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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.

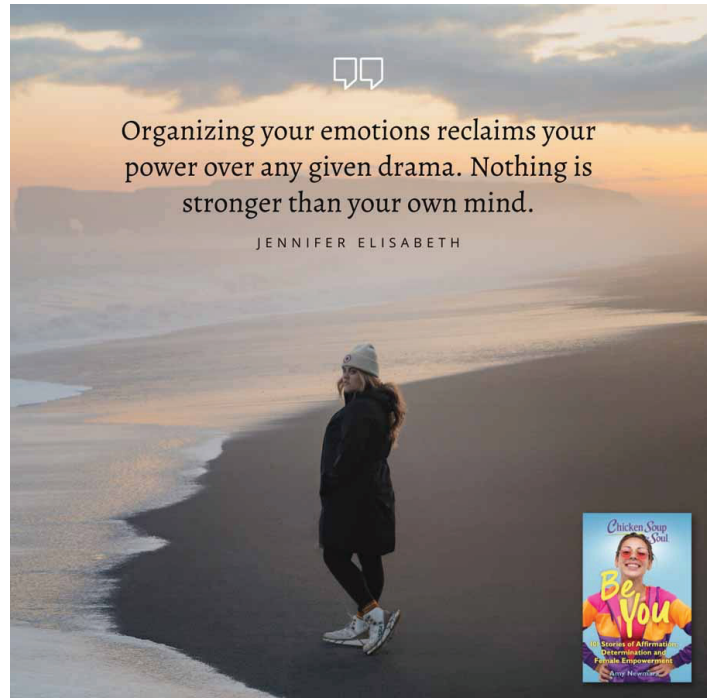
Thrift Store open 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

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

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



Organizing your emotions reclaims your power over any given drama. Nothing is stronger than your own mind.

JENNIFER ELISABETH

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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The Bulletin by Newsweek

World in Brief

Judge Tanya Chutkan imposed a narrow gag order on the former president, barring him from making comments targeting prosecutors, witnesses and staff involved in the 2020 election subversion case.

A gunman in a suspected terrorist attack killed two Swedish nationals and injured a third person in Brussels. Police shot the 45-year-old Tunisian suspect and later died in the hospital. Authorities had raised a terror alert in Brussels after the shooting, prompting the cancellation of a Belgium-Sweden Euro 2024 qualifier soccer game.

The Biden administration announced new measures to help prospective homebuyers by allowing them to use units such as garage apartments as leverage when applying for a Federal Housing Administration-insured mortgage.

The Supreme Court barred two Texas-based manufacturers from selling gun parts that can be used to make firearms at home, called 'ghost guns,' reiterating the Biden Administration's regulations on firearms that are difficult to trace.

Four inmates, including a man accused of murder, escaped a Georgia jail through a damaged window and a cut fence at around 3 a.m. on Monday, the Bibb County Sheriff's Office said. Local, state and federal authorities are looking for them.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin appears to be relying on private military company Redut to recruit troops for his war as a way to avoid further unpopular mobilization efforts, U.K. intelligence said. Meanwhile, Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov said that nearly all of Russia's drones are being supplied by China.

What to Watch in the Day Ahead

Donald Trump will beurt for his New York civil fraud trial. He is also scheduled to be deposed (a two-hour session) over lawsuits filed by former FBI officials Peter Strzok and Lisa Page — who have sued the Justice Department over claims that Trump influenced their departure from the agency.

The Commerce Department is set to release its retail sales figures for September at 8:30 a.m. ET, which will provide insights into the spending habits of U.S. consumers. Industrial production and homebuilder confidence are also on the calendar.

The earnings season is picking up steam, with major companies set to report their third-quarter results, including Goldman Sachs, Bank of America, Johnson & Johnson and Lockheed Martin.

European Council President Charles Michel has convened an extraordinary leaders' summit via video conference at 11:30 a.m. ET aimed to establish a common European Union position as the Israel-Hamas conflict deepens.

Jada Pinkett Smith's memoir, Worthy, releases today, days after she made bombshell revelations of her separation in 2016 from her husband, Will Smith.

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Junior High Football

Back row, left to right, are Coach Jordan Carson, Asher Johnson, Anthony Gilmore, John Bisbee, Braeden Fliehs, Layne Johnson, Jordan Schwan, Ryder Schelle, TC Schuster, Coach Lance Hawkins

In the front row, left to right are Kolton Antonsen, Alex Abeln, Ian Kutter, Zach Fliehs, Wesley Borg, Brysen Sandness, Tate Johnson, Noah Scepaniak. (Courtesy photo)

The 7th and 8th grade football boys wrapped up a great season, playing a lot of games and finishing with a 10-1 record.

Below is list of games and their scores.

Groton 48 Redfield 0
Groton 12 Clark/Willow Lake 8
Groton 24 Florence/Henry 0
Groton 18 Webster 0
Groton 30 Sisseton 0
Groton 20 Roncalli 0
Groton 28 Clark/Willow Lake 8
Groton 24 Webster 0
Groton 6 Milbank 24
Groton 26 Ellendale/Edgely/Kulm 8
Groton 34 Britton/Hecla 12

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Groton City Council Meeting Agenda

October 17, 2023 – 7:00pm
City Hall – 120 N Main Street

(IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CALL IN TO THIS MEETING, PLEASE MAKE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS TO DO SO BY CALLING CITY HALL 605-397-8422)

1. Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1
(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)
2. Finalize 2-year Lease Agreement for Groton Municipal Airport Land
3. Hoop Barn Overhead Door Discussion
4. Park Saferoom Update
5. Purchase of White Tarp for Skating Rink
6. Second Reading of Ordinance No. 771 – Water Rates
7. September Finance Report
8. 2024 Budget Discussion
9. Minutes
10. Bills
11. 2024 Liquor & Wine License Renewals:
 - Jungle Lanes & Lounge – package off-sale liquor & retail on-sale liquor
 - American Legion Post #39 – package off-sale liquor & retail on-sale liquor
 - Ken’s Food Fair – package off-sale liquor
 - Red Horse Inn – retail on-sale liquor
 - Olive Grove Golf Course – retail on-sale liquor
 - Dollar General – retail on-off sale wine & cider
 - MJ’s Sinclair – package off-sale liquor
12. Downtown Trick or Treat on October 31, 2023 from 4:00pm to 6:00pm – Main Street to be Blocked Off
13. Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
14. Adjournment

Coming up on GDILIVE.COM

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



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

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1940-1945 We Will Remember

Dear Friends,

Over the past two years I have been researching a potential book using the daily Sioux Falls Argus Leader digitized archives, the weekly Groton Independent hard copies, Ancestry.com., my grandmother's diary and various source documents to develop a picture of what life might have been like during the period of 1940-1945 from the perspective of farm life and small town perspectives. I hoped to enable the reader to travel the time period using my grandmother's diary as a base of activity, then the preparation of war from the standpoint of the U.S., the war itself as it overwhelms the world, our introduction to that war after Pearl Harbor and then the impact on a generation of men and women who served their country.

I attempt to accumulate the stories of the day, including the loss of lives as the battles move from the initial attacks by Germany, Italy and Japan to the reversal of fortune for the Allies as war comes to its eventual end with VE and VJ Day. I do not attempt to create a historical reference book of the war, but rather bring out some of the stories that involve the small town young men and women from South Dakota - especially in my hometown area - to the attention of the reader.

I attempted to determine how many and who those young men and women were as well as accumulate a list of those who made the ultimate personal sacrifice. I found more than 600 individuals who served their country from my little area of South Dakota, that over 50 died in doing so, and that the service involved not just men but women.

The book that has been substantially completed is going to be called "1940-1945 We Will Remember". It is currently in the process of final review and should be published in the next 30-45 days. I hope to have it ready for printing by December. It will be available via Amazon.com as well as on my website - Leeraines.com - and I hope you take the time to buy a copy and place it in your personal library. This book will join the three other books I have published about my little hometown area "Friday Night Lights South Dakota Style", "The Great Consolidation South Dakota Style" and "Service to Country South Dakota Style". I also want you to know that if you purchase any of these books from Lori's Pharmacy or at the Groton Library all proceeds will be given to the Senior Citizen group in Groton. My writing "hobby" is more a labor of love than a money making endeavor.

Over the next couple of weeks I will be providing the addressees excerpts of what is to come. I hope you enjoy the stories and get a flavor of what is to come in the book. I also hope all of these books can become part of your own libraries so that we can ensure that our history remains remembered. Thanks.

August 15, 1940 - "Pitched from his motor cycle when it skidded from under him, Private Robert F. Rosenberg of the Fourth Cavalry, Fort Meade, regular army, was in critical condition in St. Gabriel's hospital here today (Little Falls, Minnesota). Rosenberg suffered a fractured skull when his head struck the paving. His cycle skidded when he crossed a railroad spur near the entrance to Camp Ripley late Wednesday. Because of his condition Rosenberg could not be moved to Fort Snelling, the nearest military hospital. Rosenberg is 23 years old. His home is at Groton, South Dakota. Funeral services for Private Rosenberg were held in Groton, August 18, 1940. Robert graduated from Groton High School in 1935. Robert F. Rosenberg, Groton boy, who has been a member of the Fourth U.S. Cavalry at Fort Meade for three years, planned to leave his command at Webster when the convoy returned last Sunday and precede it to Groton in order to spend the night with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Verne Naeve, and then join his comrades in arms as they passed through town on Monday morning. An inscrutable fate decreed otherwise. It decreed that he should precede his command but in a flag-draped casket, accompanied by the Fourth Cavalry and that

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he shall remain forever in the little town which was his home.”

I have considered Rosenberg to be the first of many to die during World War II. He will eventually be joined by Leonard Acker, Lily; Robert Bohle, Claremont/Chicago; Harlan Busby, Hecla; O.R. Colestock, Hecla; Bernard Conley, Conde; Quentin Davidson, Bristol; Walter Davis, Turton; Harold Feser, Claremont; Ore Fitch, Langford; Ralph Fitch, Langford; Victor Forster, Webster; Leo Friebel, Britton; Charles Fuller, Groton; Edwin Gardiner, Houghton; Arthur Grandpre, Doland; Clifford Hall, Columbia; Robert Haire, Putney; John Healy, Langford; Donald Heitman, Groton; Robert Holcomb, Langford; Vere Insley, Groton; Howard Ives, Andover; George Jones, Amherst; Wallace Karnopp, Groton; Byron Kirk, Andover; Paul Kindahl, Webster; Donald Knapp, Groton; Raymond Lilly, Andover; Merle Lorenzen, Bath; Elmer Maunu, Frederick; Marshall McNickle, Doland; Telford Morgan, Warner; Adrian Ness, Pierpont; Clarence Olson, Langford; Everett Paul, Groton; Clyde Peterson, Brentford; Robert Podoll, Columbia; Helen Raecke, Groton; Ervin Reick, Warner; Marvin Schliebe, Groton/Aberdeen; Donald Smith, Amherst; Henry Stange, Groton; William Stange, Stratford; George Sturm, Andover; Harvey Swenson, Stratford; Albert Svarstad, Stratford; George Thuringer, Eden; Gale Thorne, Lily; Clarence Utne, Waubay; Milton Vietmeier, Claremont; Frederick Weinbender, Groton/Aberdeen; Ernest Wormke, Andover; Ervin Westby, Stratford; Clinton Wilmsen, Hecla; and Robert Wist, Webster.

Today, many of these towns can be described as little spots on highways surrounded by farm land. Schools are gone in most cases. Even post offices. Only the cemetery will bear witness to the loss of life during World War II. In the 1940s these towns had a small number of residents. Now even fewer.

Lee T. Raines
1414 Shore District Drive, Apt 3406
Austin, Texas 78741
512 644 6061

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Netters post 3-0 win over Langford Area

Groton Area's volleyball team posted a 3-0 win over Langford Area in action played Monday in Langford. Set scores were 25-23, 25-16 and 25-21.

Rylee Dunker was 18 of 20 in attacks with 13 kills, had two ace serves and had two solo and one assisted block. Chesney Weber was 24 of 26 in attacks with eight kills, was 17 of 19 in serving with three ace serves and had two assisted blocks. Sydney Leicht was 29 of 30 in attacks with seven kills, had 19 digs and one ace serve. Jaedyn Penning had four kills and was seven of seven in serving with one ace serve. Elizabeth Flihs had 34 assists and three sniper kills. Emma Kutter had two assisted and one solo block and two kills. Carly Guthmiller was eight of 11 in serves with two ace serves and had 19 digs. Laila Roberts had one kill.









The Lions were led by Megan Gustafson with nine kills and a block, Bayleann Moen had seven kills, Eliana Darling four kills, Cali Vanderbilts Vorst had four kills and an ace serve, Tawnee Nelson had two ace serves, Alexandria Darling had a kill and an ace serve, and Bryanna Peterson and Emily Olson each had a block.

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

Groton Area won the junior varsity match, 25-18 and 25-16. Jaedyn Penning led the Tigers with eight kills and an ace serve, Taryn Traphagen had six kills, Kella Tracy four kills, McKenna Tietz four ace serves, Talli Wright two kills, Faith Traphagen two blocks, Jerica Locke a kill and an ace serve and Liby Althoff and Emerlee Jones each had a kill.

The match was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by fans of Jaedyn Penning.

Region 1A Volleyball rankings

| # | Name | Season | | | Seed Pts |
|---|---|--------|----|------|----------|
| | | W | L | PCT | PTS |
| 1 |  Aberdeen Roncalli | 16 | 5 | .762 | 43.952 |
| 2 |  Groton Area | 15 | 4 | .789 | 43.895 |
| 3 |  Milbank | 18 | 10 | .643 | 41.893 |
| 4 |  Sisseton | 9 | 12 | .429 | 39.857 |
| 5 |  Redfield | 9 | 14 | .391 | 39.130 |
| 6 |  Webster Area | 9 | 14 | .391 | 38.478 |
| 7 |  Tiospa Zina | 7 | 16 | .304 | 37.652 |
| 8 |  Waubay/Summit | 1 | 20 | .048 | 34.524 |

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Groton's 8th Pumpkin Fest was dedicated to the late Steve Herron. Pictured here are members of the Herron family holding the Steve Herron Memorial sign that is posted at the pumpkin patch. A special dedication and prayer was held at the beginning of the event by announcer Mike Nehls. (Photo by April Abeln)

Eighth Annual Pumpkin Fest



Chief Stacy Mayou and Kathy Gubin stepped in to help the lunch crew with serving condiments and chips. (Photo by April Abeln)

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Katelyn Nehlich is pictured here switching shifts as a train driver. The train is borrowed from the Lyle Schaunaman family every year.

(Photo by April Abeln)



Mike Nehls was busy making announcements on the new park sound system throughout the day. (Photo by April Abeln)



The Groton Lions Club performed free vision screenings for children in the park. It was reported that over 2 times more were done at this year's event than last year's. (Photo by April Abeln)



David McGannon is one of the original Pumpkineers and continues to line up the hayrides annually. (Photo by April Abeln)

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Jorie Locken is pictured here with her brother. Both were winners of prizes. The giant pumpkin weighed 1401lbs. Jorie guessed 1400lbs. Many local businesses donated prizes that were given away. (Photo by April Abeln)



Silly's Costume Characters were present at this year's event. April Abeln is one of the original Pumpkineers as well! (Photo by April Abeln)

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Ryan Martin of Hub City Radio attended the event this year and did a live broadcast in the park. Many sponsors helped make this broadcast available including

- Groton Legion
- Bierman Farm Service
- Karma Salon and Boutique
- Professional management Services
- S&S Lumber
- MJ's Sinclair
- Olive Grove Golf Course
- Beauty Brew Coffee and Boutique
- Hanlan Brothers construction
- Groton Ag Partners
- Love to Travel
- Kens Super Fair Foods of Groton
- Dacotah bank of Groton
- Bahr Spray Foam
- Smith Auto Body
- Groton Chiropractic
- Loris Pharmacy
- Erickson Insurance Agency
- Full Circle Ag

(Photo by April Abeln)



Face painters and temporary tattoo artists were busy all day with children continually in line. (Photos by April Abeln)



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Another one of the original Pumpkineers, Topper Tastad is pictured here while getting ready to take over his shift at train driver.

(Photo by April Abeln)



The food bin was back again! Darrell Hill-estad and Brett Anderson continue to donate the use of their bin for the event. Pictured here are some of the lunch volunteers: Lisa Adler, Suzie Easthouse, Valerie Baker and Doris Foertsch. Many sponsors including

- Dacotah Bank**
- Ken's SuperFair Foods**
- Bierman Farm Service**
- Professional Management Services**
- Base Kamp Lodge**
- Groton Dairy Queen**

donated to the free will lunch. Donations from this year's event will go towards Groton's 9th Annual Pumpkin Fest.

(Photo by April Abeln)

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Mayor Hanlon took off his Mayor hat for the day and put on his Pumpkineer hat. He is pictured here with April Abeln. Although not a city event, many city employees work together to make the event a success including office staff, the police, and the Public Works Department. (Photo by April Abeln)



Joe Foertsch steps in to help in the lunch bin after working the hayrides. Some of the pumpkins given away were from his patch.

(Photo by April Abeln)



Douglas and Brooklyn Heinrich volunteered at the prize table. This year they donated goodie bags that were handed out to children as well as Midco sponsored cinch bags. (Photo

by April Abeln)

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Several local residents donated the use of their side by sides and trailers for hayrides. Drivers took many to and from the patch to collect pumpkins. Pumpkins were given away for free with many donated by John and Gail Zeck. (Photo by April Abeln)



Dwight Zerr smiles as a trailer gets loaded up with spectators for a hayride to the patch. (Photo by April Abeln)



2023 SPONSORS

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DOUG & BROOKLYN HEINRICH
FRUIT FUSION
GREG & JULIE MILBRANDT
GROTON CHAMBER
GROTON CITY
GROTON TRANSIT
GROTON DAIRY QUEEN
GROTON FORD
THE GROTON INDEPENDENT
GROTON LEGION AUXILIARY
GROTON LEGION POST #39

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SCOTT ALTHOFF
SIGN GYPSIES
TMC CONSTRUCTION
TODD OSTERMAN FARMS
TOM & ALESA MAHAN
WEBER LANDSCAPING



Paul Foertsch, father of Joe, helps ensure riders get on and off the hayrides safely. (Photo by April Abeln)

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It takes many grillers working together to feed everyone! Pictured here at Joel Bierman, Bob Strassemeier, Scott Kettering and Todd McGannon. Cody Keller joined them later as well. (Photo by April Abeln)



Like mother, like daughter. April Abeln's mother, Tammy Guthmiller returned this year to volunteer again. (Photo by April Abeln)



Members of Steve Herron's family pose for a picture with Pumpkineers Joe Foertsch, April Abeln, and Topper Tastad. The Steve Herron Memorial Pumpkin Patch sign was created by Jacobsen Farm Service, LLC with labor done by Joe and Topper. (Photo by Ron Rehfluss)



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Department of Corrections moves to take over inmate shopping system **by John Hult, South Dakota Searchlight**

October 16, 2023

Prison inmates in South Dakota who want to buy nearly anything beyond their state-furnished three meals a day can only order from one store: the prison commissary.

For years, the state Department of Corrections has contracted the management of inmate commissary orders and deliveries to private companies, which supply candy bars, cans of tuna, batteries, shampoo and soap, guitar picks, pinochle cards and hundreds of other items to inmates.

Inmates are allowed to buy up to \$25 in items a week through their state-provided tablets, using money earned from their inmate work assignments and any funds transferred to the inmate accounts by family members or friends.

During a virtual meeting on Monday, the state's Corrections Commission signed off on a plan for the DOC to take over management of the commissary program and its \$3.5 million in annual sales.

The DOC would still need to contract with a supplier, according to the DOC's proposed business plan for the takeover. But the operations and warehousing for commissary items would become the province of the prison system's Pheasantland Industries.

State could bring in more money through prison store

Brittni Skipper, director of finance and administration for the DOC, told commissioners that 11 states already manage their own commissary programs, including Tennessee and Utah.

In South Dakota, a 5% cut of sales under the new system and an \$85,000 annual lease payment from the supplier for use of currently open warehouse space in Sioux Falls would translate into more than a quarter-million dollars of additional revenue each year, according to the business plan.

That could mean a boost to the state budget, as well, since annual prison industry profits over \$500,000 are transferred from the prison industries revolving fund to the state's general fund.

"To do this would be a better use of our resources and space, and we think we can better provide the services than we're currently receiving," said Skipper.

The new commissary system would need three full-time Pheasantland employees to manage the warehouse, as well as 20-25 inmate laborers to manage orders and inventory. Starting pay for inmates is currently 50 cents an hour, with "lead workers" at Pheasantland eligible for up to 75 cents an hour.

The state would be reimbursed for warehouse labor costs, Skipper said.

"All labor expenses would be the responsibility of the company that we would contract with," she said. "So they're responsible for the labor, the cost of goods sold, and any equipment. That's their part of it."

The commissary business plan notes that the number of warehouse jobs in the United States is growing, and that inmates working in the commissary warehouse on the prison grounds would learn valuable job skills.

The nation will need a million more warehouse workers a year for the next decade, according to Bureau of Labor Statistics figures cited in the DOC business plan.

Inmates trained by the DOC could be eligible for those jobs, Skipper said.

"Are you looking at places like Amazon or Savers or the ReStore/Salvation Army?" said Commissioner Mark Anderson.

"Amazon would be a big one, especially involved for the warehouse," Skipper responded.

Anderson questioned whether it's realistic to think Amazon, which opened a massive distribution center

in Sioux Falls in 2022, would hire felons.

"If you're training them to work in a warehouse, but they don't hire felons, it doesn't do them any good," Anderson said.

Skipper told the commissioner that some partnerships with commissary suppliers in other states involve agreements that guarantee jobs with the commissary supplier after a successful stint working in a warehouse behind the walls.

"I know a lot of these companies that provide commissary services will hire felons," Skipper said. "And I mean, if you become forklift certified, that's huge."

Open questions on job options, contractors

Amazon spokesman Scott Seroka told South Dakota Searchlight via email on Monday that the warehouse in Sioux Falls now employs 2,100 people, and that the site needs about 600 more to manage holiday orders.

Seroka deferred questions on the hiring of felons at Amazon to a "team of PR associates." As of Monday afternoon, those questions remain unanswered.

Commissioners voted unanimously to endorse the commissary plan. The DOC will soon release a request for proposals seeking a partner to act as supplier, Skipper said, with a goal of having the DOC-run commissary system up and running by early 2024.

Skipper told the commission that the supplier agreement could stipulate that any supplies contractor must agree to hire felons. DOC spokesman Michael Winder later wrote that the wages for the inmates who will work in the warehouse will be determined through the partner talks, as well.

"The wages would be negotiated in the contract, but offenders would receive at least \$0.50/hour as that is the minimum for offenders working inside the secure perimeter," Winder wrote in an email to South Dakota Searchlight. "However, that rate could be higher."

It's unclear what company might be interested in such a contract under the terms of the DOC's new commissary plan.

The state's most recent contract for commissary was awarded to Summit Food Service, according to opensd.gov, the state's contract portal. It's one of three commissary suppliers in the South Dakota region, according to the DOC business plan, and Skipper said it was the only company to apply in 2021.

One issue in 2021 was that the DOC required its contractors to have a warehouse in South Dakota, and Summit was the only potential vendor that had one. With the new setup, the warehouse would be on the prison grounds in Sioux Falls, potentially opening up the contract to all three potential suppliers.

Summit purchased CBM, the Sioux Falls-based prior contractor, in 2017, merging to create a \$230 million company, according to a press release from Summit's parent company.

A call and an email to Summit were not immediately returned on Monday.

Mum's the word: When questioned, Noem administration stays quiet

by Dana Hess, South Dakota Searchlight

October 16, 2023

It may be best if journalists in South Dakota took a three-year break from asking questions of Gov. Kristi Noem or anyone in her administration. It would be less frustrating for them and they would likely have just as much information as they would if they kept asking questions for the last 36 months of the governor's term.

Lately noted for not being particularly forthcoming with the media, Noem hit a new low when she recently sent 50 South Dakota National Guard troops to the southern border of Texas and refused to provide any information about the deployment.

According to a South Dakota Searchlight story, Noem's office refused to answer questions about where the unit was from, what its mission was at the border, how long it would be deployed and what it would cost. The best her spokesman could do was direct reporters to the website of Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, which was only slightly less vague about the deployment than Noem was. Noem's spokesman said he couldn't answer questions until the unit returned, for "operational security reasons."

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Once the members of the Guard returned, Noem was full of praise and let slip a few facts. The unit in Texas was the Alpha Battery 1st Battalion 147th Field Artillery of Watertown. Certainly keeping the identity of the Guard unit a secret kept the drug cartel assassins at bay. The cost of their deployment, kept under wraps until they got home for "security" reasons, was \$850,000.

The information drought in the Noem administration does a disservice to anyone who is interested in the workings of their state government.

This wasn't the first time the Noem administration has invoked "security" as a reason to keep the public in the dark. Twice during the 2021 legislative session, bills were offered seeking the disclosure of the cost for providing security for Noem. At the time she was a rising star in the national Republican Party who traveled often to campaign for GOP candidates. While political campaigns covered her travel costs, her security detail was made up of South Dakota Highway Patrol troopers.

Providing even an overall number for the cost of Noem's security detail would give bad actors too much information, according to Craig Price, who at the time was the secretary of the Department of Public Safety.

"We don't talk about security," Price told one of the legislative committees. That was good enough for the Republican majorities on two committees that killed the bills.

That year the Noem administration was equally opaque about her use of state airplanes, opposing a bill that would have called for a quarterly accounting of the purpose of a flight, passengers on board, cost of the flight, who paid for the flight and departure points and destinations.

Officials who spoke against the bill offered two arguments against it. One, it would be too much work. And two, that information was already available. Republicans on the legislative committee taking testimony on the bill didn't question that lack of logic when they voted to kill the legislation.

The Noem administration has gotten even more tight-lipped recently as the governor refused to take part in the traditional weekly news conferences during the last legislative session. Another change in tactics calls for all reporters' questions to be submitted in writing to a department's public information officer who will, in theory, get answers from the proper sources. Often those queries are ignored or return with replies that don't answer the original questions.

The edict that silence is golden was taken to new heights recently by Secretary of State Monae Johnson.

A Dakota Scout story notes that she was questioned about the legality of petitions her office approved seeking to put a repeal of the state's medical marijuana laws on the ballot. Rather than explain why the petitions were legal, as the state's top election official should, Johnson's office said it wouldn't answer questions due to "a potential for litigation."

Any reporter realizes that there are times when state government officials can't talk about certain subjects. However, the information drought in the Noem administration does a disservice to anyone who is interested in the workings of their state government. Silence should be an exception. In Noem's case, it's the way she rules.

Families of poet John Neihardt and South Dakota rancher seek 'silver lining' to removal of monument

by Paul Hammel, South Dakota Searchlight

October 16, 2023

LINCOLN, Nebraska — Later this week, a backhoe is scheduled to tear into the prairie along northwest South Dakota's Shadehill Reservoir, removing a 100-year-old monument to the heroics of a mountain man.

The removal of the small, concrete obelisk dedicated to the determination of Hugh Glass, who reportedly crawled 200 miles after surviving a vicious mauling by a grizzly bear, has some people upset.

The monument is "being snatched away," wrote Hettinger, N.D., author Francie M. Berg in a letter to local newspaper editors last week.

The marker, hand-fashioned by poet/author John Neihardt and a local rancher, was a "gift to communities of Shadehill and Lemmon, S.D.," wrote another nearby resident.

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"It seems right to leave it where it is," Ellen Ketterling wrote.

Descendants seek solution

The descendants of Neihardt and Otto Weinkauff, the rancher who helped build the monument, said they have heard the pleas loud and clear, and they are hoping to do something about it.

"There has to be a silver lining to this," said Arden Saunders of Rapid City, a grandson of Weinkauff, on whose land the monument initially stood.

Monument inscription

The inscription on the monument reads:

"This altar to courage was erected August 1, 1923 by the Neihardt Club in honor of Hugh Glass who wounded and deserted here began to crawl to Fort Kiowa in the fall of 1823."

But standing in the way of replacing the monument with a historical marker of some kind is the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, which maintains that while it can permit the removal of the Hugh Glass memorial to facilitate the removal of a time capsule inside, it cannot, by statute, allow the erection of something new.

Both Saunders and Coralie Hughes, a granddaughter of Neihardt, are hoping there's some way to allow the placement of an interpretive sign or marker to explain what their ancestors did 100 years ago.

"There are two overriding principles: One is do what my grandfather asked (open the time capsule), and the second is preserve history," Hughes said.

Her family is scheduled on Saturday to retrieve the monument, which John Neihardt said holds a time capsule that includes "an original manuscript."

Removal is only way to crack into it

The Bureau ruled that the only way the monument could be cracked into was to remove it. So the Neihardt family plans to haul it to Bancroft, Nebraska, the site of the John Neihardt State Historic Site, to chip into it, fulfilling the poet's wishes that the time capsule be opened in 2023.

Some background:

John Neihardt and some members of a "Neihardt Club" from what is now Wayne State College drove up to Lemmon in 1923 and built the monument to Glass, the subject of Neihardt's epic poem, "The Song of Hugh Glass." The site was at the confluence of two rivers where the mauling was said to have taken place.

The Nebraska poet/author — best known for writing "Black Elk Speaks" — issued a challenge for Wayne State students to return in 100 years, open a time capsule encased in the concrete obelisk and celebrate like mountain men would have. A group of students trekked to the site in June.

But the Bureau of Reclamation, on whose land the monument now sits, and the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks, which operates a state recreation area on the reservoir, balked at letting the students crack into the concrete.

Ultimately, it was determined that "ownership" of the monument rested with the Neihardt family. But if they wanted to break into the concrete, the monument had to be removed from federal property.

A replacement was always intended

Hughes said Friday that it has always been the family's intention that an interpretive sign of some kind — explaining what happened in 1923 to honor Hugh Glass — be erected as a replacement. Saunders, a history buff, agrees.

He said last week that he's had some sleepless nights knowing that a monument his grandfather helped build with his homemade cement mixer, and faithfully maintained for several years, will soon be removed.

"It's a part of my family history that's going to be gone," Saunders said.

He said he doesn't blame the Neihardt family, who are just trying to fulfill their grandfather's wishes to open the time capsule.

"The government forced her hand," Saunders said.

On Thursday, a representative of the Bureau of Reclamation said that installation of a replacement sign or monument would not be allowed.

Rule says no new monuments

"Federal regulation 43 CFR Part 423.28 explicitly outlines that 'you must not ... place memorials, markers,

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vases, or plaques on Reclamation facilities, lands, or waterbodies," stated an email from Elizabeth Smith, a Bureau spokeswoman in Montana.

Smith said the removal of the monument doesn't conflict with the rule, but erecting a new one would.

The Bureau has noted that a second monument to Hugh Glass, erected by the state in 1964 using local petrified wood, will remain. Only the "smaller, lesser-known" monument will be removed.

Saunders said he hopes that decision can be relaxed or reversed and has reached out to the office of U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-South Dakota, to see if something can be done.

Hughes, from her home in Indiana, said the last thing the family wants is to leave people in the Lemmon area upset.

An official with the Neihardt Center in Nebraska is also supportive.

"There should be something there to replace it," said Marianne Reynolds, the executive director of the center.

'The Revenant' based on Glass' crawl

The Hugh Glass story is an important one in Lemmon, which holds an annual "rendezvous" festival in honor of the mountain man's crawl to safety. The odyssey was depicted, with some Hollywood adaptations, in the movie "The Revenant" starring Leonardo DiCaprio.

Saunders said that a letter written by his grandfather in 1963 filled in some details about the monument.

Everyone present for its construction, the letter stated, signed their names to a paper that was placed inside a metal box. The box was locked and encased in concrete. The key was given to the wife of the then-director of the South Dakota State Historical Society for safekeeping, until the box/time capsule was to be reopened in 2023.

There was one addition: A pair of newlyweds showed up too late to have their names included in the time capsule. So a piece of paper with their names was placed in a pop bottle that was forced down into the still-wet concrete. The newlyweds were J.D. and Myrtle Young of Lincoln, with whom Neihardt lived for a time prior to his death in 1973.

Saunders said he's still amazed at how a poet from Nebraska navigated gravel roads and cow paths to get to Lemmon in 1923, and then had the fortune of finding a tough, German rancher, who had the equipment to build a concrete monument at the now-famous site of the mauling.

Now, he said, "We just have to make the best of what we got."

Hughes said the family plans to unveil the contents of the time capsule, if it can be successfully removed from the concrete monument, at the annual spring conference of the Neihardt Foundation.

Biden will visit Israel to demonstrate U.S. support following Hamas attack

by Jacob Fischler, South Dakota Searchlight

October 16, 2023

President Joe Biden will travel to Israel on Wednesday in a show of solidarity with the Middle East ally, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Monday.

Biden will "reaffirm the United States' solidarity with Israel and our ironclad commitment to its security," send a message to other groups and powers in the region not to attack Israel and work to secure the release of hostages still held by the militant group Hamas, Blinken said during a brief appearance Monday evening in Israel. After the visit to Israel, Biden will travel to Jordan to meet with the leaders of three Arab nations, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said in a statement late Monday.

"President Biden will again make clear, as he's done unequivocally since Hamas' slaughter of more than 1,400 people, including at least 30 Americans, that Israel has the right and indeed the duty to defend its people from Hamas and other terrorists and to prevent future attacks," Blinken said. "The president will hear from Israel what it needs to defend its people as we continue to work with Congress to meet those needs."

In Jordan, Biden will meet with that country's King Abdullah, Egyptian President Fattah El-Sisi, and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.

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Biden "will reiterate that Hamas does not stand for the Palestinian people's right to dignity and self-determination and discuss the humanitarian needs of civilians in Gaza" with those leaders, Jean-Pierre said.

Biden and top administration officials have made strong statements of support for Israel since Hamas' surprise attack Oct. 7. Retaliatory air strikes and a siege cutting off food and other supplies to the Gaza Strip, where Hamas is based, have killed more than 2,600 in that territory as well, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry.

Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin visited Israel late last week to demonstrate support in person. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer also led a bipartisan Senate delegation there that included Democrats Jacky Rosen of Nevada and Mark Kelly of Arizona and Republicans Bill Cassidy of Louisiana and Mitt Romney of Utah.

Biden canceled a planned trip to Pueblo, Colorado, on Monday to instead meet with his national security team at the White House. As of Monday evening, the White House had not made any statement about the president's travel.

Israel aid package in the works

Hamas still holds more than 199 hostages, Schumer said in a Monday floor speech, likely including U.S. citizens.

Schumer, a New York Democrat and highest ranking Jewish elected official in the U.S., said that he would work with the White House to approve an aid package to Israel that includes military, intelligence, diplomatic and humanitarian assistance.

"In the coming days, I will be working with the administration on putting together an emergency supplemental that will give Israel the tools it needs to defend itself," Schumer said.

The Senate will act first on the package, Schumer said, as the U.S. House remains mired in a leadership crisis following the ouster of Speaker Kevin McCarthy.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, a Republican from Kentucky, also spoke Monday in support of Israel, saying the U.S. should back Israel's "efforts to defend itself for as long as it takes."

"This is not merely a terrorist war against Israel," McConnell said. "It's part of a clear and present danger to the United States and the entire civilized world. This ... is a time for choosing. As Israel works to eliminate the terrorists who threaten its existence, the United States must reaffirm our commitment to Israel's security."

Israeli officials have said their goal is to eliminate Hamas, and many members of Congress have endorsed that objective.

But the task is complicated by Hamas' "ability to scatter and hide within the protective shield of Gaza's civilian population," according to an issue brief last week by Bruce Hoffman, a senior fellow for counterterrorism and homeland security at the Washington think tank Council on Foreign Relations.

"We are not like the evil militants of Hamas"

Schumer highlighted the need to provide humanitarian aid for civilians who have been affected by the violence and called for Israel to work to minimize civilian casualties.

"Israel has a very difficult task: to eliminate Hamas, save the hostages, but also minimize civilian casualties, which is a difficult task but one that Israel must and does strive to live up to," Schumer said. "We are not like the evil militants of Hamas. Israel is not. In America and in Israel, the countries must hold ourselves to a higher standard. It is part of who we are as democracies."

More than 50 U.S. House Democrats wrote to Biden and Blinken last week to urge the administration to ensure that Israel "take all due measures to limit harm to innocent civilians" and address the humanitarian crisis.

"We strongly believe that Israel's response must take into account the millions of innocent civilians in Gaza who themselves are victims of Hamas and are suffering the consequences of their terror campaign," they wrote.

Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant told Blinken that peace was not imminent. "This will be a long war," he said, according to a transcript provided by the State Department. "The price will be high. But we are going to win for Israel and the Jewish people, and for the values that both countries believe in."

State breaks ground on \$60 million women's prison in Rapid City

by Seth Tupper, South Dakota Searchlight

October 16, 2023

RAPID CITY — While controversy continues over the site of a proposed new penitentiary near Sioux Falls, the state Department of Corrections is proceeding with a plan to build a new women's prison on the other side of South Dakota.

State officials broke ground for the women's prison Monday in Rapid City.

"I'm very happy to be here today and very proud of the work and the collaboration that has been happening over the course of the last six months," said Kellie Wasko, state corrections secretary, during the ceremony.

The Legislature appropriated \$3.8 million to acquire the 20-acre site in eastern Rapid City and \$60 million for construction, which will begin this winter with a target completion date of late 2025 or early 2026.

The new medium-security women's prison will have space for 288 beds and will ease overcrowding at the state's only other women's prison in Pierre. That prison and its associated off-site facilities house about 600 women, which Wasko said is at 150% of its intended capacity.

"This facility coming to the Rapid City area allows us to bring women over to this side of the state and open up more opportunities for them to work outside the facilities, work with the area schools and have more opportunities at successful re-entry," Wasko said.

The address of the future Rapid City prison is 1056 North Creek Drive. That's just to the south of Interstate 90 and east of a large shopping area that includes a Target store. But the shopping area is on the other side of a busy thoroughfare; the prison site's immediate neighbors include warehouses and storage units, and the property is bordered by railroad tracks to the north and an expanse of hilly grassland to the east.

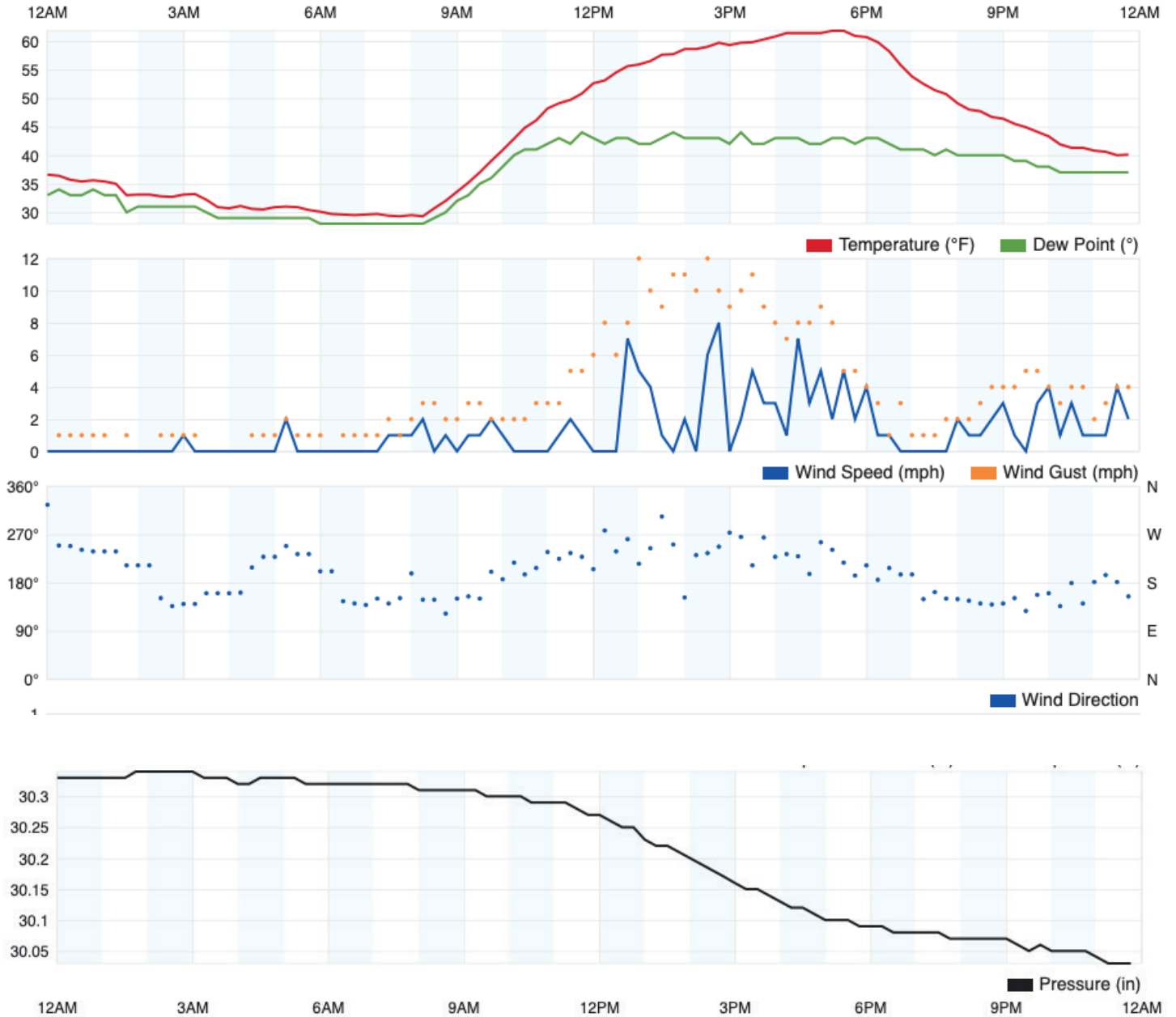
Meanwhile, the recently announced location of the proposed new penitentiary is a rural area about 15 miles south of Sioux Falls. The land there is already owned by the state Office of School and Public Lands, which has been leasing it out for agricultural use. Nearby rural homeowners said last week they were shocked by the site-selection news, and Lincoln County commissioners responded with a request for more information on the project plans from state officials.

The penitentiary project is intended to address safety problems blamed on the antiquated design of the current penitentiary, which was built in 1881 in Sioux Falls. Lawmakers last winter set aside about \$323 million for the penitentiary project.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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| Tue Oct 17 | Wed Oct 18 | Thu Oct 19 | Fri Oct 20 | Sat Oct 21 | Sun Oct 22 | Mon Oct 23 |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | | | | | | |
| 71°F | 57°F | 63°F | 67°F | 64°F | 58°F | 55°F |
| 47°F | 41°F | 42°F | 41°F | 40°F | 41°F | 49°F |
| S | W | NW | W | W | N | SE |
| 15 MPH | 24 MPH 40% | 10 MPH | 12 MPH | 13 MPH | 12 MPH | 17 MPH |



Dry Today, Showers Wednesday

October 17, 2023

3:08 AM

Dry for the upcoming weekend

Today

Partly Sunny & Mild
Highs 65-75°

Weekend Outlook
Dry & Mild

Tonight

Increasing Clouds,
Chance of Rain
Lows in the 40s

Wednesday

Scattered Showers
Highs 52-62°

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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Mild Today, Scattered Showers Wednesday

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 62 °F at 5:27 PM

Low Temp: 29 °F at 8:08 AM

Wind: 13 mph at 2:19 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 10 hours, 55 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 92 in 1910

Record Low: 15 in 1976

Average High: 59

Average Low: 33

Average Precip in Oct.: 1.29

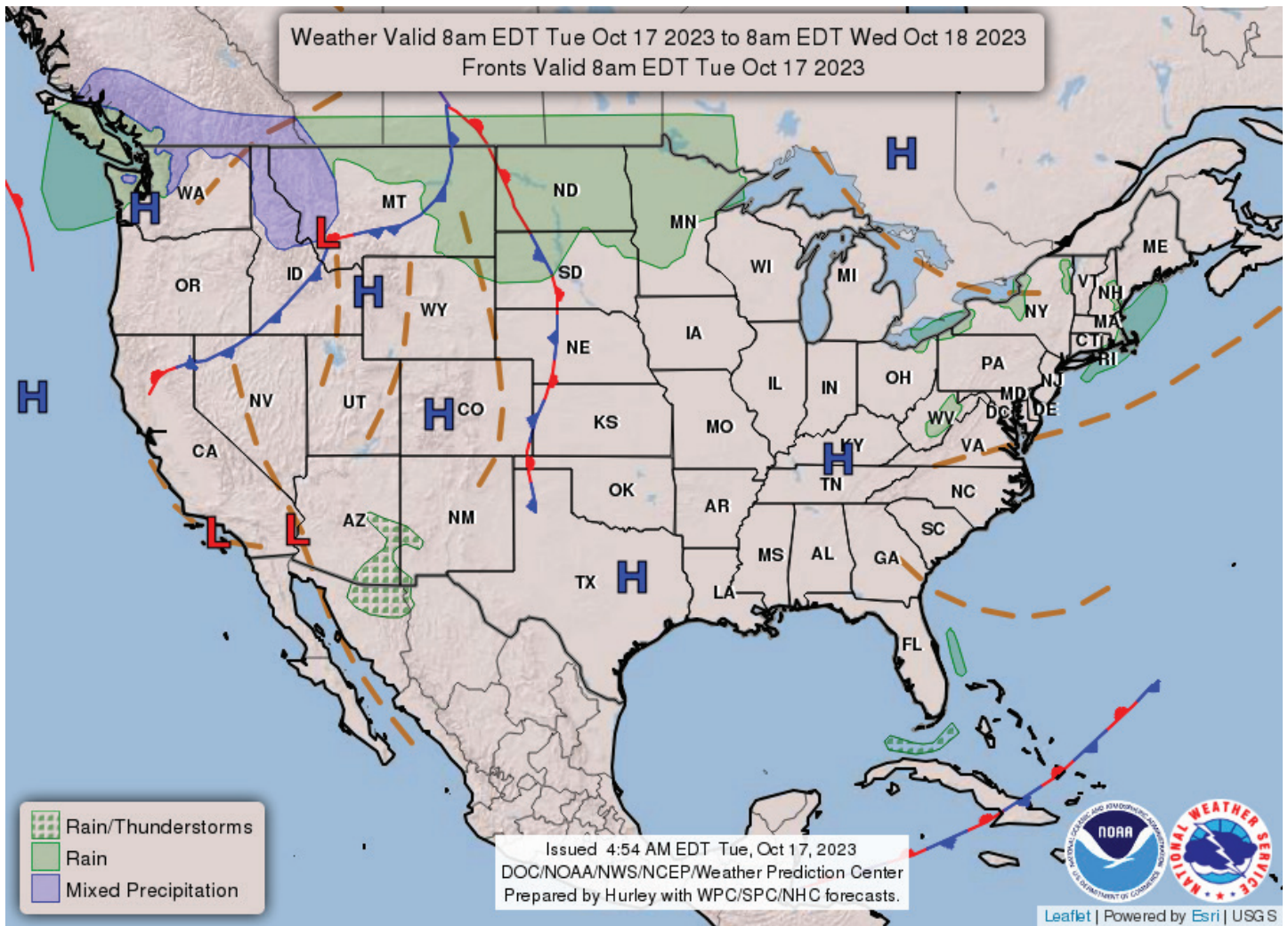
Precip to date in Oct.: 0.80

Average Precip to date: 19.62

Precip Year to Date: 22.57

Sunset Tonight: 6:45:37 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:51:11 AM



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Today in Weather History

October 17, 1910: The temperature in Aberdeen, South Dakota, warmed to 90 degrees on this day. This reading is the latest day in the calendar year in which the high temperature reached 90 degrees.

October 17, 2011: A strong low-pressure system to the northwest and a strong high-pressure system to the southeast brought stiff southerly winds across central and north-central South Dakota from the late morning until the early evening. South winds of 30 to 40 mph with gusts over 60 mph caused spotty damage across the region. The high winds created large waves on Lake Oahe near Pierre, which damaged several docks along with some boats at a marina. There were also some tree branches downed across the region, along with some damage to a few structures. With the high winds, warm temperatures, and low humidity, several grassland fires also broke out across parts of the region. The maximum wind gust of 68 mph occurred in Corson County.

1781 - General Cornwallis attempted to escape encirclement by crossing York River, "but a violent storm arose" dispersing his boats causing him to ask for an armistice. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1910: A category 4 hurricane moved north-northeast, passing just east of the Dry Tortugas. The maximum storm surge observed in Key West was 8 feet, with 15-foot waves at what is now Fort Zachary Taylor State Park.

1950 - Small but powerful Hurricane King struck Miami, FL. The hurricane packs winded to 122 mph, with gusts to 150 mph. Hurricane King then moved up the Florida peninsula to Georgia. Four persons were killed and damage was 28 million dollars. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1971: Great balls of fire were observed just ahead of a tornado moving down the main street of Wray, Colorado. However, little other electrical activity accompanied the storm. Nine people were injured in the storm, all at a trailer court at the edge of town.

1984: A snowstorm struck northern Utah producing a record 18 inches in 24 hours at Salt Lake City and 40 inches at the nearby Alta Ski Resort. The town of Magna, located ten miles west of Salt Lake City, did not receive any snow at all. The storm was responsible for a fifty-vehicle pile-up along Interstate 15 near Farmington, Utah.

1987 - It was a great day for an Oktoberfest, or to enjoy the colors of autumn, as much of the nation enjoyed sunny and mild weather. Columbia SC dipped to 34 degrees, marking their third morning in a row of record cold. Bakersfield CA reached 80 degrees for the 143rd day in a row to break a record established in 1940. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the Middle Mississippi Valley and the Lower Ohio Valley. Severe thunderstorms spawned three tornadoes in Indiana, including one which injured four persons. Strong thunderstorm winds at Connerville IND caused three million dollars damage. Thunderstorms in Illinois produced hail two inches in diameter Colfax. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Showers and thunderstorms representing the remnants of Hurricane Jerry deluged southeast Kentucky with four to six inches of rain in 18 to 24 hours, resulting in widespread flash flooding. Flooding resulted in more than five million dollars damage. Temperatures again warmed into the 80s and lower 90s in the southeastern U.S. Lakeland FL and Orlando FL reported record highs of 95 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data) 1997: Late on October 17, Super Typhoon Ivan attained its peak intensity with winds of 185 mph and an official barometric pressure of 905 mbar. On the same day, while near peak intensity, Typhoon Joan was located about 1300 miles east of Typhoon Ivan.

1998: During the weekend of October 17-18, 1998, torrential rains fell over southern and southeast Texas. Up to 22 inches of rain fell, which first resulted in deadly flash flooding from San Antonio to Austin followed by record-breaking river floods along several South Texas rivers the following week. Based on provisional data from the USGS, which is subject to revision, the flood peak for this event was the highest known peak stage at 15 locations. Tragically, a total of 31 people died during the event (26 drownings, two tornado deaths, two heart attacks, and one electrocution/drowning). At least 17 of the drowning victims were in vehicles that were either driven into water or were swept away by rapidly rising water. Preliminary property damage estimates approached three-quarters of a billion dollars.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

BECOMING CHRIST-LIKE

A sculptor was beginning a new project, and a reporter came to interview him about his work. He had never talked to a sculptor before so he asked, "What are you going to create?"

"A horse standing on its hind legs," he answered.

"How will you do such a thing?" he wondered.

"By knocking off everything that doesn't look like a horse," he replied.

Paul in writing to the Corinthians said, "Through suffering, these bodies of ours constantly share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies." God, we are reminded by Paul, is in deed and in fact, shaping us into the likeness of Christ.

As Christians, we need to know and accept the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We may at times, think that we are at the end of our rope, but as followers of Christ, we are never at the end of our hope!

As the sculptor with his block of marble, our loving Lord is "knocking off" everything in our lives that is not Christ-like. We sing our songs and say our prayers and tell others that "we want to be like Him." And someday we will be.

But until that day arrives we must be patient and willing to submit to His will, allow Him to work in us and on us so that He may work through us.

Prayer: We know, Heavenly Father, that You have a plan for each of us to become like Your Son. Give us the desire to work with You while You complete your plan for us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Through suffering, these bodies of ours constantly share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus October also be seen in our bodies. 2 Corinthians 4:1-10



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

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2023 Community Events

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

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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.13.23

6 18 44 46 68 18

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$69,000,000

NEXT 17 Hrs 24 Mins 5
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.16.23

11 30 37 39 47 7

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$2,800,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 39
DRAW: Mins 5 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.16.23

9 15 17 18 48 5

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 16 Hrs 54 Mins 5
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.14.23

3 7 14 23 26

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$24,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 54
DRAW: Mins 5 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.16.23

1 2 15 17 34 1

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 23
DRAW: Mins 5 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
10.16.23

2 27 31 44 64 18

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$49,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 23
DRAW: Mins 5 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

Monday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL

Aberdeen Christian def. Webster, 21-25, 25-13, 25-20, 25-22
Avon def. Ethan, 25-16, 25-19, 25-13
Bridgewater-Emery def. Sioux Falls Lutheran, 13-25, 18-25, 25-21, 25-23, 15-13
Canistota def. Irene-Wakonda, 26-28, 25-11, 25-13, 25-10
Elk Point-Jefferson def. Tea Area, 26-24, 25-16, 25-14
Faulkton def. Aberdeen Roncalli, 25-20, 25-22, 19-25, 25-14
Freeman def. Viborg-Hurley, 13-25, 26-24, 27-29, 25-20, 15-13
Groton Area def. Langford, 25-23, 25-16, 25-21
Hanson def. Scotland, 25-21, 26-24, 25-19
Harding County def. Hulett, Wyo., 25-23, 25-15, 25-13
Harrisburg def. Sioux Falls Christian, 25-20, 21-25, 25-18, 25-20
Herreid/Selby Area def. South Border, N.D., 25-7, 25-22, 25-17
Highmore-Harrold def. Crow Creek Tribal School, 25-18, 25-15, 25-18
Ipswich def. Leola-Frederick High School, 23-25, 25-20, 25-19, 25-21
Lennox def. Tri-Valley, 20-25, 25-12, 25-16, 21-25, 15-12
McIntosh def. Wakpala, 25-13, 17-25, 25-21, 21-25, 15-8
Platte-Geddes def. Tripp-Delmont/Armour, 3-1
Warner def. North Central Co-Op, 25-19, 25-4, 25-7
Wilmot def. Tri-State, N.D., 13-25, 25-18, 25-18, 25-12
Wolsey-Wessington def. Miller, 17-25, 25-21, 25-23, 25-23

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

Clashes again erupt on the Lebanon-Israel border after an anti-tank missile is fired from Lebanon

BEIRUT (AP) — Clashes erupted again Tuesday on the border between Lebanon and Israel, where Israeli forces and armed groups in Lebanon have engaged in a series of low-level skirmishes since the outbreak of the latest war in Gaza.

An anti-tank missile fired from Lebanon landed in the town of Metula in northern Israel Tuesday morning, injuring three people, according to the Ziv Medical Center in Safed.

No group in Lebanon has immediately claimed responsibility. It was not clear if the injured were civilians or soldiers, but Israel has ordered civilians to evacuate the area near the border with Lebanon.

Israel responded by striking several areas along the border in southern Lebanon with artillery fire and white phosphorus, the state-run National News Agency in Lebanon reported. The Israeli military said its tanks fired back into Lebanon after an anti-tank missile was launched across the border.

Earlier Tuesday, the Israeli military said it killed four militants who had attempted to plant explosive devices on a border wall between Israel and Lebanon. A video from an Israeli army reconnaissance drone showed the militants near the separation wall as they were targeted, causing an explosion.

There was no claim of responsibility. Last week, militants from the Palestinian Islamic Jihad in southern Lebanon crossed the border and clashed with Israeli troops, killing three and wounding several others. The militants were killed, and the Palestinian group held funerals for two of them.

There are fears that Hezbollah and other Iran-backed groups in the region may escalate the fight with

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Israel to support Hamas in case of a ground incursion into Gaza. So far, artillery exchanges between Hezbollah and Israel have been limited to several towns along the border.

Israel has threatened that if Hezbollah opens a new front, all of Lebanon will suffer the consequences.

As Biden heads to Israel and Jordan, aid is held up for a Gaza on the verge of total collapse

By NAJIB JOBAIN, SAMYA KULLAB and RAVI NESSMAN Associated Press

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip (AP) — The U.S. worked to break a deadlock over delivering aid to millions of increasingly desperate civilians in the Gaza Strip, which has been besieged and under assault by Israel since a brutal attack by Hamas militants, as U.S. President Joe Biden prepared to head to the region.

Israeli airstrikes continued to pound Gaza early Tuesday, killing dozens of people in the besieged enclave's south, where Israel told civilians from the north to seek shelter ahead of an expected ground offensive.

Wounded people were rushed to the hospital after heavy attacks outside the southern Gaza cities of Rafah and Khan Younis, Gaza residents reported. Basem Naim, a senior Hamas official and former health minister, reported that 27 people were killed in Rafah and 30 were killed in Khan Younis.

An Associated Press reporter saw around 50 bodies brought to Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis since early Tuesday. Family members came to claim the bodies, wrapped in white bedsheets, some soaked in blood.

An airstrike in Deir al Balah reduced a house to rubble, killing nine members of the family living there. Three members of another family that had evacuated from Gaza City were killed in a neighboring home. The dead included one man and 11 women and children. Witnesses said there was no previous warning before the strike.

Israel has sealed off Hamas-ruled Gaza and hammered it with unrelenting airstrikes since the militant attack on southern Israel last week killed 1,400 people, mostly civilians. Dozens of Israelis and citizens of other countries were taken captive and brought to Gaza by militants.

Israeli strikes have killed at least 2,778 people and wounded 9,700 others in Gaza, according to the Health Ministry. The strikes have not stopped Hamas militants from continuing to barrage Israel with rockets launched from Gaza.

Airstrikes, dwindling supplies, and Israel's mass evacuation order for the north of the Gaza Strip has thrown the tiny territory's 2.3 million people into upheaval and caused increasing desperation.

More than 1 million Palestinians have fled their homes, and 60% are now in the approximately 14-kilometer-long (8 mile) area south of the evacuation zone, the U.N. said.

Aid workers warned that the territory was near complete collapse as hospitals were on the verge of losing electricity, threatening the lives of thousands of patients, and hundreds of thousands of people searched for bread. With taps dry, many rationed the little clean water available and others resorted to drinking dirty or sewage-filled water, risking disease.

At the Rafah crossing, Gaza's only connection to Egypt, truckloads of aid were waiting to go into the tiny, densely populated territory, and trapped civilians — many of them Palestinians with dual nationalities — were hoping desperately to get out.

Mediators were trying to reach a cease-fire to open the border, which shut down last week after Israeli airstrikes. An agreement appeared to have been reached Monday, but Israel denied reports of a cease-fire in Rafah, which would be needed to open the gates. On Tuesday morning, they were still closed.

An Egyptian official said Tuesday that Egypt and Israel agreed that the aid convoys at the border would travel into Israel for inspection at the Kerem Shalom crossing between Gaza and Israel. The aid would then be allowed into Gaza. A brief humanitarian ceasefire would take place and foreign nationals would be allowed to exit Gaza via Rafah, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not allowed to speak with the media.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who visited Israel for the second time in a week on Monday after a six-country tour through Arab nations, said in Tel Aviv that the U.S. and Israel had agreed to develop a plan to enable humanitarian aid to reach civilians in Gaza. There were few details, but the plan would

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include "the possibility of creating areas to help keep civilians out of harm's way."

Gen. Erik Kurilla, the head of U.S. Central Command, arrived in Tel Aviv for meetings with Israeli military authorities ahead of a Biden visit planned for Wednesday to signal White House support for Israel. Biden will also travel to Jordan to meet with Arab leaders amid fears the fighting could expand into a broader regional conflict as fighting intensified along Israel's border with Lebanon.

In addition to the dead, some 1,200 people across Gaza are believed buried under the rubble, alive or dead, health authorities said. Emergency teams struggled to rescue people while cut off from the internet and mobile networks, running out of fuel and exposed to unceasing airstrikes. On Monday Israeli warplanes struck the headquarters of the Civil Defense in Gaza City, killing seven paramedics. Another 10 medics and doctors have been killed on the job, health authorities said.

Israel also evacuated towns near its northern border with Lebanon, where the military has exchanged fire repeatedly with the Iranian-backed Hezbollah group.

The military said it killed four militants wearing explosive vests who were attempting to cross into the country from Lebanon on Tuesday morning. Video from a reconnaissance drone the army shared showed the militants near the border wall before they were targeted, causing an explosion. No group immediately claimed responsibility.

"Whoever approaches the border with Lebanon will be killed," said Israeli military spokesman, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari.

Israel has warned Lebanon it will strongly retaliate against attacks from across the border.

Israel fought a vicious monthlong war with Hezbollah in 2006 that ended in a stalemate and a tense detente between the two sides.

Speaking to the Israeli Knesset, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned Iran and Hezbollah, "Don't test us in the north. Don't make the mistake of the past. Today, the price you will pay will be far heavier."

Soon after he spoke, the Knesset floor was evacuated as rockets headed toward Jerusalem. Sirens in Tel Aviv prompted U.S. and Israeli officials to take shelter in a bunker, officials said.

Iran's foreign minister, meanwhile, warned that "preemptive action is possible" if Israel moves closer to a ground offensive. Hossein Amirabdollahian's threat followed a pattern of escalating rhetoric from Iran, which supports Hamas and Hezbollah.

The Israeli military said Monday at least 199 hostages were taken into Gaza, more than previously estimated. Hamas said it was holding 200 to 250 hostages.

Hamas' military wing released a hostage video showing a dazed woman having her arm wrapped with bandages. The woman, who identified herself as Mia Schem, 21, rocked slightly as she spoke, the sound of explosions reverberating in the background.

The plight of the hostages has dominated the Israeli media since the attack, with interviews with their relatives playing on television almost constantly. Israeli officials have vowed to maintain the siege of Gaza until the hostages are released.

In Gaza, more than 400,000 displaced people in the south crowded into schools and other facilities of the U.N. agency for Palestinians. The agency said it has only 1 liter of water a day for each of its staff members trapped in the territory.

Israel opened a water line into the south for three hours that benefitted only 14 percent of Gaza's population, the U.N. said.

Police shoot dead suspected extremist accused of killing 2 Swedish soccer fans on a Brussels street

By SYLVAIN PLAZY, RAF CASERT and LORNE COOK Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — Police in Belgium on Tuesday shot dead a suspected Tunisian extremist accused of killing two Swedish soccer fans in a brazen shooting on a Brussels street before disappearing into the night.

Hours after a manhunt began in the Belgian capital, Interior Minister Annelies Verlinden posted on X, formerly Twitter, that "the perpetrator of the terrorist attack in Brussels has been identified and has died."

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She thanked Belgium's intelligence and security services, as well as the public prosecutor's office, "for their swift and decisive action last night and this morning." The man was shot by police in the Schaerbeek neighborhood near where the rampage took place. The weapon used in the assault was recovered.

Amateur videos posted on social media of Monday's attack showed a man wearing an orange fluorescent vest pulling up on a scooter, taking out a large weapon and opening fire on people getting out of a taxi before chasing them into a building to gun them down. He was also filmed calmly loading his weapon as cars drove slowly by.

Questions remain unanswered over how a man who was on police files, thought to be radicalized and being sought for deportation was able to launch such an attack.

"Last night, three people left for what was supposed to be a wonderful soccer party. Two of them lost their lives in a brutal terrorist attack," Prime Minister Alexander De Croo said at a news conference just before dawn. "Their lives were cut short in full flight, cut down by extreme brutality."

De Croo said his thoughts were with the victims' families and that he had sent his condolences to the Swedish prime minister. Security has been beefed up in the capital, particularly around places linked to the Swedish community in the city.

"The attack that was launched yesterday was committed with total cowardice," De Croo said.

Not far from the scene of the shooting, the Belgium-Sweden soccer match in the Belgian national stadium was suspended at halftime and the 35,000 fans were kept inside as a precaution while the attacker was at large.

Prosecutor Eric Van Duyse said, "security measures were urgently taken to protect the Swedish supporters." More than two hours after the game was suspended, a message flashed on the big stadium screen saying, "Fans, you can leave the stadium calmly."

"Frustrated, confused, scared. I think everyone was quite scared," said Caroline Lochs, a fan from Antwerp.

De Croo said the assailant was a Tunisian man living illegally in Belgium who used a military weapon to kill the two Swedes and shoot a third, who is being treated for "severe injuries."

Federal Prosecutor Frederic Van Leeuw described how the suspect, a 45-year-old man who wasn't identified, had posted a video online claiming to have killed three Swedish people.

The suspect is alleged to have said in the video that, for him, the Quran is "a red line for which he is ready to sacrifice himself."

Sweden raised its terror alert to the second-highest level in August after a series of public Quran burnings by an Iraqi refugee living in Sweden resulted in threats from Islamic militant groups.

Belgian prosecutors said overnight that nothing suggested the attack was linked to the war between Israel and Hamas.

Police overnight raided a building in the Schaerbeek neighborhood where the man was thought to be staying but did not find him. Sweden's foreign ministry sent out a text message to subscribers in Belgium asking them "to be vigilant and to carefully listen to instructions from the Belgian authorities."

According to Justice Minister Vincent Van Quickenborne, the suspect was denied asylum in 2019. He was known to police and had been suspected of involvement of human trafficking, living illegally in Belgium and of being a risk to state security.

Information provided to the Belgian authorities by an unidentified foreign government suggested that the man had been radicalized and intended to travel abroad to fight in a holy war. But the Belgian authorities were not able to establish this, so he was never listed as dangerous.

The man was also suspected of threatening a person in an asylum center and a hearing on that incident had been due to take place on Tuesday, Van Quickenborne said.

Belgian Asylum State Secretary Nicole de Moor said the man disappeared after his asylum application was refused so the authorities were unable to locate him to organize his deportation.

A terror alert for Brussels was raised overnight to 4, the top of Belgium's scale, indicating an extremely serious threat. It previously stood at 2, which means the threat was average. The alert level for the rest of the country was raised to 3.

De Croo said that Belgium would never submit to such attacks. "Moments like this are a heavy ordeal," he told reporters, "but we are never going to let ourselves be intimidated by them."

Palestinian medics in Gaza struggle to save lives under Israeli siege and bombardment

By ISABEL DEBRE and WAFAA SHURAFSA Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — For hours and hours, Moen Abu Aish digs through the rubble of demolished homes to find survivors of Israeli airstrikes, toiling in a vast and desperate search complicated by the shortage of critical supplies and the sheer scope of destruction across the Gaza Strip.

Even as rescue worker Abu Aish, 58, and his colleagues struggle to pry lifeless bodies from the concrete and twisted metal where residential towers once stood, the death toll keeps rising. Gaza's Health Ministry has reported that Israel's bombardment — launched after Hamas mounted a bloody, unprecedented attack on Israel on Oct. 7 — has killed more than 2,700 Palestinians, many of them women and children.

But far more Palestinians have been killed than have been officially reported, with 1,200 people, among them some 500 minors, believed to be trapped under the rubble awaiting rescue, or recovery, health authorities said. They based their estimates on distress calls they received.

"So many times medics say they hear victims scream but they cannot do anything about it," said Mohammed Abu Selmia, general director of Shifa Hospital, Gaza's biggest medical center.

The untold scores of victims buried beneath destroyed buildings shed light on the struggles of rescue teams in Gaza trying to save lives, while cut off from the internet and mobile networks, running out of fuel and exposed to unceasing airstrikes.

Israel imposed a siege on Gaza after the Hamas attack, severing the crowded strip's access to water, power and fuel. Health authorities have warned that without humanitarian aid, hospitals and emergency services will soon break down. Hospitals running on backup generators say they have enough fuel for another day or two at most.

"The destruction is so intense, there are hundreds of dead under the rubble as we speak," said Mahmoud Basal, the spokesperson for the Palestinian Civil Defense, which provides emergency service, his voice cracking as he fought back tears. "Where are the Arab countries? Where is the rest of the world? We are begging you, please, save us from this madness."

At dawn Monday, Israeli warplanes struck the headquarters of the Civil Defense in Gaza City, killing seven paramedics as they prepared for a rescue mission, the Interior Ministry said. In widely shared videos of the aftermath, medics, shell-shocked and exhausted, crouched on the back of their blood-smeared ambulance with their heads in their hands.

"They targeted a center for ambulances," one of them cried out, his voice frantic. "There are no weapons. There are no militants. There is nothing, nothing but civilians."

The Israeli military did not immediately comment on the airstrike but has alleged in the past that Hamas militants use hospitals and rescue services as protective cover. It says it only targets sites and infrastructure used by Hamas and other militant groups.

Since the start of this war, 10 other medics have been killed on the job, the Health Ministry said.

"I'm terrified all the time, of course I am. I'm human," Abu Aish said from Al Awda Hospital in northern Gaza, where doctors had refused an Israeli military order to evacuate earlier this week. "I see the worst things you could imagine."

Like most medics, Abu Aish has spent the past days in the hospital's ambulance bay, sleeping a few hours before returning to his grueling work. The massive blasts ripping through the northern Jabaliya refugee camp where he lives have been bad enough, he said.

What made them worse was not knowing how his loved ones fared.

Since Israeli bombardment destroyed two of Gaza's three main lines for mobile communication last week, he hasn't spoken to his family in five days.

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"I miss them so much it hurts," he said of his seven kids and 10 grandchildren. "But this is my mission. I respect it."

At the hospital, distress calls follow the nearby thunder of explosions. Abu Aish drives as far as he can in the ambulance and jumps out when the roads buckle so badly they cannot be used. Rushing in the opposite direction of panicked families, he and his team arrive by foot to ravaged homes with little more than flashlights, shovels and other amateur tools, like pickaxes, saws, backhoes and blowtorches to cut metal bars.

The rescue crews in their bright vests and white helmets largely lack excavators, ladders and heavy machinery — the outcome of a blockade imposed by Israel and Egypt in 2007 to prevent Hamas from digging tunnels and rearming itself. Often Abu Aish uses his bare hands to sort through chunks of concrete mixed with residents' belongings and personal mementos.

But as the rescuers work, they hear bombardment crashing in the distance. Another block of homes, flattened. More people who need their help, urgently.

Residents say it often takes rescue crews many hours to reach the site of an attack and search for victims. By that point, the chances of finding additional survivors are slim.

Ali Ahad, a 37-year-old resident of Gaza City, said that when airstrikes leveled the residential building next door, rescuers never came.

He and his friends sprinted outside in their slippers, sifted through the rubble and struggled to lift men and women coated in blood out of the ruins with blankets. When they saw an ambulance racing down the street to Shifa Hospital they chased it, pounding on its windows to make it stop so they could squeeze their neighbors inside.

"You have people like us using our hands and we have zero experience doing such things," he said. "There is no infrastructure. There is no capacity."

Rescuers say they try to save as many lives as they can. But at any point, they may have to save themselves.

Among the 10 medics killed over the past week were four workers with the Palestinian Red Crescent. Airstrikes last Wednesday slammed into their ambulances in two different places.

Three of those killed that day had been waiting to evacuate civilians in Jabaliya. "I was traumatized by that loss," said their colleague, Salem Abu Al-Khair. As he spoke from the ambulance center, the roar of airstrikes could be heard.

"Even during this interview we are being bombed," he said. "This is the extent of the danger."

Good news is rare for Gaza's medics. On Thursday, after airstrikes hit Jabaliya, Abu Aish found a mother hugging a small child under the rubble. The mother had been killed, along with the rest of the family members in the collapsed building.

But the child, a boy no more than 3 years old, was alive.

Abu Aish pulled him out of the rubble and took him to the ambulance. He was covered in dirt but completely healthy, he said.

"Those moments give me the will to carry on," he said. "That's my work. I never want to let one child like that die."

Dak Prescott, Cowboys rally in fourth quarter for a 20-17 victory over the Chargers

By JOE REEDY AP Sports Writer

INGLEWOOD, Calif. (AP) — Fans and some players might roll their eyes when a Week 6 game is described as a must win.

That doesn't matter to Dak Prescott

After playing one of the worst games of his eight-year career last week and with a bye week on the horizon, Prescott went into Monday night's game against the Los Angeles Chargers knowing anything other than victory would be detrimental to the Cowboys' hopes of contending for an NFC title.

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Prescott responded by throwing for 272 yards and a touchdown as Dallas rallied in the fourth quarter for a 20-17 victory.

"It was a must win. There's a big difference between 4-2 and 3-3," said Prescott, who completed 21 of 30 passes and also had a rushing TD. "We talked after last week about not allowing this thing to landslide. When you get this win like we did, we can definitely move on."

The Cowboys — coming off a 42-10 loss at San Francisco on Oct. 8 — continue to prove they don't let losses fester. They improved to 10-1 in weeks following a loss since the start of the 2021 season.

"There's plays that needed to be made, especially down the stretch," Cowboys coach Mike McCarthy said. "A lot of back and forth, a lot of resetting your jaw and just keep fighting, and I thought our men did a really good job there."

Prescott became the 30th quarterback in NFL history to throw at least one touchdown pass against 31-or-more opponents when he connected with Brandin Cooks for a 2-yard score with 11:19 remaining in the game to give the Cowboys a 17-10 lead.

"Dak did a lot of great things," said Cowboys receiver CeeDee Lamb, who had seven receptions for 117 yards. "He improvised a lot, gave us the ability to do our work down the field."

Prescott showed off his running ability midway through the first quarter when he faked a handoff on fourth-and-1 and went up the middle for an 18-yard touchdown to tie the game at 7-7. It was the longest rushing touchdown of Prescott's eight-year career.

"We had CeeDee in motion as an option. The defensive end took out Tony and two other guys ran toward CeeDee just allowing me to cut up field," said Prescott, who also had 40 rushing yards on seven carries. "I have not been showing my legs early in the year so that might have played a part in it."

Los Angeles tied it at 17 with 7:11 remaining when Gerald Everett caught a 1-yard touchdown pass from Justin Herbert.

Brandon Aubrey made two field goals, including a 39-yarder with 2:19 remaining, to give the Cowboys the lead.

The Chargers (2-3) had one last chance to send it into overtime or win, but Stephon Gilmore picked off Herbert at the LA 33-yard line with 1:22 remaining to seal the victory. On the play immediately before the pick, Herbert was sacked by Micah Parsons for an 8-yard loss.

"We fell short, and I've got to make more plays as a quarterback," said Herbert, who was 22 of 37 for 227 yards with two touchdowns and an interception. "I missed a couple of receivers, threw some bad passes. There was a lot left out there, so there's a lot to work on, and a lot to improve on."

The Chargers started off well when they scored on their opening drive for the second straight game as Allen caught a 1-yard pass from Herbert on third-and-goal. Allen finished with seven catches for 85 yards.

Los Angeles had a chance to tie or take the lead on the opening drive of the third quarter, but Herbert was unable to complete it to Joshua Palmer in the end zone on fourth-and-1 at the Cowboys 7.

"I thought we were really good most of the night on third down. I thought we pressured the quarterback at a high level, but Dak made a couple of plays on that last drive, and it hurt us," Chargers coach Brandon Staley said.

KEY PLAY

Cooks' touchdown was set up by a 60-yard reception by Pollard on the first play of the fourth quarter.

Prescott scrambled out of pressure on third-and-11 at the Dallas 24 and completed a short pass to Pollard at the 32. Pollard then spun out of a tackle by Chargers cornerback Michael Davis at the 40 and appeared as if he would score a touchdown until he was brought down by Asante Samuel at the Chargers 16.

"The throw to Pollard is one of those fluke plays off the scramble where we have him, and you give credit to Dak for making a big play," Staley said.

LUCKY BOUNCE

The Chargers tied it in the fourth quarter when they took over on the Cowboys 20 after a muffed punt.

Dallas' Jalen Tolbert thought KaVontae Turpin got his hand on the ball, but Tolbert was the first to touch it. He fumbled and Chargers linebacker Amen Ogbongbemiga recovered it.

It was originally called a downed punt, but it was reversed after the Chargers challenged the call.

INJURIES

Chargers: DL Sebastian Joseph-Day suffered a knee injury on the first play of the game, but came back in the second half. ... CB Raheem Layne also sustained a knee injury in the third quarter and did not return.

UP NEXT

Cowboys: Have their bye week before hosting the Rams on Oct. 29.

Chargers: Travel to Kansas City. The Chiefs swept last year's series and have won the last three meetings.

Putin begins visit in China underscoring ties amid Ukraine war and Israeli-Palestinian conflict

By CHRISTOPHER BODEEN Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin arrived in Beijing on Tuesday for a visit that underscores China's support for Moscow during its war in Ukraine as well as Russian backing for China's bid to expand its economic and diplomatic influence abroad.

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 against its relations with Iran and Syria, two countries that are strongly backed by Russia and with which China has forged ties for economic reasons as well as to challenge Washington's influence in the Middle East.

Putin's plane was met by an honor guard as the Russian leader began his visit that 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.

In an interview to Chinese state media, Putin praised 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 told state broadcaster CCTV, according to a transcript released by the Kremlin on Monday.

Putin will be among the highest profile guests at a gathering marking the 10th anniversary of Xi's announcement of the BRI project, which has laden countries such as Zambia and Sri Lanka with heavy debt from contracts with Chinese companies to build roads, airports and other public works they could not otherwise afford. U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres has praised the Chinese policy as bringing development to neglected areas.

Asked by reporters Friday about his visit, 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 former 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 would also discuss growing economic ties between Moscow and Beijing in energy, high-tech and financial industries. China has also grown in importance as an export destination for Russia.

Alexander Gabuev, director of the 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.

"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," he said.

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

The Chinese and Soviets were Cold War rivals for influence among left-leaning states, but China and Russia 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.

Electrical grids aren't keeping up with the green energy push. That could risk climate goals

By DAVID McHUGH AP Business Writer

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP) — Stalled spending on electrical grids worldwide is slowing the rollout of renewable energy and could put efforts to limit climate change at risk if millions of miles of power lines are not added or refurbished in the next few years, the International Energy Agency said.

The Paris-based organization said in the report Tuesday that the capacity to connect to and transmit electricity is not keeping pace with the rapid growth of clean energy technologies such as solar and wind power, electric cars and heat pumps being deployed to move away from fossil fuels.

IEA Executive Director Fatih Birol told The Associated Press in an interview that there is a long line of renewable projects waiting for the green light to connect to the grid. The stalled projects could generate 1,500 gigawatts of power, or five times the amount of solar and wind capacity that was added worldwide last year, he said.

"It's like you are manufacturing a very efficient, very speedy, very handsome car — but you forget to build the roads for it," Birol said.

If spending on grids stayed at current levels, the chance of holding the global increase in average temperature to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels — the goal set by the 2015 Paris climate accords — "is going to be diminished substantially," he said.

The IEA assessment of electricity grids around the globe found that achieving the climate goals set by the world's governments would require adding or refurbishing 80 million kilometers (50 million miles) of power lines by 2040 — an amount equal to the existing global grid in less than two decades.

Annual investment has been stagnant but needs to double to more than \$600 billion a year by 2030, the agency said.

It's not uncommon for a single high-voltage overhead power line to take five to 13 years to get approved through bureaucracy in advanced economies, while lead times are significantly shorter in China and India, according to the IEA.

The report cited the South Link transmission project to carry wind power from northern to southern Germany. First planned in 2014, it was delayed after political opposition to an overhead line meant it was buried instead. Completion is expected in 2028 instead of 2022.

Other important projects that have been held up: the 400-kilometer (250-mile) Bay of Biscay connector between Spain and France, now expected for 2028 instead of 2025, and the SunZia high-voltage line to bring wind power from New Mexico to Arizona and California. Construction started only last month after

years of delays.

On the East Coast, the Avangrid line to bring hydropower from Canada to New England was interrupted in 2021 following a referendum in Maine. A court overturned the statewide vote rejecting the project in April.

With humanitarian aid blocked at Egyptian border, Gaza draws closer to total collapse

By NAJIB JOBAIN, SAMYA KULLAB and JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Truckloads of aid idled at Egypt's border with Gaza as residents and humanitarian groups pleaded Monday for water, food and fuel for dying generators, saying the tiny Palestinian territory sealed off by Israel after last week's rampage by Hamas was near total collapse.

U.S. President Joe Biden planned to travel to Israel on Wednesday to signal White House support for the country and to Jordan to meet with Arab leaders. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced the trip early Tuesday in Tel Aviv during his second visit to Israel in less than a week amid fears that the fighting could expand into a broader regional conflict.

In Gaza, hospitals were on the verge of losing electricity, threatening the lives of thousands of patients, and hundreds of thousands of Palestinians displaced from their homes searched for bread. Israel maintained punishing airstrikes across Gaza as a ground invasion loomed, while Hamas militants kept up a barrage of rocket attacks, and tensions mounted near the Israel-Lebanon border.

More than a week after Israel cut off entry of any supplies, all eyes were on the Rafah crossing, Gaza's only connection to Egypt. Mediators were trying to reach a cease-fire that would let in aid and let out trapped foreigners. Israeli airstrikes forced the crossing to shut down last week, but it remained unclear Monday which of the regional actors was keeping the crossing closed.

Blinken, who returned to Israel after a six-country tour through Arab nations, said the U.S. and Israel had agreed to develop a plan to enable humanitarian aid to reach civilians in Gaza. There were few details, but the plan would include "the possibility of creating areas to help keep civilians out of harm's way."

"We share Israel's concern that Hamas may seize or destroy aid entering Gaza or otherwise prevent it from reaching the people who need it," Blinken said.

Israel evacuated towns near its northern border with Lebanon, where the military has exchanged fire repeatedly with the Iranian-backed Hezbollah group.

Speaking to the Israeli Knesset, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned Iran and Hezbollah, "Don't test us in the north. Don't make the mistake of the past. Today, the price you will pay will be far heavier," referring to Israel's 2006 war with Hezbollah, which operates out of Lebanon.

Soon after he spoke, the Knesset floor was evacuated as rockets headed toward Jerusalem. Sirens in Tel Aviv prompted U.S. and Israeli officials to take shelter in a bunker, officials said.

Iran's foreign minister, meanwhile, warned that "preemptive action is possible" if Israel moves closer to a ground offensive. Hossein Amirabdollahian's threat followed a pattern of escalating rhetoric from Iran, which supports Hamas and Hezbollah.

This has become the deadliest of the five Gaza wars for both sides. At least 2,778 people have been killed and 9,700 wounded in Gaza, according to the Health Ministry there. More than 1,400 Israelis have been killed, the vast majority civilians massacred in Hamas' Oct. 7 assault.

The Israeli military said Monday that at least 199 hostages were taken into Gaza, more than previously estimated. Hamas said it was holding 200 to 250 hostages, including foreigners whom it said it would free when it was feasible.

Also Monday, Hamas' military wing released a hostage video showing a dazed woman having her arm wrapped with bandages. The woman, who identified herself in the video as Mia Schem, 21, rocked slightly as she spoke, the sound of explosions reverberating in the background. In her statement, Schem was taken from Kibbutz Reim, where she was attending a rave near the Israel-Gaza border. Hamas said she had undergone a three-hour operation.

The Israeli military said Schem's family was told of her abduction last week, and officials dismissed the

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video as propaganda.

The plight of the hostages has dominated the Israeli media since the attack, with interviews of their relatives playing almost constantly. Israeli officials have vowed to maintain the siege of Gaza until the hostages are released.

The head of Israel's Shin Bet security service, in charge of monitoring militant groups, took responsibility for failing to avert Hamas' surprise attack. As agency head, "the responsibility for that is on me," Ronen Bar said.

"There will be time for investigation — now is a time for war," he wrote in a letter to Shin Bet workers and their families.

The combination of airstrikes, dwindling supplies and Israel's mass evacuation order for the north of the Gaza Strip has thrown the tiny territory's 2.3 million people into upheaval and increasing desperation. More than 1 million have fled their homes, and 60% are now in the approximately 14-kilometer-long (8 mile) area south of the evacuation zone, according to the U.N.

The Israeli military says it is trying to clear civilians for their safety ahead of a major campaign against Hamas in Gaza's north, where it says the militants have extensive networks of tunnels and rocket launchers. Much of Hamas' military infrastructure is in residential areas.

Those fleeing northern Gaza still faced airstrikes in the south. Before dawn Monday, a strike in the town of Rafah collapsed a building sheltering three families who had evacuated from Gaza City. At least 12 people were killed and nine others remained buried under rubble, survivors said. The strike reduced the house to a vast crater blanketed with wreckage.

Hospitals are expected to run out of generator fuel in the next 24 hours, meaning life-saving equipment like incubators and ventilators will stop functioning and putting thousands of lives at risk, the U.N. said.

People grew increasingly desperate in their search for food and water. With taps dry, many have resorted to drinking dirty or sewage-filled water, risking the spread of disease.

More than 400,000 displaced people in the south crowded into schools and other facilities of the U.N. agency for Palestinians, UNRWA. But the agency can't provide them supplies. UNRWA said it has only 1 liter of water a day for each of its staff members trapped in the territory.

"Gaza is running out of water, and Gaza is running out of life," said UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini, calling for a lifting of the siege. "We need this now."

The few operating bakeries had long snaking lines of people. Ahmad Salah in the city of Deir al-Balah said he waited 10 hours to get a kilo (2 pounds) of bread to feed 20-30 family members.

In northern Gaza, unknown numbers remained, either unwilling or unable to leave.

UNRWA said 170,000 people were sheltering at its schools in the north when the order to leave came. But it couldn't evacuate them and doesn't know if they remained. More than 40,000 have crowded in and around Gaza City's al-Shifa Hospital, hoping it will be safe from bombardment.

Hamas urged people to ignore the evacuation order. The Israeli military on Sunday released photos it said showed a Hamas roadblock preventing traffic from moving south.

Doctors and many hospital staff have refused to evacuate, saying it would mean death for critically ill patients and newborns on ventilators. The aid group Doctors Without Borders said many of its personnel decided to stay to treat wounded. They ran out of painkillers, and staff reported "wounded screaming in pain," it said.

On the Gaza side of the Rafah crossing, crowds of Palestinians with dual citizenship waited anxiously, sitting on suitcases or crouched on the floor, some comforting crying infants.

"They are supposed to be a developed country, talking about human rights all the time," Shrouq Alkha-zendar, whose two children are American citizens, said of the United States. "You should protect your citizens first, not leave them all alone suffering."

After increasing cross-border exchanges with Hezbollah in the north, the Israeli military ordered residents to evacuate 28 communities within 2 kilometers (1.2 miles) of the Lebanese border.

"Israel is ready to operate on two fronts, and even more," said Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, a military spokesman.

Hezbollah released video showing snipers shooting out cameras on several Israeli army posts along the border, apparently to prevent Israel from monitoring movements on the Lebanese side.

The U.S. government began evacuating some 2,500 American citizens by ship from the Israeli port city of Haifa to Cyprus. Commercial airlines have largely stopped flying into Israel's Ben-Gurion International Airport.

This version of the story corrects that Schem was taken from a rave at Kibbutz Reim, not from a party at Sderot.

Kullab reported from Baghdad. Krauss 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.

Republicans will try to elect Trump ally Rep. Jim Jordan as House speaker but GOP holdouts remain

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans will try to elect a firebrand Rep. Jim Jordan as the new House speaker, elevating a chief ally of Donald Trump to a center-seat of U.S. power and showing just how far the hard-right flank has moved into the GOP mainstream.

On Tuesday, the House is scheduled to start voting at noon in what could become a showdown for the gavel. At least a handful of holdout Republicans are refusing to give Jordan their votes, viewing the Ohio Republican as too extreme for the powerful position of House speaker, second in line to the presidency.

But with public pressure bearing down on lawmakers from Trump's allies including Fox News' Sean Hannity, it's not clear how long the holdouts can last. Jordan swiftly flipped dozens of detractors in a matter of days, shoring up reluctant Republicans who have few options left two weeks after Kevin McCarthy's ouster.

"The American people deserve to have their Congress and House of Representatives working, and you can't have that happen until you get a speaker," Jordan said after a late-night meeting Monday at the Capitol.

As the private meeting turned into a venting session of angry Republicans, he acknowledged: "We've got a few more people to talk to, listen to."

The political climb has been steep for Jordan, the combative Judiciary Committee chairman and a founding member of the right-flank Freedom Caucus. Upset that a small band of hardliners have upended the House, Republicans have watched their majority control of the chamber descend into chaos since McCarthy's sudden removal from the job. All House business has ground to a halt.

To seize the gavel, Jordan will need almost the full majority of his colleagues behind him in a House floor vote, as Democrats are certain to back their own nominee, Leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York.

Jordan fell more than 50 votes short during internal party voting last Friday, after Majority Leader Steve Scalise, the party's first nominee to replace McCarthy, abandoned his bid after Jordan's allies refused to follow the party's own rules and back him in a floor vote.

But Jordan can rely on Trump's support as well as pressure on colleagues from an army of grass-roots activists who recognize him from cable news and fiery performances at committee hearings. Republicans say it will be hard for rank-and-file lawmakers to oppose him in a public floor vote.

Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fla., who engineered McCarthy's ouster by a handful of hardliners, publicly praised each lawmaker who has flipped to Jordan's column — and berated those who have not.

"Thank you Rep. Ann Wagner!" Gaetz posted on social media, after the Missouri Republican announced her support.

Wagner said she and Jordan had spoken Monday morning at length, "and he has allayed my concerns about keeping the government open with conservative funding, the need for strong border security, our need for consistent international support in times of war and unrest."

Others also announced their support, including the House Armed Services Chairman Mike Rogers of Alabama. Picking up those two backers, Jordan said earlier Monday, was "really big."

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Still, it could take multiple rounds during House floor voting not unlike in January when it took McCarthy 15 ballots to win the gavel. With the House Republican majority narrowly held at 221-212, he can only afford to lose a few votes to reach the 217 majority threshold, if there are no absences.

One holdout, Republican Rep. Ken Buck of Colorado, said Jordan's role in the runup to the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol and his refusal to admit President Joe Biden won the 2020 election remained an issue.

"I'm going to have a conversation with Jim and talk to him about my concerns," Buck said.

"Jim, at some point, if he's going to lead this conference during the presidential election cycle and particularly in a presidential election year ... is going to have to be strong and say Donald Trump didn't win the election and we need to move forward."

Democrats have decried the far-right shift, calling Jordan the leader of the chaos wing of the GOP.

The Democratic whip, Rep. Katherine Clark, said her party is trying to stop Republicans from putting "an insurrectionist in the speaker's chair."

Jordan has been a top Trump ally, particularly during the Jan. 6 Capitol attack by the former president's backers who were trying to overturn the 2020 election he lost to Biden. Days later, Trump awarded Jordan a Medal of Freedom.

"Jim Jordan is an insurrectionist who has no place being second in line to the presidency," said Michael Fanone, a former District of Columbia police officer who was wounded fighting the mob on Jan. 6. "This is a very dark time for our democracy and should serve as a wakeup call to all Americans that we can never take our democracy for granted."

Jordan, who was personally visiting some lawmakers' offices Monday, has staunchly defended Trump as the former president faces four separate indictments, including allegations of election fraud in the runup to the Capitol attack.

Now the Republican Party's front-runner to challenge Biden in the 2024 election, Trump backed Jordan to replace McCarthy early on, and was working against Scalise's nomination last week.

Tensions remained high among Republicans ahead of voting. Rank-and-file Republicans are exhausted by the internal party infighting with no other work being done in Congress.

Some Republicans resent being pressured by Jordan's allies and say they are being threatened with primary opponents if they don't support him as speaker. One aide said their office received an email from Hannity's team pushing Jordan.

Others are simply upset at the way the whole process has dragged out. "I think we still need conversations," said Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks, R-Iowa.

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

Gaetz on Bannon's podcast Monday said purging the party of those who don't support Trump's vision could be the "greatest blessing" to come from the weeks since McCarthy's ouster.

Holdout Republicans are wary of promoting Jordan at a time of major challenges for the country. Congress must fund the government by Nov. 17 or risk a federal shutdown, and the White House is asking lawmakers to provide supplemental funding for Ukraine and Israel in the wars abroad.

Donald Trump is returning to his civil fraud trial, but star witness Michael Cohen won't be there

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Former President Donald Trump returns to a New York City courthouse Tuesday to be a spectator at the civil fraud trial threatening to disrupt his real estate empire.

Trump voluntarily attended the first three days of the trial, Oct. 2-4. He turned his appearance into a campaign stop by complaining about the case at every opportunity to TV cameras in the hallway outside

the courtroom.

Now he will be back, according to his lawyer, accompanied by bolstered security inside and outside the Manhattan courthouse. His appearance was initially supposed to coincide with testimony by Michael Cohen, his former attorney turned foe. But Cohen's planned appearance on the witness stand was delayed until at least next week, due to a health problem.

Cohen said on X, formerly known as Twitter, that he isn't dodging Trump. On Monday, he said he expects his estranged ex-boss to be in the courtroom when he does testify.

"I am thankful the medical condition, while incredibly painful, does not require an immediate procedure," Cohen said in a text message. "I anticipate appearing as soon as the pain subsides. When I do testify, I am certain Donald will be in attendance, sitting with his lawyers at the defendant's table."

New York Attorney General Letitia James' lawsuit against Trump alleges that he and his company deceived banks, insurers and others by massively overvaluing his assets and inflating his net worth on paperwork used in making deals and securing financing.

The attorney general started investigating Trump in 2019 after Cohen testified to Congress that the billionaire politician had a history of misrepresenting the value of assets to gain favorable loan terms and tax benefits.

Instead of Cohen, Trump's courtroom visit is likely to overlap with the resumption of testimony from his company's assistant controller, Donna Kidder. State lawyers on Tuesday are also expected to call Jack Weisselberg, the son of longtime Trump Organization Allen Weisselberg, who arranged financing for Trump while an executive at Ladder Capital.

During his first visit to the court earlier this month, Trump said the trial was a "scam," and accused James, a Democrat, of attempting to hurt his chances in the election.

After Trump maligned a key court staffer on social media, the judge called him into a closed-door meeting on the trial's second day, issued a limited gag order, warning participants in the case not to smear members of his staff. The judge also ordered Trump to delete the post.

Trump's first trip to the trial attracted hordes of news media and led to enhanced security measures at the courthouse, including extra screening checkpoints, metal barricades along the streets and Secret Service agents lining the courtroom walls.

Trump's return to court comes a day after the judge in his Washington, D.C. election interference criminal case imposed a narrow gag order barring him from making statements targeting prosecutors, possible witnesses and court staff.

In a pretrial decision last month, a judge resolved the top claim in James' lawsuit, ruling that Trump and his company committed years of fraud by exaggerating the value of Trump's assets and net worth on his financial statements.

As punishment, Judge Arthur Engoron ordered that a court-appointed receiver take control of some Trump companies, putting the future oversight of Trump Tower and other marquee properties in doubt. An appeals court has since blocked enforcement of that aspect of the ruling, at least for now.

The trial concerns six remaining claims in the lawsuit, including allegations of conspiracy, insurance fraud and falsifying business records.

Lawyers, Trump and money: Ex-president spends millions in donor cash on attorneys as legal woes grow

By RICHARD LARDNER, TRENTON DANIEL and AARON KESSLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump's political fundraising machine is raking in donations at a prodigious pace, but he's spending tens of millions of dollars he's bringing in to pay attorneys to deal with the escalating costs of the various criminal cases he is contending with as he moves further into the 2024 presidential campaign.

Campaign finance experts say using the money to pay for lawyers in cases not related to the campaign or

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officeholder duties appears to conflict with a federal ban on the personal use of donor dollars, even though the Federal Election Commission has ruled the prohibition doesn't apply to so-called leadership political action committees. The massive amount of money going to lawyers also amplifies the urgency Trump is feeling to raise money both for the campaign and his legal defense, which is unfolding on multiple fronts.

Trump's Save America political action committee has paid nearly \$37 million to more than 60 law firms and individual attorneys since January 2022, Federal Election Commission records show. That amounts to more than half of the PAC's total expenditures, according to an Associated Press analysis of campaign finance filings, and represents a staggering sum compared to other political organizations.

During the first half of 2023, Save America spent more on legal-related costs, over \$20 million, than any other political committee that discloses to the FEC — more than the Republican National Committee, Democratic National Committee and National Republican Senatorial Committee spent during that period combined.

The bulk of the Trump PAC money went to law firms that have defended Trump against a series of criminal charges or in civil lawsuits. Other attorneys paid with the contributions worked on behalf of Trump's businesses, his children, former White House aides and employees of the ex-president.

Footing the legal bills for co-defendants and potential witnesses raises additional thorny ethical questions: Will the attorneys paid by Trump be more loyal to him or their clients? If clients feel indebted to Trump, will they be less forthcoming about what they know?

"The way these cases get built is you persuade the little fish to testify against the big fish," said Randall Eliason, a former federal prosecutor and criminal law professor at George Washington University Law School. "Well, if the little fish's lawyer is being paid by the big fish that's less likely to happen potentially."

The Trump campaign did not respond to a request for comment. _____

Trump's status as the first former president to be criminally indicted, his run for another White House term while defending himself in multiple court cases, and the loads of donor money flowing to lawyers are a trifecta unparalleled in U.S. history. Trump has denied any wrongdoing and he and his allies have blasted the long list of felony charges and lawsuits as political attacks meant to derail his 2024 campaign.

But the legal jeopardy has become his most potent fundraising tool. Trump's claim that he's the victim of a corrupt justice system determined to silence him and his supporters is a primary plank in his platform. And he's turned the courthouse into a campaign stage to pound that message and fire up his supporters.

As Trump's civil fraud trial in New York got underway earlier this month, he used the heavy media coverage as a megaphone. To the cameras stationed in the courthouse hallways, Trump denounced state Attorney General Letitia James' case as "a witch hunt and a disgrace." He and his company are accused by James of inflating the value of his real estate empire to deceive banks and insurers.

Trump also turned his surrender in Georgia on charges that he illegally schemed to overturn the 2020 election in the state into a fundraising bonanza. His presidential campaign said it has sold about 47,000 T-shirts, coffee mugs and posters featuring the mug shot taken of the former president when he was booked in August at the at the Fulton County Jail. Overall, the campaign said it raised \$9.4 million in the days following the photo's release. That money is earmarked for political and campaign activities, not for legal expenses, according to the campaign.

To help pay the legal fees, Trump's political operation has also moved millions from his super PAC, MAGA Inc.

The FEC data reveal a pattern that has developed since Trump left office: he gets into legal trouble and responds forcefully, donations from his backers spike, and then millions of those dollars flow to the army of attorneys defending him and others caught up in the drama.

The second and third quarters of 2022 illustrate the cycle. Save America spent about \$1.5 million on legal fees in the second quarter. During the third, payments to attorneys grew to more than \$6 million. The surge coincided with the FBI's court-authorized search for top-secret documents he allegedly hoarded at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida, which federal prosecutors say violated laws meant to keep classified information secret.

"The indictments are probably not expanding his coalition, but it's certainly giving it greater intensity,"

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said Anthony Michael Kreis, a law professor at Georgia State University. "So people who are already supporting Donald Trump are probably going to dig in their heels and support him more."

That's true of at least some donors, who say they have no problem with their money going to lawyers. "First thing I thought: What a crock," said Robert Lee, a motorcycle repairman in Boca Raton, Florida, who made a small donation after the FBI's Mar-a-Lago search. "None of this ever happened to anyone who wasn't Trump."

Asked about a presidential campaign that spends so much on legal expenses, Lee said, "That would be fine with me. I see nothing wrong with that."

In addition to the New York business fraud case and the election case in Georgia, Trump is battling federal felony counts arising from the Mar-a-Lago records case in Florida and the 2020 election subversion case in Washington, D.C. In a separate New York state case, he's accused of making hush money payments during the 2016 presidential campaign to keep a sexual relationship from becoming public. Trump has denied the affair and pleaded not guilty to the charges involving the payment.

Two of Trump's most heavily compensated lawyers, Alina Habba and Christopher Kise, flanked the ex-president at the defendants' table when the trial in James' business fraud lawsuit began earlier this month.

Habba is the managing partner of Habba Madaio & Associates in Bedminster, New Jersey. Her small litigation firm, which is near Trump's eponymous golf course, has received almost \$3.5 million from Save America.

Habba has also been engaged in several civil cases for Trump, according to court records, including an ongoing defamation lawsuit brought by advice columnist E. Jean Carroll, whom a jury found was sexually assaulted by Trump. Habba is his attorney in a lawsuit he filed against his niece, Mary Trump, and New York Times reporters for an "insidious plot" he claims they masterminded to obtain his income tax records.

Kise left the megafirm Foley & Lardner to be one of Trump's attorneys. His firm, Chris Kise and Associates, received \$2.8 million from the PAC. Along with the New York fraud lawsuit, he has a lead role in the Mar-a-Lago records case. Kise has deep ties to Florida's Republican party. He worked on the transition teams for Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and Sen. Rick Scott.

Last year, Kise joined Florida-based Continental PLLC, a law firm that has separately received nearly \$2.9 million. Court records show two other Continental attorneys were involved in early stages of the records case.

Critton, Luttier & Coleman, a law firm in West Palm Beach, Florida, received \$3 million from Save America, according to the FEC filings. The firm did not respond to a request for comment about the work it did.

Ciara Torres-Spelliscy, a professor at Stetson University College of Law in Florida, said the risk of paying defense attorneys with contributions is that the FEC or the Justice Department may later decide that it was an illegal personal use of campaign funds. She doubted such a case would be brought against Trump now because doing so might slow the ongoing federal prosecutions overseen by Justice Department Special Counsel Jack Smith.

"But after the Mar-a-Lago and January 6th cases are done, I would not be surprised to see a personal use case against Trump for using these millions in donations that are meant to go to his political campaign going instead for the personal use of keeping him out of prison," Torres-Spelliscy said.

The FEC declined to comment for this story, but it seems unlikely to act anytime soon. The agency is led by six commissioners, evenly split between Republicans and Democrats. Trump nominated all the GOP commissioners. One of the Democratic commissioners, appointed by President Joe Biden, joined with the Republicans to declare in March the personal use ban didn't apply to leadership PACs.

Saurav Ghosh, director of federal campaign finance reform at the non-profit Campaign Legal Center, criticized what he called the FEC's "blinker and narrow view of the personal use prohibition."

"The FEC is a dysfunctional agency that often fails to enforce the law because several commissioners don't genuinely support the mission of the agency and favor a deregulatory approach to campaign finance laws," Ghosh said.

The hands-off approach, he added, has allowed Trump to exploit the people who give him money to help him politically.

"It does feel like donors are being taken advantage of to advance Donald J. Trump's personal interests," Ghosh said.

In a recently unsealed court filing, Smith and his team of prosecutors described Trump's decision to pay the legal fees of co-defendants and potential witnesses as part of a pattern of his "obstructive conduct" in its investigations. The former president "presents a significant risk of tampering with evidence (and) seeking to influence or intimidate potential witnesses," according to the filing.

Those concerns are amplified in court records filed by Smith's team in the Mar-a-Lago case.

About two weeks after the FBI found reams of classified documents in a storage room, Trump called a Mar-a-Lago employee with whom he is alleged to have discussed deleting security camera footage of the property, according to a July indictment. Trump assured the employee, property manager Carlos De Oliveira, that he would get him a lawyer.

De Oliveira was later charged as a third defendant in the case. He's accused of scheming with Trump and his valet, Walt Nauta, to conceal the footage from investigators. Court records show De Oliveira is being represented by John Irving of Earth & Water Law, a firm that has received more than \$338,000 in payments, according to the campaign finance reports.

De Oliveira and Nauta have pleaded not guilty.

Another firm, Brand Woodward Law, represents Nauta and has been paid more than \$350,000. Prosecutors handling the Mar-a-Lago case argued at a hearing last week that Nauta's lawyer, Stanley Woodward, has a conflict of interest based on his prior representation of a key government witness: a Mar-a-Lago information technology worker who has since struck a cooperation deal with the government. Woodward has denied any conflict and has disputed prosecutors' characterization of events, and the judge in the case cut short last Thursday's hearing and scolded prosecutors for presenting arguments that she said were not properly raised earlier.

Trump's former chief of staff, Mark Meadows, who was indicted along with Trump and others in the election interference case in Georgia, is represented by the law firm McGuireWoods. The firm received almost \$900,000.

None of that matters to donors contacted by the AP. Dawn Smelcer of Fayetteville, North Carolina, a frequent donor to Trump's 2024 campaign, said she's backing Trump because of the "mistreatment" he's endured.

"He's fighting an evil and we're helping him to fight that evil," she said.

Math disabilities hold many students back. Schools often don't screen for them

By JACKIE MADER of The Hechinger Report

Laura Jackson became seriously concerned about her daughter and math when the girl was in third grade. While many of her classmates flew through multiplication tests, Jackson's daughter relied on her fingers to count, had difficulty reading clocks and burst into tears when asked at home to practice math flashcards.

At school, the 9-year-old had been receiving help from a math specialist for two years, with little improvement.

"We hit a point where she was asking me, 'Mom, am I stupid?'" Jackson recalled.

One day, when having lunch with a friend, Jackson heard about a disorder known as dyscalculia. She later looked up a description of the learning disability that impacts a child's ability to process numbers and retain math knowledge. "I was like, 'Oh my gosh, this is my kid,'" Jackson said.

The Education Reporting Collaborative, a coalition of eight newsrooms, is documenting the math crisis facing schools and highlighting progress. Join our live expert panel for families, "Solving The Math Problem," at 8 p.m. Eastern on Tuesday, Oct. 17, at <https://st.news/mathwebinar>. Members of the Collaborative are AL.com, The Associated Press, The Christian Science Monitor, The Dallas Morning News, The Hechinger Report, Idaho Education News, The Post and Courier in South Carolina, and The Seattle Times.

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Nationwide, hundreds of thousands of students face challenges learning math due to disabilities like dyscalculia, a neurodevelopmental learning disorder caused by differences in parts of the brain that are involved with numbers and calculations. There are often obstacles to getting help.

America's schools have long struggled to identify and support students with learning disabilities of all kinds. Kids often languish while waiting to receive a diagnosis; families frequently have to turn to private providers to get one; and even with a diagnosis, some schools are unable to provide children the help they need.

That's slowly changing — for some disabilities. Most states have passed laws that mandate screening early elementary students for the most common reading disability, dyslexia, and countless districts train teachers to recognize struggling readers. Meanwhile, parents and experts say schools neglect students with math disabilities like dyscalculia, which affects up to 7% of the population and often coexists with dyslexia.

"There's not as much research on math disorders or dyscalculia," as there is on reading disabilities, said Karen Wilson, a clinical neuropsychologist who specializes in the assessment of children with learning differences. "That also trickles down into schools."

Math scores in the U.S. have remained dismal for years and only worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic. Learning struggles for some may be due to dyscalculia or other math learning disabilities, yet few teachers report their students have been screened for dyscalculia.

Experts say learning the most effective methods for teaching students with math disabilities could strengthen math instruction for all students.

"If it works for the students with the most severe disconnections and slower processing speeds, it's still going to work for the kids that are in the 'middle' with math difficulties," said Sandra Elliott, a former special education teacher and current chief academic officer at TouchMath, a multisensory math program.

Some signs of dyscalculia are obvious at an early age, if parents and educators know what to look for. Young children might have difficulty recognizing numbers or patterns. In elementary school, students may have trouble with math functions like addition and subtraction, word problems, counting money or remembering directions.

Even after Jackson learned about dyscalculia on her own, her daughter's Seattle-area public school was doubtful the third grader had a learning disability because she was performing well in other areas. Teachers suggested Jackson spend extra time on math at home.

"For so many parents, they assume the school would let them know there's an issue, but that's just not how it works," said Jackson, who ultimately wrote a book, "Discovering Dyscalculia," about her family's journey.

Students with dyscalculia often need a more structured approach to learning math that involves "systematic and explicit" instruction, said Lynn Fuchs, a research professor in special education and human development at Vanderbilt University.

Part of the problem is that teachers don't receive the training needed to work with children with math disabilities. At least one state, Virginia, requires dyslexia awareness training for teacher licensure renewal, but has no similar requirement for math disability training.

"It's pretty rare for undergraduate degrees or even master's degrees to focus on math learning disabilities with any level of breadth, depth, quality or rigor," said Amelia Malone, director of research and innovation at the National Center for Learning Disabilities.

Without more widespread knowledge of and support for dyscalculia, many parents have had to look for specialists and tutors on their own, which they say can be particularly challenging for math, and costly. In 2019, Jackson started pulling her daughter out of school for part of each day to teach her math at home.

"I am not a math teacher, but I was so desperate," Jackson said. "There's no one who knows anything, and we have to figure this out."

At the tutoring organization Made for Math, specialists have found children with dyscalculia need repetition, especially to understand math facts. Some students attend tutoring up to four days a week, at a cost of up to \$1,000 a month.

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"It's hard because it's not something schools are offering, and kids deserve it," said Heather Brand, a math specialist and operations manager for the organization.

There are pockets of progress around the country in screening more children for math disabilities, but movement at the federal level — and in most states — is "nonexistent," said Malone, of the National Center for Learning Disabilities.

New York City is one district that has prioritized math disability screening and math instruction in the early years. In 2015 and 2016, the city spent \$6 million to roll out a math curriculum featuring games, building blocks, art projects and songs. The district has also introduced universal math and reading screeners to try to identify students who may be behind.

There are ways that all schools can make math instruction more accessible, experts say. In elementary schools, activities that involve more senses should be used more widely, including whole-body motions and songs for teaching numbers and hands-on materials for math operations.

Jackson said her daughter could have benefited from a wider variety of methods at school. When the teen returned to school-based math classes in high school, after several years of learning math at home, she achieved an A in algebra.

"When you really understand what it is to be dyscalculic, then you can look around and decide what this person needs to succeed," Jackson said. "It's not just that you're 'bad at math' and need to buckle down and try harder."

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The Education Reporting Collaborative will host "Solving the Math Problem: Helping kids find joy and success in math," a live expert panel, on Tuesday, Oct. 17 at 8 p.m. Eastern. This webinar is designed for families seeking strategies to help kids engage and excel in math. The event registration shortlink is: <https://st.news/mathwebinar>

Biden didn't make Israeli-Palestinian talks a priority. Arab leaders say region now paying the price

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — From its first months in office, the Biden administration made a distinctive decision on its Middle East policy: It would deprioritize a half-century of high-profile efforts by past U.S. presidents, particularly Democratic ones, to broker a broad and lasting peace deal between Israel and the Palestinians.

Since Richard Nixon, successive U.S. administrations have tried their hands at Camp David summits, shuttle diplomacy and other big-picture tries at coaxing Israeli and Palestinian leaders into talks to settle the disputes that underlie 75 years of Middle East tensions. More than other recent presidents, Joe Biden notably has not.

Instead, administration officials early on sketched out what they called Biden's policy of quiet diplomacy. They advocated for more modest improvements in Palestinian freedoms and living conditions under Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's hardline government, which has encouraged settlement in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and which includes coalition partners that oppose the U.S.-backed two-state solution. The less-ambitious approach fit with Biden's determination to pivot his foreign-policy focus from Middle East hotspots to China.

But the long-term risks of sidelining the Israeli-Palestinian conflict exploded back into view with the Hamas attack on Israel on Oct. 7 and Israel's heavy bombardment of Gaza in response. The United States' angry Arab partners are pointing to America's failure to actively engage as Israeli-Palestinian violence roars back to center stage.

Hamas militants' bloody breakout from Gaza and Israel's military escalating response have killed thousands of civilians in Israel and Gaza, prompted Biden to deploy carrier strike groups to the region, and threatens to spill conflict and flows of Palestinian refugees across borders.

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In Cairo this weekend, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi was one of a succession of Arab leaders to warn Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who is scrambling through Middle East capitals to try to contain the conflict, that the Israel-Gaza war threatens the stability of the entire Middle East.

Biden is likely to hear the same as he meets with leaders of Jordan, Egypt and the Palestinian Authority in Jordan on Wednesday, after he travels to Israel.

Sissi, who fears the Israeli military offensive will push Gaza's 2.3 million people across the border into Egypt, cast blame on the near-disappearance of any international pressure on Netanyahu's government and Palestinians to return to negotiations.

Sissi cited "a buildup of outrage and hatred for more than 40 years" and the lack of any "horizon to solve the Palestinian cause; one that gives hope to the Palestinians" for a state with a capital in East Jerusalem.

Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, pointed to Saudis' "repeated warnings of the danger of the explosion."

Arab leaders "are very aware this is going to keep blowing up. And they might ride it out this time, they might ride it out next time, as they have in the past," said Yezid Sayigh, a senior fellow at the Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut, Lebanon.

"But it's not actually a comfortable position for them to be endlessly living in," with endless cycles of Israeli and Palestinian wars that threaten the region's peace and economies, said Sayigh, who accused the U.S. of encouraging Netanyahu to think there was no need to address Palestinian concerns.

Underscoring his administration's diminished emphasis on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Biden's call to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas this past weekend amid the building Gaza war was the American leader's first since taking office.

In 1973, Arab nations' surprise attack on Israel, and Arabs' devastating oil embargo on the U.S. and other countries for their support of Israel in that fight, convinced U.S. leaders that a lasting resolution to Palestinian demands for statehood was in America's strategic interest.

But after some early successes, recurring violence, the disappointments of past failed mediation efforts, and the scale of the disputes helped derail the U.S. push. By the time Biden, a strong supporter of the state of Israel, took office, any support for major negotiations among Israelis was faint.

To be sure, there's little to suggest ambitious engagement by Biden on Israeli-Palestinian issues would have made immediate progress, or done anything to discourage the attack by Hamas, whose charter calls for the destruction of Israel.

Even after a 2021 burst of fighting between Hamas and Israel, administration figures argued that a big push on peace efforts would undermine more easily won goals, like cease-fires with Hamas.

Instead, Biden has enthusiastically followed the new path that predecessor Donald Trump had laid out on Middle East peacemaking: lobbying for so-called normalization deals with Arab countries, absent any Israeli-Palestinian accord.

Under Trump, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Morocco all signed normalization deals establishing diplomatic relations with Israel.

Up until Oct. 7, Biden appeared to be fast closing in on brokering a normalization deal with the biggest prize of all, regional heavyweight Saudi Arabia.

Then, Hamas's breakout from Gaza shattered what National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan had hailed as a period of Middle East calm. The violence has been the deadliest of five wars between Hamas and Israel, killing more than 1,400 people in Israel and nearly 2,800 in Gaza.

It's not clear what happens to Biden's normalization push now. Despite their angry comments and varying degrees of popular support among their public for the Palestinian cause, America's Arab partners are pragmatists, and like the U.S. and Israel, adversaries of Hamas and other Iran-backed groups.

Additionally, the Biden administration's immediate and all-in rallying to Israel's mounting defense after Hamas's Oct. 7 massacres may only heighten Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's desire to lock in that kind of security alliance with the U.S. for the kingdom, many analysts are arguing.

"I think Gulf partners are looking at the quick, decisive response that the U.S. has provided Israel, and are incredibly jealous," said Jonathan Lord, director of the Middle East security program at the Center for

a New American Security think tank.

Brokering those alliances would stabilize the Middle East in themselves, no Israeli-Palestinian peace accord needed, supporters have argued.

The nightmare unfolding now for Israeli and Palestinian civilians argues differently, when it comes to Biden's approach, critics say.

"As long as the core issues stay unresolved, ignoring them does not make them go away," said Yousef Munayyer, who heads the Palestine-Israel program at the Arab Center, a Washington think tank. "And I think that's a lesson for everybody."

Israeli video compilation shows the savagery and ease of Hamas' attack

By JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — A grisly montage of video and photographs of Hamas's massacre of hundreds of civilians across southern Israel last week highlights the savagery of the attack and the ease with which the militant group appeared to operate inside Israel.

The footage that the Israeli military showed foreign correspondents Monday included a photo of a burnt baby. It showed gunmen shooting the dead bodies of civilians in cars, militants in the process of beheading a body with a hoe, burnt corpses thrown in a dumpster.

The briefing with reporters came as Israel cut off vital supplies to the Gaza Strip and pounded the territory with airstrikes. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers massed outside the territory ready to invade in response to the Hamas assault in which more than 1,400 people were killed.

In Gaza, meanwhile, the death toll rose to more than 2,700 people, many of them civilians, according to health authorities there. On Monday, an Israeli military spokesman, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, accused Hamas of using civilians as shields in order to sway world opinion.

In past fighting, Israel has come under heavy international criticism for causing large numbers of civilian deaths. The release of the video showing some of the victims of the Hamas attack appeared to be an effort to counter the criticism and keep the world's attention focused on the deaths of Israeli civilians.

"This is not just a war against Israel, it's a war against humanity," Hagari said.

The military has described horrific atrocities committed by Hamas militants against towns, small farming communities and a music festival near the Gaza border. But it has previously released just a few snippets of video to back the claims.

The latest footage was an unceasing display of horrors. Some of it came from Hamas body cameras and videos posted by Hamas militants to social media and later verified by Israel. Some was taken by civilians as they tried to escape, some by first responders.

It showed bodies of people who had been bound. A room with at least seven bodies reduced to ash. Civilians shot in bedrooms, bathrooms, front yards. Blood so thick it nearly obscured hallway floors.

It also showed the ease with which Hamas militants moved around inside Israel. In Kibbutz Be'eri, people slept as the militants peered into people's dark living rooms. They toyed with outdoor decorations, using a cigarette lighter to set a dreamcatcher hanging on someone's window ablaze. They shot randomly, at an air conditioner, at an ambulance's tires, at a dog running out to greet them. They perched on lawn chairs outside a quiet home, taking a water break. Israeli security forces were nowhere to be found.

Israel's rescue service later found more than 120 bodies there.

"The scale of the operation, the coordination, surprised us," Hagari said. "We have reinforcements at the Gaza border, but this wasn't just a terrorist attack. This was a sovereign operation. That is why they succeeded."

The militants were well prepared. The videos showed some dressed in army fatigues to look like Israeli soldiers. Others were dressed like police officers. They carried zip ties to tie victim's hands before they killed them and to bind hostages in the backs of trucks. They coordinated with one another on radios.

Dozens of militants in trucks whooped and celebrated on Israeli roads as bodies and cars burned around

them.

Hagari said Israel has detained some of the militants and is interrogating them to find out how the attack was coordinated.

Israel's defense and intelligence establishment has come under criticism for failing to prevent or repel the attack, which was planned in plain sight. Border communities were left on their own for hours.

In videos from civilians' phones, partygoers cried as they ran for safety across the open fields where they had just been dancing at the open-air Tribe of Nova music festival. A young man filmed the shelter where he and at least 10 others took cover. Bloodied people writhed and moaned on the ground as others stood around them, looks of terror in their eyes. Militants could be heard yelling outside.

In more body camera footage, the militants easily broke into a military base, killing soldiers at the front desk before grabbing their assault rifles. A group of young female soldiers cowered as a militant entered the room and began shooting. In other clips, militants on motorcycles pulled bodies out of cars, emptying their pockets and grabbing their cellphones before moving on.

They pulled young civilians, bloodied and stupefied, into the beds of trucks by their hair. As they sped back to Gaza, the gleeful militants flashed peace signs to the camera. The Israeli military said militants were holding at least 199 civilians hostage in Gaza.

In Gaza, the militants filmed themselves pulling a dead soldier's body from a car. Young men cheered and stomped on it. A young woman whose face was marred was pulled from a car trunk by her hair, pushed into the backseat and then driven off as a crowd ran alongside.

Mourners in heavily Palestinian Chicago suburb remember Muslim boy killed as kind, energetic

By CLAIRE SAVAGE, MELISSA PEREZ WINDER and SOPHIA TAREEN Associated Press

BRIDGEVIEW, Ill. (AP) — Crowds of mourners in a heavily Palestinian Chicago suburb paid respects Monday to a 6-year-old Muslim boy killed in an alleged hate crime, hours after authorities revealed new details about the evidence used to charge the family's landlord with stabbing the child and his mother.

Wadea Al-Fayoume, who had recently had a birthday, died Saturday after being stabbed dozens of times in a brutal attack that drew condemnation from local elected officials to the White House. Authorities said the family's landlord, Joseph Czuba, was upset over the Israel-Hamas war and attacked them after the boy's mother proposed they "pray for peace."

In Bridgeview, which is home to a large and established Palestinian community, family and friends remembered Wadea as a kind and energetic boy who loved playing games. His body was carried in a small white casket — which was at times draped with a Palestinian flag — through packed crowds.

Mosque Foundation Imam Jamal Said reflected on the boy's death during the janazah, or funeral service, but also the wider loss of life in the war between Israel and Hamas.

"Wadea is a child and he is not the only one under attack," he said, adding many "children are being slaughtered literally in the Holy Land, unfortunately, which is very sad."

Earlier Monday, Czuba made his first court appearance on murder, attempted murder and hate crime charges. In detailing the charges Sunday, the Will County Sheriff's Office determined "both victims in this brutal attack were targeted by the suspect due to them being Muslim and the ongoing Middle Eastern conflict involving Hamas and the Israelis."

Czuba, a Plainfield resident, replied, "Yes, sir," when asked if he understood the charges and was subsequently returned to jail in Joliet, 50 miles (80.4 kilometers) southwest of Chicago. A Will County judge granted a court-appointed lawyer. The public defender's office did not immediately return messages seeking comment about the charges against him.

The boy's mother told investigators that she rents two rooms on the first floor of the Plainfield home while Czuba and his wife live on the second floor, Assistant State's Attorney Michael Fitzgerald said in a court filing.

"He was angry at her for what was going on in Jerusalem," Fitzgerald said. "She responded to him, 'Let's

pray for peace.' ... Czuba then attacked her with a knife."

The boy's mother fought him off and went into a bathroom where she stayed until police arrived. Wadea, meanwhile, was in his own room, Fitzgerald said.

The mother was identified by family members as Hanaan Shahin, 32, though authorities used a different spelling for her name as well as her son's name.

On the day of the attack, police found Czuba with a cut on his forehead, sitting on the ground outside the home.

Czuba's wife, Mary, told police that her husband feared they would be attacked by people of Middle Eastern descent and had withdrawn \$1,000 from a bank "in case the U.S. grid went down," Fitzgerald said in the court document.

In Bridgeview, the boy's father briefly spoke to reporters in Arabic, saying he was trying to make sense of what happened to his son and the boy's mother. He hoped it would be a "bullet to solve the issue" in his homeland.

"I'm here as the father of the boy, not as a politician or religious scholar. I'm here as the father of a boy whose rights were violated," he said.

Community members chanted prayers in unison outside the mosque following the janazah as leaders transported the casket into a hearse. "There is no God, but God," "The martyr is beloved by God" and "God is greatest," they chanted, calls many Muslims recite in moments of grief, distress or remembrance.

At a news conference outside the mosque, speakers called for politicians and media to be responsible with their rhetoric and coverage of the Israel-Hamas war. Attendees gathered close to hear, phones recording and expressions somber.

In recent days, Jewish and Muslim groups have reported an increase of hateful rhetoric in the wake of the war. Several cities have stepped up police patrols.

The Justice Department said it opened a hate crime investigation into the attack.

"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," President Joe Biden said.

Gunman kills 2 Swedes in Brussels, prompting terror alert and halt of Belgium-Sweden soccer match

By SYLVAIN PLAZY, RAF CASERT and LORNE COOK Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — Belgian police early Tuesday hunted for a gunman with suspected extremist motives who killed two Swedes with stunning viciousness before disappearing into the night. He created such fear that authorities shut down a Belgium-Sweden soccer match and held 35,000 fans inside for several hours as a precaution.

Eric Van Duyse, spokesman for the federal prosecutor's office, said the investigation was centering on "a possible terrorist motivation for the shooting" after "a claim of responsibility was posted on social media."

"This person claims to be inspired by Islamic State," Van Duyse said. "The Swedish nationality of the victims was put forward as the probable motive." Sweden raised its terror alert to the second-highest level in August after a series of public Quran-burnings by an Iraqi refugee living in Sweden resulted in threats from Islamic militant groups.

"At this time, no element indicates a possible link with the Israeli-Palestinian situation," Van Duyse said, offering scant relief on a continent where many nations have increased their vigilance for fear of attacks linked to the Israel-Hamas war.

In Belgium, the anti-terror center said the terror alert in the capital was raised to its top rating of 4, meaning a "threat is extremely serious." It previously stood at 2, which means the threat was average. The alert level for the rest of the country was raised to 2.

"I have just offered my sincere condolences to @SwedishPM following tonight's harrowing attack on Swedish citizens in Brussels," Prime Minister Alexander De Croo De Croo said. He added on X, formerly known as Twitter, "As close partners the fight against terrorism is a joint one."

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As for the soccer match, Van Duyse said, "security measures were urgently taken to protect the Swedish supporters" at the game in the national stadium not far from the shooting.

Over two hours after the game was suspended, a message flashed on the big stadium screen saying, "Fans, you can leave the stadium calmy." Stand after stand emptied onto the streets filled with police as the search for the gunman continued.

"Frustrated, confused, scared. I think everyone was quite scared," said Caroline Lochs, a fan from Antwerp.

Interior Minister Annelies Verlinden said, "A horrible shooting in Brussels, and the perpetrator is actively being tracked down."

Media reports aired amateur videos showing a man arriving on a scooter in an orange fluorescent vest, dropping the vehicle and immediately taking out a large weapon and opening fire on passersby. Apart from the two Swedes who were killed, a local taxi driver was hurt but his life was not in danger.

The attacker then picked up his scooter and sped off into the gathering darkness.

Even though only two people died in the attack, compared to dozens and dozens in extremist attacks in past years in Europe, the return of a sense of dread was immediate.

"Horried at the indiscriminate killing in the heart of #Brussels tonight," said European Parliament President Roberta Metsola. "Terror and extremism cannot infiltrate in our societies. People must feel safe. Hate will not win."

UN Security Council rejects Russia's resolution on Gaza that fails to mention Hamas

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The U.N. Security Council rejected a Russian resolution Monday night that condemned violence and terrorism against civilians but made no mention of Hamas, whose surprise attack that killed 1,300 Israelis was the worst Jewish massacre since the World War II Nazi Holocaust.

Only four countries joined Russia in voting for the resolution — China, United Arab Emirates, Mozambique and Gabon. Four countries voted against it — the United States, Britain, France and Japan. The other six countries abstained. Adoption needs a minimum of nine "yes" votes in the 15-member council.

The U.N.'s most powerful body, which is charged with maintaining international peace and security, has failed to respond to Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on Israel and to Israel response with retaliatory airstrikes that have killed 2,750 and an order to Gazans in the north to head south to avoid an expected ground war.

Britain's U.N. ambassador, Barbara Woodward, said it would be "unconscionable for this council to ignore the largest terror attack in Israel's history."

With the Russian resolution rejected, she said negotiations would continue on a rival Brazilian resolution. It also "firmly condemns all violence and hostilities against civilians and all acts of terrorism." But it "unequivocally rejects and condemns the heinous terrorist attacks by Hamas" that started Oct. 7.

It was unclear if the council would vote on the Brazilian resolution Monday night.

Before the vote on Russia's draft, Russian Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia urged support for the resolution, saying it responds to the "unprecedented exacerbation of the current crisis," with the number of people killed and injured "growing every hour." He again condemned the deaths of civilians in Israel and Gaza.

After the vote, Nebenzia said that "the council once again has found itself a hostage to the selfish intentions of the Western bloc of countries" and failed to send a collective message aimed at de-escalating "the most serious explosion of violence over the past decades."

U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield countered that Hamas, whose purpose is to destroy Israel and kill Jews, unleashed terror on Israel but the Russian resolution didn't mention the militant group, which controls Gaza.

"By failing to condemn Hamas, Russia is giving cover to a terrorist group that brutalizes innocent civilians," she said. "Hamas' actions have led to the dire humanitarian crisis facing the people of Gaza."

Thomas-Greenfield said civilians shouldn't have to suffer for "Hamas' atrocities" and she urged the council and the international community to help address Gaza's humanitarian crisis, condemn Hamas and reaffirm

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Israel's right to self-defense.

"The bottom line is this: You cannot claim to stand with the Palestinians and their legitimate aspirations if you do not stand squarely against Hamas," she said.

The Russian draft resolution would have called for "an immediate, durable and fully respected humanitarian cease-fire" and strongly condemned "all violence and hostilities directed against civilians and all acts of terrorism," with no mention of Hamas.

The Brazilian draft resolution calls for "humanitarian pauses" in addition to condemning Hamas and all violence and terrorist acts against civilians.

Apparently expecting the defeat of its resolution, Russia earlier Monday proposed two amendments to the Brazilian draft resolution to be voted on separately after the vote on the Russian resolution but before the entire Brazilian resolution would be put to a vote.

One amendment would add a call "for an immediate, durable and fully respected humanitarian ceasefire."

The second proposed amendment "also unequivocally condemns indiscriminate attacks against civilians as well as against civilian objects in the Gaza Strip depriving civilian population of means indispensable for their survival, in violation of international law."

Nebenzia told reporters after the vote that the amendments would provide "balance" to the Brazilian draft resolution.

Israeli Ambassador Gilad Erdan reminded the council that the United Nations was founded on the ashes of World War II, "the genocide of the Jewish people — and just over a week ago, we witnessed yet another attempt at Jewish genocide — the Nazi Hamas massacre of babies, mothers, fathers and the elderly."

He said Hamas won't stop until Israel is obliterated and so "Israel must obliterate Hamas first" for self-preservation.

"So let me be clear. Israel is on a rescue mission, a rescue mission to save our hostages, a rescue mission to save our future and to save the people of Gaza from their savage tyrants," Erdan said.

The Palestinian U.N. ambassador, Riyad Mansour, called Israel's assault on Gaza a "massacre against innocent civilians," who comprise the vast majority of Palestinians killed, including more than 1,000 children.

"No one should forget that these are human lives, that Palestinian lives matter, too," he said. "And no one should entertain the illusion that killing more Palestinians will ever make Israelis more secure."

He said three things are needed: to halt the Israeli attack on Palestinians, allow unimpeded humanitarian access throughout Gaza, and "stop the forced transfer of our people." He urged the council to take action now, "so no Palestinians or no Israelis are killed anymore."

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 arrived in Beijing on Tuesday with an honor guard meeting his plane. His 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.

In an interview to Chinese state media, Putin praised 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 told 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

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heavy debt after they signed contracts with Chinese companies to build roads, airports and other public works they could not otherwise afford.

Asked by reporters Friday about his visit, 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, 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.

Biden will head to Israel and Jordan as concerns mount that Israel-Hamas conflict will spread

By MATTHEW LEE, COLLEEN LONG and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — President Joe Biden will travel to Israel and on to Jordan Wednesday to meet with both Israeli and Arab leadership, as concerns increase that the raging Israel-Hamas war could expand into a larger regional conflict.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced Biden’s travel to Israel as the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip grows more dire and as Israel prepares for a possible ground attack on the 141-square-mile (365-square-kilometer) territory to root out Hamas militants responsible for what U.S. and Israeli officials say was the most lethal assault against Jews since the Holocaust.

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Biden is looking to send the strongest message yet that the U.S. is behind Israel. His Democratic administration has pledged military support, sending U.S. carriers and aid to the region. Officials have said they would ask Congress for upward of \$2 billion in additional aid for both Israel and Ukraine, which is fighting Russia's invasion.

It's a chance for Biden to burnish his national security credentials to U.S. voters with the 2024 election just over a year away. It's also an opportunity to demonstrate that he's making good on his campaign promise of exercising American leadership after four years of former President Donald Trump's "America First" foreign policy.

But Biden's presence could be seen as a provocative move by Hamas' chief sponsor, Iran, or potentially viewed as tone-deaf by Arab nations as civilian casualties mount in Gaza. Blinken has already been traveling around the Mideast this past week trying to prevent the war with Hamas from igniting a broader regional conflict.

Blinken made the announcement early Tuesday after more than seven hours of talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other top Israeli officials.

"He is coming here at a critical moment for Israel, for the region and for the world," Blinken said.

Blinken added that Biden will be briefed by Israeli officials on their war aims and strategy and would hear about how they intend to conduct operations "in a way that minimizes civilian casualties and enables humanitarian assistance to flow to civilians in Gaza in a way that does not benefit Hamas."

Shortly after in Washington, White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby announced that Biden would also go to Jordan to meet with King Abdullah II, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

"We've been crystal clear about the need for humanitarian aid to be able to continue to flow into Gaza," Kirby said. "That has been a consistent call by President Biden and certainly by this entire administration."

Truckloads of aid idled Monday at Egypt's border with Gaza, barred from entry, as residents and humanitarian groups pleaded for water, food and fuel for dying generators, saying the tiny Palestinian territory sealed off by Israel after last week's rampage by Hamas was near total collapse.

Biden had been scheduled to travel to Pueblo, Colorado, on Monday but decided to postpone the visit so he could consult with his aides and speak with fellow leaders about the unfolding situation in the Middle East.

The announcements came after Biden consulted with a trio of world leaders and his own national security team on Monday amid growing global concern about the humanitarian crisis unfolding in the Gaza Strip and fears that the Israel-Hamas war could metastasize into a broader regional conflict.

Biden spoke by phone with Egypt's el-Sissi, Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz about the fallout from Hamas militants' surprise attacks on Israel that left 1,400 dead and retaliatory strikes that have killed at least 2,778 Palestinians.

European Union leaders will hold an emergency summit on Tuesday as concern mounts that the war between Israel and Hamas could fuel tensions in Europe and bring more refugees in search of sanctuary.

Biden's call with the Egyptian leader came one day after el-Sissi met with Blinken in Cairo. Egypt's state-run media said el-Sissi told Blinken that Israel's Gaza operation has exceeded "the right of self-defense" and turned into "a collective punishment."

Kirby declined to comment on el-Sissi's concerns about how Israel is conducting the war.

"The humanitarian situation was high on the list of the discussion with President el-Sissi," Kirby said.

Iran's foreign minister warned Monday that "preemptive action is possible" if Israel moves closer to its looming ground offensive in the Gaza Strip.

Iran is a chief financial sponsor of Hamas militants in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon. The comments by Hossein Amirabdollahian follow a pattern of escalating rhetoric from Iran.

"Leaders of the resistance will not allow the Zionist regime to do whatever it wants in Gaza and then go after other resistance groups after it's done with Gaza," he told state television. "Therefore any preemptive action is possible in the coming hours."

Kirby said the U.S. has not seen any signs that Iran might try to get directly involved in the Israel-Hamas

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conflict.

White House officials have said that U.S. intelligence shows that Iran has been broadly aware that Hamas had been preparing for a possible strike against Israel. But the U.S. says it has yet to uncover evidence of direct Iranian involvement in the Oct. 7 attack.

Israel is also preparing for the potential of a new front opening on its northern border with Lebanon, where it has exchanged fire repeatedly with the Iranian-backed Hezbollah group. The military ordered residents of 28 Israeli communities near the border to evacuate.

Air raid sirens interrupted Blinken's meetings with Israeli officials on three different occasions Monday, including twice as he huddled with Netanyahu and his war cabinet.

In Washington, Biden was briefed in the Oval Office by his national security team on the situation on the ground in Israel and Gaza. White House chief of staff Jeff Zients joined the briefing led by national security adviser Jake Sullivan, Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines and Central Intelligence Agency Director Bill Burns, according to the White House.

Blinken was in Israel on Monday for his second visit in less than a week for talks with Israeli leaders. He has been crisscrossing the Middle East with stops in Jordan, Bahrain, Qatar, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Blinken, in talks Monday with Netanyahu and other Israeli officials, carried back some of the feedback he received from Arab leaders. He also "underlined his firm support for Israel's right to defend itself from Hamas' terrorism and reaffirmed U.S. determination to provide the Israeli government with what it needs to protect its citizens," State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said in a statement.

White House officials said Biden's talks with Arab leaders in Amman will largely focus on humanitarian concerns for Gaza's 2.3 million people. He'll also make clear that Hamas does not stand for the Palestinian people's right to dignity and self-determination.

Still, White House officials bristled about whether Biden would ask Netanyahu and Israel officials to show restraint or set any conditions on any new U.S. military aid that could be in the pipeline.

"We are not putting conditions on the military assistance that we are providing to Israel," Kirby said. "They have a right to defend themselves. They have a right to go after this terrorist threat."

How China's Belt and Road Initiative is changing after a decade of big projects and big debts

By KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China's Belt and Road Initiative looks to become smaller and greener after a decade of big projects that boosted trade but left big debts and raised environmental concerns.

The shift comes as leaders from across the developing world descend on Beijing this week for a government-organized forum on what is known as BRI for short.

The initiative has built power plants, roads, railroads and ports around the world and deepened China's relations with Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Mideast. It is a major part of Chinese President Xi Jinping's push for China to play a larger role in global affairs.

WHAT IS THE BRI?

Called "One Belt, One Road" in Chinese, the Belt and Road Initiative started as a program for Chinese companies to build transportation, energy and other infrastructure overseas funded by Chinese development bank loans.

The stated goal was to grow trade and the economy by improving China's connections with the rest of the world in a 21st-century version of the Silk Road trading routes from China to the Middle East and onto Europe.

Xi unveiled the concept in broad terms on visits to Kazakhstan and Indonesia in 2013 and it took shape in the ensuing years, driving the construction of major projects from railroads in Kenya and Laos to power plants in Pakistan and Indonesia.

HOW BIG IS IT?

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A total of 152 countries have signed a BRI agreement with China, though Italy, the only western European country to do so, is expected to drop out when it comes time to renew in March of next year.

"Italy suffered a net loss," said Alessia Amighini, an analyst at the Italian think tank ISPI, as the trade deficit with China more than doubled since Italy joined in 2019.

China became a major financier of development projects under BRI, on par with the World Bank. The Chinese government says that more than 3,000 projects totaling nearly \$1 trillion have been launched in BRI countries.

China filled a gap left as other lenders shifted to areas such as health and education and away from infrastructure after coming under criticism for the impact major building projects can have on the environment and local communities, said Kevin Gallagher, the director of the Boston University Global Development Policy Center.

Chinese-financed projects have faced similar criticism, from displacing populations to adding tons of climate-changing greenhouse gases to the atmosphere.

WHAT ABOUT THE DEBT TRAP?

Chinese development banks provided money for the BRI projects as loans, and some governments have been unable to pay them back.

That has led to allegations by the U.S. and others that China was engaging in "debt trap" diplomacy: Making loans they knew governments would default on, allowing Chinese interests to take control of the assets. An oft-cited example is a Sri Lankan port that the government ended up leasing to a Chinese company for 99 years.

Many economists say that China did not make the bad loans intentionally. Now, having learned the hard way through defaults, China development banks are pulling back. Chinese development loans have already plummeted in recent years as the banks have become more cautious about lending and many recipient countries are less able to borrow, given their already high levels of debt.

Chinese loans have been a major contributor to the huge debt burdens that are weighing on economies in countries such as Zambia and Pakistan. Sri Lanka said last week that it had reached an agreement with the Export-Import Bank of China on key terms and principles for restructuring its debt as it tries to emerge from an economic crisis that toppled the government last year.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR BRI?

Future BRI projects are likely not only to be smaller and greener but also rely more on investment by Chinese companies than on development loans to governments.

Christoph Nedopil, director of the Asia Institute at Griffith University in Australia, believes that China will still undertake some large projects, including high-visibility ones such as railways and others including oil and gas pipelines that have a revenue stream to pay back the investment.

A recent example is the launching of a Chinese high-speed railway in Indonesia with much fanfare in both countries.

On the climate front, China has pledged to stop building coal power plants overseas, though it remains involved in some, and is encouraging projects related to the green transition, Nedopil said. That ranges from wind and solar farms to factories for electric vehicle batteries, such as a huge CATL plant that has stirred environmental concerns in BRI-partner Hungary.

Gaza's limited water supply raises concerns for human health

By MADDIE BURAKOFF AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A lack of clean water in the Gaza Strip is raising major concerns for human health.

"Gaza is running out of water, and Gaza is running out of life," said Philippe Lazzarini, chief of the U.N. agency for Palestinians.

Gaza normally gets its water supplies from a combination of sources, including a pipeline from Israel, desalination plants on the Mediterranean Sea and wells. Those supplies were slashed when Israel cut off water, along with the fuel and electricity that power water and sewage plants, in the wake of the Hamas

attacks.

The United Nations recognizes access to water as a human right, and on a basic level, the human body needs a constant supply of water to survive. "Next to air," water is "really the most important thing for maintenance of your health," said Dr. Tsion Firew, an emergency physician at Columbia University who has worked on water access in humanitarian settings.

A report from the U.S. National Academies of Science and Medicine says men need to drink about 3.7 liters (125 ounces) and women need about 2.7 liters (91 ounces) per day to be adequately hydrated. Most of that comes from drinking water or beverages, and about 20% from food, including fruits.

Many people can't survive more than a few days without water, Firew said — especially vulnerable groups like children, the elderly and those with health conditions. Dehydration can cause dizziness, fatigue and confusion and in severe cases lead to organ failure and death.

Water access is also crucial for sanitation, and a lack of clean water can lead to the spread of infections like cholera and dysentery. Diarrheal diseases that can be spread by unclean water are the leading cause of death for children under 5 across the world, Firew said.

Health care settings are a particular concern as they rely on clean water to care for patients who are sick and injured.

As hospitals across the Gaza Strip struggle to care for thousands of patients, the World Health Organization said the lack of water is putting lives in danger.

"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 in a statement.

GOP's Jim Jordan is shoring up support and peeling off detractors ahead of a House speaker vote

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — With a push by allies of Donald Trump, far-right firebrand Rep. Jim Jordan appeared Monday to be shoring up support to become U.S. House speaker, winning over reluctant Republicans who have few options left two weeks after Kevin McCarthy's ouster.

One by one, Jordan, the hard-charging Judiciary Committee chairman, has been peeling off detractors who have viewed the Ohio Republican as too extreme. A major pressure campaign from Trump allies including Steve Bannon and Fox News' Sean Hannity has helped build support.

But Tuesday's scheduled floor vote could turn into a showdown as remaining holdouts refuse to back Jordan. After a private late-night meeting at the Capitol turned into a venting session of angry Republicans, he acknowledged: "We've got a few more people to talk to, listen to."

"The American people deserve to have their Congress and House of Representatives working, and you can't have that happen until you get a speaker," Jordan said after the Monday night meeting.

The political climb has been steep for Jordan, a former outsider and a founding member of the right-flank Freedom Caucus who is now just votes away from a seat central to U.S. power. House Republicans have watched their majority control of the chamber descend into chaos since McCarthy's sudden removal from the job Oct. 3. All House business has ground to a halt.

To seize the gavel, second in line to the presidency, Jordan will need almost the full majority of his colleagues behind him in a House floor vote, as Democrats are certain to back their own nominee, Leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York. A handful of holdouts, if not more, remain.

Jordan fell more than 50 votes short during internal party voting last Friday, after Majority Leader Steve Scalise, the party's first nominee to replace McCarthy, abandoned his own nomination after failing to unify the Republicans.

But Jordan can rely on Trump's backing as well as pressure on colleagues from an army of grass-roots activists who recognize him from cable news and fiery performances at committee hearings. Republicans say it will be hard for rank-and-file lawmakers to oppose him in a public floor vote.

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Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fla., who engineered McCarthy's ouster by a handful of hardliners, publicly praised each lawmaker who has flipped to Jordan's column — and berated those who have not.

"Thank you Rep. Ann Wagner!" Gaetz posted on social media, after the Missouri Republican announced her support.

Wagner announced her support saying she and Jordan had spoken Monday morning at length, "and he has allayed my concerns about keeping the government open with conservative funding, the need for strong border security, our need for consistent international support in times of war and unrest."

Others also announced their support, including the House Armed Services Chairman Mike Rogers of Alabama. Picking up those two backers, Jordan said earlier Monday, was "really big."

Still, it could take multiple rounds during House floor voting scheduled to start at noon on Tuesday as several Republicans still are refusing to back Jordan. With the House Republican majority narrowly held 221-212 he can only afford to lose a few votes to reach the 217 majority threshold, if there are no absences.

One holdout, Republican Rep. Ken Buck of Colorado said Jordan's role in the runup to Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol and his refusal to admit President Joe Biden won the 2020 election remained an issue.

"I'm going to have a conversation with Jim and talk to him about my concerns," Buck said.

"Jim, at some point, if he's going to lead this conference during the presidential election cycle and particularly in a presidential election year ... is going to have to be strong and say Donald Trump didn't win the election and we need to move forward."

Democrats have decried the far-right shift calling Jordan the leader of the chaos wing of the GOP.

The Democratic whip, Rep. Katherine Clark, said her party is trying to stop Republicans from putting "an insurrectionist in the speaker's chair."

Jordan has been a top Trump ally particularly during the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol by the former president's backers trying to overturn the 2020 election he lost to Biden. Days later, Trump awarded Jordan a Medal of Freedom.

"Jim Jordan is an insurrectionist who has no place being second in line to the presidency," said Michael Fanone, a former District of Columbia police officer who was wounded fighting the mob on Jan. 6. "This is a very dark time for our democracy and should serve as a wakeup call to all Americans that we can never take our democracy for granted."

Jordan, who was personally visiting some lawmakers' offices Monday, has been a staunch defender of Trump as the former president faces four separate indictments, including allegations of election fraud in the runup to the Jan. 6 attack.

Now the Republican Party's frontrunner to challenge Biden in the 2024 election, Trump backed Jordan to replace McCarthy early on, and was working against Scalise's nomination last week.

Tensions remained high among Republicans ahead of voting. Rank-and-file Republicans are exhausted by the internal party infighting with no other work being done in Congress.

Some Republicans resent being pressured by Jordan's allies and say they are being threatened with primary opponents if they don't support him as speaker. One aide said their office received an email from Hannity's team pushing Jordan.

Others are simply upset at the way the whole process has dragged out. "I think we still need conversations," said Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks, R-Iowa.

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

Gaetz on Bannon's podcast Monday said purging the party of those who don't support Trump's vision could be the "greatest blessing" to come from the weeks since McCarthy's ouster.

Holdout Republicans are wary of promoting Jordan at a time of major challenges for the country. Congress must fund the government by Nov. 17 or risk a federal shutdown, and the White House is asking lawmakers to provide supplemental funding for Ukraine and Israel in the wars abroad.

600 days into the war, Russia's assault on a key eastern Ukraine city appears to be weakening

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A dayslong attempt by Russian forces to storm a strategically important city in eastern Ukraine appears to be running out of steam, Kyiv officials said Monday, as the Kremlin's war entered its 600th day.

Ukrainian forces repelled 15 Russian attacks from four directions on Avdiivka over the previous 24 hours, the Ukrainian General Staff said.

That compared with up to 60 attacks a day in the middle of last week, according to Vitalii Barabash, head of the city administration. The slackening suggests the Russian effort to capture Avdiivka has "deflated," Barabash said.

A Washington-based think tank broadly concurred with that assessment. "Russian forces continued offensive operations aimed at encircling Avdiivka ... but have yet to make further gains amid a likely decreasing tempo of Russian operations in the area," the Institute for the Study of War said in analysis published late Sunday.

Russia's ambassador to the United Nations, Vassily Nebenzia, told a U.N. Security Council meeting last Friday that the ramped-up attacks in the east amounted to a new stage in Moscow's campaign in Ukraine.

With the looming onset of wintry conditions that will limit military operations, both sides have been seeking battlefield breakthroughs that could invigorate their efforts and raise morale.

Ukraine launched its own counteroffensive about four months ago. It has made some headway but the limited success has underlined the daunting challenge of taking on the Kremlin's more numerous forces.

Kyiv's Western allies insist that their military and financial support for Ukraine will continue, even as the Israeli-Hamas war rages and competes for resources.

U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan said Sunday the Biden administration will ask Congress for a combined aid package for Ukraine and Israel worth more than \$2 billion.

Ukrainian officials have said their troops are holding out against fierce Russian efforts to wrest control of Avdiivka, a heavily fortified city.

Avdiivka lies in the northern suburbs of the city of Donetsk, in a region of the same name that Russian forces partially occupy. Avdiivka's location grants Ukrainian forces artillery advantages over the city and could serve as a springboard for them to liberate Donetsk.

It is not possible to verify battlefield claims by either side. Misinformation and disinformation have played a central role in the war.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, speaking during a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, claimed Ukrainian forces have failed to make any significant gains during their counteroffensive. Kyiv's troops are trying to make headway without air cover and have encountered multi-layered Russian defenses.

Putin, in an interview with the China Media Group released Monday, claimed that Ukraine's counteroffensive has achieved "no results so far, only massive losses."

Moscow can expect more diplomatic pressure from the 57-nation Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in coming months, according to the chief diplomat of North Macedonia, which currently holds that body's rotating presidency.

The country's foreign minister, Bujar Osmani, urged Russia to cease its attacks on Ukraine and withdraw its forces. He spoke at a press conference in Kyiv on Monday.

The OSCE was created during the Cold War to help to defuse tensions between East and West.

Meanwhile, Russian children's rights ombudswoman Maria Lvova-Belova claimed Monday that her office has helped 35 Ukrainian children reunite with their relatives in Ukraine and other countries.

Lvova-Belova, who was indicted along with Putin by the International Criminal Court for war crimes connected to the deportation of children from Ukraine, claimed Russia never opposed reuniting children with their families.

Qatar's foreign ministry issued a statement saying it had been involved in recent family reunifications through its embassy in Moscow but it provided no details.

Rangers build big early lead off Valdez, hold on for 5-4 win over Astros to take 2-0 lead in ALCS

By KRISTIE RIEKEN AP Sports Writer

HOUSTON (AP) — No matter the place or the moment, the Texas Rangers are rolling right now.

Jonah Heim homered, Nathan Eovaldi pitched six effective innings and Texas beat Framber Valdez and the Houston Astros 5-4 on Monday for a 2-0 lead in the AL Championship Series.

The Rangers improved to 7-0 in the playoffs, including six wins on the road. They swept the Rays in the Wild Card Series and the Orioles in the Division Series, and then posted a 2-0 win at Houston in the ALCS opener.

"It's just baseball to us," Texas third baseman Josh Jung said. "We're jumping on teams early, and that helps us settle in. Our pitching has been outstanding. You can't ask for anything more than what they've given us."

Adolis García, Mitch Garver and Nathaniel Lowe each hit an RBI single during Texas' four-run first inning against Valdez, and José Leclerc closed it out for the Rangers after Yordan Alvarez powered an Astros rally.

Eovaldi struck out nine, including two in a row after Houston loaded the bases with none out in the fifth. He was charged with three runs and five hits in his third win this postseason.

"You're talking about one of the elite pitchers in the game," Texas manager Bruce Bochy said. "They have that ability to turn up a notch when they had to. We made an error, bases loaded, and it's about picking each other up, and he picked us up there and made great pitches."

Game 3 of the best-of-seven series is Wednesday night in Arlington.

The Rangers are the fifth team in MLB history and first since the Astros last season to win their first seven postseason games. Kansas City holds the record with an eight-game win streak to start the 2014 postseason.

The six straight road playoff wins by the Rangers is tied for the second-longest such streak in MLB history, behind an eight-game streak by the Yankees in 1996.

Alvarez hit two solo drives to become the sixth player in MLB history to have two multihomer games in one postseason. The second one was off Aroldis Chapman, trimming Houston's deficit to 5-4 with two out in the eighth.

Leclerc then came in and walked José Abreu and Michael Brantley, but Chas McCormick grounded out to end the threat.

Jeremy Peña flied out to deep right field for the first out in the Houston ninth. Yainer Diaz then grounded out and Jose Altuve flied to center, giving Leclerc his second save of the series.

The Astros, who went 39-42 at home in the regular season, continued to struggle at Minute Maid Park. The defending champions fell to 1-3 at home in the playoffs this year.

The Rangers jumped all over Valdez. Marcus Semien smacked the first pitch to center field for a single. Corey Seager singled to left on the second pitch before Valdez made two errors on one play.

Valdez bobbled a chopper hit by Robbie Grossman for an error that allowed him to reach first and Semien to score. His second error occurred when he badly overthrew first to move Grossman to second and Seager to third.

Valdez put his hands on his knees and shook his head at the end of the play.

García then hit a liner to right field to score Seager. Garver singled home another run before Valdez finally got his first out when he struck out Heim.

The Rangers weren't done yet.

Lowe singled on a ground ball to left to make it 4-0. Valdez retired the next two batters to end the inning.

"I thought my pitches were good," he said through a translator. "Maybe they got a little bit lucky. There

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were a couple of balls that weren't hit that well for base hits."

Alex Bregman also homered for the Astros, who went 0 for 6 with runners in scoring position. Alvarez, who is dealing with an illness, looked much better than he did in Game 1 when he went 0 for 4 with three strikeouts.

He said he was feeling good Monday and deflected questions about his health.

"It was just something personal," he said through a translator. "I don't know how that got out. It didn't come from me or the team."

Valdez (0-2) allowed seven hits and five runs — four earned — in 2 2/3 innings in his second loss this postseason. It was his shortest start of the season.

The Astros missed a huge opportunity in the fifth. Brantley and McCormick hit back-to-back singles to open the inning before Peña reached on an error by Jung.

But Eovaldi escaped by striking out pinch-hitter Diaz and Altuve before Bregman grounded out.

"When I was ahead 1-2 (on Altuve) and I went with a high fastball and followed it up with the splitter. You're close but you're not out of the woods yet because Bregman is equally as talented," Eovaldi said. "I was able to make a good pitch and get us out of the jam, and I felt like that was one of the turning points of the game."

Alvarez walked with one out in the sixth before scoring on a two-out double by Brantley. Alvarez also hit a leadoff homer in the second into the second deck in right field.

Heim homered high off the wall in left field to push the lead to 5-1 with no outs in the third.

UP NEXT

Max Scherzer will start for Texas in Game 3 after sitting out since Sept. 12 because of a muscle strain in his shoulder. It will be the fifth different team that the three-time Cy Young Award winner has pitched for in the postseason.

Cristian Javier starts for Houston after throwing five scoreless innings to get the win in Game 3 of the Division Series.

Israel suspends military exports to Colombia over its president's criticism of Gaza siege

By MANUEL RUEDA undefined

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — Israel has suspended security exports to Colombia in an escalating diplomatic spat over online messages by Colombia's president comparing Israel's siege of Gaza to the actions of Nazi Germany.

Colombian President Gustavo Petro has doubled down on his criticism of Israel and suggested that his country may need to suspend diplomatic relations with Israel, while his foreign minister has suggested Israel's ambassador should leave the country.

In a statement published Sunday, Israel's foreign ministry said that Petro's recent statements on X, previously known as Twitter, "inflammate antisemitism" and "threaten the safety of the Jewish community in Colombia." The Israeli government said it called Colombia's ambassador to a meeting in which she was informed that defense cooperation between the countries would be suspended.

Colombia currently has diplomatic relations with both Israel and the Palestinian Authority, and over the past two decades it has been one of Israel's closest partners in Latin America.

The South American nation uses Israeli-built war planes and machine guns to fight drug cartels and rebel groups and both countries also signed a free trade agreement in 2020.

But the two nations have been less aligned since Petro took office last year as Colombia's first leftist president.

The war of words between Petro and Israel's Ambassador Gali Dagan started a week ago when Petro refused to condemn the Hamas raid on Israel, in which militants killed hundreds of civilians in their homes.

When Dagan urged Petro to speak about the "terrorist" attack, Colombia's president replied with a message that "terrorism is killing innocent children in Palestine" and followed up with messages in which he

accused Israel of turning Gaza into a "concentration camp."

The comments comparing Israel's military to the Nazis sparked criticism from Colombia's Jewish community and also triggered a response from the U.S. State Department, which said last Thursday through its Special Envoy to Combat and Monitor Antisemitism that it was "shocked" to see Colombia's president comparing "the Israeli government to Hitler's genocidal regime."

Over the weekend Petro wrote on X that Hamas had been "invented" by Israel's intelligence services in order to divide Palestinians and "have an excuse" to "punish" them. He provided no proof to back his claims.

Dagan mocked Petro's message with a sarcastic reply in which he wrote that his nation's intelligence services had also "created" Colombia's largest paramilitary group and that "Jews with big noses" still rule over the group.

On Monday, Colombian Foreign Minister Alvaro Leyva wrote on his X account that Dagan should "leave" the country and apologize for his messages. Later however he wrote that Israel's ambassador had not been expelled and that relations between both countries would be maintained if Israel so desired. "Respectful relations between states are always welcome" Leyva wrote.

Petro doubled down on his critiques of Israel over the weekend, describing its military campaign in Gaza as "genocide" and threatening to break off relations with the Jewish state.

"If we must suspend diplomatic relations with Israel, then that is what we will do" he wrote on X on Sunday. "You cannot insult the president of Colombia."

Venezuela and opposition reach deal on electoral conditions. They plan to sign Tuesday in Barbados

By JOSHUA GOODMAN and REGINA GARCIA CANO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Venezuela's government and opposition have reached an agreement on new electoral conditions that once signed Tuesday will trigger relief from U.S. energy sanctions on President Nicolás Maduro's administration, according to a person familiar with the outline of deal.

Venezuela's government agreed to open up the electoral process, including allowing European Union observers and creating a process for lifting bans that have blocked his top opponents from running for president, to level what is widely seen as an unfair playing field, the person said Monday.

If Maduro doesn't live up to his end of the bargain, the sanctions will be imposed again, according to the person, who insisted on not being quoted by name as a condition to discuss the agreement before it was signed.

Venezuela's government and opposition were scheduled to resume their Norway-mediated dialogue in Barbados on Tuesday, the Norwegian Embassy in Mexico said. But it appeared an agreement was already within reach because a signing ceremony was scheduled for Tuesday afternoon.

Mexico hosted multiple rounds of talks in 2021 and 2022. When the sides last met, in November 2022, they agreed to create a U.N.-managed fund to finance health, food and education programs for the poor while the U.S. government agreed to allow oil giant Chevron to pump Venezuelan oil.

Colombia and other countries have tried in recent months to restart negotiations between the sides, but Maduro has demanded that the U.S. drop economic sanctions and unfreeze Venezuelan funds held overseas as a condition of resuming talks.

Norway's statement Monday said the two sides had decided to resume the dialogue "with the objective of reaching a political agreement."

On Monday evening, Maduro said on Venezuela's national television that "we are going to move ahead with sanctions or without sanctions. If we manage to get them lifted, great, if they're kept in place, we move forward and we will overcome."

U.S. State Department spokesman Matthew Miller welcomed the announcement of negotiations in Barbados and said in a statement that the U.S. government would "continue its efforts to unite the international community in support of the Venezuelan-led negotiation process."

Earlier Monday, a U.S. official who requested anonymity to discuss the sensitive negotiations said there was no "deal" between the U.S. government and Venezuela.

The official said the Biden administration supported Venezuelan-led negotiations and was prepared to provide relief from sanctions in response to concrete actions toward holding competitive elections.

The dialogue formally began in September 2021, but President Maduro's delegates walked away from negotiations in October 2021 after Colombia-born businessman Alex Saab was extradited on money laundering charges from Cape Verde to the U.S. Maduro conditioned a resumption on the release of Saab.

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

A brief period of relative economic stability has again been shaken by jumping food prices, business closures and another wave of emigration.

Some members of the Venezuelan opposition celebrated Norway's announcement.

Luis Florido, a former exiled opposition lawmaker, said on X that only through negotiations would Venezuelans be able to restore democracy through the ballot box.

"You won't get everything you want, but you will make progress," he said of the negotiations.

The presence of election observers, however, has not served as discouragement for the government to carry out old tactics. The EU deployed dozens of observers to Venezuela for the 2021 regional elections, which many remember for the government's move to disqualify an opposition gubernatorial candidate when results showed he was ahead of one of Chavez's siblings.

The talks were scheduled to take place in Bridgetown, Barbados.

Jewish students plaster Paris walls with photos of French citizens believed held hostage by Hamas

By ALEX TURNBULL and ELAINE GANLEY Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — France's main Jewish students union has plastered walls around Paris with posters bearing the faces of French citizens believed to be held hostage by Hamas in their war with Israel. The word "Kidnapped" is inscribed on a red banner at the top of each photograph.

Very little is known about the hostages locked away in the Gaza Strip or whether some of those captured during the Oct. 7 surprise attack on Israel have been killed in the Jewish state's brutal counter-offensive. An Israeli military spokesman on Monday upped the number of hostages to 199, but did not specify whether that number includes foreigners.

Some households in France, which has the largest Jewish population in western Europe, have taken a direct hit from the Israel-Hamas war. French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna said Sunday during a visit to Israel that 19 French citizens are known to have been killed and 13 others are missing.

The students' action in Paris follows a similar campaign by Jews in London, where hundreds of volunteers recently posted fliers around the city bearing images of British citizens believed to have been taken hostage.

The images, featuring children, were placed widely to publicize the details of the atrocity beyond the Jewish community, organizers told Jewish News, an online newspaper. In a sign of growing contention over the war, two robed women were seen in videos posted online last weekend angrily ripping the posters down.

The French Jewish students union, known as UEJF, says that people are flirting with danger if the plight of Jews in France — and elsewhere — is not shared by all.

"This isn't about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It's a question of a terror organization that is attacking a free and democratic state," said Samuel Lejoyeux, president of the UEJF, glancing at the more than 50 posters on the walls near the Institute of Medicine on the Left Bank.

The union has mainly targeted universities, where debate over the war has been heated — with one professor recently disciplined for expressing support of Hamas.

Sylvie Retailleau, France's minister for higher education, has taken aim at professors and others in university circles for straying from France's pro-Israel position in the war.

Two days after Hamas militants attacked Israel, Retailleau pinned a letter on the platform X addressed to university presidents telling them to take disciplinary — and legal — measures against those who break French law, including taking cases to prosecutors.

"It's not a Jewish question. Everyone needs to act and be with us," Lejoyeux, the student union leader, said. He claimed that a minority of people see expressions of solidarity for Israel as "an act of Zionism."

"It isn't simply the Jews who are targeted, it is the values of democracy and freedom that France has in common with Israel," Lejoyeux said.

Tim Scott praises 'restraint' of Israel's Netanyahu, says US should move more firepower to region

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and MEG KINNARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina on Monday praised Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for showing what he called "restraint" after Hamas attacked Israel over a week ago.

The Republican presidential candidate said Netanyahu "waited" and showed "patience" and "humanity" in response to the Oct. 7 attack.

Israel launched airstrikes in Gaza the day of the attack and Netanyahu declared war with Hamas, vowing to inflict an "unprecedented price." The war has become the deadliest of five Gaza wars for both sides, with more than 4,000 dead.

"One of the first things that Israel's done is they waited," Scott said about Israel as he spoke at an event focused on U.S. foreign policy and national security at Georgetown University in Washington.

"Now how Prime Minister Netanyahu had the kind of restraint to refrain from immediate action, it just talks about the morality and the humanity that we see coming from Netanyahu into Gaza," the senator said.

Hamas militants' surprise attacks on Israel have left 1,400 dead and retaliatory strikes have killed at least 2,778 Palestinians.

Scott also underscored the importance of America's allyship with Israel and said "America should stand shoulder-to-shoulder, back-to-back, with no daylight with Israel."

He said the U.S. should move more firepower into the region to "be responsive" and said that U.S. special forces should be prepared to help rescue American hostages in Gaza.

Scott also criticized front-runner Republican candidate Donald Trump for his criticism of Netanyahu days after the attack. He said the former president's comments were "terrible," "not helpful" and "heading in the wrong direction."

"We should be loyal to our allies while being lethal to our adversaries. Anything less than that jeopardizes life," he said.

The senator said he somewhat agreed with GOP rival candidate Ron DeSantis, who said the United States should not take in any Palestinian refugees if they flee the Gaza Strip. DeSantis, the Florida governor, said the U.S. should not accept any refugees if they can escape Gaza because they "are all antisemitic."

Scott said not accepting refugees from Gaza is "the right decision" because the president cannot determine in the middle of the conflict "who is safe to bring in, who's not safe to bring in."

"I don't think that they're all antisemitic. I just can't tell you who's who," he said.

Scott was asked about the killing of a 6-year-old Muslim boy in Illinois who was stabbed to death in an alleged hate crime. Authorities said the boy and his mother were attacked by the family's landlord who was upset over the Israel-Hamas war.

"Disgusting," Scott said quickly. "It sounds like murder. Lock him up."

After he was asked to elaborate, the senator, who often takes on the mannerism of a preacher, then leaped up in to the aisles. Scott, who is Black, spoke about having grown up in the Deep South and said he understands racism and discrimination.

"Thankful that our country has made tremendous progress in my lifetime," he said. But of the man accused of the Illinois attack, he said, "I can't imagine that level of hate."

Scott was sitting for the conversation at an event co-hosted by The Associated Press and Georgetown's

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Institute of Politics and Public Service. The event marks the second in a series of talks the organizations are hosting on the topic with 2024 GOP candidates.

Former Vice President Mike Pence sat for the inaugural talk earlier this month.

Scott's sit-down comes as one of the super political action committees supporting his candidacy clawed back some of the advertising airtime it had purchased this fall, with its chair writing in a memo to backers that "we aren't going to waste our money when the electorate isn't focused or ready for" an alternative to Trump. The memo said the group would wait until closer to Iowa's leadoff caucuses to reconsider.

The South Carolina senator has not made foreign policy a mainstay of his campaign, instead seeking to focus on a positive message swathed in his Christian faith and an appeal for more individual responsibility in America.

Last week, he gave a speech on Israel at the Hudson Institute think tank in Washington in which he decried Hamas militants' attack on Israel as filling Americans "with heartbreak, and frankly, righteous anger," but blamed the Biden administration for the violence.

"While Hamas carried out these attacks, Joe Biden has blood on his hands," Scott said in the speech. "His weakness invited the attack."

He also recently sought to merge his Senate duties with foreign policy strides that may help his 2024 GOP presidential campaign, calling for a Senate probe into funding sources that he and other Republicans allege may have been tied to Hamas militants' attack on Israel.

Scott called for the Senate Banking Committee — on which he sits as ranking member — to hold a hearing with Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen to probe roughly \$6 billion in frozen Iranian assets recently released to an account in Qatar.

As he campaigns against rivals including a former vice president, a former United Nations ambassador and current and foreign governors, Scott has at times been asked how he would square his apparent lack of executive experience with his qualifications to lead the country.

He has held out as evidence his decade of service on Senate committees, including Banking, Finance, Armed Services and Foreign Relations.

In the memo from Trust in the Mission PAC, co-chair Rob Collins said the group would continue with door knocking and other efforts, with an eye toward potentially reallocating resources as actual votes draw nearer.

"Until the experts recognize Tim is the only candidate that can capture the nomination and defeat President Joe Biden, there will be a very expensive and loud next few months — full of sound and fury and signifying nothing," Collins wrote in the memo, which was obtained by the AP and first reported on by Politico.

"So, we are doing what would be obvious in the business world but will mystify politicians — we aren't going to waste our money when the electorate isn't focused or ready for a Trump alternative. We have done the research. We have studied the focus groups. We have been following Tim on the trail. This electorate is locked up and money spent on mass media isn't going to change minds until we get a lot closer to voting."

Waiting for news, families of Israeli hostages in Gaza tell stories of their loved ones

By The Associated Press undefined

They range from babies to the elderly. Most are civilians. Israel says at least 199 people taken during the Hamas attack are being held captive in Gaza.

Some of their families received frantic phone calls or texts during the attack. Others heard nothing and later saw video evidence their loved ones were taken.

For now, they wait, desperate to find out whether the hostages are even alive. And they tell their stories. Here are some of them.

YAFFA ADAR

Yaffa Adar loved reading, writing and keeping connected. Even at 85 she often sent her family messages and GIFs on WhatsApp. She was active on Facebook, her granddaughter recalls.

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Keeping in close touch online became especially important in recent years as she found it harder to walk beyond her home in Nir Oz, a kibbutz near the Gaza Strip. Amid that physical struggle, she kept her mind busy and knew what she wanted, her granddaughter said.

"She loved reading," Adva Adar recalled. "So we were like, "We're going to get you a Kindle." What did her grandmother say? "No, I like the smell of the paper in books."

So when Hamas' Oct. 7 massacre at Nir Oz ended and no one could find Adar, her family worried. That concern turned to horror when video surfaced showing her being driven in a golf cart in Gaza, wrapped in a pink-flowered blanket.

The footage was among the first evidence that Hamas fighters had not only killed Israelis — more than 1,400, the vast majority civilians — but had dragged dozens back to Gaza regardless of age in the most complex hostage crisis the country has ever faced.

Some people speculated that Yaffa Adar's unflinching demeanor in the video perhaps meant she didn't understand what was happening.

Not her family, which includes three children, eight grandchildren and seven great-grandkids.

"She absolutely knew what was going on around her. She wasn't going to panic," her granddaughter said.

What's frightening now is that her grandmother doesn't have her medication for blood pressure and chronic pain.

"She was really the glue of our family. She loved her life," Adva Adar recalls. "She liked good food and she liked good wine. She was very young-minded."

— Laurie Kellman

MAYA AND ITAY REGEV

"Mom, I'll unpack my suitcase when I get back," Maya Regev told her mother that Friday night, in a rush to get going. "See you tomorrow."

And within a half-hour of returning to Israel from a family trip overseas, 21-year-old Maya and her brother Itay, 18, were on their way to the Tribe of Nova music festival, planning to dance the night away.

It was a typical activity for the duo, who both love to be on the move, gather with friends, and especially to travel, said their parents, Ilan and Mirit Regev. Maya had already bought her ticket for an extended trip to South America in December.

But early the next morning, Ilan Regev's phone rang. It was a frantic Maya. "Dad, they shot me, they shot me!" she screamed in a recording the family has released. "He is killing us, Dad, he is killing us."

Her father begged her to send her location, to find a place to hide. "I'm coming," he said.

Ilan Regev jumped in his car from his home in Herzliya, near Tel Aviv, and sped south to the festival site, where he was barred from entering. Soon, the Regev family discovered a Hamas video that showed Itay in captivity in Gaza.

Maya was not pictured, but the army has told the family both were hostages in Gaza. Officials gave no further information.

"I want to know that my kids are alive," said Ilan Regev. Added their mother: "We don't know if they are eating. We don't know if they are drinking. If they are hurt."

— Jocelyn Noveck

HERSH GOLDBERG-POLIN

His mother describes Hersh Goldberg-Polin as like a lot of other young people.

The 23-year-old from Jerusalem loves music, wants to see the world and, now that he's finished his military service, has plans to go to university, his family says. But first he has to come home.

Goldberg-Polin was last seen on Oct. 7, when Hamas militants loaded him into the back of a pickup with other hostages abducted from the music festival where at least 260 people were killed.

Despite those harrowing accounts, his mother, Rachel Goldberg, holds out hope she will see him again.

"He's a survivor," Goldberg said of her son, whose grin beams out from behind a sparse, youthful beard in family photos. "He's not like this big, bulky guy. But I think that survival has a lot to do with where you are mentally."

Born in Berkeley, California, Goldberg-Polin moved to Israel with his family when he was 7 years old.

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As a child, he wanted to learn about the world, poring over maps and atlases to learn the names of capital cities and mountains. Later he became a fan of psychedelic trance music and once took a nine-week trek through six European countries so he could attend a series of raves.

Not surprising then, that he and some friends headed to the Tribe of Nova music festival, billed as a place “where the essence of unity and love combines forces with the best music.”

That vibe was shattered by gunmen who stormed into Israel from the nearby Gaza Strip.

Witnesses said Goldberg-Polin lost part of an arm when the attackers tossed grenades into a temporary shelter where he and others had taken refuge, but he tied a tourniquet around it and walked out before being bundled into the truck.

Family and friends have organized the “Bring Hersh Home” campaign on social media, hoping he will still be able to take a planned backpack trip through southern Asia.

But first his mother hopes someone helps her son.

“It will require like the biggest heroism and strength and courage, but I want someone to help out and I want someone to help all of those hostages.”

— Danica Kirka

ADA SAGI

Ada Sagi was getting ready to travel to London to celebrate her 75th birthday with family when Hamas militants attacked her kibbutz and took her hostage.

The trip was supposed to be a joyous occasion after a year of trauma. Her husband died of cancer last year, she had struggled with allergies and was recovering from hip replacement surgery. But the grandmother of six was getting through it, even though it was hard.

“They had a very, very, very strong bond of 54 years,” her son Noam, a psychotherapist in London, told The Associated Press. “And my mum, this is her main thing now, really, just getting her life back after dealing with the loss of my dad.”

Ada Sagi was born in Tel Aviv in 1948, the daughter of Holocaust survivors from Poland. She moved to a kibbutz at the age of 18, not for religious reasons but because she was attracted by the ideals of equality and humanity on which the communal settlements were built.

A mother of three, Ada decided to learn Arabic so she could make friends with her neighbors and build a better future for her children. She later taught the language to other Israelis as a way to improve communication with the Palestinians who live near Kibbutz Nir Oz, on the southeastern border of the Gaza Strip.

That was, for many years, her mission, Noam said.

While he hopes his mother’s language skills will help her negotiate with the hostage-takers, he is calling on the international community for assistance.

“The only hope I have now is ... for humanity to do something and for me to see my mother again and for my son to see his grandmother again,” he said. “I think we need humanity to actually flex its muscle here, and” — by telling her story — “that is all I’m trying to do.”

— Danica Kirka

KARIN JOURNO

Because of the fracture in her right leg, Karin Journo had talked herself out of going to the Tribe of Nova music festival and sold her ticket. But a week before Hamas militants turned the party into a killing ground, she bought another.

The 24-year-old French-Israeli airport worker who loved to travel had learned that a bunch of her friends were going to celebrate the departure of one of them to the United States. She didn’t want to miss out.

Before heading out to dance, she snapped a photo of herself in her party gear — black shorts and black halter top for a joyous night of electronic music in a dusty field. She’d left her long dark hair untied and painted her nails bright red. She was clearly excited, giving a V-sign in her selfie.

And dance she did: Video shot that night showed her waving her arms to the thumping beats, though she was rooted to the spot by the gray protective boot that encased her right foot and calf all the way up to her knee.

It made her easy to recognize in subsequent video footage filmed as Hamas started to launch its deadly

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attack.

Sheltering behind a car with a friend, her face was marked with worry. With explosions echoing in the background, she looked around anxiously in another. In a final video, she is seen sitting just outside the open door of an ambulance, wearing a brown hoodie borrowed from a friend. Two people were laid out inside the vehicle, not moving.

At 8:43 a.m. that Saturday morning she sent a final text to her loved ones, according to her father, Doron Journo: "To the whole family, I want to say that I love you a lot, because I am not coming home."

"Since that message, we have heard nothing. We don't know if she is dead, if she is in Gaza. We know nothing," the father says.

"My daughter didn't go to war," he says. "She just went to dance."

— John Leicester

ADINA MOSHE

David Moshe was born in Iraq. So decades later in Israel, his wife, Adina, cooked his favorite Iraqi food, including a traditional dish with dough, meat and rice.

But what really delighted the family, their granddaughter Anat recalls, was Adina's maqluba — a Middle Eastern meal served in a pot that is flipped upside-down at the table, releasing the steaming goodness inside. Pleasing her husband of more than a half-century, Anat Moshe says, was her grandmother's real culinary priority.

"They were so in love, you don't know how in love they were," the 25-year-old said. Adina Moshe "would make him his favorite food, Iraqi food. Our Shabbat table was always so full."

It will be wracked with heartbreak now.

On Saturday, Hamas fighters shot and killed David Moshe, 75, as he and Adina huddled in their bomb shelter in Nir Oz, a kibbutz about two miles from the Gaza border. The militants burned the couple's house. The next time Anat Moshe saw her grandmother was in a video, in which Adina Moshe, 72, in a red top, was sandwiched between two insurgents on a motorbike, driving away.

Her grandmother hasn't been heard from since, Anat Moshe said. She'd had heart surgery last year, and is without her medication.

Still, Anat Moshe brightened when she recalled her family life in Nir Oz. The community was the birthplace and landscape of Adina and David's romance and family. The two met at the pool, Anat said. Adina worked as a minder of small children, so generations of residents knew her.

But all along, low-level anxiety hummed about the community's proximity to Gaza.

"There was always like some concern about it, like rumors," Anat Moshe recalled. "She always told us that when the terrorists come to her house, she will make her coffee and put out some cookies and put out great food."

— Laurie Kellman

MORAN STELA YANAI

Delicate pearls peek out from silver and stainless steel chains — bits of brightness and optimism among Moran Stela Yanai's jewelry designs that reflected cultures around the world.

Creating art to wear has been Yanai's joy, but not the only one, her brother-in-law Dan Mor said. Yanai, a 40-year-old Israeli who disappeared after a desert rave on Saturday, also fiercely protected people and animals.

"Moran is the softest soul," recalls Dan Mor, whose wife, Lea, is Moran's sister. "She could almost be annoying with how much she was so kind and sensitive to animals. You couldn't eat meat because she was so sensitive to animals being harmed — not just pets but farm animals and wild animals."

Mor has a hard time speaking of Yanai in the past tense. But that's the least of his family's unknowns in the wake of her disappearance — and the family's horror at recognizing her in a video on TikTok that surfaced later. In it, Yanai is sitting on the ground, looking terrified, amid derogatory Arabic text about Jews.

Days earlier, Yanai had posted a video on Instagram on her way to the rave, where she hoped to sell her designs. She posted a second video, recorded by a friend, of her designs displayed on a table at the festival.

"Moran, kind hearted, never caused pain to anyone, not even a fly," reads the accompanying text. Her work, Mor said, is inspired by cultures around the world, including Chinese and Arab.

Mor, an actor, said his family in Tel Aviv is feeling Moran's absence deeply and trying to fill the wait by telling the world about her.

"My beautiful dear sister-in-law, auntie to my kids," he said. "She had a big heart, she has a big heart, and I'm hoping that heart is still pumping."

Kansas is No. 1 in the preseason men's AP Top 25; Duke, Purdue next as 5 teams get first-place votes

By DAVE SKRETTA AP Basketball Writer

Bill Self likes to remind his team that the faces may change at Kansas but the expectations within his program never do.

Expectations outside the program? Turns out they are as high as possible this year.

The Jayhawks were the clear No. 1 pick in the AP Top 25 preseason men's basketball poll released Monday, earning 46 of 63 first-place votes to easily outdistance No. 2 Duke and No. 3 Purdue. It's the fourth time since Self's arrival in Lawrence that his team will start the season on top but the first time since the 2018-19 season.

"You know you'll have a target on your back playing at Kansas," said Kevin McCullar Jr., who decided to return for a second season with the Jayhawks and fifth in college hoops. "We'll have that chip on our shoulder, you know, prove everybody wrong, and state why you should be the No. 1 team in the nation. You go out there and use that. You use that as fuel every day."

The Jayhawks had a disappointing follow-up to their 2022 national title last season, losing to Texas in the Big 12 championship and falling to Arkansas in the opening weekend of the NCAA Tournament. Self missed both of those events after having a valve in his heart replaced, but the 60-year-old coach is back on the sideline and chasing a third national title in the 75th anniversary season of the AP poll.

He has three returning starters in McCullar, DaJuan Harris Jr. and KJ Adams, along with top-50 recruit Elmarko Jackson and Michigan transfer Hunter Dickinson, perhaps the biggest prize of this past summer's portal moves.

"With our returning starters and the players we've added, I can see the writers putting us high in the rankings," Self said. "We welcome being preseason No. 1, but the goal is to be playing to that rank when it counts the most, at the end of the season."

Duke picked up 11 first-place votes to land at No. 2 in Jon Scheyer's second season, and Purdue got three first-place nods as they try to avenge a stunning end to last season. AP player of the year Zach Edey and the Boilermakers became the second men's No. 1 seed to lose to a No. 16 seed when they lost to Fairleigh Dickinson in the NCAA Tournament.

Edey's deadline-day decision to return to the Boilermakers, rather than turn pro, kept them a national title contender.

"We had a tough finish to the season losing in the first round. Hopefully that sits with us as a coaching staff and really as a program to make us better, so we can have more success in March," Purdue coach Matt Painter said. "But as you guys all know, it doesn't start there. The process starts all over, and you can't miss any steps."

Michigan State was fourth with one first-place vote, its highest ranking since December 2020, and Marquette rounded out the top five with AP coach of the year Shaka Smart returning a loaded squad led by third-team All-American Tyler Kolek.

That's the highest ranking for the Golden Eagles since they were No. 3 in March 1978, when they were known as the Warriors.

Defending national champion UConn was sixth with two first-place votes after losing standouts Adam Sanogo and Jordan Hawkins. The Huskies were followed by Big 12 newcomer Houston, Creighton, Tennessee and Florida Atlantic, which returns just about everyone from the team that went 35-4 and made

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a surprising Final Four run last season.

"We have some guys that are ready to play, have been ready to play but under circumstances have had to take a back seat," said Owls coach Dusty May, whose team has jumped from Conference USA to the American Athletic Conference.

"We'll be a little different," May said, "but we'll still be versatile and we'll play a lot of guys."

Gonzaga was No. 11 followed by Arizona, Miami, Arkansas and Texas A&M. Kentucky came in at No. 16 with national runner-up San Diego State next, while Texas, North Carolina and Baylor rounded out the top 20.

The final five were Southern California, Villanova, Saint Mary's, Alabama and Illinois.

CONFERENCE WATCH

The SEC led the way with five teams in the preseason poll, with Tennessee in the top 10. The Big 12 and Big East had four apiece with the latter landing three among the top eight in Marquette, UConn and Creighton. The ACC and Big Ten had three apiece.

OUTSIDE LOOKING IN

Wisconsin, Colorado and UCLA are the first three outside the Top 25; the Bruins were No. 7 in the final poll last season. Also on the outside were Xavier and Kansas State, both of whom were in the top 15 entering last year's NCAA Tournament.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

The season begins for most teams Nov. 6 with some big-time matchups in the first couple of weeks. That includes the annual Champions Classic doubleheader, this time in Chicago, where No. 2 Duke will play fourth-ranked Michigan State and top-ranked Kansas will face No. 16 Kentucky.

Ecuador's youngest elected president faces a practically impossible task

By REGINA GARCIA CANO and GONZALO SOLANO Associated Press

QUITO, Ecuador (AP) — Ecuador's youngest elected president on Monday faced the practically impossible task of reducing a terrifying, drug-driven crime wave within a greatly shortened 1 1/2 years in office.

Daniel Noboa, 35, is an heir to one of Ecuador's largest fortunes thanks to a global empire built on bananas — the country's main crop.

His voters were, among other things, 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.

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.

Presidential candidate and anti-corruption crusader Fernando Villavicencio was assassinated in August. 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 killed inside prisons.

To fight the crime, Noboa made proposals ranging from turning ships into floating jails to getting police more gear.

But he has less than half of a regular presidential term to meaningfully address the rise in crime, which this year has already tallied more than 4,900 violent deaths.

Policies that do not address social issues could have a temporary impact on crime statistics but not reduce the poverty-stricken communities where criminal organizations find soldiers, experts say.

"A period of 18 months is factually short to be able to meet the campaign promise to fundamentally reduce the homicide rate and minimally solve the fundamental problem at the moment, even in democratic terms, which is insecurity," said Jorge Vicente Paladines, a criminal-justice expert and professor at the Central University of Ecuador in Quito.

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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.

Noboa said Sunday that 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 through May 2025, what remains of the tenure of President Guillermo Lasso. Lasso 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.

Like Lasso, a conservative former banker, Noboa’s wealth puts him at the top of Ecuador’s elite. His father, Álvaro Noboa, is among Ecuador’s richest thanks to a conglomerate that started in the growing and shipping of bananas and now includes more than 128 companies in dozens of countries.

The elder Noboa unsuccessfully ran for president five times.

The younger 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.

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 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.

“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.

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.”

Rite Aid seeks Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection as it deals with lawsuits and losses

By TOM MURPHY and ELAINE KURTENBACH Associated Press

Rite Aid has filed for bankruptcy protection and plans to sell part of its business as it attempts to restructure while dealing with losses and opioid-related lawsuits.

The company said Rite Aid stores will continue to fill prescriptions, and customers will still be able to visit its locations or shop online while it goes through its voluntary Chapter 11 process. But that process also will allow it to speed up its plan to close underperforming stores.

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Going through Chapter 11 will help "significantly reduce the company's debt" while helping to "resolve litigation claims in an equitable manner," Rite Aid late Sunday.

Rite Aid Corp. said in its federal bankruptcy filing that it runs more than 2,000 stores. Most of its locations are on the East and West Coasts.

The Philadelphia company, which is marking its 60th year in business, has posted annual losses for several years and has been cutting costs and closing stores as it dealt with long-standing financial challenges. It has said it expects a net loss of as much as \$680 million in the current fiscal year, which will end next spring.

The company, like its rivals, also faces financial risk from lawsuits over opioid prescriptions. Rite Aid already has reached several settlements, including one announced last year with the state of West Virginia for up to \$30 million.

In March, the U.S. Justice Department intervened in a whistleblower lawsuit brought by former employees under the False Claims Act. Federal officials said in a statement that the drugstore chain filled "at least hundreds of thousands" of illegal prescriptions for drugs including opioids.

Rite Aid called the government's claims "hyperbolic" in a subsequent motion to dismiss. The company said facts alleged in the case actually showed it exceeded regulatory requirements for diversion control.

Drugstores also have been dealing with several issues that frustrate customers. They've handled prescription drug shortages, and they have struggled to fill their stores with enough pharmacists and technicians to run the pharmacies. Rivals CVS and Walgreens both have dealt with walkouts by pharmacy employees concerned about their growing workloads and lack of help.

The stores also have had to weather tight prescription reimbursement and waning COVID-19 vaccine and testing business in recent quarters. Plus online competitors like the retail giant Amazon have hurt sales of consumer goods found outside the pharmacy areas of their stores.

Rite Aid's larger competitors like CVS and Walgreens, which each run several thousand more locations, have moved more aggressively into health care, opening clinics and adding other sources of revenue.

Deutsche Bank analyst George Hill said in an August note that Rite Aid operates on a much thinner profit margin than its competitors and while it can pay costs to service its debt, it won't be able to cover principal payments "based on the current trajectory of the business."

The company's filing in U.S. Bankruptcy Court in New Jersey listed \$8.6 billion in total debts and \$7.6 billion in assets.

Rite Aid said Sunday that it had reached an agreement with some key creditors on a financial restructuring plan to cut its debt. The company also said it obtained \$3.45 billion in fresh financing from some of its lenders, which will help support the company through the Chapter 11 process.

Rite Aid says it does not know yet which stores it will close, but it will transfer workers to other Rite Aid locations where possible.

Gabelli Funds portfolio manager Jeff Jonas expects the company to close several hundred locations. He noted that this could ease some pressure on drugstores struggling to find workers.

"All those people will get new jobs immediately," he said. "You hate to say that someone's bankruptcy is a positive, but it kind of is."

Rite Aid also said Sunday that it reached a deal to sell its small pharmacy benefits manager, Elixir, to MedImpact Healthcare Systems. Elixir runs prescription drug coverage and a specialty pharmacy among other services.

Rite Aid said MedImpact will serve as the "stalking horse bidder" in a court-supervised sale process.

The company also said that Jeffrey Stein, who heads a financial advisory firm, was named CEO, replacing interim leader Elizabeth Burr. She had replaced Heyward Donigan, who left in January.

Rite Aid said Stein has experience working with companies that are undergoing financial restructuring.

A few years ago, Rite Aid propped up its share price with a 1-for-20 reverse stock split that took more than a billion shares off the market. But the share price has slid for most of this year and tumbled back below \$1 in August. The stock last traded at roughly 65 cents.

Earlier this month, Rite Aid notified the New York Stock Exchange that it was not in compliance with list-

ing standards. During a grace period, the company's stock continues to be listed and traded.

Walgreens attempted to buy Rite Aid for about \$9.4 billion in a deal announced in 2015. But the larger drugstore chain scaled back its ambition a couple years later and bought only a chunk of Rite Aid, around 1,900 stores, to get the deal past antitrust regulators.

In 2018, Rite Aid shares plunged after the company called off a separate merger with the grocer Albertsons, which is currently trying to merge with another grocer, Kroger.

Poland gives support to 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 that promised to reverse democratic backsliding and repair the nation's relationship with allies, including the European Union and Ukraine, near-complete results showed Monday.

The result was a disappointment for the Law and Justice party and its leader Jarosław Kaczyński, who have governed Poland for eight years with a conservative, nationalist and sometimes anti-EU agenda.

Though it remains Poland's biggest party, Law and Justice lost its majority in parliament, putting a centrist opposition led by former EU president Donald Tusk in a strong position to take over power, official results indicated, with over 99% of districts counted.

It was among the most important elections in an EU country this year, and the results have been anxiously awaited in Brussels, Berlin and other capitals by observers hoping that a step-by-step dismantling of checks and balances could be halted before a turn toward authoritarianism that would be hard to reverse.

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

After a bitter and emotional campaign, turnout was projected at over 74%, the highest level in the country's 34 years of democracy and surpassing the 63% who turned out in the historic 1989 vote that toppled communism. In the city of Wrocław, the lines were so long that voting continued through the night until nearly 3 a.m. Young voters particularly came out in force to flood polling stations.

The official ballot count, which matched the results of an exit poll released Sunday night, suggested voters had grown tired of the ruling party after eight years of divisive policies that led to frequent street protests, bitter divisions within families and billions in funding held up by the EU over rule of law violations.

Another term for Law and Justice would have been seen as a bad omen in Brussels, which has to contend with Hungary, where democratic erosion has gone much further under Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. New concerns arose after the leftist pro-Russia and Orbán ally Robert Fico won an election in Slovakia.

The outcome could also affect ties with neighboring Ukraine, which Poland has supported in the war against Russia's full-scale invasion. Good relations soured in September over Ukrainian grain entering and affecting Poland's market.

As the vote count neared the end, Law and Justice had nearly 36% and the far-right Confederation, a possible ally, 7%. Three opposition parties led by Tusk's Civil Coalition together had more than 53%, enough for a comfortable majority in the 460-seat lower house of parliament, or Sejm.

On Sunday evening, Tusk declared the end of Law and Justice rule and a new era for Poland. However, Poles were possibly facing weeks of political uncertainty as Law and Justice said it would still try to build a new 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.

Duda, during a visit to Rome on Monday, declined comment pending final results, telling reporters that he was happy about the large turnout and the peaceful nature of the election at a time of war across the border in Ukraine and "hybrid attacks from Belarus."

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A limited international observation mission led by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe said the "historic high turnout demonstrated the commitment of citizens to upholding democracy in Poland." But it also pointed to the problem of bias by taxpayer-funded public television, which it said "demonstrated open hostility towards the opposition."

Douglas Wake, the head of the mission, called it troubling that "the ruling party and its candidates gained a clear advantage from the misuse of state resources, undermining the separation between state and party."

The governing party also mobilized other state resources to help itself, including an unfair division of votes in electoral districts, said Jacek Kucharczyk, president of the Institute of Public Affairs, a Warsaw think tank.

"The electoral system was really tilted toward the government," Kucharczyk said. "You could say that the opposition had to fight this election with one hand tied behind its back and they still won."

Supporters of the ruling party were downbeat about the result.

"I am disappointed with the results, but I accept the democratic choice," said Elżbieta Szadura-Urbańska, a 58-year-old psychologist who voted for Law and Justice. "I think my party is also democratic."

Others were concerned about possible obstacles to a smooth transfer of power.

Cezary Tomczyk, vice chairman of Tusk's party, urged the ruling party to accept the election result, saying it was the will of the people to give power to the opposition.

"The nation has spoken," Tomczyk said.

Even if the opposition parties take power, they will face difficulties in putting forward their agenda. The president has veto power over laws, while the constitutional court, whose role is to ensure that legislation doesn't violate the basic law, is loyal to the current governing party, Kucharczyk said.

"Fixing the relations with the EU in particular will require domestic changes, namely restoring the independence of the judiciary, restoring the rule of law, which is a condition for the EU to release the funding for Poland," Kucharczyk said. "It will be a very, very prolonged and difficult process."

Martti Ahtisaari, former Finnish president, global peace broker and Nobel Peace Prize winner, dies

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."

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.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg called Ahtisaari "a hero of peace, security and conflict prevention," adding that "I admired his peace work in the Western Balkans."

"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."

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European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen called him “a visionary” and “a champion of peace” on X, formerly known as Twitter. Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair called Ahtisaari “an outstanding statesman and a good friend” and said he made a “vital contribution to the Northern Ireland peace process.”

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz wrote on X that “we are losing an outstanding diplomat.” He pointed to Ahtisaari’s mediation “in many conflicts, including in the Balkans” as he attended a summit of Western Balkan leaders in Albania.

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 the present-day Russian town of Vyborg, 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.

He then joined the U.N., working at its New York headquarters, and in 1978 was appointed as the special representative for Namibia by then-U.N. Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim.

He headed the U.N. peacekeeping operation in the 1980s that led to Namibia’s independence from South Africa in 1990. Ahtisaari had become deeply involved in activities aimed at preparing Namibians for independence during his diplomatic tenure in Africa in the 1970s.

The Namibian government was grateful for Ahtisaari’s work and later made him an honorary citizen of the country. Namibian President Hage Geingob said on X that Ahtisaari was “a friend of the Namibian liberation struggle and a leading peacemaker who played through the United Nations a pivotal role in midwifing the birth of a new Namibia.”

Stéphane Dujarric, spokesman for the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, emphasized Ahtisaari’s “invaluable contributions” to the work of the organization, including as the secretary-general’s special representative for Namibia and as a special U.N. envoy for the Horn of Africa and Kosovo among other posts.

“His remarkable life of service and pursuit of peace will always serve as an inspiration to countless United Nations officials who had the privilege to work with him,” Dujarric said in a statement. “Mr. Ahtisaari was a distinguished statesman, diplomat, and exemplary mediator who dedicated his life to the cause of peace.”

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.

A highlight came in 1999 when he negotiated — alongside Russia’s Balkans envoy Viktor Chernomyrdin — the end to fighting in the Yugoslav province of Kosovo with Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic.

Ahtisaari later said his toughest job as a negotiator and peace broker was during the Kosovo talks.

During his presidency, Ahtisaari 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 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, Marko.

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

Trump has narrow gag order imposed on him by federal judge overseeing 2020 election subversion case

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN, LINDSAY WHITEHURST and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press WASHINGTON (AP) — The federal judge overseeing the 2020 election interference case against Donald Trump in Washington imposed a narrow gag order on him on Monday, barring the Republican former president from making statements targeting prosecutors, possible witnesses and court staff.

The order from U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan marks a milestone moment in the federal case that accuses Trump of illegally conspiring to overturn his 2020 election loss to Democrat Joe Biden. It's the most serious restriction a court has placed on Trump's incendiary rhetoric, which has become a centerpiece of his grievance-filled campaign to return to the White House while fighting criminal charges in four cases.

The order may end a line of attack that Trump has made central to his campaign for the 2024 GOP presidential nomination. But it may be only the beginning of an unprecedented fight over what limits can be placed on the speech of a defendant who is also campaigning for America's highest public office.

In a social media post shortly after the hearing in Washington's federal court, Trump vowed to appeal. During a campaign appearance in Iowa later Monday, Trump decried the order as unconstitutional, and claimed it would only help him in the polls.

Speaking from the bench, Chutkan said Trump is entitled to criticize the Justice Department generally and assert his belief that the case is politically motivated but can't mount a "smear campaign" against prosecutors and court personnel.

"No other criminal defendant would be allowed to do so, and I'm not going to allow it in this case," Chutkan said.

Chutkan, who was nominated to the bench by President Barack Obama, said she would impose "sanctions as may be necessary" if the gag order is violated, but she wasn't more specific. Judges can threaten gag order violators with fines or jail time, but jailing a presidential candidate could prompt serious political blowback and pose logistical hurdles.

While ending the stream of Trump's harsh language may make the case easier to manage, the court order is likely to also fuel Trump's claims of political persecution. Trump's campaign quickly seized on the gag order in a fundraising appeal email Monday afternoon, falsely claiming that it was requested by Biden.

At rallies and in social media posts, Trump has repeatedly sought to vilify Smith and other prosecutors, casting himself as the victim of a politicized justice system working to deny him another term. His disparaging remarks have continued since prosecutors requested the gag order last month, including in a media post on Sunday in which he called Smith "deranged" and called Chutkan "highly partisan."

Gag orders are not unheard of in high-profile cases, but there is little legal precedent for court orders limiting the speech of defendants running for public office and none addressing presidential candidates.

Legal experts have said the issue may end up before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Trump's lawyer John Lauro fiercely opposed any gag order, saying Trump is entitled to criticize prosecutors and "speak truth to oppression."

"He is allowed to make statements the prosecution doesn't like. That's part of living with the First Amendment," said Lauro, who declined to comment on the ruling after the hearing.

The ruling came as Trump was onboard his plane traveling to early-voting Iowa for a pair of campaign events. It is unclear whether Trump will abide by the new restrictions, and for how long. In a statement, a Trump spokesperson called the judge's decision "an absolute abomination."

Smith's team argued that Trump knows that his incendiary remarks — calling the justice system "rigged," Chutkan a "Trump-hating judge," and prosecutors a "team of thugs" — could inspire his supporters to threaten or harass his targets. Prosecutors said it is part of Trump's effort to erode the public's faith in the judicial system just like they say he sought to undermine confidence in the 2020 election by spreading lies of fraud after he lost to Biden.

"What Mr. Lauro is saying is the defendant is above the law and he is not subject to the rules of this court like any other defendant is," prosecutor Molly Gaston told the judge. "All this order would do is prevent him from using the campaign as an opportunity to make materially prejudicial statements about this case."

The judge repeatedly pushed back against claims from the defense that prosecutors were seeking to censor the Trump's political speech. Chutkan said Trump "does not have a right to say and do exactly as he pleases."

"You keep talking about censorship like the defendant has unfettered First Amendment rights. He doesn't," Chutkan told Lauro. "We're not talking about censorship here. We're talking restrictions to ensure there is a fair administration of justice on this case."

She also cut off Trump's lawyer when he suggested the case was politically motivated, telling him: "Obviously, you have an audience other than me in mind." And she rejected a defense bid to delay the trial, currently scheduled to begin in March, until after the 2024 election, saying "this trial will not yield to the election cycle."

Lauro said Trump had not violated his pretrial conditions, and those were enough to keep him in check for the future. He told the judge, "What you have put in place is working." Chutkan burst out laughing.

"I'm going to have to take issue with that," the judge said.

Reading aloud a slew of statements from Trump, Chutkan repeatedly raised concerns that his remarks could inspire violence.

"If you call certain people thugs enough times doesn't that suggest, Mr. Lauro, that someone should get them off the streets?" she asked Trump's lawyer.

Prosecutors said Trump's litany of attacks was already having consequences. They noted that a top prosecutor on Smith's team received intimidating communications after being singled out by Trump, and a Texas woman was charged in August with making racist death threats against Chutkan, who is of Black and Asian descent, in a phone message left at her chambers.

It's the second gag order imposed on Trump in the last month. The judge overseeing Trump's civil fraud trial in New York earlier this month issued 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.

He's a survivor: A mother fights for son kidnapped by Hamas militants

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — His mother describes Hersh Goldberg-Polin as like a lot of other young people.

The 23-year-old from Jerusalem loves music, wants to see the world and, now that he's finished his military service, has plans to go to university, his family says. But first he has to come home.

Goldberg-Polin was last seen on Oct. 7, when Hamas militants loaded him into the back of a pickup with

other hostages abducted from a music festival where at least 260 people were killed.

Despite those harrowing accounts, his mother, Rachel Goldberg, holds out hope she will see him again. "He's a survivor," Goldberg said of her son, whose grin beams out from behind a sparse, youthful beard in family photos. "He's not like this big, bulky guy. But I think that survival has a lot to do with where you are mentally."

Born in Berkeley, California, Goldberg-Polin moved to Israel with his family when he was 7 years old.

As a child, he wanted to learn about the world, poring over maps and atlases to learn the names of capital cities and mountains. Later he became a fan of psychedelic trance music and once took a nine-week trek through six European countries so he could attend a series of raves along the way.

Not surprising then, that he and some friends headed to the Supernova music festival, billed as a place "where the essence of unity and love combines forces with the best music."

That vibe was shattered by gunmen who stormed into Israel from the nearby Gaza Strip.

Witnesses said Goldberg-Polin lost part of an arm when the attackers tossed grenades into a temporary shelter where people had taken refuge, but he tied a tourniquet around it and walked out of the shelter before being bundled into the truck.

Family and friends have organized the "Bring Hersh Home" campaign on social media, hoping that he will still be able to take a planned backpack trip through southern Asia.

But first his mother hopes someone helps her son.

"It will require like the biggest heroism and strength and courage, but I want someone to help out and I want someone to help all of those hostages."

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, of Ohio, 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 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, Jordan will 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 those 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 — an accusation 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, of Wyoming, 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."

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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 hard-liners 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 and 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, which Jordan denies.

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

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"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 the former president were forged, with Jordan repeatedly casting 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 his 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.

Jordan also called Trump twice on Jan. 6 — both before and after the attack.

During Trump's speech that day, which preceded the Capitol attack, he 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 he never directly asked for one for himself, Hutchinson told the congressional committee.

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

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

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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 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 Oct. 7, 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.

The Israeli public finds itself in grief and shock, but many pledge allegiance to war effort

By JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Normal life in Israel stopped when Hamas attacked on Oct. 7. Now, the country is fiercely focused on three goals: mourning the dead, fighting the Gaza-based militants and rescuing scores of hostages.

Schools across the country are closed. Major streets are nearly empty of traffic. Many shops and businesses are shuttered, with workers called up for reserve duty.

The attack, in which more than 1,400 Israelis lost their lives in a single day, left Israel unmoored, shattering faith about the state's commitment to its citizens' defense and the superiority of the country's army.

High-tech fortifications crumbled within minutes in the face of a force Israelis previously viewed as a ragtag band of terrorists. For the first time since the 1948 war over Israel's creation, enemies seized Israeli territory — and they dragged at least 199 civilian hostages into Gaza.

With terrified citizens in the south barricading themselves in their homes, the military took hours to respond. Feelings of vulnerability and abandonment were only deepened as desperate families of missing and captive Israelis found no government officials to talk to for days.

"I can't help but think how my entire generation will permanently have collective post-traumatic stress disorder," said 23-year-old Iddo Tamir, whose friend was killed in the Hamas attack.

In a tight-knit country of just over 9 million people, nearly everyone knows someone who was killed, is missing or is held hostage.

"Israel's a small country," said Sahar Dayan, a 25-year-old from a kibbutz north of Tel Aviv. "If it's not my friend, it's my friend's friend."

Dayan spent Sunday at funerals for her two best friends, Noam Shallom and Bar Tomer. They were at an outdoor music festival when Hamas militants burst into the open field and gunned down party-goers. Militants rampaged through a string of towns and villages, as well as several army bases, in their early-morning surprise attacks.

In response, Israel has hit Gaza with airstrikes; prevented food, water, fuel, electricity and medicine from entering the territory; and called up some 360,000 military reserves for an expected ground invasion aimed at destroying Hamas. More than 2,700 people have been killed on the Palestinian side.

Tamar Ashkenazi, author of a book on coping with loss, is consumed by tremendous fear for her 22-year-old son, Yonatan. She has avoided TV since he headed off to the war as a paratrooper.

"I don't like to hear the people talking about a ground invasion. I don't trust this government to take care of my son," she said.

For the last week, TV stations have set up special broadcasts with slogans like "Together we will win" and "Strong together." Their reports, tuned to music in turns somber and uplifting, focus on the aftermath of the Hamas attack — stories of grief, heroism and national unity. They make scant mention of the unfolding humanitarian crisis in Gaza, and broadcasters refer to Hamas militants as "Nazis" or "bastards."

People donate food to soldiers and medical workers, offer their homes to residents displaced from the southern border with Gaza, and gather in small groups at intersections to hold posters with victory slogans.

Stories about the hostages held by Hamas in Gaza dominate the national conversation. Families whose relatives are missing or confirmed hostages have formed organizations and work with press teams to circulate their stories.

"I can't eat. I can't sleep. I can't think of anything else," said Yoni Asher, describing how his wife, two

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young daughters, and mother-in-law were taken captive. "I know that the diplomacy world, the political world, is a cold and cynical world. Please, please, I'm begging you. Don't hurt them, time is critical. Each day that goes by, the chances they will suffer gets much bigger."

On Saturday, hundreds of protesters thronged outside the defense ministry in Tel Aviv to call for the hostages' safe return. They shouted "shame" in Hebrew and taped signs with photos of the hostages to the front of the ministry. Signs in Hebrew read, "Bibi, blood is on your hands," referring to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu by his nickname.

And as they grieve the dead and pray for the missing, Israelis face continual rocket fire out of Gaza and remain united behind the military offensive.

Even those opposed to Israel's far-right government and activists against Israel's occupation of the West Bank have joined the fold, although some have mixed feelings.

During the 2014 Gaza war, some Israelis opted to go to jail rather than serve in the military — progressive activists say that spirit is not present now as reservists eagerly report for duty.

"I don't think there's anyone who is refusing to go now for ideological reasons," said Benzion Sanders, who opposes Israel's decades-old, open-ended military control over Palestinians in the West Bank but now has volunteered for reserve duty.

Reservists who declared in droves earlier this year that they would refuse to serve until Netanyahu walked back his government's plan to overhaul the judiciary have paused their protest. They say they must rally to save Israel.

"We're not serving Netanyahu. We're serving the country," said Josh Drill, a leader of the protest movement and former combat soldier. Drill, who cannot serve for medical reasons, said three members of his old unit were killed in the initial battle. He predicted that the protest movement's rhetoric will have to shift, straddling the line between criticizing Netanyahu and supporting the war effort.

A frightened Israel has entered what many now see as a war for the country's survival. Hundreds of Israelis have cut short overseas stays to join the military campaign. Civil society has entered the breach the government left, with ad hoc groups organizing relief efforts for evacuees, and helping to identify victims and hostages.

Three of the four children of Joshua Greenberg, a 54-year old neuroscience professor, are serving in the army. One, 24-year-old Michael, is likely to serve on the front lines. Like many parents, Greenberg worries for his children. But he's confident they each made their own decision to serve — and he stands behind them.

"Because of the scale of this calamity, there has to be a reckoning. Israel must respond," Greenberg said. "Our children are going to serve in combat units and getting into harm's way to protect everybody else. It's clear that this is the right response. We can't stand silent."

Settlement over Trump family separations at the border limits future separations for 8 years

By REBECCA SANTANA and ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — The federal government would be barred from immigration policies that separate parents from children for eight years under a proposed court settlement announced Monday that also provides families that were split under the Trump administration with temporary legal status and short-term housing aid.

The settlement between the Biden administration and the American Civil Liberties Union, if approved by a judge, would at least temporarily prohibit the type of "zero-tolerance" policy on illegal immigration under which former President Donald Trump separated thousands of families at the border with Mexico.

"It is our intent to do whatever we can to make sure that the cruelty of the past is not repeated in the future. We set forth procedures through this settlement agreement to advance that effort," Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas told The Associated Press.

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Trump, the front-runner for the Republican presidential nomination, hasn't ruled out reviving the highly controversial tactic at the southern border if he wins next year's election.

His administration separated children from their parents or guardians they were traveling with as it moved to criminally prosecute people for illegally crossing the border. The children, who could not be held in criminal custody, were transferred to the Department of Health and Human Services and then typically sent to live with a sponsor, often a relative or someone else with a family connection.

Faulty tracking systems caused many to be apart for an extended time or never reunited with their parents. Facing strong opposition, Trump eventually reversed course in 2018, days before U.S. District Judge Dana Sabraw in San Diego halted the practice and ordered immediate reunification in the lawsuit brought by the ACLU.

During a CNN town hall in May, Trump was noncommittal on whether he would again separate families if elected. "When you say to a family that if you come we're going to break you up, they don't come," he said when pressed.

Lee Gelernt, lead counsel for the ACLU, said the ban on any future attempts to separate families as a deterrent to illegal immigration was crucial.

"This settlement means that babies and toddlers will finally get to see their parents after years apart and that these suffering families will have an opportunity to seek lawful status," he said. "Nothing can make these families whole again but this is at least a start."

Under the settlement, it would still be possible to separate children from parents or guardians, but under limited scenarios, as has been the case for many years. They include if the child is being abused or the parent committed a much more serious crime than crossing the border illegally.

President Joe Biden issued an executive order on his first day in office to reunite families. According to figures released by the Department of Homeland Security in February, 3,881 children were separated from their families from 2017 to 2021. About 74% of those have been reunited with their families: 2,176 before a Biden administration task force was created and 689 afterward.

Hundreds of families sued the federal government, seeking both monetary damages and policy changes.

In 2021, the government was discussing a possible payment of hundreds of thousands of dollars to each parent and child separated under Trump's policies but talks stalled on that point.

But the proposed settlement provides key benefits including authorization for parents of separated children to come to the U.S. under humanitarian parole for three years and work in the United States. The families receive housing aid for up to a year and medical and behavioral health benefits designed to address some of the trauma associated with the separations.

Mayorkas described how he'd met with a woman who had been separated from her daughter and how after they had been reunited, her daughter still struggled with the experience.

"We need to help these families heal. And that is an obligation that we carry because of the pain that we inflicted upon them," he said.

Attorney General Merrick Garland said the practice of separating families was "shameful" and that the proposed settlement will provide those affected with critical support to recover.

They'll also get access to legal services which will be vital as they may file asylum applications to stay in the United States on a permanent basis. The settlement also waives the usual one-year timeline limiting when someone can apply for asylum, and the parents can apply even if they were previously denied. A special team of supervisors will review their cases.

Some of these benefits were already available to families under a Biden-administration created task force designed to reunite separated families. But Gelernt said the settlement goes beyond the task force's purview in key ways such as the asylum assistance.

The settlement requires the government to keep detailed documentation when it separates children from parents so as to avoid the chaos that erupted during the Trump-era family separations where parents and children could not be quickly reunited.

Now that the government and the ACLU have agreed on a settlement plan, the judge will hold a hear-

ing to decide whether to accept it. Before that, people opposed to the settlement can raise objections to the judge.

Biden postpones trip to Colorado to discuss domestic agenda as the Israel-Hamas conflict intensifies

By CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden postponed a trip to Colorado on Monday to stay in Washington and focus on the growing conflict in the Middle East, setting aside an opportunity to pitch his economic accomplishments as he runs for reelection.

The White House said Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris met with Jake Sullivan, the national security adviser; Avril Haines, the national intelligence director; and Bill Burns, head of the Central Intelligence Agency. Chief of Staff Jeff Zients also attended.

Biden planned to visit Rep. Lauren Boebert's district, where he was to tour CS Wind, the world's largest facility for wind tower manufacturing. But the White House said just a few hours before Biden was set to take off for the trip that it would be rescheduled as Israel prepares a ground invasion of Gaza and humanitarian concerns worsen in the territory.

The Democratic president is weighing a decision to visit Israel in what would be a striking symbol of support following the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas that killed more than 1,400 Israelis.

More than 2,300 Palestinians have died in the ensuing Israeli bombardment of Gaza. At least 30 U.S. citizens have also died, and 13 remain missing, the State Department says.

It's rare for presidential travel, which is meticulously planned for security and logistical purposes, to be called off at the last minute. Biden's decision reflects the competing pressure that he faces as he tries to manage bloody conflicts in Ukraine, where the Russian invasion is in its second year, and now the Middle East, always one of the world's most combustible regions.

There are concerns that a second front could open in Israel's north, which neighbors the Hezbollah-controlled territory in Lebanon's south. There have already been reports of sporadic fighting along the border.

Iran backs both Hamas and Hezbollah. Two U.S. aircraft carrier strike groups have been dispatched to the Eastern Mediterranean in an effort to deter a widening war.

Domestic and foreign policy priorities have collided for Biden before.

He was scheduled to visit Papua New Guinea and Australia after attending the Group of Seven meeting in Japan earlier this year, but the two stops were scrubbed because of the standoff over the debt ceiling back in Washington. Rather than deepening ties with countries in the Indo-Pacific region, Biden jetted home to hash out a deal with Republicans to prevent a first-ever default.

The change in Monday's schedule costs Biden a chance to turn Boebert into a political foil as he showcases the Inflation Reduction Act, his signature domestic legislation and the source of hundreds of billions of dollars for clean energy incentives.

Boebert has called the law "a massive failure" that "needs to be repealed." But Biden was planning to demonstrate otherwise during a tour of CS Wind in the town of Pueblo before his trip was postponed. The company is undergoing a \$200 million expansion that is expected to create 850 jobs by 2026 with help from the tax benefits in the law.

Pueblo is one of the anchors of Colorado's sprawling 3rd Congressional District, which covers more ground than Pennsylvania. Boebert won her seat in 2020 and barely held on to it during the 2022 midterms.

There's maximum chaos in Congress right now for House Republicans, who ousted Rep. Kevin McCarthy of California as their speaker but have been unable to settle on a replacement. Rep. Jim Jordan of Ohio, 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," Biden said. "For the first time in a long time we're actually investing in America."

EU leaders will meet to deal with the fallout in Europe from the Israel-Hamas war

By LORNE COOK and RAF CASERT Associated Press

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

The leaders will also attempt to restore some order after a series of social media messages, statements and visits by EU officials sowed confusion about the 27-nation bloc's intentions after Hamas attacked southern Israel on Oct. 7, triggering a new war in Gaza.

More than 4,000 people have been killed in Israel and Gaza since Hamas launched its bloody rampage and almost 200 Israelis, including children, were taken hostage. Rallies in support of both sides have been held around Europe. Some have been banned.

"The conflict could have major security consequences for our societies," EU Council President Charles Michel said on Monday as he announced the video summit. The meeting will also focus on getting aid to civilians and working with other countries in the region to try to stop tensions from spreading.

Over the last week, France has ordered a ban on pro-Palestinian demonstrations and the number of antisemitic acts has risen. Both the EU and the United States consider Hamas to be a terrorist organization.

In the Paris area, the Louvre Museum and the Palace of Versailles 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.

In an interview with The Associated Press Friday, Michel warned that an outflow of people from Gaza could worsen divisions within the EU. "If there would be more difficulties at the regional level, we would have immediately huge difficulties on the European soil because of the refugees," he said.

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."

Also high on the leaders' list of concerns will be the EU's embarrassing mixed messages over the conflict. Just after Hamas launched its attack, a commissioner at the bloc's executive branch announced that development aid meant to help the Palestinian Authority beat poverty would be immediately suspended.

Hours later, the European Commission's position had changed. Instead, it announced an urgent review

of the assistance to ensure that no money is being misused. Since it is listed by the EU as a terror group, Hamas does not receive such any funds anyway.

On Saturday, the commission said that it was tripling humanitarian aid to Gaza - money meant to be used in times of crisis or disaster like the war.

Commission President Ursula von der Leyen was in Israel just before the aid was announced, but her visit was not coordinated with the EU member countries. Indeed, the commission has no remit under EU treaties to conduct foreign policy. She was also criticized for failing to urge Israel to protect Palestinian civilians.

"We have put emotions and visibility in front of the core interests of the EU," an EU official said Monday. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the confusion frankly, said that several member countries had complained about the way things were handled in Brussels.

But von der Leyen's spokesman, Eric Mamer, said that "the president can travel wherever she wants."

"She went to Israel to express solidarity with the country that had been the subject of an unprovoked terrorist attack. That is entirely in her prerogatives," he said.

Von der Leyen and Michel travel to Washington later this week for an EU-U.S. summit with President Joe Biden.

Human rights groups have been dismayed by the communications debacle at a time of major crisis. The EU is the world's biggest provider of aid to the Palestinians, but it holds little influence over Israel.

"This is not the time for mixed messages, instead what we need is decisive moral leadership that is centred in the cause of peace," said Vittorio Infante, the EU humanitarian policy expert at Oxfam. "As every minute goes by, civilians are paying an ever-mounting price."

Muslim boy killed and woman wounded in Illinois hate crime motivated by Israel-Hamas war, police say

By SOPHIA TAREEN Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — An Illinois landlord accused of fatally stabbing a 6-year-old Muslim boy and seriously wounding his mother was charged with a hate crime after police and relatives said he singled out the victims because of their 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 32-year-old 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.

Relatives and a Muslim civil liberties and advocacy group identified the slain boy as the wounded woman's son.

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, 71, 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. WLS-TV reported that Czuba was scheduled for an initial hearing on Monday afternoon at the county courthouse in Joliet, according to the Will County State's Attorney Office.

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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.

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 where the boy's father was in attendance. 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.

Today in History: October 17, Albert Einstein arrives in the U.S. as a refugee from Nazi Germany

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Oct. 17, the 290th day of 2023. There are 75 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Oct. 17, 1933, Albert Einstein arrived in the United States as a refugee from Nazi Germany.

On this date:

In 1610, French King Louis XIII, age nine, was crowned at Reims, five months after the assassination

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of his father, Henry IV.

In 1777, British forces under Gen. John Burgoyne surrendered to American troops in Saratoga, New York, in a turning point of the Revolutionary War.

In 1807, Britain declared it would continue to reclaim British-born sailors from American ships and ports regardless of whether they held U.S. citizenship.

In 1910, social reformer and poet Julia Ward Howe, author of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," died in Portsmouth, Rhode Island at age 91.

In 1931, mobster Al Capone was convicted in Chicago of income tax evasion.

In 1966, 12 New York City firefighters were killed while battling a blaze in lower Manhattan.

In 1967, Puyi, the last emperor of China, died in Beijing at age 61.

In 1973, Arab oil-producing nations announced they would begin cutting back oil exports to Western nations and Japan; the result was a total embargo that lasted until March 1974.

In 1978, President Jimmy Carter signed a bill restoring U.S. citizenship to Confederate President Jefferson Davis.

In 1979, Mother Teresa of India was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

In 1989, an earthquake measuring 6.9 in magnitude struck northern California, killing 63 people and causing \$6 billion worth of damage.

In 2013, the government reopened its doors hours after President Barack Obama signed a bipartisan congressional measure passed the night before to end a 16-day partial shutdown.

In 2018, residents of the Florida Panhandle community of Mexico Beach who had fled Hurricane Michael a week earlier returned home to find houses, businesses and campers ripped to shreds; the storm had killed at least 59 people and caused more than \$25 billion in damage in Florida, Georgia, the Carolinas and Virginia.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Gary Puckett is 81. Actor Michael McKean is 76. Actor George Wendt is 75. Actor-singer Bill Hudson is 74. Atlanta Braves manager Brian Snitker is 68. Astronaut Mae Jemison is 67. Country singer Alan Jackson is 65. Movie critic Richard Roeper is 64. Movie director Rob Marshall is 63. Actor Grant Shaud is 63. Animator Mike Judge is 61. Rock singer-musician Fred LeBlanc (Cowboy Mouth) is 60. Singer Rene' Dif is 56. Reggae singer Ziggy Marley is 55. Actor Wood Harris is 54. Singer Wyclef Jean (zhahn) is 54. World Golf Hall of Famer Ernie Els is 54. Singer Chris Kirkpatrick ('N Sync) is 52. Rapper Eminem is 51. Actor Sharon Leal is 51. Actor Matthew Macfadyen is 49. Actor Felicity Jones is 40. Actor Chris Lowell is 39.