

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Thursday, April 4

Senior Menu: Cheeseburger quinoa casserole, cheesy breadstick steamed Brussel sprouts, fruit.  
School Breakfast: Muffins.  
School Lunch: Pasta with meat sauce.  
Track at Mobridge 11 a.m.

## Friday, April 5

Senior Menu: Spanish rice with hamburger, green beans, vanilla pudding with mandarin oranges, whole wheat bread.  
School Breakfast: Bagel bites.  
School Lunch: Hamburgers, fries.

## Saturday, April 6

Thrift Store open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.  
Duelling Duo at the Legion 6 p.m.

## Sunday, April 7

POPS Concert 2 p.m. and 5 p.m.  
Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., Worship Service at 10:30 a.m.  
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m., SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.  
First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 6 p.m.  
St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion at St. John's at 9 a.m. and Zion at 11 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.  
NSU Soccer Camp at the Groton soccer field, 2-5 p.m.

## **OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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

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# 1440

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At least nine people are dead and over 1,000 injured in Taiwan, while scores of people are trapped in rubble after a 7.4 magnitude earthquake struck off the island's eastern coast Wednesday morning local time. The casualties are expected to rise as rescue efforts continue. The earthquake is the strongest to hit Taiwan since 1999 when a 7.7 magnitude quake killed roughly 2,400 people.

Nearly 2 million chickens were slaughtered earlier this week after a number of the animals tested positive for bird flu at a Texas egg production plant. The culling is the latest effort by agricultural companies to ward off the spread of the virus, which has affected more than 82 million birds across the US since 2022 (stats here).

Amazon confirmed yesterday it was laying off hundreds of employees from its cloud computing division, Amazon Web Services. The layoffs—impacting sales and marketing roles as well as employees focused on technology at its physical stores—come amid a broader company pivot on grocery store strategy.

## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

NCAA Women's Elite Eight matchup between Iowa and LSU hauled in 12.3 million viewers, the most ever for a women's college basketball game and the biggest basketball audience for ESPN since 2012. LSU star Angel Reesedeclares for WNBA Draft. Iowa's Caitlin Clark wins Naismith Player of the Year for second straight season.

Buffalo Bills trade four-time Pro Bowl wide receiver Stefon Diggs to the Houston Texans for 2025 second-round draft pick.

James Beard Foundation announces 2024 James Beard Award finalists for America's best restaurants and chefs.

## Science & Technology

Pig kidney transplant recipient discharged from hospital two weeks after procedure; success is a key advance in the field of cross-species transplants. New mRNA drug shows success in early clinical trials in treating propionic acidaemia, a rare genetic disease affecting metabolic function.

AI researchers find method to trick leading chatbots into violating ethics guidelines by repeatedly asking slightly different forms of the same question.

Microsoft and startup Quantinuum devise method to reduce the error rate for quantum computers by a factor of 800; marks a key step toward widespread adoption of the technology.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 +0.1%, Dow -0.1%, Nasdaq +0.2%); US private payrolls rise more than expected in March, while the Federal Reserve signals timing of interest rate cuts is uncertain.

The Walt Disney Co. and Bob Iger defeat challenge from activist investor Nelson Peltz and his hedge fund as shareholders vote to reelect full board. Former President Donald Trump sues two cofounders of Trump Media and Technology Group, the owner of Truth Social, for allegedly mismanaging the company. Two men plead guilty to \$22M insider-trading scheme tied to Trump Media.

Private equity firm Silver Lake to take entertainment company Endeavor private for \$27.50 per share, valuing the company at \$13B. Autism Impact Fund, a venture capital firm focused on autism, raises \$60M.

## Politics & World Affairs

Ukraine signs law lowering military draft age from 27 to 25 to replenish its depleted army amid war with Russia. Uganda's constitutional court largely upholds the country's anti-LGBTQ law, which allows the death penalty for certain same-sex acts.

Finnish police identify bullying as motive behind school shooting outside of Helsinki that killed one student and wounded two others.

Midwest, Northeast brace for snowstorm and blizzard conditions through today; parts of New England to see more than 2 feet of snow.

## The Life of Mary Anne Clark



Funeral Services for Mary Anne Clark, 92, of Groton will be 11:00 a.m., Friday, April 12th at the Presbyterian Church in Groton. Rev. Terry Kenny will officiate. Burial will follow at a later date in Huffton Cemetery.

Visitation will be held at Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel from 5-7 p.m. on Thursday with a prayer service at 7:00 p.m..

Mary Anne passed away on April 1, 2024 in Aberdeen, SD.

Mary Anne was born in Bristol, South Dakota to John and Lena Erwick, Norwegian immigrants, on June 30, 1931. She grew up in Bristol and graduated from Bristol High School in 1950. She went on to school at the Aberdeen School of Commerce where she excelled in secretarial skills. She then worked for Loel Lust Chevrolet where she ended up meeting her husband, John M. Clark, in the spring of 1958. They knew pretty quickly that they wanted to get married, and were married on December 6, 1958. They lived in Groton where they farmed and raised their family. She was a wonderful helpmate to her farmer husband and she kept a beautiful, organized and welcoming home. Later in life they moved

to the country where John enjoyed collecting toy John Deere tractors and she took up doll making.

Mary Anne was a loving wife, mother and grandmother. She was active in the First Presbyterian Church and P.E.O. Putney Ladies Aid and enjoyed her Wednesday morning coffee group with her many friends. Recently she has enjoyed the Monday morning coffee group, too.

Mary Anne was very artistic and creative. She had many passions that she was good at, including cooking, baking, sewing, doll making, drawing and painting.

Mary Anne was kind and generous and lived her life to the fullest!

She is survived by her daughter, Jill (Dennis Gallaher) of Eden Prairie, MN, her son John Timothy (Kelly Cutler Clark) of Groton, two grandsons, Patrick and Timothy Gallaher of Eden Prairie, MN, and one granddaughter, Kennedy Clark Sweeter (Grant Sweeter) of Dell Rapids, SD, and many nieces, nephews and cousins. She is preceded in death by her parents, husband and brother, James Erwick.



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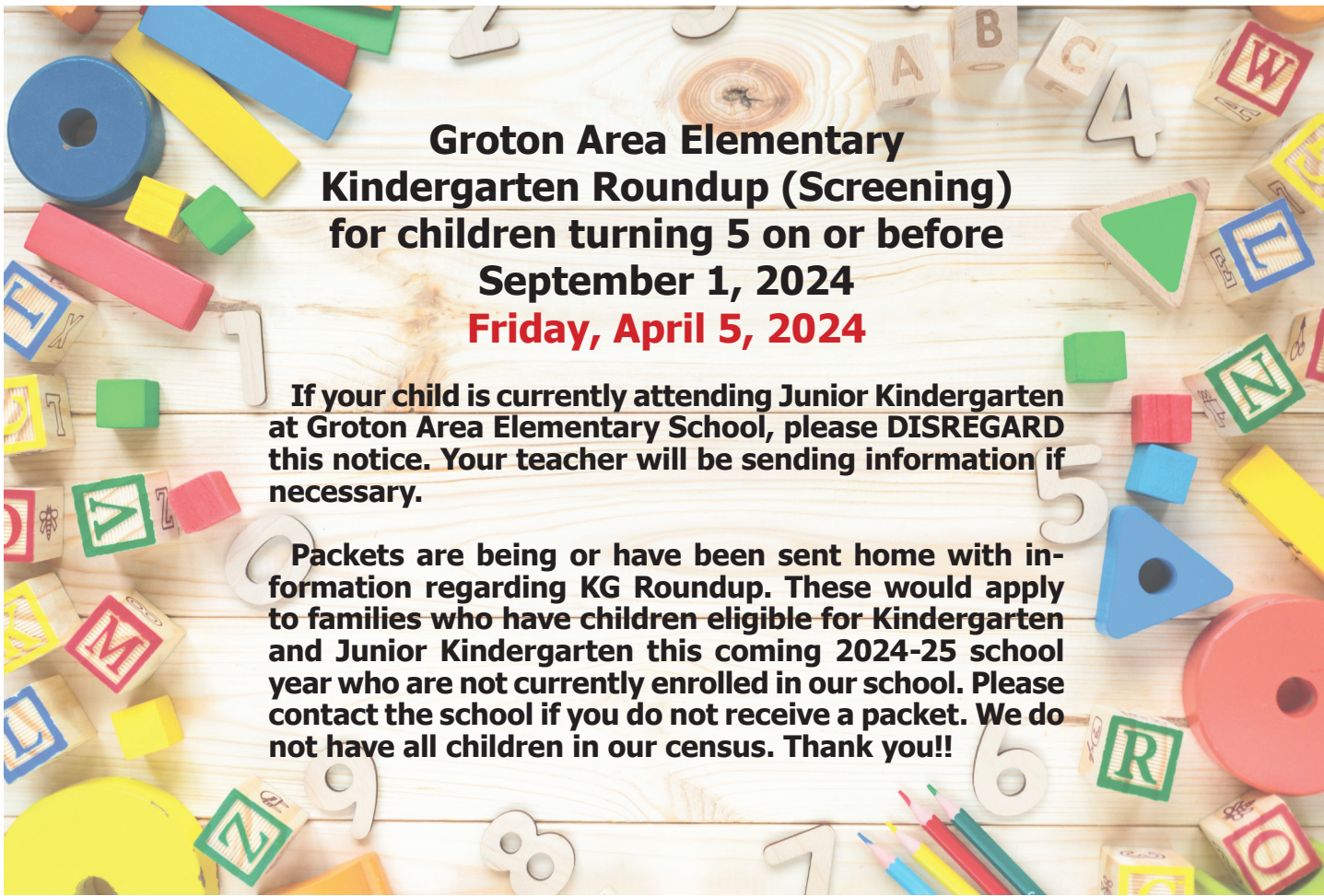
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15 N Main St. - Ste. 101  
Downtown Groton

Call/Text Paul: 605-397-7460  
Call/Text Tina: 605-397-7285



Exercise reduces joint pain and helps  
fight tiredness. - Mayo Clinic



## Groton Area Elementary Kindergarten Roundup (Screening) for children turning 5 on or before September 1, 2024 Friday, April 5, 2024

If your child is currently attending Junior Kindergarten at Groton Area Elementary School, please **DISREGARD** this notice. Your teacher will be sending information if necessary.

Packets are being or have been sent home with information regarding KG Roundup. These would apply to families who have children eligible for Kindergarten and Junior Kindergarten this coming 2024-25 school year who are not currently enrolled in our school. Please contact the school if you do not receive a packet. We do not have all children in our census. Thank you!!

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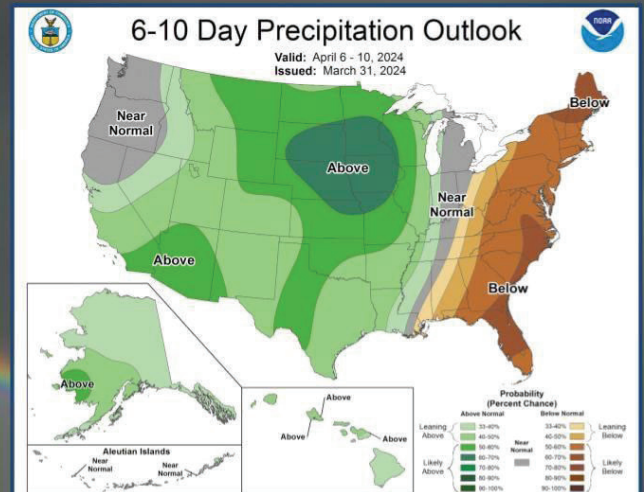
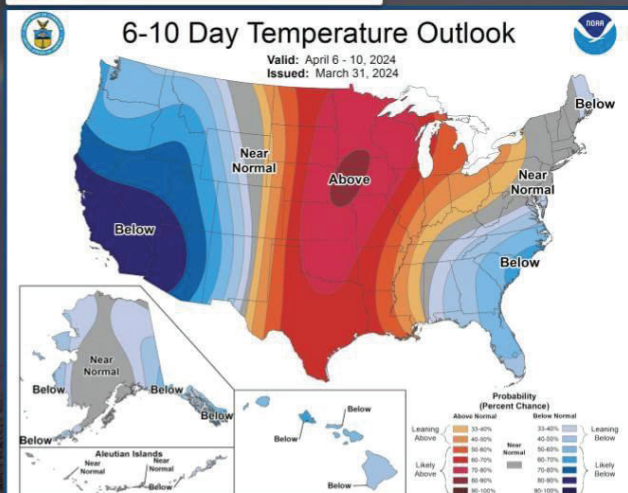
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## EMPLOYMENT

**Position available for full-time Public Works Laborer. Formal training and/or experience preferred. Salary negotiable DOE. Benefits include medical insurance, life insurance, and SD State Retirement. Please send application and resume to the City of Groton, PO Box 587, Groton, SD 57445, or email to [city.doug@nvc.net](mailto:city.doug@nvc.net). Applications will be accepted until 5pm on April 16, 2024. Full job description and application may be found at <https://www.grotonsd.gov/o/grotoncity/page/employment-options>. For more information, please call 605-397-8422. Equal opportunity employer.**

## 6-10 Day Outlooks

### Temperature



### Precipitation

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## *Thank You!*

**Wow - what a surprise our 30th Anniversary with Groton Dairy Queen was! Thank you for all the kind comments on Facebook - it is very humbling. Thank you to our children: Jessica, Daniel & Julia for surprising us with the Facebook posts and newspaper ad! You kids were a huge part of the business - beginning work at ages 14, 12 and giving in to Julia beginning at DQ at 10 years old. Wow - where did all those years go!?**



**Special shout out to Darlene, our wonderful assistant manager for the past 26 years. You are special to us.**

**Thank you to all of our present and past employees - we remember you and appreciate each of you more than you know.**

**Thank you to all of our loyal customers over the years - we so appreciate you and enjoy serving you.**

**Most of all, we praise God for His abundant blessings and for giving us strength for each day to do what He's called us to do.**

**Dale & Joyce**



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## BIO Girls hear about Enrich Groton SoDak Inc.

Enrich Groton SoDak Inc. was invited to Session 6 of BIO Girls on Wednesday afternoon. The day was an extraordinary day in their BIO Girls journey, as they put their mantras into action - Attitude of gratitude, Kindness is our superpower, and their new mantra, BE THE CHANGE!

Enrich's food pantry Manager Pat Miller spoke about their mission to recycle, reduce, reuse as well as the ways they serve the needs of the community through acts of giving and enrichment. April Abeln and CCCTS Manager Diane Warrington assisted Pat. As part of their session, BIO Girls joined hands and hearts to make a real impact through their volunteering session which included donations to The Pantry and Common Cents Community Thrift Store.





## Where is Your Cashflow Projection?

By: Blaine Carey, Program Director  
Mitchell Technical College

With spring quickly approaching comes another calving and cropping season that normally produces an abundance of optimism. That doesn't seem as prevalent these days, as there has been a steady dose of sobering discussions over break-evens, cash flows, working capital and other farm economics the past few months. It appears most producers and ag lenders have a good grasp on the situation, especially if a detailed cash flow projection was compiled in early 2024.

Once a cashflow has been completed for the year, it should become a goal list, as well as a working document, and compared to your actual income and expense. So, instead of filing that cash flow and placing it in some obscure location, keep it available during the year. As you are aware, it is difficult to estimate crop prices and yields six months from now, and the livestock sector is just as challenging. Nevertheless, cash flow projection does provide an indication of how much working capital is needed to sustain your operation. Depending on when your major sources of revenue are realized, I would highly suggest "penciling-in" the actual results and comparing them to your projections. As the year unfolds, having this information readily available may help you adjust your marketing decisions, as well as your capital purchases. Most lenders and producers tend to be fairly conservative on the income side, so there may be some extra cushion if you have been able to exceed the early projections. On the flip side, if revenue is not meeting expectations, it is better to be aware of this situation than to ignore it.

Hopefully you were a little generous on the expense side of the ledger when compiling your projections. As for crop input estimates, I think the best time to re-visit your numbers is sometime around mid-June. By then, planted acres have been finalized and most of the costs have been incurred. This timeline will also provide an opportunity to re-figure break-evens ahead of the USDA Quarterly Stocks and Planted Acreage report, both of which have a tendency to provide some big swings in commodity prices. Having a good knowledge of production expenses is an important part of controlling costs in an environment of tight margins. Overhead costs are a little more difficult to trim, but it is relatively easy to track year-to-date expenditures and compare them to projections.

These same tracking methods need to be utilized by livestock producers, even with livestock risk protection or other marketing in place to track your goals of income. Lastly, if family living expenses are being regularly tracked, it is easy to determine whether you are sticking to your budget. I realize it's not practical to check this every month, but it would be a good idea to take a good look on a quarterly basis. This will allow you to adjust spending money in one area if there are unforeseen problems appearing in another.

So, the first step is to dig out that 2024 cash flow projection and get ready to update it as needed. This is no time to bury your head in sand! If you haven't devoted much time to understanding your financial condition, now would be a great time to enroll in our program. Please contact me at either (605) 350-4132 or [Blaine.Carey@mitchelltech.edu](mailto:Blaine.Carey@mitchelltech.edu) if you would like more information about the SD Center Farm and Ranch Management.





## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Tribe worries about police staffing, not cartels, officials tell congressman

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - APRIL 3, 2024 6:30 PM

WAGNER — Yankton Sioux Tribe officials said Wednesday they know where the drugs on their tribal lands are coming from.

“Not the cartels,” said Justin Song Hawk, a former tribal police officer.

Other members of the Ihanktonwan Oyate — as the tribe is called in the Dakota language — chuckled in response. The comment was a reference to Governor Kristi Noem, who’s alleged repeatedly in recent months that Mexican cartels are bringing drugs to tribal reservations, and has accused tribal leaders of benefitting from the activity.

Song Hawk’s comments came during a meeting with South Dakota Republican U.S. Representative Dusty Johnson about the tribe’s law enforcement needs. The tribe, headquartered in southeast South Dakota, is one of nine Native American tribes in the state.

Tribal Chief of Police Edwin Young said drugs are coming from cities including Sioux Falls, and the primary drug is methamphetamine. He also told Johnson about several problems his department faces.

Young said he has one day off per month and has been working that schedule since December. He said there are only three officers, and the tribe needs about 12.

“About 80% of my time is spent patrolling,” he said. “The other tribes are the same way.”

He said one of the causes for short staffing is that tribal law enforcement officers have to train in New Mexico for months at a Bureau of Indian Affairs officer school.

Johnson said that’s a problem. He suggested allowing prospective tribal officers to train at the South Dakota Law Enforcement Training Center in Pierre.

“I can’t imagine anything but good coming from tribal law enforcement training alongside the state’s law enforcement,” Johnson said.

Young said another problem is that non-tribal, local law enforcement cannot help enforce tribal law on tribal land. He said more agreements allowing for that could be beneficial. That’s something Noem has also called for.

The federal government has treaty responsibilities to fund public safety work for tribes. Johnson said the U.S. Attorney’s Office and the FBI don’t have time for lower-level offenses. He said that creates an enforcement gap.

“You’re stuck with this big doughnut hole, where the tribes don’t have the authority to fill that gap, and the federal government doesn’t have the capacity to fill that gap,” Johnson said.

Young also said low bond amounts — which arrested people post to avoid jail time — are another problem. Johnson agreed.

“You get a lot of people bonded out on a \$20 bond,” Johnson said, “for something where if you did that in Mitchell, you’d be doing six months in jail.”

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

## COMMENTARY

### **Mention of agricultural causes comes too late in state's water pollution report**

**BRAD JOHNSON**

When you put the fox in charge of the henhouse, it's entertaining to see who gets blamed for the chicken parts scattered around.

The fox is the South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (DANR), created from Gov. Kristi Noem's 2021 merger of the Department of Agriculture with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. The hens, unfortunately, are our lakes, rivers and streams.

The disingenuous story now being told is found in the 2024 South Dakota Integrated Report for Surface Water Quality Assessment. Every two years, federal law requires the state to report on the status of water pollution.

The 2024 report says 78% of the assessed river and stream miles and 80% of the assessed acreage of lakes are too polluted to support one or more assigned beneficial uses. Those uses may include domestic water supplies, fishing, swimming or irrigation, among others.

The DANR, sometimes derisively described as the Department of Agriculture and "No Rules," blames lake pollution primarily on mercury and describes mercury pollution as a global problem beyond the ability of South Dakota to solve. How convenient, then, to blame it for South Dakota's polluted water.

"The primary source of mercury in South Dakota comes from global atmospheric deposition," the report says. "Therefore, the high incidence of nonsupport for lakes is not likely to improve until measures to reduce mercury are implemented at a global scale."

Guess that's as good a reason as any for the state not to invest in fighting water pollution.

The state not only diverts the blame for lake pollution, but also makes only a glancing mention of agricultural contributions to river and stream pollution.

"Total suspended solids (TSS) contamination from nonpoint sources and natural origin was the primary cause of nonsupport for fishery/aquatic life uses. *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) contamination from livestock and wildlife contributions was the primary cause of nonsupport for recreational uses," the executive summary says.

The report later reveals that 91% of lakes fell below the good category for total nitrogen and 94% fell below the good category for phosphorous pollutants.

"Similar to lakes, the rivers and streams survey points to excessive amounts of nitrogen and phosphorus with over 73% and 60%, respectively, falling into the poor category when compared to their ecoregional benchmarks," the report says.

Based on reading the executive summary, one can only guess the source of those pollutants.

Travel back in time to the 2014 report, before the EPA lowered its mercury standard, and there was little mention of mercury.

About 69% of rivers and streams and 56% of the lakes did not support all their beneficial uses, that report said: "Similar to previous reporting periods, nonsupport for fishery/aquatic life uses was caused primarily by total suspended solids (TSS) from agricultural nonpoint sources and natural origin."

Notice how the word "agricultural," which was important in the 2014 executive summary, disappeared from the same part of the 2024 report.

It is only when the reader gets to page 37 in the new report, a point far beyond what the general public likely would read, that you find in reference to lakes, "Runoff carrying sediment and nutrients from agricultural land is the most significant source of nonpoint pollution."

"The major water quality problems in South Dakota lakes continue to be excessive nutrients, and algae due to nonpoint source pollution (primarily agricultural)," the 2024 report continues, on page 40. "Nonpoint source runoff and internal phosphorous cycling continues to negatively impact the trophic state of many lakes. Aging reservoirs have also become more eutrophic as many are now approaching their expected

life spans.”

In other words, some of our surface water bodies are dying, and we aren't doing much to stop it.

The effect of these subtle shifts in reporting is that political leaders do not see water pollution as a problem. Very little state money is spent on cleaning up our lakes and streams, and the state's approach to agricultural pollution is all voluntary.

But when the state's own report fails to mention the "agricultural" contributions to water pollution until the 37th page, it does not create any urgency for landowners to voluntarily participate in water quality programs.

South Dakota, which depends on its surface water for tourism, fishing, hunting and community health, may not spend much money on protecting one of its more precious resources.

But at least we should be honest in acknowledging that the fox isn't the best guard for the henhouse.

*Brad Johnson is a Watertown real estate appraiser, former newspaper reporter and editor, and longtime opinion columnist. He is president of the South Dakota Lakes and Streams Association, vice president of the South Dakota Wildlife Federation and served 16 years on the South Dakota Board of Water and Natural Resources.*

## Freedom Caucuses push for conservative state laws, but getting attention is their big success

**SD and 10 other states have formal chapters of the State Freedom Caucus Network, which aims to push Republicans to the right**

**BY: ELAINE S. POVICH - APRIL 3, 2024 7:00 AM**

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. — When a Republican colleague threatened to read aloud from a 2-foot stack of books — including a biblical guide to leadership and a tome by anti-tax activist Grover Norquist — to protest inaction on his bills last week, Missouri state Sen. Rick Brattin quickly took up the cause.

Seizing on a chance to hijack the planned schedule, Brattin spoke for about 45 minutes, accusing the leaders of his own Republican Party of ignoring some bills and making things "really frustrating" for ultra-conservative members. He often waved his arms for emphasis, as other senators sat flipping through papers, waiting for the session to begin.

"It leads to things coming to a halt in this chamber," he said. "I wish we would do things people actually want."

Brattin is chair of Missouri's Freedom Caucus, a group of Republican legislators who aim to push their party further to the right on issues such as immigration, voting access and transgender restrictions.

But some other Republicans say members of the Freedom Caucus gum up the legislative works and are more interested in publicity and grandstanding than conservative policymaking. Frustrated by such tactics, Missouri Senate leaders stripped four Freedom Caucus senators, including Brattin, of their chairmanships and parking places earlier this year.

"It's hard to do stuff even when everybody's acting in good faith," said Senate President Pro Tem Caleb Rowden, a Republican. Rowden derided the Freedom Caucus members as "swamp creatures who all too often remind me more of my children than my colleagues." He added that last week's delay was a mix-up and that the bills at issue would come to the floor.

"They did that repeatedly, day after day for two weeks, basically," Rowden said in an interview last week at his spacious desk in his high-ceilinged office across the hall from the Senate. "It became necessary for us to do something that would indicate that we're not going to let four guys run the place; it's just not how this works."

The Missouri Freedom Caucus claims at least six senators and is approaching a dozen House members. There are similar chapters in 10 other states so far that are officially part of the State Freedom Caucus Network, an outgrowth of the congressional group that has held up deals and helped oust speakers in



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the U.S. House of Representatives.

The state chapters are proposing conservative legislation and slowing measures they don't like, even bills that were once considered routine and noncontroversial. And its members in many states, including Missouri, are running for higher office. But regardless of whether they succeed on legislation, they excel at getting publicity and drawing attention to themselves.

That is by design, Andrew Roth, president of the Washington, D.C.-based network, told Stateline.

"What we try to do is push conservative policy," he said. "If we win, we win. If we lose, we're exposing the fake Republicans for who they are. They will then have to answer to their constituents. We feel like we win either way."

The national organization provides the state caucuses with support and funding. That includes the salary of each state director, none of whom is a legislator, according to Roth.

The state directors pay attention to what's going on in state government even when the legislatures are not in session and the mostly part-time lawmakers are home tending to other business. They can alert the more than 160 members to issues and either get them to call a news conference or draft legislation to be considered in the next session to highlight their priorities.

Tim Jones, a former Missouri House speaker who is now director of the state's Freedom Caucus, said in an interview that since the parking spaces kerfuffle, the caucus has picked up five new members in the House. "It's not meant to be a publicity stunt for anybody," he insisted. "It's supposed to be the conservative North Star of the General Assembly."

Sen. Bill Eigel, a Missouri caucus member who is running for governor, said taking his parking spot "is kind of the height of pettiness," but that he won't be deterred.

"They are trying to silence us, just like they are trying to silence Donald Trump," Eigel said in an interview. "Unfortunately for them, it's not going to work. We're going to continue to be bold."

Eigel said he parks "down by the river" now, a few blocks away from the underground Capitol garage. His wife is happy that the extra walk means he's getting in a few more steps each day, he quipped.

## Pushing to the right

Like most other Republicans, Freedom Caucus members across states have championed school vouchers, pushed to send state troops to the U.S.-Mexico border to pursue migrants crossing into the country illegally, and opposed large state budgets and transgender medical care for minors.

But the Freedom Caucuses formed because some Republicans saw the rest of their party as not conservative enough. That has led to intraparty conflict in many GOP-dominated state capitols.

In Missouri, for example, the Senate passed a bill that would make it harder to amend the state constitution, if voters approve the measure, after leaders it stripped a provision backed by the Freedom Caucus to ban non-citizens from voting. The Missouri Constitution already restricts voting only to citizens, but Freedom Caucus members argued the ban could be made even more explicit. Democrats disagreed and staged a filibuster that tied up the Senate; Republican leaders eventually agreed to take the provisions out, drawing the Freedom Caucus's ire.

Eigel would like the House to put the tougher provisions back in. Still, he claims credit for the Senate victory. "If the Freedom Caucus doesn't stand up and cause a ruckus, the [ballot] initiative petition doesn't move," he said.

In Idaho, Republican leaders removed some Freedom Caucus members from committee leadership late last year. And in South Carolina, some Freedom Caucus members who refused to sign a loyalty oath pledging not to campaign against other Republican members, which is against party rules, were dumped from the House Republican caucus.

Matthew Green, a politics professor at the Catholic University of America who has studied the state Freedom Caucuses extensively, said in an interview that the state caucuses are "arguably more important than the U.S. House Freedom Caucus for policymaking."

In a forthcoming paper, Green found that state legislative conservative caucuses — precursors of the

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current Freedom Caucuses — began to form as early as 2017, driven by lawmakers who found the GOP in their states insufficiently conservative.

But since 2021, the caucuses have formed at the behest of the national State Freedom Caucus Network, “illustrating how national interest groups and elected officials can contribute to state-level polarization,” he said. His study also found that lawmakers who lack power and influence are more likely to join the caucuses.

These caucuses, Green said, have been able to “move [the] party’s agenda further rightward, especially if the caucus constitutes a sizable proportion of the party.”

Delaying tactics can force Republican leaders to act on some issues, he said. “Seems like if the Freedom Caucus is disruptive and confrontational, they can win battles.”

Peverill Squire, a political science professor at the University of Missouri, said the Freedom Caucus members in Missouri take advantage of unlimited debate to slow the legislature down “to a snail’s pace. Given the rules ... it is relatively easy for them to gum up the process when they are unhappy with the way things are going,” he wrote in an email. That means even bills with broad GOP support have not made it all the way through the process, he wrote.

The animosity is not restricted to Missouri. In South Carolina, Green said, there’s “basically a civil war” going on in the supermajority Republican Party.

Members of the South Carolina Freedom Caucus refused to pledge not to fund challengers to GOP incumbents; that flouted a 2006 law that prohibited “special interest” caucuses from raising money and becoming otherwise involved in political campaigns. Only major caucuses organized by political party, race, ethnicity or gender — the Democratic, Republican, Black and Women’s caucuses — were allowed political operations. The ultra-conservative Freedom Caucus argued that was unfair in a suit against the legislature’s Ethics Committee. Last year, a federal judge agreed.

Rep. RJ May, one of the leaders of the South Carolina Freedom Caucus, said that the law was a way to “sign away our First Amendment rights. The establishment attempted to weaponize the rules,” he told Stateline.

May said that one of the reasons the Freedom Caucus formed in South Carolina is that the majority Republicans don’t “follow the party platform” and are too willing to compromise. The push gained steam, he said, when GOP legislative leaders began to only allow floor amendments from leadership, not rank-and-file lawmakers.

“People in South Carolina are sick and tired of leaders saying one thing at home and doing something different in Columbia. They say they are for reducing the size of government, but they vote for budget after budget that increases the number of agencies.”

May said his caucus has had some victories, such as championing a bill that passed the House to ban gender-affirming care for minors. (The bill is awaiting action in the Senate.) Caucus members also claim credit for reducing the state’s spending bill, though many of its members’ amendments were rejected, such as a move to give grants to churches and nonprofits to bolster the foster care system.

May echoed leaders in Missouri and elsewhere by saying that passing a bill is not necessarily the goal. “We have the effect of moving the body to the right,” he said.

House Speaker Murrell Smith’s staff did not respond to requests for comment. Nor did he comment for local media stories about the caucus.

## ‘The farm team’

Most of the Freedom Caucuses formed in states with Republican supermajorities. An exception is Pennsylvania, where the governor is a Democrat and Democrats control the House, while Republicans control the Senate.

The Freedom Caucus there has filed a lawsuit accusing Democrats, including President Joe Biden and Gov. Josh Shapiro, of unconstitutionally wresting power from the legislature over expanding access to elections in the state. Just last week, a federal judge dismissed the suit.

Pennsylvania Rep. Dawn Keefer, the Republican Freedom Caucus chair, who is running for the state

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Senate, had no immediate comment on the ruling to local media. Nor would she comment for this story.

In Arizona, Freedom Caucus members, led by chair Sen. Jake Hoffman, spearheaded a drive that resulted in the state Board of Education delaying until next year a proposed new handbook governing how parents use state-funded educational savings accounts to send their kids to private schools. The new handbook was designed to tighten the rules for using the accounts.

Hoffman said parents had not been given sufficient input. The new rules would have restricted the use of the funds for summer programs and required more updates for use of the money for students with disabilities. He called for a "robust stakeholder working group" to give input into the rule changes. The Board of Education maintained it had consulted parents and other interested parties. Nonetheless, it caved after concerns from families and Freedom Caucus members.

Holding news conferences, filing lawsuits — it's all part of the State Freedom Caucus Network playbook, according to its director, Roth.

"Our members consider themselves the farm team of the House Freedom Caucus," he said. "We also provide them communications support, legal support and get them connected with legal groups to help them file lawsuits."

Back in Missouri, roiling the entrenched GOP leadership is exactly what Freedom Caucus members are doing, Eigel said.

"We're shaking the status quo just by going through a lot of bills that are brought to the floor and asking a lot of questions that can frustrate folks that are expecting a much easier route to get their special interest priorities to the legislative chamber," he said just before last week's Senate session that featured Britton's delay tactics. "I suspect that if you are watching today, you're going to see a lot of questions."

And there were.

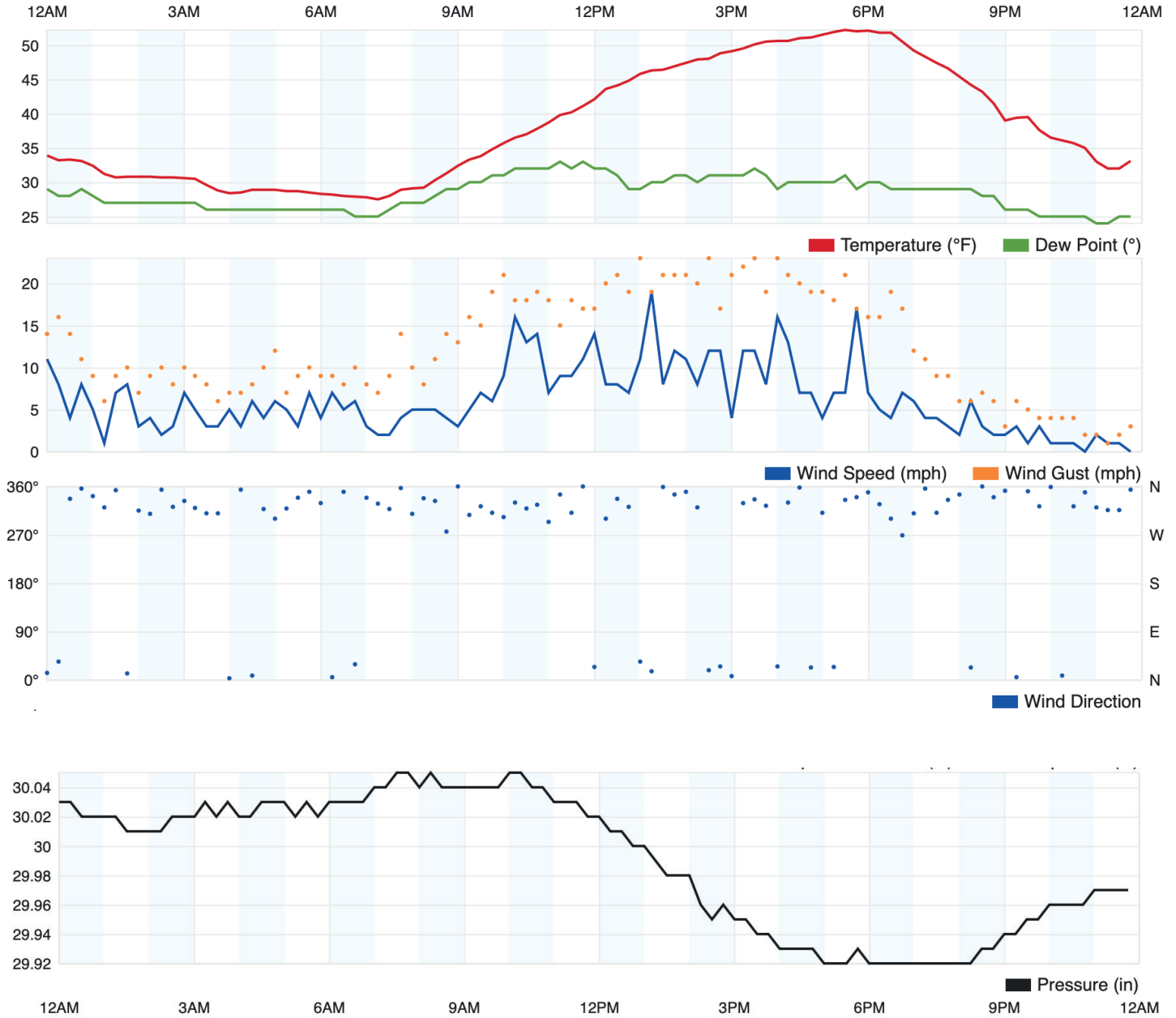
*Elaine S. Povich covers education and consumer affairs for Stateline. Povich has reported for Newsday, the Chicago Tribune and United Press International. Stateline is part of States Newsroom, the nation's largest state-focused nonprofit news organization.*



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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Broton Daily Independent

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Today



Sunny

High: 58 °F

Tonight



Mostly Clear

Low: 26 °F

Friday



Sunny

High: 62 °F

Friday Night



Partly Cloudy and Breezy

Low: 38 °F

Saturday



Windy. Sunny then Slight Chance Showers

High: 62 °F

## Mild Weather

But With Increasing Winds

Today



53 to 60°

Tonight



26 to 32°

Friday



55 to 63°

### Maximum Wind Gust Forecast (mph)

	4/4 Thu			4/5 Fri			4/6 Sat			4/7 Sun			4/8 Mon					
	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm				
Aberdeen	10	12	10	10	20	26	32	36	41	44	45	43	37	30	26	18	16	17
Britton	14	14	10	10	16	26	32	37	43	49	49	49	43	33	29	21	17	18
Brookings	21	18	13	8	13	20	28	31	40	46	51	48	44	32	29	22	20	21
Chamberlain	6	8	10	14	24	30	44	44	46	46	54	49	39	26	21	17	17	18
Clark	16	15	10	13	20	26	35	43	48	49	49	49	46	35	30	21	18	20
Eagle Butte	16	21	28	30	36	45	49	49	46	49	49	48	36	29	25	18	16	18
Ellendale	9	12	10	9	18	26	31	32	40	45	44	43	37	30	26	18	16	17
Eureka	8	10	17	20	29	35	39	47	47	46	47	47	40	31	28	17	16	17
Gettysburg	10	12	18	22	31	37	43	47	46	47	49	49	39	31	26	18	16	17
Huron	12	13	12	13	21	26	36	44	47	51	56	55	46	30	24	16	18	17
Kennebec	6	9	14	15	28	37	41	44	46	49	49	47	33	26	23	18	16	18
McIntosh	17	22	29	32	39	48	49	49	49	49	49	46	38	31	28	18	16	20
Milbank	18	18	10	8	13	21	25	26	38	43	43	43	38	30	26	20	16	18
Miller	8	9	9	16	23	30	35	43	46	48	47	46	37	28	25	17	17	18
Mobridge	10	13	21	21	31	38	41	44	43	47	49	48	37	29	26	16	16	17
Murdo	13	17	23	25	30	41	49	47	47	49	49	45	31	29	26	20	18	20
Pierre	9	13	16	17	28	39	46	45	43	48	49	47	31	26	23	16	15	16
Redfield	10	12	12	13	22	28	35	40	47	46	47	47	39	30	25	18	16	17
Sisseton	16	16	9	8	15	24	30	31	44	47	46	46	41	32	28	18	16	18
Watertown	20	18	12	9	14	22	28	33	41	48	48	46	41	33	30	22	20	21
Webster	17	17	10	12	17	26	36	40	49	49	49	49	48	37	31	22	18	20
Wheaton	17	17	10	12	14	21	25	29	39	43	40	40	37	31	28	21	16	17

Mild for the next few days, but with increasing winds. Rain will move in for the weekend.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 52 °F at 5:57 PM

Low Temp: 28 °F at 7:09 AM

Wind: 23 mph at 1:00 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 13 hours, 02 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 90 in 1921

Record Low: 90 in 1921

Average High: 52

Average Low: 27

Average Precip in April.: 0.17

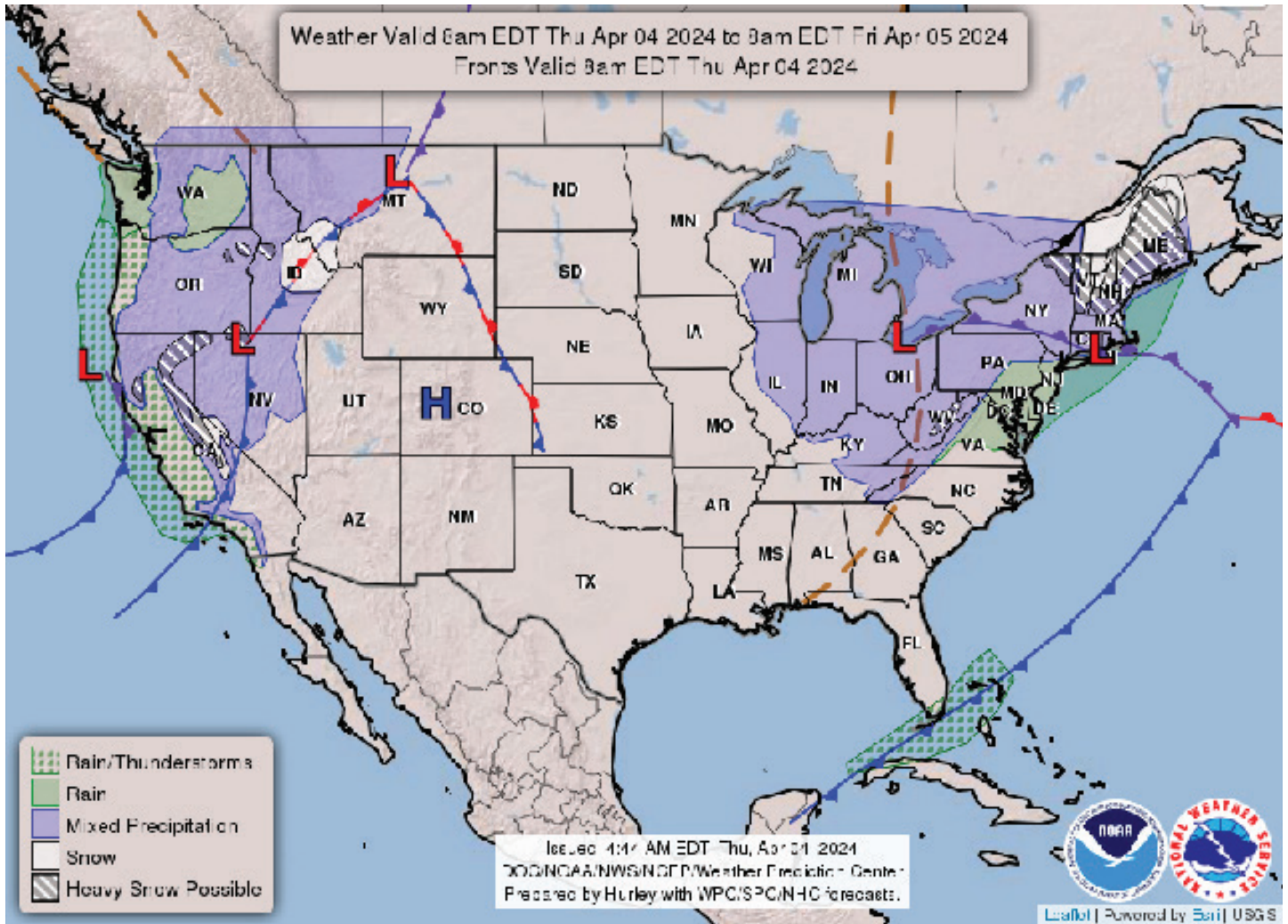
Precip to date in April: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 2.23

Precip Year to Date: 0.85

Sunset Tonight: 8:06:24 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:02:01 am





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## Today in Weather History

April 4, 1961: High winds of 40-60mph, with 80-90mph gusts, affected Central and Western South Dakota. The most extensive property damage occurred in the Pierre area. The roof was blown off, and one wall damaged at a new motel. One trailer home was blown over, numerous windows and large signboards were destroyed, and roofs sustained damages in Pierre. Total loss estimated \$10,000.

1804: A group of tornadoes slashed a 120-mile path across seven counties in Georgia and one county in South Carolina killing 11 people near Augusta, GA. The tornado's path through heavy timber was still visible some 71 years later as noted in an Army Signal Corps survey.

1923: An estimated F4 tornado killed 15 people and injured 150 at Alexandria and Pineville, LA. 142 homes and businesses in Pineville were destroyed.

1933 - Pigeon River Bridge, MN, reported 28 inches of snow, which established the state 24 hour snowfall record. (4th-5th) (The Weather Channel)

1973 - Sandia Crest, NM, reported a snow depth of 95 inches, a record for the state of New Mexico. (The Weather Channel)

1966: One of the strongest tornadoes in Florida's history moved in from the Gulf of Mexico and ripped through Pinellas, Hillsborough, Polk, and Osceola County. Damage was very severe in the towns of Gibsonia and Galloway in Polk County. 11 people were killed, and 350 were injured. The tornado was classified as F4.

1977: A Southern Airways DC-9 jet crashed near New Hope, Georgia, after being struck by large hail. The hail and associated heavy precipitation caused the engines to flame out. Seventy-two people (including nine on the ground) died.

1977: A massive F5 tornado moved across northern Birmingham, Alabama, killing 22 people and injuring 130. The tornado cut a 15-mile path from just northwest of Birmingham to the town of Tarrant. 167 homes were destroyed, primarily in the Smithfield Estates subdivision. Daniel Payne College sustained substantial damage. At one point, the tornado was three-quarters of a mile wide. The tornado crossed busy I-65, tossing cars and trucks like they were toys. Other tornadoes killed one other person in Alabama and one person in Georgia that day.

1983 - Colorado was in the midst of a three day winter storm. Buckhorn Mountain, located west of Fort Collins, received 64 inches of snow. (Storm Data)

1987 - Rains of five to eight inches drenched eastern New York State, and ten persons were killed in a bridge collapse over Schoharie Creek. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Sunny and warm weather prevailed across the nation. Fort Smith AR reported a record high of 90 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from the Lower Mississippi Valley to the Southern Appalachians. The thunderstorms spawned seventeen tornadoes, including one which caused two million dollars damage at Baldwin AL. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 90 mph at Bremen GA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - A deep low pressure system in northern New York State brought heavy snow to parts of western and central New York during the day. The snowfall total of 5.8 inches at Buffalo was a record for the date, and 9.5 inches was reported at Rochester. Snowfall totals ranged up to 11 inches at Warsaw. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### "WHY DO SOMETHING FOR OTHERS?"

Alfred Adler is known as one of the "founding fathers" of modern psychology. He is remembered mostly for his analysis of the impact of "birth order" – the "position" or "place" we have with our siblings, and how that influences our personality. He also developed what he called his "Fourteen-Day Cure Plan."

He claimed that this plan could cure anyone of mental illness in just fourteen days if they would just do exactly as he told them to do. For example - one day, a woman who was extremely depressed came to see him. He told her, "I can cure you of your depression in just fourteen days if you follow my advice."

"What do you want me to do?" she asked.

"If you do one thing for someone else every day for fourteen days, at the end of that time, your depression will be cured," he told her.

She objected, "Why should I do something for someone else when no one ever does anything for me?"

Jokingly he responded, "Well, I guess because you are different, it will take you twenty-eight days. Adler realized that because she was so self-centered, there was little hope for her to change her behavior, and think of others rather than herself, and find relief.

Paul said that we are to "share each other's problems and troubles." Christians must never develop an attitude that entertains the idea that we are not responsible for helping others in their times of need. It is sometimes difficult to think of "service before self." But that is the way Jesus lived and died. As His disciples, can we do less?

Prayer: Lord, may we move from an attitude of self-centeredness to one of other-centeredness and see, hear, feel, and meet the needs of others as Your Son did. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2



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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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.02.24

10 50 56 60 66 19

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$67,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 23  
Mins 42 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.03.24

11 16 20 27 47 4

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$2,650,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 38  
Mins 42 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.03.24

30 36 41 42 45 15

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 53 Mins 43  
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.03.24

1 12 13 16 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$45,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 53  
Mins 43 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.03.24

10 44 53 60 63 13

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 22  
Mins 42 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.03.24

11 38 41 62 65 15

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$1,230,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 22  
Mins 42 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

## News from the Associated Press

### Editorial Roundup: South Dakota

By The Associated Press undefined

Yankton Press & Dakotan. April 1, 2024.

Editorial: Addressing The State Of SD Democracy

A forum held last week in Vermillion explored the state of democracy in South Dakota, and three veteran lawmakers all agreed that the health of democracy in this state leaves a little to be desired.

Actually, perhaps more than a little.

And, in fact, it reflects what we're seeing on a national scale.

The forum was part of the 2024 Chiesman Democracy Conference held at the University of South Dakota, and it featured retired Democratic state legislator Ray Ring and retired Republican state legislator Arthur Rusch, both of Vermillion, and District 15 Democratic Sen. Linda Duba, who has announced she is not seeking reelection this year. (Meanwhile, Ring is seeking a return to the State House in District 17 this fall.)

All three offered a downbeat outlook on democracy in this state, pointing to polarization both between and within parties, as well as the problems posed by an electorate that's not as involved in the process as they should be, the Vermillion Plain Talk reported.

The latter factor can also cultivate polarization in Pierre and elsewhere. "I think that people are making less of an effort to really understand both sides of an issue," Rusch said. "I think that's damaging to our democracy."

Meanwhile, the climate in Pierre has grown more contentious, thanks in part to lawmakers who, like some voters, often appear to have little interest in exploring all sides of an issue.

"What I have seen in our state is a rise in individuals who are extreme and they are fracturing what I would consider our Republican Party," said Duba, of Sioux Falls. "That fracture is obvious, and it shows itself in committee; it shows itself on the floor; it shows itself when you talk about performance. There is a lot of performing going on right now in South Dakota, and we should have our heads down and be focused."

This is, arguably, evident in a possible growing split emerging within the state Republican Party, which otherwise owns healthy supermajorities in both the House and Senate. This is producing an unusually high number of contested primary races in June.

It's also evident in the Democratic Party, which ousted its party chair last summer in a move that has created bitter feelings and a need for "healing," Duba said.

When the party members are battling among themselves, it's harder to reach accommodations with members of other parties.

And that outreach is needed to make our democracy more constructive and productive for the people.

That means coming together to solve problems, perhaps through compromise, not ramrodding one solution or blowing an issue apart. We saw that happen at times with the carbon pipeline issue in Pierre, which looked irreconcilable at some points and still seems precarious now that the session is over.

Rusch noted that lawmakers must learn that it's OK to agree to disagree on some issues and to have "respectful disagreements" and not resort to insults.

Dr. Shane Nordyke, director of the Chiesman Center for Democracy at USD and moderator of last week's event, advised lawmakers to "be like a goldfish," which only has a 15-second memory. Otherwise, how "do you set (an issue) aside to move on to the next issue that needs to be dealt with ... "? she asked.

For democracy to truly be productive, bipartisanship between parties must mirror the intra-party ability to put aside issues within a caucus. And the public must support, not penalize, efforts by lawmakers to occasionally reach across the aisle to address the state's business.

That's the best medicine for what ails our democracy, both here and elsewhere.

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## Rescuers in Taiwan search for those missing after major earthquake

By JOHNSON LAI and KANIS LEUNG Associated Press

HUALIEN, Taiwan (AP) — Rescuers searched Thursday for dozens of people still missing a day after Taiwan's strongest earthquake in a quarter century damaged buildings, killed nine people, and left others stranded in remote areas or sleeping in tents.

In the eastern coastal city of Hualien near the epicenter, workers used an excavator to stabilize the base of a damaged building with construction materials, as some officers took samples of its exterior and chickens browsed amid potted plants on its slanted roof.

Mayor Hsu Chen-wei previously said 48 residential buildings had been damaged, some of which were tilting at precarious angles with their ground floors crushed.

Some Hualien residents were still staying in tents, and the main road linking the county to the capital and the island's was still closed Thursday afternoon, but much of the island's day-to-day life was returning to normal. Some local rail service to Hualien resumed, and the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. — one of the world's most important manufacturers of computer chips — restarted most operations, the Central News Agency reported.

Taiwan is regularly jolted by earthquakes and its population is well-prepared for them. It also has stringent construction requirements to ensure buildings are quake-resistant.

Hendri Sutrisno, a 30-year-old professor at Hualien Dong Hwa University, spent Wednesday night in a tent with his wife and baby, fearing aftershocks.

"We ran out of the apartment and waited for four to five hours before we went up again to grab some important stuff such as our wallet. And then we're staying here ever since to assess the situation," he said.

Others also said they didn't dare to go home because the walls of their apartments were cracked and they lived on higher floors. Taiwanese Primer Chen Chien-jen visited some earthquake evacuees in the morning at a temporary shelter.

Nearly 1,070 people were injured in the quake that struck Wednesday morning. Of the nine dead, at least four were killed inside Taroko National Park, a Hualien County tourist attraction famous for canyons and cliffs, about 150 kilometers (90 miles) from the island's capital Taipei. One person was found dead in a damaged building, and another was found in the Ho Ren Quarry.

About 690 people were either still missing or stranded Thursday, including over 600 who were stranded inside a hotel called Silks Place Taroko, the National Fire Agency said. Authorities said the employees and guests at were safe and had food and water, and that work to repair the roads to the hotel was close to completion.

Others who were reported to be stranded, including two dozen tourists and six university students, were safe too, they said.

Authorities also said some 60 workers, who had been unable to leave a quarry due to blocked and damaged roads, were freed. Central News Agency said all of them got off the mountain safely around noon. Six workers from another quarry were airlifted out.

Around 40 people, mostly hotel employees earlier reported to be in the national park, were still out of contact with authorities.

For hours after the quake, local television showed neighbors and rescue workers lifting residents through windows and onto the street from damaged buildings where the shaking had jammed doors shut. It wasn't clear Thursday if any people were still trapped in buildings.

The quake and its aftershocks caused landslides and damaged roads, bridges and tunnels. The national legislature and sections of Taipei's main airport suffered minor damage.

The quake was the strongest to hit Taiwan in 25 years. Local authorities measured the initial quake's strength as 7.2 magnitude, while the U.S. Geological Survey put it at 7.4.

Huang Shiao-en was in her apartment when the quake struck. "At first the building was swinging side to side, and then it shook up and down," Huang said.

The Central Weather Administration has recorded more than 300 aftershocks from Wednesday morning into Thursday.



The economic losses caused by the quake are still unclear. The self-ruled island is the leading manufacturer of the world's most sophisticated computer chips and other high-technology items that are sensitive to seismic events.

Hualien was last struck by a deadly quake in 2018, which killed 17 people and brought down a historic hotel. Taiwan's worst recent quake struck on Sept. 21, 1999, a magnitude 7.7 temblor that caused 2,400 deaths, injuring around 100,000 and destroying thousands of buildings.

## **The true toll of the war in Ukraine is measured in bodies.**

### **This man brings them home, one at a time**

By ERIKA KINETZ and SOLOMIIA HERA Associated Press

DOVHENKE, Ukraine (AP) — The smell in the car is sick and sweet, the overpowering scent of corpses that have lain too long in muck and ruin, the ones the dogs didn't devour. Oleksii Yukov, a 38-year-old martial arts instructor who leads a team of volunteer body collectors in Ukraine, doesn't notice.

He is on the phone with one of the mothers. She heard her son was injured in battle and left behind, but she's not sure where.

"He was left to die and now they are telling me that 'he died as a hero!'" she says, choking out words between sobs.

"Don't cry," Yukov tells her. "Because if you get weak — no one will help him ... Don't cry in front of anyone! They are not worth it. Cry in front of the grave of your son only."

"We will take everyone back," he promised. "We just need some time."

Yukov says the same thing to all the mothers. He tells them to talk about their dead children, so they will be remembered. There is one person in particular whose story Yukov does not want forgotten: Oleksandr Romanovych Hrysiuk — Sasha, to his mother, Olha.

In a cryptic voice message last year, Yukov urged Olha to tell Sasha's story. "Not everyone has such a story," he told her.

But he left out the most important part: What it had cost him to bring Sasha home.

#### COUNTING BODIES

The true toll of the war in Ukraine — and the odds faced by each side — can be measured in bodies.

More than half a million people have been killed or seriously injured in two years of war in Ukraine, according to Western intelligence estimates — a human toll not seen in Europe since World War II. The question of who prevails is being increasingly shaped by which side can tolerate higher losses.

By that measure, Moscow has the upper hand.

Analysts say it will be hard for Ukraine to outmatch Russian forces, which continue to grow despite hundreds of thousands of casualties, without significant resources from its international partners. But the U.S. Congress has not approved \$60 billion in aid for Ukraine, even as soldiers at the front run low on ammunition.

"Putin is not running a democracy," said Evelyn Farkas, a former senior Pentagon official for Russia and Ukraine who now heads the McCain Institute at Arizona State University. "Putin can afford to be more callous and disregard the body count."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, on the other hand, is presiding over a more democratic system, "where the will of the people is actually the strongest component of their war machine."

Russia had 3.7 times more men of fighting age than Ukraine in 2022, according to World Bank data. That means that though Russia has sustained nearly twice as many casualties as Ukraine, according to Western intelligence estimates, on a per capita basis Russia's losses remain lower than Ukraine's.

At current levels of recruitment, the Kremlin can sustain current attrition rates through 2025, according to an assessment by the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), a think tank in London. Meanwhile, Ukraine this week took the politically difficult step of lowering the military conscription age from 27 to 25 in an effort to replenish its ranks.

"Manpower is another currency," said Nick Reynolds, a research fellow at RUSI. "The Russians with their

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industrial base and larger manpower can expend manpower and materiel at less cost.”

Yukov understands that for people far away, war is geopolitics, death can be counted in numbers, and money matters more than men. But he knows better.

“War has one face,” he said. “Death and stupidity and horror.”

GOD TAKES THE BEST AWAY

The last time Olha Hrysiuk spoke with her son, Sasha asked about the spring crops, the vegetable garden, their horses and cows, were the chickens laying many eggs? The conversation went on, as if they had all the time in the world. It was May 15, 2022.

Sasha vanished the next day.

For three days, Olha knew only silence. She accepted it, because Sasha had told her he was going on a mission and might be out of touch.

On the fourth day, she called the head of her village, who called the nearest military office, who contacted his military unit, who said that Sasha was missing.

Sasha wasn't a born fighter. An athlete, he studied physiotherapy before he was drafted and packed off on April 3, 2022. Olha gave him a silver cross on a chain to hang around his neck as he went into battle.

Where was her boy now, she wondered, the kid with the sweet smile and ears that stuck out, who loved to run and had so many friends she couldn't keep count? Where was her son, who dreamed of building a home for the family he did not yet have?

“In Ukraine, we have a saying that God takes the best away,” Olha said. “I think this is the case.”

After pleading on social media for information, Olha's daughter-in-law managed to speak directly with some soldiers from Sasha's unit.

They said Sasha was dead. They were very sorry they couldn't take his body with them, the shelling was too heavy, all they could do was hide him in a cellar in Dovhenke — a rural settlement in eastern Ukraine that fell to the Russians. They would write his name on the shells they fired because they loved him too. He was a hero, they said.

Sasha, 27 years old, had lasted exactly six weeks at war. It was time for him to come home. If Olha couldn't have her son back, she'd take whatever pieces were left.

But how?

Olha started making calls, so many that she had to buy a notebook to keep track. She said she called the Ukrainian Red Cross, the International Committee of the Red Cross, Ukraine's National Information Bureau, the Ukrainian military, the Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War, every hotline and volunteer group she could find. She emailed the Commissioner for Human Rights and wrote letters to the Ministry of Defense and even to President Zelenskyy himself.

She wrote down who answered, who didn't, and, mostly, who told her to wait, wait, wait. For six months, Olha tried.

“I just could not live without trying,” she said. “How is it possible to not even see the bones of your child! I was even ready to go to Dovhenke myself!”

In the end, people told her that if Black Tulip couldn't bring Sasha home, no one could.

'WE HAVE TO BE BURIED'

Black Tulip is the name of the network of volunteer body collectors Yukov worked with back in 2014, when Russia seized Crimea and pushed into eastern Ukraine. Black Tulip has since disbanded but the name stuck. Yukov went on to found his own group, called Platsdarm, which can be translated as “bridgehead,” to continue Black Tulip's mission.

It is Yukov's job to bring everyone back. He has collected the fragments of a man scattered across the trees and restored the scraps to the soldier's mother. He has pulled hot human remains from a smoldering helicopter. Once, a mother asked him to please retrieve her son's arm, which she'd heard was left dangling in a particular tree; he did. He has rooted through feces to retrieve the finger bones and teeth of men whose corpses were eaten by pigs.

“Listen, if your child was killed, you would gnaw through this s— with your teeth to bury the body,” he

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said.

Yukov is racing against time, which eats up corpses, to bring all the souls home. But there are too many. He can't fit them all in his car, no matter if he straps them to the roof, carries them in his hands. They overwhelm him.

"Sometimes I just want to scream. To yell. Because you realize what madness and pain it is," he said. "I understand that I do not have enough life to finish this work of searching for the dead."

Yukov's story is the story of the bloodlands of Ukraine, a landscape transformed by generations of conflict. He grew up cold and hungry in Sloviansk, in eastern Ukraine, one of five children. They made it through one winter by foraging dried peas packed in his brother's punching bag. He learned to share, down to his last piece of bread.

When Yukov was around six, a local cemetery got dug up to make way for a new children's hospital. Bulldozers heaved piles of clothes and bones; children ran around playing with skulls stuck on the end of sticks.

He was shocked and ashamed as he stood before the unburied dead. "I looked at the bones and thought, 'Crap ...these are people!'" Yukov recalled. "What if my relatives are buried in this place?"

The forests of Yukov's childhood were filled with the bones of German and Soviet soldiers from World War II, some so densely strewn they looked like snow.

He started searching for the dead when he was thirteen, but at first he made mistakes. The souls he offended — or failed to find — haunted him. He felt them poke his ribs as he slept and he woke up dizzy, his nose bleeding.

"Why do you keep coming?" he demanded of his phantoms. "What do you need?"

As a boy, he dreamt he was running in a forest, jumping over pits and trenches until he tumbled into a hole, falling deep into ruby-colored light. He smelled the bodies before he saw them, bones sliding beneath his feet as he sank.

"Someone grabs me by the scruff of the neck, whispering, 'We have to be buried,'" he recalled.

He woke up wet with sweat. He knew what he had to do.

"Until they are buried according to their traditions and rituals, a soul will suffer. So it's very important for me, even if it is an enemy, to return them home to be buried properly, for their souls to be calm," Yukov said. "Collectors of souls' is what the locals call us."

A FATEFUL CLICK

In late summer 2022, Olha and her other son reached out to Yukov, seeking help. They sent along photos of Sasha and his tattoo, as well as satellite images of his approximate location.

Yukov got to Dovhenke in September, not long after the Russians left. More than 90 percent of buildings there had been destroyed or damaged, and it was hard to find the cellar where Sasha's unit said they'd left him. Also, there were mines.

They spent days searching. On Sept. 19, Yukov took a step and heard a click. The force of the explosion knocked him to the ground.

"I was laying there and I felt like I had no legs," Yukov said. "I was like, 'It's fine, I'll get a prosthesis.' ... But I saw holes and blood spraying from my legs. I was like, 'OK. Legs are in place.' But suddenly, I can't see with my eye. There's no eye."

His team came running for him, screaming. "STOP! DON'T RUN, STAND STILL!" Yukov hollered back, worried they'd get blown up too. "Bring tourniquets and a stretcher!"

They drove him to the hospital fast, in silence, their dog panting above the high whine of the straining engine. Yukov was limp in the backseat, legs cinched with tourniquets. He gingerly touched a bloodied white cloth to the spot where his right eye used to be.

Two weeks later, Yukov led everyone back to Dovhenke, his eye patched like a pirate, and stumbled around on crutches trying to find Sasha. But it was still too dangerous, and they had to wait another few weeks for the mines to be cleared. By then, Yukov had a new glass eye, which looks incredibly real until he raps on it with his knuckles.



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When they finally got back to Dovhenke to search for Sasha, a small grey kitten with an injured nose kept jumping on Yukov's shoulder, nuzzling him. The cat circled one spot in the wreckage. They started digging there.

"Souls come over and wander next to us," Yukov explained. "A sign came to show us where he was lying ... He wants to be back home. Mother is waiting."

Sasha was pancaked beneath the rubble of a collapsed building. The place was scorched. There were fragments of 120mm mortars and signs of a massive blast.

By the time they'd pried through the last layers of concrete, it was dark. Denys Sosnenko, a 21-year-old who Yukov used to coach at kickboxing, went down in the pit to comb the dirt with his fingers, looking for bones.

Yukov told Denys to try to keep the fragments of Sasha's head together in what was left of his helmet. He handed part of Sasha's skull, wet and yellowed, to Yukov, who placed it gently down in a large white bag. It was hard to keep track of all the pieces because it was pitch black and they were working by flashlight.

Denys pulled out a silver, soil-caked cross and set it aside, then a spoon and a watch.

Yukov went on, making a rough anatomical inventory of what was left of Sasha. An arm. The backbone. Pelvis. Femur. Elbow.

"Wait," Yukov said. "Where is the other arm and shoulder blade?"

It was Nov. 25, 2022.

Two months later, Denys drove over a landmine while searching for bodies and died.

11 RUSSIANS AND ONE LEG

As in most wars, both sides have downplayed or obscured their losses, and the true toll may not be known for years. But from the sky, the multitudes of dead are already transforming the landscape. The graves look the same on both sides of the front: fields, once empty, now quilted with patchworks of fresh tombstones.

President Zelenskyy recently said that 31,000 Ukrainian soldiers have been killed in the war, less than half what Western intelligence has estimated. Russia's losses are thought to be roughly double Ukraine's.

Using satellite imagery and site visits, The Associated Press documented the rapid growth of soldiers' graves at a few key sites in Russia and Ukraine where the war dead have accumulated at scale.

By March, more than 650 soldiers lay in what was open land outside Lviv two years ago, and there were more than 800 new soldiers' graves in one Kyiv cemetery. Some 700 graves appeared in two plots for soldiers in a Kharkiv cemetery between Feb. 2022 through Sept. 2023, satellite images show. The AP also counted at least 1,345 new soldiers' graves at a Dnipro cemetery in March, edged by six neat rows of empty pits in the earth waiting for more bodies.

Many more dead are scattered across both Ukraine and Russia, discreetly tucked among civilian graves.

Mediazona, an independent Russian media outlet, has identified the locations of dozens of Russian cemeteries that have swelled with war dead. Along with the BBC's Russia service and a network of volunteers, they've confirmed the deaths of around 50,000 Russian soldiers killed since the full-scale invasion, a number they say probably captures just over half of the true death toll. Their count does not include Russian fighters from occupied territories in Ukraine.

The dead cannot be hidden from space. Satellite images show more than 750 graves at the Wagner cemetery in Bakinskaya, a town near the Black Sea, up from around 170 in Jan. 2023. About 15 kilometers (9 miles) away, an estimated 2,646 compartments for cremated remains have been built into new rows of dark grey walls at the Wagner Chapel, though it wasn't possible to say how many were filled. The number of war dead buried at the Federal Military Memorial Cemetery north of Moscow, has tripled in the last year, to an estimated 846 graves.

These are the lucky ones, the ones who made it home.

Yukov says he's collected over 1,000 bodies since the full-scale invasion began two years ago, more than half of them Russians.

"We are not fighting the dead," he said. "I don't separate the bodies of Russian soldiers and Ukrainian soldiers. They are all souls for me."

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One night in October, Yukov returned from a mission near Sloviansk with black body bags strapped to the roof of his car. They bounced perilously over potholes, as he sped to deliver the cargo to a morgue.

The count that day was 11 Russians and one leg, which was probably Ukrainian, judging by its boot. Their wounds would be documented. The things they carried — amulets that hadn't worked, kids' drawings, family photos, letters of love and despair — would be collected and cataloged. Their DNA would be tested, if necessary, and their identities logged in government databases.

The Ukrainians, Yukov hoped, would find their way home. The Russians would become currency to barter for Ukrainian bodies in periodic exchanges of war dead.

"When someone says, 'I am tired of war,' yes, we are all tired," Yukov said. "But we just need you to understand: Help us. Don't stand aside. Because war has no borders. War will cross your doorstep too."

He peered into a body bag. The corpses had baked in the sun and the meat of their faces was partly mummified. Yukov figured they'd been dead for around three months.

Suddenly angry, Yukov began speaking in agitated Russian.

"You carried this child in your womb," he said, "Now your Russian boys are lying here, in Ukrainian soil. Why did you let them come here? You knew what this was all about, that they were going to kill and be killed."

Yukov looked down at the bodies laid out on the night grass. "This is where it all ends," he said.

He turned away and let out a little laugh, then stopped talking and shook his head in silence.

"So, I don't know ... It's stupidity."

HOLDING THE SKY TOGETHER

Olha hoped for a long time that missing meant alive. But when Yukov sent a photograph of the necklace they'd found in the cellar in Dovhenke, Olha recognized it instantly. It was the same silver Jesus she'd given Sasha when he left for war, only now it was an exhibit, number 3118, mud-flecked evidence of the dead.

Olha never got to see her son's face again. By the time she got the body back, Sasha had no face anymore. This was hard for her because it allowed her to nurture a tiny, painful hope that there had been some mistake.

Yukov is a destroyer of hope for mothers. But they thank him anyway.

"I am glad we managed to do it," Yukov messaged Olha, after he found Sasha. "We hug you and hope that we can meet you to get to know more about him. We are holding the sky together with you."

"Your work is priceless," she replied.

Olha buried what was left of Sasha on March 16, 2023 in her village cemetery, beneath a cross bandaged with flowers and ribbons.

"It's very important for me to know his body is next to me," Olha said. "We are all waiting for victory. For me, it's the most important thing. If we do not win, what did my son die for — and so many other sons?"

Yukov never told Olha he'd lost an eye trying to find her son.

When she heard what had happened, she nodded faintly, her frown deepening to an expression of infinite sadness.

"I cannot express with words how grateful I am," she said. She opened her hands and looked up, searching for sounds that could convey the enormity of loss. "I'm so shocked ... As long as I live, I will remember the sacrifice he made for me and my family."

Olha visits Sasha's grave every day, to sit with him, talk with him and pray that he — and perhaps she herself — finds peace.

"Whatever people say, I know Sasha wanted to come home," Olha said. "Sometimes I watch TV, the internet, TikTok, whatever, and I think: That's it, we lost. I feel like giving up ... But when I watch videos of Oleksii (Yukov), I want to keep helping. If there are people like Oleksii, nothing is lost yet in Ukraine."

## **A Russian drone attack kills 4 people and wounds 12 in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city**

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A nighttime Russian attack using Iranian-designed drones killed four people and wounded 12 in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, local authorities said.

Shahed drones smashed into two apartment buildings in the city near the Russian border that has frequently been targeted during more than two years of war.

The Kremlin's forces in recent months have stepped up their aerial barrages of Ukraine, hitting urban areas and the power grid. The about 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line is largely deadlocked, but Kyiv officials say they expect a large-scale Russian offensive in the summer.

Three first responders in Kharkiv were killed when Russia struck a multistory building twice in quick succession, local authorities said. Six people were wounded at that location. Another 14-story building was hit by a drone, killing a 69-year-old woman.

Ukrainian officials have previously accused Russia of targeting rescue workers by hitting residential buildings with two consecutive missiles — the first one to draw crews to the scene and the second one to wound or kill them. The tactic is called a "double tap" in military jargon. Russians used the same method in Syria's civil war.

Other first responders have also been victims of the fighting. The World Health Organization said Thursday that ambulance workers and other health transport staff face a high risk of injury or death.

"Many emergency teams come under fire either on the way to a call or at their bases," WHO said in a report.

"This is a horrifying pattern," Dr. Emanuele Bruni, WHO's incident manager in Ukraine, was quoted as saying in the report. "These attacks threaten their safety and further devastate communities that have been living under constant shelling for more than two years."

Ukrainian soldiers shot down 11 of the 20 drones Russia launched against Ukraine during the night, the General Staff said.

Some 700,000 people in Kharkiv lost power last week after a massive missile attack hit the city's thermal power plant. Repairs are ongoing.

"Each manifestation of Russian terror once again proves that the country-terrorist deserves only one thing — a tribunal," Ukraine's human rights chief, Dmytro Lubinets, said on Telegram in response to the attack.

## **NATO marks its 75th birthday as Russia's war in Ukraine gnaws at its unity**

By LORNE COOK and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — NATO marked on Thursday 75 years of collective defense across Europe and North America, with its top diplomats vowing to stay the course in Ukraine as better armed Russian troops assert control on the battlefield.

The anniversary comes as the now-32-nation alliance weighs a plan to provide more predictable longer-term military support to Ukraine. Plagued by ammunition shortages, Ukraine this week lowered the military conscription age from 27 to 25 in an effort to replenish its depleted ranks.

"Ukraine is under heavy attacks, like daily, 24-seven," Estonian Foreign Minister Margus Tsahkna told reporters, appealing for more military materiel for Ukraine like air defense systems, drones and artillery shells.

"We need to give these systems which we are not using to Ukraine, to take and protect their people, civil infrastructure and also energy infrastructure," he said, before a ceremony with his counterparts to mark the day NATO's founding treaty was signed: April 4, 1949, in Washington.

A bigger celebration is planned when NATO leaders meet in Washington from July 9 to 11.

Hundreds of staffers filled the vast air terminal-like space at the center of NATO's sprawling Brussels headquarters, while scores of others looked down from glassed walkways and stairways as Belgian and Dutch military bands played the NATO Hymn, the original Washington Treaty laid before them.



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"I like the Washington Treaty. Not least because it is very short," NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said with a smile. "Just 14 paragraphs over a few pages. Never has a single document with so few words meant so much to so many people. So much security. So much prosperity, and so much peace."

Outside Brussels on Wednesday evening, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken had paid tribute "to the millions of soldiers, sailors, and aviators whose courage and willingness to put their lives on the line have given weight to our sacred commitment to defend one another."

Blinken said that even as foreign ministers mark more than seven decades of peace, "that security – together with the Alliance's core principles of democracy, liberty, and the rule of law – is once again being threatened by those who believe that might makes right... and who seek to redraw borders by force."

Sweden's foreign minister, Tobias Billström, is taking part in the first ministerial-level meeting since his country became NATO's 32nd ally last month. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 drove Sweden and Finland into NATO's arms.

"NATO represents the freedom to choose," Finnish Foreign Minister Elina Valtonen said, reflecting on the way the Nordic neighbors recently joined. "Democratic nations, free people chose to join. Unlike how Russia expands its by aggression or by illegal annexation."

Putin said he launched the war, in part at least, because NATO was expanding closer to Russia's borders.

The alliance's ranks have almost tripled from its 12 founding members, but Finland and Sweden joined in record time to shelter under NATO's collective security guarantee.

That promise — Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, which has been shipped to Brussels for the ceremony — stipulates that an attack on any one of their number must be met with a united response. It's only ever been used once, after the Al-Qaeda attacks on U.S. soil in 2001.

Among the more recent successes as it grew from the Cold War and after the Berlin Wall collapsed, NATO would count its 1999 air campaign against former Yugoslavia to end a bloody crackdown on separatist ethnic Albanians and its effort to avert near civil war in Macedonia in 2001.

At the other end of the scale lies the operation in Afghanistan. NATO took command of the security effort in 2003 and it became the longest, costliest and deadliest in alliance history. It was marked by a chaotic retreat in August 2021, many of the successes over almost two decades abandoned.

Today, Ukraine also wants a seat at NATO's table, but the alliance works on unanimity and there is no consensus on whether it should join. Most allies oppose membership while war rages on anyway. For now, NATO promises only that its door is open for Ukraine in the future.

NATO allies cannot agree on whether to arm Ukraine either. As an organization, the alliance only provides non-lethal support like transport vehicles, fuel, combat rations, medical supplies and demining equipment. However, many members provide arms and ammunition bilaterally or in groups.

The bulk of NATO's efforts since Russian troops began massing for the invasion has focused on reinforcing its own borders near Russia and Ukraine to dissuade President Vladimir Putin from targeting any of the allies next.

Article 5 was given perhaps its toughest test during Donald Trump's term as president of the United States – by far NATO's most powerful member country. Trump suggested the U.S. might not come to the defense of any NATO ally who declined to boost their own defense spending to at least 2% of gross domestic product, as they had agreed to do in 2014.

Trump has repeated the threat during election campaigning this year. NATO predicts that 18 of its 32 members will reach that target this year, up from only 3 a decade ago.

## Family and friends recall dedication of World Central Kitchen aid workers killed in Gaza

By The Associated Press undefined

Israeli airstrikes that killed seven aid workers in Gaza reverberated around the world, as friends and relatives mourned the losses of those who were delivering food to besieged Palestinians with the charity World Central Kitchen.

Killed were three British nationals, an Australian, a Polish national, an American-Canadian dual citizen and a Palestinian. Some had traveled the world, participating in aid efforts in the aftermath of wars, earthquakes and wildfires.

Here's some information on those killed.

SAIFEDDIN ISSAM AYAD ABUTAHA

Saifeddin Issam Ayad Abutaha, 25, had worked for World Central Kitchen as a driver and translator since the beginning of the year, relatives said.

His brothers described him as a dedicated young man eager to help fellow Palestinians.

He'd also been a successful businessman who conducted trade with Ukraine, Egypt, China and others, brother Abdul Razzaq Abutaha said. His work made him known on the Israeli side, his brother added, which helped in coordination and approval to assist the World Central Kitchen team in unloading the ship.

Saifeddin had hoped to get married. "My mother was looking for a wife for him," Abdul Razzaq Abu Taha said. "He was supposed to get married if the war didn't happen."

Saifeddin and other workers were excited about unloading the food aid, desperately needed in Gaza. The last time Saifeddin and his brother spoke, he said, they'd finished the job and he was heading home.

After hearing about the airstrikes, Abdul Razzaq Abutaha said he tried to call to see whether Saifeddin was OK.

After many attempts, he said, a stranger answered and told him, "I found this phone about 200 meters away from the car. All of the people inside are killed."

LALZAWMI 'ZOMI' FRANKCOM

Friends and family remembered Lalzawmi "Zomi" Frankcom, 43, as a brave, selfless woman whose care for others drew her across the globe. For the last five years, she'd worked for Washington-based World Central Kitchen, taking her to the U.S., Thailand and her native Australia.

"We mourn this fine Australian who has a record of helping out her fellow citizens, whether it be internationally or whether it be through the support that she gave during the bushfires that occurred during that Black Summer," Prime Minister Anthony Albanese told Australian Broadcasting Corp. "She is someone who clearly was concerned about her fellow humanity."

In a statement, relatives described Frankcom as an "outstanding human being" who was "killed doing the work she loves delivering food to the people of Gaza."

She was born in Melbourne and earned a bachelor's from the Swinburne University of Technology. For eight years, she worked for the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, the nation's largest bank.

Frankcom's social media highlighted visits to help those in need in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Romania and Haiti.

World Central Kitchen colleague Dora Weekley, who met Frankcom responding to Hurricane Dorian in the Bahamas in 2019, described her as "larger than life."

She recalled when Frankcom was invited to walk a Hollywood red carpet, for a documentary about World Central Kitchen that was nominated for an Emmy.

"I remember getting a picture of her in a dress, saying, 'Hold onto this forever,'" Weekley told ABC. "Because usually I'm in sweats and runners, and I'm in Pakistan or Afghanistan or, you know, she could be anywhere, and never with her hair done or makeup done."

"She worked all hours, she gave everything, and she believed in helping people who were less fortunate."

DAMIAN SOBÓL

Damian Soból, 35, was known as a cheerful, friendly and resourceful manager who quickly rose in World

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Central Kitchen's ranks.

Hailing from the southeastern Polish city of Przemyśl and studying hospitality there, Soból had been on aid missions in Ukraine, Morocco, Turkey and, for the past six months, Gaza.

"He was a really extraordinary guy," said Marta Wilczynska, of the Free Place Foundation, which cooperates with World Central Kitchen. "We were very proud of him."

Wilczynska met Soból on the Polish side of the border with Ukraine, a few days after Russia's February 2022 invasion. He spoke English well and was a translator, and as a skilled manager, he could organize work in any condition, she said.

"Always smiling, always so helpful, he loved this job. I felt I had a brother in him," Wilczynska said.

Free Place Foundation President Mikolaj Rykowski said Soból was "the man for every task — he could overcome every difficulty."

Posting on Facebook, Przemyśl Mayor Wojciech Bakun said of Soból's death that there are "no words to describe how people who knew this fantastic young man feel now."

JOHN CHAPMAN, JAMES HENDERSON AND JAMES KIRBY

The three British victims were military veterans who had been in dangerous situations before. They died providing security for the World Central Kitchen aid mission.

Kirby, 47, came from the port city of Bristol in southwest England and served in Bosnia and Afghanistan with the British Army before moving into private security work. According to his LinkedIn profile, he worked as a players' escort at the 2021 Wimbledon tennis tournament.

Kirby's cousin Amy Roxburgh-Barry called him an "all-round gentleman" who was planning to give his mother and aunt a surprise cruise after he returned from Gaza.

"It's just devastating that he's fought in these wars and come home with not a scratch, and then he goes out to do something helpful, and that's what happens," she told Sky News.

Chapman, 57, was a Royal Marines veteran whose family said in a statement that they were devastated to lose him.

"He died trying to help people and was subject to an inhumane act," they said. "He was an incredible father, husband, son and brother."

Henderson, who was 33 and known as Jim, was a former Royal Marine from Cornwall in southwest England, news outlets there reported. Sky News reported that he was due to leave Gaza on Monday, the day he was killed.

JACOB FLICKINGER

Jacob Flickinger was a 33-year-old dual citizen of the United States and Canada.

He served for more than 10 years in the Canadian Armed Forces and was deployed to Afghanistan, the military said in a statement.

A GoFundMe page raising money to help his family said he had a partner and 1-year-old son at home.

"It is an extreme loss to tell you a couple of days ago I lost my son, but in a way I'm not surprised because he was so into these type of missions, this type of work," his mother, Sylvie Labrecque, told The Associated Press. "There has been several times where I thought there was a strong possibility that his life was going to be short. He was kind of wild. He was very intense, but at the same time very smart."

Labrecque said Jacob had an American father and she is Canadian. She separated from Jacob's father after five years in New York and five in Miami. She wanted to raise her son in rural Quebec.

She said Jacob's grandfather died fighting for the United States in World War II around the same age.

She said her son leaves behind a 22-year-old girlfriend who is grieving at their home in Costa Rica.

Labrecque said she believes his aid convoy was deliberately targeted by IDF. "It was on purpose," she said.

In Acapulco, Mexico, restaurants posted on social media that Flickinger was among workers who brought relief to their neighborhoods last fall after Hurricane Otis slammed the Pacific coast.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said the fact that he was killed "while delivering food to civilians in need, his death is absolutely unacceptable."

"At a time when humanitarian aid is so urgently needed in Gaza, Israel has an obligation to ensure the

safety of aid workers. The world – and his loved ones – deserves an explanation as to how this happened,” Trudeau said in a post on X.

## One Tech Tip: How to use apps to track and photograph the total solar eclipse

By KELVIN CHAN AP Business Writer

Monday's total solar eclipse might become one of the most filmed and photographed events of the year.

As the moon passes in front of the sun, plunging a swath of North America into a few minutes of darkness, throngs will take pictures or videos of the moment. But powerful solar rays and drastic changes in lighting pose unique challenges in catching that perfect image.

Here are some pointers on how to get the best shot:

How can I find the best place to capture the eclipse?

First, get in the right position. You'll want to be as close as possible to the path of totality, which passes over Mexico's Pacific coast and ends in eastern Canada. Fifteen U.S. states get to see the full eclipse.

There are online maps to check if you'll be anywhere near the path. NASA's map shows how many minutes of totality there will be if you're inside the path depending on location, and how much of a partial eclipse you'll see if you're outside of it.

For spectators in Mexico and Canada, eclipse expert Xavier Jubier's website overlays the eclipse's path on Google Maps, which allows zooming into street level detail.

What can I use to plan a good shot?

With so many factors in play including cloud cover and the sun's position in the sky, planning is key to getting the best image.

There are a host of smartphone apps for eclipse chasers. The American Astronomical Society has compiled a list of useful ones for both iOS and Android devices, including its own Totality app that shows your location on a map of the totality path.

The Solar Eclipse Timer uses your phone's GPS to play an audio countdown to the moment of totality and highlights key moments. The app's maker advises using a separate phone for taking photos.

Eclipse Calculator 2 for Android devices uses the phone's camera to depict how the event will look in the sky from your position, using lines overlaid on top of the camera image. For iPhone users, apps like Sky Guide and SkySafari have eclipse simulators. There are other iOS apps that use augmented reality to simulate the eclipse, but they're pricier and not yet on the society's list.

How can I take a great photo of the eclipse?

Digital SLR cameras will produce the best photos. Their manual exposure controls and ability to add zoom lenses and accessories like remote shutter buttons will let you make great pictures.

Associated Press chief photographer Julio Cortez advises using a smaller aperture — f11 or f17 — to keep the focus "a little bit sharper." When he shot the 2017 total solar eclipse, he used an ISO setting of 1250 and 1/500 shutter speed.

The rest of us have our smartphones.

NASA published detailed guidelines for smartphone eclipse photography in 2017 with the caveat that "smartphones were never designed to do sun and moon photography." That's because the wide-angle



**FILE - Viewers use special glasses to watch from San Antonio, as the moon moves in front of the sun during an annular solar eclipse, or ring of fire, Oct. 14, 2023. The total solar eclipse on April 8, 2024 may be weeks away but businesses are ready for the celestial event with oodles of special eclipse glasses for sale, along with T-shirts and other souvenirs.** (AP Photo/Eric Gay, File)



lenses on most devices won't let you capture close-up detail. But new phones released since then come with sophisticated sensors, multiple lenses and image stabilization software that give a better chance.

Some experts suggest HDR, or High Dynamic Range, mode, which takes a series of pictures at different light levels and then blends them into a single shot — ideal for combining an eclipse's very dark and very bright areas.

But don't use flash. You can spoil the moment by ruining the vision of those around you whose eyes have adapted to darkness.

What will I need to protect against the sun?

The American Astronomical Society advises using a solar filter to protect cameras against intense sunlight and heat.

You can buy a filter that screws onto DSLR lenses, but it will take time to remove when totality happens. Cortez made his own with cardboard, tinted film and fasteners that he can quickly rip off.

For smartphones, you can use a spare pair of eclipse glasses and hold it over the lens, or buy a smartphone filter. There's no international standard, but the society's website has a list of models it considers safe. Make sure macro mode is not on.

If you plan to shoot for an extended time, use a tripod. To line up his camera after mounting it on a tripod, Cortez uses a solar finder, which helps locate the sun without damaging your eyes or equipment.

Cortez also advises bringing a white towel to cover up your gear after setting up to keep it from overheating as you wait for the big moment.

Can I take a selfie with the eclipse?

It's very tempting to make a TikTok or Instagram-friendly eclipse video. Perhaps you want to selfie video, narrating into the camera while the cosmic ballet between sun and moon plays out over your shoulder.

Be careful: While you might think your vision isn't at risk because you're not looking at the sun, your phone's screen could reflect harmful ultraviolet light, eye experts have warned.

And if you're using a solar filter on the selfie camera, it will turn the picture dark and you won't show up.

## **In the aftermath of the Moscow concert hall attack, is a harsher era under Putin in the works?**

By The Associated Press undefined

Video and photos of suspects in a mass shooting show them apparently being brutalized by Russian security forces — without any rebuke from authorities. A top Kremlin official urges that hit squads be sent to assassinate Ukrainian officials. Senior lawmakers call for restoring capital punishment, abolished decades ago.

The aftermath of the Moscow concert hall attack that killed 145 people in the bloodiest assault in Russia in two decades seems to be setting the stage for even harsher rule by President Vladimir Putin following his highly orchestrated electoral landslide last month.

Putin vowed to hunt down the masterminds of the March 22 attack that he linked to Ukraine despite Kyiv's vehement denials and a claim of responsibility by an offshoot of the Islamic State group. He warned ominously that terrorism is a "double-edged weapon."

Putin lieutenant Dmitry Medvedev declared that if Ukrainian involvement is proven, Moscow should respond by deploying hit men to kill the country's leaders "in Kyiv or any other convenient place."

The attack dealt a heavy blow to Putin less than a week after the vote that extended his rule for another six-years. It marked a major failure by his security agencies that were given an advance warning by the U.S. that extremists were planning an imminent attack.

Critics of the Kremlin argue that security forces are so focused on conducting the harshest crackdown on dissent since Soviet times that they are distracted from tackling real threats.

In an apparent attempt to divert attention from the security lapse and rally support for the war in Ukraine, Putin and his lieutenants alleged — without evidence — that the arrest of the four suspects near Ukraine

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indicated Kyiv's likely involvement.

The four, all citizens of Tajikistan, were detained by security forces in a forest about 140 kilometers (86 miles) from the Ukrainian border.

Video confessions of their involvement in the attack were released by Russian news outlets, but the veracity of those statements has been called into question because the men seemed to have been severely beaten and bore other signs of brutality when they appeared in court.

One had a heavily bandaged ear — reportedly cut off during interrogation. Another had pieces of a plastic bag on his neck, a possible sign of attempts at suffocation. A third was in a wheelchair, barely conscious, accompanied by medical personnel.

Russian police and other security agencies have long been accused of torture, but many incidents also brought official condemnation, dismissals of those involved and criminal prosecutions.

In stark contrast, authorities refused to comment on the grisly video that emerged or the signs of maltreatment seen in court.

One video showed a man in combat fatigues cutting off part of one of the suspects' ear and forcing it into his mouth while threatening to do the same with his genitals. Another suspect was seen with his trousers pulled down and wires attached to his genitals.

The Associated Press was unable to verify the authenticity of the images, but Human Rights Watch said it determined the men in the photos and videos were the same as those in court for their pretrial hearings.

"The rapid and widespread sharing of these videos appears to be no accident but rather some kind of appalling boast by the Putin government of its brazen disregard for basic rights, fundamental humanity, and the rule of law," said Tanya Lokshina, HRW's associate director for Europe and Central Asia.

Kremlin propagandists sought to cast their treatment as a proper response to the massacre.

Margarita Simonyan, head of state-funded broadcaster RT, dismissed criticism and said the law enforcement personnel involved shouldn't face any punishment.

"Imagine yourself in place of our guys who were chasing those ghouls who just mowed down many, many of our fellow citizens," Simonyan said. "What were they supposed to do? Serve them some warm porridge and yogurt?"

Many observers saw the tacit endorsement of such brutality as an ominous sign of more to come.

"All that serves a double function -- a show of terror as a mechanism of intimidation and rallying hatred," political analyst Kirill Rogov said in a commentary. "It normalizes hatred as a response, including to those who have questions and disagreements."

Medvedev, deputy head of Russia's Security Council, who served as liberal-minded placeholder president in 2008-12, when term limits forced Putin to shift to the premier's seat, has turned recently into one of the harsher voices from the Kremlin.

In a commentary on his messaging app channel this week, he called for the extrajudicial killings of Ukrainian officials, arguing Russia should follow in the Soviet practice in the last century of assassinations, like those of Ukrainian nationalists Yevhen Konovalts and Stepan Bandera.

"What should we do? Simply crush the Banderite swine as the Soviet MGB did after the war," Medvedev wrote, referring to a forerunner of the KGB, "and liquidate their leaders on convenient occasions -- like Konovalts and Bandera -- in Kyiv or any other convenient places."

The concert hall attack also brought demands from hawks and some senior lawmakers to reinstate the death penalty, which has been suspended since 1996 when Russia joined the Council of Europe, the continent's leading human rights organization.

Calls for its restoration have circulated often, particularly after attacks blamed on insurgents from the region of Chechnya and other militant extremists. They increased after Moscow left the Council of Europe after its invasion of Ukraine.

Vladimir Vasilyev, head of the parliamentary faction of United Russia, the main Kremlin party, said the lower house would review restoring the death penalty, taking into account "society's mood and expectations."

Some Kremlin-connected lawmakers and others oppose the move, in an apparent sign of Putin's hesitation.

Andrei Klishas, the influential head of the constitutional affairs committee in the upper house of parliament, argued its restoration is impossible unless Russia approves a new constitution.

Andrei Medvedev, the deputy speaker of the Moscow City Council, said Russia should never bring back capital punishment because of its troubled history in the Soviet era.

"Regrettably, our judicial system isn't ideal and isn't immune from mistakes," he wrote in a commentary. "The country that saw repressions, Red Terror ... and executions of those who believed in God must forget about the death penalty once and for all."

Lidiya Mikheyeva, the secretary of the Public Chamber, a Kremlin-controlled advisory board, also spoke against reinstatement and reverting "to the times of savagery and barbarity."

"The abolition of the death penalty is one of our country's major historic achievements," she added.

Dmitry Kiselyov, a Russian state TV commentator, also hinted that Putin doesn't support its reinstatement. "It's good that Russia is led by Putin, for whom the life of each of our citizens is priceless," he said.

Despite those apparent doubts, many observers say the official tolerance of the harsh treatment of the suspects and calls for killing Russia's enemies herald an even more ruthless era.

Net Freedoms, a Russian group focusing on freedom of speech, noted that harsh statements from Putin and Medvedev coming amid "the backdrop of demonstrative torture effectively sanction extrajudicial executions and give law enforcement agencies a directive on how to treat the enemies."

"We are seeing the possible beginning of the new Great Terror," the group said, referring to the purges by Soviet dictator Josef Stalin of the 1930s. "There must be no illusions — the developments follow a very bad scenario and the slide is rapidly accelerating."

## **Powerball jackpot jumps to \$1.23 billion after another drawing without a big winner**

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — The Powerball jackpot has increased to an estimated \$1.23 billion after another drawing without a big winner Wednesday night.

The numbers selected were: 11, 38, 41, 62, 65 and the Powerball 15.

The jackpot, which now ranks as the eighth-largest in U.S. lottery history, has been growing for more than three months, reflecting the long odds of 1 in 292.2 million of winning the top prize. Since the last player won the jackpot Jan. 1, there have been 40 consecutive drawings without anyone matching all six numbers and hitting it rich.

Lottery officials note that thousands of people have won smaller prizes, which range from \$2 to \$2 million.

The \$1.23 billion prize is for a sole winner who chooses to be paid through an annuity with 30 annual payments. Winners almost always prefer the cash option, which for the next drawing Saturday night would be an estimated \$595.1 million.

Powerball is played in 45 states plus Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

## **Jewish group launches Holocaust survivor speakers bureau to fight increasing antisemitism worldwide**

By KIRSTEN GRIESHABER Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — More than 250 Holocaust survivors have joined an international initiative to share their stories of loss and survival with students around the world during a time of rising antisemitism following the Oct. 7 Hamas attack on Israel that triggered the war in the Gaza Strip.

The Survivor Speakers Bureau was launched Thursday by the New York-based Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, also referred to as the Claims Conference.

"A Holocaust survivor speakers bureau of this scale and reach is unprecedented," said Gideon Taylor, the president of the Claims Conference. "At a moment of dramatically rising antisemitism, this program tells the history and educates for the future."

Six million European Jews and people from other minorities were killed by the Nazis and their collabora-

tors during the Holocaust.

The speakers bureau connects Holocaust survivors with students both virtually and in person.

In the United States and Germany, educational institutions can invite survivors to personally speak in classrooms and university lecture halls. Educators in other countries can request video conferences to ensure firsthand testimony is accessible.

The Claims Conference hopes to soon add more countries where young people can meet survivors in person.

"Holocaust education is crucial, especially given the current events happening around the world," said Holocaust survivor Eva Szepesi, who lives in Germany.

"My goal in sharing my own story of survival is and has always been to show the human impact, not just of the Holocaust, but of all the racist and hateful actions being taken in the world," the 91-year-old survivor of the Auschwitz death camp added.

"If hearing my testimony helps one person understand that they, too, have a role in the events happening in their community, and they can stand up for what is right, then I feel it is worth it for me to go remember and share those terrible stories."

Antisemitism in Germany, many other European countries, the United States and elsewhere has been described as reaching levels not seen in many decades. The Claims Conference hopes that first-person accounts of the cruelties endured during the Holocaust will help counter disinformation, denial and prejudice.

"Firsthand accounts are essential to maintaining Holocaust memory and go much further to ensure people understand the impact of bigotry, antisemitism and unchecked hatred," said Greg Schneider, the vice president of the Claims Conference.

The group handles claims on behalf of Jews who suffered under the Nazis and negotiates compensation with Germany's finance ministry every year. Since 1952, the German government has paid more than \$90 billion (83 billion euros) to individuals for suffering and losses resulting from persecution by the Nazis.

The Claims Conference administers several compensation programs that provide direct payments to survivors globally, provides grants to more than 300 social service agencies worldwide and ensures survivors receive services such as home care, food, medicine, transportation and socialization.

It also has secured increasing funding for Holocaust education in recent years as the number of survivors becomes smaller. Funding has increased from 30 million euros for 2024 to 41 million euros for 2027.

## **Southeast Asian countries consider ways to boost 'green financing' as region chokes on smog**

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

LUANG PRABANG, Laos (AP) — Senior finance and central bank officials from Southeast Asia and major economies met Thursday in the scenic Laotian city of Luang Prabang to discuss ways to help the region build resilience against shocks like the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters brought on by climate change.

The need for faster progress was dramatically apparent as the city and surrounding region were engulfed in heavy smoke from fires — some set to clear forests for crops, some ignited by record high temperatures and tinder-dry conditions. The air quality index early Thursday was nearly 300, or "very unhealthy."

Laos and other countries in Southeast Asia have committed to seeking more sustainable ways to feed their people and power their economies. The question is where the money will come from to do that.

Green finance is among several items on the agenda of the finance meetings of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations related to countering the mounting impacts of global warming. The officials also were set for talks on an ASEAN infrastructure fund and disaster risk financing and insurance, according to the agenda provided by hosts of this week's meetings.

Also on the list, refining a "taxonomy" to help identify and agree on projects that support ASEAN's sustainability agenda and align with its climate change commitments and other goals.

The 10 member nations of ASEAN — Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines,



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Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam — range from tiny but wealthy Brunei and Singapore to big, fast growing economies like Vietnam and Indonesia. They have pledged to cut carbon emissions to help reduce the impact of climate change but are struggling to find ways to unlock financing needed to make that transition.

ASEAN members are extremely vulnerable to extreme weather, drought and rising sea levels. Investments in clean energy need to increase by five to seven times, to more than \$200 billion a year, according to various estimates. Laos and its neighbors also are contending with a raft of other regional troubles, including human trafficking, a growing illicit drug trade and fast-growing enclaves of online scam centers run by criminal syndicates.

A landlocked country of about 7.5 million people, Laos is rich in hydroelectric power, but its economy has been shrinking in recent years and its national finances are fraught — strained by a heavy load of foreign and domestic debt, a weakening currency and inflation.

Longstanding traditions and a lack of funding to persuade farmers not to rely on crop burning — their most affordable option — mean that progress is slow. The government has set a goal of reducing the number of fires by 35% by the end of 2025. Similar burning in neighboring Thailand, Myanmar and Cambodia leaves the region shrouded in heavy smog for weeks at a time during the spring.

Countries in the region have begun to build regional electricity grids as one step toward improving a balance between supply and demand.

A higher priority for Laos, a Communist state where annual incomes average below \$2,000 a person, is weaving itself into the wider regional economy of about 660 million people. Combined, the region is the world's fifth-largest economy at about \$3.3 trillion.

Like many countries in the region, Laos' economy has become increasingly entwined with that of China. Those ties have deepened with the building of a \$6 billion high-speed railway that links to railways in southwest China's Yunnan province and eventually will be connected with a line running to Bangkok and the Gulf of Thailand. The downside: debts that are a heavy drain on the country's resources.

Along with regional financial leaders, senior officials of major international financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund and Asian Development Bank, along with delegates from Japan, China, the U.S. and other major economies, are attending the talks in Luang Prabang.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen is not attending the talks, but traveling to China this week, where she will meet with American business leaders and Chinese officials in south China's Guangzhou and in Beijing.

Also in Beijing this week were Indonesia's President-elect Prabowo Subianto and the foreign ministers of Vietnam, Laos and East-Timor, which is aspiring to become an ASEAN member. The flurry of visits highlights rivalries for influence in the region.

## **Treasury secretary heads to China to talk trade, anti-money laundering and Chinese 'overproduction'**

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska (AP) — Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen is headed to a China determined to avoid open conflict with the United States, yet the world's two largest economies still appear to be hashing out the rules on how to compete against each other.

There are tensions over Chinese government support for the manufacturing of electric vehicles and solar panels, just as the U.S. government ramps up its own aid for those tech sectors. There are differences in trade, ownership of TikTok, access to computer chips and national security — all of them a risk to what has become a carefully managed relationship.

The 77-year-old Yellen, a renowned economist and former Federal Reserve chair, laid out to reporters the issues that she intends to raise with her Chinese counterparts during her five-day visit. Yellen is headed to Guangzhou and Beijing for meetings with finance leaders and state officials. Her engagements will include Vice Premier He Lifeng, Chinese Central Bank Governor Pan Gongsheng, former Vice Premier Liu He, leaders of American businesses operating in China, university students and local leaders.

Yellen, speaking to reporters Wednesday during a refueling stop in Alaska en route to Asia, said her

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visit would be a "continuation of the dialogue that we have been engaged and deepening" ever since U.S. President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping met in 2022 in Indonesia. She noted that it would be her third meeting with China's vice premier.

Yellen recently accused China of flooding global markets with heavily subsidized green energy products, possibly undercutting the subsidies the U.S. has provided to its own renewable energy and EV sector with funds provided by the Democrats' Inflation Reduction Act. She said she intends to repeat her concerns to Chinese officials that they're flooding the global market with cheap solar panels and EVs that thwart the ability of other countries to develop those sectors.

"We need to have a level playing field," Yellen told reporters. "We're concerned about a massive investment in China in a set of industries that's resulting in overcapacity."

Yellen didn't rule out taking additional steps to counter Chinese subsidies in the green energy sectors, adding, "It's not just the United States but quite a few countries, including Mexico, Europe, Japan, that are feeling the pressure from massive investment, in these industries in China."

The Treasury secretary's travels come after Biden and Xi held their first call in five months on Tuesday, meant to demonstrate a return to regular leader-to-leader dialogue between the two powers. The leaders discussed Taiwan, artificial intelligence and security issues.

The call, described by the White House as "candid and constructive," was the leaders' first conversation since their November summit in California, which renewed ties between the two nations' militaries and enhanced cooperation on stemming the flow of deadly fentanyl and its precursors from China.

Still, it appears to be difficult for the two countries to strike a balance between competition and antagonism.

For instance, Xi last week hosted American CEOs in Beijing to court them on investing in China. Meanwhile, Biden last August issued an executive order that instructed an inter-agency committee, chaired by Yellen, to closely monitor U.S. investment in China related to high-tech manufacturing.

Jude Blanchette, a China expert at the Center for Strategic & International Studies, said, "the Biden administration's efforts over the last year to stabilize the relationship are clearly working, but the main friction points all remain unresolved and will likely challenge the relationship for the foreseeable future."

"For the time being, a 'managed rivalry' might be the best we can hope for, given the potentially catastrophic consequences of the relationship really going off the rails," he said.

Yellen last week said China is flooding the market with green energy that "distorts global prices," and plans to tell her counterparts that Beijing's increased production of solar energy, electric vehicles and lithium-ion batteries poses risks to productivity and growth to the global economy.

China began to broaden its presence in the global economy more than two decades ago, exporting cheap goods that appealed to U.S. consumers at the expense of factory jobs in many of those consumers' hometowns. Research by the economists David Autor, David Dorn and Gordon Hanson into what's known as the "China Shock" led to the steady demise of many factory towns, and in some cases led to greater political discontent.

Still, some experts see a benefit in an economic showdown to produce green products.

Shang-Jin Wei, a professor of Chinese business at Columbia University, says that a subsidy war could ultimately help consumers in both countries buy more climate-friendly products, which is an aim of the Biden administration.

"In contrast, a U.S. tariff on EV imports could raise the price of EVs in the U.S. and is therefore counterproductive for the purpose of inducing a green transition."

Yellen's trip will run from April 4 to 9. It's intended as a follow-up to Yellen's travel to China last July, which resulted in the launch of a pair of economic working groups between the two nations' finance departments to ease tensions and deepen ties.

But this visit falls in an election year, where tough talk on China has increased by Democrats and Republicans — who criticize Chinese ownership of popular social media app TikTok, the nation's censorship and human rights record and hold a deep mistrust over recent acts of espionage such as hacking and the use of a spy balloon.

Scheherazade S. Rehman, a professor of International Business and Finance and International Affairs at George Washington University, said while "it's an election year, so all the rhetoric is going to be sharper, the U.S and China are in a symbiotic trading relationship and ultimately need each other."

China is one of the United States' biggest trading partners, and economic competition between the two nations has increased in recent years. Yellen stressed Wednesday that the United States has no interest in decoupling from China.

China's support of Russia as it continues its invasion of neighboring Ukraine is another issue that will come up during the meetings. As the U.S. and its allies sanction Russian officials and entire sectors of the Russian economy, like banking, oil production and manufacturing, trade between China and Russia has increased.

## When voters say 'no' to new stadiums, what do professional sports teams do next?

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — Like a loss in the playoffs, voter rejection of a stadium tax plan will force the Kansas City Royals and Chiefs to reevaluate their approach.

The defeat Tuesday of a three-eighths cent sales tax to fund a new downtown Royals ballpark and renovate the Chiefs' Arrowhead Stadium was almost assuredly not the end of the matter. Other teams and cities have faced similar setbacks, and that hasn't slowed a wave of stadium construction underway across the U.S.

"The next page in the playbook, if they lose this referendum, would be to threaten to move," said Brad Humphreys, an economics professor at West Virginia University, who researches sports stadiums.

But that doesn't mean relocation is imminent, or even likely.

Moving to a new stadium within the same region or another state is just one of several options. Teams could tweak their plans and ask voters again. They could build or renovate stadiums without public funds. Or they could avoid a referendum by seeking approval for public subsidies directly from a legislative body such as a city council, county commission or state legislature.

"Usually, team owners just find a new way to get money, and they'll go the legislative route," said Geoffrey Propheter, an associate public finance professor at the University of Colorado Denver. "Rarely do team owners just straight up leave."

### DECADES OF DECISIONS

From 1990 through 2023, voters cast ballots on 57 stadium and arena proposals across the country, approving 35 and rejecting 22, according to data compiled by Propheter.

In December, Oklahoma City voters overwhelmingly approved a 1% sales tax for six years to help fund a new downtown arena for the NBA's Thunder that is expected to cost at least \$900 million.

But last May, voters in the Phoenix suburb of Tempe rejected a proposal for a \$2.3 billion entertainment district that would have included a new arena for the NHL's Arizona Coyotes. The defeat marked the latest setback for the hockey team, which underwent a 2009 bankruptcy and is currently playing in a 5,000-seat arena shared with Arizona State University.

The Coyotes haven't given up on the Phoenix area yet. The team is looking into bidding on a 95-acre tract in north Phoenix.

### NO REFERENDUM NEEDED

Public subsidies for stadiums and arenas often get approved by elected officials without going on the ballot.

Last year, the Nashville City Council approved \$760 million in local bonds to go along with \$500 million in state bonds — all to help finance a new \$2.1 billion football stadium for the Tennessee Titans. There was no public referendum.

Construction also began last year on a new football stadium for the Buffalo Bills that's projected to cost more than \$1.6 billion. A total of \$850 million is coming from New York and Erie County, with no public

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referendum.

The proposal from the Royals and Chiefs went to voters because the Missouri Constitution requires a public vote on local taxes. Only voters in Jackson County got a say, because the proposed tax applied only to sales in that county.

Voter approval might not be necessary if the teams can finance their stadiums without a tax. One option is privately financed bonds, but those would still need a funding stream for repayments, said Brent Never, associate public affairs professor at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

## MAKING AN END RUN

After losing elections, some teams subsequently sidestep voters to get new stadiums.

In 1997, voters in 11 southwestern Pennsylvania counties rejected a proposed half-cent sales tax to replace a stadium shared by the MLB's Pirates and NFL's Steelers with two separate facilities and to fund a convention center expansion. But the next year, a regional development district approved public financing for the new facilities without going back to voters.

Similar scenarios played out elsewhere in the mid-1990s. When voters in King County, Washington, rejected a tax plan for a Seattle Mariners ballpark, owners threatened to put the team up for sale. Within a month, state lawmakers authorized a new financing plan for a new baseball stadium.

After Wisconsin voters rejected a sports lottery for a new Milwaukee Brewers ballpark, the state legislature authorized a regional sales tax to help pay for it. Last year, Wisconsin's governor signed a law authorizing an additional \$500 million of public aid for stadium renovations, again without a voter referendum.

## TRYING AGAIN

Teams sometimes bounce back from a stadium election loss to achieve victory with voters.

After Houston voters defeated a new downtown arena for the NBA's Rockets in 1999, supporters tried again the next year and easily won.

The San Francisco Giants are perhaps the greatest example of electoral persistence.

Voters said "no" to new stadium plans twice in San Francisco, once in Santa Clara County and once in San Jose, before the Giants put forth a privately financed stadium that finally received voter approval for a needed San Francisco zoning change in 1996.

## MOVING OUT

The Oakland A's received MLB approval last year to relocate to Las Vegas, following the path of the NFL's Oakland Raiders who were similarly lured by a new publicly subsidized stadium. But those deals didn't involve public votes.

The NFL's Chargers are the most recent team to move following voter rejection of a stadium referendum. San Diego voters in 2016 defeated a plan to raise hotel taxes for a new football stadium and to expand a convention center. The Chargers then moved to a new privately financed stadium in Los Angeles, sharing it with the Rams, who relocated from St. Louis.

The NBA's Charlotte Hornets moved to New Orleans in 2002 — later rebranding as the Pelicans — after voters defeated a sweeping plan to fund a new basketball arena, minor league baseball stadium, museums and cultural centers.

But just six months after the team left, the Charlotte City Council approved a plan for a new downtown arena without submitting it to voters. The NBA then awarded Charlotte an expansion team, which later assumed the Hornets name.

## **Palestinians want April vote on UN membership despite US saying peace with Israel must come first**

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The Palestinians want the Security Council to vote later this month on their revived request for full membership in the United Nations, despite the United States reiterating Wednesday that Israel and the Palestinians must first negotiate a peace agreement.



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Riyad Mansour, the Palestinian U.N. ambassador, said 140 countries recognize the state of Palestine, and "we believe it is high time now for our state to become a full member at the United Nations."

The Palestinians are making a fresh bid for U.N. membership as the war between Israel and Hamas that began Oct. 7 nears its sixth month, putting the unresolved decades-old Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the spotlight after years on the back burner.

During the Cold War between the former Soviet Union and the United States, Mansour said, countries were blocked from joining the U.N., but they all eventually became members, including North Korea. The U.S. doesn't recognize North Korea but didn't block its admission, he said, and asked why conditions should be placed on Palestinian membership.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas delivered the Palestinian Authority's application to become the 194th member of the United Nations to then Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Sept. 23, 2011, before addressing world leaders at the General Assembly.

That bid failed because the Palestinians failed to get the required support of nine of the Security Council's 15 members. Even if they did, the United States, Israel's closest ally, had promised at that time to veto any council resolution endorsing Palestinian membership, saying this should follow a negotiated peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians.

The Palestinians then went to the 193-member General Assembly, where there are no vetoes, and by more than a two-thirds majority succeeded in having their status raised from a U.N. observer to a non-member observer state in November 2012.

Mansour asked the Security Council on Tuesday to consider during April the Palestinians' renewed application for membership, which was supported by the 22-nation Arab Group at the United Nations, the 57-nation Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the 120-member Nonaligned Movement.

He told several journalists Wednesday that he expects the council's Standing Committee on New Members, which includes all 15 council nations, to meet behind closed doors to consider the application before the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan on April 9.

Mansour said he then expects the Security Council to vote on the Palestinian request for full U.N. membership at its monthly meeting on the Middle East, being held at ministerial level April 18.

Seven of the council's 15 members recognize the state of Palestine — China, Russia, Ecuador, Mozambique, Algeria, Guyana and Sierra Leone.

U.S. State Department spokesman Matthew Miller was asked Wednesday whether the United States would veto full membership for Palestinians. "I am not going to speculate about what may happen down the road," he replied.

He said intensive diplomacy has taken place over the past few months to establish a Palestinian state with security guarantees for Israel, which the United States supports. But Miller said that should be done through direct Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, "something we are pursuing at this time, and not at the United Nations."

U.S. deputy ambassador Robert Wood pointed to another obstacle: The U.S. Congress has adopted legislation "that in essence says that if the Security Council approves full membership for the Palestinians outside of a bilateral agreement between Israel and the Palestinians ... (U.S.) funding would be cut off to the U.N. system."

"We're bound by U.S. laws," he told several reporters Wednesday. "So our hope is that they don't pursue that, but that's up to them."

Mansour, the Palestinian ambassador, said it is the Palestinians' "natural and legal right" to seek full U.N. membership and declared, "Let the process unfold."

## Why is Taiwan so exposed to earthquakes and so well prepared to withstand them?

By SIMINA MISTREANU Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — Taiwan was struck Wednesday by its most powerful earthquake in a quarter of a century. At least nine people were killed and hundreds injured, buildings and highways damaged and dozens of workers at quarries stranded.

Taiwan is no stranger to powerful earthquakes yet their toll on the high-tech island's 23 million residents has been relatively contained thanks to its excellent earthquake preparedness, experts say.

Here is a closer look at Taiwan's history of earthquakes:

### WHY SO MANY TEMBLORS?

Taiwan lies along the Pacific "Ring of Fire," the line of seismic faults encircling the Pacific Ocean where most of the world's earthquakes occur.

The area is particularly vulnerable to temblors due to the tension accumulated from the interactions of two tectonic plates, the Philippine Sea Plate and the Eurasian Plate, which may lead to sudden releases in the form of earthquakes.

The region's mountainous landscape can magnify the ground shaking, leading to landslides. Several such landslides occurred on Taiwan's eastern coast near the epicenter of Wednesday's quake near eastern Hualien County, when falling debris hit tunnels and highways, crushing vehicles and causing several deaths.

### HOW WELL-EQUIPPED IS TAIWAN TO HANDLE QUAKES?

Wednesday's earthquake measured 7.2, according to Taiwan's earthquake monitoring agency, while the U.S. Geological Survey put it at 7.4. It damaged several buildings in Hualien but caused only minor losses in the capital Taipei despite being strongly felt there.

The earthquake hit in the middle of the morning rush hour yet only slightly derailed the regular commute. Just minutes later, parents were again walking their children to school and workers driving to offices.

"Taiwan's earthquake preparedness is among the most advanced in the world," said Stephen Gao, a seismologist and professor at Missouri University of Science and Technology. "The island has implemented strict building codes, a world-class seismological network, and widespread public education campaigns on earthquake safety."

The government continually revises the level of quake resistance required of new and existing buildings — which may increase construction costs — and offers subsidies to residents willing to check their buildings' quake resistance.

Following a 2016 quake in Tainan, on the island's southwestern coast, five people involved in the construction of a 17-story high-rise apartment building that was the only major structure to have collapsed, killing dozens, were found guilty of negligence and given prison sentences.

Taiwan also is pushing quake drills at schools and workplaces while public media and cellphones regularly carry notices about earthquakes and safety.

"These measures have significantly enhanced Taiwan's resilience to earthquakes, helping to mitigate the potential for catastrophic damage and loss of life," Gao said.

### THE 1999 QUAKE WAS A WAKE-UP CALL

Taiwan and its surrounding waters have registered about 2,000 earthquakes with a magnitude of 4.0 or greater since 1980, and more than 100 earthquakes with a magnitude above 5.5, according to the USGS.

The island's worst quake in recent years struck on Sept. 21, 1999, with a magnitude of 7.7. It caused 2,400 deaths, injured around 100,000 and destroyed thousands of buildings.

It was also a major wake-up call that led to key administrative reforms to improve emergency response and disaster reduction, according to Daniel Aldrich, professor of political science and public policy at Northeastern University.

"Observers strongly criticized Taiwan's response to the 21 September 1999 earthquake, arguing that it took hours for emergency medical response teams to arrive, that rescuers lacked training, and that the operations between government agencies were not well coordinated," he wrote in an email. As a result,

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the government passed the Disaster Prevention and Protection Act and set up two national centers to handle coordination and training for earthquakes.

"I think we're seeing the results in this most recent shock," he said.

## **Fierce earthquake rattles Taiwan, killing 9 and injuring more than 1,000**

By JOHNSON LAI, CHRISTOPHER BODEEN and SIMINA MISTREANU Associated Press

HUALIEN, Taiwan (AP) — The strongest earthquake in a quarter-century rocked Taiwan Wednesday morning, killing nine people, stranding dozens at quarries and a national park, and sending some residents scrambling out the windows of damaged buildings.

The quake, which injured more than 1,000, struck just before 8 a.m. and was centered off the coast of rural, mountainous Hualien County, where some buildings leaned at severe angles, their ground floors crushed. Just over 150 kilometers (93 miles) away in the capital of Taipei, tiles fell from older buildings, and schools evacuated students to sports fields as aftershocks followed.

Rescuers fanned out in Hualien, looking for people who may be trapped and using excavators to stabilize damaged buildings. The numbers of people missing, trapped or stranded fluctuated as authorities learned of more in trouble and worked to locate or free them.

Some 70 workers who were stranded at two rock quarries were safe, according to Taiwan's national fire agency, but the roads to reach them were damaged by falling rocks. Six workers were going to be airlifted on Thursday.

In the hours after the quake, TV showed neighbors and rescue workers lifting residents, including a toddler, through windows and onto the street. Some doors had fused shut in the shaking.

Taiwan is regularly jolted by quakes and its population is among the best prepared for them. But authorities expected a relatively mild earthquake and did not send out alerts. The eventual quake was strong enough to scare even people who are used to such shaking.

"I've grown accustomed to (earthquakes). But today was the first time I was scared to tears by an earthquake," said Hsien-hsuen Keng, who lives in a fifth-floor apartment in Taipei. "I was awakened by the earthquake. I had never felt such intense shaking before."

At least nine people died in the quake, according to Taiwan's fire agency. Most of the fatalities were caused by falling rocks, including four people who were struck inside Taroko National Park, according to the state Central News Agency. One died in a residential building that was damaged, the news agency said.

A small tsunami washed ashore on southern Japanese islands but caused no damage.

At least 1,011 people were reported injured. Authorities initially lost contact with 50 hotel employees in minibuses in the park after the quake downed phone networks; three employees walked to the hotel, while the others remained stranded. About two dozen tourists were also stranded in the park, the state news agency said.

The quake and aftershocks caused many landslides and damaged roads, bridges and tunnels. The national legislature, a converted school built before World War II, and sections of the main airport in Taoyuan, just south of Taipei, also saw minor damage.

Hualien Mayor Hsu Chen-wei said 48 residential buildings were damaged in the city, which shares a name with the county. Hsu said water and electricity supplies were in the process of being restored.

Taiwan's earthquake monitoring agency said the quake was 7.2 magnitude while the U.S. Geological Survey put it at 7.4. It struck about 18 kilometers (11 miles) from Hualien and was about 35 kilometers (21 miles) deep. Multiple aftershocks followed.

Traffic along the east coast was at a virtual standstill after the earthquake, with landslides and falling debris hitting tunnels and highways. Train service was suspended across the island of 23 million people, with some tracks twisted by the stress of the quake, as was subway service in Taipei, where sections of a newly constructed elevated line split apart but did not collapse.

The initial panic quickly faded on the island, which prepares for such events with drills at schools and notices issued via public media and mobile phone. Stephen Gao, a seismologist and professor at Missouri

University of Science and Technology, said Taiwan's readiness is among the most advanced in the world and includes strict building codes and a world-class seismological network.

By noon, the metro station in the busy northern Taipei suburb of Beitou was again buzzing with people commuting to jobs and people arriving to visit the hot springs or travel the mountain paths at the base of an extinct volcano.

The earthquake was felt in Shanghai and provinces along China's southeastern coast, according to Chinese media. China and Taiwan are about 160 kilometers (100 miles) apart.

The Japan Meteorological Agency said a tsunami of 30 centimeters (about 1 foot) was detected on the coast of Yonaguni island about 15 minutes after the quake struck. Smaller waves were measured in Ishigaki and Miyako islands. All alerts in the region had been lifted by Wednesday afternoon.

Taiwan lies along the Pacific "Ring of Fire," the line of seismic faults encircling the Pacific Ocean where most of the world's earthquakes occur.

Hualien was last struck by a deadly quake in 2018 that killed 17 people and brought down a historic hotel. Taiwan's worst quake in recent years struck on Sept. 21, 1999, with a magnitude of 7.7, causing 2,400 deaths, injuring around 100,000 and destroying thousands of buildings.

The economic fallout from the quake has yet to be calculated. Taiwan is the leading manufacturer of the world's most sophisticated computer chips and other high-technology items that are highly sensitive to seismic events. Parts of the electricity grid were shut down, possibly leading to disruptions in the supply chain and financial losses.

Taiwanese chipmaker TSMC, which supplies semiconductors to companies such as Apple, said it evacuated employees from some of its factories in Hsinchu, southwest of Taipei. Hsinchu authorities said water and electricity supplies for all the factories in the city's science park were functioning as normal.

## **Judge rejects Donald Trump's request to delay hush-money trial until Supreme Court rules on immunity**

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A judge on Wednesday rejected Donald Trump's bid to delay his April 15 hush money criminal trial until the Supreme Court rules on presidential immunity claims he raised in another of his criminal cases — spurning another of the former president's ploys to put off the historic trial. Several more are pending.

Manhattan Judge Juan M. Merchan declared the request untimely, ruling that Trump's lawyers had "myriad opportunities" to raise the immunity issue before they finally did so last month, well after a deadline for pretrial motions had already passed.

The timing of the defense's March 7 filing "raises real questions about the sincerity and actual purpose of the motion," Merchan wrote in a six-page decision.

Lawyers for Trump, the presumptive Republican nominee, had asked Merchan to adjourn the New York trial indefinitely until Trump's immunity claim in his Washington, D.C., election interference case is resolved.

Trump contends he is immune from prosecution for conduct alleged to involve official acts during his tenure in office. His lawyers have not raised that as a defense in the hush-money case, but they argued that some evidence — including Trump's social media posts about former lawyer Michael Cohen — is from his time as president and should be excluded from the trial because of his immunity protections.

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear arguments on April 25 — a week-and-a-half after the start of jury selection in the hush-money case.

Trump lawyer Todd Blanche declined to comment. The Manhattan district attorney's office also declined to comment.

Trump first raised the immunity issue in his Washington criminal case, which involves allegations that he worked to overturn the results of his 2020 election loss in the run-up to the violent riot by his supporters at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

Merchan, in his ruling, drew a distinction between the Washington case — which he referred to as the



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Federal Insurrection Matter — and the hush-money case he's overseeing.

In Washington, Trump is trying to use presidential immunity to get the charges thrown out on the grounds that he has "absolute immunity from federal criminal liability," the judge wrote. In the hush-money case, he said, Trump is trying to preclude evidence of what prosecutors said was his "pressure campaign" against Cohen and other witnesses.

The hush money case centers on allegations that Trump falsified his company's internal records to hide the true nature of payments to his former lawyer Michael Cohen, who helped Trump bury negative stories during his 2016 presidential campaign. Among other things, Cohen paid porn actor Stormy Daniels \$130,000 to suppress her claims of an extramarital sexual encounter with Trump years earlier.

Trump pleaded not guilty last year to 34 felony counts of falsifying business records. He has denied having a sexual encounter with Daniels, and his lawyers argue the payments to Cohen were legitimate legal expenses and not part of any cover-up.

The hush-money trial, the first of Trump's four criminal cases scheduled to go before a jury, was originally scheduled to begin March 25. Merchan postponed it until April 15 after Trump's lawyers complained about a last-minute document dump from a prior federal investigation into the matter that sent Cohen to prison.

Trump and his lawyers have continued to lobby for even more delays, parlaying gripes about Merchan and concerns about getting a fair trial in heavily Democratic Manhattan into eleventh-hour pleas for more time. It's the latest iteration of the strategy Trump proclaimed to TV cameras outside a pretrial hearing in February: "We want delays."

Trump's lawyers are again urging Merchan to step aside from the case, arguing in a letter to the judge this week that he may have a conflict of interest because of his daughter's work as a Democratic political consultant. Merchan rejected a similar recusal request last year. If he were to exit now, it would throw the trial schedule into disarray, with time needed to assign a new judge and get that person up to speed.

In other recent filings, Trump's lawyers argued that the trial should be delayed indefinitely until "prejudicial media coverage" of the case dissipates. They also contend that by seeking to make the case about the 2016 election, prosecutors in the liberal borough are "endeavoring to give jurors an opportunity for a referendum" on Trump's win in that race.

Prosecutors balked at that Wednesday, arguing that publicity about the unprecedented trial of the former president is "unlikely to recede" anytime soon. They blamed Trump's "own incessant rhetoric" for generating significant publicity, adding that "it would be perverse" to reward him with a delay "based on media attention he is actively seeking."

Prosecutors said the jury selection process — with additional questions designed to weed out biased prospects — will allow both sides to pick an impartial jury.

In his ruling Wednesday, Merchan wrote that Trump's failure to raise the immunity issue sooner strained credulity since the former president's lawyers had previously invoked presidential immunity in a failed bid last year to get the hush-money case moved from state court to federal court.

U.S. District Judge Alvin Hellerstein rejected Trump's claim that allegations in the hush money indictment involved official duties, writing last July, "The evidence overwhelmingly suggests that the matter was a purely a personal item of the President — a cover-up of an embarrassing event."

"Hush money paid to an adult film star is not related to a President's official acts. It does not reflect in any way the color of the President's official duties," Hellerstein added.

The question of whether a former president is immune from federal prosecution for official acts taken in office is legally untested.

Prosecutors in the Washington case have said no such immunity exists and that, in any event, none of the actions alleged in the indictment count as official acts. The trial judge in Washington and a federal appeals court have both ruled against Trump.

## Chinese signatures on graduation certificates upset northern Virginia police chief

BY MATTHEW BARAKAT Associated Press

FAIRFAX, Va. (AP) — A northern Virginia town has been excluded from a countywide police training academy after the town's chief complained about Chinese signatures on trainees' graduation certificates.

Herndon Police Chief Maggie DeBoard complained that the academy director, Maj. Wilson Lee, used Chinese characters to sign the certificates that graduates receive when they complete training at the Fairfax County Criminal Justice Academy.

In an email sent last month and obtained by The Associated Press, DeBoard told Lee, "I just found out that the academy graduation certificates were signed by you in some other language, not in English. This is unacceptable for my agency. I don't want our Herndon officers to receive these and I am requesting that they are issued certificates signed in English, the language that they are expected to use as an officer."

On March 18, the county's deputy executive for safety and security, Thomas Arnold, wrote to DeBoard informing her that the county was terminating Herndon's affiliation with the academy.

In a statement, Herndon Town Manager Bill Ashton said the town is reviewing the incident.

He defended DeBoard. "It is unfortunate that Chief DeBoard's recent interaction with Fairfax County's Criminal Justice Academy has been viewed as discriminatory. I have personally known Chief DeBoard for over 12 years and this interaction is completely inconsistent with the dedicated public servant that I know," Ashton said.

The Town of Herndon is a part of Fairfax County, just outside the nation's capital, but the town maintains its own police force. The much larger Fairfax County Police Department is the primary user of the academy, which also serves the town of Vienna, the county sheriff's office and the county fire marshal.

Fairfax County Police Chief Kevin Davis declined to comment on the dispute. But in an email he sent to officers, he defended Lee, saying. "For 16 years of an impeccable career, memorializing a legal name given at birth with a signature that exudes heritage pride has not garnered a single criticism. Nor should it."

Last year, a former Herndon police officer sued the town in federal court, saying she suffered sexual harassment and discrimination at the hands of a supervisor. The lawsuit accused DeBoard of failing to stop the harassment even though she was aware of it.

The lawsuit was eventually settled before trial, but court papers indicate that other officers complained of racial discrimination during the time DeBoard has been chief.

In the court papers, the town said DeBoard took the female officer's concerns seriously and that she would have recommended firing the officer accused of harassment, but he resigned before she could do so. Lawyers for the town said the complaints of racial discrimination were made by officers who faced disciplinary action.

Herndon Police referred questions Wednesday to the statement issued by the town manager.

## Prosecutors recommend at least 10 years in prison for parents of Michigan school shooter

By ED WHITE Associated Press

PONTIAC, Mich. (AP) — Prosecutors in Michigan are recommending at least 10 years in prison next week for two parents who are the first in the U.S. to be held criminally responsible for a school shooting.

Jennifer Crumbley showed a "chilling lack of remorse" for her role, and James Crumbley "failed to exercise even the smallest measure of ordinary care" that could have prevented the deaths of four students at Oxford High School in 2021, prosecutors said in a court filing Wednesday.

The Crumbleys, the parents of shooter Ethan Crumbley, were convicted of involuntary manslaughter at separate trials earlier this year. They were not accused of knowing their son's plan. But prosecutors said they failed to lock up a gun at home and ignored his mental health.

The maximum prison stay for the crime is 15 years. But the minimum sentence set by the judge on April

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9 will be critical because the Crumbleys would be eligible for parole consideration after that time. They will get credit for about 2 1/2 years spent in the Oakland County jail since their arrest.

Messages seeking comment from defense lawyers were not immediately returned Wednesday.

In their filing, prosecutors disclosed that Jennifer Crumbley, 46, is hoping to avoid prison and instead be fitted with an electronic tether and live with her attorney, Shannon Smith. They said James Crumbley, 47, too, is hoping to be released.

"Such a proposed sentence is a slap in the face to the severity of tragedy caused by defendant's gross negligence, the victims and their families," assistant prosecutor Marc Keast said, referring to Jennifer Crumbley.

On the day of the shooting, the Crumbleys went to the school to discuss Ethan's morbid drawing of a gun, a bullet, a wounded figure and phrases such as, "The thoughts won't stop. Help me."

Instead of taking their son home, the Crumbleys left with a list of contacts for mental health services and returned to work. A few hours later, Ethan, who was 15 at the time, pulled a Sig Sauer 9 mm handgun from his backpack and began shooting.

School staff had not demanded that Ethan be removed from school. But they also didn't know that James Crumbley had purchased the gun just four days earlier and that it resembled the one in the drawing, according to trial testimony.

Ethan, now 17, is serving life in prison with no chance for parole after pleading guilty to murder and terrorism.

During James Crumbley's trial, the judge barred his use of a phone and tablet while in jail. The sheriff's department, which operates the jail, said he had been making threats, though no details were publicly disclosed at the time.

In his court filing, Keast said profanity-laced threats were aimed at Karen McDonald, the elected county prosecutor. He offered five examples.

"I am ... on a rampage, Karen. Yes, Karen McDonald. You better be ... scared," he said on Jan. 3, according to Keast.

## 50 years later, a Braves fan shares long-private video of Hank Aaron's 715th home run

By CHARLES ODUM AP Sports Writer

SAVANNAH, Ga. (AP) — Charlie Russo had an unbelievable view of Hank Aaron's record-breaking 715th home run. Fifty years later, he's ready to share it with the world.

The 81-year-old Russo is releasing his long-private footage of the moment Aaron broke Babe Ruth's record on April 8, 1974, which he captured after surreptitiously following Aaron's family onto the field at Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium. He was right there celebrating at home plate with Aaron, his family and teammates — including Dusty Baker, who was on deck for the Atlanta Braves when Aaron connected.

"Was that guy filming?" Baker asked when told about the video made available to The Associated Press by Russo and his family. "Come on! I've never seen that!"

Russo's video shows Aaron — standing just feet away — raising his right arm and smiling to the cheering crowd.

"Everything just fell into place," Russo said. "I mean, just everything we did was just, you know, magical."

Russo says he and his uncle, Joseph Mathews, obtained the coveted tickets before making the drive from Savannah. The game was a sellout, with a crowd of 53,775. Russo recalls that finding the tickets was just the start of a charmed day.

Russo was filming from seats behind the third-base dugout when Aaron's drive cleared the wall in left-center in his second at-bat. He then walked closer to where he had seen Aaron's family and entertainers Sammy Davis Jr. and Pearl Bailey seated. When Aaron's mother, father and others made their way toward the field, Russo followed.

"They open the gate and they go," Russo said. "So I go in the field, too. I mean, it's just like 'OK, I'm

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part of the family.”

Russo's shots — filmed with an 8 mm camera — show him getting closer and closer to Aaron, until suddenly Aaron is grinning inches away from his lens. He also got a close-up moment with Davis, who had promised \$25,000 to whoever caught the home run. Footage from other cameras shows Russo, in a brown leather jacket, standing directly behind Aaron while the Hall of Famer waved to someone in the stands.

It was remarkable access given the security concerns around Aaron at the time. Aaron received numerous death threats as he approached Ruth's record, the target of racism as a Black man set to pass a white player whose mark was set while the sport was segregated. Despite extra security, Russo — who is white — said he was never questioned.

“Nobody says anything,” he said. “Well, all the attention is on Aaron, you know?”

Former Braves media relations director Bob Hope says a popular rumor was that police snipers were in place atop the stadium due to security concerns. Hope says that wasn't true, but when told about Russo's story, he acknowledged security should have been more stringent.

Russo wasn't the only unauthorized visitor on the field. Two 17-year-old fans, Britt Gaston and Cliff Courtenay, barged onto the diamond and joined Aaron as he ran around the bases.

“I mean, I don't know how the security wasn't tighter than it was,” Hope said. “It definitely should have been. ... I mean, the two kids run around the bases. Oh my gosh, if there were snipers, they would have gotten them for sure.”

While filming, Russo looked down to see the rosin bag and weighted donut used by Braves hitters in the on-deck circle. Russo reached down and placed the items in his jacket.

“I was just down there and, you know, I think everything just sort of fell into place,” Russo said. “OK, this is the rosin bag and a donut. Oh, my Lord. And I put them in my pocket.”

Aaron visited Savannah a few months later and gave Russo a signature, which was placed in a frame with the rosin bag, donut and Sports Illustrated cover showing the record homer. Russo now wants to pass along the rosin bag and donut, perhaps for auction.

Russo said Aaron was not upset to learn Russo had the items from the on-deck circle.

“He was nice as he could be,” Russo said. “Came in and autographed them. ... I mean, his demeanor is just ‘Oh, man, that's beautiful.’ And, I mean, he's fine. And he signed them, ‘Best wishes, Hank Aaron.’”

Aaron finished his Hall of Fame career with 755 homers, a record broken by Barry Bonds in 2007.

The Braves plan to celebrate the 50th anniversary at Truist Park next week. Baker, who retired as Houston Astros manager after last season, plans to attend, along with Tom House, the relief pitcher who caught the homer in the Braves bullpen. Baker and Hope were the only non-family pallbearers at Aaron's funeral following his death at 86 in 2021.

Russo said being so close to one of the most famous homers in baseball history was not his first brush with a memorable game. He said he jumped over Sanford Stadium's hedges to walk onto the field after Georgia's young coach, Vince Dooley, beat Alabama's Bear Bryant in 1965.

He also has a framed photo of himself standing beside Pete Maravich in the Louisiana State locker room after Maravich scored 58 points in a double-overtime win at Georgia in 1969.

“Maybe it's my demeanor that, you know, it's an occasion,” Russo said. “And when you do these things, you've got to go ahead and do them. You can't sit and think about them.”

Russo isn't one to just sit. He still works six-day weeks at the fish market founded by his father in 1946. He says he wouldn't hesitate if he had another opportunity to leave the stands for an up-close view of history.

“Yes,” he said. “If the event called for it, yes I would.”



## In rare call, Russian defense minister warns French counterpart against sending troops to Ukraine

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia's defense minister warned his French counterpart against deploying troops to Ukraine in a rare phone call Wednesday and noted that Moscow is ready to take part in talks to end the conflict.

Sergei Shoigu told French Defense Minister Sébastien Lecornu that if Paris follows up on its statements about the possibility of sending a French military contingent to Ukraine, "it will create problems for France itself," according to a statement from the Russian Defense Ministry. It didn't elaborate.

The conversation followed French President Emmanuel Macron's comments in February, in which he said that the possibility of Western troops being sent to Ukraine could not be ruled out.

The call marked the first such contact between Russian and French defense ministers since October 2022. Shoigu noted Moscow's "readiness for dialogue on Ukraine," emphasizing that a planned round of peace talks in Geneva would be "senseless" without Russia's involvement. He added that possible future negotiations could be based on a draft document, which was discussed during Russia-Ukraine talks in Istanbul in March 2022.

Media reports have said that the draft negotiated in Istanbul weeks after Moscow sent troops into Ukraine envisaged that Ukraine will abandon its bid to join NATO and remain neutral. No final deal was reached and the talks collapsed quickly after.

The Russian Defense Ministry also said in its readout of Wednesday's call that Lecornu offered condolences over the March 22 attack on a suburban Moscow concert hall that killed 145 in the deadliest assault on Russian soil in decades.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and his officials have sought to link Ukraine and the West to the attack despite Kyiv's fierce denial, a claim of responsibility issued by an affiliate of Islamic State group and an advance warning that the U.S. had issued to Moscow about imminent attack.

The Russian Defense Ministry said that during the call Lecornu tried to persuade Shoigu that Ukraine and its Western allies had no relation to the concert hall raid, but Shoigu insisted that Moscow has "information about Ukrainian trace in organizing the terror attack."

"The Kyiv regime does nothing without approval of its Western handlers," the ministry quoted Shoigu as telling Lecornu. "We hope that the French special services weren't involved in it."

## Bodies of 6 foreign aid workers slain in Israeli strikes are transported out of Gaza

By MOHAMMAD JAHJOUH and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — The bodies of six foreign aid workers killed in Israeli airstrikes began the journey back to their home countries Wednesday as more questions swirled over Israel's explanation that a "misidentification" led to the attack on their convoy.

The deadly strikes renewed criticism of Israel's conduct in the nearly 6-month-old war with Hamas and highlighted the risks that the military's bombardment poses to aid workers as they try to deliver food to the besieged enclave. The U.N. says nearly a third of the Gaza population is on the brink of starvation.

The three British citizens, a Polish citizen, an Australian and a Canadian American dual citizen worked for World Central Kitchen, an international charity founded by celebrity chef José Andrés. Their Palestinian driver was also killed, and his remains were handed over to his family for burial in Gaza.

The other bodies were driven into Egypt through the Rafah crossing, according to the Palestinian Crossings Authority, which oversees border crossings.

The seven were distributing food that had been brought into Gaza through a newly established maritime corridor when Israeli airstrikes targeted their three vehicles late Monday, killing everyone inside.

Israel's military chief, Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi, announced the results of a preliminary investigation.

"It was a mistake that followed a misidentification — at night during a war in very complex conditions.

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It shouldn't have happened." He gave no further details. He said an independent body would complete a "thorough investigation" in the coming days.

Andrés said the strikes "were not just some unfortunate mistake in the fog of war."

"It was a direct attack on clearly marked vehicles whose movements were known by" the Israeli military, Andrés wrote in an op-ed published Wednesday by Israel's Yediot Ahronot newspaper. "It was also the direct result of (the Israeli) government's policy to squeeze humanitarian aid to desperate levels."

World Central Kitchen said it had coordinated its movements with the military, and the vehicles were marked with the organization's logo.

Andrés, a Spanish-American chef whose organization has provided aid in war and disaster zones all over the world, including to Israelis after Hamas' Oct. 7 attack that triggered the war, wrote that "the Israeli government needs to open land routes to food and medicine today. It needs to stop killing civilians and aid workers today."

Spain's prime minister, Pedro Sanchez, said Israel's explanation so far was "absolutely unacceptable and insufficient" and called for "much more detailed clarification of what happened." He spoke at a joint news conference in Doha with his Qatari counterpart. Qatar has played a key role in efforts to mediate a cease-fire, along with the U.S. and Egypt.

Some of Israel's closest allies condemned the deaths, which led the World Central Kitchen and other charities to suspend food deliveries, citing the dire security situation.

Israeli officials have not elaborated on the nature of the mistake.

The military has repeatedly struck aid vehicles and ambulances, as well as humanitarian group offices and U.N. facilities, often justifying the attacks by saying suspected militants were present. The military says strikes are first cleared by legal experts, but critics have called the bombardment indiscriminate with little regard for civilian casualties.

More than 180 humanitarian workers have been killed in the conflict, according to the U.N.

On Tuesday, Israeli TV reported initial findings that have not been officially confirmed, saying the army identified the cars carrying World Central Kitchen's workers and observed suspected militants nearby. Half an hour later, the vehicles were struck by the air force. The reports said it was not clear who ordered the strikes or why.

Dr. Maya Sion-Tzidkiyahu, an expert in Israel-Europe relations at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the progressive think tank Mitvim Institute, said it was possible the military did not have enough control over commanders and soldiers on the ground, who are "taking some action into their own hands. They're interpreting the engagement rules in a much more elaborate way."

International reaction has been "extremely harsh, and it's justified," she said. "The credit that we had after Oct. 7 has already dwindled, and now it's dwindled so much more."

Israel faces growing isolation as international criticism of its Gaza assault has mounted. On the same day as the deadly airstrikes, Israel stirred more fears by apparently striking Iran's consulate in Damascus, killing two Iranian generals. The government also moved to shut down a foreign media outlet — Qatari-owned Al Jazeera television.

The hit on World Central Kitchen's convoy threatened to set back efforts by the U.S. and other countries to open a maritime corridor for aid from Cyprus to help ease the desperate conditions in northern Gaza. Israel has severely restricted access to the north, where experts say famine is imminent.

U.S. President Joe Biden and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu are scheduled to speak Thursday amid growing White House frustration with Israel's prosecution of the war and in the aftermath of Monday's airstrikes, according to a U.S. official familiar with planning for the call. The official was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss plans for the call.

In statement on Tuesday, Biden issued unusually blunt criticism of Israel, expressing outrage over the strikes and saying Israel "has not done enough to protect aid workers."

Meanwhile, Monday's strike on the Iranian Consulate in Damascus — which the U.S. assessed was carried out by Israel — hiked fears of a wider conflict. The strike killed 12 people.

Gen. Ramazan Sharif, a spokesman for Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, said Wednesday that

“soon we will see deadlier blows” against Israel by “the Resistance Front.”

He appeared to be referring to Iran and its allies across the region, including the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah and militias in Syria, Iraq and Yemen. They have repeatedly traded fire with Israel and the U.S. since the start of the war in Gaza.

The top U.S. Air Force commander for the Middle East, Lt. Gen. Alexis Grynkeiwich, said Wednesday that the U.S. is concerned that the Damascus strike could trigger new attacks on American troops by Iranian-backed militias in Iraq and Syria.

Nearly 33,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israel’s assault in Gaza, around two-thirds of them women and children, according to the territory’s Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its count.

Hamas’ Oct. 7 attacks killed some 1,200 people and resulted in around 250 being taken hostage.

Hamas still holds an estimated 100 hostages and the remains of around 30 others, after most of the rest were freed last year in exchange for Palestinians imprisoned in Israel.

## **Transportation officials want NYC Marathon organizers to pay \$750K to cross the Verrazzano bridge**

By PHILIP MARCELO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The New York City Marathon organizers will soon have to pay a bridge toll, just like every other commuter, if New York transit officials have their way.

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority is demanding the New York Road Runners, organizers of the venerable race generally held the first Sunday of each November, pay roughly \$750,000 for use of the Verrazzano-Narrows Bridge.

The agency that oversees New York’s bridges and tunnels says the fee represents the estimated amount of toll revenue lost when the nation’s longest suspension bridge is closed.

“New Yorkers love Marathon Sunday, but taxpayers cannot be expected to subsidize a wealthy non-government organization like the New York Road Runners to the tune of \$750,000,” said Catherine Sheridan, president of MTA’s department of bridges and tunnels, in a statement.

But the Road Runners have pushed back, arguing the MTA enjoys increased revenue from greater transit ridership during marathon week that “more than makes up” for any lost toll revenue from the bridge. The Verrazzano-Narrows Bridge connects the New York City boroughs of Brooklyn and Staten Island, and is named after the first European explorer to sail into the New York Harbor.

The organization also noted that the 2019 marathon generated an estimated \$427 million for the city, significantly boosting tourism, tax revenues and the economy, according to an economic impact report it commissioned in 2020.

“The impact of MTA’s request would represent a material change to the cost structure and would require an increase to how much runners pay to run the Marathon, making it less affordable for local runners and those who travel to New York City from around the world—both of whom contribute hundreds of millions of dollars to the City’s and State’s economy,” Crystal Howard, a spokesperson for the organization, said in an emailed statement.

She said the organization has repeatedly asked the MTA to provide data to back up their claim of \$750,000 in lost revenue loss but have not received it.

The agency has also declined to share data regarding the revenue generated by the increased ridership during marathon week, despite Gov. Kathy Hochul’s office announcing after last year’s marathon that the MTA enjoyed “record subway ridership” on race day, Howard said.

The Road Runners, she added, are willing to negotiate with transit officials, but any resolution should reflect the “significant value” the agency derives from the marathon, which the organization says has been run over the bridge since 1976.

The MTA has also threatened to restrict the marathon to using just one of its two decks of traffic if it doesn’t pay up, but the Road Runners have said such a move would significantly hinder the race, which

is the largest marathon in the world, welcoming more than 50,000 participants annually.

The organization said it might have to either decrease the field of runners or extend the total time of the marathon, forcing the bridge and other roadways in the city to be closed even longer on race day.

The MTA declined to respond to follow up questions, but Sheridan, in her statement, said the agency is similarly open to working with the organization on a compromise, provided it "leads, over time, to full reimbursement for the lost revenue."

## **Biden faces protest over his support for Israel during White House meeting**

By CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden has faced protests over the conflict in Gaza all over the country, but this week he confronted one inside the White House itself.

The occasion was a private meeting on Tuesday where Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris and national security leaders could hear from Muslim Americans about their concerns involving the war between Israel and Hamas.

Shortly after the conversation began, a Palestinian American doctor from Chicago named Thaer Ahmad who has volunteered in Gaza announced that he was walking out.

Before leaving, Ahmad presented the president with a letter from an orphaned 8-year-old girl in Rafah, a city that Israel plans to target next. He included a photo.

Ahmad said Biden's response to his protest was muted.

"He said, 'I understand,'" the doctor recalled.

Biden's support for Israel's military operations in Gaza, including the sale of U.S. weapons, has angered Muslim Americans. The war began on Oct. 7 when Hamas killed 1,200 Israelis in a surprise attack.

Since then, roughly 33,000 Palestinians have been killed by Israel. Biden has expressed concern about civilian casualties but has not cut off military assistance for Israel.

"There's a change in the rhetoric," Ahmad said. "But concrete actions, we have not seen a significant change."

This week's meeting was arranged by the White House instead of the more traditional celebratory dinner to mark the end of Ramadan. Several Muslim community leaders had refused invitations to break their fasts with the president, saying it would have been inappropriate at a time of famine in Gaza.

"We understand how this community is feeling in a deeply painful moment," White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said on Wednesday.

She was circumspect when asked about Tuesday's meeting, saying the conversation was private. Pressed on Biden's reaction to Ahmad's decision to walk out, she said the president "respects their freedom to peacefully protest."

When Ahmad received the invitation to attend the White House meeting, he was under the impression that the meeting would be Biden's first opportunity to talk with someone who had been on the ground in Gaza in the six months after the war started.

Jean-Pierre would not confirm whether that was the case.

As the meeting approached, Ahmad said he was troubled by a string of news stories about U.S. weapons sales to Israel.

"I was starting to question, what's the purpose of the meeting? What difference am I going to make by being there?" he said.

Before going to the White House, Ahmad decided that he would walk out once the meeting started.

"I'm not going to yell at anybody. I'm not going to throw anything. I'm just going to walk out calmly," Ahmad said. "And that's what I did."

Ahmad is planning another trip to Gaza at the end of the month.



## US braces for retaliation after attack on Iran consulate — even as it says it wasn't involved

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER and LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Shortly after an airstrike widely attributed to Israel destroyed an Iranian consulate building in Syria, the United States had an urgent message for Iran: We had nothing to do with it.

But that may not be enough for the U.S. to avoid retaliation targeting its forces in the region. A top U.S. commander warned on Wednesday of danger to American troops.

And if Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's recent broadening of targeted strikes on adversaries around the region to include Iranian security operatives and leaders deepens regional hostilities, analysts say, it's not clear the United States can avoid being pulled into deeper regional conflict as well.

The Biden administration insists it had no advance knowledge of the airstrike Monday. But the United States is closely tied to Israel's military regardless. The U.S. remains Israel's indispensable ally and unstinting supplier of weapons, responsible for some 70% of Israeli weapon imports and an estimated 15% of Israel's defense budget. That includes providing the kind of advanced aircraft and munitions that appear to have been employed in the attack.

Israel hasn't acknowledged a role in the airstrike, but Pentagon spokeswoman Sabrina Singh said Tuesday that the U.S. has assessed Israel was responsible.

Multiple arms of Iran's government served notice that they would hold the United States accountable for the fiery attack. The strike, in the Syrian capital of Damascus, killed senior commanders of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps for Syria and Lebanon, an officer of the powerful Iran-allied Hezbollah militia in Lebanon, and others.

American forces in Syria and Iraq already are frequent targets when Iran and its regional allies seek retaliation for strikes by Israelis, notes Charles Lister, the Syria program director for the Middle East Institute.

"What the Iranians have always done for years when they have felt most aggressively targeted by Israel is not to hit back at Israelis, but Americans," seeing them as soft targets in the region, Lister said.

On Wednesday in Washington, the top U.S. Air Force commander for the Middle East, Lt. Gen. Alexis Grynkeiwich, said Iran's assertion that the U.S. bears responsibility for Israeli actions could bring an end to a pause in militia attacks on U.S. forces that has lasted since early February.

He said he sees no specific threat to U.S. troops right now, but "I am concerned because of the Iranian rhetoric talking about the U.S., that there could be a risk to our forces."

U.S. officials have recorded more than 150 attacks by Iran-backed militias in Iraq and Syria on U.S. forces at bases in those countries since war between Hamas and Israel began on Oct. 7.

One, in late January, killed three U.S. service members and injured dozens more at a base in Jordan.

In retaliation, the U.S. launched a massive air assault, hitting more than 85 targets at seven locations in Iraq and Syria, including command and control headquarters, drone and ammunition storage sites and other facilities connected to the militias or the IRGC's Quds Force, the Guard's expeditionary unit that handles Tehran's relationship with and arming of regional militias. There have been no publicly reported attacks on U.S. troops in the region since that response.

Grynkeiwich told reporters the U.S. is watching and listening carefully to what Iran is saying and doing to evaluate how Tehran might respond.

Analysts and diplomats cite a range of ways Iran could retaliate.

Since Oct. 7, Iran and the regional militias allied to it in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen have followed a strategy of calibrated attacks that stop short of triggering an all-out conflict that could subject Iran's homeland forces or Hezbollah to full-blown war with Israel or the United States.

Beyond strikes on U.S. troops, possibilities for Iranian retaliation could include a limited missile strike directly from Iranian soil to Israel, Lister said. That would reciprocate for Israel's strike on what under international law was sovereign Iranian soil, at the Iranian diplomatic building in Damascus.

A concentrated attack on a U.S. position abroad on the scale of the 1983 attack on the U.S. Embassy in Beirut is possible, but seems unlikely given the scale of U.S. retaliation that would draw, analysts say.

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Iran also could escalate an existing effort to kill Trump-era officials behind the United States' 2020 drone killing of Iranian General Qassem Soleimani.

How far any other retaliation and potential escalation goes may depend on two things out of U.S. control: Whether Iran wants to keep regional hostilities at their current level or escalate, and whether Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's far-right government does.

Sina Toossi, a fellow at the Center for International Policy, said analysts in Iran are among those trying to read Netanyahu's mind since the attack, struggling to choose between two competing narratives for Israel's objective.

"One perceives Israel's actions as a deliberate provocation of war that Iran should respond to with restraint," Toossi wrote in the U.S.-based think tank's journal. "The other suggests that Israel is capitalizing on Iran's typically restrained responses," and that failing to respond in kind will only embolden Israel.

Ultimately, Iran's sense that it is already winning its strategic goals as the Hamas-Israel war continues — elevating the Palestinian cause and costing Israel friends globally — may go the furthest in persuading Iranian leaders not to risk open warfare with Israel or U.S. in whatever response they make to Monday's airstrike, some analysts and diplomats say.

Shira Efron, a director of policy research at the U.S.-based Israel Policy Forum, rejected suggestions that Netanyahu was actively trying with attacks like the one in Damascus to draw the U.S. into a potentially decisive conflict alongside Israel against their common rivals, at least for now.

"First, the risk of escalation has increased. No doubt," Efron said.

"I don't think Netanyahu is interested in full-blown war though," she said. "And whereas in the past Israel was thought to be interested in drawing the U.S. into a greater conflict, even if the desire still exists in some circles, it is not more than wishful thinking at the moment."

U.S. President Joe Biden is facing pressure from the other direction.

So far he's resisting calls from growing numbers of Democratic lawmakers and voters to limit the flow of American arms to Israel as a way to press Netanyahu to ease Israeli military killing of civilians in Gaza and to heed other U.S. appeals.

As criticism has grown of U.S. military support of Israel's war in Gaza, State Department spokesman Matthew Miller has increasingly pointed to Israel's longer-term need for weapons — to defend itself against Iran and Iranian-allied Hezbollah in Lebanon.

The U.S. is "always concerned about anything that would be escalatory," Miller said after the attack in Damascus. "It has been one of the goals of this administration since October 7th to keep the conflict from spreading, recognizing that Israel has the right to defend itself from adversaries that are sworn to its destruction."

Israel for years has hit at Iranian proxies and their sites in the region, knocking back their ability to build strength and cause trouble for Israelis.

Since the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas, one of a network of Iran-aligned militias in the region, that shattered Israel's sense of security, Netanyahu's government has increasingly added Iranian security operatives and leaders to target lists in the region, Lister notes.

The U.S. military already has deepened engagement from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea since the Hamas-Israel war opened — deploying aircraft carriers to the region to discourage rear-guard attacks against Israel, opening airstrikes to quell attacks on shipping by Iran-allied Houthis in Yemen.

It is also moving to build a pier off Gaza to try to get more aid to Palestinian civilians despite obstacles that include Israel's restrictions and attacks on aid deliveries.

## Trump's events aren't drawing big protests this year. Instead, Biden is facing public ire

By JILL COLVIN and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — When Donald Trump first ran for the White House eight years ago, protesters filled the streets.

His inflammatory rhetoric and often dehumanizing descriptions of immigrants spurred thousands to demonstrate outside his rallies. By this time in 2016, protesters regularly interrupted his speeches, sparking clashes and foreshadowing Trump's habit of encouraging violence against those he casts as his enemies.

"Knock the crap out of them, would you?" Trump once said as he egged on the crowd to go after protestors on their own — even promising to pay their legal bills.

No longer.

As he runs again with an agenda that is arguably more extreme than his two previous campaigns, mass protests at Trump rallies and appearances are a thing of the past. When Trump returned to New York last week for a hearing in one of his criminal cases, just a smattering of detractors turned up outside the courthouse. During a Midwestern swing Tuesday, Trump was interrupted briefly by a protest in Green Bay, but otherwise encountered minimal opposition.

In a twist, it's now President Joe Biden who is facing a sustained protest movement, largely by those furious over the administration's support for Israel in its war against Hamas. During his first major rally of the year, Biden's 22-minute speech was interrupted no less than a dozen times by detractors calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. Protesters repeatedly disrupted his celebrity fundraiser last week with former presidents Barack Obama and Bill Clinton at New York's Radio City Music Hall, as hundreds more demonstrated outside.

Nearly a decade after Trump launched his first campaign, organizers and others who participated in past protests describe a change in tactics as they focus their efforts on other issues or turning out voters in November. Some described a "Trump fatigue" after nearly a decade of outrage. Others say it's Biden's policy toward Israel that has them the most agitated and have turned their attention to protesting him.

"All the people that would be protesting Trump, a lot of these people, a lot of that energy are now focused on protesting a genocide in Gaza," said Thomas Kennedy, an immigrant from Argentina who participated in more than a dozen anti-Trump protests and rallies in 2016.

Kennedy still describes the former president as a "horrible threat." But for "a lot of people like me who would have been out there protesting Trump, it's just demoralizing and dispiriting. It's not worth my effort and my energy."

Warning sign

That's a potential warning sign for Biden, whose campaign aims to energize its base by casting Trump as a threat and framing the election as a historic test of the nation's commitment to democracy.

"President Biden believes in the constitutional right of making your voice heard and treats protestors with respect and empathy — unlike Donald Trump," said Biden campaign spokesman Ammar Moussa.

Biden campaign officials note that protest intensity hasn't correlated with recent election outcomes. Trump won in 2016 despite the fierce resistance, and President Obama won despite demonstrations in 2012. They also point to Democratic wins in recent elections, including the 2022 midterms.

Some who organized protests against Trump in the past say the more muted approach this year is part of a deliberate effort to not elevate his comments and ideas.

Strongmen "need an audience and they need gas and wind in their sails," said Rachel O'Leary Carmona, executive director of Women's March, a group that began as a worldwide demonstration against Trump's inauguration in 2017. "The best thing that people can do to combat Trump in many ways is not to give him a platform and gas."

It's a perspective, she said, that took hold during the 2020 campaign at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic when many activist groups opposing Trump decided to "stand down." Instead, demonstrations turned to broader demands for racial justice following George Floyd's killing by police.

Annette Magnus, the former executive director of Battle Born Progress, a Nevada group that helped organize anti-Trump protests during the 2016 election, also described a strategic change.

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"People are very focused on turnout and going door-to-door and talking to voters, because that's what's going to matter," she said. "I will do everything I can to make sure he is never elected again. It's just going to look different because it's a different election year and so much has happened since then."

There are also safety concerns, with some organizers concluding that demonstrating against Trump isn't worth the potential physical risk.

Trump protests

Trump has encountered occasional protests at his events this year. In early-voting Iowa and New Hampshire, a small group of environmental activists interrupted all the major candidates, including Trump. But his response underscored how much things had changed.

"It's amazing 'cause that used to happen all of the time. And I don't think it's happened in two-and-a-half or three years," he remarked after an interruption in Indianola. "It always adds excitement."

That "excitement" included assaults and arrests, as well as frequent scenes of protesters clashing with supporters as well as riot police.

In March 2016, Trump was forced to cancel a rally in Chicago after raucous protesters packed the arena where he was set to speak. A day later, in Ohio, a man leaped over a barrier and rushed Trump's stage. U.S. Secret Service mobilized to surround the candidate in a protective ring.

Trump routinely responded to the protesters with mockery and insults, telling them to "Go home to mommy," or instructing security to "Get 'em out!" as his crowds erupted into chants of "Trump! Trump! Trump!"

Eventually, organizers began playing an announcement ahead of his rallies with instructions for the crowd. "If a protest starts near you, please do not in anyway touch or harm a protester," said one version. Instead, they were told to notify law enforcement by holding up rally signs and chanting Trump's name.

This time it's Biden who is having to adjust to endless disruptions. Unlike Trump, the incumbent president has tried to defuse confrontations. During a recent event in Raleigh, North Carolina, promoting the administration's health care policies, Biden urged the crowd to, "Be patient" with those shouting concerns about Gaza.

"They have a point. We need to get a lot more care into Gaza," he said, drawing strong applause.

That was a very different reception from the one that awaited Paula Muñoz, who was a student at Nova Southeastern University in Florida in October 2015 when she and several friends decided to organize what was one of the early disruptions of a Trump event.

About a dozen activists — including her future husband — RSVP'd for the rally at Trump's Doral golf club — and divided themselves into three groups, planning to stagger their outbursts in 20-minute intervals.

"Our goal was to interrupt, to badger the whole speech," she said, "to try to ruin his event, basically."

The event would provide a taste of the violence to come. One of the protesters was forcefully dragged by the collar of his shirt and pulled to the ground; another was kicked.

'We're exhausted'

Muñoz is no longer focused on Trump. Now the executive director of the Florida Student Power Network, Muñoz spends her time on local issues, including an abortion amendment that will be on the ballot in November.

"We're exhausted," she said, expressing frustrations over "the two party system in general." National politics, she said, "feels almost as a distraction" when people are struggling to pay their rent.

While she said she fears the prospect of another Trump administration, she said she is deeply disappointed by Biden.

"We're tired of having to pick the less of the two evils," she said. "That's part of the thing I think people feel burned out about. It's just like complete disappointment on end."

Marta Popadiak, director of movement politics for People's Action, a progressive activist organization, said the group is focused on voter turnout but hasn't ruled out organizing protests this summer at the GOP convention.

"We are super laser-focused on doing our persuasion program and getting ready to defeat (Trump) in 2024."



## Women's Final Four ticket on resale market selling for average of \$2,300, twice as much as for men

By The Associated Press undefined

The average price paid for a ticket on the resale market this week was twice as high for the NCAA women's Final Four compared with that for the men's semifinals, according to a technology company that analyzes prices across multiple platforms.

The average price of a ticket sold to the women's semifinals was \$2,323; the average sale price for the men's was \$1,001.21, Logitix reported Wednesday.

The women's games Friday match Iowa against Connecticut and South Carolina against North Carolina State at 19,432-seat Rocket Mortgage Fieldhouse in Cleveland. Including data from sales made a month ago and longer, the average price for the women's semifinals is \$1,131.78, compared with \$400.29 for the same period in 2023.

The men's games Saturday pit Purdue against North Carolina State and Connecticut against Alabama at 63,400-seat State Farm Stadium in Glendale, Arizona. Overall average ticket price for the men's semifinals is \$993.70, compared with \$636.43 in 2023.

A ticket to the women's championship game on Sunday was selling for an average of \$1,110.63 this week. The average ticket to the men's title game Monday was selling for \$646.45.

The higher price for the women's games is partially due to ticket supply for the men's games being greater because seating capacity at its venue is three times larger, a Logitix spokesman said. He added that demand for women's tickets is unprecedented and driven by fanfare for Iowa's Caitlin Clark, the all-time leading scorer in Division I. The Hawkeyes have played before sellout crowds — at home, on the road and at neutral sites — for all but two games this season.

The NCAA sells ticket packages — now sold out — that include all three games of the Final Four. Face value ranges from \$200 to \$400 for the women's semifinals and final and \$250 to \$900 for the men's semifinals and final.

Tickets on the resale market can be sold separately for the semifinals (both games) and final because they are held on different days and require different digital entry QR codes.

## Ukraine lowers its conscription age to 25 to replenish its beleaguered troops

By HANNA ARHIROVA and SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine lowered its draft-eligible age for men from 27 to 25 on Wednesday, reflecting the strain that more than two years of war with Russia has put on its military and the need to infuse its depleted ranks with new conscripts.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed three bills into law aimed at strengthening the country's beleaguered forces, which are trying to hold the front lines in fighting that has sapped Ukraine's ranks and stores of weapons and ammunition.

The new laws, which will also do away with some draft exemptions and create an online registry for recruits, might add around 50,000 troops to the military, said Oksana Zabolotna, an analyst with the Center for United Actions, a government watchdog in Kyiv.

That would be a tenth of the 500,000 additional troops that Zelenskyy said in December that the military wanted to mobilize. But after signing a security agreement with Finnish President Alexander Stubb in Kyiv on Wednesday, Zelenskyy said an audit requested by Ukraine's newly appointed commander-in-chief determined that the 500,000 figure was wrong, partly because existing troops could be sent from the rear to the front. He didn't say why that option wasn't considered previously.

Zelenskyy said he wasn't ready to say publicly how many new conscripts the Ukrainian army will need. "I can say that Russia is preparing to mobilize an additional 300,000 military personnel on June 1," Zelenskyy told reporters.

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Ukrainian Defense Ministry statistics say the country's military had nearly 800,000 troops in October. That doesn't include National Guard or other units. In total, 1 million Ukrainians are in uniform, including about 300,000 who are serving on front lines.

Conscription has been a sensitive matter amid Ukraine's growing shortages of infantry and ammunition, which have helped give Russia the battlefield initiative. Russia's own problems with manpower and planning have so far prevented it from taking full advantage of its edge.

The average soldier's age on both sides is over 40, military analysts say. Some Ukrainians worry that lowering the minimum conscription age to 25 and taking more young adults out of the workforce could backfire by further harming the war-ravaged economy, which is why the draft age wasn't simply set at 18. But the problem has become more pressing because Kyiv is expecting a renewed push by Russian forces this spring or summer.

The Russian military said Wednesday that it has experienced a recent surge in enlistments, attributing it to public outrage over last month's attack on a Moscow concert hall that killed more than 140 people. About 16,000 people have signed up in the last 10 days, Russia's Defense Ministry said, though its claim couldn't be independently verified.

An affiliate of the Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the concert hall attack, but the Kremlin has insisted, without providing evidence, that Ukraine and the West played a role, despite their strong denials.

Zelenskyy took almost a year to sign the law lowering the conscription age, perhaps reflecting how unpopular such a move might be.

Antonina Piliuhina, the 49-year-old Kyiv mother of a 21-year-old son, said she opposed lowering the draft age.

"I have just one son, I am a single mother," Piliuhina said. "What did I raise him for all these years, for him to be taken away and then killed by someone for fun? I don't need this."

Mykola Petrovskyi, a 28-year-old social worker, said that although he loves Ukraine, he doesn't think it's right to send people to fight if they're unwilling.

"I am not ready to go somewhere tomorrow and kill people," Petrovskyi said. "It's not because I'm not a patriot of my country, it's because I am not ready to kill. I am not born for this. I am a person who's ready to help save someone's life, but not take one."

But Metelya, a 37-year-old soldier who used his nom de guerre instead of his real name due to security concerns, said he was all for lowering the draft age. He said he's been fighting since 2014 — the year Russia illegally annexed Crimea from Ukraine — and new troops are needed.

"If an 18-year-old boy was ready to fight with us when we fought for Kyiv, then why can't a 25-year-old adult man do the same?" he asked.

Zabolotna, the government watchdog analyst, said even though there are about half a million men ages 25 to 27, she estimates only about 50,000 would be added to the ranks.

"Some of them are unfit for service, some have left, some are (in the) reserve or have the right to deferment," she said.

The law's introduction is a signal that Ukraine is facing up to the reality that it's in a war of attrition and of competition for resources, said Orysia Lutsevych, head of the Ukraine forum and deputy director of the Russia and Eurasia Program at the Chatham House think tank in London.

Zelenskyy was hoping for a relatively quick end to the war, she said. But he realizes that Putin "is not just fighting Ukraine. His main enemy is the United States and its presence in Eastern Europe."

The initial enthusiasm for going out to fight against the Kremlin's forces has waned, though public support for the war remains high.

Ukraine currently forbids men younger than 60 from traveling abroad. Many Ukrainian men are evading the draft by hiding at home or trying to bribe their way out of the battle. Commanders say they don't have enough soldiers to launch offensives, and barely enough to hold positions during intensifying Russian assaults.

Russia's population is more than three times the size of Ukraine's, and President Vladimir Putin has shown a willingness to force men to the front if not enough volunteer.

## How brown rats crawled off ships and conquered North American cities

By LAURA UNGAR AP Science Writer

Brown rats are the undisputed winners of the real rat race.

New research suggests that they crawled off ships arriving in North America earlier than previously thought and out-competed rodent rivals – going on to infuriate and disgust generations of city-dwellers and becoming so ubiquitous that they're known as common rats, street rats or sewer rats.

It didn't take long for them to push aside the black rats that had likely arrived with Columbus and thrived in colonial cities.

After first appearing on the continent before 1740, brown rats took over the East Coast from black rats "in only a matter of decades," said Michael Buckley, one of the authors of a study published Wednesday in the journal *Science Advances*.

Brown rats are larger and more aggressive than black rats — and they want to be close to human populations, said Matthew Frye, a researcher and community educator with the New York State Integrated Pest Management Program at Cornell University.

From this research, "we know a more exact time of when they arrived and then what they were doing once they got here," said Frye, who was not involved with the study. "Having that picture of the rat population helps us better understand what they're doing and maybe how we can manage them."

Neither rat species is native to North America, said Buckley, of the University of Manchester in the United Kingdom. Scientists used to think that brown rats arrived around 1776. The new study pushes that date back by more than 35 years.

Buckley and his colleagues analyzed rodent bones that had already been excavated by archeologists. The remains came from 32 settlements in eastern North America and the Gulf of Mexico dated from the founding of Jamestown in 1607 through the early 1900s. Other samples were from seven shipwrecks dating from about 1550 to 1770.

The data suggests that shipping networks across the Atlantic Ocean "essentially functioned as rat super-highways," with brown rats gaining their earliest footholds in coastal shipping centers, said Ryan Kennedy, a study author at Indiana University who researches animal remains at archaeological sites.

One probable reason they dominated, researchers suggest, is that they ate food black rats would otherwise have consumed – which may have reduced reproduction among black rats. Historical anecdotes back up this finding, describing the near disappearance of black rats from cities in the 1830s.

Today, both types of rats exist in North American cities, though brown rats are more prevalent. Some urban centers are especially overrun. New York City, for example, last year hired a "rat czar" to tackle a growing problem there.

The biggest issue? Rats can carry diseases. Brown rats are known to spread a bacterial disease called leptospirosis, which is caused by bacteria in the urine of infected animals. They can also help spread murine typhus and food-borne germs like salmonella.

Experts said knowing which type of rat leads the pack helps cities control the pests — even if it may not seem like it sometimes.

For instance, brown rats like to hang out on or near the ground rather than in the trees or other high spots, where black rats often prefer to stay.

Both black and brown rats are omnivores, but brown rats are especially fond of animal products — meaning reducing those in food wastes "should have the greatest chance of reducing the value of urban habitats for rat populations," Buckley said.

Frye said all efforts to cut down on available food waste help.

"Food availability is the No. 1 reason that brown rats are there," he said. "Any efforts to sort of prevent rats from getting at food sources is an effective measure."

## Scathing federal report rips Microsoft for shoddy security, insincerity in response to Chinese hack

By FRANK BAJAK AP Technology Writer

BOSTON (AP) — In a scathing indictment of Microsoft corporate security and transparency, a Biden administration-appointed review board issued a report Tuesday saying “a cascade of errors” by the tech giant let state-backed Chinese cyber operators break into email accounts of senior U.S. officials including Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo.

The Cyber Safety Review Board, created in 2021 by executive order, describes shoddy cybersecurity practices, a lax corporate culture and a lack of sincerity about the company’s knowledge of the targeted breach, which affected multiple U.S. agencies that deal with China.

It concluded that “Microsoft’s security culture was inadequate and requires an overhaul” given the company’s ubiquity and critical role in the global technology ecosystem. Microsoft products “underpin essential services that support national security, the foundations of our economy, and public health and safety.”

The panel said the intrusion, discovered in June by the State Department and dating to May “was preventable and should never have occurred,” blaming its success on “a cascade of avoidable errors.” What’s more, the board said, Microsoft still doesn’t know how the hackers got in.

The panel made sweeping recommendations, including urging Microsoft to put on hold adding features to its cloud computing environment until “substantial security improvements have been made.”

It said Microsoft’s CEO and board should institute “rapid cultural change” including publicly sharing “a plan with specific timelines to make fundamental, security-focused reforms across the company and its full suite of products.”

In a statement, Microsoft said it appreciated the board’s investigation and would “continue to harden all our systems against attack and implement even more robust sensors and logs to help us detect and repel the cyber-armies of our adversaries.”

In all, the state-backed Chinese hackers broke into the Microsoft Exchange Online email of 22 organizations and more than 500 individuals around the world including the U.S. ambassador to China, Nicholas Burns — accessing some cloud-based email boxes for at least six weeks and downloading some 60,000 emails from the State Department alone, the 34-page report said. Three think tanks and foreign government entities, including a number of British organizations, were among those compromised, it said.

The board, convened by Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas in August, accused Microsoft of making inaccurate public statements about the incident — including issuing a statement saying it believed it had determined the likely root cause of the intrusion “when, in fact, it still has not.” Microsoft did not update that misleading blog post, published in September, until mid-March after the board repeatedly asked if it planned to issue a correction, it said.

Separately, the board expressed concern about a separate hack disclosed by the Redmond, Washington, company in January — this one of email accounts including those of an undisclosed number of senior Microsoft executives and an undisclosed number of Microsoft customers and attributed to state-backed Russian hackers.

The board lamented “a corporate culture that deprioritized both enterprise security investments and rigorous risk management.”

The Chinese hack was initially disclosed in July by Microsoft in a blog post and carried out by a group the company calls Storm-0558. That same group, the panel noted, has been engaged in similar intrusions — compromising cloud providers or stealing authentication keys so it can break into accounts — since at least 2009, targeting companies including Google, Yahoo, Adobe, Dow Chemical and Morgan Stanley.

Microsoft noted in its statement that the hackers involved are “well-resourced nation state threat actors who operate continuously and without meaningful deterrence.”

The company said it recognizes that recent events “have demonstrated a need to adopt a new culture of engineering security in our own networks,” adding it has “mobilized our engineering teams to identify and mitigate legacy infrastructure, improve processes, and enforce security benchmarks.”



## Prosecutors in Trump's classified documents case sharply rebuke judge's unusual and 'flawed' order

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal prosecutors chided the judge presiding over former President Donald Trump's classified documents case in Florida, warning her off potential jury instructions that they said rest on a "fundamentally flawed legal premise."

In an unusual order, U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon had asked prosecutors and defense lawyers to formulate proposed jury instructions for most of the charges even though it remains unclear when the case might reach trial. She asked the lawyers to respond to two different scenarios in which she appeared to accept the Republican ex-president's argument that he was entitled under a statute known as the Presidential Records Act to retain the sensitive documents he is now charged with possessing.

The order surprised legal experts and alarmed special counsel Jack Smith's team, which said in a filing late Tuesday that the 1978 law — which requires presidents to return presidential records to the government upon leaving office but permits them to retain purely personal ones — has no relevance in a case concerning highly classified documents like the ones Trump is alleged to have stored at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach, Florida.

Those records, prosecutors said, were clearly not personal and there is no evidence Trump ever designated them as such. They said that the suggestion he did so was "invented" only after it became public that he had taken with him to Mar-a-Lago after his presidency boxes of records from the White House and that none of the witnesses they interviewed in the investigation support his argument.

"Not a single one had heard Trump say that he was designating records as personal or that, at the time he caused the transfer of boxes to Mar-a-Lago, he believed that his removal of records amounted to designating them as personal under the PRA," prosecutors wrote. "To the contrary, every witness who was asked this question had never heard such a thing."

Smith's team said that if the judge insists on citing the presidential records law in her jury instructions, she should let the lawyers know as soon as possible so that prosecutors can appeal.

The filing reflects continued exasperation by prosecutors at Cannon's handling of the case.

The Trump-appointed judge has yet to rule on multiple defense motions to dismiss the indictment as well as other disagreements between the two sides, and the trial date remains unsettled, suggesting that a criminal case that Smith's team has said features overwhelming evidence could remain unresolved by the time of the November presidential election.

Cannon, who earlier faced blistering criticism over her decision to grant Trump's request for an independent arbiter to review documents obtained during an FBI search of Mar-a-Lago, heard arguments last month on two of Trump's motions to dismiss the case, including that the Presidential Records Act permitted him to designate the documents as personal and that he was therefore permitted to retain them.

The judge appeared skeptical of that position but did not immediately rule. Days later, she asked the two sides to craft jury instructions that responded to the following premise: "A president has sole authority under the PRA to categorize records as personal or presidential during his/her presidency. Neither a court nor a jury is permitted to make or review such a categorization decision."

An outgoing president's decision to exclude personal records from those returned to the government, she continued, "constitutes a president's categorization of those records as personal under the PRA."

That interpretation of the law is wrong, prosecutors said. They also urged Cannon to move quickly in rejecting the defense motion to dismiss.

"The PRA's distinction between personal and presidential records has no bearing on whether a former President's possession of documents containing national defense information is authorized under the Espionage Act, and the PRA should play no role in the jury instructions on the elements of Section 793," they said, citing the statute that makes it a crime to illegally retain national defense information.

"Indeed, based on the current record, the PRA should not play any role at trial at all," they added.

Trump, Republicans' presumptive nominee for 2024, is facing dozens of felony counts related to the mishandling of classified documents, according to an indictment alleging he improperly shared a Pentagon

"plan of attack" and a classified map related to a military operation. The Florida case is among four criminal cases against the former president, who has insisted he did nothing wrong in any of them.

In a separate Trump team filing, defense lawyers renewed their demand that Cannon dismiss the indictment.

## **Caitlin Clark's path to stardom paved by pioneering players who changed trajectory for women's hoops**

By TOM WITHERS AP Sports Writer

CLEVELAND (AP) — Long before Caitlin Clark broke records, packed arenas across the country like a Taylor Swift in sneakers and inspired young girls to be like her, women's basketball looked very different than it does today.

Until 1997, there was no WNBA. Media coverage was minimal. The madness of March was almost exclusively the men's domain.

Born five years following the WNBA's launch, Clark has never known anything but what she's helped create — a spectacular game underscored by a record 12.3 million viewers watching Monday's LSU-Iowa rematch in the NCAA Tournament — and a sport with room to grow.

While Clark has done her part with every step-back logo 3-pointer, a generation of women cleared the way.

And as the Final Four roars into Cleveland this week — Clark is there after scoring 41 in the regional final to dethrone Angel Reese and the defending champion Tigers — those roundball revolutionaries are getting a long overdue salute.

More than 40 years later, Nancy Lieberman remembers Billie Jean King assuring her she was blazing trails. "She told me when I was 22, 'You're a pioneer,'" said Lieberman, whose on-court wizardry earned her the nickname "Lady Magic" and made her a three-time Kodak All-American at Old Dominion, two-time Olympian and Naismith Hall of Famer.

"I'm like, what? I'm a pioneer? I didn't know what she meant. I know what she means now."

It's easy to forget that the 1996 U.S. Olympic team, which jumpstarted two professional leagues, played in 5,000-seat arenas during the Atlanta Games. And before those leagues launched, women went overseas to play professionally.

As Clark rewrote the record books this season while pushing TV viewership to unimaginable levels and pulling unprecedented attention to the women's game, she steered the spotlight toward stars who preceded her. With the same deft touch as one of her down-court passes for an assist to a fast-breaking teammate, Clark has connected present to past.

Before dynasties at South Carolina, UConn, Tennessee or Louisiana Tech, there were dominant programs at Delta State and Immaculata University, the first women's national champions in 1972.

Clark's run has also illuminated the contributions of some of the sport's giants — greats like Lieberman, Ann Meyers Drysdale, Pearl Moore, Carol Blazejowski, Cheryl Miller, Maya Moore, Lynette Woodard and many others who laid the foundation for the heights the game has reached in 2024.

These women, some of whom have records that still aren't acknowledged by the NCAA, have been glossed over in these Tik-Tok times.

"Those are the forgotten names, and they're only brought up because there's a record that was being broken where we haven't done a great job at historically producing documentaries on the history of women's basketball," said South Carolina coach Dawn Staley, who has her undefeated team in a fourth straight Final Four.

"We have to do a better job," Staley added. "This day and age will be documented and told a million times, and I hope when that's being told that we pull from the legends. We're standing on their shoulders, and what they've done should not be forgotten."

Maybe not household names like today's top players, who have benefitted from increased media attention the past two decades, and when NIL didn't mean name, image and likeness but literally what they

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received for playing, they are the ones who made everything possible.

Barrier busters and then some.

"Some people play the game, and some people change the game," Lieberman said in a phone interview. "I changed the game. Caitlin has changed the game. Cheryl Miller changed the game. Diana Taurasi changed the game. Brittney Griner changed the game and that doesn't mean you're not a hell of a player.

"There's a lot of really good players, but how many have really changed the game?"

And my, how the game has changed.

Since 1972 and Title IX's historic passing, which at least in theory gave females the same athletic opportunities as their male counterparts, women's basketball has grown from a gym class activity in some places to a global game.

Professional leagues with varying degrees of success started and folded before the WNBA, which has blossomed in popularity with players and teams proudly promoting social activism and inclusion — along with playing high-level hoops.

For Meyers Drysdale, it's been like watching a child learn how to crawl, walk and run.

It's hard to imagine, but it wasn't that long ago when women didn't receive athletic scholarships. In fact, Meyers Drysdale, who had a highly publicized NBA tryout 45 years ago, was the first to get four-year financial assistance.

She followed her All-American brother, Dave, and played at UCLA, a decision she made casually at a family cookout.

"David was teammates with Kenny Washington and Kenny was going to be the women's coach," Meyers Drysdale said. "They came home for a weekend and said, 'How would you like to go to UCLA and play basketball?' I said, OK. That was the extent of my recruitment."

That memory draws a hearty laugh from Meyers Drysdale, who was Clark and LSU's Angel Reese rolled into one.

One of 11 children, she was one of one on the court — or anywhere she competed.

Along with basketball, Meyers Drysdale played softball, badminton, field hockey, tennis and ran track. So gifted, she won the female version of ABC's "The Superstars" and competed in the men's event. During filming she met her husband, Don, a Hall of Fame pitcher with the Dodgers who died of a heart attack in 1993.

Her flirtation with the men's pro game came in 1979, when Meyers Drysdale made history as the first female to get an NBA tryout after signing a \$50,000 free agent contract with Indiana.

She held her own before being cut by the Pacers after six practices, but her foray on the floor with men was a pivotal moment of acceptance for women. Doors were beginning to open.

"I got a lot of publicity with my tryout," she said. "It helped. We didn't have podcasts. We didn't have social media. We had the local TV stations. We had local newspapers. You didn't have all the stuff they have today."

Lieberman and Meyers Drysdale don't begrudge the modern player. Just the opposite. They lit the torch and proudly passed it along.

When they were young, there were no professional star to inspire them, no chartered planes for road trips, no state-of-the-art facilities on college campuses — not even basic equipment.

The late Pat Summitt — who made a meager \$250 a month when she started at Tennessee — had to fight for athletic apparel like sports bras.

"We didn't have trainers or anyone to tape our ankles," said Meyers Drysdale, vice president of the Phoenix Mercury. "We didn't have practice uniforms. You'd wear the same uniform two or three years in a row."

For Lieberman, the soaring state of women's basketball is a testament to her generation and a new one pushing it higher.

In recent years, the 65-year-old has bonded with Clark, and Lieberman finally got to see her play in person last week when she attended the superstar's home finale in Iowa City. When it ended, Clark presented Lieberman with one of her game-worn jerseys.

"The greatest thing that has happened to women's basketball for the next level of growth is Caitlin Clark,

Angel Reese and some of those kiddos," Lieberman said. "But in particular what this woman has done. She kind of did this."

Some pioneers helped.

## The killing of aid workers adds to pressure on the UK government to halt arms sales to Israel

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Britain's main opposition parties demanded Wednesday that the Conservative government publish legal advice it has received on whether Israel has broken international humanitarian law during the war in Gaza. They say the U.K. should ban weapons sales to Israel if the law has been broken.

Britain is a staunch ally of Israel, but relations have been tested by the mounting death toll of the almost six-month war. Calls for an end to arms exports have escalated since an Israeli airstrike killed seven aid workers from World Central Kitchen, three of them British.

David Lammy, foreign affairs spokesman for the main opposition Labour Party, said "there are very serious accusations that Israel has breached international law."

He urged the government to "publish the legal advice now."

"If it says there is a clear risk that U.K. arms might be used in a serious breach of international humanitarian law, it's time to suspend the sale of those arms," Lammy told British broadcasters

London Mayor Sadiq Khan, one of the country's most senior Labour officials, said "I don't understand any justification for not publishing the legal advice that they've got."

"It's important they publish that legal advice so that we can have confidence that the British government is following international law as well," Khan told reporters in London.

Two smaller opposition parties, the centrist Liberal Democrats and secessionist Scottish National Party, called on the government to halt arms sales to Israel.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak did not commit to publishing the legal advice, but said the U.K. followed a strict "set of rules, regulations and procedures" over licensing arms exports.

"I have been consistently clear with Prime Minister (Benjamin) Netanyahu since the start of this conflict that while of course we defend Israel's right to defend itself and its people against attacks from Hamas, they have to do that in accordance with international humanitarian law, protect civilian lives — and sadly too many civilians have already lost their lives," Sunak told The Sun newspaper's politics podcast.

## Solar eclipse playlist: 20 songs to rock out to on your cosmic adventure

By MARIA SHERMAN AP Music Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The total solar eclipse is quickly approaching. While you prepare to hit the road towards the path of total darkness or anticipate hours of traffic coming out of your watch party, you'll need something to listen to. And we've got your back.

Across 20 tracks, here's a comprehensive playlist of total solar eclipse (and total solar eclipse-adjacent) songs to listen to while preparing to take in the wonders of the universe on Monday. Listen to the full playlist on Spotify.

A classic eclipse song: "Total Eclipse of the Heart" by Bonnie Tyler

There is no more appropriate song than Bonnie Tyler's karaoke classic, "Total Eclipse of the Heart." Try not to start a singalong with this one.

A rockin' eclipse song: "Blinded by the Light" by Bruce Springsteen

Not the synth-y cover by Manfred Mann's Earth Band — Bruce Springsteen's spirited "Blinded by the Light" is an eclipse song for the ages, or at least for those hoping to put a little boogie in their viewing experience.

An eclipse song to dance to: "Blinding Lights" by The Weeknd



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One of the greatest pop songs of the last decade, The Weeknd's "Blinding Lights" is not only an ideal song for speeding down a highway in the darkness — safely, of course — but also a Max Martin-produced earworm that will crawl into your brain and lodge itself there forevermore.

A grounded eclipse song, to remind you of the Earth: "Solar Eclipse" by YoungBoy Never Broke Again

The best YoungBoy Never Broke Again tracks bring the listener into his world: He names loved ones, he dives deep into his pain and he transforms it into affecting raps. "Solar Eclipse" centers his own mortality and what would happen to his kids if something were to happen to him. A total solar eclipse can be a time for existential thinking: This is a once-in-a-lifetime moment for many, and so it is important to value that lifetime.

An eclipse song for the introspective listener: "Moon at the Window" by Joni Mitchell

In Joni Mitchell's "Moon at the Window," a lover looks out towards the sky and sees "ghosts of the future / phantoms of the past," the folk legend sings atop jazzy instrumentation. There's a kind of melancholic whimsy here, and lyrical poetry, which makes this song an appropriate listen for a solar eclipse.

A throwback eclipse song: "Blue Moon" by Billie Holiday

What is a space-themed playlist without a "Blue Moon"? Originally written by Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart in 1934, the song has been covered countless times over the decades, but no other hits with the soul of Billie Holiday's 1952 take.

An eclipse song for the arty folk: "Starman" by David Bowie

If space is the final frontier, David Bowie knew of its powers — and on Tuesday, with a quick listen to "Starman," we can all try a bit of his Ziggy Stardust.

An eclipse song for people very much in touch with the universe: "Space is the Place" by Sun Ra

The beauty of Sun Ra's "Space is the Place" is that it's taken from a 1970s Afrofuturist film of the same name. Start with the song and watching the eclipse in real time, end with a screening.

A righteous eclipse song: "Eclipse" by Earl Sweatshirt

Consider the distorted, reversed production of Earl Sweatshirt's short rap track as an interlude for this playlist — a palate cleanser with a message.

The "it isn't an eclipse song, but it also isn't not an eclipse song" eclipse song: "Moonlight" by Jay-Z

"Moonlight," an undercelebrated cut from Jay-Z's momentous 2017 album "4:44," considers frequent exploitation of Black artists in entertainment. It's not an eclipse song in a traditional sense but considering his once-in-a-lifetime star power — and that of his collaborators — it feels like a fitting inclusion.

A sexy eclipse song: "Moonlight" by Kali Uchis

Colombian American musician Kali Uchis' songs center love, loss and divine femininity — and so does her hit "Moonlight." In this sweet moment of pop astrology, the moon is a source of power.

An eclipse song for the Swiftie in your life: "Seven" by Taylor Swift

Looking up at the sky as a symbol of ambition, hope, nostalgia or innocence has a long literary history. It also functions as the perfect visual for Taylor Swift's "Folklore" cut "Seven." Swifties know what's up.

An idyllic eclipse song: "Moonshadow" by Cat Stevens

What is more fitting for an afternoon eclipse than the soft folk stylings of Cat Stevens' "Moonshadow"? It doubles as a great road trip song for country road driving, too, so for those who are traveling — take note.

A dreamy eclipse song: "The Moon and the Sky" by Sade

From Sade's 2010 comeback album "Soldier of Love" comes "The Moon and the Sky," a soft soul song good enough for Earth and what exists above.

A romantic eclipse song: "Eclipse" by JACE Carrillo and Alyko

Venezuelan Canadian pop singer JACE Carrillo teams up with producer Alyko for this summery, romantic slow burn, "Eclipse." This is the one you'll want to turn up if you're planning on watching the total eclipse with your partner.

An eclipse song to get the afternoon party started: "La Noche de Anoche" by Bad Bunny and Rosalía

The eclipse will hit North America in the afternoon, so a full-on club banger is a little too nighttime for this daytime event. However, some sultry down-tempo reggaetón? That's on the table, courtesy Bad Bunny

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and Rosalía.

An R&B-pop bop for the eclipse: "Eclipse" by LOONA's Kim Lip

Not long after K-pop girl group LOONA debuted, Kim Lip was announced its sixth member and her solo single "Eclipse" was released — a R&B bubblegum-pop song that confirmed her talents. Seven years on, its pleasant pop is worthy of this playlist.

An eclipse song that will immediately inspire a dance lesson: "Eclipse" by GOT 7

K-pop boy group Got7 marry future bass and anthemic rock in this barnburner of a pop song. Give yourself a few hours to learn the choreography to keep yourself occupied while you wait for totality to hit.

An explosive eclipse song for those who feel lonely when the moon covers the sun: "Eclipse" by MAMA-MOO's Moonbyul

Moonbyul's "Eclipse" begins with a fake out: delicate production explodes into hard-hitting trap production and a gothic chorus — loud synths and chugging guitars. "When the moon covers the sun / It feels like I'm alone," the K-pop girl group member sings, but that isolation doesn't last long.

The eclipse song that has to be present on every eclipse playlist: "Eclipse" by Pink Floyd

Can an eclipse playlist exist without ending with the massive drums and Hammond organ of Pink Floyd's "Eclipse"? We think not.

## Today in History: April 4

### Martin Luther King is assassinated in Memphis at age 39

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, April 4, the 95th day of 2024. There are 271 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 4, 1968, civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., 39, was shot and killed while standing on a balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee; his slaying was followed by a wave of rioting (Washington, D.C., Baltimore and Chicago were among cities particularly hard hit). James Earl Ray later pleaded guilty to assassinating King, then spent the rest of his life claiming he'd been the victim of a setup.

On this date:

In 1841, President William Henry Harrison succumbed to pneumonia one month after his inaugural, becoming the first U.S. chief executive to die in office; John Tyler became the first vice president to assume the office of president after such a death.

In 1865, President Abraham Lincoln, accompanied by his son Tad, visited the vanquished Confederate capital of Richmond, Virginia, where he was greeted by a crowd that included former slaves.

In 1917, the U.S. Senate voted 82-6 in favor of declaring war against Germany (the House followed suit two days later by a vote of 373-50).

In 1945, during World War II, U.S. forces liberated the Nazi concentration camp Ohrdruf in Germany. Hungary was liberated as Soviet forces cleared out remaining German troops.

In 1949, 12 nations, including the United States, signed the North Atlantic Treaty in Washington, D.C.

In 1973, the twin towers of New York's World Trade Center were officially dedicated.

In 1974, Hank Aaron of the Atlanta Braves tied Babe Ruth's home-run record by hitting his 714th round-tripper in Cincinnati.

In 1975, more than 130 people, most of them children, were killed when a U.S. Air Force transport plane evacuating Vietnamese orphans crash-landed shortly after takeoff from Saigon.

In 1983, the space shuttle Challenger roared into orbit on its maiden voyage. (It was destroyed in the disaster of January 1986.)

In 1991, Sen. John Heinz, R-Pa., and six other people, including two children, were killed when a helicopter collided with Heinz's plane over a schoolyard in Merion, Pennsylvania.

In 2011, yielding to political opposition, the Obama administration gave up on trying avowed Sept. 11

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mastermind Khalid Sheik Mohammed and four alleged co-conspirators in civilian federal courts and said it would prosecute them instead before military commissions.

In 2012, a federal judge sentenced five former New Orleans police officers to prison for the deadly Danziger Bridge shootings in the chaotic days following Hurricane Katrina. (The verdicts in the case were later set aside by the judge, who cited prosecutorial misconduct; the officers pleaded guilty in 2016 to reduced charges.)

In 2013, Pulitzer Prize-winning film reviewer Roger Ebert died in Chicago at age 70.

In 2015, in North Charleston, South Carolina, Walter Scott, a 50-year-old Black motorist, was shot to death while running away from a traffic stop; Officer Michael Thomas Slager, seen in a cellphone video opening fire at Scott, was charged with murder. (The charge, which lingered after a first state trial ended in a mistrial, was dropped as part of a deal under which Slager pleaded guilty to a federal civil rights violation; he was sentenced to 20 years in prison.)

In 2018, saying the situation had reached "a point of crisis," President Donald Trump signed a proclamation directing the deployment of the National Guard to the U.S.-Mexico border to fight illegal immigration.

In 2021, Stanford beat Arizona 54-53 to become NCAA women's basketball champions.

In 2022, President Joe Biden called for Russian President Vladimir Putin to be tried for war crimes after what he described as "outrageous" atrocities around Kyiv during the invasion of Ukraine.

In 2023, Prosecutors unsealed a historic 34-count felony indictment of Donald Trump that said he conspired to illegally influence the 2016 election through a series of hush money payments designed to stifle claims that could be harmful to his candidacy.

Today's Birthdays: Recording executive Clive Davis is 92. Author Kitty Kelley is 82. Actor Craig T. Nelson is 80. Actor Christine Lahti is 74. Country singer Steve Gatlin (The Gatlin Brothers) is 73. Actor Mary-Margaret Humes is 70. Writer-producer David E. Kelley is 68. Actor Constance Shulman is 66. Actor Phil Morris is 65. Actor Lorraine Toussaint is 64. Actor Hugo Weaving is 64. Rock musician Craig Adams (The Cult) is 62. Talk show host/comic Graham Norton is 61. Actor David Cross is 60. Actor Robert Downey Jr. is 59. Actor Nancy McKeon is 58. Actor Barry Pepper is 54. Country singer Clay Davidson is 53. Rock singer Josh Todd (Buckcherry) is 53. Singer Jill Scott is 52. Rock musician Magnus Sveningsson (The Cardigans) is 52. Magician David Blaine is 51. Amanda Righetti Singer Kelly Price is 51. R&B singer Andre Dalyrimple (Soul For Real) is 50. Country musician Josh McSwain (Parmalee) is 49. Actor James Roday is 48. Actor Natasha Lyonne is 45. Actor Eric Andre is 41. Actor is 41. Actor-singer Jamie Lynn Spears is 33. Actor Daniela Bobadilla is 31. Pop singer Austin Mahone (muh-HOHN') is 28. Actor Aliyah Royale is 24.