

Groton Daily Independent

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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.

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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

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The Bulletin by Newsweek

World in Brief

employees have reached a tentative deal with the company, potentially signaling the end of the largest healthcare strike in U.S. history.

NASA's Psyche spacecraft has successfully launched from Cape Canaveral in Florida on a six-year journey to study the unique Psyche asteroid. The probe is being carried on a SpaceX Falcon Heavy rocket.

A suspected suicide bomb at a mosque in Afghanistan's Baghlan Province killed multiple people during Friday prayers, though local reports have not yet confirmed the number of deaths.

The funding partner for Trump Media & Technology Group, which owns the former president's social media site Truth Social, said that it will return \$533 million to investors after fellow investors canceled \$467 million of commitments.

Poland holds a pivotal election Sunday that will decide the country's position in the European Union. A record number of Poles registered to vote; the outcome could dethrone or solidify the ruling Law and Justice party (PiS).

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Russia's proposed 2024 budget allocates funding to the families of 102,700 military personnel killed in Ukraine, according to independent Russian news outlet Mozhem Obyasnit, giving insight into Moscow's likely death toll in the war..

What to Watch in the Day Ahead

Voters in Louisiana will head to the polls on Saturday to vote for the gubernatorial primary. Fourteen candidates are competing to replace term-limited Democratic Gov. John Bel Edwards. If no candidate receives over 50% of the vote, the top two will advance to the Nov. 18 general election.

The moon will nearly block out the sun on Saturday. An annular solar eclipse starts in Oregon at about 12:13 p.m. ET/ 9:13 a.m. PDT before moving across Nevada, Utah and New Mexico. It will end in the U.S. at around 1:03 p.m. ET/12:03 p.m. CDT as it passes through Texas.

Poland is set to hold its parliamentary election on Sunday which could be key in deciding the country's position in the European Union. The ruling nationalist Law and Justice party is seeking an unprecedented third four-year term in power.

TALKING POINTS

"The mass expulsion of over 1 million people in a day is ethnic cleansing. The UN has already said this is 'impossible' and will have 'devastating humanitarian consequences.' We have to stop ignoring the thousands of Palestinian lives lost and millions at stake!" Minnesota Democratic Representative Ilhan Omar said Israel's warning to evacuate northern Gaza in a span of 24 hours will cause "an unspeakable humanitarian crisis."

"I do think that the job [Donald Trump] did as a foreign policy president was tremendous. Now, more and more people are beginning to recognize that. Now, under President Biden, this [Israel-Hamas] is the second war that's broken out in the world, and when you have weak leadership, the world becomes a less safe place." Jared Kushner said of the former president while speaking on the Lex Fridman podcast.

"What employees really want is plain and simple: to save money and have more flexibility. Companies should consider paying for employees' commuting costs, subsidizing food and beverages, and/or providing on-site childcare or eldercare if they truly want to entice employees back into office," Owl Labs CEO Frank Weishaupt told Newsweek about the findings of his organization's "State of Hybrid Work 2023" report.

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Football: Groton Area 20, Mobridge-Pollock 8

Groton Area Tigers

First Downs: 13

Rushing: 41 carries for 114 yards, 1 touchdown
Christian Ehresmann 25-77, 1 TD
Korbin Kucker 8-36
Keegen Tracy 2-4
Teylor Diegel 2-1
Gavin Englund 1-0
Lane Tietz 3-(-4)

Passing:

Lane Tietz completed
3 of 9 for 50 yards, 1 TD
Korbin Kucker: 0 for 1 for 0 yards

Receivers:

Colby Dunker: 2-30
Teylor Diegel: 1-20, 1 TD

Fumbles: Had 5, lost 0

Penalties: 7 for 60 yards

Defensive Leaders

Logan Ringgenberg, 8 tackles, 1 fumble recovery
for 28 yard return for TD, 1 sack
Christian Ehresmann 9 tackles
Holden Sippel 7 tackles, 1 sack
Colby Dunker 7 tackles
Teylor Diegel 2 interceptions
Korbin Kucker 1 sack

Record: 5-3

Next Game: Playoffs vs. Elk Point/Jefferson

Scoring:

First Quarter

2:09 Groton Area: Logan Ringgenberg 28 yard fumble recovery return. (PAT pass failed)6-0

Second Quarter

0:01: Groton Area: Teylor Diegel 20 yard pass from Lane Tietz. (PAT: Tietz to Keegen Tracy).. 14-0

Third Quarter

7:15: Groton Area: Christian Ehresmann 3 yard run. (PAT: pass failed) 20-0

Fourth Quarter

9:05: Mobridge-Pollock: Max Saxon 2 yard run. (PAT: Jackson Eiseman to Shane Henderson) 20-8

Mobridge-Pollock Tigers

First Downs: 15

Rushing: 38 carries for 144 yards, 1 touchdown
Simon Fried 12-78
Jackson Eiseman 15-33
Joseph Dutenhoeffler 4-11
Mack Saxon 6-7, 1 TD
Easton Eiseman 1-4

Passing:

Jackson Eiseman completed 9 of 27 for 108 yards
2 interceptions

Receivers:

Shane Henderson 3-45
Simon Fried 2-16
Kale Knudson 2-12
Taylor Carmody 1-15
Easton Eiseman 1-10

Fumbles: Had 4, lost 1

Penalties: 6 for 28 yards

Defensive Leaders

Easton Eisemann 8 tackles
Taylon Carmody 8 tackles
Shane Henderson 5 tackles

Record: 2-5

Next Game: End of Season

Ringgenberg takes fumble into the endzone to get Groton Area rolling over Mobridge-Pollock

Groton Area got the traveling trophy back to Groton as the hometown Tigers defeated Mobridge-Pollock, 20-8. The football game was played in Groton under windy and medium to heavy misty conditions.

Logan Ringgenberg scored first on a fumble recovery and running back 28 yards for the touchdown. He also had eight tackles and one sack for the Tiger defense.

Taylor Diegel would score with half a second left in the half after he would, just a few plays earlier, intercept the ball. Diegel's touchdown was a 20 yard pass from Lane Tietz. Diegel also had a second interception in the game.

Christian Ehresmann would score on a three-yard run in the middle of the third quarter. He led the rushing with 25 carries for 77 yards and had nine tackles.

Colby Dunker had 30 yards receiving and had seven tackles. Korbin Kucker had 36 yards rushing and one sack. Holden Sippel had seven tackles and one sack. Keegan Tracy caught one PAT from Lane Tietz, who completed three of nine passes for 50 yards.

The wet conditions made for a slippery football as there were nine fumbles in the game with Mobridge-Pollock losing the one to Ringgenberg.

Mobridge-Pollock had 144 yards rushing and 108 yards passing. Groton Area had a total of 114 yards rushing and 50 yards passing. Mobridge-Pollock had 15 first downs while Groton Area had 13. There were 13 penalties in the game.

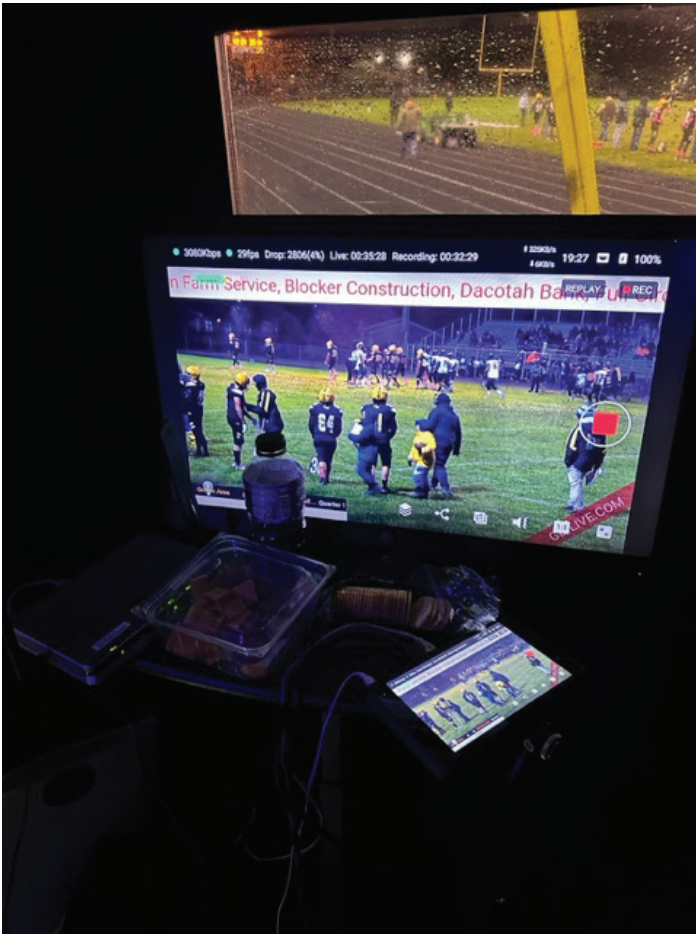
Groton Area will head to the playoffs to take on Elk Point-Jefferson on Thursday. The Tigers are 5-3 on the season heading into the playoffs.

The game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, 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.

- Paul Kosel

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GDILIVE all set up for the football game

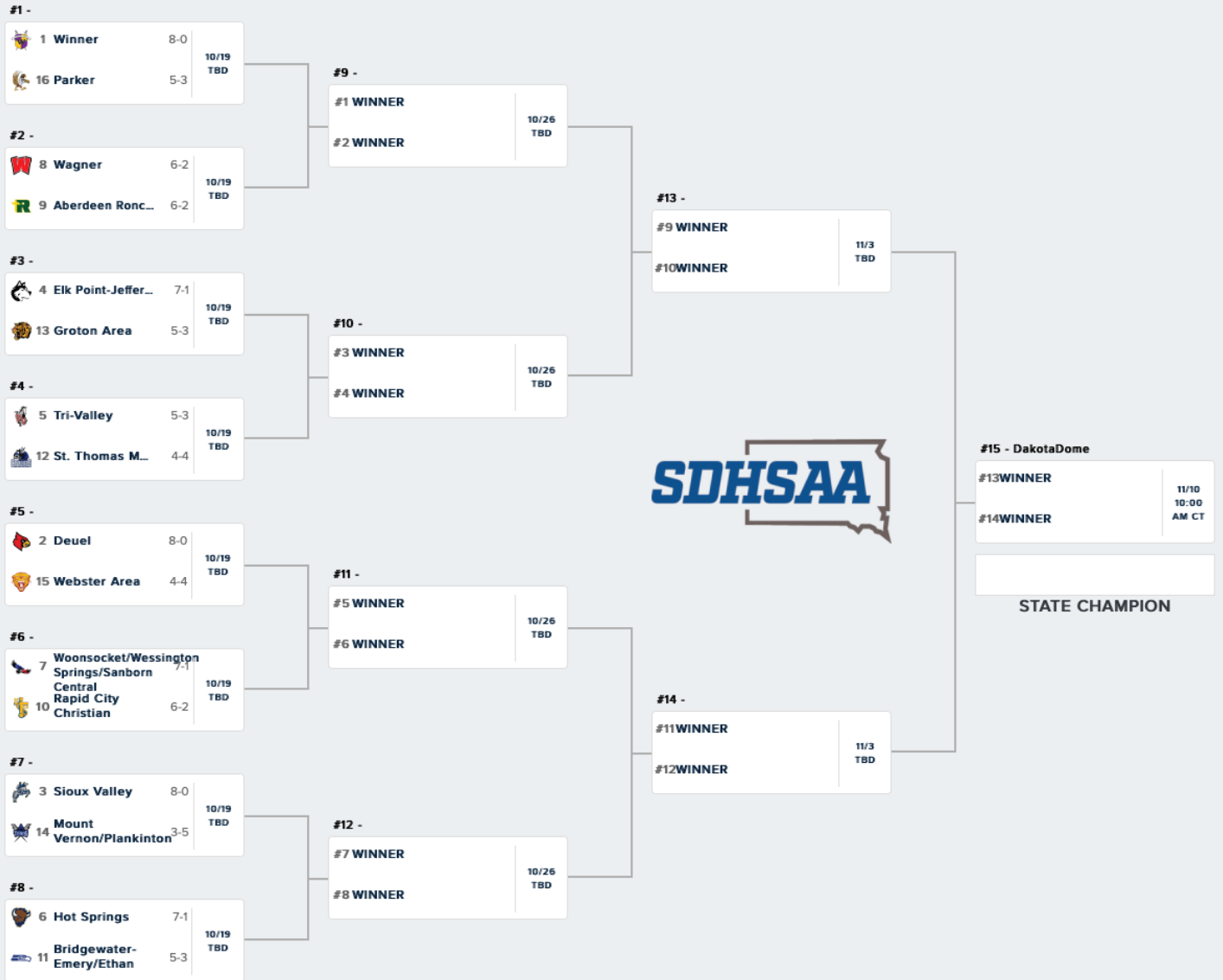
The rain and the wind did not stop the broadcast of the football game on Friday in Groton, thanks to the help of lots of people. Justin Hanson of Rutgear605 provided a deer shelter on his trailer. Landon Johnson helped haul the trailer to the field. S & S Lumber used their forklift to lift the stand onto the trailer. James Valley Telecommunications allowed us to use their wifi hotspot since we were on the west side of the field. Everything worked great. The left photo features our setup (oh yes, including a snack!) with a big screen TV. We were independent from electricity as we had our own power box that supplied the power to our equipment.

Mike Nehls did a wonderful job announcing. Instead of staying in the shelter, he decided to announce from the sideline of the field. Jeslyn Kosel operated the camera out the window of the shelter having extra duty to balance the camera on two legs of the tripod instead of three (see top right photo for her station). Paul Kosel kept all of the technical things going inside the shelter, out of the rain. It was a new experience for everyone.

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Class 11B - State



Seed Points Averages #1 Winner 46.875 - #2 Deuel 46.125 - #3 Sioux Valley 45.000 - #4 Elk Point-Jefferson 43.750 - #5 Tri-Valley 43.250 - #6 Hot Springs 43.000 - #7 Woonsocket/Wessington Springs/Sanborn Central 42.625 - #8 Wagner 42.375 - #9 Aberdeen Roncalli 42.375 - #10 Rapid City Christian 42.375 - #11 Bridgewater-Emery/Ethan 41.750 - #12 St. Thomas More 41.500 - #13 Groton Area 41.000 - #14 Mount Vernon/Plankinton 40.500 - #15 Webster Area 40.375 - #16 Parker 40.250 #8

Tie Breakers: Wagner over Aberdeen Roncalli and Rapid City Christian based on average of opponents' seed points (40.281 vs. 39.875 vs. 39.656) - #9 Aberdeen Roncalli over Rapid City Christian based on average of opponents' seed points (39.875 vs. 39.656)

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Northern State Glides Through Friday Contest with UMary

Aberdeen, S.D. – In a quick Friday night affair, the Northern State University volleyball team swept the University of Mary. After going 5-sets with the Marauders a week ago, the Wolves buckled down, hitting .291 with 46 kills in the win.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 3, MARY 0

Records: NSU 14-4 (6-3 NSIC), MARY 5-14 (1-9 NSIC)

Attendance: 1282

HOW IT HAPPENED

The Wolves downed the Marauders with set scores of 25-20, 25-16, and 25-16

NSU tallied a match leading 46 kills, 41 assists, 60 digs, eight blocks, and five aces; suffering just 12 hitting errors including a combine five in the final two sets

Defensively Northern held UMary to just 27 kills and forced 20 hitting errors

Natalia Szybinska and Morissen Samuels led the offense with double figures kills each, while Eliza Bauers knocked down a career high nine, hitting a team high .563

Abby Meister was a sounding board for the Mary offense with 19 digs in the win, averaging just over six per set

Keri Walker dished out 38 total assists and four Wolves recorded three or more blocks

The victory extended NSU's win streak over MARY to 23 matches

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Natalia Szybinska: 11 kills, 5 digs, 3 blocks

Morissen Samuels: 10 kills, .533 attack%, 4 digs, 1 block

Eliza Bauers: 9 kills (career high), .563 attack% (career high), 3 blocks

Keri Walker: 38 assists, 4 digs, 3 kills

Abby Brooks: 5 blocks, 6 kills

Reese Johnson: 8 digs, 3 aces

Abby Meister: 19 digs

UP NEXT

Northern returns to Wachs Arena this evening for a conference match against Minot State. Start time is set for 5 p.m. following the neutral site contest between MSU Moorhead and the University of Mary.

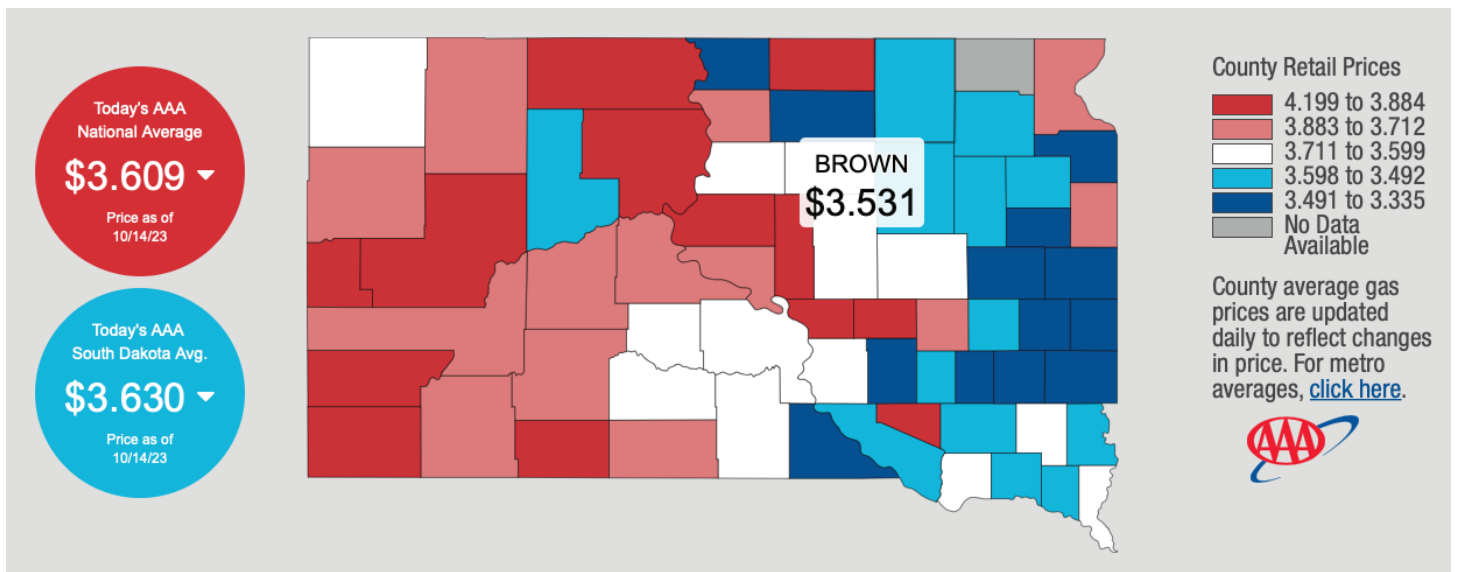
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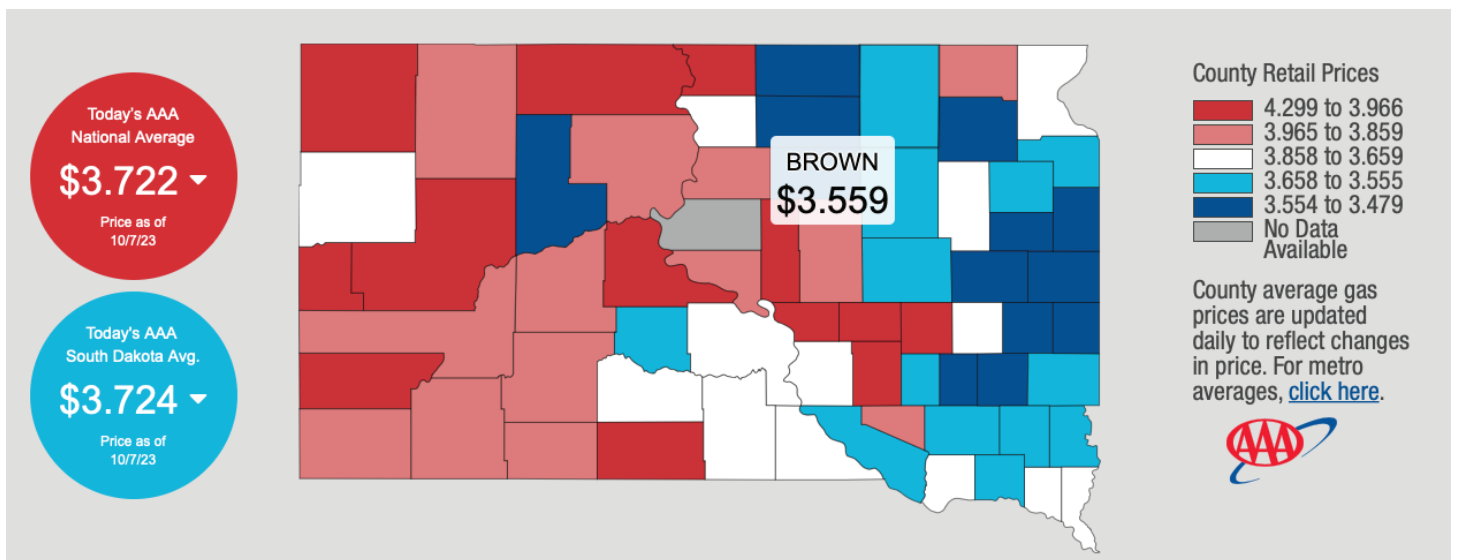
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.630	\$3.794	\$4.296	\$4.331
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.642	\$3.818	\$4.294	\$4.333
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.724	\$3.925	\$4.384	\$4.405
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.946	\$4.117	\$4.591	\$4.295
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.789	\$3.977	\$4.436	\$5.035

This Week



Two Weeks Ago



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Drought Classification

None

D0 (Abnormally Dry)

D1 (Moderate Drought)

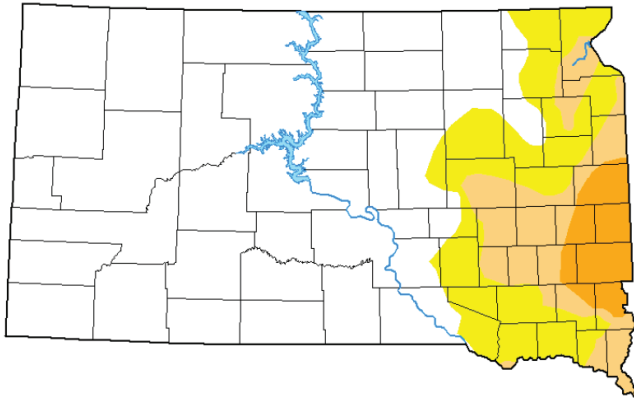
D2 (Severe Drought)

D3 (Extreme Drought)

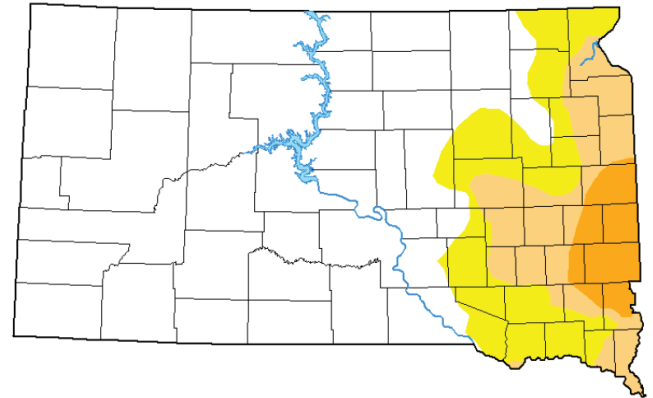
D4 (Exceptional Drought)

No Data

Drought Monitor



October 10



October 3

A 1-category improvement was made to northwestern North Dakota and northeastern South Dakota where more than 1 inch of precipitation occurred this past week. Small improvements were also warranted in central Nebraska with the wet start to October. Although parts of eastern Nebraska also received heavier precipitation, NDMC's long-term blend supports D2+ levels of drought. Based on drier-than-normal conditions during the past 60 days and soil moisture, abnormal dryness (D0) was expanded across the southwestern corner of Nebraska. 60-day SPI, soil moisture, and NDMC's short-term blend supported an increase in D0 and the addition of D1 across southern Wyoming. The suppressed 2023 Monsoon and the 6-month SPEI supported an expansion of D2 in southwestern Colorado, while increasing short-term dryness led to increasing D0 coverage across northwestern Colorado.

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**BROWN COUNTY
BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA
REGULAR MEETING TUESDAY
OCTOBER 17, 2023, 8:45 A.M.**

COMMISSIONER'S CHAMBERS, COURTHOUSE ANNEX - 25 MARKET STREET, ABERDEEN SD

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Opportunity for Public Comment
4. Dirk Rogers, Highway Superintendent
 - a. R-O-W for Web Water
 - b. Department Update
5. Kylie Lange, Summit Carbon Solutions – Project Update
6. Rachel Kippley – Fair/Fairgrounds/Parks Manager
 - a. Discuss Ticketing Services
 - b. Board Approval of Fair Board Member Recommendations
7. First Reading of Ordinances:
 - a. #257 – Rezone
 - b. #258 – Rezone
 - c. #259 – Rezone
8. Karly Winter, State's Attorney – Discuss Uniform Policy
9. Consent Calendar
 - a. Approval of General Meeting Minutes from October 10, 2023
 - b. Claims
 - c. HR Report
 - d. Operating Transfer for Hwy. Dept.
 - e. Auditors Report of Accounts
 - f. Lease Agreement
10. Other Business
11. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
12. Adjourn

Brown County Commission Meeting

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet, or smartphone.

<https://meet.goto.com/BrCoCommission>

You can also dial in using your phone. United States: [+1 \(872\) 240-3311](tel:+18722403311)

Access Code: 601-168-909 #

Get the app now and be ready when your first meeting starts: <https://meet.goto.com/install>

Public comment provides an opportunity for the public to address the county commission - Presentations may not exceed 3 minutes.

Public comment will be limited to 10 minutes (or at the discretion of the board)

Public comment will be accepted virtually when the virtual attendance option is available.

Official Recordings of Commission Meetings along with the Minutes can be found at <https://www.brown.sd.us/node/454>

Asphalt Crack Sealing Projects Scheduled to Begin in East Central South Dakota

HURON, S.D. – On Monday, Oct. 16, 2023, crews will begin asphalt crack sealing operations on six routes in east central South Dakota. The contractor will move from one project to the next in the following order:

S.D. Highway 37 — Project will begin at the junction of S.D. Highway 37 and U.S. Highway 212 in Doland and run north 11 miles to Turton.

U.S. Highway 212 — Project will begin at the junction of Highway 37 and Highway 212 in Doland and run east for 11 miles.

S.D. Highway 28 — Project will begin three miles east of Hitchcock and end six miles east of Bloomfield.

S.D. Highway 45 — Project will begin at the junction of S.D. Highway 45 and S.D. Highway 34 and run north for seven miles.

S.D. Highway 34 — Project will begin at the junction of S.D. Highway 47 and Highway 34 in Ft. Thompson and run east for five and one-half miles.

S.D. Highway 47 & 249 — Project will begin three miles south, and end one mile northeast, of Ft. Thompson.

Motorists will be guided through the work zone with a pilot car and flaggers. Motorists are asked to slow down and be aware of equipment and workers in the work zone.

The prime contractor on this \$330,000 project is Northwest Asphalt & Maintenance of Thief River Falls, MN. The overall completion date for this project is Friday, Nov. 10, 2023.

Gov. Noem and Colleagues Send Letter Supporting Israel to President Biden

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, Governor Kristi Noem and 19 of her fellow Republican governors sent a letter to President Biden expressing their support for the State of Israel. The governors called on the federal government to take action to help the beloved people of Israel and keep America secure.

“We pledge our steadfast support to our ally Israel following the appalling attacks perpetrated against Israel’s sovereignty and innocent civilians on October 7, 2023,” wrote Governor Noem and her colleagues. “We write today to make clear that our states absolutely condemn these heinous acts of terrorism led by Iran-backed Hamas and proudly stand Israel and the Jewish people.”

The Republican governors hold that, “when the lives of American citizens hang in the balance, the American President must speak boldly and act decisively.” Governor Noem issued her own statement in support of Israel following the devastating terrorist attacks. Governor Noem also ordered that flags be flown at half-staff statewide in support of Israel.

“This type of international chaos and violence is a direct result of your administration’s appeasement-first foreign policy,” continued Governor Noem and the other governors. “We call on you to project American strength by...clearly and unequivocally condemning these attacks and supporting Israel’s unquestioned right to respond and defend itself.”

Governor Noem was joined by the following Republican governors in issuing the statement:

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, Governor Kay Ivey, Alaska Governor Mike Dunleavy, Arkansas Governor Sarah Sanders, Georgia Governor Brian Kemp, Idaho Governor Brad Little, Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb, Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds, Mississippi Governor Tate Reeves, New Hampshire Governor Chris Sununu, North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum, Nevada Governor Joe Lombardo, Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt, South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster, Tennessee Governor Bill Lee, Texas Governor Greg Abbott, Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin, and Wyoming Governor Mark Gordon.

BBB Tips for Donating to Relief Efforts in Israel and Gaza

This past Saturday, Hamas militants from Gaza launched a surprise attack against towns in southern Israel, including a music festival. Media sources report there were over 900 deaths, over a thousand wounded and more than 100 Israeli hostages being taken. In response, Israel declared war on Hamas, sent airstrikes into Gaza on Sunday, over 600 Palestinians were killed. For those seeking to help victims and families impacted by this crisis, BBB Wise Giving Alliance offers the following giving tips and a list of BBB Accredited Charities soliciting for relief efforts.

Can the charity get to the impacted area? Not all relief organizations will be positioned to provide relief quickly. See if the charity already has a presence in Israel or Gaza.

Are you alert to possible social media scams? Scammers recognize the emotional motivation to help in response to emergency situations. Be wary of responding to appeals without taking the opportunity to verify the trustworthiness of the social media source or the specified charity.

Should you send clothing and food? Local drives to collect clothing and food to send overseas may not be practical as the logistics and timing to deliver and disperse such items will be challenging. Relief organizations are better equipped to obtain what is needed, distribute it effectively and avoid duplication of effort.

Is the charity experienced in providing emergency relief? Experienced disaster relief charities are the best bet to help deliver aid as soon as possible. New entrants may have difficulty in following through even if they have the best of intentions.

Are you considering crowdfunding appeals? If engaging in crowdfunding, it is safest to give to someone you personally know and trust, keeping in mind that some crowdfunding sites take measures to vet posts, others don't. If the poster claims they will forward funds to a specified charity, consider visiting the charity's website on your own and giving to them directly after having checked them out.

Are you cautious about "100%" claims in appeals? Charities have fundraising and administrative expenses. If a charity promotion claims that all funds collected will be used for relief, see if there is an explanation about how they are able to do this. Even a credit card donation will have a processing fee.

State Minimum Wage to Increase Jan. 1

PIERRE, S.D. – The state minimum wage will increase from \$10.80/hour to \$11.20/hour effective Jan. 1, 2024.

The minimum wage is annually adjusted by any increase in the cost of living, as measured in the Consumer Price Index published by the U.S. Department of Labor. South Dakota implements this annual increase as established by SDCL 60-11-3.2, a law passed by the South Dakota Legislature that took effect on Jan. 1, 2016.

The hourly minimum wage for tipped employees will be \$5.60/hour effective Jan. 1, 2024, half the minimum wage for non-tipped employees. Wages and tips combined must equal at least the minimum wage.

These increases will apply to all South Dakota employers, with some limited exceptions. For more information, visit dlr.sd.gov/employment_laws/minimum_wage.aspx.

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Mike Nehls was a busy guy on Friday as he announced the line-ups for the Lake Region Marching Festival. Due to the weather, the event was moved into the Arena. Then Nehls did the commentary of the football game on GDILIVE.COM.

Lake Region Marching Festival

The Lake Region Marching Festival was held Friday in Groton.

In the high school division, Warner took first and Pierre T.F. Rigs, Emerald Regiment, took second.

In the combined division, Aberdeen Roncalli took first and Langford Area took second.

In the middle school division, Simmons/Holgate Middle School took first and Milbank Middle School took second.

Pierre Emerald Regiment won outstanding drum-line, while Aberdeen Roncalli won outstanding wind, Color Guard and Grand Overall Winner.



The Groton Area High School Marching Band led the Lake Region Marching Festival that was held in the Groton Area Arena on Friday.

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The Groton Area drum line was the last one to perform at the Lake Region Marching Festival.



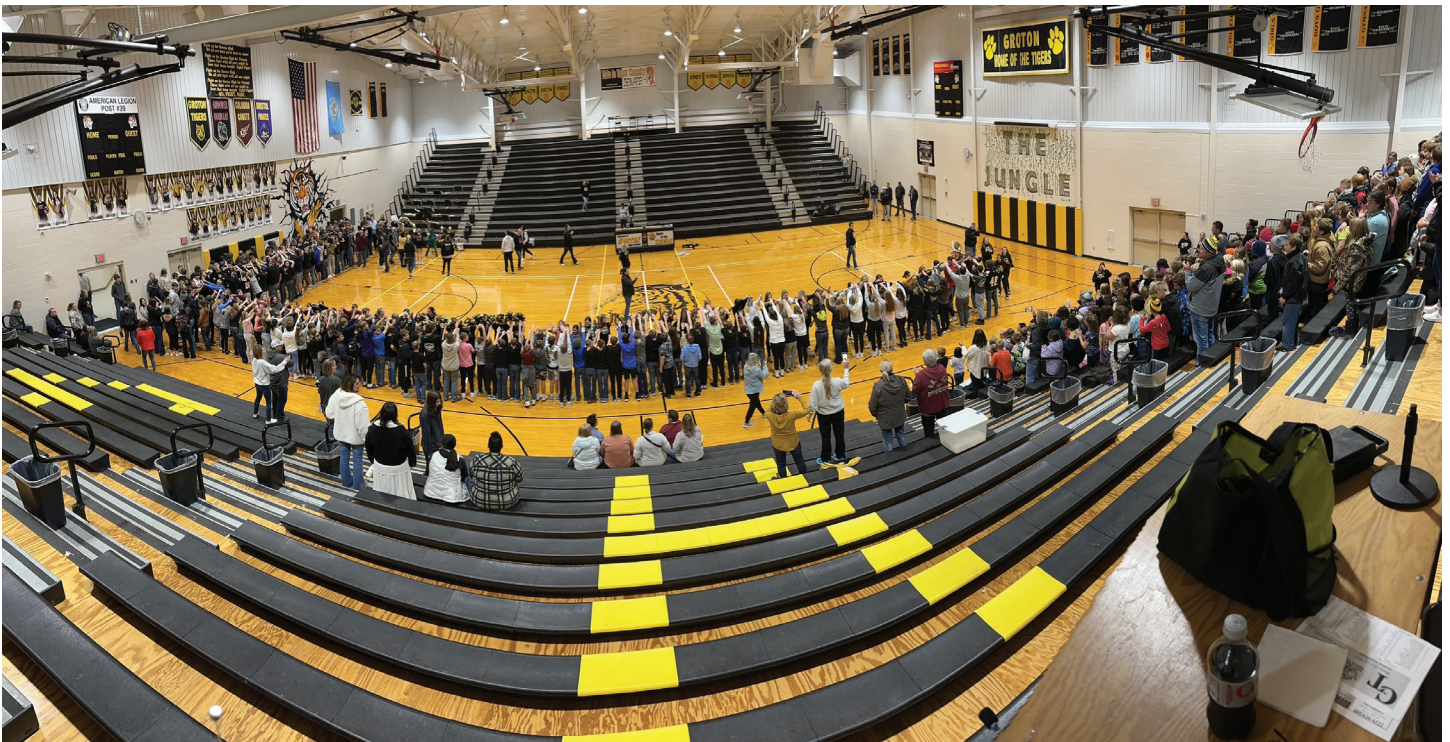
The Northern State University marching band put on a crowd pleasing performance at the Lake Region Marching Festival.

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A send-off for the Girls Soccer Team to the state championship game

A pep rally was held Friday afternoon as the girls soccer team will be playing in the state championship game at 11 a.m. today in Brandon Valley. Coach Kucker talked about how good of a team he has this year and that they are looking forward to a rematch with the Titans.





SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Momentum grows for more state child care funding

Fix needed for underutilization of existing subsidies

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - OCTOBER 13, 2023 6:09 PM

South Dakota doesn't invest much state money in child care — unlike several of its counterparts across the country — and existing subsidies for child care are underutilized.

Unless that changes, South Dakota will fall behind in its workforce and economic development, according to legislators, child care providers, and economic leaders who participated in a recent panel discussion hosted by South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

The state matches around \$800,000 a year (the minimum requirement) to receive federal dollars for low-income child care subsidies, and the state used millions of dollars in federal COVID relief for child care provider grants over the last few years. The latest state effort, using more COVID relief money, is another round of grants for communities to find "innovative solutions" to address child care's accessibility and affordability issues in the state.

But that federal money is running out, and the state doesn't have a plan to replace it. Even then, providers say the money didn't fix underlying problems.

While the urgency and the need for collaboration between the public and private sector was front and center at the SDPB panel, the need for more state involvement was also loud and clear.

Something needs to change, said President of the South Dakota Chamber of Commerce and Industry David Owen.

"Inflation coming out of COVID is a threat and that's a domino this economy can't afford," Owen said. "If we don't figure something out, we're going to go from child care being marginal and on the edges to ceasing to exist. This needs to be addressed."

SD's current subsidy program is 'perpetuating the problem'

Of the roughly 29,000 South Dakota children who qualify for subsidized child care, only 1,800 receive assistance — about 7%.

That's "abysmal," Early Learner South Dakota Executive Director Kayla Klein told South Dakota Searchlight. Klein says there are two main reasons for the poor subsidy participation rate: paperwork and reimbursement rates.

The first step to increasing the low participation rate of children in the child care subsidy program is to address regulations that disqualify otherwise low-income families from the program. Current regulations often disqualify people who need subsidized child care the most, Klein said, such as single parents, teen parents and homeless families.

Nicole Weiss, early learning director for the YMCA in Rapid City, explained that of the roughly 50 people in the organization's child care programs for homeless families and children with teen parents, only three receive subsidized child care.

That's because regulations require that single parents pursue child support payments before they qualify for assistance — though some mothers might not want to because they don't know who the child's father is to collect payment, they may not want to push for child support because of an abusive relationship, or other factors. Teen parents especially are less likely to pursue child support, according to national nonprofit Zero to Three.

The child care subsidy program also requires parents work or attend school a certain amount of hours, Klein said. In the case of a homeless parent searching for work, that can be difficult. Homeless parents

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sometimes do not have the necessary documents needed for the program application, either.

If homeless parents can't put their children in care so they can search for work, they can't afford housing or escape poverty, Klein said.

"It's like the system is perpetuating the problem," Klein said.

Those fixes can be made administratively, Klein said, but they won't fix everything.

Child care providers lose money when accepting state subsidies

The second reason participation rates are so low in the state is because child care providers lose money when they accept state subsidies, Klein said.

About 60% of child care providers in South Dakota are unregulated by the state, which means those providers don't have access to subsidy dollars. Even then, state-licensed providers can opt out of the subsidy program.

Providers can choose to be unregulated for a variety of reasons — facility requirements that are difficult to achieve in an in-home setting, they don't want state involvement, or there's no financial incentive. The latter is what Klein hopes to change.

"People tend to want paying parents and don't want to deal with subsidies because there are so many flaws in the system," she said.

State subsidies typically do not cover a child's entire tuition. Providers can either accept that they'll lose money by taking on the child, or they can require the family to pay the remaining balance after the subsidy is paid.

If providers try to have the family pay a co-pay, they risk not getting fully paid — causing a headache for the provider, a fight with the family, and eventually leading to the child being kicked out of the facility.

"Because we know that the parent is on child care assistance because they can't afford it, why would I anticipate they're able to afford anything more than the state is subsidizing?" Klein added.

A lag time in being paid by the state also contributes to providers being hesitant to accept subsidies, she said.

Additionally, the state reimburses providers on an hourly basis, but most families don't keep their children in day care for the entire time the provider is open. If parents who are eligible for a subsidy pick up their child early, the provider doesn't get the full day's amount, even though the spot is reserved for a full day.

Basing child care subsidy rates on true cost, not market rates

Sen. Tim Reed, R-Brookings, is spearheading the child care discussion in the supermajority Republican Legislature. He says there is a drive within his caucus to address the issue in the coming session, which begins in January.

Reed's concern, as the CEO of the Brookings Economic Development Corporation, is that South Dakota isn't investing in its own workforce, he told South Dakota Searchlight. Research shows that early learning is essential to a person's development.

"I'm afraid other states will get ahead of us and have a better educated workforce," Reed said of other states' support for child care.

New Mexico approved a constitutional amendment devoting a portion of the state's Land Grant Permanent Fund — fees the state collects from oil and gas development on public land — to early education and child care, generating an estimated \$150 million a year for early childhood programs. Since August, the state has made child care free for all families making up to 400% of the federal poverty level, or \$120,000 for a family of four.

The Washington Supreme Court upheld a 7% capital gains tax (passed in 2021) that will pay for early education, child care and public school construction projects. The state collected \$850 million from the tax in its first year.

And Minnesota passed a host of bills this legislative year dealing with child care improvements, including a continuation of previous grant programs for child care workforce programs funded through federal COVID relief money and creating the new Department of Children, Youth and Families.

Vermont increased reimbursement rates for child care providers and expanded low income child care

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assistance subsidies to 575% of the federal poverty level (\$172,500 for a family of four). New York similarly expanded its low income child care subsidies to 300% of the federal poverty level (\$90,000 for a family of four).

Reed's focus is to increase provider reimbursement rates for child care subsidies.

Child care subsidies for low income families at or below 209% of the federal poverty level (\$62,700 for a family of four) are reimbursed to providers through a regional market rate. The issue with that, Reed said, is that the public already recognizes that child care providers aren't charging enough to properly pay their employees and keep their businesses afloat.

Instead, he said the state should base its subsidy reimbursements on the "true cost" of doing business, thereby increasing the state funds to providers to more accurately reflect how providers should be paid. He likened the reimbursement model to how nursing homes are currently reimbursed at 100% for Medicaid residents — a decision the Legislature made last session.

"We at least have to get to the true cost," Reed told South Dakota Searchlight. "Even at that point we're not necessarily giving enough money to pay the employees enough."

Klein hopes increasing subsidy rates will incentivize more providers to register with the state — which would then hopefully lead to a higher subsidy participation rate in the state — but it won't immediately address the issue since subsidies only account for a fraction of the need.

Mike Bockorny, CEO of the Aberdeen Development Corporation, said during the panel discussion that he hopes something is done in the next year.

"The answer can't be at the end of this legislative session, 'We don't have the money,'" Bockorny said. "We can't not do anything. That's not going to work. I think the people who are saying 'Oh, this is going to cost a lot of money' are looking at it wrong. It's not a cost. This is an investment."

Finding more data and evaluating funding options

Reed was one of six legislators who traveled to Nashville this summer for the Hunt Institute's Early Childhood Leadership Summit. It was there he realized how much other states contribute to child care.

The takeaway from the event for Rep. Linda Duba, D-Sioux Falls, is that South Dakota needs an evaluation of what the state is already doing.

"What are the sources of funding? Where are they coming from? Who administers them? Are they strictly federal pass-through dollars? What are they and how many families are we leaving behind?" Duba said about the state involvement.

The group plans to present a proposal to Gov. Kristi Noem this year on how to partner with the Hunt Institute to analyze South Dakota. Noem campaigned on child care accessibility and affordability last year.

Legislators are determined to use grants or business donations to pay for the analysis, so it won't be taxpayer-funded.

"A lot of this hinges on getting a thumbs-up from the governor," Duba said, "but I think what we've proposed is a good starting point. We don't know what we don't know. Emotions are fine, but data is what drives good policy decisions."

Beyond subsidies: What about the 60%?

Duba is doubtful increasing subsidy reimbursement rates will increase the number of state licensed providers.

"With licensing and regulation comes other things an in-home provider needs to do," Duba said, referencing facility requirements, such as square footage and bathroom requirements. "I understand encouraging providers to become licensed and I'm not poo-h-pooing that, but is that an immediate fix? Not necessarily."

That's where the state and private sector can play a role, Duba said. Businesses can make child care part of a benefits package for employees, like Black Hills Energy in Rapid City, which partnered with Rapid City YMCA to offer child care.

Faced with 21 staff openings, the YMCA has decided to temporarily close three classrooms and cut 10 positions while trying to hire the other 11. The organization has several private partnerships, and it offers benefits, substantial paid time off and retirement packages.

But it's not enough, said YMCA Learning Director Nicole Weiss, calling for more state involvement to help boost pay.

"If you can't buy your groceries, you're not looking at what your benefits are," she said.

It's the same issue in Sioux Falls at Embe, which serves up to 400 children.

"Our starting wage is higher than average, but it's not enough," said Brandon Hanson, executive director of child care and school age care at Embe. "On a daily basis, we are choosing between pushing our families into poverty or pushing our employees into poverty."

As an independent, in-home child care provider in Sioux Falls, Karen Rieck said she makes about \$7 an hour after factoring in the other expenses and the hours she works off the clock. She has to work a second job.

The state has to help "take the financial burden" off of child care providers to properly support the economic ecosystem, Weiss said.

"We have to do something right now," she said. "In a year or two years we're not going to have employees, because we won't have child care. The time is now."

Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan whose work has won national and regional awards. She's spent five years as a journalist with experience reporting on workforce, development and business issues within the state.

COMMENTARY

Noem-Lewandowski relationship doesn't have to be an affair to be inappropriate

SETH TUPPER

After reporting that Gov. Kristi Noem is allegedly having an extramarital affair, Ken Silverstein suffered a memory lapse.

It happened on the Dakota Town Hall podcast. The hosts wanted to know if Silverstein's Sept. 15 story about Noem was his first about South Dakota politics.

Silverstein struggled with his answer — "I don't think that's possible, because I honestly feel like I've covered ..." — until one of the hosts interrupted. The host suggested Silverstein had probably written about former Senate leader Tom Daschle and current Senate Minority Whip John Thune.

"I know I've written about Daschle multiple times, and I'm sure I've written about others," Silverstein said. "I just honestly can't remember. I've been doing this for too long. It's been a long time since I've written about anything really related to South Dakota, but I know I have, with Daschle and others."

One of those others was former Sen. Larry Pressler.

Silverstein and the late Alexander Cockburn co-authored the 1996 book "Washington Babylon." It was described by its publisher, Verso Books, as an "exposé of Washington politics." Three pages devoted to Pressler included a claim that he had "suddenly" gotten married "amid speculation that he was gay."

Pressler, a Republican, lost his Senate seat that year to his Democratic challenger, Tim Johnson. Two years later, Pressler's lawsuit against Verso ended with a settlement, according to media reports at the time. The exact financial terms were not disclosed, but Verso issued a statement expressing regret for "inaccurate and hurtful" statements about Pressler's marriage.

A 1998 Rapid City Journal editorial called the ordeal "one of the sleaziest episodes in the history of South Dakota politics."

Silverstein co-wrote his recent article about Noem with Laura Collins for DailyMail.com, an international website associated with a British tabloid newspaper. The article alleges that Noem is having an affair with political consultant Corey Lewandowski (Noem, through a spokesman, has denied the allegation). The claim is attributed to anonymous sources and one named source who said the pair "seemed to be dating," based on that source's observations of their behavior.

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Silverstein and Collins are not the first to go public with the allegation. The initial report was written two years ago by Pedro Gonzalez for American Greatness, a website that says it aims to be “the leading voice of the next generation of American Conservatism.” All of the sources in the Gonzalez story were anonymous.

The only thing we know for sure is that Noem, a nationally ambitious governor, has spent a lot of time with Lewandowski, a political consultant with national connections. Noem’s spokesman has said she “never paid a dime” to Lewandowski, but South Dakota’s lackluster campaign finance system prevents us from confirming that. On state campaign finance reports, Noem and other candidates list expenses under vague headings such as “consulting,” without identifying recipients.

In the end, we don’t actually need to know whether Noem and Lewandowski are having an affair to know that their relationship is inappropriate. Lewandowski has such a long and notorious record of alleged misbehavior that no governor should associate with him for any reason.

In 1999, while working for U.S. Rep. Bob Ney, R-Ohio, Lewandowski was arrested for entering a House office building with a loaded pistol. He said the gun was accidentally left in a bag of dirty clothes, and the charge was dropped.

In 2000, while Lewandowski was still working for Ney, the congressman became criminally involved in the infamous Jack Abramoff lobbying scandal. Ney did Abramoff’s bidding in exchange for trips, meals, drinks, event tickets and campaign contributions. Lewandowski wrote a letter to a judge seeking leniency for Ney, saying the disgraced congressman had “served as a mentor to me, as a surrogate father, and as a best friend all in one.”

While serving as Donald Trump’s presidential campaign manager in 2016, Lewandowski allegedly grabbed a female reporter by the arm and was cited for simple battery, but prosecutors didn’t pursue the case.

In 2021, during a charity dinner Lewandowski attended with Noem in Las Vegas, he allegedly made repeated and unwanted sexual advances toward a female attendee. Lewandowski was charged with misdemeanor battery and reached an agreement that allowed him to pay a \$1,000 fine, perform 50 hours of community service and undergo impulse control training without an admission of guilt.

After that incident, Noem spokesman Ian Fury said Lewandowski would “not be advising the governor in regard to the campaign or official office.” Yet, within months, the two were once again seen together. Most recently, Lewandowski popped up in Rapid City for a political rally where Noem introduced Trump.

Why would Noem affiliate with such a person in the first place, let alone continue the affiliation after it reduces her to tabloid fodder?

Multiple reporters, including Silverstein, have now claimed an affair is the answer to that question. But those stories are based on hearsay from mostly anonymous sources.

Even worse for South Dakota, in my opinion, is another possibility: that Noem is so deeply controlled by political ambition, she’ll associate with anybody — no matter how unsavory — to get ahead.

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

Wind is South Dakota’s role in ‘hydrogen hub’

Effort seeks to reduce carbon emissions in five-state region

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - OCTOBER 13, 2023 4:33 PM

Hydrogen power may soon spread across the country thanks to federal grants, and South Dakota wind turbines could provide some of the electricity to make it.

Hydrogen, as a gas, transforms into water when burned as fuel.

While hydrogen is currently produced from fossil fuels — and used in industries such as oil refining, steel production and fertilizer production — renewable energy advancements and billions in federal climate change incentives are beginning to change that.

Hydrogen production via electrolysis — splitting water into hydrogen and oxygen using electricity — is gaining interest. To keep the process sustainable, electrolysis can be powered by excess production from wind and solar energy.

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But those processes are expensive and require new infrastructure, which is why the Biden administration is directing \$7 billion from the bipartisan infrastructure law to build seven regional hydrogen power hubs in 16 states, the White House announced Friday.

One of the new hubs is the Heartland Hydrogen Hub in Minnesota, Wisconsin, South Dakota, North Dakota and Montana, which is the recipient of a \$925 million grant. The hub – a network of hydrogen producers, consumers and infrastructure – is a collaboration involving Xcel Energy, Marathon Petroleum Corporation, TC Energy and the University of North Dakota's Energy & Environmental Resource Center.

Not all of the hydrogen produced within the hubs will be strictly "green"; some could still be made from fossil fuels in processes that release CO2 into the atmosphere. But the projects hope to capture and store that carbon dioxide underground, a process called sequestration. Carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas in the atmosphere that traps heat and contributes to climate change.

The hydrogen could be used for the previously mentioned industrial applications, for heating buildings when mixed into the natural gas supply, and other uses.

The state of South Dakota was not a formal participant in planning the Heartland Hydrogen Hub. The governors of North Dakota, Minnesota, Montana and Wisconsin signed a memorandum of understanding last year to work on the plan together.

But South Dakota's wind turbines could help power hydrogen production through electrolysis, said Theo Keith of Xcel Energy. The Minneapolis-based utility provides energy to customers across eight Western and Midwestern states, including South Dakota.

"We're already thinking about places on our existing system to add electrolyzers to produce hydrogen from clean energy resources, and this includes our wind resources in South Dakota," Keith said. "We anticipate future investment in South Dakota wind as well."

The hub hopes to reduce carbon emissions associated with hydrogen production by over 1 million metric tons annually, equivalent to removing 220,000 gasoline cars from roads, and potentially generating about 3,900 jobs.

Xcel anticipates the hub's efforts to build up hydrogen production will not be complete until 2035.

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.

'So many ways hydrogen can go wrong': Hub announcements viewed with caution

BY: ROBERT ZULLO - OCTOBER 13, 2023 7:08 PM

The Friday announcement that seven projects had been selected to receive \$7 billion in seed money to kickstart the production of clean hydrogen across the country was billed by President Joe Biden's administration as a major step toward slashing carbon emissions, creating thousands of domestic jobs and positioning the U.S. as a clean energy leader.

"I'm here to announce one of the largest advanced manufacturing investments in the history of this nation," Biden said during an appearance in Philadelphia. "Seven billion dollars in federal investments that's going to attract \$40 billion in private investments in clean hydrogen."

However, there's also criticism over a lack of transparency by the Department of Energy around the application and selection process and those who are dubious about the ways some of the newly minted "hydrogen hubs" intend to produce the gas, which the administration called "crucial to achieving President Biden's goal of American industry powered by American clean energy."

Hydrogen, which releases no carbon emissions when burned, is seen broadly as a key part of cutting emissions from hard-to-decarbonize sectors of the economy, such as steelmaking and cement manufacturing, aviation, shipping and other areas. There's more controversy around uses like blending it with

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natural gas to burn in power plants or for heating. How climate-friendly hydrogen is depends on how it's produced. Currently most hydrogen in the U.S. is produced using natural gas, so-called "gray" hydrogen. "Green" hydrogen is produced by an electrolysis process with clean energy. "Blue" hydrogen is fossil-fuel derived but coupled with carbon capture, in which CO₂ is filtered out of emissions and stored.

Four of the projects (the Appalachian, Gulf Coast, Heartland and Midwest hydrogen hubs) that the DOE announced as winners will use fossil fuels to produce hydrogen. (In the bipartisan infrastructure law, Congress required that at least one hub "demonstrate the production of clean hydrogen from fossil fuels.")

"There are so many ways hydrogen can go wrong. ... We're really concerned with the number of projects that rely in part or in whole on fossil fuel-based hydrogen production," said Julie McNamara, a deputy policy director at Union of Concerned Scientists' climate and energy program. "For hydrogen to be a clean energy solution, it has to be cleanly produced and it has to be strategically used."

In some scenarios, environmental groups worry the hydrogen could actually increase U.S. greenhouse gas emissions.

A report last month by the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis, an Ohio nonprofit, found that the U.S. government "significantly understates the likely impact of producing hydrogen from fossil fuels on global warming." The assumption that 1% of the methane being used to produce hydrogen will be emitted into the atmosphere is "far less than recent peer-reviewed scientific analyses have found and that has been identified by airplane and satellite emission surveys," the report says. It also notes that using fossil fuels to make hydrogen cleanly depends on the "overly optimistic and unproven assumption that hydrogen production projects will be able to capture almost all of the carbon dioxide they create."

In short, said David Schlissel, one of the report's authors, blue hydrogen is not a great idea when you consider emissions from the entire process, from producing natural gas to shipping and storing the hydrogen and the unknowns of trying to use carbon capture and storage at scale.

"We fear, and it's based on our analysis, that the money the government is going to spend on blue hydrogen production is going to result in the continued emission of greenhouse gases for decades," he said. "We worry about the waste of money. But we really worry about the waste of time and giving fossil fuel companies the opportunity to build infrastructure that depends on their continued operation. That's the real concern, to keep the world addicted to fossil fuels."

That's the concern with all of this hydrogen hype."

Schlissel and other critics also questioned the lack of details released by the Department of Energy about the projects, noting that much of the application materials have been treated as trade secrets by the states and the DOE. It's unclear how the DOE scored the projects for funding, he added.

"How much hydrogen is going to be produced? What are going to be the CO₂ emissions? How much CO₂ is going to be captured? Then, where is it going to be used?" he said. "DOE and the applicants have taken the position that everything is confidential."

The department's press office did not respond Friday to a list of questions, including one about how projects were evaluated.

"We would encourage the DOE to be as transparent as they possibly can, especially for the communities where they'll be proposed," said Patrick Drupp, director of climate policy for the Sierra Club, one of the nation's largest environmental groups.

'This is not trivial'

Perhaps even more important than the hub applications that were selected, Drupp and McNamara say, are the debates ongoing at the Internal Revenue Service around the final rules for the hydrogen tax production credit created by the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act.

"While these hubs are large and there is a significant amount of money on the table, the hydrogen production tax credit could potentially dwarf that amount of money," McNamara said. "That makes it all the more critical that how the administration determines what is truly clean energy is rigorously done."

The final shape of those rules, which are linked to the intensity of greenhouse gas emissions of the hydrogen source, could be the difference between a boon and a boondoggle on the scale of the biofuels industry, a pair of climate economists wrote in a recent Washington Post op-ed.

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"Using fossil-generated electricity or siphoning off renewables subsequently back-filled by fossil power to operate electrolyzers — which would occur under loose guidance — generates at least twice the carbon emissions that status-quo gas-derived hydrogen emits," a coalition of environmental groups, developers and other organizations wrote to the Treasury Department in February. "Weak guidance could therefore force Treasury to spend more than \$100 billion dollars in subsidies for hydrogen projects that result in increased net emissions, in direct conflict with statutory requirements and tarnishing the reputation of the nascent 'clean' hydrogen industry."

Groups like the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Rocky Mountain Institute say the final rules should incorporate a "three pillars" approach. The first is "additionality," meaning a new hydrogen electrolyzer that is connected to the electric grid is responsible for ensuring the added electric demand they are creating is being met by new low-carbon generation. The second is "time-matching," requiring electrolyzers' electric consumption to match its hydrogen production. The third pillar, deliverability, would require hydrogen producers to get clean electricity from within their region.

McNamara said the guidance is expected to be finished by the end of the year.

"This is not trivial," she said. "Hydrogen can be a valuable tool for the clear energy transition but it is not a given ... and getting it wrong comes with enormous consequences for climate and public health."

Robert Zullo is a national energy reporter based in southern Illinois focusing on renewable power and the electric grid. Robert joined States Newsroom in 2018 as the founding editor of the Virginia Mercury. Before that, he spent 13 years as a reporter and editor at newspapers in Virginia, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Louisiana. He has a bachelor's degree from the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Va. He grew up in Miami, Fla., and central New Jersey.

Jordan latest speaker nominee after SD's Johnson delivers nominating speech

'Best chance to unify this conference of any other leader we've got'

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY, JENNIFER SHUTT AND SAMANTHA DIETEL - OCT. 13, 2023 6:33 PM

WASHINGTON — U.S. House Republicans on Friday put forward their second nominee this week for speaker, though lawmakers departed Capitol Hill for the weekend without unifying enough to hold a floor vote and with a highly uncertain outcome when they return.

Ohio Republican Rep. Jim Jordan won the conference nomination in a closed meeting, defeating Georgia's Austin Scott, who announced his bid shortly before the meeting began.

But Jordan is at least 50 votes shy of being able to win the speaker's gavel during a floor vote and Republicans said they weren't entirely sure he could secure the votes. That raises the strong possibility they will hit the two-week mark on Tuesday lacking a functional U.S. House of Representatives.

House Democrats also blasted Jordan as an extremist on Friday evening, pointing out he refused to certify the 2020 election results and linking him to the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol. Jordan, a founder of the far-right House Freedom Caucus and the aggressive chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, has been backed by former President Donald Trump in his campaign for speaker; Jordan has said he had nothing to do with the Capitol insurrection.

Scott said following the second ballot that he has endorsed Jordan for speaker and that his fellow Republicans should accept the process is to now back Jordan on the floor.

"This is not about Jim Jordan. It's not about Steve Scalise. It's not about Austin Scott," he said, referring to himself in the third person and to Rep. Steve Scalise, the first nominee picked by Republicans earlier in the week. "This is about the United States of America and having a speaker in the House."

Scott, who was publicly a candidate for speaker for less than four hours, said his frustration was not with Jordan, but with the people who refused to vote for Scalise after Republicans nominated him on Wednesday.

Scott launched his campaign against Jordan to have an "an honest debate about different issues and things that needed to be sorted out."

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"I didn't have prep time, or a whip list, or make phone calls asking for support," Scott said. "I never even told the Georgia delegation I was running, because I didn't have time. I was also trying to get in touch with my wife."

Scott eventually did talk with his wife and she replied "go for it," he said.

Jordan vs. Scott

House Republicans voted first whether to nominate Jordan or Scott, a 124-84 vote.

After Jordan won the nomination, a second ballot asked Republicans if they would support him on the floor. That ballot came back with 152 yes votes and 55 no votes, according to Florida Rep. Kat Cammack. The victor will need 217 votes on the floor.

Jordan plans to work through the weekend to get the votes he needs to become speaker, but Cammack conceded the process could devolve into exactly what happened with Scalise this week.

"The fact remains that you have got a very, very thin margin," Cammack said. "And he's going to have to basically get all of those (no votes), including some of those people who swore up and down that they never would support him. So they have to really get into those weeds."

The House returns at 6 p.m. Eastern on Monday, though no votes have been scheduled.

Turmoil as Scalise drops out

The speaker nomination vote came just two days after the party elected Louisiana's Scalise as their nominee. But he withdrew Thursday evening after failing to get commitments for the 217 votes needed to win a floor vote.

"I did not recommend that Steve Scalise dropped out of the race. I think there were tactics that he could have used to get there," said Rep. Dusty Johnson of South Dakota.

"But listen, I respect Steve Scalise. His decision, he felt like remaining in the race was more likely to divide the conference than to unify it right now," Johnson said. "I would tell you, Jim Jordan has the best chance to unify this conference of any other leader we've got."

Johnson delivered the nomination speech for Jordan on Friday.

"Jim Jordan is gonna give us the best opportunity to get things done during the 118th Congress. This is an unruly bunch," Johnson said.

Rep. Frank Lucas of Oklahoma nominated Scott.

Florida Rep. Mario Díaz-Balart, who opposes Jordan, said it's not personal, but he questions whether Jordan can get his supporters to follow him on legislative deals if he couldn't get them to back Scalise when he was the speaker nominee.

"He supported Scalise and yet the folks that are his closest group, he couldn't get them to follow him," Díaz-Balart said.

"This is not trying to figure out how to negotiate appropriation bills, how to deal with the debt limit, how to deal with national security issues," Díaz-Balart said. "This is, frankly, I hate to say this, kind of the simplest thing we do."

"And if you can't get your own people to follow you on a very simple thing like this then I think you have an issue of leadership," Díaz-Balart added.

Díaz-Balart also said he thinks Jordan has a numbers problem and likely cannot get the backing he needs to win on the floor.

"My issue here is very simple," Díaz-Balart said. "I think it's a very difficult math equation for him to overcome. I think he clearly deserves the opportunity to try to figure out how we can move forward. And let's see where that goes."

No speaker since Oct. 3

The House has been without a speaker for nearly two weeks after eight House Republicans and Democrats voted to remove California Rep. Kevin McCarthy from office.

Internal disagreements about the direction of the House Republican Conference and years of personal grievances have prevented the group from unifying around a candidate since then.

Scalise called together his fellow lawmakers twice on Thursday, once to try to coalesce everyone around

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him as their nominee and a second time to bow out of the race.

House Republicans again gathered behind closed doors Friday morning to debate whether they should change their internal party rules to require a speaker nominee to, in a closed conference meeting, garner the 217 votes needed to win on the floor before holding a vote in full view of the American people.

They once again decided to keep party rules as they are, requiring a simple majority of the conference to vote for a nominee for speaker.

They broke for lunch and then huddled again Friday afternoon to hear from Jordan, who lost to Scalise in conference earlier this week, and Scott.

Until Republicans elect a speaker, the House will remain at a standstill with five weeks until a mid-November funding deadline and as war rages in Israel and Ukraine.

Jordan's background

Jordan, 59, was a member of the Ohio House of Representatives from 1995 to 2000 before moving to the state's Senate from 2001 to 2006. He was sworn in as a member of Congress in 2007.

He is chair of the Judiciary Committee and is one of the party's leading critics of the Biden administration and Democrats in general. But he would need to step aside as chairman if elected speaker.

Scott, 53, was a member of the Georgia House of Representatives from 1997 to 2010 before being sworn in as a member of Congress in 2011.

Scott is a member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, House Armed Services Committee and House Committee on Agriculture.

With the Republican stalemate dragging on, several members of the party have begun discussing voting to give Speaker Pro Tempore Patrick McHenry of North Carolina the authority to bring up bills and resolutions on the floor.

The role of speaker pro tem, established after 9/11 to ensure continuity of government, has been broadly debated by experts and lawmakers since McCarthy was removed as speaker.

Some have argued that the speaker pro tem should have more authority than McHenry has been exercising, while a House procedure expert said during an interview Thursday the role was meant to be limited to a caretaker for the institution who facilitates the election of the next speaker.

Vote next week?

Rep. Kevin Hern of Oklahoma said Jordan still has several members to convince before taking the vote to the floor.

"When you can only lose four and you've got 55 saying no, that's big," Hern said. "(Jordan's) asked everybody to come forward over the next few days. And right now it looks like we're gonna be adjourned and vote on Tuesday."

Nebraska Rep. Don Bacon said "a bipartisan path is going to be the only way out."

McCarthy, when asked if he was concerned about the current attendance problem, said he was "worried about the small majority."

"You see how eight can partner with all the Democrats and cause all sorts of chaos," McCarthy said.

Florida's Anna Paulina Luna said Republicans shouldn't be going home for the weekend.

"We should not be leaving town. We have no speaker, we should not be out," she said.

When asked why the Republicans decided to return home for the weekend, Johnson said "There are lots of concerns about attendance. I think you just get a lot of funerals and weddings scheduled on Saturday. This is a human element."

Democrats blast Jordan, call for moderates to join them

Late Friday afternoon, just as Republicans were exiting their meeting, House Democratic leaders rallied against Jordan and urged Republicans to take a bipartisan path.

Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York, Katherine Clark of Massachusetts and Pete Aguilar of California tied Jordan to the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol and called him unfit for leadership.

"The House Republican civil war continues to rage on, mirroring the Congress in chaos, dysfunction and extremism," Jeffries said. "House Republicans have chosen to triple down."

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"House Republicans have selected as their nominee to be speaker of the people's House the chairman of the chaos caucus, a defender in a dangerous way of dysfunction and extremist extraordinaire."

Jordan, a close ally of former President Donald Trump who voted against certifying the 2020 presidential election results, represents a dangerous element of the Republican Party, Clark said.

House Republicans who voted for Jordan for speaker were "siding with an insurrectionist against our democracy," she said.

The Democratic leaders didn't explicitly call for Republicans to support their candidate for speaker, Jeffries, but said moderate Republicans should work with them on the issues facing the chamber.

"Traditional Republicans can break away from the extremism, partner with Democrats on an enlightened, bipartisan path forward so we can end the recklessness and get back to work doing the business of the American people," Jeffries said, a theme he's voiced repeatedly all week.

Jacob Fischler contributed to this report.

Ashley Murray covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include domestic policy and appropriations.

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.

Samantha Dietel is a reporter intern in Washington, D.C. She is pursuing a degree in journalism at the University of Missouri-Columbia. She has previously covered the Missouri legislature in Jefferson City as a reporter for the Columbia Missourian.

Law enforcement issues unresolved following Oglala Lakota lawsuit

Judge orders tribe and federal government to negotiate a settlement of lawsuit within weeks

BY: AMELIA SCHAFFER - OCTOBER 13, 2023 11:23 AM

A 155-year-old treaty is central to defining what law enforcement services the United States is obligated to provide to the Oglala Sioux Tribe. But questions still remain about what that entails and what it means for the rest of Indian Country.

The "Bad Men Clause" within the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty with the Ojibwe (Lakota, Dakota and Nakota) states the United States is responsible for the protection of tribal citizens. This clause is now central to the 2022 lawsuit launched by the Oglala Sioux Tribe.

In July 2022, the tribe launched a lawsuit against the United States arguing that the United States has failed to uphold its treaty obligation of protecting the signatories of the 1868 treaty from "bad men." The police department only has 30 employees and has struggled to keep up with an influx in emergency calls.

Currently, both parties, the Oglala Sioux Tribe and the United States, are in discussion and looking to negotiate a settlement per the judge's order in the coming weeks.

"I'm not optimistic," said Ben Fenner, a litigator from Peebles Kidder representing the Oglala Sioux Tribe. "Essentially the government has told us that the litigation is to determine the duty owed. Thus far, there's been no movement and I'm not optimistic that there's going to be any movement. My concern is that this will drag out for years and years, and in the meantime, the community will continue to suffer."

According to the initial complaint filed in July 2022, of the thousands of 911 calls filed on Pine Ridge in the past year, 794 were calls for assault, 1,463 were domestic violence calls, 522 were gun-related calls, 541 were drug/narcotic calls and 541 were of reported missing persons.

Only between six and eight of the 30 Oglala Sioux Tribe's officers are working at one time and responsible for servicing an area the size of Connecticut. The tribe's law enforcement is administered under contract with the BIA's Division of Law Enforcement Services. This means that Law Enforcement is entirely controlled by the tribe, using federal funds.

"If you've got a domestic violence call and an active shooter call that's 150 miles away, the officers have to make a decision right there on the spot, 'Which life do I save?'" Fenner said.

Xavier Barraza, Pomo Nation citizen and senior associate attorney for Peebles Kidder, said the standard number of officers per 1,000 individuals is 2.4 officers, and the Oglala Sioux Tribe is at 0.6 officers per

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1,000 people.

"We're not saying you need to give us more money, we're saying you need to meet your standard," he said. "At the end of the day that may mean money being appointed by Congress, but that's not what we're arguing."

The Pine Ridge Reservation has a population of about 20,000 people spread over 3.1 million acres. The tribe's total enrollment is about 46,855, and many tribal members commute from border towns to the reservation to work.

The immense land base means law enforcement, which is centered in the village of Pine Ridge, can often take up to an hour to respond to a phone call. Often officers have to prioritize which calls they'll respond to, meaning many calls go without a response.

Right now, the Oglala Sioux Tribe's lawsuit against the government stands at a crossroads. The issue isn't whether or not the government has a duty to uphold treaty obligations, it's how they have to uphold those obligations.

The tribe is requesting enough funding for 120 officers, which they said would be able to adequately police the reservation, and a re-evaluation of the budget set in 1999, which has not been adjusted since.

In 1999 when the BIA changed its funding mechanism for law enforcement, the amount of money calculated for the Oglala Sioux Tribe's needs was based on additional support from non-BIA grants for law enforcement, allowing the tribe to use the Tribal Priority Allocation system for other programs. In 2006, the tribe stopped receiving that grant. The allocated amount set in 1999, however, was not adjusted for the change, inflation or rising population.

"Even if they can afford to hire a new officer, the attrition rate is a big problem. They don't have the funds, they're in constant damage control mode to keep the force at what it is, which is maxing out their funding," Fenner said.

Prior to losing the Tribal Priority Allocation grant, the tribe's law enforcement boasted a roster of 120 officers with a reservation population of only 15,521. After losing the grant, the tribe lost roughly half of its police officers; that number has continued to dwindle.

Earlier this year, former Oglala Sioux Tribe Police Chief Algin Young testified his 33 patrol officers could not respond to all 911 calls and work an average of 80 hours of overtime a week.

Representatives from the Department of the Interior declined to comment.

Problems not exclusive to Pine Ridge

Pine Ridge isn't the only Indigenous community struggling with insufficient law enforcement. Several Indigenous communities have begun to sue the government over a lack of law enforcement funding and personnel.

In 2022, two Montana communities, the Northern Cheyenne Tribe and the Fort Belknap Indian Community, sued the United States. The Northern Cheyenne sued over a general lack of officers, drug investigators, missing persons investigators and jail space despite rising crime rates. The Fort Belknap Indian Community sued the United States after their request for a \$3.8 million increase in law enforcement funding was rejected.

Both communities, like Pine Ridge, struggle with high rates of Missing and Murdered Indigenous People and drug trafficking.

There are different routes available to tribes. The Oglala Sioux Tribe could elect to move back to being a BIA law enforcement-operated tribe, rather than staffing their own law enforcement using BIA resources. This move doesn't guarantee protection.

The Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, whose law enforcement is BIA-controlled, has been struggling for years with police staffing, a lack of a tribal jail and general crime on the reservation.

The tribe launched its independent citizen patrol initiative in July 2023 after the murder of tribal citizen Garrett Hawk. The tribal night patrol, however, does not have the authority to make arrests and must partially rely on the BIA.

Crow Creek Chairman Peter Lengkeek said a majority of drugs on his reservation are being trafficked

by non-Natives.

Fenner spoke to a similar issue on the Pine Ridge Reservation, where non-Native drug traffickers enter the reservation and recruit vulnerable youth to work for them.

Even "Public Law 280" tribes, which are patrolled by non-Native law enforcement from nearby communities or counties, struggle with a lack of law enforcement resources.

In Montana, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes elected to be a Public Law 280 tribe in the 1960s, moving jurisdiction over the Flathead Reservation to Lake County officers while the tribal authority would continue to handle misdemeanors.

This past legislative session, representatives from Lake County moved to pass a bill making the state pay the county more money as they patrol the reservation and the county. The bill passed but was later vetoed by the governor. The county has since filed a lawsuit to attempt to gain more money and resources for patrolling the reservation and threatened to cease providing law enforcement if it's not reimbursed for the average \$4 million per year spent patrolling the Flathead Reservation.

South Dakota is not a Public Law 280 state, but in September 2022 the Oglala Sioux Tribe entered into an agreement with the Pennington County Sheriff's Office to allow for mutual aid between the two parties.

"Every day that goes by the tribe, the community is suffering," Fenner said. "The decision was handed down in May and here we are going into the winter, and there hasn't been any real movement on the substantive order of the court, which is to re-evaluate the base contract."

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

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

Biden administration to send \$7 billion for clean hydrogen hubs in 16 states

Heartland Hydrogen Hub will include assets in South Dakota

BY: JACOB FISCHLER - OCTOBER 13, 2023 6:00 AM

The Biden administration is directing \$7 billion from the bipartisan infrastructure law to build seven regional hydrogen power hubs in 16 states, the White House announced Friday.

The projects, each of which is a cluster of assets that produce and process hydrogen fuel as an alternative to fossil fuels, will benefit the climate, the economy and U.S. energy security, administration officials told reporters Thursday. Officials previewed the announcement on the condition they not be named.

"Advancing clean hydrogen is essential to achieving the President's vision of a strong clean energy economy that strengthens energy security, bolsters domestic manufacturing, creates healthier communities, and delivers new jobs and economic opportunities across the nation," a news release from the White House said.

Congress approved the funding as part of the \$1.2 trillion infrastructure law early in President Joe Biden's term in 2021.

The projects will have assets in Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, New Jersey, Minnesota, South Dakota, Indiana, Michigan, Oregon, Washington, Montana, California, Delaware, Texas, North Dakota and Illinois. A hub based in Houston could "perhaps" involve Louisiana, an administration official said.

Hydrogen fuel is an important part of the administration's goal to reach net zero emissions by 2050, the White House said.

Clean hydrogen is especially important for the most difficult sectors to decarbonize, including heavy-duty transportation and chemical, steel, and cement manufacturing, according to the release.

The hubs are expected to reduce carbon emissions by 25 million metric tons each year, the equivalent of 5.5 million gas-powered cars, the White House said. The projects will contribute about one-third of the administration's clean hydrogen goal.

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The administration projects the seven hubs will create tens of thousands of jobs and would prompt more than \$40 billion in private investment, an administration official said Thursday.

Biden and Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm are scheduled to make an appearance in Philadelphia on Friday to announce a hub based there.

Hydrogen hub projects

Appalachian Regional Clean Hydrogen Hub in Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia, which will power the region's manufacturing sector, according to an administration official. The project can take advantage of bountiful natural gas in the area, while permanently and safely storing the resulting carbon emissions, the release said.

Alliance for Renewable Clean Hydrogen Energy Systems in California, which at \$1.2 billion will be the largest single hub in terms of total money.

HyVelocity Hydrogen Hub based in Houston, "perhaps" expanding into Louisiana, which will be the largest in terms of the amount of "green hydrogen," the cleanest form of hydrogen fuel, produced.

Heartland Hydrogen Hub based in Minnesota with "significant" assets in North Dakota and South Dakota. That hub will use wind resources in those states, according to an official, and help decarbonize the area's agriculture sector, according to the release.

Mid-Atlantic Clean Hydrogen Hub in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware. This hub will use repurposed oil infrastructure, the release said.

Midwest Alliance for Clean Hydrogen in Illinois, Indiana and Southwest Michigan. The hub will produce hydrogen with nuclear power in the area. Two other sites will use nuclear power, though the Midwest site is planned to be the largest user of nuclear power, the official said. The hub will enable decarbonization of steel and glass production, power generation, refining, heavy-duty transportation, and sustainable aviation fuel, according to the release.

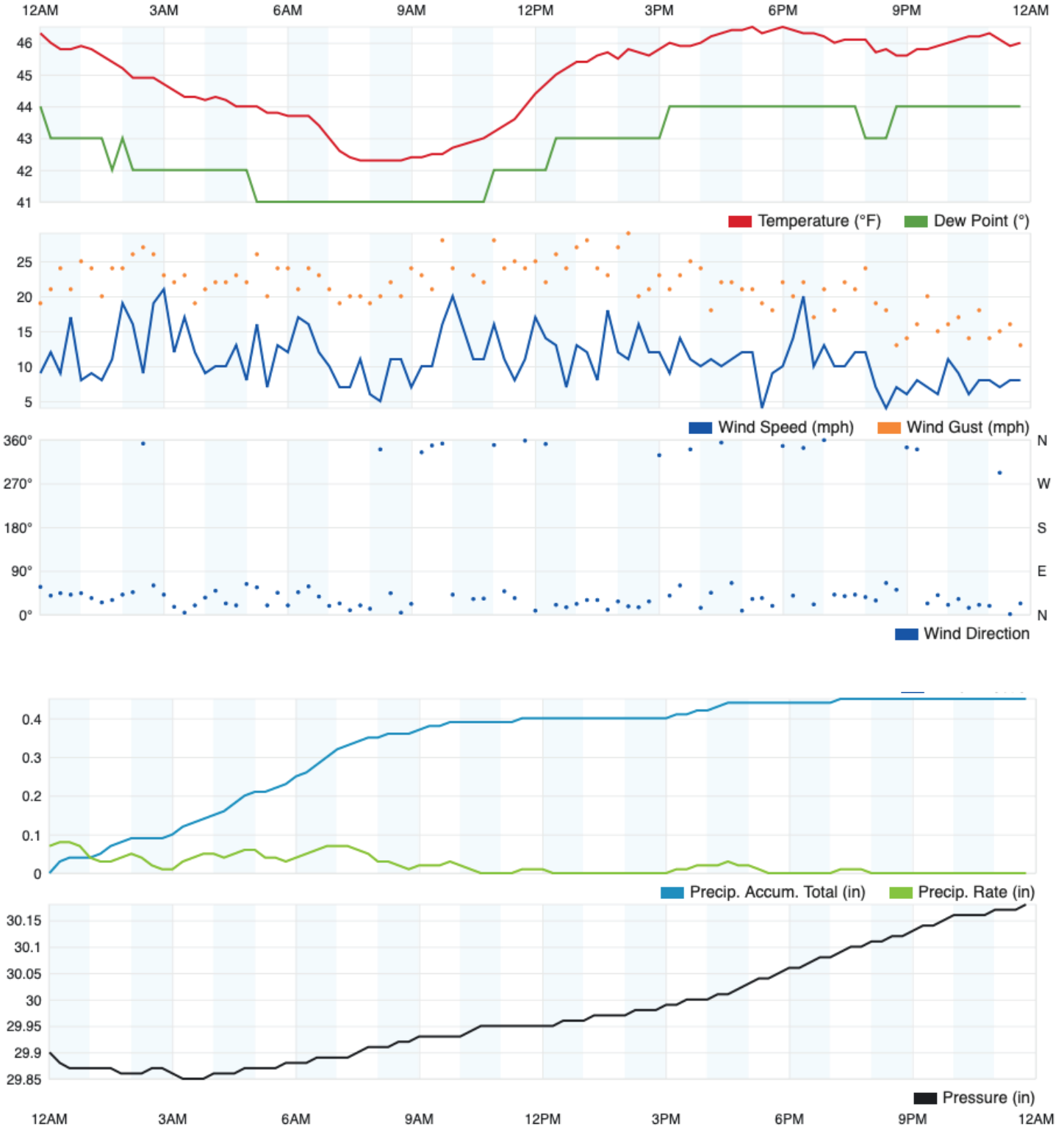
Pacific NW Hydrogen Hub encompasses eastern Washington, northeast Oregon and parts of Montana. This hub will produce hydrogen exclusively from renewable energy sources, according to the news release.

Jacob covers federal policy as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Based in Oregon, he focuses on Western issues. His coverage areas include climate, energy development, public lands and infrastructure.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Sat Oct 14	Sun Oct 15	Mon Oct 16	Tue Oct 17	Wed Oct 18	Thu Oct 19	Fri Oct 20
51°F 36°F	53°F 31°F	57°F 38°F	65°F 45°F	60°F 43°F	57°F 36°F	62°F 42°F
N 11 MPH	N 7 MPH	N 6 MPH	S 15 MPH	W 15 MPH	NNW 17 MPH	SW 12 MPH
				30%	20%	



Cool & Cloudy

October 14, 2023
2:40 AM



Today

> Very Light Showers. Highs 48-53°



Tonight

> Cloudy. Lows 39-34°



Sunday

> Partly-Mostly Cloudy. Highs 49-56°



Sunday Night

> Mostly Clear. Lows 34-31°



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Cant rule out some light shower activity today however this will only add a few hundreds of additional moisture if that. Unfortunately, not good viewing for todays partial Annular Eclipse. More info at <https://eclipse.aas.org/eclipse-america-2023>

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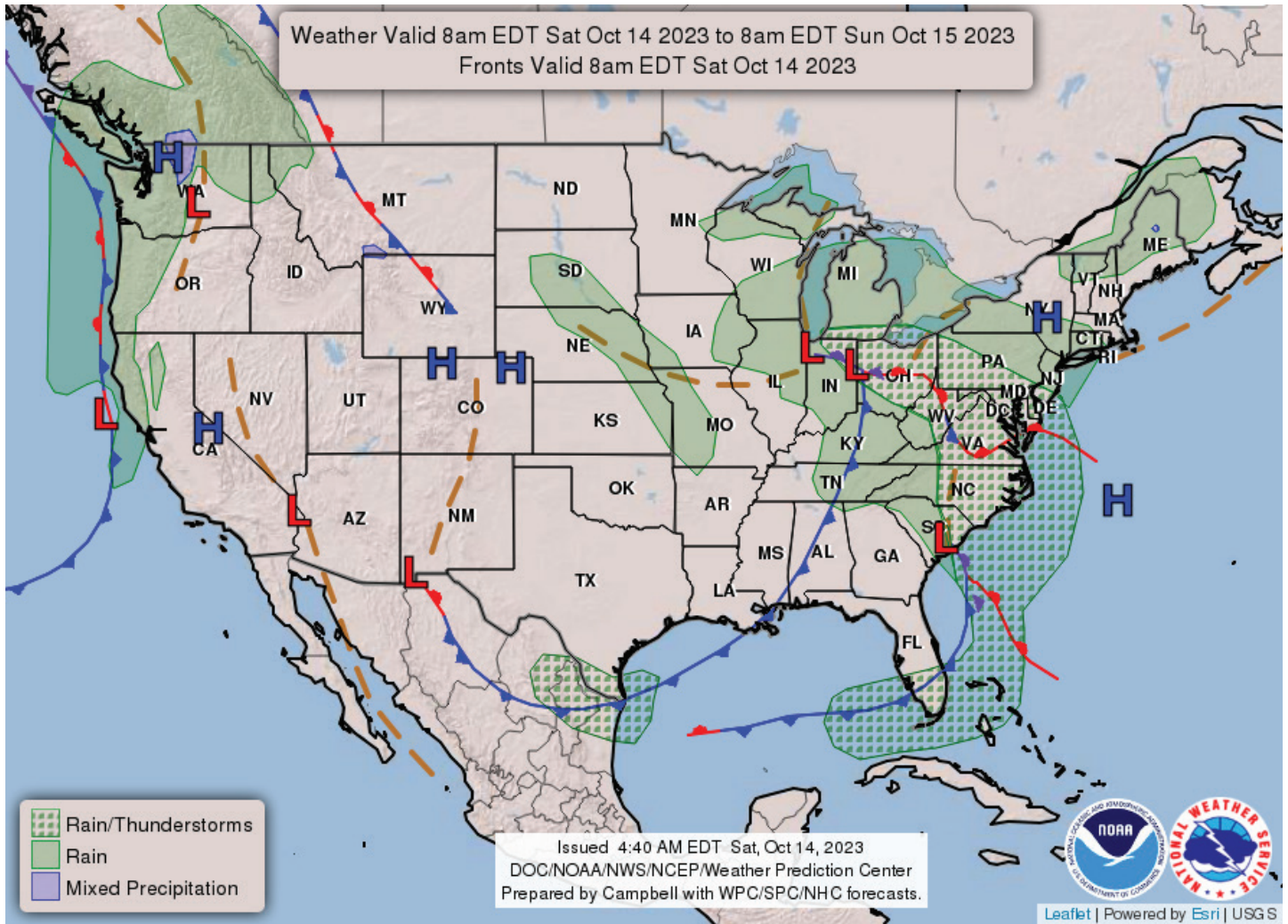
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 47 °F at 5:05 PM
Low Temp: 42 °F at 8:03 AM
Wind: 31 mph at 11:34 AM
Precip: : 0.45

Day length: 11 hours, 05 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 87 in 1962
Record Low: 10 in 1937
Average High: 61
Average Low: 34
Average Precip in Oct.: 1.05
Precip to date in Oct.: 0.80
Average Precip to date: 19.38
Precip Year to Date: 22.57
Sunset Tonight: 6:50:53 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:47:12 AM



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Today in Weather History

October 14, 1969: Cold air during the overnight produced lows from six degrees in Custer, Gillette, and Devils Tower to fifteen degrees in Dupree, Hot Springs, and the Rapid City Airport.

1909: An F3 tornado struck Pittsburg Landing and Stantonville, TN killing 23 people and injuring 80 others.

1941: America's first television weather forecast was broadcast on New York's WNBT (later WNBC). There weren't many televisions at that time, so viewers were limited to perhaps a few hundred people. The weathercast consisted of a sponsor's message followed by a text screen containing the next day's forecast.

1957 - Floodwaters roared through a migrant labor camp near the town of Picacho AZ flooding fifty cabins and a dozen nearby homes. 250 migrant workers lost their shelters. The month was one of the wettest Octobers in Arizona weather history. (The Weather Channel)

1965 - Heavy rains hit the coastal areas of southeastern Florida. In a 24 hour period rains of twenty inches were reported from Deerfield Beach to Fort Lauderdale, with 25.28 inches on the Fort Lauderdale Bahia-Mar Yacht Basin. Flooding that resulted caused considerable damage to roads and streets. The rains inundated numerous newly planted vegetable fields, and some residences. Ten miles away just 4.51 inches of rain was reported. (14th- 15th) (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1981 - Four days of heavy rain across northern Texas and southern Oklahoma came to an end. The heaviest rains fell in a band from southwest of Abilene TX to McAlester OK, with up to 26 inches reported north of Gainesville, in north central Texas. The heavy rains were the result of decaying Hurricane Norma, which also spawned thirteen tornadoes across the region. Seven deaths were attributed to the flooding. (Storm Data)

1984 - Dense fog contributed to a 118 vehicle accident on I-94, just south of Milwaukee WI. It was the seventh day of an eight day stretch of dense fog. At the time of the accident the visibility was reportedly close to zero. (Storm Data)

1987 - Sixteen cities, mostly in the Appalachian Region, reported record low temperatures for the date. Record lows included 43 degrees at Lake Charles LA, 35 degrees at Augusta GA, and 27 degrees at Asheville NC. Gale force winds buffeted the Carolina coast. Light snow fell across parts of Wyoming, Colorado, and western South Dakota. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Forty cities in the eastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date. Elkins WV was the cold spot in the nation with a record low of 18 degrees above zero. Thunderstorms in Arizona drenched Phoenix with nine inches of rain in nine hours, the fifth highest total for any given day in ninety-two years of records. Carefree AZ was soaked with two inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather over Michigan during the morning, and over New York State and Connecticut during the afternoon and evening hours. Thunderstorms spawned two tornadoes, and there were ninety reports of large hail or damaging winds, including seventy reports of damaging winds in New York State. A tornado at McDonough NY killed one person and injured three other people. Strong thunderstorm winds gusted to 105 mph at Somerset. Temperatures warmed into the 80s and lower 90s over much of the nation east of the Rockies, with eleven cities reporting record high temperatures for the date. Afternoon highs of 81 degrees at Beckley WV and Bluefield WV equalled October records. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

SEEING THE LIGHT

An astronomy professor asked his class, "When can you see the farthest - at night or in the daytime?" Unanimously, the class answered, "In the daytime."

"Wrong," corrected the teacher. "In the day time, you see the sun. But at night you can see the stars, and the stars are millions of times farther away than the sun."

What do you do when you are trapped in unpleasant situations? Withdraw? Think impossible thoughts? Blame someone else for where you are? Have a pity-party? Get angry and resentful? We all have developed ways to deal with uncomfortable, seemingly unchangeable situations. It's something that most of us do to escape unbearable surroundings. Why not try to escape reality for a moment. Are there other options for bad times and horrible places?

When King Uzziah died, Isaiah "saw the Lord sitting on a lofty throne." What he saw was his commission to be God's messenger to His people. For some that might have been a dream come true. Others may have seen it as a responsibility more than they could handle. Being God's messenger has always had its difficult moments - even for the most qualified.

But Isaiah's mission and his situation looked difficult from the beginning. He had to tell people who believed they were blessed by God that they were going to be destroyed by God because they were disobedient to God. His response? "I'll go. Send me! I'll do whatever You ask!"

Now, more than ever, we need Isaiah's view of God. He has called us to serve Him wherever He has placed us. We are where we are because He has a mission for us. We dare not fail Him!

Prayer: Grant us, Lord, a vision of Your greatness that matches Isaiah's and empower us to serve You at all costs. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Then I heard the Lord asking, "Whom should I send as a messenger to this people? Who will go for us?" I said, "Here I am. Send me." Isaiah 6



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:
10.13.23

6 18 44 46 68 18

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$69,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[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 12 Hrs 54 Mins 11
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.13.23

8 14 19 21 30 13

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT 13 Hrs 9 Mins 11
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 10.11.23

2 7 8 16 28

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$22,000

NEXT 13 Hrs 9 Mins 12
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 10.11.23

3 40 51 59 66 2

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 13 Hrs 38 Mins 12
DRAW: 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 13 Hrs 38 Mins 12
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the Associated Press

Friday's Scores The Associated Press **PREP FOOTBALL**

Aberdeen Roncalli 7, Clark/Willow Lake 2
Alcester-Hudson 52, Irene-Wakonda 0
Avon 22, Wolsey-Wessington 14
Bon Homme 18, Gregory 0
Brandon Valley 34, Sioux Falls Jefferson 6
Burke 18, Gayville-Volin High School 8
Canton 55, Custer 23
Castlewood 38, Estelline/Hendricks 8
Centerville 34, Garretson 14
Chamberlain 33, Milbank 13
Colman-Egan 42, Arlington 0
Corsica/Stickney 14, Sully Buttes 0
Dakota Valley 36, Beresford 0
Dell Rapids 42, St. Thomas More 15
Dell Rapids St. Mary 20, Deubrook 18
Deuel 50, Redfield 0
Elk Point-Jefferson 35, Bridgewater-Emery/Ethan 6
Elkton-Lake Benton 12, DeSmet 2
Faulkton 14, Leola-Frederick High School 6
Freeman Academy/Marion 54, Florence/Henry 0
Great Plains Lutheran 28, Hitchcock-Tulare 20
Groton Area 20, Mobridge-Pollock 8
Hanson 52, Colome 0
Harrisburg 61, Brookings 0
Herreid/Selby Area 46, Britton-Hecla 14
Hot Springs 56, Hill City 6
Howard 46, Chester 13
Huron 19, Mitchell 14
Kadoka Area 46, New Underwood 0
Kimball/White Lake 50, Bennett County 6
Lead-Deadwood 51, Lakota Tech 6
Lyman 22, Lemmon/McIntosh 16
Madison 14, Vermillion 2
Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 44, Iroquois/ Lake Preston Co-op 12
Parker 13, McCook Central/Montrose 0
Philip 54, White River 0
Pierre T F Riggs High School 26, Tea Area 18
Platte-Geddes 28, Canistota 14
Potter County 50, Sunshine Bible Academy 23
Rapid City Christian 7, Woonsocket/Wessington Springs/Sanborn Central 0
Sioux Falls Christian 42, Belle Fourche 6
Sioux Falls Lincoln 56, Sioux Falls Washington 7
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 42, Rapid City Central 7

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Sioux Falls Roosevelt 35, Rapid City Stevens 21
Sioux Valley 47, Flandreau 7
Sisseton 14, Baltic 6
Stanley County 38, Faith 8
Sturgis Brown 45, Douglas 21
Tiospa Zina Tribal 60, Flandreau Indian 0
Tri-Valley 38, Wagner 6
Tripp-Delmont/Armour/Andes Central/Dakota Christian 44, Miller/Highmore-Harrold 14
Warner 51, Northwestern 0
Watertown 42, Spearfish 7
West Central 36, Lennox 6
Winner 50, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 0
Yankton 31, Aberdeen Central 21

PREP VOLLEYBALL

Brandon Valley def. Rapid City Central, 25-20, 25-9, 25-8
Lakeville South, Minn. def. Sioux Falls Roosevelt, 25-18, 25-16
Marshall, Minn. def. Sioux Falls Roosevelt, 25-18, 25-16
Sioux Falls Lutheran def. Waverly-South Shore, 25-16, 25-9, 25-12
Sioux Falls O'Gorman def. Rapid City Central, 25-17, 25-14, 25-14

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

Blinken calls for protection of civilians as Israel prepares for expected assault on Gaza

By MATTHEW LEE and LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken called Saturday for protecting civilians in the Gaza Strip and Israel as the Israeli military ordered half of the Palestinian territory's population to evacuate in advance of an expected ground assault.

Blinken met with Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan as America's top diplomat held a third day of talks across the Mideast aimed at preventing the Israel-Hamas war from expanding into a regional conflict and worsening the humanitarian crisis.

Both officials stressed the importance of minimizing the harm to civilians as Israel prepared for an anticipated incursion against Hamas a week after the militant group's unprecedented attack against Israel.

"As Israel pursues its legitimate right, to defending its people and to trying to ensure that this never happens again, it is vitally important that all of us look out for civilians, and we're working together to do exactly that," Blinken said before heading to the United Arab Emirates for further discussions.

"None of us want to see suffering by civilians on any side, whether it's in Israel, whether it's in Gaza, whether it's anywhere else," Blinken said.

The Saudi minister said the kingdom was committed to the protection of civilians.

"It's a disturbing situation," he said. "It's a very difficult situation. And, as you know, the primary sufferer of this situation are civilians, and civilian populations on both sides are being affected and it's important, I think, that we all condemn the targeting of civilians in any form at any time by anyone."

A U.S. official said Saturday that Washington did not ask Israel to slow or hold off on the evacuation plan. The official said the discussions with Israeli leaders did stress the importance of taking into account the safety of civilians as Israel's military moved to enforce the evacuation demand.

The official, who was not authorized to publicly discuss the private discussions and spoke on condition of anonymity, said the Israeli leaders acknowledged the guidance and took it under advisement.

In a sign of some small potential progress, a senior U.S. official traveling with Blinken said an agreement

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in principle had been worked out between Egypt, Israel and Qatar to allow Palestinian Americans and other dual citizens in Gaza to cross the border into Egypt during a five-hour window on Saturday. There are an estimated 500 Americans living in Gaza, but that number is imprecise, officials have said.

But Egyptian officials said the Rafah crossing remained closed due to a dispute over aid for Gaza and that U.S. citizens in the territory were not yet permitted to leave. The state-owned Al-Qahera TV station, which has close ties with Egyptian security agencies and cited unnamed security officials, reported that authorities in Cairo have conditioned the crossing of American citizens on the delivery of aid to Gaza.

Also, it was not immediately clear whether Hamas would allow convoys of foreigners to reach the crossing unimpeded.

The U.S. State Department on Saturday authorized the departure of nonemergency U.S. government personnel and their family members from the American Embassy in Jerusalem and an office in Tel Aviv.

Faisal said it was imperative for the violence between Israel and Hamas to end.

"We need to work together to find a way out of this cycle of violence," he said. "Without a concerted effort to end this constant return to violence, it will always be the civilians that suffer first, it will always be civilians on both sides that end up paying the price."

Saudi Arabia called an urgent meeting of foreign ministers from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, a 57-member bloc of Muslim countries. The group said in a statement that the session, set for Wednesday in Jeddah, will "address the escalating military situation in Gaza and its environs as well as the deteriorating conditions that endanger the lives of civilians and the overall security and stability of the region."

After his meeting in Abu Dhabi, Blinken plans to return to Saudi Arabia and then to travel on Sunday to Egypt. He has already visited Israel, Jordan, Qatar and Bahrain on his mission to show U.S. support for Israel as it prepares for the expected incursion into Gaza, but has also affirmed the importance of maintaining humanitarian aid in Gaza and preventing civilian casualties, in part by creating safe zones inside Gaza.

Baldor reported from aboard a U.S. military aircraft.

An Australian referendum to create an Indigenous advocacy committee to Parliament has failed

By ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — Australians resoundingly rejected on Saturday a referendum proposal to create an advocacy committee to offer advice to Parliament on policies that affect Indigenous people — the nation's most disadvantaged ethnic minority.

The government proposed the first constitutional change since 1977 as a step forward in Indigenous rights. But the vote divided Indigenous leaders as well as the wider community.

More than 59% of voters opposed the so-called Voice to Parliament with almost half the votes counted by Saturday. The loss is unofficial but is not contested.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese blamed his political opponents' campaigning against the measure for the failure. No referendum has ever succeeded without support of the major parties.

Albanese promised on the day he was elected last year to hold the referendum and accepted responsibility for his government's decision to proceed despite evidence it was doomed.

"I had a duty, as a conviction politician, to put that to the Australian people," Albanese told reporters.

Bipartisan support is widely regarded as essential for an Australian referendum's success. Only eight of 45 referendums have succeeded in the constitution's 122-year history.

Voice advocate Tanya Hosch, who spent a decade on developing the model, said she was devastated by the result.

"There's going to be a lot of pain and hurt and dismay and we're going to need to take a moment to absorb that message and what it says," Hosch said.

Voice advocates had hoped that listening to Indigenous views would lead to more effective delivery of government services and better outcomes for Indigenous lives.

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Opponents said the Voice would divide Australians along racial lines without reducing Indigenous disadvantages. They also said it could be a first step toward Indigenous claims for repatriation and compensation.

Accounting for only 3.8% of the population, Indigenous Australians die on average eight years younger than the wider population, have a suicide rate twice that of the national average and suffer from diseases in the remote Outback that have been eradicated from other wealthy countries.

Opposition leader Peter Dutton accused Albanese of needlessly creating racial division over a doomed referendum.

"The prime minister was warned over the course of the last 16 or 17 months not to proceed with this divisive referendum and he owes the Australian public an apology for that," Dutton said.

'Ring of fire' solar eclipse will cut across the Americas, stretching from Oregon to Brazil

By CLAIRE RUSH and PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — A rare "ring of fire" eclipse of the sun cuts across the Americas on Saturday, stretching from Oregon to Brazil, and huge crowds were on the move before dawn in cities, rural areas and national parks to try to catch a glimpse of it.

For the small towns and cities along its narrow path, there was a mix of excitement, worries about the weather and concerns they'd be overwhelmed by visitors flocking to see the celestial event, also called an annular solar eclipse. Clouds and fog threatened to obscure the view of the eclipse in some western states, including California and Oregon.

Unlike a total solar eclipse, the moon doesn't completely cover the sun during a ring of fire eclipse. When the moon lines up between Earth and the sun, it leaves a bright, blazing border.

Saturday's path: Oregon, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico and Texas in the U.S., with a sliver of California, Arizona and Colorado. Next: Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, Belize, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia and Brazil. Much of the rest of the Western Hemisphere gets a partial eclipse.

The celestial event brought eclipse watchers from around the U.S. to remote corners of the country to try to get the best view possible. At Bryce Canyon national park in southern Utah tiny lights could be seen along a well known trail that snakes through a valley of red rock hoodoos as eclipse enthusiasts hit the trail before sunrise to stake out their preferred spot.

"I just think it's one of those things that unites us all," said John Edwards, a cancer drug developer who traveled alone across the country to try to watch the eclipse from Bryce Canyon. "I just think it's seeing these unique experiences that come rarely is what got me here. This is about as rare as it gets."

Viewing all depends on clear skies — part of the U.S. path could see clouds. NASA and other groups planned to livestream it.

With a chance of rain in its forecast, the small town of Reedsport near Oregon's Pacific Coast moved its eclipse festival inside so that a bounce house and games wouldn't get soaked in the mud.

"But we're still hoping that we might get a glimpse of it," said city official Rosa Solano.

Weather was less of a concern in tiny Baker, Nevada, where the population hovers around 100. Inn and general store owner Liz Woolsey made T-shirts and planned a slate of activities including a drum circle and a dance party. Her seven rooms have been booked for over a year.

"For a little place, we're putting on a good show," said Woolsey, who became an eclipse enthusiast after seeing the 2017 total solar eclipse that swept the U.S. from coast to coast.

Viewers on the East Coast were prepared to see less of the event — close to a quarter eclipse around midday in some areas, such as New York City — but were nonetheless geared up to watch the skies. In Maine, viewers expected to see only about 12% of the sun covered, but the Clark Telescope on the grounds of the Versant Power Astronomy Center at the University of Maine was open to the public.

The planetarium was selling safety glasses for \$2 Saturday to encourage safe viewing, said Shawn Laatsch, director of the Versant Power Astronomy and the Maynard Jordan Planetarium.

"As the Moon passes between the Earth and the sun, it casts its shadow on our planet," said Laatsch.

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"In a very real sense, solar eclipses are 'made in the shade' of the moon."

Tens of thousands could get a double treat in Albuquerque, New Mexico. For the city's annual air balloon fiesta, which ends this weekend, hundreds of colorful hot air balloons lift off around dawn, hours before the eclipse briefly dims the skies.

Colombia's Tatacoa desert was playing host to astronomers helping a group of visually impaired people experience the eclipse through raised maps and temperature changes as the moon blots out the sun.

At the Cancun Planetarium, young visitors built box projectors to indirectly and safely view the ring of fire. The ancient Maya — who called eclipses "broken sun" — may have used dark volcanic glass to protect their eyes, said archeologist Arturo Montero of Tepeyac University in Mexico City.

Towns and national parks in the path braced for a huge throngs. Officials in Oregon's Klamath County urged residents to stock up on groceries and fill their gas tanks in case traffic backs up on its two-lane highways. Utah's Bryce Canyon expected Saturday to be the park's busiest day of the year, spokesperson Peter Densmore said. Brazil's Pedra da Boca state park, known for its rocky outcrops for climbing and rappelling was also expecting crowds.

The entire eclipse — from the moment the moon starts to obscure the sun until it's back to normal — is 2 1/2 to three hours at any given spot. The ring of fire portion lasts from three to five minutes, depending on location.

Next April, a total solar eclipse will crisscross the U.S. in the opposite direction. That one will begin in Mexico and go from Texas to New England before ending in eastern Canada.

The next ring of fire eclipse is in October next year at the southernmost tip of South America. Antarctica gets one in 2026. It will be 2039 before another ring of fire is visible in the U.S., and Alaska will be the only state in its direct path.

Whittle reported from Portland, Maine. AP reporters Susan Montoya Bryan in Albuquerque, New Mexico, Brady McCombs in Garfield County, Utah, Astrid Suarez in Bogota, Colombia, María Verza in Cancun, Mexico, and Mauricio Savarese in Sao Paulo, Brazil, contributed.

New Zealand elects conservative Christopher Luxon as premier after 6 years of liberal rule

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

AUCKLAND, New Zealand (AP) — Conservative former businessman Christopher Luxon will be New Zealand's next prime minister after winning a decisive election victory Saturday.

People voted for change after six years of a liberal government led for most of that time by Jacinda Ardern.

The exact makeup of Luxon's government is still to be determined as ballots continued to be counted.

Luxon arrived to rapturous applause at an event in Auckland. He was joined on stage by his wife, Amanda, and their children, William and Olivia. He said he was humbled by the victory and couldn't wait to get stuck in to his new job. He thanked people from across the country.

"You have reached for hope and you have voted for change," he said.

Supporters chanted his campaign slogan which promised to get the country "back on track."

Outgoing Prime Minister Chris Hipkins, who spent just nine months in the top job after taking over from Ardern in January, told supporters late Saturday he had called Luxon to concede.

Hipkins said it wasn't the result he wanted.

"But I want you to be proud of what we achieved over the last six years," he told supporters at an event in Wellington.

Ardern unexpectedly stepped down as prime minister in January, saying she no longer had "enough in the tank" to do the job justice. She won the last election in a landslide, but her popularity waned as people got tired of COVID-19 restrictions and inflation threatened the economy.

Her departure left Hipkins, 45, to take over as leader. He had previously served as education minister

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and led the response to the coronavirus pandemic.

With most of the vote counted, Luxon's National Party had about 40% of the vote. Under New Zealand's proportional voting system, Luxon, 53, is expected to form an alliance with the libertarian ACT Party.

Meanwhile, the Labour Party that Hipkins leads was getting only a little over 25% of the vote — about half the proportion it got in the last election under Ardern.

And in a result that would be particularly stinging for Labour should it lose the seat, National was in a tight race for Ardern's old electorate seat, Mount Albert. The seat has long been a Labour stronghold and was also held by another former Labour prime minister, Helen Clark.

The National Party candidate for the seat, Melissa Lee, told The Associated Press she was feeling excited but also nervous about the final result in Mount Albert.

"It's been Labour since 1946. It has been the biggest, safest Labour seat forever," she said. "It would be fantastic if we won it."

Lee said that when she was door-knocking, people had told her they were tired of the current government and were concerned with the state of the economy and the spiraling cost of living.

David Farrar, a longtime conservative pollster, said there was still a good chance that Labour would end up holding the seat once all the votes were counted. However, he said, his initial impression of voting throughout the country was that it was turning out to be a "bloodbath" for the left.

Luxon has promised tax cuts for middle-income earners and a crackdown on crime. Hipkins had promised free dental care for people younger than 30 and the removal of sales taxes on fruit and vegetables.

Also at stake in the election is the government's relationship with Indigenous Māori. Luxon has promised to axe the Māori Health Authority, which he says creates two separate health systems. Hipkins says he's proud of such co-governance efforts and has accused Luxon of condoning racism.

Within days of taking the reins in January, Hipkins found himself dealing with a crisis after deadly floods and then a cyclone hit New Zealand. He quickly jettisoned some of Ardern's more contentious policies and promised a "back to basics" approach focused on tackling the spiraling cost of living.

Warm spring weather in the largest city, Auckland, seemed to encourage voters, with queues forming outside some polling places. Early voting before Election Day was lower than in recent elections.

During a six-week election campaign, both Hipkins and Luxon traveled the country and hammed it up for the cameras.

Earlier in the week, Luxon, who served as chief executive of both Unilever Canada and Air New Zealand, told an energized crowd in Wellington that he would crack down on gangs.

"I've gotta tell you, crime is out of control in this country," Luxon said. "And we are going to restore law and order, and we are going to restore personal responsibility."

Luxon also got cheers when he promised to fix the capital's gridlocked traffic with a new tunnel project.

Luxon is relatively new to politics but held his own against the more experienced Hipkins during televised debates, according to political observers. But Luxon also made some gaffes, such as when he was asked in a 1News debate how much he spent each week on food.

His answer of "about sixty bucks" (U.S. \$36) was ridiculed on social media as showing he was out of touch with the cost of living.

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A proposed gag order on Trump in his federal election case is putting the judge in a tricky position

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A proposed gag order aimed at reining in Donald Trump's incendiary rhetoric puts the judge overseeing his federal election interference case in a tricky position: She must balance the need to protect the integrity of the legal proceedings against the First Amendment rights of a presidential candidate to defend himself in public.

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U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan will hear arguments Monday in Washington over whether Trump has gone too far with remarks such as calling prosecutors a "team of thugs" and one possible witness "a gutless pig."

It is the biggest test yet for Chutkan, underscoring the unprecedented complexities of prosecuting the former Republican president as the judge vows not to let political considerations guide her decisions.

Ending the stream of Trump's harsh language would make the case easier to manage. But among the difficult questions Chutkan must navigate is how any gag order might be enforced and how one could be fashioned that does not risk provoking Trump's base and fueling his claims of political persecution as he campaigns to retake the White House in 2024.

"She has to think about the serious risk that it's not just his words that could trigger violence, but that she could play into the conspiracy theories that Trump's followers tend to believe in, and that her act of issuing a gag order might trigger a very disturbing response," said Catherine Ross said, a George Washington University law school professor.

"If we allow that to stop a judge from doing what is called for, that's a big problem for rule of law. But on the other hand, if I were the judge, I would certainly be thinking about it," she said.

Short of issuing an order, Chutkan has already suggested that inflammatory comments could force her to move up the trial, now scheduled to begin in March, to guard against tainting the jury pool. Judges can threaten gag order violators with fines or jail time, but jailing a presidential candidate could prompt serious political blowback and pose logistical hurdles.

Chutkan, who was nominated to the bench by President Barack Obama, isn't the first judge to confront the consequences of Trump's speech. The judge in his civil fraud trial in New York recently imposed a limited gag order prohibiting personal attacks against court personnel following a social media post that maligned the judge's principal clerk.

Special counsel Jack Smith's team envisions a broader order, seeking to bar Trump from making inflammatory and intimidating comments about lawyers, witnesses and others involved in the case that accuses the former president of illegally plotting to overturn his 2020 election loss to Democrat Joe Biden. Trump's lawyers call it a "desperate effort at censorship" that would prevent Trump from telling his side of the story while campaigning.

A complicating factor is that many of the potential witnesses in the case are themselves public figures. In the case of Trump's vice president, Mike Pence is also running against Trump for the GOP nomination. That could open the door for Trump's team to argue that he should be permitted to respond to public broadsides he sees on television or seek a competitive edge by denouncing a political rival for the White House.

Burt Neuborne, a longtime civil liberties lawyer who challenged gag orders on behalf of defendants and lawyers in other cases, questioned whether a formal order was necessary because witness intimidation is already a crime and the court can guard against a tainted jury by carefully questioning prospective jurors before trial. A gag order may also slow down the case because it's likely Trump either violates it and the judge will want to punish him or Trump will challenge the order in advance, he said.

"And so in some sense, you may be playing directly into his hands by essentially creating yet another mechanism for him to try to push this until after the 2024 election because my sense is that any gag order that she issues will eventually reach the Supreme Court," Neuborne said.

But Barbara McQuade, a former U.S. attorney in Michigan, said she believes the judge can issue a narrow enough order that withstands legal challenges and protects both the case and Trump's abilities to campaign.

"Especially in this case, where Donald Trump has made it apparent that he will say all kinds of outrageous and vitriolic things about the parties, about the judge, about witnesses unless she acts," said McQuade, a University of Michigan Law School professor. "So in some ways she has, I think, a responsibility to act here."

There is some limited precedent for restricting speech of political candidates who are criminal defendants.

In one case, a federal appeals court in 1987 lifted a gag order on U.S. Rep. Harold Ford Sr., a Tennessee Democrat charged in a fraud case. Ford, who was ultimately acquitted, claimed the case brought under

Republican President Ronald Reagan's administration was racially and politically motivated.

Ford's gag order prohibited him from even sharing his opinion of or discussing facts of the case. The court noted that Ford would soon be up for reelection and said the gag order would unfairly prevent him from responding to attacks from his political opponents and block his constituents from hearing the "views of their congressman on this issue of undoubted public importance."

Another appeals court in 2000 upheld a gag order challenged by then-Louisiana Insurance Commissioner Jim Brown in a fraud case, noting the order allowed assertions of innocence and other general statements about the case.

The court, however, also noted that the judge briefly lifted the gag order to avoid interfering with Brown's reelection campaign, saying that the "urgency of a campaign, which may well require that a candidate, for the benefit of the electorate as well as himself, have absolute freedom to discuss his qualifications, has passed."

Chutkan herself has experience with gag orders.

In 2018, she imposed an order restricting the comments of lawyers in the case of Maria Butina, a Russian gun activist who pleaded guilty to working in America as a secret agent for Moscow. The order followed prosecutors' admission that they had wrongly accused Butina of trading sex for access as well as public comments by her lawyer that Chutkan said had "crossed the line."

The next year, U.S. District Judge Amy Berman Jackson imposed a gag order on Trump ally Roger Stone in his obstruction and witness tampering case after he posted a photo of judge with what appeared to be crosshairs of a gun. Though she warned she could jail him if he violated the order, she instead barred him from using social media months later after he again publicly disparaged the case against him.

But that order was in direct response to a specific action, said Bruce Rogow, Stone's attorney in that case. He said he was dubious that Trump's attacks, "while in very poor taste," posed the kind of danger to merit a gag order.

"Trump's talk may be déclassé, but the First Amendment defends his right to present his distorted view of the world up to the point that he presents a true threat to people or the administration of justice. Not easy to measure," Rogow wrote in an email. "Like obscenity, one knows it when you see it."

Richer reported from Boston.

Hunter Biden investigations lead to ethical concerns about President Biden, an AP-NORC poll shows

By JOSH BOAK and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ethical concerns are casting a shadow over President Joe Biden as he seeks reelection amid investigations into his son Hunter and an impeachment inquiry, with a poll showing that 35% of U.S. adults believe the president himself has done something illegal.

An additional 33% say they think the Democratic president behaved unethically, but not illegally. And 30% say Joe Biden did nothing wrong, according to the poll. The results of the survey by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research reflect both a vast political divide and skepticism about the morality of government leaders.

House Republicans have launched an impeachment inquiry into Biden, seeking to tie the president to the foreign business dealings of his 53-year-old son. Hunter Biden is facing a separate criminal indictment by a special counsel after a plea deal in a tax and gun case fell apart.

Republicans have been investigating Hunter Biden for years, since his father was vice president. While questions have arisen about the ethics surrounding the Biden family's international business, no evidence has emerged so far to prove that Joe Biden, in his current or previous office, abused his role or accepted bribes.

The survey's findings point toward a U.S. political system riven with cynicism and suspicion. Having fractured along partisan lines, the public largely appears to judge Joe Biden as much based on his party

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affiliation as the known facts.

Roughly two-thirds of Republicans say they think Joe Biden is guilty of crimes pertaining to his son, but only 8% of Democrats and 38% of independents agree. About an additional third in each party say they think Joe Biden at least did something unethical. A solid majority of Democrats (58%) maintain that the president did nothing wrong.

Interviews with poll respondents tapped into a deeper sense of rot within the federal government. Several said the political class as a whole was beset by greed and corruption, causing politicians to selfishly neglect the country's needs. That perspective is at odds with Biden's message of optimism about a government that is spurring investments in infrastructure, new factories and renewable energy sources.

Asked if the president had profited off his son's work abroad, Idaho resident Hank Gardiner said the evidence presented so far proved Joe Biden had.

"Absolutely. I don't think you have to be intelligent to see that," said Gardiner, 42, a Pocatello contractor who formerly worked in law enforcement. Gardiner, who voted to reelect Republican Donald Trump as president in 2020, said he feels the country is headed in the wrong direction because "our government's totally corrupt."

Joe Biden has said only that he loves and supports his son, whose drug addiction has formed the basis of a gun charge against him. Hunter Biden was silent for years as Republican attacks swirled, but has now gone on the offensive. He is suing operatives who obtained and spread his personal data. That data has been used in the GOP probes, including embarrassing images that were shown in House committee hearings.

The president has said little in an effort to avoid any appearance that he is meddling in the Justice Department probe. But it hasn't been taken that way by some voters, who see the mere existence of the investigation as proof of their own beliefs that politicians are instinctively underhanded.

With their investigation, GOP lawmakers are seeking in part to distract from the increasing legal peril of GOP front-runner Trump, who is facing four criminal cases, including a federal indictment accusing him of working to overturn the results of the 2020 election in the run-up to the violent riot by his supporters at the U.S. Capitol. Trump continues to claim — wrongly — that the election was stolen, even in the face of the mounting charges against him.

Trump and his Republican supporters in Congress instead say that Joe Biden and his family are getting a sweetheart deal from prosecutors, while Trump has been hung out to dry by an overly aggressive justice system that does not want to see him as president again.

Some voters see Joe Biden acting as any parent would with his son, and the GOP-led investigation into his business dealings as excessive.

"We've spent too much time on this and wasted money," said David Parrott, 57, a retired construction worker from Tennessee who voted for Trump in 2020. "If a father can take care of his son, he's going to do it. He acted like a father should act."

But Parrott does not see Joe Biden as being more ethical than Trump; he sees corruption as being endemic to the government.

"Oh, man," he said. "I don't think either one of them is very ethical at all. This country is all about the money. That's all either one of them care about: the money."

Americans are slightly more likely to disapprove (39%) than approve (33%) of the House impeachment inquiry into Joe Biden. About one-quarter say that they neither approve nor disapprove. Two-thirds of Republicans (67%) approve of the inquiry, but just 28% of independents and 7% of Democrats agree.

Terry Kilgore, a 75-year-old lawyer in Westlake, Ohio, said that Biden has behaved ethically by deferring to the Justice Department. He sees Republican lawmakers as thirsty for power with their impeachment efforts. The lone safety valve might be the Democratic majority in the Senate to block a conviction, said Kilgore, who voted for Joe Biden in 2020.

Referring to GOP senators, Kilgore added that if they had their way, "if they controlled the Senate, what would they do? You know. They would impeach him. Just because they had the manpower to do it."

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An AP-NORC poll conducted in October 2019 — after the House opened the first of two impeachment inquiries into Trump — found that 47% of U.S. adults said they approved of the inquiry, while 38% disapproved. At the time, 38% of Americans said Trump acted illegally in his interactions with Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, and an additional 29% said he acted unethically. The former president was ultimately impeached by the House but acquitted by the Senate.

The same 2019 AP-NORC poll found that 69% of Americans said it was inappropriate for Hunter Biden to serve on the board of a Ukrainian energy company while Joe Biden was vice president.

In general, Democrats appear to enjoy a relative edge on ethics over Republicans, though many people don't see that as a strong suit for either party.

More U.S. adults say they trust the Democrats (28%) over the Republicans (19%) to handle corruption in government. Even more — about 4 in 10 — trust neither party while 14% trust both sides equally. Most Democrats (56%) have more faith in their party than Republicans to handle corruption, while 42% of Republicans trust their own party over Democrats. About 6 in 10 independents trust neither Republicans nor Democrats to address government corruption.

The impeachment inquiry seems to have had little impact on Biden's overall job approval.

About 4 in 10 approve of how Joe Biden is handling the presidency, while 61% disapprove. Those approval figures have stayed consistently low over the past two years as the country endured a dose of high inflation while the economy recovered from the pandemic. But many also express worries about the 80-year-old Biden's abilities given his age.

"I'm a little concerned about his competency given some of the speeches he's given," said Shae Rouzan, 34, an administrative assistant from Carson, California. "I don't think he's healthy enough or mentally competent enough to fully realize the duties of the presidential office."

Still, Rouzan, who voted for Joe Biden in 2020, said she would do so again in 2024 given the possible alternatives.

Biden earns relatively high marks on his handling of the coronavirus pandemic (52% approve, 47% disapprove).

But just 32% support Joe Biden's handling of the economy, with 67% disapproving. Only 31% back his management of the federal budget. And 41% support his handling of student debt, which involved Biden forgiving smaller sums than promised after the Supreme Court rejected his authority to write off \$400 billion in loans.

Despite the low marks, voters such as Oakley Graham said Joe Biden displayed his values by going to the picket lines of striking autoworkers in Michigan.

"He stands with workers," said Graham, 30, a homemaker from Greenwood, Missouri, who voted for Joe Biden in 2020. "Not standing with corporations shows that he does care about the American people and individual Americans' lives."

The poll of 1,163 adults was conducted Oct. 5-9, 2023, using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, designed to represent the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 3.9 percentage points.

Palestinians stream south in Gaza as Israel urges a mass evacuation and conducts brief raids

By WAFAA SHURAF and JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Palestinians scrambled to flee northern Gaza on Saturday after the Israeli military ordered nearly half the population to evacuate south and carried out limited ground forays ahead of an expected land offensive a week after Hamas' bloody, wide-ranging attack into Israel.

Israel renewed calls on social media and in leaflets dropped from the air for some 1 million Gaza residents to move south, while Hamas urged people to stay in their homes. The U.N. and aid groups have said such a rapid exodus would cause untold human suffering, with hospital patients and others unable to relocate.

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Families in cars, trucks and donkey carts packed with possessions crowded a main road heading away from Gaza City as Israeli airstrikes continued to hammer the 40-kilometer (25-mile) long territory, where supplies of food, fuel and drinking water were running low because of a complete Israeli siege.

Egyptian officials said the southern Rafah crossing would open later Saturday for the first time in days to allow foreigners out. Israel said Palestinians could travel within Gaza without being harmed along two main routes from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. local time.

The Israeli military said "hundreds of thousands" of Palestinians had already heeded the warning and headed south. But some live up to 20 kilometers (12 miles) away, and roads demolished by airstrikes and fuel shortage hindered their journeys.

Thousands of people crammed into a U.N.-run school-turned-shelter in Deir al-Balah, a farming town south of the evacuation zone. Many slept outside on the ground without mattresses, or in chairs pulled from classrooms.

"I came here with my children. We slept on the ground. We don't have a mattress, or clothes," Howeida al-Zaaneen, 63, who is from the northern town of Beit Hanoun, said. "I want to go back to my home, even if it is destroyed."

The military said its troops conducted temporary raids into Gaza to battle militants and hunted for traces of some 150 people — including men, women and children — who were abducted during Hamas' shocking Oct. 7 assault on southern Israel.

The Gaza Health Ministry said Saturday that over 2,200 people have been killed in the territory, including 724 children and 458 women. The Hamas assault killed more than 1,300 people on the Israeli side, most of them civilians, and roughly 1,500 Hamas militants were killed during the fighting, the Israeli government said.

Fearing a mass exodus of Palestinians, Egyptian authorities erected "temporary" blast walls on Egypt's side of the heavily-guarded Rafah crossing, which has been closed for days because of Israeli airstrikes, two Egyptian officials said on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief the media.

ISRAELI RAIDS INTO GAZA

Raids into Gaza on Friday were the first acknowledgment that Israeli troops had entered the territory since the military began its round-the-clock bombardment in retaliation for the Hamas massacre. Palestinian militants have fired more than 5,500 rockets into Israel since the fighting erupted, the Israeli military said.

The military said the ground troops left after conducting the raids.

Israel has called up some 360,000 reserves and massed troops and tanks along the border with Gaza, but no decision has been announced on whether to launch a ground offensive. An assault into densely populated Gaza would likely bring even higher casualties on both sides in brutal house-to-house fighting.

"We will destroy Hamas," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed Friday night.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan in Riyadh on Saturday, and both called for Israel to protect civilians in Gaza.

"As Israel pursues its legitimate right to defend its people and to trying to ensure that this never happens again, it is vitally important that all of us look out for for civilians, and we're working together to do exactly that," Blinken said.

Hamas said Israel's airstrikes killed 13 hostages, including foreigners. It did not provide their nationalities. The military denied the claim. Hamas and other Palestinian militants hope to trade the hostages for thousands of Palestinians held in Israeli prisons.

The Israeli public is overwhelmingly in favor of a military offensive, and TV news broadcasts focus heavily on the aftermath of the Hamas attack and make scarce mention of the unfolding crisis in Gaza.

In the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian Health Ministry says 53 Palestinians have been killed since the start of the war, including 16 on Friday. The U.N. says attacks by Israeli settlers have surged there since the Hamas assault.

A MASS EVACUATION

The Israeli military's evacuation call affects 1.1 million people and would force the territory's entire

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population to cram into the southern half of the Gaza Strip as Israel continues strikes across the territory, including in the south.

Egyptian officials said an agreement was reached to allow foreigners to exit Gaza via Rafah on Saturday afternoon. One official said both Israel and Palestinian militant groups had agreed to facilitate the departures and that talks were still underway about getting aid into Gaza through the same crossing. The officials were not authorized to brief journalists and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Palestinian families in Gaza faced agonizing dilemmas in deciding whether to leave or stay. Israeli strikes have leveled entire city blocks. A siege declared earlier in the week cut off food, water and medical supplies, and the territory was under a near-total power blackout.

An Israeli military spokesperson, Jonathan Conricus, said the evacuation was aimed at keeping civilians safe and preventing Hamas from using them as human shields. He urged people in the targeted areas to leave immediately and to return "only when we tell them that it is safe to do so."

"The Palestinian civilians in Gaza are not our enemies. We don't assess them as such, and we don't target them as such," Conricus said. "We are trying to do the right thing."

The U.S. and Israel's other allies have pledged ironclad support for the war on Hamas. The European Union's foreign policy chief, however, said Saturday the Israeli military needed to give people more time to leave northern Gaza.

Josep Borrell welcomed the evacuation order but said, "You cannot move such a volume of people in (a) short period of time," noting a lack of shelters and transportation.

Gaza's Health Ministry said it was impossible to safely transport the wounded from hospitals already dealing with high numbers of dead and injured.

Patients and personnel from the Al Awda Hospital in Gaza's far north spent part of their night in the street "with bombs landing in close proximity," the medical aid group Doctors Without Borders said.

Scott Hamilton, a spokesperson for the aid group, said some of the medical staff and all patients were moved to another location, "but the situation remains extremely complicated and chaotic."

The U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees said many people were relying on dirty water from wells as desalination plants shut down for lack of fuel.

"Fuel is the only way for people to have safe drinking water," Philippe Lazzarini, UNRWA's commissioner general said. "If not, people will start dying of severe dehydration, among them young children."

WHERE TO GO?

Hamas' media office said airstrikes hit cars in three locations as they headed south from Gaza City, killing 70 people. There was no comment from the Israeli military.

Two witnesses reported a strike on fleeing cars near Deir el-Balah. Fayza Hamoudi said she and her family were driving from their home in the north when the strike on the road hit some distance ahead and two vehicles burst into flames. A witness from another car on the road gave a similar account.

"Why should we trust that they're trying to keep us safe?" Hamoudi said, her voice choking. "They are sick."

More than half of the Palestinians in Gaza are descendants of refugees from the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation, when hundreds of thousands fled or were expelled from what is now Israel. Many feared a second expulsion, this time to Egypt's Sinai Peninsula.

Israeli airstrikes since the Hamas attack already forced at least 423,000 people — nearly 1 in 5 Gaza residents — from their homes as of Thursday, according to the United Nations.

"Where is the sense of security in Gaza? Is this what Hamas is offering us?" said one resident, Tarek Mraish.

Krauss reported from Jerusalem. Associated Press writers Isabel DeBre and Julia Frankel in Jerusalem, Samya Kullab in Baghdad, Samy Magdy in Cairo, Ashraf Sweilam in El-Arish, Egypt, Kareem Chehayeb in Beirut and Matthew Lee in Riyadh contributed to this report.

Poland prepares to vote in a high-stakes national election with foreign ties and democracy at stake

By VANESSA GERA Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Poland is holding an election Sunday that many view as its most important one since the 1989 vote that toppled communism. At stake are the health of the nation's democracy, its legal stance on LGBTQ+ rights and abortion, and the foreign alliances of a country on NATO's eastern flank that has been a crucial ally to Ukraine.

Political experts say the election will not be fully fair after eight years of governing by a conservative nationalist party that has eroded checks and balances to gain more control over state institutions, including the courts, public media and the electoral process itself.

Opponents of the ruling Law and Justice party fear it could be their last chance to preserve the constitutional system won at great cost through the struggle of many Poles, from former President Lech Walesa to the millions who supported his Solidarity movement.

The election "will decide the future of Poland as a country of liberal democracy, a system that has been a guarantor of Polish success for the last three decades," the editor of the Rzeczpospolita newspaper, Boguslaw Chrabota, wrote in a Friday editorial.

Supporters of the ruling party, however, are afraid that if Law and Justice is voted out, the opposition would take the country in a more liberal direction, including with new laws legalizing abortion and civil unions for same-sex partners.

Women in Poland currently have the right to abortions only in cases of rape or incest, or if there is a threat to their life or health.

"I'm afraid that I'll wake up after the elections and there will be such a change that, for example, abortion will be promoted (and) LGBT," said civil servant Bozena Zych, 57, after leaving a Catholic church located in a hipster area of Warsaw filled with gay-friendly establishments.

Zych said she went to the Church of the Holiest Savior with a friend to pray for Law and Justice to win a third-straight term. Churches, even Poland's holiest Jasna Gora shrine in Czestochowa, have held prayers in recent weeks for candidates who support Christian values.

Citizens who want a more liberal Poland also mobilized with two massive marches this year. Some interviewed in recent days by The Associated Press became very emotional or fought back tears as they described what they regard as corruption, democratic backsliding, propaganda and bitter divisions in Polish society since Law and Justice came to power in 2015.

"What has happened in Poland is a nightmare," said Maryla Kowalewska, 75. "Let's hope there is a total change in this country."

Recent polls show Law and Justice has more support than any other single party, but not enough to reach the majority in Parliament it would need to govern alone. It could be forced to seek support from a far-right party, Confederation, that is hostile to Ukraine.

The polls show that three opposition groups — Civic Coalition, Third Way and New Left — could together get a majority of seats in Parliament. The largest is the centrist Civic Coalition led by Donald Tusk, a former Polish prime minister and former European Union president.

Tusk has vowed to restore the rule of law and to rebuild ties with the EU that became severely strained under Law and Justice. The EU is withholding billions of euros in COVID-19 pandemic recovery funds from Warsaw, citing rule of law violations.

Small shifts for or against the smaller parties could significantly impact what coalitions will be possible after election day.

"So we have this situation of two sides who think that these are very high-stakes elections, two sides very determined and energetic. The emotions are very high, but the playing field is not even," said Jacek Kucharczyk, the president of the Institute of Public Affairs, a Warsaw-based think tank.

The main reason for the imbalance is Law and Justice's control of taxpayer-funded state media, which it uses to constantly bash opponents, Kucharczyk argued. But other factors could play a role in the elec-

tion's outcome, including the party's political control over the electoral administration and the chamber of the Supreme Court that will validate the election.

Amid the huge interest in the election, more than 600,000 Poles abroad registered to vote, three times more than in 2015, the Foreign Ministry.

The ministry also said it had "immediately dismissed" its spokesman, Lukasz Jasina, for saying that not all polling stations would be able to count all the votes before the deadline for submitting them, which would cause them to be invalidated. The ministry said in a statement late Friday that it was prepared to carry out the vote abroad, and that Jasina was fired for spreading "false information."

There is also a high level of state ownership in the Polish economy, and the ruling party has built up a system of patronage, handing out thousands of jobs and contracts to its loyalists.

Wojciech Przybylski, editor-in-chief of Visegrad Insight, a policy journal focused on Central Europe, said the practice threatens the ability of the middle class to advance socially "without special connections to politics."

That could in turn could threaten the foundations of the "economic miracle" Poland has experienced in the post-communist era, he said. The country is now the EU's sixth-largest economy.

Law and Justice's nationalist policies also have harmed Poland's relations with key allies. While Poland has been a staunch ally of neighboring Ukraine since Russia invaded and a transit hub for Western weapons, relations chilled over the Ukrainian grain that entered Poland's market.

With tensions rising, and as the Confederation party's numbers grew, Poland's prime minister said his country was no longer sending weapons to Kyiv.

"They quarreled with everyone, with the EU, with NATO, with everyone," said Ludmila, a 68-year-old who opposes Law and Justice. She wouldn't give her last name, saying that the country was moving in an authoritarian direction and she didn't feel safe doing so. "This is unacceptable, it cannot continue like this."

"Poland will be as lonely as in 1939," the year World War II broke out, she added.

France is deploying 7,000 troops after a deadly school stabbing by a suspected Islamic radical

By JEFFREY SCHAEFFER and ANGELA CHARLTON Associated Press

ARRAS, France (AP) — France will mobilize up to 7,000 soldiers to increase security around the country after a teacher was fatally stabbed and three other people wounded in a school attack by a former student suspected of Islamic radicalization, the president's office said Saturday.

Some schoolchildren, parents and personnel returned to the Gambetta-Carnot school in the northern city of Arras as it reopened Saturday morning to reconnect and seek support, after the attack Friday that rattled France in a context of global tensions over the Israel-Hamas war.

Counterterrorism authorities are investigating the stabbing, and the suspected assailant and several others are in custody, prosecutors said. The suspect had been under recent surveillance by intelligence services for radicalization. Court documents viewed by The Associated Press show he is from the Ingushetia region in Russia's Caucasus Mountains, which neighbors Chechnya. Authorities had initially identified him as Chechen.

The French government heightened the national threat alert, and President Emmanuel Macron ordered up to 7,000 soldiers deployed by Monday night and until further notice to bolster security and vigilance around France, his office said. The "attack emergency" threat posture allows the government to temporarily mobilize the military to protect public places among other measures.

The attacker's exact motive remains unclear, and he is reportedly refusing to speak to investigators.

At the school Saturday morning, police stood guard as adults and children arrived. Classes were canceled, but the school reopened for those who wanted to come together or seek support. One mother said she came with her 17-year-old daughter in a show of defiance against extremism, and to overcome the fear of returning to a site where children were locked down for hours after the stabbing.

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Another mother came to seek guidance from counselors about how to support her two sons, who witnessed the attack in their schoolyard.

"As adults, we are managing with difficulty to take a step back, but for them, they're children," said Emily Noge, arriving at the school with her sons and partner. "They initially thought it was an exercise, so keeping things separate, to say that we've passed from an exercise to something dramatic, is very tricky for them."

"It's always the same moments that come back: The schoolyard, the chairs to protect themselves, the stabbings, the whys. 'Why us? Why Arras? Why the teachers? They were good teachers. They were there to protect us,'" she said.

For many in France, the attack echoed the killing of another teacher, Samuel Paty, almost exactly three years ago near his Paris area school. He was beheaded by a radicalized Chechen later killed by police.

The suspect in this week's attack had been under surveillance since the summer on suspicion of Islamic radicalization, French intelligence services told AP. He was detained Thursday for questioning based on the monitoring of his phone calls in recent days, but investigators found no sign that he was preparing an attack, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said.

French intelligence suggested a link between the war in the Middle East and the suspect's decision to attack, the minister said. He said authorities have detained 12 people near schools or places of worship since the Hamas attack on Israel, some of whom were armed and were preparing to act. France has heightened security at hundreds of Jewish sites around the country this week.

The prosecutor said the alleged assailant was a former student there and repeatedly shouted "Allahu akbar," or "God is great," during the attack. Prosecutors are considering charges of terrorism-related murder and attempted murder against the suspect.

The dead educator was Dominique Bernard, a French language teacher at the Gambetta-Carnot school, which enrolls students ages 11-18. Another teacher and a security guard were in critical condition with wounds from the stabbing, police said. The counterterrorism prosecutor said a cleaning worker was also injured.

Announcing that the school would reopen Saturday, Macron urged the people of France to "stay united."

"The choice has been made not to give in to terror," he said. "We must not let anything divide us, and we must remember that schools and the transmission of knowledge are at the heart of this fight against ignorance."

Charlton reported from Paris. Associated Press journalists Nicolas Garriga in Arras, France, Nicolas Vaux-Montagny in Lyon, France, John Leicester in Paris and Elise Morton in London contributed to this report.

What to know in the latest Israel-Hamas war

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — More than a million people in the northern Gaza Strip have been ordered to evacuate to the south as the latest Israel-Hamas war entered its seventh day Friday and Israel appeared to be preparing a ground offensive. Hamas urged residents to stay put.

The orders sent panic through civilians and aid workers already struggling under Israeli airstrikes and a blockade of the Hamas-ruled area. International aid groups warned of a worsening humanitarian crisis after Israel prevented the entry of supplies from Egypt to Gaza's 2.3 million people.

The latest Israel-Hamas war has claimed more than 3,000 lives on both sides in the week since Hamas launched an unprecedented surprise attack on Oct. 7.

Some key takeaways from the war:

WHAT'S HAPPENED IN THE WEEK SINCE THE LATEST ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR STARTED?

An Israeli shell landed in a gathering of international journalists covering clashes on the border in southern Lebanon on Friday, killing a Reuters videographer and leaving six other journalists injured.

Israel has cut off supplies of food, fuel, electricity and medicine into Gaza. The only crossing point be-

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tween Egypt and Gaza was shut down Tuesday following nearby Israeli airstrikes. Internet connectivity in Gaza City has been below 20% since Tuesday.

With Israel having sealed Gaza's borders, the only direction to flee is south, toward Egypt. But Israel is still carrying out airstrikes across the Gaza, and Egypt has rushed to secure its border against any mass influx of Palestinians.

Governments around the world have spent the week trying to evacuate their nationals and dual citizens caught in the conflict after a spate of commercial flight cancellations.

Israel's government is under intense pressure from the public to topple Hamas, which has ruled Gaza since 2007. Israel has called up 360,000 army reservists and threatened an unprecedented response to Hamas' wide-ranging incursion.

The Gaza Health Ministry said Friday that roughly 1,800 people have been killed in the territory. The Israeli military said more than 1,300 people, including 222 soldiers, have been killed in Israel — a staggering toll unseen since the 1973 war with Egypt and Syria that lasted weeks. Roughly 1,500 Hamas militants were killed during the fighting, the Israeli government said.

WHAT IS THE SITUATION IN GAZA?

As airstrikes hammered the territory throughout the day Friday, families in cars, trucks and donkey carts packed with blankets and possessions streamed down a main road out of Gaza City.

Hundreds of thousands of other Palestinians across the territory wrangled over the agonizing choice of whether to stay or go following the Israeli order to evacuate.

Before the evacuation directives, 423,000 Gaza Strip residents had already fled their homes, according to the United Nations. Gaza is only 40 kilometers (25 miles) long, wedged among Israel, Egypt and the Mediterranean Sea.

Many Palestinians fear a repeat of the most traumatic event in their tortured history: their mass exodus from what is now Israel during the 1948 war surrounding its creation.

Hamas' media office said warplanes struck cars fleeing south, killing more than 70 people, while Israel's military said that its troops had conducted temporary raids in Gaza to battle militants. Israel said its soldiers also hunted for traces of some 150 people abducted in Hamas' attack on Oct. 7.

WHAT HAS THE RESPONSE BEEN AROUND THE WORLD?

United States President Joe Biden said Friday that it's a priority of his administration to address the unfolding humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin assured Israel that "we have your back" as he and America's top diplomat met Friday with Israeli and Arab leaders.

The United Nations Security Council hadn't found a collective voice on the latest Israel-Hamas war after meeting behind closed doors Friday for the second time in five days.

Russia is proposing a "humanitarian cease-fire," which could be a tough sell as Israel is expected to undertake a ground offensive against the Hamas militants who rule Gaza.

European Union leader Charles Michel on Friday warned that the Israel-Hamas war could create a surge in refugees heading for Europe, raising the risk of spurring on anti-migrant forces, deepening divisions and inflaming tensions between supporters of Israel and supporters of Palestinians.

Iran's foreign minister warned on Friday that if Israel's attacks on the Gaza Strip don't stop immediately, the violence could spread to other parts of the Middle East.

Syria's president on Friday called on countries of the world to stand together to stop "the crimes that Israel is committing against the Palestinian people."

The Egyptian Foreign Ministry on Friday condemned the Israeli army's decision to order the evacuation, which could cause a spike in refugees in Egypt.

The deadly attacks by Hamas on Israeli civilians and the devastating Israeli airstrikes and blockade of Gaza have raised accusations among international legal experts that both sides were violating international law.

WHAT PROMPTED HAMAS' ATTACK ON ISRAEL?

Hamas, which seeks Israel's destruction, says it is defending Palestinians' right to freedom and self-determination. But the devastation following Hamas' surprise attack on Oct. 7 has sharpened questions

about its strategy and objectives.

Desperation has grown among Palestinians, many of whom see nothing to lose under unending Israeli control and increasing settlements in the West Bank, the blockade in Gaza, and what they see as the world's apathy.

In addition to citing long-simmering tensions, Hamas officials cite a long-running dispute over the sensitive Al-Aqsa Mosque that is sacred to both Muslims and Jews. Competing claims over the site, known to Jews as the Temple Mount, have spilled into violence before, including a bloody 11-day war between Israel and Hamas in 2021.

Associated Press Writers Matthew Lee in Washington, Samy Magdy in Cairo and Jennifer Peltz at the United Nations contributed to this report.

Evolving crisis fuels anxiety among Venezuelans who want a better economy but see worsening woes

By REGINA GARCIA CANO Associated Press

SAN JOAQUIN, Venezuela (AP) — The avocado trees across the road from Jose Hernandez's tin-roofed home help feed several retirees in the rural community of San Joaquin along a highway two hours southwest of Venezuela's capital.

He and his neighbors cut the avocados with the owner's permission and sell them to motorists at a nearby toll booth or on the streets of the nearby city of Valencia, which has not emptied out as much as San Joaquin from migration over the last decade.

They live day by day. Their pension these days amounts to \$3.70 a month, only 20 cents more than the cost of a gallon of bottled water. So no sales mean no food.

"Sometimes, we even have to barter avocados for food in other neighborhoods. We want jobs!" Hernandez, 67, exclaimed while sitting on his dusty, cement-floor porch with a neighbor. "He was a carrier, I sold merchandise downtown. Right now, there is no work. All the young people have already left. This neighborhood is desolate!"

The political, social and economic crisis that has come to define their South American homeland has evolved since it began a decade ago as a result of a global drop in the price of oil, Venezuela's most valuable resource, mismanagement by the self-proclaimed socialist administration and government repression of its opponents.

The latest phase has been particularly challenging after the economic stability that many experienced for several months overlapping 2021 and 2022 vanished. They again are grappling with constant food-price hikes, business closures and painful thoughts of migrating.

Amid this daily reality, Venezuelans are hearing election chatter as the opposition gets ready to hold a primary Oct. 22 to pick a candidate to challenge President Nicolás Maduro in a presidential election next year.

But apathy and disgust toward politics and politicians — be they Maduro, his allies or his adversaries — have deepened among the young and old amid the litany of disappointments, corruption accusations, rampant misinformation and government repression.

Maduro's government managed to get Venezuela out of a hyperinflationary cycle at the end of 2021 with public spending cuts, tax increases and foreign currency injections. For a time last year, workers could pull out of their pockets a dollar or two and maybe even some worthless bolivares, the local currency. Practically everyone knew someone running a business from their home, such as selling sugar-free snacks via Instagram or offering group lessons on basic math.

The respite — coming after Venezuela's economy contracted 80% from 2014 into 2021 — even prompted some Venezuelans to return from Colombia, Peru, Ecuador and other Latin American countries that had hosted them for years but where they could not find work in a post-pandemic economy. It also slowed down the exodus from Venezuela.

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But by January, the stability was gone. May 1 came and went without the president's traditional Labor Day announcement of a minimum wage increase. The last raise, in April 2022, put monthly pay at 130 bolivares, which at the time was worth \$30, but has now dwindled to \$3.70.

These days, a kilo (2.2 pounds) of chicken costs about \$2.40, a dozen eggs is \$2.25, and a liter (a little over a quart) of milk goes for \$2.

"Things got very difficult. Even getting sick is difficult because if you buy food, you can't buy medicine," Mayela Ramirez, 59, said standing by her front door in downtown Valencia, once home to multiple auto assembly plants. "I have a nephew who has a problem with his brain — he has like a ball growing there — and needs a biopsy, but he can't (afford it) because it is \$150, so we are doing raffles to raise money."

Ramirez helps her husband run his auto repair shop, but it is no longer uncommon for a week to go by without a single car being dropped off. It has been a long time since she shopped freely at the grocery store, where she now buys more vegetables than ever because protein sources are too expensive.

She has noticed people have begun leaving the country again, including four of her neighbors who migrated at the end of September.

More than 7.7 million Venezuelans have fled their country, mostly to Latin American and Caribbean countries. But these days, people are migrating with their eyes set on the U.S. and not Colombia or Peru, which have received the largest number of Venezuelans since the crisis began.

Over the last year, the number of Venezuelan migrants trying to enter the U.S. through its southern border has increased exponentially. U.S. border patrol agents in the last 11 months had more than 199,500 encounters with Venezuelans at the U.S.-Mexico border, compared with 2,700 in all 2020. In August alone, the encounters were more than 31,400.

Venezuelans have come to feel the crisis as one numbingly featureless expanse of struggles, though they use some of its bigger calamities to parse out one year from another: 2017 had mass anti-Maduro protests and repression; 2018 saw severe food shortages; 2019 brought nationwide power outages; 2020 had days-long gas station lines.

Worries are growing as people see many of these woes striking all at once, even in the capital, Caracas, whose residents had been partially insulated from some of the crisis' challenges.

The variety of products at supermarket shelves and neighborhood markets is getting smaller. Imported-goods stores put goods on the front edge of shelves to give the appearance of being fully stocked. Restaurants are closing. Refilling a gas tank with subsidized fuel again involves careful planning. Hours-long power outages are more frequent in Caracas.

Many long for the days of "el Comandante" — the late President Hugo Chávez and his self-described socialist revolution of the 2000s. But regardless of political affiliation, Venezuelans are increasingly feeling like pawns in a geopolitical game that ignores their empty wallets.

A 12-hour stretch one recent day illustrated that growing sentiment.

Around 9:30 a.m., the highway that goes by San Joaquin was blocked by soldiers purportedly for unsafe conditions due to downed electrical wires, but they moved aside roughly two hours later after local leaders verified that Maria Corina Machado, the frontrunner in the opposition's presidential primary, had left the area.

By 4:30 p.m., the U.S. government, whose economic sanctions failed to topple Maduro, flipped-flopped on its definition of safety for Venezuelans when it announced the resumption of deportation flights to the South American country. The announcement came just two weeks after it had expanded protections for about 500,000 Venezuelan migrants citing "increased instability and lack of safety" in the country.

Around 6 p.m., news of the flights spread on social media and thousands of people rallied with Machado in Valencia. An hour later, the attorney general announced on national television a new criminal investigation against Juan Guaidó, an exiled opposition leader who ran a parallel government to Maduro's with the help of the U.S.

"The government needs to be removed, but right now, right now, what is affecting us Venezuelans is the economy," said Vanessa Martinez, 31, who does maintenance at a rest stop for about \$60 a month and was unaware of the opposition's primary.

"Here, one lives day to day," she said. "The situation is very sad. Who knows when we'll see a change."

In Israel's call for mass evacuation, Palestinians hear echoes of their original catastrophic exodus

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — In Israel's call for the evacuation of half of Gaza's population, many Palestinians fear a repeat of the most traumatic event in their tortured history, their mass exodus from what is now Israel during the 1948 war surrounding its creation.

Palestinians refer to it as the Nakba, or "catastrophe." An estimated 700,000 Palestinians, a majority of the prewar population, fled or were expelled from what is now Israel in the months before and during the war, in which Jewish fighters fended off an attack by several Arab states.

The Palestinians packed their belongings, piling into cars, trucks and donkey carts. Many locked their doors and took their keys with them, expecting to return when the war ended.

Seventy-five years later, they have not been allowed back. Emptied towns were renamed, villages were demolished, homes reclaimed by forests in Israeli nature reserves.

Israel refused to allow the Palestinians to return, because it would threaten the Jewish majority within the country's borders. So the refugees and their descendants, who now number nearly 6 million, settled in camps in the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. Those camps eventually grew into built-up neighborhoods.

In Gaza, the vast majority of the population are Palestinian refugees, many of whose relatives fled from the same areas that Hamas attacked last weekend.

The Palestinians insist they have the right to return, something Israel still adamantly rejects. Their fate was among the thorniest issues in the peace process, which ground to a halt more than a decade ago.

Now, Palestinians fear the most painful moment from their history is repeating itself.

"You look at those pictures of people without cars, on donkeys, hungry and barefoot, getting out any way they can to go to the south," said political analyst Talal Awkal, who has decided to stay in Gaza City because he doesn't think the south will be any safer.

"It is a catastrophe for Palestinians, it is a Nakba," he said. "They are displacing an entire population from its homeland."

Israel has vowed to crush Hamas after its bloody Oct. 7 incursion. Militants killed over 1,300 Israelis, many in brutal fashion, and captured around 150 — including soldiers and civilians, young and old. Israel has launched blistering waves of airstrikes on Gaza in response that have already killed over 1,500 Palestinians, and the war appears set to escalate further.

On Friday, Israel called on all Palestinians living in northern Gaza, including Gaza City, to head south. The evacuation orders apply to more than a million people, about half the population of the narrow, 40-kilometer (25-mile) coastal strip.

With Israel having sealed Gaza's borders, the only direction to flee is south, toward Egypt. But Israel is still carrying out airstrikes across the Gaza, and Egypt has rushed to secure its border against any mass influx of Palestinians. It too, fears another Nakba.

Israeli officials say the evacuation is aimed at sparing civilians and denying Hamas the ability to use them as human shields.

"The camouflage of the terrorists is the civil population," Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said Friday. "We need to separate them. So those who want to save their life, please go south."

The military has said those who leave can return when hostilities end, but many Palestinians are deeply suspicious.

Israel's far-right government has empowered extremists who support the idea of deporting Palestinians, and in the wake of the Hamas attack some have openly called for mass expulsion. Some are West Bank settlers still angry over Israel's unilateral pullout from Gaza in 2005.

"Right now, one goal: Nakba! A Nakba that will overshadow the Nakba of 48. Nakba in Gaza and Nakba

to anyone who dares to join!" Ariel Kallner, a member of parliament from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud, wrote on social media after the Hamas attack.

Hamas, meanwhile, has told people to remain in their homes, dismissing the Israeli orders as a ploy.

President Mahmoud Abbas, who heads the internationally-recognized Palestinian Authority in the occupied West Bank, also rejected the evacuation orders, saying they would lead to a "new Nakba."

Abbas, 87, is a refugee from Safed, in what is now northern Israel. He wore a key-shaped lapel pin when he addressed the United Nations last month, noting the 75th anniversary of the Nakba.

Palestinians have heard their relatives' stories, and have been raised on the idea that the only hope for their decades-long struggle for self-determination is steadfastness on the land.

But many in Gaza may be too frightened, exhausted and desperate to make a stand.

For nearly a week, they have been seeking safety under a barrage of Israeli airstrikes that have demolished entire city blocks, sometimes hitting without warning. There's a territory-wide electricity blackout and dwindling supplies of food, fuel and medicine.

The south isn't safe, but if Israel launches a ground offensive in the north, as seems increasingly likely, it might be their best hope for survival, even if they never return.

"The experience that happened with our families in 1948 taught us that if you leave, you will not return," said Khader Dibs, who lives in the crowded Shuafat refugee camp on the outskirts of Jerusalem. "The Palestinian people are dying and the Gaza Strip is being wiped out."

Associated Press reporters Isabel DeBre and Julia Frankel contributed.

Sen. Joe Manchin considers independent 2024 run, warns party system could be nation's 'downfall'

By LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia has benefited from waiting to reveal where he stands as the swing vote in a chamber closely divided between Democrats and Republicans.

He's taken the same approach when it comes to the next phase of his political career: The moderate Democrat has teased possible retirement, a run for reelection to the Senate or even a presidential campaign in 2024 — possibly as an independent candidate.

During a multi-day trip to West Virginia's capital this week, the 76-year-old expressed growing frustration with the polarized U.S. two-party system.

"I'm having a hard time — I really am," he said while touring a Charleston metal stamping plant. "The two-party system, unless it changes, will be the downfall of our country."

Manchin's visit included the metal plant, which began being revitalized during his governorship, and an Amtrak station renovated with infrastructure funds he helped secure. He told reporters he was "getting closer" to a 2024 decision, repeating his line that he'll make an announcement before the end of the year. But he deflected questions about his identity as a Democrat, which he's held since first running for West Virginia's House of Delegates in 1982.

"Don't worry about the 'D' or the 'R', worry about the person — who is that person?" said Manchin, who was a Democratic secretary of state and governor of West Virginia. "There can be a good D and a bad D and a good R and a bad R, but the identity — I like more the independent identity."

Manchin, who joined Congress in 2010 and rose to prominence in West Virginia politics when both coal and the Democratic Party were king, has wielded his influence like few other politicians in recent years.

He managed to win reelection in 2018 in one of former President Donald Trump's most loyal states as the last of his party to hold statewide office in now-deep red West Virginia.

However, some observers say he faces very tough odds if he runs for reelection, particularly as the state's enormously popular Republican Gov. Jim Justice has entered the race.

Some progressive Democrats over the past few years have grown weary of Manchin. His vote is one of

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two they've had to beg, convince and cajole in a 51-49 Senate — but his nearly constant chides at many fellow Democrats, particularly President Joe Biden, left them concerned he could switch parties and take away their slim hold on power.

One of his most stunning rebukes of his party came in December 2021 when after months of painstaking negotiations directly with the White House, Manchin pulled his support from a \$2 trillion social and environmental bill, dealing a fatal blow to Biden's leading domestic initiative in his first year in office.

Months later, in a surprise turn of events, Manchin and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer crafted a compromise package to ultimately pass and sign into law a modest domestic bill focused on healthcare and climate change.

As Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Chair, Manchin has used his sway to push a variety of West Virginia initiatives, including support for miners with black lung and the completion of the contested Mountain Valley natural gas pipeline. If he chooses to run for any office, he will be counting on nuts and bolts investments making a difference to voters.

Two Republicans, Justice and Rep. Alex Mooney, are already vying for Manchin's Senate seat. The senator had recruited Justice to run for governor as a Democrat before Justice, in a surprise move, switched to the GOP at a rally for Trump during his first term.

Over the last months, Manchin appeared in New Hampshire at an event for No Labels, a national political movement that could offer an independent presidential ticket in 2024. He's currently holding around \$10.8 million in campaign funds, compared to Mooney's \$1.5 million and Justice's \$800,000.

Still, Justice has a high approval rating in West Virginia, making him a formidable opponent for any candidate.

Robert Rupp, a retired political history professor at West Virginia Wesleyan, called Manchin one of the most successful campaigners in recent state history because of his personal relationships with constituents.

The question, Rupp said, is whether Manchin will "risk his reputation and further political career by running for a race where the odds are overwhelmingly against him."

"On paper, most of the people would write him off, but I haven't, based on his past record of success," Rupp said. "I have some doubts that he would run as an independent, since that's in many ways a road to nowhere."

Meeting with constituents this week, Manchin stressed the importance of infrastructure investments and the bipartisanship that crafted the historic law. Many rural communities suffer from the consequences of deferred maintenance, he told a small crowd at the ribbon-cutting for Charleston's \$6.4 million Amtrak renovation project.

He spoke about American political unrest, and said the democracy is still an experiment after 240-plus years, "one that could fail at any time."

He said voters shouldn't be concerned with a politician's party, as long as their focus is "public service, not self-service."

As for politicians taking zero-compromise positions on party loyalty: "I'm not so sure whether they really care enough to put their politics aside and do what's best for the country, and that scares me."

He described himself as "fiscally responsible and socially compassionate" and said the government's purpose is to provide a good quality of life for its citizens, regardless of race, religion, "whoever you like, love, whatever gender you may be — it doesn't matter."

Multiple times, he said his way of thinking and voting is "independent" and said he identifies more as a public servant than with either party, both of which have their "pluses and minuses." He criticized the political system in Washington he said has become too much of a "business model" pushing politicians to extremes.

"We've got to break that," he said. "People have to start pushing back — the average voter has to push back. This is not normal. It's not normal for people to act this way."

Venezuelan migrants who are applying for temporary legal status in the US say it offers some relief

By GISELA SALOMON Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — After receiving death threats for openly opposing Venezuela's socialist government, Víctor Macedo and his wife fled, staying for a time in Spain before coming to the U.S.

For nearly two years, they have lived in Florida with the support of family and friends as they tried to build a better life for their two children.

They are among several hundred thousand Venezuelans living in the U.S. whose lives could change now that President Joe Biden's administration is offering them temporary legal status making it easier for them to get authorization to work in the U.S.

"We have 18 months of peace of mind, without the fear of being deported. That is the greatest benefit, and the greatest fear," said Macedo, 38, who dreams of opening a bakery like the one his father had in Venezuela. "We can now begin to earn income as God intended. We no longer depend on the relatives we have here."

To qualify for Temporary Protected Status, Venezuelans must have arrived in the U.S. by July 31. Meanwhile, the Biden administration also recently announced it would restart deportation flights to Venezuela for those without authorization to be in the U.S.

Immigration experts and lawyers are urging Venezuelans who qualify to apply for TPS.

"It can provide some kind of security and some stability for people in the meantime while they are here in the United States," said Ilissa Mira, an immigration attorney at Catholic Legal Immigration Network.

Like many Venezuelans living in the U.S., Macedo and his wife have applied for asylum, but the process is long and does not guarantee success. Between October 2022 and August 2023, immigration judges completed more than 3,800 asylum cases for Venezuelans and nearly a third were denied, according to the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse at Syracuse University.

Macedo and his wife pray they are approved for TPS while they wait. Protected status not only makes it easier to work but suspends deportation until an asylum application case is resolved. People seeking asylum can apply for work permits 150 days after submitting an application.

"We will go ahead with both cases," Macedo said. "They go hand in hand. We have another extra opportunity with TPS for residency and legal status here in the United States."

At least 7.3 million people have fled Venezuela in the past decade during political, economic and humanitarian crises. Most settled in neighboring countries in Latin America, but many came to the United States in the past three years through the dangerous Darien Gap, a stretch of jungle dividing Colombia and Panama.

The Department of Homeland Security's recent announcement of status for 472,000 Venezuelans came on top of more than 242,000 who were previously covered under TPS grants in 2021 and 2022. In the past 11 months, U.S. Border Patrol agents had more than 199,500 encounters with Venezuelans at the southern border, compared with 2,700 in all of 2020.

Macedo and his wife, Ana Merino, left Venezuela in 2016 after Merino was confronted by two men for refusing to donate to a political campaign of ruling party candidates. One of the men struck Merino in the face and she lost a pregnancy the next day, while Macedo also received death threats for not supporting the government's candidates, he said.

They initially came to the U.S. but were deterred by the long asylum process and went to Spain, which is home to a large Venezuelan community. But Macedo said he was threatened there by the same groups that persecuted him in his home country. The family flew to Mexico, then crossed the Rio Grande to enter the U.S. with Macedo carrying his 3-year-old daughter on his shoulders. His wife was helped by their 11-year-old son, who saved her from drowning.

Like Macedo, Venezuelan Deisy Mori and her family crossed the border illegally, surrendered to U.S. authorities and requested asylum. They also are seeking Temporary Protected Status.

They left Venezuela five years ago after paramilitary forces entered their home and threatened to kill

them for participating in street demonstrations demanding freedom of expression and free elections. Mori said she was imprisoned for several days. Her husband was hospitalized with injuries.

They first went to Ecuador, but did not feel safe there. They crossed six countries by foot and used horses, buses and boats to get to the U.S. with their 7-year-old daughter in August 2021.

"It was worth it, that suffering, that fear, that terror, that agony," said the 41-years-old woman, who worked as an assistant at a multinational company in Venezuela. TPS "is a guarantee that you have status and will not be deported."

Not everyone seeking TPS has crossed into the U.S. illegally.

Caren Añez, a 40-year-old single mother, came using a tourist visa in June. Añez, an independent reporter working for a Venezuelan news site, feared being arrested for covering the news in Maracaibo and decided to explore opportunities in the U.S.

She and her 10-year-old son stayed with her aunt in Orlando, Florida. She left behind her 13-year-old twins while trying to find sponsors to apply for humanitarian parole, one of the legal paths Venezuelans have used to enter the U.S. Her family said they already had sponsored other people, so she was considering an asylum request.

"Going back to Venezuela is not an option," Añez said. "I have never imagine that I would have such a good luck to meet the requirements for TPS."

California Gov. Newsom signs law to slowly raise health care workers' minimum wage to \$25 per hour

By ADAM BEAM Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — California will raise the minimum wage for health care workers to \$25 per hour over the next decade under a new law Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom signed Friday.

The new law is the second minimum wage increase Newsom has signed. Last month, he signed a law raising the minimum wage for fast food workers to \$20 per hour.

Both wage increases are the result of years of lobbying by labor unions, which have significant sway in the state's Democratic-dominated Legislature.

"Californians saw the courage and commitment of healthcare workers during the pandemic, and now that same fearlessness and commitment to patients is responsible for a historic investment in the workers who make our healthcare system strong and accessible to all," said Tia Orr, executive director of the Service Employees International Union California.

The wage increase for health care workers reflects a carefully crafted compromise in the final days of the legislative session between the health care industry and labor unions to avoid some expensive ballot initiative campaigns.

Several city councils in California had already passed local laws to raise the minimum wage for health care workers. The health care industry then qualified referendums asking voters to block those increases. Labor unions responded by qualifying a ballot initiative in Los Angeles that would limit the maximum salaries for hospital executives.

The law Newsom signed Friday would preempt those local minimum wage increases.

It was somewhat unexpected for Newsom to sign the law. His administration had expressed concerns about the bill previously because of how it would impact the state's struggling budget.

California's Medicaid program is a major source of revenue for many hospitals. The Newsom administration had warned the wage increase would have caused the state to increase its Medicaid payments to hospitals by billions of dollars.

Labor unions say raising the wages of health care workers will allow some to leave the state's Medicaid program, plus other government support programs that pay for food and other expenses.

A study by the University of California-Berkely Labor Center found almost half of low-wage health care workers and their families use these publicly funded programs. Researchers predicted those savings would offset the costs to the state.

The \$25 minimum wage had been a point of negotiations between Kaiser Permanente and labor unions representing about 75,000 workers. Those workers went on strike for three days last week. Both sides announced a tentative deal Friday.

The strike came in a year when there have been work stoppages within multiple industries, including transportation, entertainment and hospitality. The health care industry has been confronted with burnout from heavy workloads, a problem greatly exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Republicans pick Jim Jordan as nominee for House speaker, putting job within the Trump ally's reach

By LISA MASCARO, KEVIN FREKING and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans chose firebrand Rep. Jim Jordan as their new nominee for House speaker during internal voting Friday, putting the gavel within reach of the staunch ally of GOP presidential front-runner Donald Trump.

Electing Jordan, a founding member of the Freedom Caucus, to the powerful position second in line to the presidency would move the GOP's far right into a central seat of U.S. power. A groundswell of high-profile backers including Fox News' Sean Hannity publicly pressured lawmakers to vote Jordan into the speaker's office after the stunning ouster of Kevin McCarthy.

Jordan, of Ohio, will now try to unite colleagues from the deeply divided House GOP majority ahead of a public vote on the floor, possibly next week. Republicans split 124-81 in Friday's private vote, though a second secret ballot nudged his tally higher.

"I think Jordan would do a great job," McCarthy, R-Calif., said ahead of the vote. "We got to get this back on track."

Frustrated House Republicans have been fighting bitterly over whom they should elect to replace McCarthy to lead their party after his unprecedented ouster by a handful of hardliners. The stalemate between the factions, now in its second week, has thrown the House into chaos, grinding all other business to a halt. Lawmakers left for the weekend, and are due back Monday.

Attention swiftly turned to Jordan, the Judiciary Committee chairman and founder of the far-right Freedom Caucus, after Majority Leader Steve Scalise abruptly ended his bid when it became clear holdouts would refuse to back his nomination.

But not all Republicans want to see Jordan as speaker.

Jordan is known for his close alliance with Trump, particularly when the then-president was working to overturn the results of the 2020 election, leading to the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol.

His rise would all but complete the far-rightward shift of the party, and boost its defense of Trump in four separate legal cases, including over 2020 election fraud. During Trump's impeachment proceedings over the Jan. 6 attack, Jordan was his chief defender in Congress. Trump awarded him the Medal of Freedom days later.

The work of Congress, including next month's Nov. 17 deadline to fund the government or risk a federal shutdown, would be almost certain to become anything but routine. Jordan's wing of the party has already demanded severe budget cuts that he has promised to deliver, and aid to Ukraine would be seriously in doubt. Investigations into Biden and his family would push to the forefront.

House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries immediately gathered his party on the Capitol steps to urge Republicans against giving the gavel to Jordan — an "extremist extraordinaire" — and encourage GOP lawmakers to partner with them to reopen the House.

Overwhelmed and exhausted, anxious GOP lawmakers worry their House majority is being frittered away to countless rounds of infighting and some don't want to reward the speaker's gavel to Jordan's wing, which sparked the turmoil.

"If we're going to be the majority party, we have to act like the majority party," said Rep. Austin Scott, R-Ga., a former president of the "tea party" freshmen class of 2011 who posed a last-ditch challenge to Jordan.

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Jordan's tally Friday was not much better than the 113-99 vote he lost to Scalise at the start of the week, showing the long road ahead, though Friday's second-round ballot pushed his tally to 152-55.

"He's got some work to do," said veteran Rep. Mike Simpson, R-Idaho.

While Jordan has a long list of detractors, his supporters said voting against the Trump ally during a public vote on the House floor would be tougher since he is so popular and well known among more conservative GOP voters. Challenger Scott threw his support to Jordan.

Heading into a morning meeting, Jordan said, "I feel real good."

The House, without a speaker, is essentially unable to function during a time of turmoil in the U.S. and wars overseas. The political pressure is increasingly on Republicans to reverse course, reassert majority control and govern in Congress.

With the House narrowly split 221-212, with two vacancies, any nominee can lose just a few Republicans before failing to reach the 217 majority needed in the face of opposition from Democrats, who will most certainly back their own leader, Jeffries. Absences could lower the majority threshold.

"As emotion begins to leave some members, I think it's going to be easier for some of them to get to yes," said Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-S.D.

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.

On Friday, California Republican Rep. Tom McClintock, introduced a motion to reinstate McCarthy during the morning meeting, but it was shelved.

In announcing his decision to withdraw from the nomination, Scalise declined to throw his support behind Jordan as the bitter rivalry deepened. "It's got to be people that aren't doing it for themselves," he said late Thursday.

But Jordan's allies swung into high gear at a chance for the hard-right leader to seize the gavel.

Jordan also received an important nod Friday from the Republican Party's campaign chairman, Rep. Richard Hudson, R-N.C., who made an attempt to unify the fighting factions.

"Removing Speaker Kevin McCarthy was a mistake," Hudson wrote on social media, saying the party was at a crossroads. "We must unite around one leader."

Just as handfuls of Republicans announced they wouldn't go for Scalise, the situation flipped Friday and holdouts were sticking with Scalise, McCarthy or someone other than Jordan.

Trump, the early front-runner for the 2024 GOP presidential nomination, had announced his preference early for Jordan, and he and allies repeatedly discussed Scalise's battle against cancer.

Scalise has been diagnosed with a form of blood cancer and is being treated, but he has also said he was definitely up for the speaker's job.

Jordan himself faces questions about his past. Some years ago, Jordan and his office denied allegations from former wrestlers during his time as an assistant wrestling coach at Ohio State University who accused him of knowing about claims they were inappropriately groped by an Ohio doctor. Jordan and his office have said he was never aware of any abuse.

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.

Associated Press writers Stephen Groves and Jill Colvin in New York contributed to this report.

Palestinians flee northern Gaza after Israel orders 1 million to evacuate as ground attack looms

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

JERUSALEM (AP) — Palestinians fled in a mass exodus Friday from northern Gaza after Israel's military told some 1 million people to evacuate to the southern part of the besieged territory ahead of an expected ground invasion in retaliation for the surprise attack by the ruling Hamas militant group.

The U.N. warned that evacuating almost half of crowded Gaza's population would be calamitous, and it urged Israel to reverse the unprecedented directive. As airstrikes hammered the territory throughout the day, families in cars, trucks and donkey carts packed with possessions streamed down a main road out of Gaza City.

Hamas' media office said warplanes struck cars fleeing south, killing more than 70 people. The Israeli military said its troops conducted temporary raids into Gaza to battle militants and hunted for traces of some 150 people abducted in Hamas's assault on Israel nearly a week ago.

In urging the evacuation, Israel's military said it planned to target underground Hamas hideouts around Gaza City. But Palestinians and some Egyptian officials fear that Israel ultimately hopes to push Gaza's people out through the southern border with Egypt.

Hamas told people to ignore the evacuation order, and families in Gaza faced what they saw as a no-win decision to leave or stay, with no safe ground anywhere. Hospital staff said they couldn't abandon patients.

Unrelenting Israeli strikes over the past week have leveled large swaths of neighborhoods, magnifying the suffering of Gaza, which has also been sealed off from food, water and medical supplies, and under a virtual total power 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.

In the nearly week-old war, the Gaza Health Ministry said Friday that roughly 1,900 people have been killed in the territory — more than half of them under the age of 18, or women. The Hamas assault last Saturday killed more than 1,300 Israelis, most of whom were civilians, and roughly 1,500 Hamas militants were killed during the fighting, the Israeli government said.

ISRAELI TROOPS MAKE FORAY INTO GAZA

Israel's raid was the first word of troops entering Gaza since Israel launched its round-the-clock bombardment in retaliation for Hamas' massacre of hundreds of civilians in southern Israel.

A military spokesman said Israeli ground troops left after conducting the raids. The troop movements did not appear to be the beginning of an expected ground invasion.

The evacuation order was taken as a further signal of an expected Israeli ground offensive, although no such decision has been announced. Israel has been massing troops along the Gaza border.

An assault into densely populated and impoverished Gaza would likely bring even higher casualties on both sides in brutal house-to-house fighting.

"We will destroy Hamas," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed Friday night in a speech, adding, "This is only the beginning."

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 the claim.

In Israel, the public remained in shock over the Hamas rampage and frightened by continual rocket fire out of Gaza. The public is overwhelmingly in favor of the military offensive, and Israeli TV stations have set up special broadcasts with slogans like "together we will win" and "strong together." Their reports focus heavily on the aftermath of the Hamas attack and stories of heroism and national unity, and they make scant mention of the unfolding crisis in Gaza.

In the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian Health Ministry reported 16 Palestinians killed Friday, bringing the total of Palestinians killed there since Hamas' rampage to 51. The U.N. says attacks by Israeli settlers have surged there since the Hamas assault.

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ISRAEL URGES MASS EVACUATION OF GAZA CIVILIANS

The U.N. said the Israeli military's call for civilians to move south affects 1.1 million people. If carried out, that would mean the territory's entire population would have to cram into the southern half of the 40-kilometer (25-mile) strip.

An Israeli 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.

Israel has long accused Hamas of using Palestinians as human shields. Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said Israel wanted to separate Hamas militants from the civilian population.

"So those who want to save their life, please go south," he said at a news conference with U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin.

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.

PALESTINIANS IN GAZA GRAPPLE WITH WHERE TO GO

Hamas' media office said airstrikes hit cars in three locations as they headed south from Gaza City, killing 70 people. There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military on the strike.

Two witnesses reported a strike on fleeing cars near the town of Deir el-Balah, south of the evacuation zone and in the area Israel told people to flee to. Fayza Hamoudi said she and her family were driving from their home in the north when the strike hit some distance ahead on the road and two vehicles burst into flames. A witness from another car on the road gave a similar account.

"Why should we trust that they're trying to keep us safe?" Hamoudi said, her voice choking. "They are sick."

The Israeli military did not respond to a request for comment on the strike.

Hamas called the evacuation order "psychological warfare" aimed at breaking Palestinian solidarity and urged people to stay. But there was no sign of it preventing the flight.

Gaza City resident Khaled Abu Sultan at first didn't believe the evacuation order was real, and now isn't sure whether to move his family to the south. "We don't know if there are safe areas there," he said. "We don't know anything."

Many feared they would not be able to return or would be gradually displaced to Egypt's Sinai Peninsula.

More than half of the Palestinians in Gaza 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. For many, the mass evacuation order dredged up fears of a second expulsion. Already, at least 423,000 people — nearly 1 in 5 Gazans — have been forced from their homes by Israeli airstrikes, the U.N. said Thursday.

"Where is the sense of security in Gaza? Is this what Hamas is offering us?" said one resident, Tarek Mraish, standing by an avenue as vehicles flowed by. "What has Hamas done to us? It brought us catastrophe," he said, using the same Arabic word "nakba" used for the 1948 displacement.

The U.N. estimated that tens of thousands had fled homes in the north by Friday night.

HOSPITALS STRUGGLE WITH PATIENTS

Gaza's Health Ministry said it was impossible to safely transport the many wounded from hospitals, which are already struggling with high numbers of dead and injured. "We cannot evacuate hospitals and leave the wounded and sick to die," spokesperson Ashraf al-Qidra said.

Farsakh, of the Palestinian Red Crescent, said some medics refused to abandon patients and instead called colleagues to say goodbye.

"We have wounded, we have elderly, we have children who are in hospitals," she said.

Al Awda Hospital was struggling to evacuate dozens of patients and staff after the military contacted it and told it to do so by Friday night, said the aid group Doctors Without Borders, known as MSF, which supports the facility. The military extended the deadline to Saturday morning, it said.

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

"The scale and speed of the unfolding humanitarian crisis is bone-chilling. Gaza is fast becoming a hell-hole and is on the brink of collapse," said Philippe Lazzarini, UNRWA's commissioner general.

Pressed by reporters on whether the army would protect hospitals, U.N. shelters and other civilian locations, Hagari, the Israeli military spokesperson, said the military would keep civilians safe "as much as we can." But he warned: "It's a war zone."

Shurafa reported from Gaza City, Gaza Strip, and Lederer from Chicago. Associated Press writers Joseph Krauss in Jerusalem, Samya Kullab in Baghdad, Samy Magdy in Cairo, and Kareem Chehayeb in Beirut contributed to this report.

AP Exclusive: 911 calls from deadly Lahaina wildfire reveal terror and panic in the rush to escape

By GENE JOHNSON, CLAUDIA LAUER, REBECCA BOONE and AUDREY McAVOY Associated Press
LAHAINA, Hawaii (AP) — Trapped in their cars, in homes or on the beach as flames, black smoke and embers swirled around them, people in the historic Maui town of Lahaina called 911, the one number that might send help or tell them what to do, where to go.

A man sprayed water on his house as homes around him burned: "I don't know if we can get out," he reported. A family huddled in a fireplace, reluctant to leave without their frightened dog, as smoke alarms beeped incessantly. "I cannot get out of my door — there's flames blowing into the house!" another woman pleaded. "I have a baby."

The responses from dispatchers, captured in audio recordings provided to The Associated Press through a public records request, reflect how quickly the deadliest U.S. wildfire in more than a century overtook the town — and how challenging it was for overwhelmed officials to keep up with the chaos.

Inundated with calls, and with police and firefighters all occupied, the dispatchers became increasingly powerless to render help, resorting to offering advice like "Leave if you have to leave" and assuring callers that responders were in the area.

The dispatchers often showed compassion, working to soothe residents and telling them to do whatever they needed to do to be safe. As circumstances changed, some callers were told to stay in their cars, others to run for their lives or to head for the ocean. Many were urged to shelter at the Lahaina Civic Center if they could make it.

"You folks just need to be patient," one dispatcher told a woman stuck in traffic while trying to evacuate with her family on Front Street — where a number of cars would soon burn and people would perish. "It's going to be moving, but it's going to be very slowly."

"Are we in danger?" the caller asked.

"No, ma'am — no. We're trying our best."

Minutes later, a caller stuck on another road got sharply different guidance: "If you can't drive, get out of your car and run."

The 911 calls released to AP cover a period from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Aug. 8 as the blaze, 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. The fire leveled Lahaina, 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 primary electric utility company, has acknowledged its power lines started a wildfire on Maui that morning. County firefighters declared the blaze contained and left, only to have flames reemerge 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.

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The pleas for help came one after another, people calling because they were stuck in cars, trapped by fallen trees and power lines, or worried about loved ones who were home alone. Again and again, overwhelmed dispatchers apologized but said there was no one available to send to their location.

A panicked father reported being trapped in his pickup, with a long line of other cars, behind the old mill of one of Hawaii's first sugar plantations. Flames were just inches from the vehicle when they finally managed to drive away, still on the line with a dispatcher.

"Somebody's down over there!" he said.

"Just go, Dad!" his son shouted. "We cannot do nothing for her!"

Dispatchers also fielded calls from outside Lahaina, including reports of violent crimes and other wildfires burning elsewhere on the island. In all there were more than 4,500 emergency calls and texts that day, according to the Maui Police Department, including hundreds of calls during the time span requested by AP. Normally, dispatchers get about 1,600 calls a day.

"It was an extremely dynamic situation that day, in which our dispatchers adapted to the best of their abilities," police spokesperson Alana Pico wrote in an email.

Authorities redacted names and addresses from the recordings to avoid releasing personally identifying information. For many of the recordings, it was not clear whether the callers made it to safety.

The dispatcher persuaded the family huddling in the fireplace with the dog to evacuate. There have been no babies among the identified known victims, so the woman with the baby and flames coming in her door likely survived.

Roughly two-thirds of the known victims who died were 60 or older, according to a Maui County list. The calls reflect the helplessness of those who couldn't escape on their own.

At 3:31 p.m., a woman said her daughter already had called about an 88-year-old man left behind in their house. 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."

Two minutes later, a woman called from the Hale Mahaolu Eono group senior residence. She was one of four people left at the facility as the flames pushed closer, she reported.

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

"OK, ma'am, if you feel unsafe, listen to yourself and evacuate," the dispatcher replied.

As cinders rained around her, the woman tried to flag down people driving past for a ride. She eventually got one.

It wasn't clear from the call what happened to the remaining people at the residence. Multiple people died there, authorities would later learn.

As the disaster in Lahaina progressed, frustrations increased. One dispatcher briefly chastised a man when he called at 4:56 p.m. to report his older adult parents were stuck in their burning home.

"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.'"

Dispatchers also tried to calm people.

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

The dispatcher coaxed her to provide the street name where she last saw them.

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

Maui County communication chief Mahina Martin said the county released the recordings to comply with a legal request for public records.

"Reliving the tragedy causes unimaginable pain and grief for survivors, their families and the families of loved ones lost that chaotic and heartbreaking day," Martin wrote in an email.

She later continued, "it is truly unfortunate that as people are beginning to heal they are faced with re-

experiencing the horrific event over again as it replays on media.”

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 directed onto a dirt road behind the civic center but also found their way blocked by a locked gate. A third caller told dispatchers they needed to open a road on the south side of town, warning that the blocked exit would result in people dying.

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. One dispatcher told a caller 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,” she said. “If you're not safe, you need to find some way to get to the ocean.”

Lauer reported from Philadelphia, Johnson from Seattle and Boone from Boise, Idaho. Associated Press writers Lisa Baumann in Seattle; Christopher L. Keller in Albuquerque, New Mexico; and Claire Rush in Portland, Oregon, contributed.

Palestinians in Gaza face impossible choice: Stay home under airstrikes, or flee under airstrikes?

By ISABEL DEBRE and FATIMA SHBAIR Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — Watching the pulverized alleys of Jabaliya refugee camp in northern Gaza empty of people, Naji Jamal was frozen with indecision.

Should he heed the Israeli army's demand that all Palestinians evacuate and make the risky trip to Gaza's south, where his only certainty was homelessness? Or should he stay at his multistory building — within what the Israeli army has now designated a target zone — ahead of a likely Israeli ground invasion?

“It's an existential question, but there is no answer,” Jamal, a 34-year-old health clinic worker, said. “There is no safe haven, there is no place that is not being shelled and besieged, there is no place to go.”

In an unprecedented order to civilians in northern Gaza and Gaza City, the Israeli military gave Jamal — and 1.1 million other Palestinians — 24 hours to make up their minds. It was the sixth day of Israeli bombing prompted by Hamas' brutal attack that killed more than 1,300 Israelis and stunned the country.

As the clock ticked on the ultimatum, hundreds of thousands of Israeli army reservists were massing near Gaza's northern border. Israeli warplanes roared overhead, diving low to hurl bombs at homes and residential high-rises. Aid groups appealed to the international community to stop what they denounced as a possible war crime of forcible population transfer.

In understaffed and poorly supplied hospitals, Palestinian doctors said they felt they had no choice but to stay put. There was no way to evacuate Shifa, Gaza's biggest hospital, its general director Mohammad Abu Selim said. Even though the hospital was in chaos — its electricity dwindling under an Israeli siege, its beds overwhelmed, its morgue overflowing — Abu Selim said there was simply no other safe place in Gaza to put 600 patients, many of them in serious condition from the attacks.

“To ask us to evacuate is ridiculous, it's impossible,” Abu Selim said.

But hundreds of thousands of other Palestinians across the territory wrangled over the agonizing choice as the Israeli retaliation intensified. The Israeli army says its airstrikes target militant infrastructure, not civilians — a claim that Palestinians reject.

Many fled south for their lives, squeezing into relatives' cars and trundling through streets blocked by rubble even as thundering bombardment crashed around them. A jumbled line of tractors, horse carts and donkeys stretched some 30 kilometers (18 miles) across the strip, turning what is normally a breezy 45-minute trip into a harrowing — and for dozens of people, deadly — two-hour journey.

Israeli airstrikes on evacuating vehicles killed at least 70 people, the Hamas press office said.

“I don't trust them,” said Ali Abdul Bari, a 37-year-old resident of Gaza City said of the Israeli army. “But

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I will always do whatever I can to keep my family safe.”

Bari’s apartment on the northwest edge of Gaza City was flattened in a huge airstrike late Thursday. Dazed and weary from nights spent awake, he arrived in Khan Younis, a city in southern Gaza, after the evacuation order, but couldn’t fit all his family members in the car. He promised his aunt and uncle that he would return for them Saturday. Bari said the decision was simple for him.

“I am responsible for my parents, my brothers and my sisters,” he said.

When asked about how civilians would be able to evacuate to safety even as heavy bombardment persisted, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, an Israeli military spokesman, told reporters: “We will try to make sure that it will happen.”

Despite the danger, some stubbornly refused to leave their homes. They watched the convoys pass, remembering previous tides of Palestinian refugees who fled other wars only to never be able to return home. Some Palestinians point back to what they call the Nakba, or “catastrophe,” of Israel’s creation in 1948, when some 700,000 fled or were driven from their homes in what is now Israel. Gaza’s Hamas rulers have also urged people not to flee, describing Israel’s order as “psychological warfare” to break their solidarity.

“This is the Nakba, all of our traumas, all over again,” said activist Yasser Hasounah, in Gaza City. “We will not be intimidated.”

Others did not have the means or the foresight to pack up and leave.

Jamal, in the Jabaliya camp, simply didn’t have a car. The thought of piling his infant son, ailing mother and 30 other family members onto a horse cart and sending them through a war zone made him shudder. He said he was resigned to whatever God had in store for him.

“This way we will be together and can read the Quran and pray,” he said.

For many, word of evacuations moved slowly, due to the the collapse of mobile phone networks and internet in much of Gaza.

In the heart of Gaza City — a once-vibrant district hollowed out by heavy bombardment — 27-year-old engineer Saeb al-Jarz was waiting for word of his father, who was wounded in an airstrike on their residential tower late Thursday. Three of his neighbors were killed and his family home destroyed.

Still in shock from the scenes he witnessed, al-Jarz first heard about the Israeli army’s evacuation ultimatum from an Associated Press reporter. He was thrown into a panic, scrambling to figure out next steps with his 25 relatives.

“Maybe we stay, because if we die, we die together,” he said.

His voice trembled. He changed his mind.

“I just really, really want to live,” he said.

DeBre reported from Jerusalem.

Black student disciplined over hairstyle hopes to ‘start being a kid again’

By CHEYANNE MUMPHREY and ANNIE MA AP Education Writers

For more than a month, Darryl George, a Black high school student in Texas, spent each school day sitting by himself in punishment over his hairstyle. This week, he was sent to a separate disciplinary program, where he’s been told he will spend several more weeks away from classmates.

In an interview with The Associated Press, George said he has felt discouraged about missing out on his classes and time with the football team.

“I feel like I’m missing my full experience of being in the classroom,” George said Thursday.

George, 18, was first pulled from the classroom at his Houston-area school in August after school officials said his locs fell below his eyebrows and ear lobes and violated the district’s dress code. His family argues his hairstyle does not break any rules.

By the time George is allowed to return to Barbers Hill High School in Mont Belvieu, Texas, in November, he will have missed 56 of 67 days of regular classroom instruction to start his junior year. The family has

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filed a federal civil rights lawsuit alleging the state failed to enforce a new law outlawing discrimination based on hairstyles.

But the family said George is not looking to change schools. They want to take a stand at a school that has clashed previously with other Black male students over their hairstyles.

"We have to stand, and we have to let them know that, 'No, Darryl's not cutting his hair. No, Darryl is not going to let this go. No, you're not going to run Ms. George and her family out of their neighborhood,'" said Candice Matthews, a civil rights activist who is operating as a spokesperson for the family.

After George spent weeks on in-school suspension, his family received a letter from the school principal referring him to the disciplinary program for the dress code violations and other transgressions: violating the tardy policy, disrupting the in-school suspension classroom and not complying with school directives.

Barbers Hill Superintendent Greg Poole said Friday in an email to the AP that officials cannot disclose the infractions that led to George's current placement, but it was not because of his hair.

George's mother, Darresha George, said he once used a profanity to express frustration with the in-school suspension. The family said George also has had two tardy violations. But they see the refusal to cut his hair as the root of the issue.

"They are retaliating and that's all that this is," said Allie Booker, the family's attorney.

George on Thursday attended his first day at the disciplinary school, where he sits in a cubicle and does schoolwork. He is allowed breaks but must stay inside the room. He is able to interact with teachers in the program, but he feels like he's falling behind.

"I'm just not learning what they're trying to teach me," he said.

School systems in Texas have broad discretion over which offenses can result in students being sent to disciplinary alternative education programs, said Renuka Rege of Texas Appleseed, a social justice advocacy organization. But she said it would be unusual for a student to be transferred over a dress code violation.

"If a district wants to be really, really harsh, then they can lay that out in their code of conduct," Rege said. "There's a lot of districts here in Texas that still very much have a zero-tolerance mindset."

Dress code and hair violations disproportionately affect students of color, said Ashley Sawyer, senior staff attorney at the Advancement Project, a civil rights advocacy organization. She said students are pressured to conform to standards that may not factor in their culture and heritage, such as wearing natural hair.

George's family has filed two religious exemptions for his hair. One was denied and they are awaiting a response to their second request, Booker said.

Men in the family going back generations have had locs. The hairstyle has cultural and religious importance, Darresha George said.

Darryl's mother said her son's discipline is not just affecting him at school, but behind closed doors as well.

"Nobody can see the pain. Nobody can see the hurt. Nobody can see the tears. I have to see this. I have to see the way he gets up in the morning, the way he doesn't want to endure the day. It weighs on me as his mother because I have to see my child go through this," she said through tears.

Darryl George said he hopes to return to how things were.

"I hope I can start being a kid again, start living my life, start playing football again and enjoy my year, my last few years in high school," he said.

Mumphrey reported from Phoenix and Ma reported from Washington D.C.

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Israeli shelling along Lebanon border kills 1 journalist, wounds 6

By HASSAN AMMAR Associated Press

ALMA AL-SHAAB, Lebanon (AP) — An Israeli shell landed in a gathering of international journalists covering clashes on the border in south Lebanon on Friday, killing a Reuters videographer and injuring six other journalists.

An Associated Press photographer at the scene saw the body of Reuters videographer Issam Abdallah and the six who were wounded, some of whom were rushed to hospitals in ambulances. Images from the scene showed a charred car.

"We are deeply saddened to tell you that our videographer, Issam Abdallah, has been killed," the Reuters news agency said in a statement. The agency added that Abdallah was part of a Reuters crew in southern Lebanon that was providing a live signal.

Reuters said that two of its journalists, Thaer Al-Sudani and Maher Nazeh, were wounded in the shelling in the border area.

Qatar's Al-Jazeera TV, said two of its employees, Elie Brakhya and reporter Carmen Joukhadar, also were among the wounded.

France's international news agency, Agence France-Presse, said two of its journalists also were among the wounded, but the agency did not release their names.

Lebanon's caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati in a statement condemned Israel's shelling that struck the journalists "during its aggression on southern Lebanon."

At the United Nations, Secretary-General António Guterres expressed condolences to the family of the killed journa. "So many journalists are paying with their lives to bring truth to everybody," he said.

U.N. spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric earlier said that the world body hopes for an investigation into what happened. "Journalists need to be protected and allowed to do their work," he said.

Later Friday, dozens of Lebanon-based journalists and rights activists gathered outside the National Museum in Beirut to grieve over Abdallah's death and the injury of the journalists.

"We are urgently seeking more information, working with authorities in the region, and supporting Issam's family and colleagues," Reuters said. "Our deepest condolences go out to those affected, and our thoughts are with their families at this terrible time."

The shelling occurred during an exchange of fire along the Lebanon-Israel border between Israeli troops and members of Lebanon's militant Hezbollah group.

The Lebanon-Israel border has been witnessing sporadic acts of violence since Saturday's attack by the militant Palestinian group Hamas on southern Israel.

Journalists from around the world have been coming to Lebanon out of concern that war might break out between Hezbollah and Israel.

Associated Press writer Jennifer Peltz contributed to this report from the United Nations.

French authorities link a school stabbing that killed a teacher to Islamic extremism

By JOHN LEICESTER, JEFFREY SCHAEFFER and SAM PETREQUIN Associated Press

ARRAS, France (AP) — A man of Chechen origin who was under surveillance by French security services over suspected Islamic radicalization stabbed a teacher to death at his former high school and wounded three other people Friday in northern France, authorities said.

France raised its threat alert to its highest level, and the attack was being investigated by anti-terrorism prosecutors amid soaring global tensions over the war between Israel and Hamas. It also happened almost three years after another teacher, Samuel Paty, was beheaded by a radicalized Chechen near a Paris area school.

The suspected attacker had been under surveillance since the summer on suspicion of Islamic radical-

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ization, French intelligence services told The Associated Press. He was detained Thursday for questioning based on the monitoring of his phone calls in recent days, but investigators found no sign that he was preparing an attack, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said.

"There was a race against the clock. But there was no threat, no weapon, no indication. We did our job seriously," Darmanin said on TF1 television. French intelligence suggested a link between the war in the Middle East and the suspect's decision to attack, the minister said.

The suspect, identified by prosecutors as Mohamed M., was reportedly refusing to speak to investigators. Several others also were in custody Friday, national counterterrorism prosecutor Jean-Francois Ricard said. Police said the suspect's younger brother was among those held for questioning.

President Emmanuel Macron said France had been "hit once again by the barbarity of Islamist terrorism." "Nearly three years to the day after the assassination of Samuel Paty, terrorism has hit a school again and in a context that we're all aware of," Macron said at the site of the attack in Arras, a city 115 miles (185 kilometers) north of Paris.

A colleague and a fellow teacher identified the dead educator as Dominique Bernard, a French language teacher at the Gambetta-Carnot school, which enrolls students ages 11-18. The victim "stepped in and probably saved many lives" but two of the wounded — another teacher and a security guard — were fighting for theirs, according to Macron.

Authorities said the third person wounded worked as a cleaner at the school. The prosecutor said the alleged assailant was a former student there and repeatedly shouted "Allahu akbar," or "God is great" in Arabic during the attack.

Police officer Sliman Hamzi was one of the first on the scene. Hamzi said he was alerted by another officer, rushed to the school and saw a male victim lying on the ground outside the school and the attacker being taken away. He said the victim had his throat slit.

"I'm extremely shocked by what I saw," the officer said. "It was a horrible thing to see this poor man who was killed on the job by a lunatic."

The National Police force identified the suspect in the attack as a Russian national of Chechen origin who was born in 2003. The French intelligence services told the AP he had been closely watched since the summer with tails and telephone surveillance and was stopped as recently as Thursday for a police check that found no wrongdoing.

Friday's attack had echoes of Paty's slaying on Oct 16, 2020 — also a Friday — by an 18-year-old who had become radicalized. Like the suspect in Friday's stabbings, the earlier attacker had a Chechen background; police shot and killed him.

Martin Doussau, a philosophy teacher at Gambetta-Carnot, said the assailant was armed with two knives and appeared to be hunting specifically for a history teacher. Paty taught history and geography.

"I was chased by the attacker, who ... asked me if I teach history," said Doussau, who recounted how he barricaded himself behind a door until police used a stun gun to subdue the attacker. "When he turned around and asked me if I am a history teacher, I immediately thought of Samuel Paty."

The school went into lockdown, and some children were held inside classrooms for hours while distraught parents gathered outside.

"My husband was in tears. There were a lot of people crying, a lot in a state of panic," said Céline Bourgeois, whose 15-year-old son, Louis, was inside.

Prosecutors said they were considering charges of terror-related murder and attempted murder against the suspect.

Macron visited the school, stopping for a moment before the blanket-covered body of the teacher, which was in the parking lot in front of the school, then met with students.

He said police thwarted an "attempted attack" in another region of France after the teacher's fatal stabbing. He did not provide details, but the Interior Ministry said he was referring to a man armed with a knife arrested coming out of a prayer hall in the Yvelines region west of Paris. The man's motives weren't immediately clear, police said.

School attacks are rare in France, and the government asked authorities to heighten vigilance at all

schools across the country.

The government also increased its threat alert to its highest level Friday, allowing for larger police and military deployments to protect the country. Darmanin said there was no specific threat that prompted the move, but cited calls by extremists to attack amid the Mideast war.

He said authorities have detained 12 people near schools or places of worship since the Hamas attack on Israel last Saturday, some of whom were armed and were preparing to attack. France has heightened security at hundreds of Jewish sites around the country this week.

The suspect's telephone conversations in recent days gave no indication of an impending attack, leading intelligence officers to conclude that the assailant decided suddenly on Friday to act, intelligence services told the AP.

The suspect's father was expelled from France in 2018 for radicalism, the interior minister said.

An older brother is serving a 5-year prison term for terror offences. He was convicted this year of involvement in a plot for an armed attack around the presidential Elysee Palace in Paris that was thwarted by the intelligence services. Other members of the radical Islamist group were also jailed for up to 15 years. He was the group's only Chechen.

The older brother also was a former pupil at the high school targeted Friday, according to legal records from his trial earlier this year on terror-related charges. Investigation records show that during a school class in 2016 about freedom of expression, the older brother defended a terror attack in 2015 that killed 12 cartoonists at the French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo.

Friday's attack came amid heightened tensions around the world over Hamas' attack on southern Israel and Israel's blistering military response, which have killed hundreds of civilians on both sides.

Darmanin on Thursday ordered local authorities to ban all pro-Palestinian demonstrations amid a rise in antisemitic acts.

France is estimated to have the world's third-largest Jewish population after Israel and the U.S., as well as the largest Muslim population in Western Europe.

A moment of silence was held at the opening of a France-Netherlands soccer match Friday night to honor victims of the Israel-Hamas fighting and the slain teacher.

Macron said the school in Arras would reopen as soon as Saturday morning, and he urged the people of France to "stay united."

"The choice has been made not to give in to terror," he said. "We must not let anything divide us, and we must remember that schools and the transmission of knowledge are at the heart of this fight against ignorance."

Leicester reported from Paris and Petrequin from Brussels. Angela Charlton in Paris, Nicolas Vaux-Montagny in Lyon and Michel Spingler in Arras, France, contributed.

US cities boost security as fears spread over Israel-Hamas war despite lack of credible threats

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Police in New York, Los Angeles, and other U.S. cities increased patrols, authorities put up fencing around the U.S. Capitol and some schools closed Friday amid fears of violence inspired by the Israel-Hamas war. But law enforcement officials stressed there were no credible threats in the U.S.

A former Hamas leader's call for a "day of rage" put American Jewish communities on edge, and sparked heightened security around houses of worship, schools and cultural institutions. The jitters were a sign of just how much the war between Israel and Hamas is reverberating around the world, striking fear in communities even in the absence of a credible threat.

Law enforcement officials said they were on high alert for violence driven by antisemitic or Islamophobic sentiments in the wake of the Hamas attack on Israel. Jewish and Muslim groups have reported an increase

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of hateful and threatening rhetoric on social media.

"We cannot and do not discount the possibility that Hamas or and other foreign terrorist organizations could exploit the conflict to call on their supporters to conduct attacks here on our own soil," FBI Director Christopher Wray told Jewish community leaders at a security briefing on Thursday.

Ashley Reyes, 40, who is Jewish and lives in Montclair, New Jersey, said the escalating conflict has made her feel less safe and has sparked worries for her 10-year-old son.

"This is the first time in my life that I have actively thought of saying to my son, 'If someone asks you if you're Jewish or if your mom's Jewish, you say no,'" Reyes said.

At the Palestinian American Community Center in Clifton, New Jersey, Executive Director Rania Mustafa said there has been an increase in harassing phone calls, emails and messages on social media. Mustafa said the group has closed its doors and is only letting in people they know or who identify themselves.

"It's been a very stressful week in all regards, from one end trying to convince the world that we're human and that our lives are as sacred as anyone else's lives and on the other end, trying to protect our own from being targeted. And protecting freedom of speech, of expressing opinions and solidarity with the Palestinian people," she said.

New York City Mayor Eric Adams told reporters Thursday that police would do extra patrols in some city neighborhoods and send additional resources to schools and houses of worship. There has been a large police presence at protests, rallies and vigils in the city over the past week. Some synagogues have also said they would have private security guards.

Adams and New York Gov. Kathy Hochul stressed that law enforcement wasn't aware of any credible threats against the state or the city.

"We want to reiterate to New Yorkers: There's no reason to feel afraid. No one should feel they have to alter their normal lives or their routines; and indeed when we change our behavior without a serious credible threat, then we're letting the terrorists win," Hochul said.

"I want all New Yorkers to feel confident going to a synagogue, going to school, walking in the streets of New York and throughout our state."

Meanwhile, a New York City councilmember was arrested Friday for bringing a handgun to a student demonstration supporting Palestinians.

Inna Vernikov, a Republican who is Jewish, has been among the most outspoken opponents of Palestinian activists, describing the protesters as "terrorists" while accusing them of making Jewish students feel unsafe. She was seen in photos and videos with the butt of a pistol jutting from her waistband. Vernikov did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment and messages left at her offices were not returned.

New York City's public university system has seen a wave of dueling protests in recent days following the Hamas attack on Israel and escalating war in Gaza.

Columbia University halted public access to its Manhattan campus Thursday in advance of a planned demonstration by pro-Palestinian activists and a rival pro-Israel group, saying only students, faculty and credentialed journalists would be allowed in. The demonstrations wound up being peaceful.

In Washington, crews were seen putting metal barriers outside the Capitol Thursday evening. A Capitol police spokesperson said in an email they were "not taking any chances" even though there are no specific threats.

Las Vegas' Innovations International Charter School, which has a campus located in a former Jewish temple, said Friday they were canceling classes out of an "abundance of caution." Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School in Rockville, Maryland, also closed its campuses, telling parents in an email that there was no specific threat to the school, but it, too, was acting out of "an abundance of caution."

Los Angeles, police said they were reaching out to Jewish and Muslim communities and providing extra patrols. Police in Westchester County, New York, also said they were increasing patrols around schools and Jewish houses of worship on Friday. In Boston, police since the beginning of the conflict have increased their uniformed presence around religious and cultural institutions, a spokesperson said Friday.

The Secure Community Network, which advises U.S. Jewish institutions on security, has encouraged

Jewish communities to be vigilant and bolster their security efforts. But the group has advised institutions there is no need to close their doors, absent specific information otherwise from law enforcement.

Michael Masters, the group's CEO, warned against letting "fear or clickbait threats cause chaos" in Jewish communities because he said that is part of the objective of those spreading hateful rhetoric online.

"We saw some of the worst of humanity on Saturday, but we also saw some of the best," he said of the horrific Hamas attack. "People rushing with literally nothing at their disposal to the lives of family, friends and people they don't know."

"I think we owe it to them that we are not going to give in easily and that we are not going to bow down ... because others wish for us to go away."

____ Associated Press reporters Jake Offenhartz, Deepti Hajela and Karen Matthews in New York City contributed.

Experts say Hamas and Israel are committing war crimes in their fight

By MIKE CORDER and JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — The deadly attacks by Hamas on Israeli civilians and the devastating Israeli airstrikes and blockade of Gaza have raised accusations among international legal experts that both sides were violating international law.

A United Nations Commission of Inquiry said it has been "collecting and preserving evidence of war crimes committed by all sides" since the violence started last week. That evidence could be added to an investigation by the International Criminal Court into possible war crimes committed by Israel and Hamas in past conflicts.

"Intentional targeting of civilians and civilian objects without a military necessary reason to do so is a war crime, period," said David Crane, an American international law expert and the founding chief prosecutor of the United Nations' Special Court for Sierra Leone. "And that's a standard that both sides are held to under international law."

Even Israel's staunchest ally has sounded a note of caution.

U.S. President Joe Biden, at a meeting with Jewish leaders Wednesday, said he told Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "that it is really important that Israel, with all the anger and frustration and just — I don't know how to explain it — that exists is that they operate by the rules of war — the rules of war. And there are rules of war."

DID HAMAS COMMIT WAR CRIMES?

After breaking through Israel's security barrier early Saturday morning, Hamas militants gunned down entire families, including women and young children, in border communities around the Gaza Strip. Israel's health service said it extricated the bodies of over a hundred community members from Kibbutz Be'eri. Militants attacked the Tribe of Nova music festival, gunning down people as they desperately sought refuge.

The attacks killed more than 1,300 people in Israel, including 247 soldiers — a toll unseen in Israel for decades.

Omar Shakir, Israel and Palestine Director of Human Rights Watch, pointed to Hamas "shooting civilians en masse, taking hostages, including women and children — undeniably grave abuses of international law, for which there's no justification."

In an analysis published on the international law website *Opinio Juris*, Cornell Law School professor Jens David Ohlin wrote that the Hamas attacks amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity under the International Criminal Court's founding Rome Statute.

Rights group Amnesty International called for accountability.

"Massacring civilians is a war crime and there can be no justification for these reprehensible attacks," said Agnès Callamard, Amnesty International's secretary-general.

"These crimes must be investigated as part of the International Criminal Court's ongoing investigation into crimes committed by all parties in the current conflict," Callamard said.

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IS ISRAEL'S MILITARY RESPONSE LEGAL?

The Israeli military has pulverized large parts of the Hamas -ruled Gaza Strip with airstrikes and blocked deliveries of food, water, fuel and electricity ahead of a possible ground invasion. The bombardment already has killed about 1,800 people in Gaza, including U.N. workers, paramedics and journalists.

Experts say the blockade, which is hitting the territory's more than 2 million residents, violates international law. "Collective punishment is a war crime. Israel is doing that by cutting electricity, water, food, blocking aid from entering the Gaza Strip," Shakir said.

Early Friday, Israel's military directed the evacuation of some 1 million civilians living in the northern Gaza Strip ahead of a feared Israel ground offensive. Hamas called on residents to remain in their homes.

The International Committee of the Red Cross said the order to leave along with the siege "are not compatible with international humanitarian law."

Jan Egeland, secretary-general of the Norwegian Refugee Council, also called the order illegal. It is "not an evacuation opportunity, it's an order to relocate. Under humanitarian law, it's called forcible transfer of populations, and it's a war crime," he said.

Israel has also faced criticism for its widespread airstrikes razing large areas of Gaza since the Hamas attacks.

But Crane said that Hamas' base in the densely populated area makes any Israeli military action extremely difficult.

"They're almost in an impossible situation. Every time they fire an artillery piece, an aircraft fires missiles and stuff at a legitimate target, they're going to collaterally kill civilians," he said.

The Israeli military has "this challenge where you have one of the most densely populated places on Earth where you have a combatant hiding behind and firing from those positions, using the civilians as human shields," Crane said.

Many in Israel's defense establishment have pledged to fight until every trace of militancy is gone from the territory — even if it means wreaking mass havoc on the besieged strip's civilian population.

But Israel's relentless airstrikes could come under scrutiny, both because of the heavy civilian death toll and heavy damage to civilian infrastructure.

"We're seeing reports of entire neighborhoods, blocks that are reduced to rubble. Certainly that would appear to be, you know, war crimes as well," Shakir said. "We've seen attacks that have affected hospitals and other areas that are entitled to protection."

The Israeli army says it follows international legal norms and strikes only legitimate military targets.

"The most pleasant way not to cause any harm to anyone is not to do anything," said retired Israeli general Giora Eiland. "But Israel has to fight. And how do you fight? You have to bomb them. Or you do nothing. If civilians decide to stay on the streets of Gaza, there will be much more civilian casualties."

CAN THE ICC GET INVOLVED?

While Israel is not one of the court's 123 member states, ICC judges have ruled that the Palestinians are and that the court has jurisdiction over territories occupied by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war.

The ICC prosecution office's ongoing investigation — spurred by the last major conflict in Gaza — can analyze war crimes allegations from the latest war.

But Israel does not recognize the court's jurisdiction and the ICC does not have a police force to execute arrest warrants.

Frankel reported from Jerusalem.

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' ability to breach its Gaza defenses, the group appears to have hidden its extensive preparations for the assault in plain sight. One of the compounds Hamas used to prepare was so close to an Israeli border checkpoint that soldiers could have been able to observe the site with binoculars.

"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 more than 100 videos Hamas released over the last year, primarily through the social media app Telegram. Using satellite imagery, the AP was able to verify key details, as well as identify five sites Hamas used to practice shooting and blowing holes in Israel's border defenses.

The AP matched the location of the mocked-up settlement from the Sept 12 video 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 flying an Israeli flag. The gunmen move through the cinderblock buildings, seizing and cuffing other men playing the roles of Israeli soldier hostages.

The AP matched the location where the video was taken to a site near the town of Beit Hanoun, less than half a mile (800 meters) from the Israeli border wall. Satellite images show increased activity at the compound over the last year, with the addition of concrete structures and what appear to be large tents.

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 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 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

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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 grenades and mortar shells dropped from off-the-shelf, commercial drones — 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 used paragliders to sail over the Israeli defenses, providing Hamas airborne troops despite lacking airplanes. Increasingly sophisticated homemade rockets capable of striking 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 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 sight of the attack, only to be attacked and destroyed in a ball of flame. Hamas then disabled radio towers and radar sites, likely impeding the ability of 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 Islamic fighters, 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. But he insisted the recent operation to breach Israel's border defenses was homegrown, 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, Barakeh said, 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.

Last weekend's devastating surprise attack has shaken political support for Netanyahu within Israel, who pushed ahead with spending 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 Netanyahu's push to build border walls, he found an enthusiastic partner in then-President Donald

Trump, who praised the 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.

Contact AP's global investigative team at Investigative@ap.org.

Sharon Stone says health issues slowed her acting career so she's expressing herself through paint

By BROOKE LEFFERTS Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — During the pandemic, a friend sent Sharon Stone a paint-by-numbers set to keep her busy, a gesture that has led to a new path of creative expression for the actor.

Known best for roles in films like "Casino" and "Basic Instinct," Stone has discovered a love of painting and launched a show of her giant canvases at the C. Parker Gallery in Greenwich, Connecticut, this week.

Stone got frustrated staying within the lines and colors in that first paint set and started creating her own abstract paintings using acrylic on canvas.

Over the past several years she has carved out studio space in her home where she works both inside and outside and says she loves it because she always needs to be moving.

The show, titled "Welcome to My Garden" is only her second outing and features 19 of her brightly colored works. Stone, 65 and the mother to three sons, recently spoke with The Associated Press about artistic inspiration, battling health issues and whether she will act again. Answers have been edited for clarity and brevity.

AP: How did you get inspired to be an artist?

STONE: Museums allowed me to come when they were closed so I went to museums all over the world on Mondays. That was unbelievable. I lived all over the world and worked all over the world, both in my life as an actress and my life as a peace activist and human rights activist. So I've seen so much extraordinary art that it's almost like I got this sort of side degree in art and art history, which has just been magnificent. And that has been unbelievably inspiring to me.

AP: This passion for painting started with paint-by-numbers and then went quickly to 6-by-8-foot canvases?

STONE: I love the bigs. It just sends me to paint on a big canvas. If I could get bigger ones... (laughs.) I love painting in the big scale and it's opened something in me. It's moved something inside of me. My first show was called 'Shedding' because I started realizing I was shedding a lot of oppression. A lot of 'You have to do it this way. You're allowed to be creative, but it has to be like this.'

AP: How do you know when a painting is finished?

STONE: That's the biggest discipline. Because in the beginning, you can't stop. Because you never feel like, 'That's it.' When this stuff was being wrapped up for this show, I put it all outside so I can see everything, all together. And then I was running around with this pallet. 'Oh! Oh, my gosh! (gestures paint strokes) But then I was like, 'You got to cool it.' Because you can destroy everything, and you can just ruin your art if you don't stop. You can go past a point of no return.

AP: How do you feel when you're painting?

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STONE: I feel valuable. Disciplined. I like work. And I like purpose. Art is purposeful. Art is greatly purposeful to me. And we do know that when we teach young people art, there is less recidivism in the prison system, and yet we're taking art out of schools.

AP: Do you still want to act?

STONE: I don't get much work as an actress. And the system hasn't really supported me. I had a massive stroke when I was 41 and I walked away alive. I had about a 1-to-5% chance of survival. Everyone thought I was going to die. So many, many, many bad things happened to me because people presumed that I was dead. My bank account somehow went to zero while I was in the hospital, my money disappeared. I lost custody of my child. My career ended. All these things happened. I have a brain seizure condition that's very serious. And I tried to hide that for many years because I wanted to make my way back in the business. And if you have a disability, that doesn't really work in my industry. And so I hid in my condition for many, many, many years. And that's who I am. I'm a woman with a brain seizure condition. I have a disability, and painting has helped me not have the anxiety I had. I was just so anxious... that I wasn't going to be OK and I couldn't be accepted. And I was able to shed all that fear and trauma that I wouldn't be accepted, I wouldn't be able to work in my community. And you know what? They didn't really want me anyway. They weren't going to let me back in and I'm OK with that.

AP: You paint almost every day, what motivates you?

STONE: I love it so much and I love that it brings so much joy to people. It just does. It brings such pleasure. And I love when people come to the studio and they're like, 'Wow — we didn't know!'

US says North Korea delivered 1,000 containers of equipment and munitions to Russia for Ukraine war

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House said on Friday that North Korea has delivered more than 1,000 containers of military equipment and munitions to Russia for its ongoing war in Ukraine.

Speculation about a possible North Korean plan to refill Russia's munition stores drained in its protracted war with Ukraine flared last month, when North Korean leader Kim Jong Un traveled to Russia to meet President Vladimir Putin and visit key military sites.

White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said that the U.S. believes Kim is seeking sophisticated Russian weapons technologies in return for the munitions to boost North Korea's military and nuclear program.

The White House released images that it said show the containers were loaded onto a Russian-flagged ship before being moved via train to southwestern Russia. The containers were shipped between Sept. 7 and Oct. 1 between Najin, North Korea, and Dunay, Russia, according to the White House.

"We condemn the DPRK for providing Russian with this military equipment, which will be used to attack Ukrainian cities and kill Ukrainian civilians and further Russia's illegitimate war," Kirby said, using the initials for Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the country's official name. "In return for support, we assess the Pyongyang is seeking military assistance from Russia including fighter aircraft, surface to air missiles, armored vehicles, ballistic missile production equipment, or other materials and other advanced technologies."

The U.S. unveiled the intelligence determination as North Korea lashed out Friday at the arrival of a U.S. aircraft carrier battle group in South Korea, calling it a provocation and again raising the specter of using nuclear weapons to defend itself.

The North's official Korean Central News Agency called the aircraft carrier's arrival "an undisguised military provocation" that proves a U.S. plan to attack North Korea is being realized. It threatened to respond in line with its escalatory nuclear doctrine that authorizes the preemptive use of nuclear weapons.

The U.S. has accused North Korea of previously providing ammunition, artillery shells and rockets to Russia. North Korea has previously denied providing weaponry to Moscow.

The Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank, last week published satellite

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photos that showed a sharp increase in rail traffic along the North Korea-Russia border,

The report said satellite images as of Oct. 5 captured "a dramatic and unprecedented level of freight railcar traffic" at the Tumangang Rail Facility. It said images show approximately 73 railcars while a review of previous satellite images over the past five years shows about 20 railcars at this facility at most.

Kim last month, after he had met with Putin, called for an exponential increase in production of nuclear weapons and for his country to play a larger role in a coalition of nations confronting the United States in a "new Cold War," North Korean state media said.

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

The trip to Russia was also Kim's first foreign trip since the pandemic, during which North Korea imposed tight border controls for more than three years. After decades of hot-and-cold relations, Russia and North Korea have drawn closer since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Relations between Moscow and Pyongyang go back to the 1948 foundation of North Korea, as Soviet officials installed young, ambitious nationalist Kim Il Sung, the late grandfather of Kim Jong Un, as the country's first ruler. Since then, Soviet aid shipments had been crucial in keeping North Korea's economy afloat for decades before the disintegration of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s.

Meanwhile, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who is in the Middle East to consult with allies in the aftermath of last week's Hamas attack on Israel, spoke by phone on Friday with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba.

Blinken and Kuleba discussed the latest battlefield developments, according to the State Department.

FACT FOCUS: Misinformation about the Israel-Hamas war is flooding social media. Here are the facts

Associated Press undefined

In the days since Hamas militants stormed into Israel early Oct. 7, a flood of videos and photos purporting to show the conflict have filled social media, making it difficult for onlookers from around the world to sort fact from fiction.

While plenty of real imagery and accounts of the ensuing carnage have emerged, they have been intermingled with users pushing false claims and misrepresenting videos from other events.

Among the fabrications, users have shared false claims that a top Israeli commander had been kidnapped, circulated a doctored White House memo purporting to show President Joe Biden announcing billions in aid for Israel, and pushed old and unrelated videos of Russian President Vladimir Putin with inaccurate English captions.

Here is a closer look at the misinformation spreading online — and the facts. CLAIM: A video shows a BBC News report confirming Ukraine provided weapons to Hamas.

THE FACTS: The widely shared video clip is fabricated, officials with the BBC and Bellingcat, an investigative news website that is cited in the video as the source, confirm.

The clip, which includes the BBC's distinctive block-text logo, purports to show a story from the outlet about a recent report from Bellingcat on Ukraine providing arms to Hamas.

"Bellingcat: Ukrainian military offensive failure and HAMAS attack linked," reads the text over the video, which has more than 2,500 comments and 110,000 views on the messaging service Telegram. "The Palestinians purchased firearms, ammunition, drones and other weapons."

But neither the BBC nor Bellingcat has reported any evidence to support the notion that Ukraine funneled arms to Hamas.

"We've reached no such conclusions or made any such claims," Bellingcat wrote Tuesday in a post on X that included screengrabs of the fake report. "We'd like to stress that this is a fabrication and should be treated accordingly."

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Eliot Higgins, the Amsterdam-based organization's founder, noted in a separate post on X that the claims have been amplified by Russian social media users.

Nassim Nicholas Taleb, a New York University professor briefly shown near the end of the video, also disputed the clip's suggestion that he's said the U.S. might leave NATO if the arms claims prove true.

"Entirely fake. Never said that," the distinguished professor of risk engineering wrote in an email.

Spokespersons for the BBC didn't respond to emails seeking comment, but Shayan Sardarizadeh, a reporter with the organization's fact checking unit, confirmed in a post on X Tuesday that the video is not real.

Ukrainian officials have similarly dismissed the notion that its country's arms have somehow found their way to Hamas. The country's military intelligence agency, in a Monday post on its official Facebook page, accused Russia of plotting a disinformation campaign around these claims.

Experts say there is also no evidence of Hamas making any claims about receiving arms from Ukraine, nor would it make sense for Kyiv to provide them.

"I see no reason Ukraine would do this," said Michael O'Hanlon, director of foreign policy research at the Brookings Institution, a Washington think tank. "Starting with the fact that Kiev is in the business of obtaining weapons and not giving them away."

— Associated Press writers Philip Marcelo in New York and Hanna Arhirova in Kyiv contributed this report.

CLAIM: The Greek Orthodox Church of Saint Porphyrios was destroyed during Israel's bombing of Gaza.

THE FACTS: Officials with the church confirmed Thursday the structure remains intact and unharmed during the shelling.

Posts circulating on social media falsely claimed that the holy Christian site, located in the al-Zaytun section of Gaza's Old City, had become a casualty in the conflict.

"Israel just blew up the third oldest church in the world," wrote an Instagram user. "Saint Porphyrius Orthodox Church in Gaza was 1,616 years old."

But the house of worship remains standing, according to church officials who took to social media in recent days to debunk the false narrative.

In email replies Thursday, officials confirmed the church would host worship services Friday morning. They also referred the Associated Press to the regular updates that have been posted on the church Facebook page.

A post on the page in Arabic on Tuesday said the church remains "untouched and operating" to assist the congregation and broader community in Gaza, and that claims circulating online about it being damaged are false.

— Philip Marcelo.

CLAIM: Video of a young actor being filmed lying in a pool of fake blood shows propaganda being created for use in the Israel-Hamas war.

THE FACTS: The video is behind-the-scenes footage from the making of "Empty Place," a short film focused on the story of Ahmad Manasra, a Palestinian who was arrested at age 13 in 2015 in relation to the stabbing of two Israelis.

Social media users on both sides of the latest Israel-Hamas war are sharing the video, each falsely alleging that it's proof the other group is creating propaganda about their own.

In the clip, a young actor lies on a sidewalk covered in fake blood, his right leg bent backward, as a film crew works around him. Other actors mill about dressed as soldiers and in garb worn by many orthodox Jewish men.

"See how Israelis are making fake videos saying that Palestine Freedom Fighters killed children," reads one tweet that had received more than 5,600 likes and more than 4,400 shares as of Wednesday.

An Instagram post claimed the opposite, stating: "These terrorists are dressing up as JEWISH soldiers to create fake videos about Israeli soldiers! Faking Propaganda!"

But neither allegation is correct. The video shows footage from the making of the 2022 short film directed by Awni Eshtaiwe, a filmmaker based in the West Bank. The scene being shot begins about 1 minute and

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10 seconds into the approximately 2 minute film.

Mohamad Awawdeh, a cinematographer listed in the film's credits as a camera assistant, posted the behind-the-scenes footage to TikTok in April 2022, around the time the film was released. A caption on the post, written in Arabic, explains that the scene being filmed in the video shows Manasra being attacked. Awawdeh posted the same footage to Instagram on June 30.

CLAIM: Nimrod Aloni, a top general in the Israeli army, was captured by Hamas militants during a deadly incursion Saturday into southern Israeli towns near the Gaza Strip.

THE FACTS: There's no truth to this claim, a spokesperson for the Israel Defense Forces confirmed. Aloni was seen Sunday at a meeting of top Israeli military officials.

The erroneous claim that Aloni was one of the hostages taken by Hamas spread widely online Saturday after the militant group attacked Israel.

"Palestinian resistance fighters capture Israeli commander Nimrod Aloni along with dozens of other Israeli soldiers as the resistance fighters attacked neighbouring occupied towns and Israeli check posts near Gaza," stated one Instagram post that received more than 43,000 likes.

But Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, the IDF's chief military spokesman, told reporters on Saturday that claims Aloni was captured are "not true."

Aloni clearly appears 10 seconds into a video posted to the Israeli military's official YouTube channel of top IDF officials discussing the war on Sunday. Sunday's date can be seen on a slide in the background. The IDF also published online four images from the meeting. The one on the lower right shows Aloni on the far right.

The Israeli army confirmed to The Associated Press that Aloni is the man in the video and image.

Hamas militants are holding Israeli civilians and soldiers hostage in Gaza, the Israeli military has confirmed. The militants have cautioned that they will kill a hostage every time Israel's military bombs civilian targets in the Gaza Strip without warning.

— Associated Press writer Melissa Goldin in New York contributed this report.

CLAIM: A memo shows that President Joe Biden just announced he is sending \$8 billion in military aid to Israel.

THE FACTS: An image of a memo being widely shared online was fabricated, and Biden has not made any such announcement, the White House confirmed on Monday.

Social media users began sharing the altered image in the wake of Saturday's surprise attack on Israel by Hamas.

It appears to show Biden authorizing Secretary of State Antony Blinken to direct up to \$8 billion in aid, as Israel formally declared war Sunday.

The purported memo is formatted like other orders posted on the White House website, complete with the blue-and-white White House logo at the top and Biden's name at the bottom.

"BREAKING! Biden signs order to send \$8 BILLION in Military Aid to Israel," wrote one user who shared the memo on X, the social media platform formerly known as Twitter.

But the widely shared memo is a fake, Sean Savett, a White House spokesperson, confirmed Monday. The funds released to Iran are also not related to Hamas' attack, the office also maintains.

The memo appears to be a doctored version of an order Biden issued providing war assistance to Ukraine this summer.

Much of the language mirrors that July 25 missive, including the title: "Memorandum on the Delegation of Authority Under Section 506(a)(1) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961."

The real memo called for up to \$400 million for Ukraine in its ongoing war with invading Russian forces. Biden's name appears in the center of the fake document, rather than the right side as in the original.

Savett, in his emailed reply, also pointed to Biden's call over the weekend with Israel President Benjamin Netanyahu, in which the Democrat reiterated that help was on the way to bolster Israel and that more

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assistance would arrive in the coming days.

The administration deployed the USS Gerald R. Ford, the Navy's newest and most advanced aircraft carrier, which sailed to the Eastern Mediterranean on Sunday carrying approximately 5,000 sailors and a deck of fighter jets. It was accompanied by a group of cruisers and destroyers in a show of force and support for Israel.

— Philip Marcelo.

CLAIM: A video shows Hamas fighters parachuting onto a sports field before attacking Israeli citizens during the group's surprise attack on Israel.

THE FACTS: While Hamas did employ paragliders to get some fighters across the border between Gaza and southern Israel, the footage of the sports field shows parachute jumpers in Cairo, Egypt, and has been online since at least September.

The clip shows people strapped to multi-colored parachutes descending onto a crowded sports field complex filled with children and families, many in red sports jerseys.

"Hamas paraglided amongst Israeli citizens and proceeded to massacre them," text on the video clip reads. One post of the misleading footage on TikTok was viewed more than 38,000 times.

But this footage has been online since at least Sept. 27, when it was posted to TikTok with the location tag "Egypt."

Details of the video also point to Egypt as the location — a person is wearing a blue shirt that reads "El Nasr SC" on the back, the name of a sporting club in northeastern Cairo.

Images of the club on Google Maps match the scene of the video — as well as several other clips of the event from the same TikTok user — with both showing a bright blue fence around a sporting ground next to a paved area with green and blue plastic seats.

The parachuters land on a larger soccer pitch surrounded by tall field lights. The field matches photos posted to the club's Facebook page and footage of its soccer team's matches, including a distinctive red building with a blue fence on top at one end that can be seen in the TikTok clip at around 19 seconds.

Other TikTok users shared footage of a parachuting similar scene around the same time, with "El Nasr" in the caption in Arabic.

The crowd of onlookers in the clip circulating online also doesn't seem distressed by the arrival of the parachuters, as one might expect if they were an invading force. In fact, many women and children are seen running towards them, phones in hand taking videos and photos of the aerial display.

— Melissa Goldin.

CLAIM: Two videos show Russian President Vladimir Putin warning the U.S. to "stay away" from the latest Gaza war.

THE FACTS: Both videos circulating online are months-old clips of Putin speaking about the Russia-Ukraine war, not the conflict in the Middle East, which have been miscaptioned in English.

Both videos show Putin speaking in Russian, with false English captions saying he was warning the U.S. to refrain from helping the Jewish state.

"America wants to Destroy israel as we destroy ukraine In past," the captions on one video state. "I am warning America. Russia will help palestine and america can do nothing." One TikTok post that shared the clip had received approximately 11,600 views as of Monday.

A caption on another video of Putin, filmed in a different location, similarly reads: "I am warning america to stay Away from palestine israel war."

But the two clips long predate the latest Israel-Hamas war and make no mention of Israel at all.

The first shows Putin at a meeting of Russia's Human Rights Council in December 2022, where, amid discussions about the war in Ukraine, he responded to a question about the country's potential use of nuclear weapons, as the AP reported at the time. The footage was featured by multiple other newsoutlets with similar translations.

In the second, Putin is speaking at a February 2023 event marking the 80th anniversary of the World War II Soviet victory over Nazi German forces in the battle of Stalingrad. In his remarks, he compared this threat to Germany's then-recent decision to supply Ukraine with tanks, the AP reported at the time. Several media outlets also featured the footage in similar reports.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Monday that Russia is "extremely concerned" by the "spiral of violence" in Israel. Mikhail Bogdanov, Russia's deputy foreign minister and former ambassador to Israel and Egypt, told the state Tass agency Saturday that Moscow has been in touch with "all parties (of the conflict), including Arab countries" and was urging for "an immediate cease-fire and peace."

— Melissa Goldin.

This is part of AP's effort to address widely shared misinformation, including work with outside companies and organizations to add factual context to misleading content that is circulating online. Learn more about fact-checking at AP.

AP Exclusive: 911 calls from deadly Lahaina wildfire reveal terror and panic in the rush 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 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.

The pleas for help came one right after another. Overwhelmed dispatchers repeatedly apologized to callers — at times showing 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.

Dispatchers told some callers there was no one available to send to their location because everyone was working on the fire.

At 3:33 p.m., 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.

The woman managed to flag down a passing car. 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.

In a 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."

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A dispatcher said they would update the fire department. Roughly two-third of those who died in the fire were age 60 or older.

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 primary electric utility company, has acknowledged its power lines started a wildfire on Maui that morning. County firefighters declared the blaze contained and left, only to have the flames reemerge 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.

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.'"

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

Maui County's communication chief Mahina Martin said the county released the tapes to comply with a legal request for public records.

"Reliving the tragedy causes unimaginable pain and grief for survivors, their families and the families of loved ones lost that chaotic and heartbreaking day," Martin wrote in an email, "and our hearts go out to them."

She later continued, "it is truly unfortunate that as people are beginning to heal they are faced with re-experiencing the horrific event over again as it replays on media."

Dispatchers were also fielding emergency calls from outside of Lahaina, including report of violent crimes and other wildfires burning in a different part of the island. They received more than 4,500 emergency calls and texts that day, according to the Maui Police Department, including hundreds of calls during the time span requested by the AP. Normally, the dispatchers get about 1,600 calls a day.

"It was an extremely dynamic situation that day, in which our dispatchers adapted to the best of their abilities," Maui Police Department spokesperson Alana Pico wrote in an email.

The audio clips echo a refrain heard from many Lahaina survivors: They were unable to escape, even by car, because of traffic and blocked roads. Some reported being routed onto roads that were blocked by gates. Others warned that a road south of town needed to be opened or people would die.

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.

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

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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.

Lauer reported from Philadelphia and Boone reported from Boise, Idaho. Associated Press writers Lisa Baumann and Gene Johnson in Seattle, Chris Keller in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Claire Rush in Portland, Oregon, contributed to this report.

Bryce Harper shines as Phillies aim for second straight World Series

By DAN GELSTON AP Sports Writer

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Bryce Harper has manhandled postseason pressure with the ease of one of his swings -- bat tucked behind his helmet, short ground step, then, whack! -- against a slider.

He's crushed it.

The drama lies in the postseason not so much in what Harper will do once he digs into the batter's box, but more in what kind of kitschy T-shirt design will surface from each game-changing hit that rings both an hydraulic Liberty Bell and the ears of 45,000 diehard and dyed-in-red Phillies fans.

Maybe a hyped Harper will bellow, "This is my house!" standing on second base after a go-ahead double.

Or perhaps he won't say anything at all, just deliver an icy death stare -- two, actually -- to a sheepish shortstop who poked Harper with a mocking "Attaboy!"

Harper has turned his Phillies teammates into fans, as they step on the dugout steps and hug the railing for his at-bats, the best seat in the house for the inevitable big moment.

"Any time he goes up there, it's kind of must-watch TV," second baseman Bryson Stott said.

Harper is Mr. Red October, who, after listening to sports talk radio like any good Phillies fan on his commute, arrives at the clubhouse with an intense focus -- "it's a locked-in look, I guess," says Stott -- that spills into field. He a \$330 million bargain, in large part from a resume that screams Philly's greatest clutch athlete; from his NL Championship Series MVP honors a year ago, to the fastest return in baseball from Tommy John surgery, to a speedy transition to first base. He hit three homers and batted .462 in a four-game NL Division Series win over Atlanta that moved the Phillies on the cusp of a second straight World Series trip.

"I signed here for a reason, to do everything I could to bring back a trophy to this town," Harper said. "I got chills thinking about it, because that's what it's all about. I absolutely love this place."

Philly loves him back.

They can show their thanks for him again on Monday when Harper turns 31, the same day the Phillies host Arizona in the NLCS opener.

Harper expects to play in that one after he briefly made Philly lose a breath when he clutched his surgically-repaired right elbow after a Game 4 collision at first base. Harper finished the game, said he was fine and had just stung his funny bone. He flexed his beer muscles in the clubhouse when -- shirtless, naturally -- he dumped a beer over his head with his right arm.

Inside the jubilant clubhouse, the Phillies had their fun, spraying Harper with beer and gleefully yelling, "Attaboy, Harper! Attaboy!"

Braves shortstop Orlando Arcia had gleefully shouted, "Attaboy, Harper" in the wake of a Game 2 win that ended when Harper was doubled up on the bases, a wisecrack Arcia acknowledged he never intended for the Phillies to hear.

Harper doubled down that his baserunning decision was correct, the aggressiveness just part of his fiery

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makeup.

"Me, personally, I don't think it was a miscue," Harper said. "But I took a chance, and (centerfielder) Michael Harris made an incredible play. I'm not going to change the way I play because of a moment or situation."

Harper then stared down Arcia on his each of his two Game 3 home run trots (nine total in two Phillies' postseasons).

"I didn't really see it, but I'm sure there's pictures somewhere," Stott said.

Yes, the homers launched the shot memed 'round the world, a message sent that you don't tug on No. 3's jersey.

The Phillies are more than just Harper, of course.

They boast arguably the best 1-2 starting rotation among the four teams left in the postseason with Zack Wheeler and Aaron Nola.

Trea Turner became the first Phillies player with four hits in a postseason game when he went 4 for 4 in Game 4. Against the Braves in Games 3 and 4, Nick Castellanos became the first player to hit multiple homers in consecutive postseason games.

Philadelphia's lethal lineup has led to few ho-hum postseason wins among the 16 over the last two seasons.

They slugged six homers!

It's a Stott Slam!

They scored six in the ninth to win it!

It's been riveting October baseball. Every game (yes, even their losses are eventful).

The topper, Rob Thomson, is the second manager in MLB history to reach the LCS in each of his first two seasons.

"I think that he's done pretty consistent at remaining relaxed and understanding that the talent is there to win in the locker room," Castellanos said. "If we don't win, it's not because there's a managerial bad decision. It's because we didn't play well enough."

Harper was hailed as a baseball prodigy since before he was a teen, hailed as baseball's version of LeBron James or Tiger Woods. The Las Vegas sensation blossomed into a star and an MVP with the Washington Nationals. Then came a second life as a postseason conqueror in Philadelphia.

"When I was 10 years old, 11 years old, I played in so many big tournaments and big lights," Harper said. "And I mean, you guys couldn't imagine the pressure of the situations or going to JUCO early and having everybody in the world relying on you to be the number one pick. That was hard."

"You know, 17 years old, 16 years old, trying to be the number one pick, knowing that if you're not, you're a failure. So that's pressure, you know. Trying to make all the money you can to get your family out of an area or set them up for life, that's pressure. This is all cake, man. This is so much fun."

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

NASA spacecraft launched to mysterious and rare metal asteroid in first mission of its kind

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — NASA's Psyche spacecraft rocketed away Friday on a six-year journey to a rare metal-covered asteroid.

Most asteroids tend to be rocky or icy, and this is the first exploration of a metal world. Scientists believe it may be the battered remains of an early planet's core, and could shed light on the inaccessible centers of Earth and other rocky planets.

SpaceX launched the spacecraft into an overcast midmorning sky from NASA's Kennedy Space Center. Named for the asteroid it's chasing, Psyche should reach the huge, potato-shaped object in 2029.

"It's so thrilling," said Laurie Leshin, director of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. Added Arizona State

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University's Jim Bell, part of the Psyche team: "What a great ride so far."

An hour later, the spacecraft separated successfully from the rocket's upper stage and floated away, drawing applause from ground controllers.

After decades of visiting faraway worlds of rock, ice and gas, NASA is psyched to pursue one coated in metal. Of the nine or so metal-rich asteroids discovered so far, Psyche is the biggest, orbiting the sun in the outer portion of the main asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter alongside millions of other space rocks. It was discovered in 1852 and named after Greek mythology's captivating goddess of the soul.

"It's long been humans' dream to go to the metal core of our Earth. I mean, ask Jules Verne," lead scientist Lindy Elkins-Tanton of Arizona State University said ahead of the launch.

"The pressure is too high. The temperature is too high. The technology is impossible," she said. "But there's one way in our solar system that we can look at a metal core and that is by going to this asteroid."

Astronomers know from radar and other observations that the asteroid is big — about 144 miles (232 kilometers) across at its widest and 173 miles (280 kilometers) long. They believe it's brimming with iron, nickel and other metals, and quite possibly silicates, with a dull, predominantly gray surface likely covered with fine metal grains from cosmic impacts.

Otherwise, it's a speck of light in the night sky, full of mystery until the spacecraft reaches it after traveling more than 2 billion miles (3.6 billion kilometers).

Scientists envision spiky metal craters, huge metal cliffs and metal-encrusted eroded lava flows greenish-yellow from sulfur — "almost certain to be completely wrong," according to Elkins-Tanton. It's also possible that trace amounts of gold, silver, platinum or iridium — iron-loving elements — could be dissolved in the asteroid's iron and nickel, she said.

"There's a very good chance that it's going to be outside of our imaginings, and that is my fondest hope," she said.

Believed to be a planetary building block from the solar system's formation 4.5 billion years ago, the asteroid can help answer such fundamental questions as how did life arise on Earth and what makes our planet habitable, according to Elkins-Tanton.

On Earth, the planet's iron core is responsible for the magnetic field that shields our atmosphere and enables life.

Led by Arizona State University on NASA's behalf, the \$1.2 billion mission will use a roundabout route to get to the asteroid. The van-size spacecraft with solar panels big enough to fill a tennis court will swoop past Mars for a gravity boost in 2026. Three years later, it will reach the asteroid and attempt to go into orbit around it, circling as high as 440 miles (700 kilometers) and as close as 47 miles (75 kilometers) until at least 2031.

The spacecraft relies on solar electric propulsion, using xenon gas-fed thrusters and their gentle blue-glowing pulses. An experimental communication system is also along for the ride, using lasers instead of radio waves in an attempt to expand the flow of data from deep space to Earth. NASA expects the test to yield more than 10 times the amount of data, enough to transmit videos from the moon or Mars one day.

The spacecraft should have soared a year ago, but was held up by delays in flight software testing attributed to poor management and other issues. The revised schedule added extra travel time. So instead of arriving at the asteroid in 2026 as originally planned, the spacecraft won't get there until 2029.

That's the same year that another NASA spacecraft — the one that just returned asteroid samples to the Utah desert — will arrive at a different space rock as it buzzes Earth.

The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Science and Educational Media Group. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

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 against the intensifying Israeli bombardment of Gaza, underscoring the risk of a wider regional conflict as Israel prepares for a possible ground invasion.

From the typically sedate streets of downtown Amman in Jordan, to Yemen's war-scarred capital of Sanaa, crowds of Muslim worshippers poured into the streets after weekly Friday prayers, angered by devastating Israeli airstrikes on Gaza that began after the militant group Hamas launched an unprecedented surprise attack on Israel last Saturday.

At the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem's Old City, Israeli police were permitting only certain older men, women and children to enter the sprawling hilltop compound for prayers, trying to limit the potential for violence. Only 5,000 worshippers made it into the site, the Islamic endowment that manages the mosque said. On a typical Friday, some 50,000 perform the prayers.

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

"We can't live, we can't breathe, they are killing everything that is good within us," said Ahmad Barbour, a 57-year-old cleaner, red-faced and seething after police blocked him from entering for prayers.

"Everything that is forbidden to us is allowed to them," he added, referring to the Israelis.

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 Mosque 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.

Hundreds of young Palestinian worshippers who had been turned away from the Old City threw down small prayer rugs on the street in the east Jerusalem neighborhood of Wadi Joz and prayed in the open. When some of the men started shouting, Israeli police charged into the crowd with batons and fired rounds of tear gas at the worshippers, wounding at least six people, said the Palestinian Red Crescent.

Thousands demonstrated in Amman in neighboring Jordan, some crying out: "We are going to Jerusalem as millions of martyrs!"

"What do they want from Palestine? Do they expect them to leave?" asked protester Omar Abu-Sundos. "For what remains of Palestine to leave? They won't leave."

In Beirut, thousands of supporters of Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group waved Lebanese, Palestinian and Hezbollah flags, chanting slogans in support of Gaza and calling for "death to Israel." The Iranian-backed militant group in neighboring Lebanon has launched sporadic attacks since the Hamas assault, but largely stayed on the sidelines of the war.

However, Hezbollah's deputy secretary-general warned that it would be "on the lookout" for the United States and British naval vessels heading to the Mediterranean Sea. U.S. officials, including President Joe Biden, have repeatedly warned Iran and the regional militias Tehran backs to stay out of the conflict between Israel and Hamas.

"Your battleships do not interest us, nor do your statements frighten us," Naim Kassim said at a rally in a southern suburb of Beirut. "When the time is right to take action, we will do so."

In Baghdad, tens of thousands of protesters gathered in Tahrir Square — the protest hub of Iraq's capital — for rallies called by the influential Shiite cleric and political leader Muqtada al-Sadr.

"We, as Iraqis, know the pain of having an occupier on our land," said protester Alaa al-Arabyia, referring to the U.S. occupation of Iraq following its 2003 invasion to topple Saddam Hussein. "Palestinian women have husbands, loved ones and sons fighting the occupation. We stand with them in their struggle."

Across Iran, a supporter of Hamas and Israel's regional archenemy, demonstrators also streamed into the streets after prayers. In Tehran, they burned Israeli and American flags, chanting: "Death to Israel,"

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"Death to America," "Israel will be doomed," and "Palestine will be the conqueror."

"The Palestinian people are fed up, now your idea is to destroy Gaza, the houses of the people," Iran's hard-line President Ebrahim Raisi said in a speech in the country's southern Fars province. "The people of the world and Palestine will cause trouble for you."

In the Syrian capital of Damascus, protesters — including Palestinians from the Yarmouk refugee camp formed after the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation — also rallied.

"I tell the people not to leave their homes otherwise they will be like our grandparents who left Palestine and came to Syria but never returned," Ahmad Saeed, a 23-year-old Palestinian living in Syria, said, referring to the 1948 war.

In Yemen's Sanaa, held by the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels still at war with a Saudi-led coalition, demonstrators crowded the streets 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."

"We are ready to participate actively and send hundreds of thousands of mujahedeen ... to defend Palestine, the Palestinian people and the holy sites," the Houthi government said in a statement Friday.

After Friday prayers, Egyptian demonstrators ringed the historic Al-Azhar Mosque in downtown Cairo, the Sunni Muslim world's foremost religious institution, chanting that Israel remained their enemy "generation after generation." They repeated the traditionally nationalistic slogan, "We give our souls and blood to Al-Aqsa."

In Pakistan's capital of Islamabad, some worshippers trampled on American and Israeli flags.

"International media and international courts turn a blind eye to the injustices with the Palestinians. But they only notice the actions that the Palestinians take to defend themselves," said Faheem Ahmed, a worshipper in Karachi. "They call it terrorism."

Associated Press writers Abdulrahman Zeyad in Baghdad; Kareem Chehayeb in Beirut; Amir Vahdat in Tehran, Iran; Albert Aji in Damascus, Syria; and Munir Ahmed in Islamabad contributed to this report.

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

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court avoided a catastrophic accident last year when a piece of marble at least 2 feet long crashed to the ground in an interior courtyard used by the justices and their aides, according to several 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 the 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."

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.

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

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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."

McNeil reported from Tel Aviv.

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

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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 the museum’s independence.

This story, supported by the Pulitzer Center for Crisis Reporting, is part of an ongoing Associated Press series covering threats to democracy in Europe.

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

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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 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.

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Today in History: October 14

Martin Luther King wins Nobel Peace Prize

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Saturday, Oct. 14, the 287th day of 2023. There are 78 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Oct. 14, 1964, civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. was named winner of the Nobel Peace Prize.

On this date:

In 1066, Normans under William the Conqueror defeated the English at the Battle of Hastings.

In 1586, Mary, Queen of Scots, went on trial in England, accused of committing treason against Queen Elizabeth I. (Mary was beheaded in February 1587.)

In 1933, Nazi Germany announced it was withdrawing from the League of Nations.

In 1939, a German U-boat torpedoed and sank the HMS Royal Oak, a British battleship anchored at Scapa Flow in Scotland's Orkney Islands; 833 of the more than 1,200 men aboard were killed.

In 1944, German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel took his own life rather than face trial and certain execution for allegedly conspiring against Adolf Hitler.

In 1947, U.S. Air Force Capt. Chuck Yeager became the first test pilot to break the sound barrier as he flew the experimental Bell XS-1 rocket plane over Muroc Dry Lake in California.

In 1964, Soviet leader Nikita S. Khrushchev was toppled from power; he was succeeded by Leonid Brezhnev as First Secretary and by Alexei Kosygin as Premier.

In 1981, the new president of Egypt, Hosni Mubarak (HOHS'-nee moo-BAH'-rahk), was sworn in to succeed the assassinated Anwar Sadat. Mubarak pledged loyalty to Sadat's policies.

In 1986, Holocaust survivor and human rights advocate Elie Wiesel (EL'-ee vee-ZEHL') was named winner of the Nobel Peace Prize.

In 1990, composer-conductor Leonard Bernstein died in New York at age 72.

In 2008, a grand jury in Orlando, Fla. returned charges of first-degree murder, aggravated child abuse and aggravated manslaughter against Casey Anthony in the death of her 2-year-old daughter, Caylee. (She was acquitted in July 2011.)

In 2012, retired Air Force Brig. Gen. Chuck Yeager, at the age of 89, marked the 65th anniversary of his supersonic flight by smashing through the sound barrier again, this time in the backseat of an F-15 which took off from Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada.

In 2016, a judge in Connecticut dismissed a wrongful-death lawsuit by Newtown families against the maker of the rifle used in the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting massacre, citing a federal law that shielded gun manufacturers from most lawsuits over criminal use of their products.

In 2017, a truck bombing in Somalia's capital killed more than 500 people in one of the world's deadliest attacks in years.

In 2018, Saudi Arabia threatened to retaliate for any sanctions imposed on it over the disappearance and suspected murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

In 2021, 78-year-old New York real estate heir Robert Durst was sentenced in Los Angeles to life in prison without a chance of parole for the murder of a friend, Susan Berman, more than two decades earlier. (Durst died in prison two months later.)

Today's Birthdays: Classical pianist Gary Graffman is 95. Movie director Carroll Ballard is 86. Country singer Melba Montgomery is 86. Former White House counsel John W. Dean III is 85. Fashion designer Ralph Lauren is 84. Singer Sir Cliff Richard is 83. Singer-musician Justin Hayward (The Moody Blues) is 77. Actor Greg Evigan is 70. World Golf Hall of Famer Beth Daniel is 67. Singer-musician Thomas Dolby is 65. Actor Lori Petty is 60. Former MLB player and manager Joe Girardi is 59. Actor Steve Coogan is 58. Singer Karyn White is 58. Actor Edward Kerr is 57. Actor Jon Seda is 53. Country singer Natalie Maines (The Chicks) is 49. Actor-singer Shaznay Lewis (All Saints) is 48. Actor Stephen Hill is 47. Singer Usher is 45. TV personality Stacy Keibler is 44. Actor Ben Whishaw is 43. Actor Jordan Brower is 42. Director Benh Zeitlin is 41. Actor Skyler Shaye is 37. Actor-comedian Jay Pharoah is 36. Actor Max Thieriot is 35.