

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 1 of 56

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- Newsweek Bulletin](#)
- [3- Prairie Doc: "Differences matter"](#)
- [4- Welcome home for soccer team](#)
- [4- Coming up on GDILIVE.COM](#)
- [5- EarthTalk - AI & Robotics](#)
- [6- SD SearchLight: Q&A: Rounds on regulating AI, which will impact 'every single aspect of our lives'](#)
- [9- Weather Pages](#)
- [13- Daily Devotional](#)
- [14- 2023 Community Events](#)
- [15- Subscription Form](#)
- [16- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [17- News from the Associated Press](#)

Monday, Oct. 16

Senior Menu: Vegetable beef soup, chicken salad sandwich, Mandarin oranges, tomato juice, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Apple pie in a cup.

School Lunch: French bread pizza, peas.

Pantry Open 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center, 1 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

Volleyball at Langford (7th at 4 p.m., 8th at 5 p.m., JV at 6:30 p.m. with varsity to follow)

Tuesday, Oct. 17

Senior Menu: Baked chicken breast, mashed potatoes and gravy, California Blend, Lemon tart bar, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Monty cristo sandwich.

School Lunch: Oriental chicken, Asian rice.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

Thrift Store open 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Food Pantry open 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Volleyball hosts Northwestern (C/7th at 5 p.m., JV/8th at 6 p.m., varsity to follow) VOLLEY FOR CURE NIGHT!

City Council Meeting, 7 p.m. at City Hall



"Your life does not get better by chance. It gets better by change."

-Jim Rohn

Wednesday, Oct. 18

Senior Menu: Scalloped potatoes/ham, peas, Mandarin orange salad, whole wheat bread, Ambrosia.

School Breakfast: French toast.

School Lunch: Cheese stick with Marinara sauce.

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton Ad Council, 7 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation (service event), 6 p.m.; League, 6:30 p.m.

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

Thursday, Oct. 19

Senior Menu: Swiss steak, mashed potatoes, califlower, apricots, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Muffins.

School Lunch: Taco salad.

Emmanuel Lutheran: WELCA (final day to pack LWR projects), potluck, 1:30 p.m.

First Round of Football Playoffs: Groton Area at Elk Point/Jefferson, 6 p.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
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Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 2 of 56

The Bulletin by Newsweek

World in Brief

two counts of a hate crime and aggravated battery with a deadly weapon.

Actress Suzanne Somers, best known for roles in Three's Company and Step by Step, has died at 76 amid a longtime battle with cancer.

A new poll showed that Donald Trump is ahead of President Joe Biden in two swing states — Arizona and Georgia — that could shape the 2024 election. Both the states helped Trump win in 2016 but sided with Biden in 2020.

Two girls aged 4 and 11 kidnapped from a Burger King in Columbus, Georgia on Sunday are feared to be in "extreme danger" as police search for their suspected abductor, 49-year-old Mikaela Harrell.

Business heir Daniel Noboa won Ecuador's presidential runoff election and vowed to "rebuild" the South American country struggling with violence, rising crime, and a weak economy.

Populist ruling Law and Justice party is predicted to win most seats in Poland's general election, exit polls showed. However, the opposition, led by the liberal Civic Coalition, appeared to secure a majority to form the next government.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Ukrainian forces downed a Russian Mi-8 helicopter on Sunday, new footage from the Ukrainian military shows, as Russian advances on the Kyiv-held frontline town of Avdiivka appear to be slowing down.

What to Watch in the Day Ahead

On the economic calendar, the Empire state manufacturing survey for October will be released at 8:30 a.m. ET. Philadelphia Federal Reserve President Patrick Harker is scheduled to participate in an event from 10:30 a.m.

U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is scheduled to address members of the Parliament and reiterate "the UK's total condemnation" of Hamas attacks on Israel, his office said. He will also discuss "out the government's approach to the developing crisis."

TALKING POINTS

"Israel is going after a group of people who have engaged in barbarism that is as consequential as the Holocaust. And ... I think Israel has to respond. They have to go after Hamas. Hamas is a bunch of cowards. They're hiding behind the civilians," President Joe Biden said during a segment on 60 Minutes.

"The many, many Palestinians who have had nothing to do with the brutal terrorist organization Hamas — the vast majority of the population of Gaza — they deserve dignity. They deserve safety and security," U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan urging the evacuation of Palestinian civilians out of Gaza amid a looming Israeli offensive in the region.

"I saw so many terrible pictures this week of children suffering, Israeli children and Palestinian children. It took me back to a really horrible, horrible place. No one in this world deserves to suffer like that, especially not kids." Comedian Pete Davidson in his Saturday Night Live cold open, a week after Hamas-led attacks on Israel.

Drugstore chain Rite Aid filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in New Jersey after struggling with legal battles alleging the company helped fuel the nation's opioid epidemic.

President Biden said he is "shocked and sickened" by news of an Illinois landlord's stabbing of a 6-year-old Palestinian Muslim child because he was upset about the Israel-Hamas conflict. The child's mother, who was also injured, remains hospitalized. Joseph Czuba, 71, was charged with first-degree murder, attempted first-degree murder and

"Differences matter"

Aristotle is said to have referred to the female as a mutilated male, and this philosophy seems to have carried forward into much more modern times.

In 1977, official FDA guidelines recommended that women of "childbearing potential" be excluded from early stage clinical trials. Men, particularly white men, were considered the ideal model, from which the success and side effects of any particular treatment could be judged. Somehow, women's menstrual cycles made them too difficult to study, while simultaneously being irrelevant to the results. The thalidomide tragedy quite

reasonably brought fetal wellbeing to the front of researchers' minds, but there was reluctance to wait for animal teratogenicity data before starting human trials. Companies often interpreted childbearing potential to mean childbearing age, and then extended that ban to all women, in all stages of research. Studies carried out in the mid to later part of the last century frequently enrolled thousands of participants, but no women at all. This was even true in purely observational studies, where nothing was being trialed or tested.

Then, in 1993 congress passed a mandate that women be included in NIH funded trials, and the FDA changed their guidelines. Now they said that the population studied in trials should be representative of the people likely to be treated with an intervention if it were approved. This meant that most studies had to include people of different ages, races, and genders.

Once scientists started looking, it became evident that the differences among us translate to differences in the way diseases develop, the way conditions present, and the way we respond to potential treatments. We may need different doses. We may experience different side effects. We may need different treatments altogether. This can be true for differences based on age, race, health status, and, of course, sex.

The scientific landscape is very different today than it was in 1993, but we still have a long way to go. A recent review of studies involving cardiovascular disease, cancer, and mental health interventions found that just over 40% of study participants were women. Cardiovascular disease and cancer affect men and women almost equally. In mental health research the situation is worse: women make up approximately 60% of those affected, but still, just over 40% of those enrolled in trials.

Everyone deserves to know that the recommendations their doctor makes are backed by science that includes people like them. Many treatments work just as well in people of different races, ages, or genders. But many don't, and we won't know if we don't ask that question.

Debra Johnson, M.D. is part of The Prairie Doc® team of physicians and currently practices family medicine in Brookings, South Dakota. Follow The Prairie Doc® at www.prairiedoc.org and on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show providing health information based on science, built on trust for 22 Seasons, on SDPB and streaming live on Facebook most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.



Debra Johnston, MD

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 4 of 56



There was a welcome home celebration for the girls soccer team Sunday afternoon at the Groton Area Arena. The girls placed second in the state this year. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM video)

Coming up on GDILIVE.COM

GDILIVE.COM Monday, Oct. 16, 2023
Groton Area at Langford Area
Tigers 6:00 JV: Fans of Jaedyn Penning



Langford Area Lions

Varsity Sponsors: Agtegra, Bary Keith at Harr Motors, BK Custom Ts & More, Bierman Farm Service, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Full Circle Ag, Groton Ag Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Ford, John Sieh Agency and Locke Electric

GDILIVE.COM Tuesday, Oct. 17, 2023
Groton Area Northwestern Area
Tigers 6:00 JV: Gordon & Dorene Nelson



Northwestern Wildcats

Varsity Sponsors: Agtegra, Bary Keith at Harr Motors, BK Custom Ts & More, Bierman Farm Service, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Full Circle Ag, Groton Ag Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Ford, John Sieh Agency and Locke Electric

EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: How are AI and robotics combining to revolutionize recycling? – B.C., New York, NY

A survey conducted by the Carton Council of North America in 2018 showed that 94 percent of Americans support recycling. That same year, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reported that the recycling rate was only 32.1 percent. Why is this the case?

Local governments are responsible for creating recycling programs. Cities that have invested in recycling infrastructure, education and incentive programs, like San Francisco and Los Angeles, claim recycling rates of over 70 percent.

Contrarily, cities with smaller budgets and staff and contamination issues have eliminated curbside recycling altogether. (Chesapeake, VA Pembroke Pines, FL are two examples.)

The adoption of single-stream recycling, where various recyclables are placed in a single container, has significantly increased household participation. But it has also contributed to a 25 percent contamination rate of recycled material. Contamination occurs when non-recyclable items are mixed with recyclables, making it challenging or impossible to sort and safely process these materials. Common contaminants include non-recyclable plastics (bubble wrap, trash bags, cling wrap, etc.) and food residue.

Contamination is more than a mere inconvenience. In 2016, China received over 16 million tons of plastic, paper and metals from the U.S., 30 percent of which was contaminated and later dumped in the Chinese countryside and waterways. In 2017, China passed the National Sword Policy, banning the importation of materials that the U.S. had previously sent in for recycling. As a result, U.S. recycling facilities have had to make substantial improvements in the quality of their recyclables.

How does AI play a role in improving recycling? The 1990s saw the introduction of optical sensing and computational intelligence to distinguish between various types of plastic and paper. These systems typically achieved 80 to 95 percent purity, with human workers tasked to manually remove contaminants. Enter artificial intelligence! Recycling requires rapid identification of objects with diverse shapes, sizes and orientations on conveyor belts. AI-driven systems demonstrate near-100-percent accuracy by relying on image analysis of attributes, including color, opacity and form. A vast dataset of recyclable material images, collected globally and meticulously annotated, are regularly updated to improve reliability.

One company, AMP Robotics, has pioneered in the AI-recycling industry since 2014. Equipped with a powerful network, their 1,800 pound 'pick-and-place' robots are twice as efficient as human employees, identifying and sorting 80 items per minute. Now recycling facilities equipped with artificial intelligence robots are able to sort greater quantities of trash while reducing operating costs.

Perhaps we can even stop contamination at the point of disposal, right at home. CleanRobotics has created a receptacle named TrashBot that uses imaging, AI algorithms, and robotics to detect and sort waste as it is being thrown away. This prevents contamination and makes the sorting process easier down the line.



The combination of artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics is making the recycling business much more profitable and practical than ever.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Q&A: Rounds on regulating AI, which will impact 'every single aspect of our lives'

Senator part of bipartisan group studying technology's influence

BY: JOHN HULT - OCTOBER 15, 2023 7:00 AM

Talk of artificial intelligence is all but unavoidable in 2023.

The emergence of tools like ChatGPT for text generation and Midjourney for art have pushed the technology into the public consciousness in a way voice recognition like the iPhone's Siri or autocomplete features on a word processor never did.

AI is an umbrella term that generally refers to programs that can ingest and analyze massive datasets to draw conclusions or perform tasks. Ask ChatGPT a question, and it uses what it's learned from billions of words of "training data" to generate an answer within seconds.

In March, a group of tech leaders signed an open letter urging U.S. companies to pause on AI development over concerns it was advancing more rapidly than regulators could keep up with.

Republican Sen. Mike Rounds of South Dakota has become a key player in the AI conversation in recent months. He's part of a bipartisan four-senator group conducting a series of meetings on AI in national defense, copyright and health care, the most famous of which was a closed-door meeting with tech luminaries including Elon Musk of Tesla, Eric Schmidt of Google and Sam Altman of Open AI, the company behind ChatGPT.

On Thursday, after participating in an AI panel discussion at the annual South Dakota Biotech summit and annual meeting in Sioux Falls, Rounds answered questions from South Dakota Searchlight on the path forward for Congress.

Why is this issue so important to you?

It's been around for a long time, but it's now something that people are concerned with, and it's not going to go away. Every single aspect of our lives, whether you're talking about social media, electricity, telecommunications, financial services – all of those are impacted by the application of artificial intelligence.

I got involved in it because of my ties with the Cyber Subcommittee on the Armed Services Committee. We started seeing how much artificial intelligence was impacting cyber operations. It became very clear that we could not hire enough specific cyber experts without having AI as a tool for them to use to stay on top of the attacks.

The other part of this is health care. Last year, there was a report to the Department of Defense on artificial intelligence and its impact on our defense. There was a classified portion that I got because I was on the cyber subcommittee, and I saw all the things we could do with regard to health care, like the ability to really address cancer, which is personal to me [Rounds' wife, Jean, died from cancer in 2021].

It became evident that the information in that classified report was not being disseminated to the people who could actually fund it, who could look at the upside to artificial intelligence. That really became a part of what drove me.

I actually got the Senate to change its rules so that every single office had an employee who could review items that were identified as classified in (the report). Doing so meant that staff members could go back to their members, tell them to get the report and to integrate it into the work that they were doing in their committees, whether that was the Appropriations Committee, the Armed Services Committee, or the Commerce Committee or the Judiciary Committee.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 7 of 56

Can I ask you about the group of four senators working on this issue? What have you done so far, and what are the next steps? What's the timeline there?

We've established a series of meetings with tech experts, AI experts. We had one series with all of those recognized names within the industry, and then we've been holding other smaller informational groups, where all the members [of the Senate] are welcome.

We did one on national defense, which was classified, and then we're doing one now where innovation is going to be part of it, and Dr. José-Marie Griffiths [of Dakota State University] will be actively involved. I'm doing one when we get back [to Washington D.C.] on cancer and on cancer research, one doing kind of a moonshot on cancer with artificial intelligence.

We've got a series of these things, about 12 of them, on and off over the next four months, and we're always doing it on a bipartisan basis.

With social media, some want Congress to force companies to open up the black box and show us the algorithms. If we're here at the ground floor with generative AI, do you suspect that these regulations will include some measure of transparency?

There are two types of databases. One is the open databases, or open AI. Those will be used in our universities, and it's going to be a lot harder to control because people can use them as they wish. Then there'll be proprietary databases, which companies will have, and they're not going to want to share the information on those.

In both cases, we have challenges on how we integrate appropriate regulatory directives. We've got to be careful, because AI is something the entire world is following right now. If we overregulate, they'll simply move outside of the United States. If you chase them off campus, so to speak, then they're unregulated entirely.

Most of the companies we've talked to want guidelines and a framework that helps to promote AI, but that also identifies good actions from unacceptable actions. And in doing so, they believe we've got our best shot at getting people to stay here and to develop here. Other countries might very well try to overregulate it, and all they're going to do is chase that business back into the United States.

So it is a challenge, but that's the reason why we want to kind of go committee by committee. Each committee understands what's important to the industries that they regulate, but also with regard to the existing regulation that should still be enforced.

Just because you're using a new tool, that doesn't mean you'll somehow get away with doing something that you couldn't do beforehand. If it's illegal to plagiarize or to use a patent without permission, it's still illegal if you do it with AI.

How can we be confident that the industry isn't writing these regulations?

There are people who are technicians. It's kind of like when we determine industry standards for the particular type of pipe or the strength of a pipe. We go to the (American Society for Testing and Measures) ASTM. It's the institute that actually looks at the standards that our manufacturing processes are based on. This has been going on for decades. It's something that all the people within the industry understand. The way that I look at it, let's do the same thing when it comes to AI.

If we can get them to act as referees, then the players know there's actually somebody there with technical expertise that will challenge them if they try to get away with something.

Someone from Avera said Thursday that the process of getting FDA approval for a new use of AI in health care makes it unaffordable. Is there a place for any regulatory changes that would maybe allow people in South Dakota and around the country to be a little bit more maneuverable?

I can't speak specifically to that instance, but I can tell you that as AI is being developed, it's actually going to be used to test and to look at other AI products.

As the federal government gets more into it, the FDA could actually contract with outside organizations that are specifically designing AI tools to look at these, and to confirm or recommend approval.

But you're still going to have to have a regulatory process that takes extra steps to make sure that the American people feel comfortable that these are safe to use, and do more good than harm.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 8 of 56

Are there concerns about displacing people like agronomists or other experts with AI in agriculture? Or do you think it'll go the other way?

I think it's going to make those agronomists even more valuable, because with more tools being available, they're going to be able to walk in and to use these tools and actually show a dramatic change in the profitability for those farmers or ranchers.

A machine is probably not going to start by going through everything that needs to be done with a farmer. Someone's going to help program the systems and help the farmers actually integrate AI into their machinery.

The best thing I can equate to is that it used to be when you were flying an airplane, you had an instrument landing system, what you call VOR systems, to fly from point A to point B.

Now we have GPS. But included in GPS are huge new numbers of approaches you can do. Somebody's got to install (these systems) and somebody's got to service them. Those guys are doing better now than they ever did before.

You've talked about restricting "bad guys" from using the computing power we have in the U.S. to run the algorithms. How do you go about stopping a bad guy from contracting with an international player like Amazon Web Services?

We do it now through our trade agreements, and through the Department of Commerce and Homeland Security. It's being done today.

But even more importantly, it's the chips that are created by some of the most advanced chip makers in the world that we contract with, that we have, and China does not have. We have to restrict China's access to those most advanced chips, and we're doing that today.

Sources vary, anywhere from six months to a year and a half, as far as our standing ahead of China in terms of development. That's not a lot of time, but it's enough to keep them from being super aggressive with their military capabilities. They already harass our aircraft in the open skies area around Taiwan. They already harass our ships in the free shipping areas, because they're trying to make life miserable for people that believe in free economic movement on the high seas.

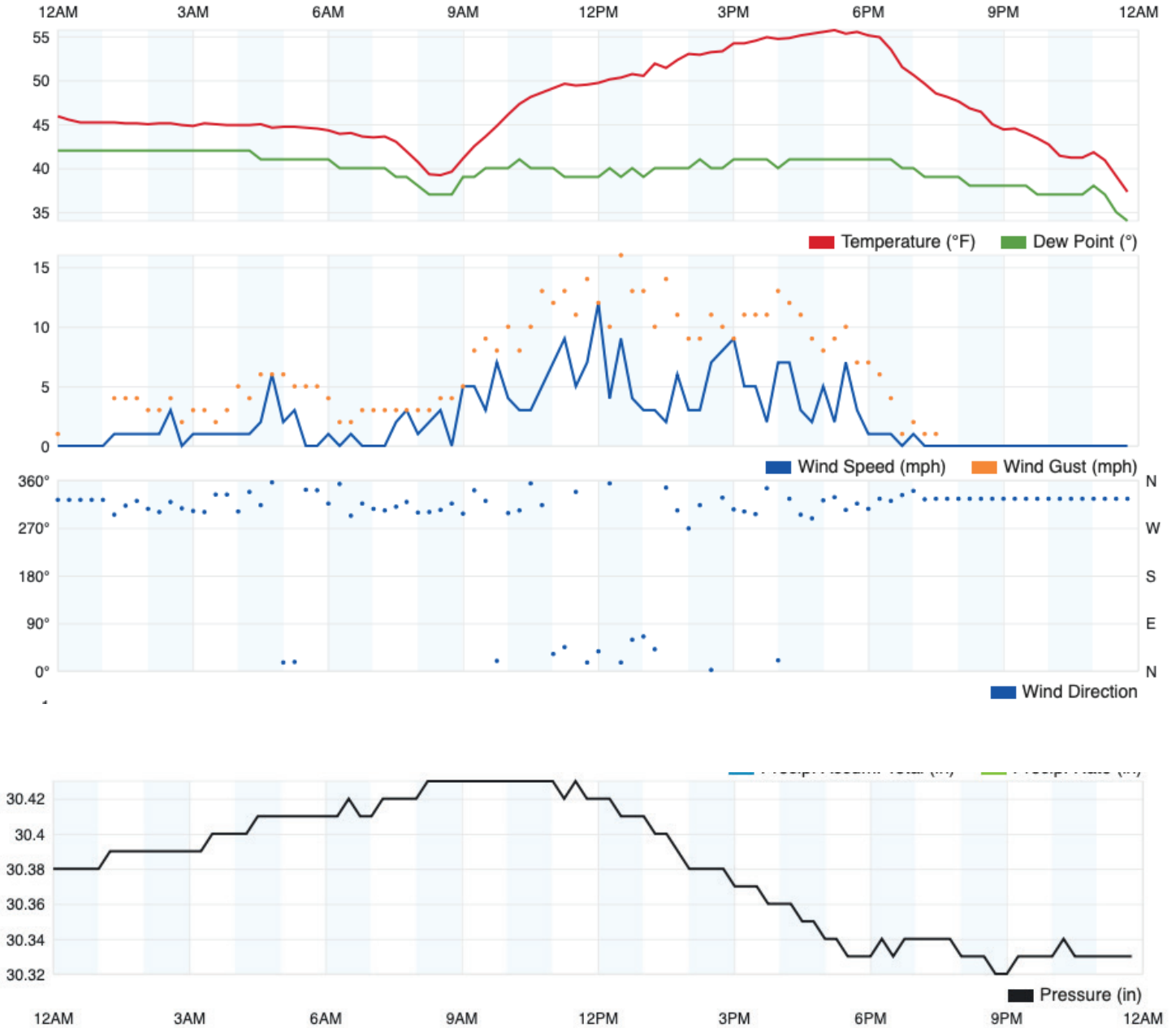
For us, if we can keep a step ahead of China, then we can keep the peace.

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

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 9 of 56

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 10 of 56

Mon Oct 16	Tue Oct 17	Wed Oct 18	Thu Oct 19	Fri Oct 20	Sat Oct 21	Sun Oct 22
58° F 37° F	67° F 46° F	58° F 40° F	61° F 40° F	65° F 41° F	60° F 38° F	54° F 44° F
SW 6 MPH	S 16 MPH	W 25 MPH 40%	NW 11 MPH	WNW 13 MPH	NW 16 MPH	S 12 MPH



The Week Ahead

October 16, 2023
3:06 AM

	Today ➤ Sunny. Highs 58-68°	
	Tuesday ➤ Partly Cloudy & Breezy. Highs 65-75°	
	Wednesday ➤ Scattered Showers & Windy. Highs 57-61°	
	Thursday ➤ Clear. Lows 59-67°	
	Friday ➤ Clear. Lows 63-70°	



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

The forecast for the week ahead will feature mainly above normal temperatures. A mid-week system will bring some light showers (just a 10-20% chance of exceeding 0.25" inches moisture), and winds which will gust between 30 and 45mph out of the NW on Wednesday

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 11 of 56

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 56 °F at 5:15 PM

Low Temp: 39 °F at 8:19 AM

Wind: 16 mph at 12:24 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 10 hours, 58 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 90 in 1991

Record Low: 19 in 1976

Average High: 59

Average Low: 33

Average Precip in Oct.: 1.21

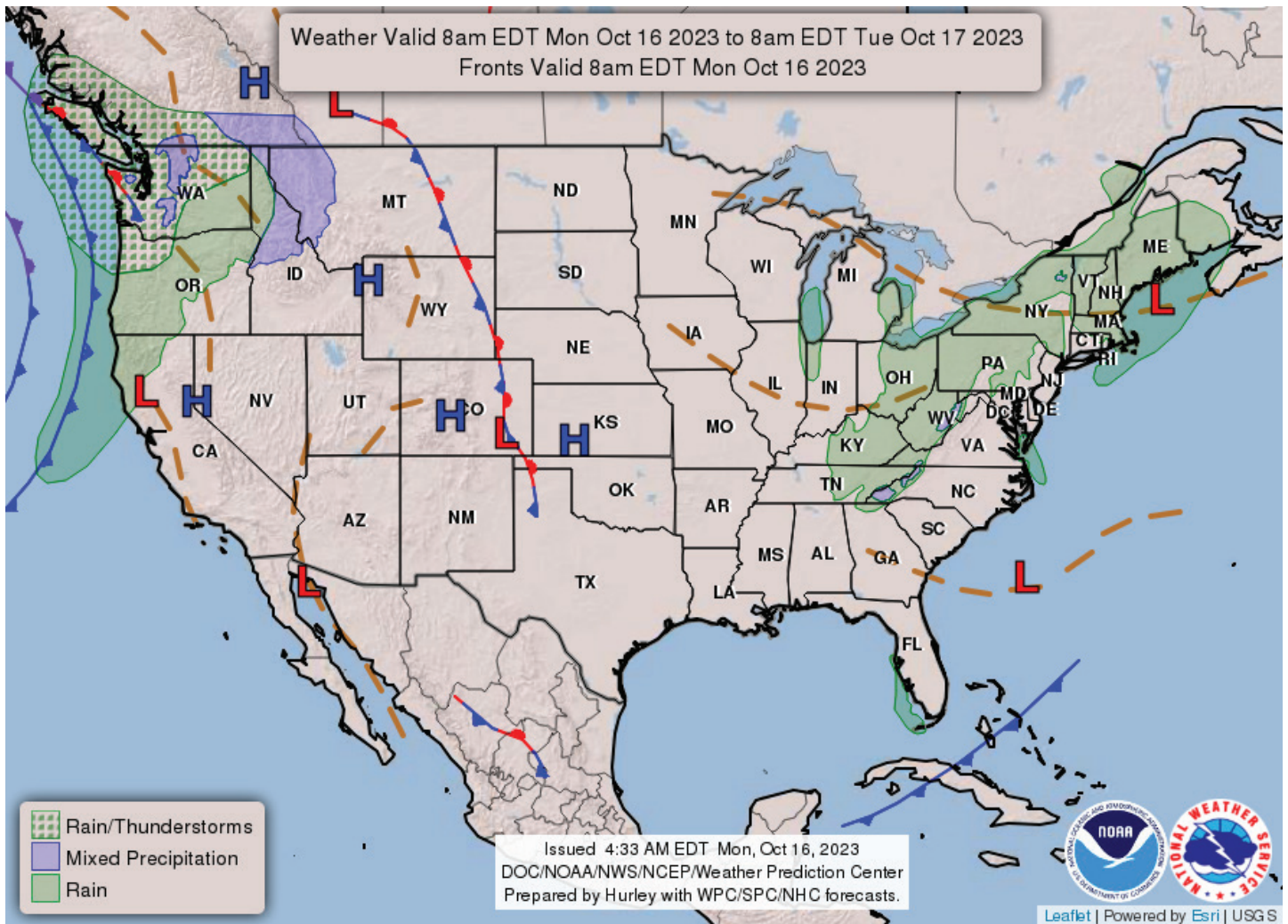
Precip to date in Oct.: 0.80

Average Precip to date: 19.54

Precip Year to Date: 22.57

Sunset Tonight: 6:47:22 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:49:51 AM



Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 12 of 56

Today in Weather History

October 16, 1980: A squall line packing damaging winds developed across portions of central South Dakota and raced into Minnesota during the afternoon and evening. The line of thunderstorms developed around 2 pm CDT and moved east and northeast at over 50 miles an hour. A large portion of southeast South Dakota was belted with winds of 50 to 70 miles an hour. Yankton reported winds of 60 to 70 mph while Sioux Falls was hit with a 62 mile an hour gust. Considerable damage was done in southeast South Dakota to trees, farm structures, and small buildings. Damage estimates were 100 to 200 thousand dollars. By late afternoon the thunderstorms were roaring through southwest Minnesota. Numerous outbuildings and many trees were downed or damaged. In Redwood County, two combines and a 24-foot travel trailer were tipped over and damaged.

1913 - The temperature in Downtown San Francisco soared to 101 degrees to equal their record for October. (The Weather Channel)

1937 - An unlikely winter-like storm produced as much as ten inches of snow in Minnesota and Iowa.

1944: The 1944 Cuba – Florida hurricane, also known as the Pinar del Rio Hurricane, struck western Cuba on this day as a Category 4. This storm killed an estimated 300 people in Cuba and nine in Florida. This hurricane is currently the 7th costliest U.S. Atlantic hurricane, with an estimated \$46.9 billion (2015 USD) in damages.

1987 - Ten cities in the southeastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date. The low of 34 degrees at Augusta GA marked their third straight morning of record cold. A cold front brought showers and thunderstorms to parts of the central U.S. Lightning struck a bull and six cows under a tree near Battiest OK. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Late afternoon thunderstorms produced severe weather in southwestern Lower Michigan and northern Indiana. One thunderstorm spawned a tornado north of Nappanee IN which caused half a million dollars damage. Six cities in California reported record high temperatures for the date. The afternoon high of 100 degrees at Red Bluff CA was the latest such reading of record for so late in the autumn season. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988: An F2 tornado carved a 6 mile long, east-northeast path through a mostly rural area of north-central Indiana. The extremely slow-moving tornado touched down 1.5 miles north of Nappanee, just 300 yards north of a high school, and shortly after that moved through a subdivision where 11 homes sustained damage.

1989 - Heavy snow blanketed the foothills of Colorado. Up to three inches was reported around Denver. Echo Lake was buried under nineteen inches of snow. Temperatures again warmed into the 80s and lower 90s in the eastern and south central U.S. Thirteen cities reported record high temperatures for the date, including Atlantic City NJ with a reading of 84 degrees. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1999: Hurricane Irene moved across the Florida Keys producing heavy rainfall, strong winds, and high waves. A gust 102 mph was reported in Big Pine Key.

2007: A blinding sandstorm in the high desert north of Los Angeles wreaks havoc with local traffic causing a highway pileup involving dozens of vehicles. Two people die, and 16 are injured as a result of the storm, which reportedly raised dust to 1000 foot high.

2015: A well-defined waterspout was visible from Marquette, Michigan.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 13 of 56

Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

FINDING LIFE'S SECRETS

Charlie Brown was having a serious conversation with Lucy in one of the "Peanuts" cartoons. Said Charlie, "I've made a giant step forward in unraveling the mysteries of the Old Testament, Lucy!"

"What's that?" asked Lucy, bursting with interest.

"I started reading it," he replied.

Many people view the Bible as a collection of fables, myths, or tales and unintelligent stories about a God who hides in deep, unfathomable messages. Some claim it is a book beyond the ability of humans to understand. Although it is a book written by humans, it is not a "human book." It is the story of God making Himself known through words, deeds, and "The Word," - His beloved Son. It is not beyond the ability of humans to understand the contents. God Himself will make its message clear when people ask Him to speak to them through His Holy Spirit.

Through the Holy Spirit, God revealed His Person and plan of redemption and reconciliation - the Gospel Message. The authors of God's revelation in Scripture were inspired by His Spirit to speak on His behalf. God wanted to make Himself known because He wants us to know Him, to love Him, to accept His truth, to trust Him, and to turn to His Son for salvation.

If we want to know and understand God we need to do what Charlie Brown did, "start reading" His Word.

Prayer: You have spoken to us, Lord, through Your Word. If we seek Your truth and want to know You and please You with our lives, Your Word will show us how. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. 2 Timothy 3:16-17



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

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 14 of 56

2023 Community Events

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

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 15 of 56

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Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 16 of 56



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.13.23

6 18 44 46 68 18

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$69,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 44
DRAW: Mins 36 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.14.23

6 32 33 36 47 4

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$2,750,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 59 Mins 36
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.15.23

4 10 14 38 42 1

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT 16 Hrs 14 Mins 36
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.14.23

3 7 14 23 26

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$24,000

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 14
DRAW: Mins 36 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.14.23

13 21 33 46 50 23

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 43 Mins 35
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.14.23

14 16 42 48 64 14

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$34,000,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 43 Mins 35
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

Martti Ahtisaari, former Finnish president and Nobel Peace Prize winner, dies at 86

By JARI TANNER Associated Press

HELSINKI (AP) — Martti Ahtisaari, the former president of Finland and global peace broker who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2008 for his work to resolve international conflicts, died Monday. He was 86.

The foundation he created for preventing and resolving violent conflicts said in a statement it was “deeply saddened by the loss of its founder and (former) chair of the board.”

In 2021, it was announced that Ahtisaari had advanced Alzheimer’s disease.

“It is with great sadness that we have received the news of the death of President Martti Ahtisaari,” Finnish President Sauli Niinistö said in a statement. “He was president in times of change, who piloted Finland into a global EU era.”

Niinistö described Ahtisaari in a televised speech as “a citizen of the world, a great Finn. A teacher, diplomat and head of state. A peace negotiator and a Nobel Peace Prize laureate.” Regular programming on Finnish public broadcaster YLE was interrupted for Niinistö’s speech.

Ahtisaari helped reach peace accords related to Serbia’s withdrawal from Kosovo in the late 1990s, Namibia’s bid for independence in the 1980s, and autonomy for Aceh province in Indonesia in 2005. He was also involved with the Northern Ireland peace process in the late 1990s, being tasked with monitoring the IRA’s disarmament process.

“President Ahtisaari committed all his life to peace, diplomacy, the goodness of humanity, and had an extraordinary influence on our present and the future,” said Kosovar President Vjosa Osmani. “He engraved the frame of our country, and his name will remain forever in the pages of the Republic of Kosovo’s history.”

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen called him “a visionary” and “a champion of peace” on X, formerly known as Twitter.

When the Norwegian Nobel Peace Committee picked Ahtisaari in October 2008, it cited him “for his important efforts, on several continents and over more than three decades, to resolve international conflicts.”

Ahtisaari was the Nordic country’s president for one six-year term — from 1994 until 2000 — and later founded the Helsinki-based Crisis Management Initiative, aimed at preventing and resolving violent conflicts through informal dialogue and mediation.

Born June 23, 1937, in the eastern town of Viipuri, which is now in Russia, Ahtisaari was a primary school teacher before joining Finland’s Foreign Ministry in 1965. He spent about 20 years abroad, first as ambassador to Tanzania, Zambia and Somalia and then to the United Nations in New York.

After that he joined the U.N., working at its New York headquarters, before heading the U.N. operation that brought independence to Namibia in 1990. Ahtisaari had become deeply involved in activities aimed at preparing Namibians for independence during his diplomatic tenure in Africa in the 1970s.

He was appointed as the special representative of Namibia by then-U.N. Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim in 1978, and is widely credited with leading the African nation to independence under his mandate as head of U.N. peacekeeping forces there in the late 1980s.

The Namibian government was grateful for Ahtisaari’s work and later made him an honorary citizen of the country.

After returning to Finland in 1991, Ahtisaari worked as a Foreign Ministry secretary of state before being elected president in 1994. He was the first Finnish head of state to be elected directly instead of through an electoral college.

Having lived abroad for so long, he came into the race as a political outsider and was seen as bringing a breath of fresh air to Finnish politics. Ahtisaari was a strong supporter of the European Union and NATO, which Finland joined in 1995 and 2023 respectively.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 18 of 56

His international highlight came in 1999 when he negotiated — alongside Russia's Balkans envoy Viktor Chernomyrdin — the end to fighting in the Yugoslav province of Kosovo. Ahtisaari also hosted Russian President Boris Yeltsin and U.S. President Bill Clinton at a U.S.-Russia summit in the Finnish capital, Helsinki, in March 1997.

Ahtisaari "had a great heart and he believed in the human being," Niinistö said.

"In his speech at the Nobel celebration, Ahtisaari said that all conflicts can be resolved: 'Wars and conflicts are not inevitable. They are caused by humans,'" Niinistö said. "There are always interests that war promotes. Therefore, those who have power and influence can also stop them."

As president, Ahtisaari traveled abroad more widely than any of his predecessors. At home, he often appeared impatient and vexed by media criticism — he was clearly much more comfortable in international circles.

He declined to run for a second term in the January 2000 presidential election, saying he wanted to devote the time he would otherwise have used for campaigning to run the rotating EU presidency, which Finland held for the first time in 1999.

After the Finnish presidency, he was offered several international positions, including in the United Nations refugee agency, but decided instead to open his own office in Helsinki which centered on mediating in international crises.

In May 2017, Ahtisaari stepped down as chairman of the Crisis Management Initiative to help resolve global conflicts but said he would continue working with the organization as an adviser. He was replaced by former Finnish Prime Minister Alexander Stubb, who is now running for president.

Stubb reacted to Ahtisaari's death on X, saying that "perhaps now more than ever, the world needs people like him."

Ahtisaari is survived by his wife Eeva and their adult son, Markko.

CMI said Ahtisaari will be laid to rest following a state funeral. The date will be announced later.

Gaza's crowded hospitals near breaking point as Israeli ground invasion looms

By NAJIB JOBAIN, SAMYA KULLAB and JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Palestinians in besieged Gaza crowded into hospitals and schools on Monday, seeking shelter and running low on food and water. More than a million people have fled their homes ahead of an expected Israeli ground invasion aimed at destroying Hamas after its fighters rampaged through southern Israel.

As the enclave's food, water and medicine supplies dwindled, all eyes were on the Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt, where trucks carrying badly needed aid have been waiting for days as mediators press for a cease-fire that would allow them enter Gaza and allow foreigners to leave. Rafah, Gaza's only connection to Egypt, was shut down nearly a week ago because of Israeli airstrikes.

Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians sheltering in U.N. facilities are on less than 1 liter (1 quart) of water per day. Hospitals warn they are on the verge of collapse, with emergency generators that power machines like ventilators and incubators down to about one day of fuel and supplies of medicine almost exhausted.

The Gaza Health Ministry said 2,750 Palestinians have been killed and 9,700 wounded since the fighting erupted, more than in the 2014 Gaza war, which lasted over six weeks. That makes this the deadliest of the five Gaza wars for both sides.

More than 1,400 Israelis have died, the vast majority civilians killed in Hamas' Oct. 7 assault. The Israeli military said Monday that at least 199 hostages were taken back in Gaza, higher than previous estimates. The military did not specify whether that number includes foreigners.

Israeli airstrikes have pulverized entire neighborhoods as Palestinian militants continue to fire rockets into Israel. Israel is widely expected to launch a ground offensive in order to kill Hamas leaders, recover captives and destroy the group's military infrastructure, much of which is in residential areas.

Street-by-street fighting would likely cause mounting casualties on both sides.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 19 of 56

Israel has ordered more than 1 million Palestinians — almost half the territory's population — to leave Gaza City and the surrounding area for the enclave's south. The military says it is trying to clear away civilians ahead of a major campaign against Hamas in the north, where it says the militants have extensive networks of tunnels and rocket launchers.

Hamas has urged people to stay in their homes, and the Israeli military on Sunday released photos it said showed a Hamas roadblock preventing traffic from moving south.

For a third day, Israel's military announced a safe corridor for people to move from north to south between the hours of 8 a.m. and noon. It said more than 600,000 people have already evacuated the Gaza City area.

Hospitals in Gaza are expected to run out of generator fuel in the next 24 hours, endangering the lives of thousands of patients, according to the U.N. Gaza's sole power plant shut down for lack of fuel after Israel completely sealed off the 40-kilometer (25-mile) long territory following the Hamas attack.

The World Health Organization said hospitals are "overflowing" as people seek safety. "We are concerned about disease outbreaks due to mass displacement and poor water and sanitation," it said. Four hospitals in northern Gaza are no longer functioning and 21 have received Israeli orders to evacuate. Doctors have refused, saying it would mean death for critically ill patients and newborns on ventilators.

The WHO said water shortages caused by Israel's decision to cut off water supplies, combined with a lack of fuel for pumps and desalination stations, put thousands of hospital patients at risk.

"Water is needed to ensure sanitary conditions on inpatient wards, in operation rooms, and emergency departments. It is essential for the prevention of hospital associated infections and for the prevention of outbreaks in hospitals," the WHO said.

The U.N. health agency said life-saving assistance for 300,000 patients is currently awaiting entry through Rafah.

The U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, known as UNRWA, says over 1 million people — about half of Gaza's population — have been displaced in a little over a week. Half are sheltering in U.N.-run schools and other facilities, while others are staying with family or neighbors.

UNRWA said it has been forced to ration water, giving people just 1 liter (1 quart) a day to cover all their needs.

Israel has said the siege won't be lifted until Hamas releases all the captives, but the country's water ministry said water had been restored at one "specific point" in Gaza, at a location outside the southern town of Khan Younis. Aid workers in Gaza said they had not yet seen evidence the water was back.

Meanwhile, the Israeli military ordered residents to evacuate 28 communities near the Lebanese border after increasing cross-border fire between Israel and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah. The military order affects towns that are within 2 kilometers (1.2 miles) from the border.

Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, a military spokesman, said the evacuation would allow Israeli forces to operate with greater latitude. "Israel is ready to operate on two fronts, and even more," he said. "If Hezbollah makes the mistake of testing us, the response will be deadly."

Hezbollah militants fired rockets and an anti-tank missile on Sunday, and Israel responded with airstrikes and shelling. The fighting killed one person on the Israeli side and wounded several on both sides of the border.

Hezbollah said it had fired rockets toward an Israeli military position in retaliation for Israeli shelling that killed Reuters videographer Issam Abdallah on Friday and two Lebanese civilians on Saturday. It said the increased strikes represented a "warning" and did not mean Hezbollah has decided to enter the war.

In the northern Israeli port city of Haifa, the U.S. government began evacuating some 2,500 American citizens by ship to Cyprus. Commercial airlines have largely stopped flying into Israel's Ben-Gurion International Airport, making it extremely difficult to get out of the country.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken returned to Israel for a second time in less than a week after a six-country tour through Arab nations aimed at preventing the fighting from igniting a broader conflict. President Joe Biden is also considering a trip to Israel, though no plans have been finalized.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 20 of 56

In a television interview Sunday night, Biden, who has repeatedly proclaimed support for Israel, said he thought it would be a "big mistake" for the country to reoccupy Gaza.

Israel's ambassador to the U.N., Gilad Erdan, told CNN the country does not want to occupy Gaza but will do "whatever is needed" to obliterate Hamas' capabilities.

In Nasser Hospital, in southern Gaza, intensive care rooms were packed with wounded patients, most of them children under the age of 3. Hundreds of people with severe blast injuries have come to the hospital, said Dr. Mohammed Qandeel, a consultant at the critical care complex.

There were 35 patients in the ICU who require ventilators and another 60 on dialysis. If fuel runs out, "it means the whole health system will be shut down," he said Sunday, as children moaned in pain in the background. "All these patients are in danger of death if the electricity is cut off."

Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya, the head of pediatrics at the Kamal Adwan Hospital in northern Gaza, said the facility did not evacuate despite Israeli orders. There were seven newborns in the ICU hooked up to ventilators, he said. Evacuating "would mean death for them and other patients under our care."

Shifa hospital in Gaza City, the territory's largest, said it would bury 100 bodies in a mass grave as an emergency measure after its morgue overflowed. Tens of thousands of people seeking safety have gathered in the hospital compound.

Israeli forces, supported by a growing deployment of U.S. warships in the region and the call-up of some 360,000 reservists, have positioned themselves along Gaza's border and drilled for what Israel said would be a broad campaign to dismantle the militant group. Israel said it has already struck dozens of military targets, including command centers and rocket launchers, and also killed Hamas commanders.

Muslim boy killed and woman wounded in Illinois hate crime motivated by Israeli-Hamas war

By SOPHIA TAREEN Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — A 71-year-old Illinois man accused of fatally stabbing a 6-year-old boy and seriously wounding a 32-year-old woman was charged with a hate crime Sunday. Police allege he singled out the victims because of their Islamic faith and as a response to the war between Israel and Hamas.

In recent days, police in U.S. cities and federal authorities have been on high alert for violence driven by antisemitic or Islamophobic sentiments. FBI officials, along with Jewish and Muslim groups, have reported an increase of hateful and threatening rhetoric.

In the Chicago-area case, officers found the woman and boy late Saturday morning at a home in an unincorporated area of Plainfield Township, about 40 miles (65 kilometers) southwest of Chicago, the Will County Sheriff's Office said in a statement on social media.

The boy was pronounced dead at a hospital. The woman had multiple stab wounds and was expected to survive, according to the statement. An autopsy on the child showed he had been stabbed dozens of times.

"Detectives were able to determine that both victims in this brutal attack were targeted by the suspect due to them being Muslim and the on-going Middle Eastern conflict involving Hamas and the Israelis," the sheriff's statement said.

According to the Will County sheriff's office, the woman had called 911 to report that her landlord had attacked her with a knife, adding she then ran into a bathroom and continued to fight him off.

The man suspected in the attack was found Saturday outside the home and "sitting upright outside on the ground near the driveway of the residence" with a cut on his forehead, authorities said.

Joseph M. Czuba of Plainfield was charged with first-degree murder, attempted first-degree murder, two counts of hate crimes and aggravated battery with a deadly weapon, according to the sheriff's office. He was in custody Sunday and awaiting a court appearance.

Attempts to reach Czuba or a family member were unsuccessful Sunday. His home phone number was unlisted. Messages left for possible relatives in online records and on social media were not immediately returned. The sheriff's office and county public defender's office did not immediately return messages about Czuba's legal representation.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 21 of 56

Authorities did not release the names of the two victims.

But the boy's paternal uncle, Yousef Hannon, spoke at a news conference Sunday hosted by the Chicago chapter Council on American-Islamic Relations. There the boy was identified as Wadea Al-Fayoume, a Palestinian American boy who recently had turned 6. The organization identified the other victim as the boy's mother.

"We are not animals, we are humans. We want people to see us as humans, to feel us as humans, to deal with us as humans, because this is what we are," said Hannon, a Palestinian American who emigrated to the U.S. in 1999 to work, including as a public school teacher.

The Muslim civil liberties organization called the crime "our worst nightmare" and part of a disturbing spike in hate calls and emails since the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war. The group cited text messages exchanged among family members that showed the attacker had made disparaging remarks about Muslims.

"Palestinians basically, again, with their hearts broken over what's happening to their people," said Ahmed Rehab, the group's executive director, "have to also worry about the immediate safety of life and limb living here in this most free of democracies in the world."

In response to the increased threats, the Illinois State Police are communicating with federal law-enforcement and reaching out to Muslim communities and religious leaders to offer support, according to a Sunday press release from Illinois Democratic Gov. JB Pritzker.

"To take a six-year-old child's life in the name of bigotry is nothing short of evil," Pritzker said. "Wadea should be heading to school in the morning. Instead, his parents will wake up without their son. This wasn't just a murder — it was a hate crime. And every single Illinoisan — including our Muslim, Jewish, and Palestinian neighbors — deserves to live free from the threat of such evil."

President Joe Biden echoed that sentiment Sunday, saying in a statement: "This horrific act of hate has no place in America, and stands against our fundamental values: freedom from fear for how we pray, what we believe, and who we are."

The Justice Department opened a hate crime investigation into the events leading up to the attack, Attorney General Merrick Garland said.

FBI Director Chris Wray said on a call with reporters Sunday that the FBI is also moving quickly to mitigate the threats.

A senior FBI official who spoke on condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the Bureau said the majority of the threats that the FBI has responded to were not judged to be credible, adding that the FBI takes them all seriously nonetheless.

The official also said that agents have been encouraged to be "aggressive" and proactive in communicating over the last week with faith-based leaders. The official said the purpose is not to make anyone feel targeted but rather to ask clerics and others to report to law enforcement anything that seems suspicious.

Urban battle from past Gaza war offers glimpse of what an Israeli ground offensive might look like

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — A battle that killed dozens of civilians and more than a dozen Israeli soldiers nearly a decade ago offers a glimpse of the type of fighting that could lie ahead if Israeli forces roll into Gaza as expected to punish Hamas for its rampage across southern Israel last week.

It was July 19, 2014, during Israel's third war against Hamas. The target was Shijaiyah, a densely populated neighborhood of Gaza City that the army said Hamas had transformed into a "terrorist fortress," filled with tunnels, rocket launchers and booby traps.

The battle came on the third day of a ground offensive that had been preceded by a 10-day air campaign. Then, as now, Palestinian civilians had been told to leave the neighborhood, Then, as now, many stayed, either because Hamas told them to or because they had nowhere else to go.

As Israeli forces pushed into Shijaiyah, a jumble of squat concrete buildings and narrow alleys, militants

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 22 of 56

unleashed a withering barrage of automatic gunfire, anti-tank missiles and rocket-propelled grenades, the army said at the time.

An armored personnel carrier broke down. When two soldiers got out to fix it, a militant fired an anti-tank missile at the vehicle, blowing it up and killing all seven soldiers inside. In the ensuing chaos, Hamas fighters managed to drag away the remains of one of the soldiers and are still holding them.

In the panicked aftermath, soldiers were ordered to climb into their armored vehicles as artillery battalions fired 600 shells and aircraft struck from overhead. The next day, Israeli warplanes dropped 100 one-ton bombs on the area, Israeli media reported later.

"The gate of hell has opened, and shrapnel came through the windows," a Palestinian resident told the AP at the time.

In 2014, "there was a feeling of craziness in how much fire was used," an Israeli soldier told Breaking the Silence, a group of veterans who are critical of Israel's policies and collect anonymous testimony from soldiers.

Fifty-five civilians were killed during the two-day battle, including 19 children and 14 women, a U.N. report found, as well as an unknown number of militants. Thirteen Israeli soldiers were killed.

Amir Avivi, a retired Israeli general who was serving alongside top commanders during the 2014 battle, said this time would be "completely different," because the artillery and airstrikes will come first.

"It will be a massive maneuver with a lot of air and artillery — a very, very strong entrance. We're going to try to minimize as much as possible our troops' casualties, and for this, we need a lot of cover." He said less firepower would be needed if it is used at the start and not when soldiers are in distress.

The tremendous firepower may have stemmed the army's losses, but it took a heavy toll on civilians and flattened much of the neighborhood. Some 670 buildings were destroyed and nearly 1,200 were moderately to severely damaged, the U.N. report said. Investigators counted 270 craters.

"It's a hell of a pinpoint operation," then-Secretary of State John Kerry said sarcastically about the battle, in a moment caught on a hot mic.

Israel has ordered an unprecedented evacuation of nearly half of Gaza's 2.3 million Palestinians from the northern part of the besieged territory to the south. Avivi, the retired general, said that is intended to spare them. But not everyone is able or willing to flee.

"When the artillery will start, those who haven't evacuated yet will evacuate," he said.

The U.N. report found "strong indications" that the Shijaiyah operation involved indiscriminate fire that "may amount to a war crime." The International Criminal Court is investigating possible war crimes committed by both sides during the 2014 war.

Israel, which has long accused U.N. bodies of being biased against it, refused to cooperate with either probe.

The war continued for more than a month after Shijaiyah, through similarly destructive battles. It ended with a shaky truce and Hamas still firmly in control despite the deaths of 2,251 Palestinians — mostly civilians — and widespread destruction. On the Israeli side, 74 people were killed, including six civilians.

In 2021 the two sides fought another devastating war, though there was no ground invasion.

And then on Saturday, a still unbowed Hamas stormed out of Gaza and rampaged through southern Israel, killing hundreds and dragging some 200 hostages back into the narrow, coastal territory.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who was also in power in 2014, has vowed to destroy Hamas. The group's leaders say they are prepared for all scenarios.

Israel has promised a "very broad" air, ground and naval offensive in the near future. It has massed tanks and tens of thousands of troops along the Gaza border.

If they move in, Shijaiyah will be among their first targets.

Biden picks Boebert as his foil for economic message in Colorado

By CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is visiting the Colorado congressional district of Rep. Lauren Boebert, a combative Trump loyalist, on Monday as he draws a sharper contrast between the Democratic and Republican economic agendas.

Boebert has described Biden's Inflation Reduction Act, the president's signature domestic legislation and the source of hundreds of billions of dollars for clean energy incentives, as "a massive failure" that "needs to be repealed."

But Biden is out to demonstrate otherwise when he visits CS Wind, the world's largest facility for wind tower manufacturing, in the town of Pueblo. The company is undergoing a \$200 million expansion that is expected to create 850 jobs by 2026 with help from the tax incentives in the law.

Pueblo is one of the anchors of Colorado's sprawling Third Congressional District, which covers more ground than the state of Pennsylvania. Boebert won her seat in 2020 and barely held on to it during the 2022 midterms.

Biden's trip comes at a moment of maximum chaos for House Republicans, who ousted Rep. Kevin McCarthy as their speaker but have been unable to settle on a replacement. Rep. Jim Jordan, a prominent ally of Donald Trump, is the current leading candidate to replace McCarthy, but victory for him is uncertain.

Despite low unemployment and slowing inflation, Biden has been struggling to convince Americans that his policies are good for the U.S. economy.

An August poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research said just 36% of U.S. adults approve of Biden's handling of the economy, roughly where his numbers have stood for a year and a half.

The president and other top administration officials have been traveling the country to promote their "Investing in America" agenda. Last week, the president visited a marine terminal in Philadelphia, where he announced that the area would become one of seven regional hubs for producing and delivering hydrogen fuel.

"I truly believe this country is about to take off, for the first time in a long time we're actually investing in America," Biden said.

Poles vote in huge numbers for centrist opposition after 8 years of nationalist rule

By VANESSA GERA and MONIKA SCISLOWSKA Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — The majority of voters in Poland's general election supported opposition parties who promised to repair the nation's constitutional order and its relationship with allies, including the European Union and Ukraine, according to projections Monday.

After a bitter and emotional campaign, voters turned out in droves on Sunday to make their voice known. Turnout was at the highest level in the country's 34 years of democracy, surpassing the 63% who turned out in the historic 1989 vote that toppled communism.

The final result was not expected for many hours. But a so-called late exit poll by Ipsos suggested that voters had finally grown tired of the ruling nationalist party, Law and Justice, after eight years of divisive policies that led to frequent street protests, bitter divisions even within families and billions of euros (dollars) in funding held up by the EU over rule of law violations.

The poll showed that three centrist opposition parties that campaigned on a promise to reverse the illiberal drift of the government had together secured around 248 seats in the 460-seat lower house of parliament, or Sejm — a clear majority.

"I am really overjoyed now," Magdalena Chmieluk, a 43-year-old accountant, said on Monday morning. The opposition "will form a government and we will finally be able to live in a normal country, for real."

Still, Poles on Monday were facing weeks of political uncertainty. Law and Justice won more votes than any single party and said it would try to keep governing.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 24 of 56

"No matter how you look at it, we won," Law and Justice campaign manager Joachim Brudziński said Monday morning in an interview on the RMF FM radio broadcaster.

He said that his party would try to build a government led by Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki.

President Andrzej Duda, an ally of Law and Justice, must call the first session of the new parliament within 30 days of the election and designate a prime minister to try to build a government. In the meantime, the current government will remain in a caretaker role.

The tradition in the democratic era has been for the president to first tap someone from the party with the most votes, but he is not required to do so.

It was not clear how Law and Justice could realistically hold onto power, unless it managed to win over some lawmakers from opposition parties, something it did in the past to maintain the thin parliamentary majority it held for eight years. But that seemed unlikely given the large number it would be required to change allegiances.

The Ipsos poll showed Law and Justice with 36.6% of the votes cast; the opposition Civic Coalition, led by former European Council President Donald Tusk, with 31%; the centrist Third Way coalition with 13.5%; the Left party with 8.6%; and the far-right Confederation with 6.4%.

The electoral commission said it expected to report the final result by early Tuesday.

Tusk on Sunday evening declared that it was the end of Law and Justice rule and that a new era had begun for Poland.

Some Polish media were more cautious on Monday, only reporting that the opposition could take power.

Cezary Tomczyk, vice-chairman of Tusk's party, said the governing party would do everything to try to maintain power. He called on it to accept the election result, saying it was the will of the people to hand over power to the opposition.

"The nation spoke," Tomczyk said.

A top EU official convenes a summit to deal with a fallout in Europe from the Israel-Hamas war

BRUSSELS (AP) — European Union leaders will hold an emergency summit on Tuesday as concerns grow that the war between Israel and Hamas could fuel inter-communal tensions in Europe and bring more refugees in search of sanctuary.

"This conflict has many consequences, including for us in the European Union," EU Council President Charles Michel said in a video statement announcing that he had convened the virtual meeting. "The conflict could have major security consequences for our societies."

Since the Palestinian militant group Hamas attacked southern on Oct. 7, triggering the latest Gaza war, France has ordered a ban on pro-Palestinian demonstrations and the number of antisemitic acts has risen. Low-level rallies have been held in other EU countries. Both the the 27-nation bloc and the United States consider Hamas as a terrorist organization.

The Louvre Museum in Paris and Versailles Palace evacuated visitors and staff after receiving bomb threats over the weekend, and the French government started deploying 7,000 troops to increase security around the country following a fatal school stabbing by a suspected Islamic extremist.

Germany too has ramped up security. Berlin has offered military help to Israel and promised to crack down on support for Hamas at home. Chancellor Olaf Scholz has underlined Germany's historical responsibility for Israel's security.

Michel said that the war "has a potential to worsen tensions between communities and to feed extremism" in Europe, and that "there is a major risk of migration and movements of a large number of people to neighboring countries."

He said that the leaders would look at ways to help civilians in Israel and Gaza caught up in the war and to work with other countries in the Middle East and Persian Gulf regions to try to prevent the conflict from spreading.

More than a million people have fled their homes in Gaza ahead of an expected Israeli ground invasion

aimed at destroying Hamas.

Michel condemned "the brutal terrorist attacks" and said that "Israel has the right to defend itself in full compliance with international law and international humanitarian law."

Putin's visit to Beijing underscores China's economic and diplomatic support for Russia

By CHRISTOPHER BODEEN Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin is expected to meet this week with Chinese leaders in Beijing on a visit that underscores China's support for Moscow during its war in Ukraine.

The two countries have forged an informal alliance against the United States and other democratic nations that is now complicated by the Israel-Hamas war. China has sought to balance its ties with Israel with its economic relations with Iran and Syria, which are strongly backed by Russia.

Putin's visit is also a show of support for Chinese leader Xi Jinping's signature Belt and Road initiative to build infrastructure and expand China's overseas influence.

Putin gave an interview to Chinese state media praising the massive but loosely linked BRI projects.

"Yes, we see that some people consider it an attempt by the People's Republic of China to put someone under its thumb, but we see otherwise, we just see desire for cooperation," he said in the interview with state broadcaster CCTV, according to a transcript released by the Kremlin on Monday.

The Russian leader will be among the highest profile guests at a gathering marking the 10th anniversary of Xi's announcement of the BRI policy, which has laden countries such as Zambia and Sri Lanka with heavy debt after they signed contracts with Chinese companies to build roads, airports and other public works they could not otherwise afford.

Putin's visit has not been officially confirmed, but Chinese officials have suggested he will arrive late Monday.

Asked by reporters Friday about a visit to China, Putin said it would encompass talks on Belt and Road-related projects, which he said Moscow wants to link with efforts by an economic alliance of ex-Soviet Union nations mostly located in Central Asia to "achieve common development goals." He also downplayed the impact of China's economic influence in a region that Russia has long considered its backyard and where it has worked to maintain political and military clout.

"We don't have any contradictions here, on the contrary, there is a certain synergy," Putin said.

Putin said he and Xi will also discuss growing economic and financial ties between Moscow and Beijing.

Beijing and Moscow have financial ties in energy, high-tech and financial industries. China has also grown in importance as an export destination for Moscow.

Alexander Gabuev, director of Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center, said that from China's view, "Russia is a safe neighbor that is friendly, that is a source of cheap raw materials, that's a support for Chinese initiatives on the global stage and that's also a source of military technologies, some of those that China doesn't have."

"For Russia, China is its lifeline, economic lifeline in its brutal repression against Ukraine," Gabuev told The Associated Press.

"It's the major market for Russian commodities, it's a country that provides its currency and payment system to settle Russia's trade with the outside world — with China itself, but also with many other countries, and is also the major source of sophisticated technological imports, including dual-use goods that go into the Russian military machine."

Gabuev said that while Moscow and Beijing will be unlikely to forge a full-fledged military alliance, their defense cooperation will grow.

"I don't expect that Russia and China will create a military alliance," Gabuev said. "Both countries are self-sufficient in terms of security and they benefit from partnering, but neither really requires a security guarantee from the other. And they preach strategic autonomy."

"There will be no military alliance, but there will be closer military cooperation, more interoperability,

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 26 of 56

more cooperation on projecting force together, including in places like the Arctic and more joint effort to develop a missile defense that makes the U.S. nuclear planning and planning of the U.S. and its allies in Asia and in Europe more complicated," he added.

China and the former Soviet Union were Cold War rivals for influence among left-leaning states, but have since partnered in the economic, military and diplomatic spheres. Just weeks before Russia's invasion of Ukraine last February, Putin met with Xi in Beijing and the sides signed an agreement pledging a "no-limits" relationship. Beijing's attempts to present itself as a neutral peace broker in Russia's war on Ukraine have been widely dismissed by the international community.

Xi visited Moscow in March as part of a flurry of exchanges between the countries. China has condemned international sanctions imposed on Russia, but hasn't directly addressed an arrest warrant issued for Putin by the International Criminal Court on charges of alleged involvement in the abductions of thousands of children from Ukraine.

Polish opposition leader Tusk declares win after exit poll shows ruling conservatives lose majority

By MONIKA SCISLOWSKA and VANESSA GERA Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Polish opposition leader Donald Tusk declared the beginning of a new era for his country after opposition parties appeared to have won enough votes in Sunday's parliamentary election to oust the governing nationalist conservative party.

That party, Law and Justice, has bickered with allies and faced accusations of eroding rule of law at home in its eight years in power. It appeared that voters were mobilized like never before, voting in even greater numbers than when the nation ousted the communist authorities in 1989. Exit poll results pegged it at a record 72.9%. In some places people were still in line when polling officially closed, but all were allowed to vote.

If the result predicted by the exit poll holds, Law and Justice won but also lost. It got more seats than any other party but fewer than in the previous election and not enough to be able to lead a government that can pass laws in the legislature.

The Ipsos exit poll suggested that Law and Justice obtained 200 seats. Its potential partner, the far-right Confederation got 12 seats, a showing the party acknowledged was a defeat.

It also showed that three opposition parties have likely won a combined 248 seats in the 460-seat lower house of parliament, the Sejm. The largest of the groups is Civic Coalition, led by Tusk, a former prime minister and former European Union president. It won 31.6% of votes, the exit poll said.

"I have been a politician for many years. I'm an athlete. Never in my life have I been so happy about taking seemingly second place. Poland won. Democracy has won. We have removed them from power," Tusk told his cheering supporters.

"This result might still be better, but already today we can say this is the end of the bad time, this is end of Law and Justice rule," Tusk added.

Law and Justice leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski acknowledged the ambiguous result. He told supporters at his headquarters that his party's result, at nearly 37% of the vote, according to the exit poll, was a success, making it the party to win the most votes for three parliamentary elections in a row.

"We must have hope and we must also know that regardless of whether we are in power or in the opposition, we will implement this (political) project in various ways and we will not allow Poland to be betrayed," Kaczynski said.

If the result holds, and Law and Justice is the single party with the most seats, then it would most likely get the first chance to try to build a government.

It falls to President Andrzej Duda, who is an ally of Law and Justice, to tap a party to try to form a government.

Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki said on Polsat News that Duda "will entrust the mission of forming the government to the winning party and in this first step we will certainly try to build a parliamentary

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 27 of 56

majority.”

The question arose whether it would obtain the new parliament’s approval.

Three opposition parties, Tusk’s Civic Coalition, Third Way and the New Left, ran on separate tickets but with the same promises of seeking to oust Law and Justice and restore good ties with the European Union.

Włodzimierz Czarzasty, a leader of the Left party, vowed to work with the others to “create a democratic, strong, reasonable and predictable government.”

Katarzyna Pelczynska-Nalecz, the head of election campaign for Third Way, called it a “huge day for our democracy.”

Votes were still being counted and the state electoral commission says it expects to have final results by Tuesday morning.

The high turnout also extended the count of Ipsos’ late poll, based on findings from 50% of the voting stations, which was still not published in the early hours of Monday.

At stake in the election were the health of the nation’s constitutional order, its legal stance on LGBTQ+ rights and abortion, and the foreign alliances of a country that has been a crucial ally to Ukraine after Russia launched its full-scale invasion.

LGBTQ+ rights activist Bart Staszewski called it the end of a “nightmare” for himself as a gay man and others.

“This is just the beginning of reclaiming of our country. The fight is ahead but we are breathing fresh air today,” Staszewski said.

Environmental activist Dominika Lasota was emotional with relief, saying “we have our future.”

Law and Justice has eroded checks and balances to gain more control over state institutions, including the courts, public media and the electoral process itself.

During the campaign many Poles described the vote as the most important one since 1989, when a new democracy was born after decades of communism. Turnout then was 63%.

Despite many uncertainties ahead, what appeared certain was that support for the governing party has shrunk since the last election in 2019 when it won nearly 44% of the vote, its popularity dented by high inflation, allegations of cronyism and bickering with European allies.

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

A political change could open the way for the EU to release billions of euros in funding that has been withheld over what the EU viewed as democratic erosion.

Piotr Buras, of the European Council on Foreign Relations, said the opposition had gained from “growing fatigue” with the government among Poles, “beyond the groups usually supporting the liberals.”

The fate of Poland’s relationship with Ukraine was also at stake. The Confederation party campaigned on an anti-Ukraine message, accusing the country of lacking gratitude to Poland for its help in Russia’s war. Its poor showing will be a relief for Kyiv.

A referendum on migration, the retirement age and other issues was held simultaneously. Some government opponents called on voters to boycott the referendum, saying it was an attempt by the government to galvanize its supporters. Many voters were seen refusing to take part in the referendum and the exit poll pegged participation at 40%, which meant the results would not be legally binding.

Jim Jordan’s rapid rise has been cheered by Trump and the far right. Could it soon make him speaker?

By BRIAN SLODYSKO, FARNOUSH AMIRI and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rep. Jim Jordan has such a reputation as a political brawler that former House Speaker John Boehner once said he’d never met someone “who spent more time tearing things apart.”

Now, nearly a decade after Boehner stepped down in the face of a conservative revolt, it is Jordan who is trying to bring the Republican Party together to win the speaker’s gavel.

A favorite of former President Donald Trump and darling of the party’s rabble-rousing base, Jordan’s

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 28 of 56

path to the U.S. government's third-highest office is by no means certain in a House Republican conference riven by conflict following the ouster two weeks ago of former Speaker Kevin McCarthy. To win, he'll need support from nearly every House Republican, having few votes to spare in a chamber they only narrowly control.

Should Jordan succeed, it would help cement the far right's takeover of the Republican Party and trigger fresh conflict with Democrats over the size and scope of government. But a Jordan speakership would also come with baggage that could present a challenge to Republicans as they labor to hold their House majority in next year's election, an effort that will likely hinge on drawing support from moderate voters in swing districts.

Some members of Congress — including some in his own party — label Jordan an extremist unworthy of the speakership, pointing to his active role in Trump's bid to stop the certification of the 2020 presidential election, as well as his refusal to honor a congressional subpoena about the Jan. 6 attack at the Capitol. Further in his past, Jordan continues to be questioned over his alleged knowledge of sexual abuse in the wrestling program at Ohio State University — accusations he adamantly denies.

Former Rep. Liz Cheney, who helped lead the Jan. 6 investigation and was ousted from GOP leadership by conservatives, has warned that giving Jordan the gavel could even pose a threat to democracy itself.

"If the Republicans decide that Jim Jordan should be the speaker of the House," Cheney said during a recent speech, "there would no longer be any possible way to argue that a group of elected Republicans could be counted on to defend the Constitution."

Jordan has defended his bare-knuckled approach as rooted in principle, a message that resonates with conservatives who have long accused GOP leaders of capitulation.

"One person says disruption," Jordan told The Associated Press in 2017. "We like to say we're doing what we told the voters we were going to do."

Jordan, a 59-year-old father of four, was born near Dayton in western Ohio. He was a four-time state wrestling champion in high school and a two-time NCAA champion at the University of Wisconsin in the 1980s. That helped him land a coaching job at Ohio State University before his election to the Ohio legislature in the mid 1990s.

His conservatism and zeal for a political fight were evident in early clashes with GOP legislative leaders, as well as with Republican Gov. Bob Taft.

When he decided to pursue a state Senate seat in 1999, he faced opposition from the GOP establishment and from Boehner, then a four-term congressman, who supported a rival. Jordan easily won, ousting a veteran state representative with nearly 60% of the vote. Jordan was elected to Congress several years later, in 2006.

After the tea party wave swept Republicans to power in 2011, the roles reversed, and Jordan was among the conservatives who were frequently Boehner's tormentors.

Jordan was the founding chairman in 2015 of the House Freedom Caucus, a group of conservative hardliners who eventually pressured Boehner to step aside. More than eight years later, members of the group were instrumental in McCarthy's removal, a stunning outcome testament to the group's outsized power.

But it is Jordan's past as a wrestling coach — a sport he described as "good for a society" — that has posed one of his biggest political liabilities.

In 2018, several former athletes he coached at Ohio State came forward to describe a lurid atmosphere surrounding the school's wrestling program when Jordan was an assistant coach. The allegations centered around sexual misconduct by Richard Strauss, a doctor who was on the faculty and medical staff.

Jordan would "even make comments: 'This guy better not touch me,'" Dunyasha Yetts, one of the wrestlers, told AP in 2018.

A subsequent investigation found Strauss, who died by suicide in 2005, groped or sexually assaulted nearly 200 students, many of them wrestlers seeking medical care. Since then, even more former wrestlers Jordan coached have come forward to say that Jordan was aware of the doctor's conduct but did nothing to stop it — an allegation that Jordan vehemently denied.

"It's false. I never saw, never, heard of, never was told about any kind of abuse," Jordan told Fox News

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 29 of 56

in 2018, suggesting that the allegations against him were politically motivated. "What bothers me the most is the guys that are saying these things, I know they know the truth."

Adam DiSabato, a former Ohio State wrestling captain and brother to one of the early whistleblowers, offered an unsparing assessment during a 2020 legislative hearing in Columbus. DiSabato testified that he repeatedly urged Jordan and others on the coaching staff to intervene.

"Jim Jordan called me crying ... begging me to go against my brother," DiSabato said, referring to a call he said he received after the abuse allegations first became public. "He's throwing us under the bus — all of us. He's a coward."

Ohio State has since doled out tens of millions of dollars in settlements. Jordan's political committee paid \$84,000 to a conservative public relations firm in 2018 to help manage the fallout, campaign finance disclosures show.

Unlike many in Congress, Jordan has not adopted some of the flashier trappings of office, appearing regularly in a blue button-up and gold tie, sans jacket and with his shirt sleeves rolled up. Nor, unlike many of his peers, does Jordan appear to have experienced a dramatic improvement in his personal finances while serving in Congress, public financial disclosures show.

When Jordan first entered Congress, his wife, Polly, earned a modest salary from a western Ohio school district while he relied on a mid-five-figure income from a deferred compensation plan. His most recent disclosure, filed last year, show Jordan's net worth has improved only slightly, thanks to his \$174,000 salary as a congressman and royalties from a political memoir.

"It's true, retail legislative activity for him, so there's no like, 'I'm gonna buy a house in Washington and live there,'" said Ohio Senate President Matt Huffman, a longtime ally. "He's doesn't have any interest in that."

Jordan's skill set proved particularly useful in the politically charged years after Trump won the White House.

His allegiance was on full display during the Justice Department's investigation into potential coordination between Russia and Trump's 2016 presidential campaign, when he used his platform on the House Judiciary Committee to rail against the probe as politically motivated and to attack the law enforcement officials who supervised it.

In recognition of Jordan's growing influence, Republicans moved him to the House Intelligence committee during the first impeachment proceedings against Trump in 2019. And when Republicans won the House in last year's election, Jordan secured the chairmanship of the Judiciary Committee, one of the most prestigious posts in Congress — and one well-suited to his combative style.

In tense hearings this year, Jordan has sparred with Cabinet secretaries, FBI officials and ambassadors alike, accusing them all of taking part in a "weaponization" of government against conservatives. Jordan comes to the hearings with a wrestler's mindset, trying to anticipate his opponents' moves ahead of time during preparatory sessions in his Capitol Hill office.

Jordan is also among the Republicans leading the impeachment inquiry into President Joe Biden. Republicans say the investigation is needed to root out whether the Biden family corruptly profited from their connections in Washington.

But it was in the period after Trump lost the election to Biden in 2020 that Jordan's strongest connections to Trump were forged. Jordan repeatedly cast doubt on the outcome of the contest while organizing the House Republican response.

Documents obtained by Congress through its investigation of the attack offer a window into Jordan's involvement in Trump's bid to stay in office.

Days after the election, Jordan traveled with fellow GOP Rep. Scott Perry to Pennsylvania to meet with the Republican state House speaker, where the two congressmen "raised some questions regarding what I'll call the legal process," then-Speaker Bryan Cutler told investigators.

On Dec. 21, 2020, Jordan was among those attending a White House meeting focused on pressuring then Vice President Mike Pence to use his ceremonial role presiding over the electoral college to overturn

the election, according to documents from the investigation.

Jordan also hosted a Jan. 2, 2021 conference call with the White House to discuss logistics for Jan 6, including Republican plans to object to the election's certification, according to call logs and testimony from Cassidy Hutchinson, an aide to Trump's chief of staff Mark Meadows.

White House call logs also show that Jordan called Trump twice on Jan. 6 — both before and after the attack.

During his speech that day, which preceded the Capitol attack, Trump singled out Jordan for praise.

"There's so many weak Republicans. And we have great ones. Jim Jordan and some of these guys, they're out there fighting," Trump said. "The House guys are fighting."

In the days after the Capitol was attacked, Jordan raised the possibility of getting presidential pardons for members of Congress, though never directly asked for one, Hutchinson told the congressional committee.

A week later, Trump presented Jordan with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor.

Daniel Noboa, political neophyte and heir to fortune, wins presidency in violence-wracked Ecuador

By REGINA GARCIA CANO and GONZALO SOLANO Associated Press

QUITO, Ecuador (AP) — Daniel Noboa has managed to do what his father failed at five times: Getting elected as Ecuador's president.

And he did it Sunday on his first attempt, winning a runoff election against a leftist lawyer on the resume of a 35-year-old who belongs to the South American country's elite, which means some schooling in the U.S., some entrepreneurial work, some dabbling in politics.

Now, he must answer the universal demand to make Ecuador safe again, which voters urged on all the candidates who originally jumped into the race amid a surge in unprecedented violence tied to drug trafficking.

Noboa's proposals to tackle the crucial issue have run the gamut. At one point in the campaign, he proposed turning ships into floating jails for the most violent criminals. At another, he simply promised more gear for police.

Voters are increasingly frightened by the escalation of drug violence over the past three years. Killings, kidnappings, robberies and other criminal activities have become part of everyday life, leaving Ecuadorians wondering when, not if, they will be victims.

And as he is getting a truncated term, Noboa faces a daunting task.

"I think there would be a very slim chance that even the best equipped president could reverse Ecuador's security crisis within 18 months — it's such a short period of time — and neither of these candidates was the best equipped. Noboa certainly not," said Will Freeman, a fellow on Latin American studies at the Council on Foreign Relations. "His proposals on security were erratic, and they gave the sense that he was improvising."

The incoming president's term will run only through May 2025, which is what remains of the tenure of President Guillermo Lasso. He cut his term short when he dissolved the National Assembly in May as lawmakers pursued impeachment proceedings against him over alleged improprieties in a government contract.

With nearly all votes counted, electoral officials said Noboa had just over 52%, compared to nearly 48% for Luisa González, an ally of exiled former President Rafael Correa. González conceded defeat during a speech before supporters in which she also urged Noboa to fulfill his campaign promises.

After results showed him victorious, Noboa thanked Ecuadorians for believing in "a new political project, a young political project, an improbable political project."

He said his goal is "to return peace to the country, to give education to the youth again, to be able to provide employment to the many people who are looking for it." To that end, Noboa said, he will immedi-

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 31 of 56

ately begin to work to “rebuild a country that has been seriously hit by violence, corruption and hatred.”

The government’s inability to tackle the security crisis was laid bare in August with the assassination of presidential candidate and anti-corruption crusader Fernando Villavicencio. Since then, other politicians and political leaders have been killed or kidnapped, car bombs have exploded in multiple cities, including the capital, Quito, and inmates have rioted in prisons. Earlier this month, seven men held as suspects in Villavicencio’s slaying were themselves killed inside prisons.

Noboa opened an event organizing company when he was 18 and then joined his father’s Noboa Corp., where he held management positions in the shipping, logistics and commercial areas. His political career began in 2021, when he got a seat in the National Assembly and chaired its Economic Development Commission.

His father, Álvaro Noboa, is the richest man in Ecuador thanks to a conglomerate that started in the growing and shipping of bananas — Ecuador’s main crop — and now includes more than 128 companies in dozens of countries. The elder Noboa unsuccessfully ran for president five times.

The younger Noboa’s party will not have enough seats in the National Assembly to be able to govern on its own. Garnering support from opposing lawmakers will be key to avoid the difficulties that plagued Lasso’s term.

Lasso, a conservative former banker, clashed constantly with lawmakers after his election in 2021 and decided not to run in the special election. On Sunday, he called on Ecuadorians to have a peaceful election and think about what is “best for their children, their parents and the country.”

Under Lasso’s watch, violent deaths soared, reaching 4,600 in 2022, the country’s highest in history and double the total in 2021. The National Police tallied 3,568 violent deaths in the first half of 2023.

The spike in violence is tied to the trafficking of cocaine produced in neighboring Colombia and Peru. Mexican, Colombian and Balkan cartels have set down roots in Ecuador and operate with assistance from local criminal gangs.

“I don’t expect much from this election,” Julio Ricaurte, a 59-year-old engineer, said Sunday near one of the voting centers in northern Quito. “First, because the president will have little time to do anything, and second because the (National) Assembly in our country is an organization that prevents anyone who comes to power from governing.”

Noboa and González advanced to the runoff by finishing ahead of six other candidates in the election’s first round on Aug. 22. The replacement of Villavicencio finished in third place.

González was unknown to most voters until the party of Correa, her mentor, picked her as its presidential candidate. She held various government jobs during Correa’s decade-long presidency and was a lawmaker from 2021 until May.

At the start of the campaign, she said Correa would be her adviser, but she recently sought to distance herself a bit in an effort to court voters who oppose the former president, who remains a major force in Ecuador despite being found guilty of corruption in 2020 and sentenced in absentia to eight years in prison. He has been living in his wife’s native Belgium since 2017.

Rosa Amaguaña, a 62-year-old fruit and vegetable vendor, said Sunday that safety “is the first thing that must be solved” by the next president.

“I’m hopeful the country will change,” Amaguaña said. “Yes, it can. The next president must be able to do even something small.”

Major US pharmacy chain Rite Aid files for bankruptcy

The Associated Press undefined

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Major U.S. pharmacy chain Rite Aid said Sunday that it has filed for bankruptcy and obtained \$3.45 billion in fresh financing as it carries out a restructuring plan while coping with falling sales and opioid-related lawsuits.

In 2022, Rite Aid settled for up to \$30 million to resolve lawsuits alleging pharmacies contributed to an oversupply of prescription opioids. It said it had reached an agreement with its creditors on a financial

restructuring plan to cut its debt and position itself for future growth and that the bankruptcy filing was part of that process.

The plan will "significantly reduce the company's debt" while helping to "resolve litigation claims in an equitable manner," Rite Aid said.

In March, the Justice Department filed a complaint against Rite Aid, alleging it knowingly filled hundreds of thousands of unlawful prescriptions for controlled substances from May 2014-June 2019. It also accused pharmacists and the company of ignoring "red flags" indicating the prescriptions were illegal.

The Justice Department acted after three whistleblowers who had worked at Rite Aid pharmacies filed a complaint.

Jeffrey Stein, who heads a financial advisory firm, was appointed Rite Aid's CEO as of Sunday, replacing Elizabeth Burr, who was interim CEO and remains on Rite Aid's board.

Earlier this month, Rite Aid notified the New York Stock Exchange that it was not in compliance with listing standards. During a grace period, the company's stock continues to be listed and traded.

The bankruptcy filing in New Jersey and noncompliance with listing standards would not affect the company's business operations or its U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission reporting requirements, it said.

Rite Aid said it was arranging for payment of wages and other costs as usual, though some "underperforming" stores among its more than 2,100 pharmacies in 17 states will be closed.

It earlier reported that its revenue fell to \$5.7 billion in the fiscal quarter that ended June 3, down from \$6.0 billion a year earlier, logging a net loss of \$306.7 million.

Judge Chutkan to hear arguments over proposed gag order in Trump's election interference case

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN, LINDSAY WHITEHURST and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal prosecutors and lawyers for Donald Trump will argue in court Monday over a proposed gag order aimed at reining in the former president's diatribes against likely witnesses and others in his 2020 election interference case in Washington.

In pressing U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan to impose the narrow gag order, special counsel Jack Smith's team has accused the Republican of using increasingly incendiary rhetoric to try to undermine the public's confidence in the justice system and taint the jury pool.

Trump's defense has called the proposal an unconstitutional effort to "silence" his political speech as he campaigns for the Republican presidential nomination in 2024.

"This desperate effort at censorship is unconstitutional on its face," his lawyers wrote in court papers.

The gag order fight underscores the unprecedented complexities of prosecuting the former president as he tries to retake the White House while fighting criminal charges in four cases. And it raises tough questions for the judge, who has to balance Trump's First Amendment rights to defend himself publicly with a need to protect the integrity of the case.

It comes on the heels of the judge overseeing Trump's civil fraud trial in New York imposing a more limited gag order prohibiting personal attacks against court personnel following a social media post from Trump that maligned the judge's principal clerk.

Prosecutors are asking Chutkan to bar Trump and lawyers from making statements "that pose a substantial likelihood of material prejudice to this case," including inflammatory or intimidating remarks about witnesses, lawyers and other people involved in the case.

It's not clear whether Chutkan will issue a ruling on Monday. Chutkan has said Trump does not have to attend the hearing.

It's the first time the lawyers will appear before Chutkan since she denied Trump's request to recuse herself from the case, which alleges Trump illegally schemed to overturn his 2020 election loss to President Joe Biden. Trump has denied any wrongdoing.

The defense had claimed Chutkan's comments about Trump in other cases raised questions about whether she had prejudged his guilt. But Chutkan said her comments were mischaracterized and there

was no need for her to step aside.

Trump has frequently used social media to attack Chutkan, prosecutors, likely witnesses and others despite warnings from the judge, who was appointed by President Barack Obama, that inflammatory comments could force her to move up the trial currently scheduled to begin in March.

Prosecutors noted in a recent motion that Trump's incendiary rhetoric has continued even after their initial gag order request. They cited critical comments about witnesses referenced in the indictment — such as former Attorney General William Barr — and a social media post suggesting that Mark Milley, the retiring chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had committed treason and should be executed.

Prosecutors have said their proposal would not impact Trump's ability to campaign or prevent him from publicly declaring his innocence. In court papers, they wrote that Trump is demanding "special treatment," by claiming "he should have free rein to publicly intimidate witnesses" and disparage others involved in the case.

"In this case, Donald J. Trump is a criminal defendant like any other," Smith's team wrote.

European Union leaders to hold a summit with Western Balkans nations to discuss joining the bloc

By LLAZAR SEMINI Associated Press

TIRANA, Albania (AP) — Leaders from the European Union and the Western Balkans will hold a summit in Albania's capital on Monday to discuss the path to membership in the bloc for the six countries of the region.

The main topics at the annual talks — called the Berlin Process — are integrating the Western Balkans into a single market and supporting their green and digital transformation. The nations in the region are Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia.

The senior EU officials attending the summit in Tirana are European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, European Council President Charles Michel. They will be joined by German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and French President Emmanuel Macron.

The six Western Balkan countries are at different stages of integration into the bloc. Serbia and Montenegro were the first Western Balkan countries to launch membership negotiations a few years ago, followed by Albania and Macedonia last year, while Bosnia and Kosovo have only begun the first step of the integration process.

Russia's war in Ukraine has put integration of the Western Balkans into the EU at the top of the 27-nation bloc's agenda. The EU is trying to reinvigorate the whole enlargement process, which has been stalled since 2013, when the last country to become a member was Croatia.

The EU had made it a requirement for Western Balkans to reform their economies and political institutions before joining the bloc.

Von der Leyen mentioned a new growth plan for the Western Balkan countries that she will make public at the summit: opening new trade routes in seven specific areas of the EU's common market for the Balkan countries, which need to implement quick reforms that in turn will be accompanied by investment.

Von der Leyen, speaking at a news conference on Sunday after meeting with Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama, gave no further details.

A bitter dispute between Serbia and Kosovo, a former Serbian province that declared independence in 2008, remains a great concern for the EU before the summit. A recent shootout between masked Serb gunmen and Kosovo police that left four people dead and sent tensions soaring in the region seems to have suspended the EU-facilitated dialogue to normalize their ties.

EU officials have called on the Balkan countries to overcome regional conflicts and stand together as Russia wages war in Ukraine.

The summit, which is being held for the first time in a non-EU member country, takes place at a pharaonic landmark, known as the Pyramid. It was built in 1988 as a posthumous museum for Albania's communist-era strongman, Enver Hoxha.

Few Republicans have confidence in elections. It's a long road for one group trying to change that

By CHRISTINE FERNANDO Associated Press

SUAMICO, Wis. (AP) — Kim Pytleski could barely sleep the night before. She replayed the PowerPoint slides in her head, packed her notebook and took a deep breath.

The clerk from a rural Wisconsin county north of Green Bay was preparing for a public meeting to explain the election process to residents. She didn't know who she would encounter. Would some deny the results of the last presidential election? Would the conversation get combative? Most importantly, would she get through to anyone?

They were questions Pytleski never expected to ask herself when she started the job in Oconto County more than 14 years ago. But since then, election conspiracy theories have taken root in the rural, heavily Republican county in northeastern Wisconsin. It's among large swaths of the country where distrust of voting and ballot-counting, fanned by former President Donald Trump's false claims of a stolen election, maintains a stubborn grasp.

Pytleski, who was born and raised in the county, hears conspiracy theories nearly everywhere she goes: Democrats are paying people to stuff ballot boxes with illegal votes, absentee voting allows rampant fraud, voting machines are hacked by foreign powers. She receives skeptical letters and emails. When she's defended the election process, Pytleski, a lifelong Republican, has been called a RINO — a Republican in Name Only.

"You know pretty much everyone," she said of the towns that make up Oconto County, which has consistently leaned Republican in presidential elections over the past two decades, except when former President Barack Obama won here in 2008. "The joke is that if someone moves here, you have to live here 30 years before you're considered a local. It's a warm feeling, being in a place like this."

But, she added, "election denialism has gotten its hold on it."

For elections officials and grassroots democracy groups in the presidential swing state, it has been an uphill fight to combat the doubts and the people who continue to spread them. They describe grappling with an almost faith-like pull of conspiracy theories perpetuated by online misinformation and far-right figures.

Still, they press on, taking on the issue one community event and one conversation at a time, hoping for a half-step forward.

"This state is vital, and it's ground zero in this fight to save our republic," said Reid Ribble, a Republican who represented the area in Congress until 2017 and is an adviser to the nonprofit Keep Our Republic. The group is holding town hall-style forums throughout Wisconsin hoping to restore faith in elections and has plans to do the same in two other states that will be pivotal to next year's presidential race, Michigan and Pennsylvania.

The group's efforts come as distrust in elections has gained a persistent foothold across the country, especially in rural areas. That has led to attempts to ditch voting machines in favor of less accurate and efficient hand counts, threats of violence against election workers and the violent Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

Polling from last summer by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that only 22% of Republicans have high confidence that votes in the 2024 presidential election will be counted accurately, compared to 71% of Democrats, while a solid majority of Republicans continue to believe President Joe Biden's election win was illegitimate.

The deep partisan divide comes amid a relentless campaign of lies from Trump that the 2020 election was stolen as he seeks a second term in the White House.

Wisconsin has been an epicenter of the efforts to undermine faith in elections. The state supreme court, then with a conservative majority, came within one vote in 2020 of overturning the presidential results, and Republicans in the Legislature later launched a partisan investigation seeking evidence of widespread fraud. That probe eventually landed before a judge who declared that it had uncovered "absolutely no

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 35 of 56

evidence of election fraud.”

Instead, multiple audits and recounts have affirmed Biden’s 21,000-vote win in the state. Yet the doubt remains.

With Coke cans and paper plates stacked with Pepperoni pizza slices, about 50 community members filled a fire station on a recent evening in Suamico, a town of 13,000 that borders Oconto County on the shores of Lake Michigan, just outside Green Bay.

Flanked on either side by U.S. and Wisconsin flags, a panel of local officials brought together by Keep Our Republic walked attendees through the election process, from how voting equipment is tested to the process of certifying the results.

“We’re arming people with facts,” said Kathy Bernier, state director of the nonprofit group, which emphasizes that it is nonpartisan. “The best way to help people understand is to bring the experts to them and connect with them like this. Then they can spread that information to their own friends, family and neighbors.”

Bernier, a Republican former state senator, broke with her own party to criticize those who disseminate false election claims. The event in late September was the second in a series she is planning in Wisconsin.

“I’ve been yelled at more times than I can count,” Bernier said. “People have sent out press releases chastising me. But I’m going to stand my ground because the truth is on my side, and this work needs to be done.”

It’s not without obstacles. Bernier and others involved in the effort said the public is still largely unaware of what happens behind the scenes during elections, leaving them vulnerable to misinformation.

People also consume news that confirms their biases and move to areas where they are surrounded by people who think as they do, Bernier said. In addition, when many people see Trump and others who spread election misinformation as “some sort of savior,” election denialism can become almost like a faith system.

“If you’ve closed your mind to the truth, there’s not always a lot we can do,” Bernier said. “We’re working on those who are hovering around the middle.”

The effort to provide a clear view of how elections work comes as other groups are spreading a conflicting message in Wisconsin — that elections are rigged, not secure and that fraud is rampant. Their efforts are aided by prominent voices in the election conspiracy movement, including MyPillow founder Mike Lindell and Douglas Frank, who has visited Wisconsin regularly to speak at events spreading false claims of 2020 election fraud.

These narratives have fueled an ongoing fight over an effort by legislative Republicans to fire Meagan Wolfe, the state’s nonpartisan elections commissioner and potentially replace her with someone favored by the GOP in time for the 2024 presidential election. Wolfe is scheduled to speak at another town hall hosted by Keep Our Republic later this month.

They also were reflected in a flood of questions from residents during the Suamico town hall: How are absentee voters being vetted, are ballot drop boxes secure, are dead people and undocumented immigrants voting? A meeting scheduled for three hours stretched to five as residents lingered until 10:30 p.m.

“I can’t say for sure that we changed hearts and minds, but they were engaged, that’s for sure,” Bernier said.

The forum didn’t seem to budge several of those who showed up and have become deeply skeptical of the election process.

Connie Streckenback, from Howard, a town of about 20,000 just outside Suamico, said she “saw cheating” while serving as a poll observer in the Green Bay area. For example, she said she saw over a dozen women register to vote with the same address. When she later drove by the building, she saw a single-family home.

Local officials offered possible explanations, such as that the women could have been roommates, but Streckenback, 59, remained convinced they could not have all lived in the same home.

“It was fraud,” she said. “Everyone was very nice, but people were acting like I was making a big deal out of nothing. ... I don’t believe the explanations.”

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 36 of 56

She added, "This has not improved my trust in the election process."

Another poll observer from the same town, 79-year-old Mary Verheyen, said she trusted the election officials at the meeting but that it didn't make "any difference at all" in her trust in the system as a whole.

"I believe the people here think like I do and are doing their jobs," she said. "That doesn't mean everyone is."

Verheyen's comments illustrate a challenge faced by election officials across the country, especially in rural areas. In close-knit communities where residents rely on each other, improving trust in local election officials is possible, said Michelle Bartoletti, the Suamico Village clerk. But it's harder to persuade residents to trust the system as a whole, especially in urban areas.

In Suamico, the election administration was ranked number two, just under the fire department, in a survey last year asking residents to rate the village's services, Bartoletti said. Even with that level of local trust, the false belief that the 2020 presidential election was stolen permeates the community.

"It's really difficult to combat that kind of attitude," she said.

There's no perfect solution, said clerks and experts who've participated in Keep Our Republic efforts. In addition to more community events, the group is planning social media campaigns to combat online misinformation and is organizing talks at high schools. They may even work with voting machine companies to create explanatory material that counties and cities can send to residents.

Bartoletti is putting her faith in one-on-one conversations and community forums like the one in Suamico.

"We just keep trying because that's all you really can do," she said. "What other option is there? This is too important to just throw our hands up and give up."

Daniel Noboa, heir to banana fortune, wins Ecuador's presidential runoff election

By REGINA GARCIA CANO and GONZALO SOLANO Associated Press

QUITO, Ecuador (AP) — Daniel Noboa, an inexperienced politician and an heir to a fortune built on the banana trade, won Ecuador's presidential runoff election Sunday held amid unprecedented violence that even claimed the life of a candidate.

With more than 97% of the votes counted, electoral officials said Noboa had 52.1%, compared to 47.9% for Luisa González, a leftist lawyer and ally of exiled former President Rafael Correa. González conceded defeat during a speech before supporters in which she also urged Noboa to fulfill his campaign promises.

Noboa, 35, will lead the South American country during a period that drug trafficking-related violence has left Ecuadorians wondering when, not if, they will be victims. Their uneasiness has prompted them to continuously watch their backs and limit how often they leave home.

After results showed him victorious, Noboa thanked Ecuadorians for believing in "a new political project, a young political project, an improbable political project."

He said his goal is "to return peace to the country, to give education to the youth again, to be able to provide employment to the many people who are looking for it." To that end, Noboa said, he will immediately begin to work to "rebuild a country that has been seriously hit by violence, corruption and hatred."

The incoming president's term will run only through May 2025, which is what remains of the tenure of President Guillermo Lasso. He cut his term short when he dissolved the country's National Assembly in May as lawmakers carried out impeachment proceedings against him over alleged improprieties in a contract by a state-owned company.

Ecuadorians — young and old, rich and poor, city and rural dwellers — had a universal demand throughout the campaign: safety. Noboa is now expected to meet it, but the magnitude of the problem coupled with the brevity of the upcoming presidential term might prove an impossible task for the U.S.-educated man who will become Ecuador's youngest president.

"I think there would be a very slim chance that even the best equipped president could reverse Ecuador's security crisis within 18 months — it's such a short period of time — and neither of these candidates

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 37 of 56

was the best equipped. Noboa certainly not," said Will Freeman, a fellow on Latin American studies at the Council on Foreign Relations. "His proposals on security were erratic, and they gave the sense that he was improvising."

Violence erupted in Ecuador roughly three years ago with a rise in criminal activity linked to cocaine trafficking, and the government's inability to tackle it was laid bare in August with the assassination of presidential candidate and anti-corruption crusader Fernando Villavicencio.

Since then, other politicians and political leaders have been killed or kidnapped, car bombs have exploded in multiple cities, including the capital, Quito, and inmates have rioted in prisons. Earlier this month, seven men whom authorities identified as suspects in Villavicencio's slaying were killed while in custody.

Noboa's political career began in 2021, when he got a seat in the National Assembly and chaired its Economic Development Commission. The U.S.-educated businessman had opened an event organizing company when he was 18 and then joined his father's Noboa Corp., where he held management positions in the shipping, logistics and commercial areas.

His father, Alvaro Noboa, is the richest man in Ecuador thanks to a conglomerate that started in the growing and shipping of bananas — Ecuador's main crop — and now includes more than 128 companies in dozens of countries. The elder Noboa unsuccessfully ran for president five times.

The younger Noboa's party will not have enough seats in the National Assembly to be able to govern on its own. Garnering support from opposing lawmakers will be key to avoid the difficulties that plagued Lasso's term.

Lasso, a conservative former banker, clashed constantly with lawmakers after his election in 2021 and decided not to run in the special election. On Sunday, he called on Ecuadorians to have a peaceful election and think about what is "best for their children, their parents and the country."

Under Lasso's watch, violent deaths soared, reaching 4,600 in 2022, the country's highest in history and double the total in 2021. The National Police tallied 3,568 violent deaths in the first half of 2023.

The spike in violence is tied to the trafficking of cocaine produced in neighboring Colombia and Peru. Mexican, Colombian and Balkan cartels have set roots in Ecuador and operate with assistance from local criminal gangs.

"I don't expect much from this election," Julio Ricaurte, a 59-year-old engineer, said Sunday near one of the voting centers in northern Quito. "First, because the president will have little time to do anything, and second because the (National) Assembly in our country is an organization that prevents anyone who comes to power from governing."

Noboa and González, both of whom have served short stints as lawmakers, advanced to the runoff by finishing ahead of six other candidates in the election's first round on Aug. 22. The replacement of Villavicencio finished in third place.

A large group of military and police officers as well as private security guards protected Noboa when he voted in Olón, a community on the country's central Pacific coast. He wore a bulletproof vest.

González was unknown to most voters until the party of Correa, her mentor, picked her as its presidential candidate. She held various government jobs during Correa's decade-long presidency and was a lawmaker from 2021 until May.

At the start of the campaign, she said Correa would be her adviser, but she recently sought to distance herself a bit in an effort to court voters who oppose the former president, who remains a major force in Ecuador despite being found guilty of corruption in 2020 and sentenced in absentia to eight years in prison. He has been living in his wife's native Belgium since 2017.

Rosa Amaguaña, a 62-year-old fruit and vegetable vendor, said Sunday that safety "is the first thing that must be solved" by the next president.

"I'm hopeful the country will change," Amaguaña said. "Yes, it can. The next president must be able to do even something small."

Another powerful earthquake shakes quake-devastated region in western Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Another 6.3 magnitude earthquake struck part of western Afghanistan on Sunday after thousands of people died and entire villages were flattened by devastating quakes a week earlier.

The latest quake was centered about 30 kilometers (19 miles) outside the city of Herat, the capital of Herat province, and was 6 kilometers (4 miles) below the surface, the U.S. Geological Survey said. It's the fourth quake the USGS has measured at 6.3 magnitude in the same area in just over a week.

Aid group Save the Children said four people have died and that Herat Regional Hospital has received 153 injured. Everything in the Baloch area of Rabat Sangi district has collapsed. Several villages have been destroyed, according to the aid group. Authorities have given lower casualty numbers.

Sayed Kazim Rafiqi, 42, a Herat city resident, said he had never seen such devastation before with the majority of houses damaged and "people terrified." Rafiqi and others headed to the hospital to donate much-needed blood.

"We have to help in any way possible," he said.

The initial earthquakes on Oct. 7 flattened whole villages in Herat and were among the most destructive quakes in the country's recent history.

More than 90% of the people killed were women and children, U.N. officials reported Thursday. They struck during daytime, while many of the men in the region were working outdoors.

Taliban officials said the earlier quakes killed more than 2,000 people across the province. The epicenter was in Zenda Jan district, where the majority of casualties and damage occurred.

The initial quake, numerous aftershocks and a third 6.3-magnitude quake on Wednesday flattened villages, destroying hundreds of mud-brick homes that could not withstand such force. Schools, health clinics and other village facilities also collapsed.

Besides rubble and funerals after that devastation, there was little left of the villages in the region's dusty hills. Survivors are struggling to come to terms with the loss of multiple family members and in many places, living residents are outnumbered by volunteers who came to search the debris and dig mass graves.

Earthquakes are common in Afghanistan, where there are a number of fault lines and frequent movement among three nearby tectonic plates.

Suzanne Somers, of 'Three's Company,' dies at 76

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

Suzanne Somers, the effervescent blonde actor known for playing Chrissy Snow on the television show "Three's Company" and who became an entrepreneur and New York Times best-selling author, has died. She was 76.

Somers had breast cancer for over 23 years and died Sunday morning, her family said in a statement provided by her longtime publicist, R. Couri Hay. Her husband Alan Hamel, her son Bruce and other immediate family were with her in Palm Springs, California.

"Her family was gathered to celebrate her 77th birthday on October 16th," the statement read. "Instead, they will celebrate her extraordinary life, and want to thank her millions of fans and followers who loved her dearly."

In July, Somers shared on Instagram that her breast cancer had returned.

"Like any cancer patient, when you get that dreaded, 'It's back' you get a pit in your stomach. Then I put on my battle gear and go to war," she told Entertainment Tonight at the time. "This is familiar battleground for me and I'm very tough."

She was first diagnosed in 2000, and had previously battled skin cancer. Somers faced some backlash for her reliance on what she's described as a chemical-free and organic lifestyle to combat the cancers. She argued against the use of chemotherapy, in books and on platforms like "The Oprah Winfrey Show," which drew criticism from the American Cancer Society.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 39 of 56

Somers was born in 1946 in San Bruno, California, to a gardener father and a medical secretary mother. Her childhood, she'd later say, was tumultuous. Her father was an alcoholic, and abusive. She married young, at 19, to Bruce Somers, after becoming pregnant with her son Bruce. The couple divorced three years later and she began modeling for "The Anniversary Game" to support herself. It was during this time that she met Hamel, who she married in 1977.

She began acting in the late 1960s, earning her first credit in the Steve McQueen film "Bullitt." But the spotlight really hit when she was cast as the blonde driving the white Thunderbird in George Lucas's 1973 film "American Graffiti." Her only line was mouthing the words "I love you" to Richard Dreyfuss's character.

At her audition, Lucas just asked her if she could drive. She later said that moment "changed her life forever."

Somers would later stage a one-woman Broadway show entitled "The Blonde in the Thunderbird," about her life, which drew largely scathing reviews.

She appeared in many television shows in the 1970s, including "The Rockford Files," "Magnum Force" and "The Six Million Dollar Man," but her most famous part came with "Three's Company," which aired on ABC from 1977 to 1984 — though her participation ended in 1981.

On "Three's Company," she was the ditzzy blonde opposite John Ritter and Joyce DeWitt in the roommate comedy.

"Creating her was actually intellectual," she told CBS News in 2020. "How do I make her likable and loveable ... dumb blondes are annoying. I gave her a moral code. I imagined it was the childhood I would've liked to have had."

In 1980, after four seasons, she said she asked for a raise from \$30,000 an episode to \$150,000 an episode, which she described as comparable to what Ritter was getting paid. Hamel, a former television producer, had encouraged the ask.

"The show's response was, 'Who do you think you are?'" Somers told People in 2020. "They said, 'John Ritter is the star.'"

She was promptly phased out and soon fired; Her character was replaced by two different roommates for the remaining years the show aired. It also led to a rift with her co-stars; They didn't speak for many years. Somers did reconcile with Ritter before his death, and then with DeWitt on her online talk show.

But Somers took the break as an opportunity to pursue new avenues, including a Las Vegas act, hosting a talk show and becoming an entrepreneur. In the 1990s, she also became the spokesperson for the "ThighMaster."

The decade also saw her return to network television in the 1990s, most famously on "Step by Step," which aired on ABC's youth-targeted TGIF lineup. The network also aired a biopic of her life, starring her, called "Keeping Secrets."

Somers was also a prolific author, writing books on aging, menopause, beauty, wellness, sex and cancer.

She was in good spirits and surrounded by family before her death, even giving an interview to People Magazine about her birthday plans to be with her "nearest and dearest."

Hamel, in the People story, said she'd just returned from the Midwest where she had six weeks of intensive physical therapy.

"Even after our five decades together, I still marvel at Suzanne's amazing determination and commitment," Hamel said.

She told the magazine that she had asked for "copious amounts of cake."

"I really love cake," she said.

Gaza hospitals are overwhelmed with patients and desperately low on supplies as invasion looms

By NAJIB JOBAIN, SAMYA KULLAB and RAVI NESSMAN Associated Press

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip (AP) — Medics in Gaza warned Sunday that thousands could die as hospitals packed with wounded people ran desperately low on fuel and basic supplies. Palestinians in the besieged coastal enclave struggled to find food, water and safety ahead of an expected Israeli ground offensive in the war sparked by Hamas' deadly attack.

Israeli forces, supported by a growing deployment of U.S. warships in the region, positioned themselves along Gaza's border and drilled for what Israel said would be a broad campaign to dismantle the militant group. A week of blistering airstrikes have demolished entire neighborhoods but failed to stem militant rocket fire into Israel.

The Gaza Health Ministry said 2,670 Palestinians have been killed and 9,600 wounded since the fighting erupted, more than in the 2014 Gaza war, which lasted over six weeks. That makes this the deadliest of the five Gaza wars for both sides.

More than 1,400 Israelis were killed, the vast majority of them civilians, in Hamas' Oct. 7 assault. At least 155 others, including children, were captured by Hamas and taken into Gaza, according to Israel. It's also the deadliest war for Israel since the 1973 conflict with Egypt and Syria.

The U.S. State Department said Secretary of State Antony Blinken would return to Israel on Monday after completing a frantic six-country tour through Arab nations aimed at preventing the fighting from igniting a broader regional conflict. President Joe Biden is also considering a trip to Israel, according to a senior administration official, though no plans have been finalized.

Fighting along Israel's border with Lebanon, which has flared since the start of the latest Gaza war, intensified Sunday with Hezbollah militants firing rockets and an anti-tank missile, and Israel responding with airstrikes and shelling. The Israeli military also reported shooting at one of its border posts. The fighting killed at least one person on the Israeli side and wounded several on both sides of the border.

Several Hamas officials have been killed in the fighting while about 360,000 reservists have been called up in Israel, divided between the south around Gaza and the northern border with Lebanon, according to Israeli military spokesman Jonathan Conricus.

An Israeli drone fired two missiles late Sunday at a hill west of the town of Kfar Kila in south Lebanon, the state-run National News Agency reported. There were no casualties reported in the strikes, which hit near a Lebanese army center.

Conricus told reporters that the Israeli military had hit Hezbollah targets along the border known as the Blue Line and destroyed some.

Hezbollah said in a statement that it had fired rockets toward an Israeli military position in the northern border town of Shtula in retaliation for Israeli shelling that killed Reuters videographer Issam Abdallah on Friday and two Lebanese civilians on Saturday.

A Hezbollah spokeswoman, Rana Sahili, said the increased fighting represented a "warning" and did not mean Hezbollah has decided to enter the war.

With the situation in Gaza growing increasingly desperate, the U.S. named David Satterfield, the former U.S. ambassador to Turkey with years of experience in Mideast diplomacy, to be special envoy for Middle East humanitarian issues. U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan said in a statement Sunday that Satterfield will focus on getting humanitarian assistance to Palestinians in Gaza.

Hospitals in Gaza are expected to run out of generator fuel within two days, endangering the lives of thousands of patients, according to the U.N. Gaza's sole power plant shut down for lack of fuel after Israel completely sealed off the 40-kilometer (25-mile) long territory following the Hamas attack.

In Nasser Hospital, in the southern town of Khan Yunis, intensive care rooms were packed with wounded patients, most of them children under the age of 3. Hundreds of people with severe blast injuries have come to the hospital, where fuel is expected to run out by Monday, said Dr. Mohammed Qandeel, a consultant at the critical care complex.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 41 of 56

There were 35 patients in the ICU who require ventilators and another 60 on dialysis. If fuel runs out, "it means the whole health system will be shut down," he said, as children moaned in pain in the background. "All these patients are in danger of death if the electricity is cut off."

Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya, the head of pediatrics at the Kamal Adwan Hospital in northern Gaza, said the facility did not evacuate despite Israeli orders. There were seven newborns in the ICU hooked up to ventilators, he said. Evacuating "would mean death for them and other patients under our care."

Ahmed Al-Mandhari, the regional director of the World Health Organization, said hospitals were able to move some mobile patients out of the north, but most patients can't be evacuated, he said.

Shifa hospital in Gaza City, the territory's largest, said it would bury 100 bodies in a mass grave as an emergency measure after its morgue overflowed. Tens of thousands of people seeking safety have gathered in the hospital compound.

Gaza was already in a humanitarian crisis due to a growing shortage of water and medical supplies caused by the Israeli siege.

"An unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe is unfolding under our eyes," said Philippe Lazzarini, the head of the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees. He said his agency was no longer able to provide humanitarian assistance and that the number of people seeking shelter in schools and other facilities in southern Gaza exceeded capacity.

Sullivan told CNN that Israeli officials told him they had turned the water back on in southern Gaza. Israel's minister of energy and water, Israel Katz, said in a statement that water had been restored at one "specific point" in Gaza. A spokesman said the location was outside Khan Younis. Aid workers in Gaza said they had not yet seen evidence the water was back.

Israel has ordered more than 1 million Palestinians — almost half the territory's population — to move south. The military says it is trying to clear away civilians ahead of a major campaign against Hamas in the north, where it says the militants have extensive networks of tunnels, bunkers and rocket launchers.

Hamas urged people to stay in their homes, and the Israeli military released photos it said showed a Hamas roadblock preventing traffic from moving south.

Nevertheless, more than 600,000 people had evacuated the Gaza City area, said Israel's chief military spokesman, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari.

About 500,000 people, nearly one quarter of Gaza's population, were taking refuge in United Nations schools and other facilities across the territory, where water supplies were dwindling, said Juliette Touma, spokesperson for the U.N.'s Palestinian refugee agency. "Gaza is running dry," she said.

The agency says an estimated 1 million people have been displaced in Gaza in a single week.

The U.S. has been trying to broker a deal to reopen Egypt's Rafah crossing with Gaza to allow Americans and other foreigners to leave and humanitarian aid amassed on the Egyptian side to be brought in. The crossing, which was closed because of airstrikes early in the war, has yet to reopen.

Israel has said the siege will only be lifted when the captives are returned.

Hamas rocket attacks on Israel continued Sunday, spurring a broader evacuation from the southern Israeli city of Sderot. The city of about 34,000 people sits about a mile (1.6 kilometers) from Gaza and has been a frequent rocket target. "The kids are traumatized, they can't sleep at night," Yossi Edri told Channel 13 before boarding a bus.

The military said Sunday an airstrike in southern Gaza had killed a Hamas commander blamed for the killings at Nirim, one of several communities Hamas attacked in southern Israel. Israel said it struck over 100 military targets overnight, including command centers and rocket launchers.

Israel has called up some 360,000 military reserves and massed troops and tanks along the border with Gaza. Israeli officials gave no timetable for a ground invasion.

Kullab reported from Baghdad. Nessman reported from Jerusalem. Associated Press writers Julia Frankel and Amy Teibel in Jerusalem, Abby Sewell in Beirut and Samy Magdy in Cairo contributed to this report.

Israeli rabbis work around the clock — even on the Sabbath — to count the dead from Hamas attack

By JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

SITRIYA, Israel (AP) — Rarely do rabbis spend the Sabbath counting bodies. But on Saturday, a week after Hamas militants blew easily past Israel's fortified security fence and gunned down hundreds of Israelis — at music festivals, in their homes, in cars while trying to flee — Israel's military rabbinate made an exception.

At Shura military base in central Israel, bodies have been coming in faster than the rabbis can identify them. Hundreds of soldiers, women, and children in body bags line shelves of refrigerated trucks, awaiting examination. Identification teams gather on plastic stools opposite the trucks to take smoke breaks between shifts. They wear heavy gas masks — the smell of death is overwhelming.

"Generally, Jewish law says that you cannot break the Sabbath for a dead person," said Rabbi Israel Weiss, who is helping lead the operation. "The exception is when a family is in doubt, and the death is so crippling that it may risk the family's lives. Then, you must work on the Sabbath to identify the body and bring answers to the family."

Now, the best the country can offer the families of some 1,300 people killed by Hamas militants is final confirmation that their loved ones are dead.

The process was continuing Sunday and could take months, workers said. Some bodies are so disfigured that they cannot be identified. Each must undergo DNA testing, a task made more difficult by the fact that the military does not have a DNA database for civilians. Only half the civilians have been identified thus far, rabbis said.

Seeking the final word on their loved ones, families across Israel have flocked to hospitals to give DNA samples in the hope that they can be matched to the bodies at one of several bases around the country receiving the dead.

The family of Maayan Mualem wants answers. The last they heard, Maayan had been shot in the back by Hamas fighters who burst into the open field of the music festival she attended, gunning down partygoers in an open field. Her family spent a whole day searching Soroka Medical Center in southern Israel to find her body, only to come up short.

"For 12 hours until midnight, we went department by department, bed by bed, and she wasn't there," said Raz Mualem, Maayan's brother.

Last week, the family filed into a police station outside of Tel Aviv to give DNA samples. They hope to receive word from the rabbinate that it is a match.

"The state of Israel will put in any effort that is possible, money, resources, so that every fallen soldier and citizen will be recognized," said Weiss. "Until we reach the point that no mother is left crying over the grave of her son or daughter, having any sort of doubt that it might not be them."

Rabbis have not worked on the Sabbath since 2005, said Weiss, when the rabbinate disinterred graves from a cemetery in an Israeli settlement in Gaza that residents evacuated as part of Israel's unilateral withdrawal at the time. Hamas won Palestinian elections in 2006, and the following year, it seized control of Gaza from the Palestinian Authority.

Nearly two decades later, the militant group is still in power in Gaza, and the rabbinate was again at work on the Sabbath.

Teams of reservists, some as young as 23, work around the clock identifying bodies. Prior to the attack, some worked as dentists, some were students, some worked at tech companies. Now, they spend their days in white hazmat suits.

"The reservists go home at night and try to unsee what they have seen here," said Capt. Maayan, a 40-year-old dentist from Tel Aviv who works on a team identifying the bodies of women. Maayan, whose last name could not be published under military regulations, said that on one of her shifts she unzipped a body bag to find one of her former patients staring up at her.

"No one should have to see what we see here, and what we will never stop seeing," she said, starting

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 43 of 56

to cry.

The process of identifying soldiers has gone more quickly, identification teams said. Soldiers give DNA samples at the start of their service, making them easier to identify. According to the military, 90% of dead soldiers — 265 bodies — have been identified. But the bodies keep coming in.

"There are still so many bodies piled. It's endless," said Senior Staff Sgt. Avigail, who is 48 and from Tel Aviv and once worked at the telephone company. Her team operates in shifts, four women at a time. At the end of the day, Avigail said, her team consults with psychologists and social workers to try to grapple with the horrors of the day.

Her voice quivering, she described how staff had decided not to perform the ritual cleansing of dead bodies under Jewish law.

"We don't perform the ritual on the people who were murdered," she said. "Anyone who died in this manner is already considered pure."

Some of the bodies have been brought to Mount Herzl, Israel's national cemetery in Jerusalem. On Saturday night, the site was shrouded in a mist so thick it blurred streetlights. Still, the freshly dug graves were visible, illuminated by harsh floodlights to help the military guard nearby keep close watch.

In the morning, the digging would begin again. But for now, they sat hunched, hands on their weapons — young soldiers keeping watch over the graves of young soldiers.

AP Top 25: Washington into top 5 for 1st time in 6 years. Air Force ranked for 1st time since 2019

By RALPH D. RUSSO AP College Football Writer

Washington moved up to No. 5 on Sunday in The Associated Press college football poll, the Huskies' best ranking in six years, after a thrilling victory against Oregon and unbeaten Air Force was ranked for the first time since 2019.

The top four teams in the country were unchanged after No. 1 Georgia, No. 2 Michigan, No. 3 Ohio State and No. 4 Florida State all won Saturday in blowout fashion. The Bulldogs received 43 first-place votes, Michigan got 16, and Ohio State and Florida State each had one.

Washington received two first-place votes and jumped two spots past No. 6 Oklahoma and No. 7 Penn State, giving the Huskies their best ranking since reaching No. 5 on Oct. 8, 2017. The last time Washington was ranked this highly this late in the season was 2016, when the Huskies made the College Football Playoff.

That was the last time any Pac-12 team reached the four-team playoff.

Washington beat Oregon 36-33 when the Ducks missed a field goal on the game's final play.

"This moment right now is really special for our program," Huskies coach Kalen DeBoer said after the game.

Oregon dropped one spot to No. 9, flip-flopping with No. 8 Texas.

North Carolina moved up two spots to a season-high No. 10 after beating Miami 41-31.

Southern California dropped eight spots to No. 18 after suffering its first loss of the season at Notre Dame. The Fighting Irish jumped six places to No. 15.

No. 22 Air Force vaulted into the rankings by beating rival Wyoming to stay undefeated.

Oregon State moved up three spots to No. 12, the Beavers' best rankings since reaching No. 7 in 2012.

POLL POINTS

Alabama held steady at No. 11 after beating Arkansas, extending its streak of being out of the top 10 to five weeks.

The Crimson Tide dropped out for the first time since 2015 on Sept. 17, when they fell to a season-low No. 13 after a sloppy performance in a victory over South Florida.

Alabama has won five straight since a Week 2 loss to Texas, but it hasn't been able to get back into the top 10.

The Tide have not spent this much of a season out of the top 10 since 2007, Nick Saban's first as coach, when Alabama finished 7-6.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 44 of 56

The Tide are positioned to either get back into the top 10 or slip even farther next week when they host No. 17 Tennessee. After that, Alabama has a week off before hosting No. 19 LSU.

Alabama has not been out of the top 15 since Nov. 28, 2010, when the Tide lost to Auburn in their regular-season finale to fall to No. 17 at 9-3.

IN-N-OUT

Air Force has finished 10-3 in each of the last two seasons, both times fueled by late winning streaks, but failed to make an appearance in the AP Top 25.

Now the Falcons are 6-0 for the first time since 2002 and ranked for the first time since the last three Top 25s of the 2019 season. Air Force finished that season 11-2 and No. 22 in the country.

The other teams to move into the Top 25 have been here earlier in the season.

— No. 20 Missouri bounced right back into the rankings after winning at Kentucky.

— No. 23 Tulane (5-1) is back after beating American Athletic Conference rival Memphis on Friday night.

— No. 24 Iowa (6-1) returns after seizing control of the Big Ten West by beating Wisconsin.

Dropping out this week were Washington State, Kansas, Kentucky and Miami, all of which lost for the second time this season.

CONFERENCE CALL

SEC — 6 (Nos. 1, 11, 13, 17, 19, 20).

Pac-12 — 6 (Nos. 5, 9, 12, 14, 18, 25).

Big Ten — 4 (Nos. 2, 3, 7, 24).

ACC — 4 (Nos. 4, 10, 16, 21).

Big 12 — 2 (Nos. 6, 8).

American — 1 (No. 23).

Mountain West — 1 (No. 22).

Independent — 1 (No. 15).

RANKED vs. RANKED

No. 7 Penn State at No. 3 Ohio State. Seventh straight meeting with both teams ranked.

No. 17 Tennessee at No. 11 Alabama. Consecutive seasons with both teams ranked for the Third Saturday in October rivalry. That hasn't happened since 1995-96.

No. 16 Duke at No. 4 Florida State. Only two ranked meetings previously and the Seminoles won them both by a combined 77 points.

No. 14 Utah at No. 18 USC. Third straight meeting with both teams ranked after the Utes won both last year to take the Pac-12 title.

Water runs out at UN shelters in Gaza. Medics fear for patients as Israeli ground offensive looms

By NAJIB JOBAIN and SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip (AP) — Water has run out at U.N. shelters across Gaza as thousands packed into the courtyard of the besieged territory's largest hospital as a refuge of last resort from a looming Israeli ground offensive and overwhelmed doctors struggled to care for patients they fear will die once generators run out of fuel.

Palestinian civilians across Gaza, already battered by years of conflict, were struggling for survival Sunday in the face of an unprecedented Israeli operation against the territory following a Hamas militant attack on Oct. 7 that killed 1,300 Israelis, most of them civilians.

Israel has cut off the flow of food, medicine, water and electricity to Gaza, pounded neighborhoods with airstrikes and told the estimated 1 million residents of the north to flee south ahead of Israel's planned attack. The Gaza Health Ministry said more than 2,300 Palestinians have been killed since the fighting erupted last weekend.

U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan told CNN on Sunday that Israeli officials told him they had turned the water back on in southern Gaza. But the spokesman for Israel's energy and water ministry, Adir

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 45 of 56

Dahan, said it was only flowing at a single location in southern Gaza. Aid workers in Gaza said they had not yet seen evidence the water was back and a Gaza government spokesperson said it was not flowing.

Throughout the day, Gazans lined up for hours outside bakeries and jostled to buy bread, as fears of food shortages loomed. Umm Abdullah Abu Rizq had come at 7 a.m. hoping to buy food to feed her family and the others sheltering in her home.

"Is this enough for seven families and their children?" she asked, holding a small plastic bag with bread. She was not able to buy more.

In Khan Younis, residents rushed to mosques where clean water supplies were still available, for now. Eyad Aqel, a resident, said widespread electricity outages meant water could not be pumped up to replenish his tank. He held a small plastic water container he said would be his family's supply for washing and cooking.

Relief groups called for the protection of the over 2 million civilians in Gaza urging an emergency corridor be established for the transfer of humanitarian aid. There was no indication that such a corridor will be opened anytime soon, said Ahmed al-Mandhari, the regional director of the World Health Organization.

The agency has supplies over the Rafah border in Egypt, but no permission from either Egypt or Israel to deliver them.

"The difference with this escalation is we don't have medical aid coming in from outside, the border is closed, electricity is off and this constitutes a high danger for our patients," said Dr. Mohammed Qandee, who works at Nasser Hospital in the southern Khan Younis area.

Doctors in the evacuation zone said they couldn't relocate their patients safely, so they decided to stay as well to care for them.

"We shall not evacuate the hospital even if it costs us our lives," said Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya, the head of pediatrics at Kamal Adwan Hospital in Beit Lahia.

If they left, the seven newborns in the intensive care unit would die, he said. And even if they could move them, there is nowhere for them to go in the 40-kilometer-long (25-mile-long) coastal territory. "Hospitals are full," Abu Safiya said. The wounded stream in every day with severed limbs and life-threatening injuries, he said.

Following the evacuation order, around 22 hospitals with 2,000 patients in northern Gaza managed to move "mobile patients" south, said al-Mandhari. But most can't be evacuated, he said. Over 60% of hospital beds in the strip are located in northern Gaza, he said.

Other doctors feared for the lives of patients dependent on ventilators and those suffering from complex blast wounds needing around-the-clock care. Doctors worried entire hospital facilities would be shut down and many would die as the last of fuel stocks powering their generators came close to running out. United Nations humanitarian monitors estimated this could happen by Monday.

At Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, the heart of the evacuation zone, medical officials estimated at least 35,000 men, women and children crammed into the large open grounds, in the stairways and corridors of the hospital building, hoping the location would give them protection from the fighting. "Their situation is very difficult," said hospital director Mohammed Abu Selmia.

Still, hundreds of wounded continue to come to the hospital every day, he said.

The violence has not spared the health workers. Plastic surgeon Medhat Saidam was killed along with 30 members of his family in an airstrike Saturday when he returned home from work, said Ghassan Abu Sittah, a doctor at Shifa. At least three Shifa doctors and 15 medics were killed so far, Selmia said.

Gaza's Health Ministry issued an urgent appeal to the international community to send replacement medical workers.

About half a million Gaza residents have taken refuge in U.N. shelters across the territory and are running out of water, said Juliette Touma, a spokesperson for the U.N.'s Palestinian refugee agency, known by the acronym UNRWA. "Gaza is running dry," she said, adding that U.N. teams have also begun to ration water.

Touma said a quarter of a million people in Gaza moved to shelters over the past 24 hours, the majority of which are U.N. schools where "clean water has actually run out," said Inas Hamdan, another UNRWA

spokeswoman.

Across Gaza, families rationed dwindling water supplies, with many forced to drink dirty or brackish water. Many resorted to going to dirty wells and the sea, increasing the risk of dehydration, water borne diseases and more deaths.

"I am very happy that I was able to brush my teeth today, can you imagine what lengths we have reached?" said Shaima al-Farra, in Khan Younis.

Taylor Swift's 'The Eras Tour' dances to No. 1 at the box office, eyeing 'Joker' film record

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

Movie theaters turned into concert venues this weekend as Swifties brought their dance moves and friendship bracelets to multiplexes across the country. The unparalleled enthusiasm helped propel "Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour" to a massive, first place debut between \$95 million and \$97 million in North America, AMC Theatres said Sunday.

It's easily the biggest opening for a concert film of all time, and, not accounting for inflation, has made more than the \$73 million "Justin Bieber: Never Say Never" earned in 2011. In today's dollars, that would be around \$102 million. And if it comes in on the higher end of projections when totals are released Monday, it could be the biggest October opening ever. The one to beat is "Joker," which launched to \$96.2 million in 2019.

A unique experiment in distribution, premium pricing, star power and loose movie theater etiquette—more dancing and shouting than a Star Wars premiere—have made it an undeniable hit. Compiled from Swift's summer shows at Southern California's SoFi Stadium, the film opened in 3,855 North American locations starting with "surprise" Thursday evening previews. Those showtimes helped boost its opening day sum to \$39 million – the second biggest ever for October, behind "Joker's" \$39.3 million.

Internationally, it's estimated to have earned somewhere between \$31 to \$33 million, bringing its global total in the range of \$126 million to \$130 million.

"This is a phenomenal number," said Paul Dergarabedian, the senior media analyst for Comscore. "To have a blockbuster style opening weekend for a concert film is unprecedented."

Swift, who produced the film, went around the Hollywood studio system to distribute the film, making a deal directly with AMC, the largest exhibition company in the United States. With her 274 million Instagram followers, Swift hardly needed a traditional marketing campaign to get the word out.

Beyoncé made a similar deal with the exhibitor for "Renaissance: A Film By Beyoncé," which will open on Dec. 1. The two superstars posed together at the premiere of "The Eras Tour" earlier this week in Los Angeles. It was a needed injection of star power with Hollywood actors over 90 days into a strike that has left most red carpets void of glamorous talent and resulted in several high-profile films being pushed to next year.

"The Eras Tour," directed by Sam Wrench, is not just playing on AMC screens either. The company, based in Leawood, Kansas, worked with sub-distribution partners Variance Films, Trafalgar Releasing, Cinepolis and Cineplex to show the film in more than 8,500 movie theatres globally in 100 countries.

The spotlight on Swift has been especially intense lately as a result of her relationship with Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce. The two made separate surprise appearances on "Saturday Night Live" this weekend and were also photographed holding hands in New York.

It led to some hyperbolic projections going into the weekend, with some analysts predicting that "The Eras Tour" could make over \$125 million. Dergarabedian said it's common for outsized expectations to be attached to massive brands like Swift. There's also no precedent for something like "The Eras Tour" and a celebrity of Swift's stature.

"The laws of gravity don't apply to Taylor Swift," Dergarabedian said.

The film scored well with both critics and audiences, who gave it an A+ CinemaScore, a metric that typically signals a film will continue to do well after its first weekend.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 47 of 56

Elizabeth Frank, the executive vice president of worldwide programming and chief content officer for AMC Theatres, said in a statement that they are grateful to Taylor Swift.

"Her spectacular performance delighted fans, who dressed up and danced through the film," Frank said. "With tremendous recommendations and fans buying tickets to see this concert film several times, we anticipate 'Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour' concert film playing to big audiences for weeks to come."

The stadium tour, which continues internationally, famously crashed Ticketmaster's site and re-sale prices became astronomical. Pollstar projects that it will earn some \$1.4 billion. The concert film offered fans both better seats and a much more affordable way to see the show for the first or fifth time. Prices are higher than the national average, at \$19.89, which references her birth year and 2014 album, and ran closer to \$29 a pop for premium large format screens like IMAX. Even so, they are significantly less than seat at one of the stadium shows.

Showtimes are also more limited than a standard Hollywood blockbuster, but AMC is guaranteeing at least four a day on Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays at all AMC locations in the U.S. Many locations also specified that there are no refunds or exchanges. And fans will have to wait a while for "The Eras Tour" to be available on streaming — part of the AMC deal was a 13-week exclusive theatrical run.

Michael O'Leary, CEO of the National Association of Theater Owners said in a statement the moment was, "Another landmark weekend for cinemas."

"This year has been marked by unprecedented experiences for movie lovers in theaters across this nation," O'Leary continued in a statement. "The 'Eras Tour' debut proves, yet again, that fans are eager to share other experiences in a communal way, with theater owners working creatively to build memorable moments in their cinemas."

O'Leary said that a survey of 6,000 people by his organization and The Cinema Foundation found that 72% want to see more concert films on the big screen.

"The Eras Tour" accounted for over 70% of the total weekend box office grosses. "The Exorcist: Believer" placed a very distant second in its second weekend with \$11 million, followed by the "Paw Patrol" movie in third with \$7 million. Rounding out the top five was "Saw X" with \$5.7 million and "The Creator" with \$4.3 million.

"This is great news for theaters," Dergarabedian said. "'The Eras Tour' wasn't even on our radar in mid-August. You take this out of the equation and it would have been a totally different weekend."

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Comscore. Final domestic figures will be released Monday.

1. "Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour," \$95 to \$97 million.
2. "The Exorcist: Believer," \$11 million.
3. "Paw Patrol: The Mighty Movie," \$7 million.
4. "Saw X," \$5.7 million.
5. "The Creator," \$4.3 million.
6. "A Haunting in Venice," \$2.1 million.
7. "The Blind," \$2 million.
8. "The Nun II," \$1.6 million.
9. "The Equalizer 3," \$960,000.
10. "Dumb Money," \$920,000.

6 killed in Russian attacks on Ukraine as Kyiv continues drone counterstrikes

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian attacks on Ukraine over a 24-hour period killed six people, local officials reported Sunday.

Two people were killed and three more injured in the Kherson area after more than 100 shells bombarded the region over the weekend, local governor Oleksandr Prokudin wrote on social media.

Two guided bombs later hit key infrastructure in Kherson city, sparking a partial blackout and disruption

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 48 of 56

to the area's water supply, reported the head of the city's military administration, Roman Mrochko.

Local officials said two more people died in the Donetsk area and that a 57-year-old man and a 54-year-old woman were killed by an airstrike that destroyed their home in the Kharkiv region.

In a separate incident, a 14-year-old boy was killed by a mine in a field in Ukraine's Mykolaiv region, Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko said. The explosion also injured another 12-year-old boy.

Fighting remained fierce across eastern Ukraine over the weekend, with Russian forces repeatedly attempting to encircle the city of Kupiansk in the Kharkiv region, military officials said.

Illia Yevlash, spokesperson for the Ukrainian military's eastern forces, told journalists that forces defending the area had faced 10 separate attacks in the space of 24 hours.

"The enemy is trying to attack us in the direction of Kupiansk to encircle it and reach the banks of the Oskol River," Yevlash told Ukrainian television. He said that Ukrainian forces in the town of Lyman in the Donetsk region had also faced heavy attack.

Russia's U.N. ambassador, Vassily Nebenzia, told a U.N. Security Council meeting on Friday that the intensified attacks in the east amounted to a new stage in Moscow's campaign in Ukraine.

"Russian troops have, for several days now, switched over to active combat action practically throughout the entire front line. ... The so-called Ukrainian counteroffensive can therefore be considered finished," he said.

Meanwhile, the Russian defense ministry announced Sunday that Ukraine had launched 27 drones in an overnight attack on western Russia.

Officials said that 18 drones were shot down over the Kursk region, leading to speculation in the Russian press that the attack could have been targeting the nearby Khalino military airfield.

Images on social media showed burning debris just 1.5 kilometers (1 mile) from the air base, which was previously attacked by Ukrainian forces at the end of September.

Writing on social media, Kursk Gov. Roman Starovoit said that debris had fallen in the region's namesake capital and the nearby village of Zorino. No casualties were reported.

Officials also said that two more drones had been shot down over Russia's Belgorod region, but did not confirm the fate of the remaining seven drones. Ukrainian media outlets later said that Kyiv's forces had carried out a successful strike on Russia's Krasnaya Yaruga electrical substation, close to the Ukrainian border.

The reports cited an unnamed source from within Ukraine's security services and included a video that appeared to show an aerial strike against an unidentified target.

The Associated Press could not independently verify the reports.

Moscow also said Sunday that it had intercepted a Global Hawk drone close to Russia's Black Sea border.

A Su-27 fighter was scrambled to intercept the drone, which turned away and ultimately did not cross into Russian airspace, the Russian defense ministry said in a statement on social media.

Schools near a Maui wildfire burn zone are reopening. Parents wrestle with whether to send kids back

By JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER Associated Press

LAHAINA, Hawaii (AP) — Children take their places at folding tables on a church patio several miles from where their school burned down. Plastic tubs hold brand new textbooks quickly shipped from a publisher. Recess is on the resort golf course across the street.

The wind-driven wildfire that leveled the historic Maui town of Lahaina this summer displaced many pupils not just from their homes, but from their schools, forcing their families and education officials to scramble to find other ways to teach them.

Now, more than two months after the Aug. 8 wildfire killed at least 98 people, the three public schools that survived are set to reopen this week, posing an emotional crossroads for traumatized children and their families as they decide whether to go back to those campuses or continue at the other schools that

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 49 of 56

took them in.

Some parents said they won't send their children back because they worry the fire left toxins behind, despite assurances from education officials that the campuses are safe.

"I'm feeling optimistic about it and grateful we get to go back," said Cailee Cuaresma, a 10th-grader at Lahainaluna High School. "I'm grateful our school is still standing."

For the past month, Cuaresma has attended classes at the makeshift campus of Sacred Hearts School, a Catholic school founded in 1862. Most of the school burned down, but its leaders quickly got classes up and running at Sacred Hearts Mission Church 10 miles (16 kilometers) away.

Sacred Hearts and other private schools across the state took in displaced public school students, such as Cuaresma, while offering a year of free tuition. Other students bused more than 45 minutes away to public schools on the other side of Maui or opted for remote classes.

On a recent school day at Sacred Hearts' temporary site, teachers moved students between pockets of shade to keep them out of the relentless Lahaina sun. Principal Tonata Lolesio told students assembled on cushioned pews in a chapel that it might be two years before they can return to a rebuilt school.

"Pray that it can be sooner," she said.

Meanwhile, space limitations require students to attend classes on staggered days. Workers have been readying an adjacent lawn for tents allowing at least the younger children to attend school daily.

Cuaresma sat with a group of younger students petting a golden retriever comfort dog brought in by Assistance Dogs of Hawaii. Her home survived the fire but her dad only recently got his job back at a hotel. Being at Sacred Hearts was a good opportunity because the work was challenging, she said.

One public school in Lahaina, King Kamehameha III Elementary, was destroyed. Pupils from there will share space with Princess Nāhi'ena'ena Elementary, which was closed for post-fire cleaning along with Lahainaluna High and Lahaina Intermediate.

The schools are just blocks away from piles of potentially dangerous ash, prompting concerns from parents, but education officials have said air-quality tests show it is safe to reopen.

"He is not going to be stepping one foot back there," said Tiffany Teruya, the mother of a Lahaina Intermediate eighth-grader.

She and her son, Pu'uwai Naho'oikaika, have been staying in a hotel since their apartment building burned down. He has been participating in a Hawaiian immersion program connected to Lahaina Intermediate.

After the school closed, the program held classes outdoors, away from the burn zone, and focused on cultural learning such as making bamboo trumpets and working in taro patches.

Teruya doesn't know where she will send her son once the school reopens and the immersion program returns to campus, she said.

Debbie Tau's two children won't return to their Lahaina schools because she also is worried the air isn't safe. They live in a Lahaina neighborhood north of the burn zone. She plans to drive them after fall break, when the school district stops providing busing to other schools in Kihei, about 45 minutes away.

"Asbestos is something that really scares me because it's a carcinogen. And 10, 20, 30 years down the road, our kids could have cancer," she said. "I feel like it's like back to COVID, where every decision you make is wrong and you're, like, putting your kids' lives at risk."

Some of the public school students who have joined private schools plan to stay. Patrick Williams said the first time he saw his son Kupa'a praying at Sacred Hearts reminded him of his own childhood in Mississippi.

"I'm like, 'Oh, this is where he should have been all along,'" Williams said.

The family, whose home wasn't touched by the fire, will make sacrifices to afford tuition, especially because Williams lost most of his Lahaina water delivery routes to the fire.

The difficult circumstances have prompted teachers to try different ways of connecting with the displaced students.

At Maui Preparatory Academy, which at one point had taken in 150 public school students, science and math teacher Gabby Suzik said she checks in often with her Lahainaluna High students who lost their homes. Suzik lost the home she and her husband bought last year on Lahaina's Front Street.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 50 of 56

When some students showed up at Maui Prep with no shoes, no backpack and no pencil, she told them not to worry, noting she was wearing borrowed clothes.

"I just like being honest with them and saying, like, 'Hey, you know, I get what you're going through and you can talk to me anytime,'" Suzik said.

During a Hawaiian culture lesson at Sacred Hearts, teacher Charlene Ako sought to make connections with third-graders from Princess Nāhi'ena'ena Elementary by showing them a picture of the princess with a lei of bird feathers around her head, a symbol of the monarchy that once ruled the Hawaiian kingdom.

Ako had the students draw native Hawaiian birds. Maile Asuncion, 9, drew a red iwi, also known as a scarlet honeycreeper.

Until she was 7, she and her family lived in a cottage behind her grandfather's home near historic Waiola Church, which burned, and where the princess is buried. The cottage burned down, as did her grandfather's home, forcing him to move to Kihei.

Maile and her family have not been able to return to their new home in a condo, which survived but is in the burn zone. They now live in the hotel where her father works.

Many of Maile's friends have left the school, including her best friend, whom she desperately wants to see again: "She's still on Maui. But I don't know where she is right now." ____ Associated Press religion coverage receives support through the AP's collaboration with The Conversation US, with funding from Lilly Endowment Inc. The AP is solely responsible for this content.

The war between Israel and Hamas is testing the Republican Party's isolationist shift

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Political Writer

ROCHESTER, N.H. (AP) — Nikki Haley vowed to stand with Israel "every step of the way." She promised to "decimate" the Iranian economy. And she called for continued funding for Ukraine as it fights to repel the Russian invasion.

"It's a dangerous world right now," Haley told Republican primary voters gathered inside New Hampshire's American Legion Post No. 7 as a new war raged in the Middle East. "And this is gonna get messier before it gets better."

Less than 24 hours later, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis told New Hampshire business leaders that the United States should stop funding Ukraine until there is a clear strategy. He was more focused on what he saw as a threat posed by foreign nationals at the U.S.-Mexico border. And Israel, he said, has a right to defend itself.

"I don't think there's going to be a lot we even need to do militarily," DeSantis said of the war between Israel with Hamas. "We may have to provide some additional support like we've traditionally done, but I think mostly it's just the moral clarity to say, 'They don't have to live like this.'"

The Republican Party's White House hopefuls are offering conflicting messages on the mounting foreign policy challenges as a presidential election long centered on domestic kitchen-table issues suddenly shifts its focus abroad. The rapidly evolving dynamics are testing the limits of the GOP's drift toward an isolationist foreign policy and threaten to undermine the party's broader argument that Democratic President Joe Biden has mismanaged U.S. relationships with the rest of the world.

Republican primary voters across New Hampshire who pelted Republican presidential candidates with foreign policy questions this past week are hungry for better answers.

"This God-awful international situation is calling for a rational voice. That chair sits empty right now," said Tom Rath, a former New Hampshire attorney general who attended DeSantis' Friday appearance at St. Anselm College, where the first three questions focused on foreign policy.

The war is a stark reminder of how the GOP has shifted away from more traditional Republicans such as Rath over the past two decades. Former President George W. Bush, whose administration was defined in large part by its failures in the Iraq War, recently described himself as "kind of a hard-liner." In video obtained by Axios, he said the Biden administration's response to the Israel-Hamas conflict has "started

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 51 of 56

off on the right foot.”

But under former President Donald Trump’s leadership, the GOP has moved sharply away from its long-standing support for a muscular foreign policy. In last fall’s midterm elections, for example, 56% of voters for Republican candidates said the U.S. should take a less active role in world affairs, according to AP VoteCast.

Haley, who was Trump’s ambassador to the United Nations, has emerged as the representative for the GOP’s old guard, calling for the “the end” of Hamas and an aggressive response to Israel’s enemies, including Iran. On the other side among her 2024 rivals, DeSantis and entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy, backed by conservative media personality Tucker Carlson, favor a more cautious “America First” approach.

Trump, the front-runner in the Republican primary, has confused the issue with an inconsistent message fueled by personal grievance.

In a rambling speech last week, Trump said Israel’s prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, “let us down” just before the U.S. killed a top Iranian general, Qassem Soleimani, in 2020. Trump also said Israeli leaders needed to “step up their game” and he referred to Hezbollah, which Israel fears may launch a large-scale attack from the country’s north, as “very smart.” In an interview that aired Thursday, Trump said Netanyahu “was not prepared” for the Hamas incursion from Gaza.

On Sunday, Trump ally Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., said Trump should not have criticized the Israeli foreign minister at this moment.

“That was a huge mistake,” Graham said on NBC’s “Meet the Press.” “If I were President Trump I’d talk about being the strongest president for Israel in modern times.”

Trump’s team finished the week in damage control mode, sending out statements that highlighted his past support for Israel. Trump himself joined the effort as he insisted the attack never would have happened had he won the 2020 election and he praised Israeli soldiers.

“I have always been impressed by the skill and determination of the Israeli Defence Forces. As they defend their Nation against ruthless terrorists, I want to wish every soldier the best of luck. May you return home safely to your families, and may God bless you all!” Trump wrote on his Truth Social network.

Meanwhile, some Republican primary voters don’t like what they’re hearing from their party’s presidential hopefuls.

“Now, more than ever, is when I feel like we need a strong leader in the White House. Biden ain’t it. Trump ain’t it,” said Michele Woonton, a 58-year-old retired nurse who attended a DeSantis appearance at the New Hampshire Statehouse this past week.

Woonton, who said she would consider voting for independent candidate Robert Kennedy Jr. if Trump wins the Republican nomination, was particularly upset about Trump’s initial reaction to the attack on Israel.

“We don’t need somebody who can’t control his emotions,” Woonton said. “I’m not saying he wasn’t a good president. But he’s too immature. ... This is not the kind of kind of leader we need in a time of war.”

Bruce Wilson, a 76-year-old Army veteran from Alton, said he wants to see the Republican Party get back to its roots with a stronger approach to foreign affairs. He lamented the influence of Trump’s “Make America Great Again” movement on multiple issues.

“The party got in bed (with Trump) and now they’re living with the consequences,” said Wilson, who attended Haley’s town hall meeting at the American Legion. “I’d like to see a leader with more conviction.”

The next day at St. Anselm College, Dave Lundgren, a Republican state representative who has endorsed DeSantis, said he’s also worried about the GOP’s drift toward isolationism.

“I think we need to go in and spank somebody,” he said of the U.S. response to Hamas’ attack on Israel, suggesting that U.S. special forces get involved, at least to help rescue kidnapped Americans. “Republicans are weak right now and we need a strong leader that is going to put us back to No. 1 in the world. We’ve been there before. We’re not there now.”

Palestinian mother fears for her children as she wonders about the future after evacuating Gaza City

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Najla Shawa and her family are safe for now after fleeing their home in Gaza City, but she's worried she may never be able to return.

Shawa, a Gaza native who works for the international aid group Oxfam, is sheltering with her husband, two daughters and about 50 others at a compound in Zawaida, a community just south of the area Israeli forces ordered residents to evacuate before an anticipated ground offensive.

The adults are sleeping in shifts and the group is rationing food and water amid an Israeli siege that has blocked supplies from entering the Gaza Strip. But the compound has solar panels, so they have a few lights, internet service and are able to charge their phones.

Aid work has stopped as Shawa and her colleagues focus on their families.

"The worry is now sinking in, in a way that we need to be prepared for all scenarios," Shawa, Oxfam's Gaza-based country director, told The Associated Press in a video call. "There are no answers, really, because the destruction, the scale of destruction, that we have been seeing is terrifying."

"I was talking to someone (and they asked) why didn't you decide to stay? ... I'm in Gaza because I want to be in Gaza. I mean, in general, with my family. But at the same time, I'm going to see myself and my daughters hurt. So if there's any chance I can prevent that, I would."

About 500,000 people, almost a quarter of Gaza's population, are sheltering in U.N. schools and other facilities across the territory, according to the U.N. refugee agency. The Gaza Health Ministry said that 2,450 Palestinians have been killed and 9,200 others wounded during a week of Israeli airstrikes that have razed apartment buildings, offices and mosques.

Now that her family is safe, at least for the time being, Shawa is thinking of what comes next.

The events of the past week have reminded Palestinians of the hundreds of thousands of people who were forced from their homes and became refugees after the creation of Israel in 1948. Now some people are talking about Gaza residents being evacuated to the Sinai Desert in Egypt, she said.

"We don't want to be refugees again," Shawa said. "But to what extent can you bear the suffering, can you bear that possibility of even losing your life?"

But as a parent, Shawa is more worried about her children than her own safety.

"Losing our lives, it's OK, it's God's will," she said. "But the suffering, seeing our kids torn or severely injured, etc., not being able to treat them, to hospitalize them. It's really just beyond thinking."

Drug used in diabetes treatment Mounjaro helped dieters shed 60 pounds, study finds

By JONEL ALECCIA AP Health Writer

The medicine in the diabetes drug Mounjaro helped people with obesity or who are overweight lose at least a quarter of their body weight, or about 60 pounds on average, when combined with intensive diet and exercise, a new study shows.

By comparison, a group of people who also dieted and exercised, but then received dummy shots, lost weight initially but then regained some, researchers reported Sunday in the journal Nature Medicine.

"This study says that if you lose weight before you start the drug, you can then add a lot more weight loss after," said Dr. Thomas Wadden, a University of Pennsylvania obesity researcher and psychology professor who led the study.

The results, which were also presented Sunday at a medical conference, confirm that the drug made by Eli Lilly & Co. has the potential to be one of the most powerful medical treatments for obesity to date, outside experts said.

"Any way you slice it, it's a quarter of your total body weight," said Dr. Caroline Apovian, who treats obesity at Brigham and Women's Hospital and wasn't involved in the study.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 53 of 56

The injected drug, tirzepatide, was approved in the U.S. in May 2022 to treat diabetes. Sold as Mounjaro, it has been used "off-label" to treat obesity, joining a frenzy of demand for diabetes and weight-loss medications including Ozempic and Wegovy, made by Novo Nordisk.

All the drugs, which carry retail price tags of \$900 a month or more, have been in shortage for months.

Tirzepatide targets two hormones that kick in after people eat to regulate appetite and the feeling of fullness communicated between the gut and the brain. Semaglutide, the drug used in Ozempic and Wegovy, targets one of those hormones.

The new study, which was funded by Eli Lilly, enrolled about 800 people who had obesity or were overweight with a weight-related health complication — but not diabetes. On average, study participants weighed about 241 pounds (109.5 kilograms) to start and had a body-mass index — a common measure of obesity — of about 38.

After three months of intensive diet and exercise, more than 200 participants left the trial, either because they failed to lose enough weight or for other reasons. The remaining nearly 600 people were randomized to receive tirzepatide or a placebo via weekly injections for about 16 months. Nearly 500 people completed the study.

Participants in both groups lost about 7% of their body weight, or almost 17 pounds (8 kilograms), during the diet-and-exercise phase. Those who received the drug went on to lose an additional 18.4% of initial body weight, or about 44 pounds (20 kilograms) more, on average. Those who received the dummy shots regained about 2.5% of their initial weight, or 6 pounds (2.7 kilograms).

Overall, about 88% of those taking tirzepatide lost 5% or more of their body weight during the trial, compared with almost 17% of those taking placebo. Nearly 29% of those taking the drug lost at least a quarter of their body weight, compared with just over 1% of those taking placebo.

That's higher than the results for semaglutide and similar to the results seen with bariatric surgery, said Apovian.

"We're doing a medical gastric bypass," she said.

Side effects including nausea, diarrhea and constipation were reported more frequently in people taking the drug than those taking the placebo. They were mostly mild to moderate and occurred primarily as the dose of the drug was escalated, the study found. More than 10% of those taking the drug discontinued the study because of side effects, compared with about 2% of those on placebo.

Lilly is expected to publish the results soon of another study that the firm says shows similar high rates of weight loss. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has granted the company a fast-track review of the drug to treat obesity, which Eli Lilly may sell under a different brand name. A decision is expected by the end of the year.

Azerbaijanis who fled a separatist region decades ago ache to return, but it could be a long wait

By AIDA SULTANOVA Associated Press

BAKU, Azerbaijan (AP) — As a young man starting out as a dentist, Nazim Valiyev was forced to flee his home as ethnic violence roiled a separatist region inside Azerbaijan. More than three decades later, with his medical career over after a stroke, the 60-year-old hopes he can return there, now that it is back under Azerbaijani control.

It could still be years, however, before he realizes his dream.

Valiyev is among the estimated 700,000 Azerbaijanis who fled or were forced out of the region they call Karabakh amid violence that flared beginning in 1988 and then grew into an outright war.

That conflict ended in 1994, with the territory under the control of ethnic Armenian forces supported by their neighboring country. A subsequent war in 2020 returned control of much of the area to Azerbaijan, and a lightning offensive last month forced the Armenian separatists to relinquish the rest of the region known elsewhere as Nagorno-Karabakh.

On Sunday, Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev raised his nation's flag over the region's capital, reaf-

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 54 of 56

firming control over it.

Within days of the capitulation, ethnic Armenians streamed out of the region, leaving it nearly empty. A United Nations mission that visited in early October said there may be no more than 1,000 people left in the region whose population was an estimated 120,000 a month ago.

The blinding speed of events raised spirits among those who had fled so long ago and longed to return to its mountains and thick forests.

"I often saw in my dreams how my neighbors and I, as before, were walking in the forest and picking flowers," Bahar Aliguleyeva said of her childhood memories in the Karabakh capital city of Khankendi, which was called Stepanakert by Armenians.

When she heard that Azerbaijan had regained control of the city she left in 1988 at age 16, "I somehow didn't even believe it. It's as if I found myself somewhere between the past and reality, but there is a path to happiness," she told The Associated Press in Baku, the Azerbaijan capital.

Valiyev, the former dentist, said he thinks about returning every day, "but I understand that this will not be a quick process."

In 2022, Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev established a program called "The Great Return to Azerbaijan's Liberated Territories" to bring back long-displaced people. It envisions improvements in infrastructure, construction of residences, and laborious, slow-moving efforts to clear the region of mines.

Azerbaijan's budget for this year allocates about \$3.1 billion for reconstruction projects in the region.

So far, only about 2,000 people have returned, but the government aims for 10,000 by the end of the year, according to Fuad Huseynov of the State Committee for Affairs of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons.

He told AP that the government plans to return 150,000 people by 2027.

"Mines are a huge obstacle, a huge problem. The territories that were under Armenian occupation for 30 years were not only virtually completely razed to the ground, but also mined with mines and other unexploded military ammunition," he said.

Since the 2020 war, at least 65 people have been killed by mines and another 267 injured in the territories once held by Armenians, according to Azerbaijan's Mine Action Agency.

If Aliguleyeva and Valiyev and other displaced residents are ever able to return, what they may find could be wrenching. Aliguleyeva is uncertain whether her childhood home is still intact.

Although she was able to contact a former neighbor through social media, "when I asked her to send a photo of the house, she only sent a photo of the courtyard wall."

Valiyev said his family residence was burned down in 1988, although the separate building where he kept his dental equipment survived. He is eager to go back nonetheless.

"My 5-year-old granddaughter loves it when I tell her about my childhood in Karabakh, and she says that she also wants to grow up there. The past must never be repeated," he said. "We and the Armenians must start a new life, no matter how difficult it may be. Enmity cannot continue forever, it must remain in the past."

Overcoming that enmity likely is a more difficult process than rebuilding war-ruined buildings. Although both Valiyev and Aliguliyeva spoke warmly of getting along with their Armenian neighbors when they lived in Khankendi, they also told of the terror they felt when ethnic violence drove them away.

Azerbaijan has repeatedly promised that the rights of ethnic Armenians who want to stay in the region will be respected.

But "such assertions are difficult to accept at face value after the months of severe hardships, decades of conflict, impunity for alleged crimes, in particular during hostilities, and the Azerbaijani government's overall deteriorating human rights record," the Human Rights Watch organization said.

An Arab paramedic who treated Israelis injured by Hamas militants is remembered as a hero

By PAMELA SAMPSON Associated Press

When Hamas unleashed its attack on thousands of Jews attending a music festival in southern Israel earlier this month, an Israeli Arab paramedic insisted on staying at the scene to try to save lives.

In the end, he gave his own.

Awad Darawshe was 23, single, handsome — but he wasn't at the Tribe of Nova festival to dance. He worked for Yossi Ambulances and was among a team of paramedics assigned to work the festival in a tent on the site's periphery.

He was killed when Hamas militants slipped undetected into Israel from the Gaza Strip and butchered their way through the festival crowd and into nearby villages, settlements and kibbutzim.

Shortly after dawn on Oct. 7, rockets pierced the skies. Grenades went off. Gunfire ricocheted everywhere. Injured, bleeding revelers raced to the paramedics' station. But the chaos quickly escalated. As the scope of the Hamas attack became clear, the station's leader ordered the paramedics to evacuate.

Darawshe refused to leave. He was shot to death while bandaging one of the injured.

Days later, after his body was identified, the surviving paramedics told Darawshe's family why he had chosen to stay. He felt that, as an Arab, he could somehow mediate with the attackers.

"He said, 'No, I'm not leaving. I speak Arabic, I think I can manage,'" said his cousin, Mohammad Darawshe, who spoke to The Associated Press by telephone from his home in northern Israel.

That fateful decision has left the Darawshe family reeling with sorrow, their only comfort the bravery of Awad's actions.

"He brought us a lot of pain, he brought us a lot of agony, he brought us a lot of sorrow," his cousin said. "But he also brought us a lot of pride — because he chose to stay with his mission until the last moment."

A funeral was held Friday in Iksal, a small Arab-majority village about 3 miles (5 kilometers) southeast of Nazareth. Several thousand mourners attended.

The Darawshe family has lived in Iksal for generations. They are part of Israel's Palestinian Arab minority that makes up about 20% of the population. They are the descendants of Palestinians who stayed in the country after the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation. Unlike Palestinians living in the occupied West Bank and Gaza, they are full citizens of Israel, but they face widespread discrimination. Tensions between them and Jewish Israelis flare repeatedly, particularly in times of war.

The festival attack left at least 260 Israelis dead and an undetermined number were taken hostage. In Saturday's brutal attack by Hamas, more than 1,300 Israelis were killed altogether, the worst massacre in the country's history. Israel declared war on Hamas the following day. As of Sunday, the conflict has also left more than 2,300 Palestinians dead and the Middle East on the precipice of a wider conflagration.

Darawshe's death was confirmed by the Israeli Foreign Ministry in social media posts, which said Hamas not only killed Darawshe but stole his ambulance and drove it to Gaza.

"A hero," the Foreign Ministry said of Darawshe. "May his memory be a blessing."

Mohammad Darawshe is the director of strategy at the Givat Haviva Center for Shared Society, an organization that works to bridge the gap between Israel's Jewish and Arab citizens — the ethos of the Darawshe family for which Awad made the ultimate sacrifice.

"We are very proud of his actions," Mohammad Darawshe said. "This is what we would expect from him and what we expect from everyone in our family — to be human, to stay human and to die human."

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Oct. 16, 2023 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 114 ~ 56 of 56

Today in History: October 16, Cuban missile crisis begins

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, Oct. 16, the 289th day of 2023. There are 76 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Oct. 16, 1962, the Cuban missile crisis began as President John F. Kennedy was informed that reconnaissance photographs had revealed the presence of missile bases in Cuba.

On this date:

In 1758, American lexicographer Noah Webster was born in Hartford, Connecticut.

In 1793, during the French Revolution, Marie Antoinette, the queen of France, was beheaded.

In 1859, radical abolitionist John Brown led a raid on the U.S. arsenal at Harpers Ferry in what was then a part of western Virginia. (Ten of Brown's men were killed and five escaped. Brown and six followers were captured; all were executed.)

In 1934, Chinese Communists, under siege by the Nationalists, began their "long march" lasting a year from southeastern to northwestern China.

In 1964, China set off its first atomic bomb, codenamed "596," on the Lop Nur Test Ground.

In 1968, American athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos sparked controversy at the Mexico City Olympics by giving "Black power" salutes during a victory ceremony after they'd won gold and bronze medals in the 200-meter race.

In 1978, the College of Cardinals of the Roman Catholic Church chose Cardinal Karol Wojtyla (voy-TEE'-wah) to be the new pope; he took the name John Paul II.

In 1984, Anglican Bishop Desmond Tutu was named winner of the Nobel Peace Prize for his decades of non-violent struggle for racial equality in South Africa.

In 1991, a gunman opened fire at a Luby's Cafeteria in Killeen, Texas, killing 23 people before taking his own life.

In 1997, in the first known case in the United States, a Georgia woman gave birth after being implanted with previously frozen eggs.

In 2002, President George W. Bush signed a congressional resolution authorizing war against Iraq.

In 2009, agricultural officials said pigs in Minnesota had tested positive for the H1N1 virus, or swine flu, the first such cases in the U.S.

In 2013, Congress passed legislation to avoid a threatened U.S. default and end the partial, 16-day government shutdown.

In 2017, Army Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, who had been captured and held by the Taliban for five years after walking away from his post in Afghanistan, pleaded guilty to desertion and endangering his comrades.

Today's Birthdays: Actor-producer Tony Anthony is 86. Actor Barry Corbin is 83. Rock musician C.F. Turner (Bachman-Turner Overdrive) is 80. Rock singer-musician Bob Weir is 76. Producer-director David Zucker is 76. Record company executive Jim Ed Norman is 75. Actor Daniel Gerroll is 72. Actor Martha Smith is 71. Comedian-actor Andy Kindler is 67. Actor-director Tim Robbins is 65. Actor-musician Gary Kemp is 64. Singer-musician Bob Mould is 63. Actor Randy Vasquez is 62. Rock musician Flea (Red Hot Chili Peppers) is 61. Movie director Kenneth Lonergan is 61. Actor Christian Stolte is 61. Actor Todd Stashwick is 55. Actor Terri J. Vaughn is 54. Singer Wendy Wilson (Wilson Phillips) is 54. Rock singer Chad Gray (Mudvayne) is 52. Actor Paul Sparks is 52. Actor Kellie Martin is 48. Singer John Mayer is 46. Actor Jeremy Jackson is 43. Actor Caterina Scorsone is 43. Actor Brea Grant is 42. U.S. Olympic and retired WNBA basketball star Sue Bird is 42. Actor Kyler Pettis is 31. Philadelphia Phillies outfielder Bryce Harper is 31. Tennis star Naomi Osaka is 26.