

Groton Daily Independent

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Monday, July 8

School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.
Senior Menu: Beef noodle stroganoff, green beans, vanilla pudding, mandarin oranges, whole wheat bread.
U12 hosts Webster, 6 p.m. (DH)
U10 W/R at Watertown, 6 p.m. (DH)
U8 R hosts Columbia 6 p.m. (1)
T-Ball Black hosts Columbia, 5 p.m.; Gold practice, 6 p.m. on Soccer Complex
Softball at Oakes: U8 at 5 p.m. (1), U10B at 6 p.m. (2)
Jr. Teeners hosts Clark, 5:30 p.m. (DH)
Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.
Pantry open, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center, 1 p.m.

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



Tuesday, July 9

Senior Menu: Lemon chicken breast, au gratin potatoes 3-bean salad, pineapple/strawberry ambrosia, dinner roll.
U8 R/B hosts Webster, 6 p.m. (4 games)
Softball at Britton: U8 at 6 p.m. (1), U10G at 6 p.m.m (1)
Jr. Legion at Sisseton, 5:30 p.m. (DH)
Jr. Teeners at Miller, 5:30 p.m. (DH)
Emmanuel Lutheran: Council, 6 p.m.
United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.
Free SNAP application assistance at Groton Community Center, 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.
Common Cents Community Thrift Store open, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.
Pantry Open, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Groton Community Center

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1440

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France's Left Prevails

France's leftist New Popular Front alliance was projected to win the most seats in yesterday's final round of legislative elections. The news came as an upset to the nationalist-populist National Rally, which ranked first in last week's preliminary round but fell to third place yesterday behind President Emmanuel Macron's centrist coalition.

The New Popular Front—led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon—is a collection of leftist parties including socialist and communist groups committed to reversing Macron's pension reforms. With voter turnout estimated at 67%—France's highest rate in 40 years—the bloc was projected to win a plurality of seats but fall short of the majority needed to secure the prime minister role.

Prime Minister Gabriel Attal pledged to resign today following the vote, with negotiations for his replacement expected to last weeks. While Macron had called for this month's snap parliamentary elections, he has committed to retaining the presidency until the end of his second term in 2027.

Mars Simulation Concludes

Four NASA astronauts emerged from a yearlong Earth-based mission over the weekend, having been sequestered in a habitat simulating life inside a base on Mars. The effort is designed to uncover potential unforeseen challenges involved in an eventual crewed voyage to the red planet.

Taking place inside a 1,700-square-foot, 3D-printed installation at Houston's Johnson Space Center, the group spent time growing self-sustainable crops, simulating walks on the Martian surface, and more. The effect of the relative isolation on the crew was also studied.

At an average of 140 million miles from Earth, a one-way trip to Mars could take around nine months each way. The transit time depends on how much fuel is used to accelerate the spacecraft, among many other challenges.

NASA does not have a firm target for a crewed Martian mission—potential timelines point to the late 2030s. However, the current Artemis program includes building a lunar orbital station as a steppingstone by 2031.

Beryl Turns to Texas

Beryl was on track to make landfall on the southern coast of Texas as a Category 1 hurricane this morning, the first storm of the 2024 Atlantic season to make landfall in the US.

The storm last week killed at least 11 people across the Caribbean and Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula. Now, over 120 Texas counties are under disaster declaration as thousands of people have evacuated. Beryl is anticipated to bring heavy rains, winds, and possibly a storm surge.

The news comes as more than 132 million people across the US are under a heat wave warning, with temperatures breaking daily records across both coasts. Parts of the West—including Arizona, California, and Nevada—have seen record daily temperatures while California battles 21 wildfires, including the Lake Fire, stretching over 16,000 acres and 0% contained as of this writing. The East Coast has witnessed temperatures above 100 degrees, with North Carolina seeing a daily record of 106.

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Jon Landau, Oscar-winning producer best known for "Titanic" and "Avatar," dies at age 63.

Khyree Jackson, Minnesota Vikings rookie cornerback, dies in car crash at age 24 along with two former college football players.

Professional wrestler and actor John Cena announces he will retire from the WWE in 2025 after over 20 years with the company.

Emma Navarro upsets fellow American No. 2 seed Coco Gauff to advance to Wimbledon quarterfinals. Spain, France, Netherlands, and England reach UEFA European Championship semifinals.

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Science & Technology

The UK releases first-ever guidelines for use and generation of stem cell-based embryo structures; biological models allow researchers to study early fetal development and potentially develop treatments for congenital disorders.

Analysis suggests the Antikythera mechanism—a 2,000-year-old mechanical device found on a Greek shipwreck—was built to align with the lunar calendar.

Second-known living species of vampire squid discovered in the South China Sea; the first type of the animal was formally described in 1903.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher Friday (S&P 500 +0.5%, Dow +0.2%, Nasdaq +0.9%) with the S&P 500 and Nasdaq closing at record highs as latest jobs report raises hopes for interest rate cuts.

Paramount's board approves Skydance's merger proposal after months of negotiation, paving the way for a formal announcement expected today.

Meme stock influencer Keith Gill (also known as Roaring Kitty) posts indicating possible interest in headphone maker Koss, sending shares up 25% Friday.

Politics & World Affairs

Rival Sudanese factions meet in Egypt for reconciliation talks as war approaches 15-month mark, with a reported death toll of over 16,000 people.

Israel-Hamas cease-fire talks set to resume after Hamas reportedly drops demand that Israel commit to ending war, clearing hurdle for US-proposed cease-fire plan.

House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D, NY-8) holds a virtual meeting with committee members to discuss calls for President Joe Biden to step aside from the 2024 race amid concerns over his mental fitness.

*Actual retail prices are set by dealer and may vary. Taxes are additional and vary by location. Freight and PDI charges may be additional and vary by dealer. Models subject to limited availability. Images may not reflect dealer inventory and/or unit specifications. † As rated by Kohler; all power levels are stated in gross horsepower at 3600 RPM per SAE J1940 as rated by engine manufacturer. †† As required by Kawasaki; horsepower tested in accordance with SAE J1195 and rated in accordance with SAE J2723 and certified by SAE International. **See operator's manual for warranty details and information. Certain restrictions apply. Kohler® is a registered trademark of Kohler Co. Kawasaki® is a registered trademark of KAWASAKI JUKOKYO KABUSHIKI KAISHA.
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PLEASE JOIN US IN
CELEBRATING

DROP & GO GIFT CARD
BRIDAL SHOWER FOR

*Julianna Kosel
& Isaac Moll*

Julianna is the daughter of Tina & the one & only "Paper Paul" Kosel
The wedding will take place in Florida on July 30th.

GROTON SWIMMING POOL
DROP OFF TIMES ARE: 1-8:30 M-TH
1-8 FRI-SUN

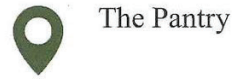
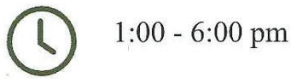
FROM: JUNE 27TH TO JULY 14TH

*The couple is also registered on Amazon if you prefer to send them a gift.



BUYING FOOD IS A SNAP!

FREE SNAP APPLICATION ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE



WITH SNAP:

 You will stretch your food dollars.

 Your students qualify for free school meals.

Household Size	Max Gross Monthly Income
1	\$1580
2	\$2137
3	\$2694
4	\$3250
5	\$3807
6	\$4364
EACH ADDITIONAL MEMBER +\$557	

Information needed to receive help filling out SNAP Application:

- Social Security Numbers of all household members.
- Gross monthly earned and unearned income.
- Out-of-pocket medical expenses totaling over \$35/month (Only for those age 60+ and disabled households).
- Amount of childcare Expenses.



*This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

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Hail Damage East of Groton



This is what is left of a corn field five miles east of Groton. (Photo courtesy Jeff Howard)



This was a wheat field. (Photo courtesy Jeff Howard)



Layne Howard's field 1.5 miles east of Groton. (Photo courtesy Jeff Howard)

Harding County Fatal Crash

What: Single vehicle fatal crash

Where: SD Highway 79, mile marker 230, 30 miles north of Reva, SD

When: 8:59a.m., Sunday, July 7, 2024

Vehicle 1: 2015 Ford F350

Driver 1: Male, 75, fatal injuries

Seatbelt Use: No

Harding County, S.D.- A 75-year-old man died this morning from injuries in a single vehicle crash 30 miles north of Reva, SD.

The name of the person involved has not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2015 Ford F350 was traveling south near mile marker 230 in SD Highway 79. For an unknown reason, the vehicle crossed the center line, entered the east ditch, struck a field approach and rolled. The driver was ejected and passed away from his injuries.

Names Released in Custer County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash

Where: Intersection of SD Highway 89 and US 385, in Pringle, SD city limits

When: 11:21a.m., Thursday, June 27, 2024

Vehicle 1: 2006 Chevrolet Impala

Driver 1: Heather Marie Whitney, 46-year -old female from San Diego, CA, no injuries

Seatbelt Use: Yes

Passenger 1: Jason Douglas Whitney, 21-year-old male from San Diego, CA, no injuries

Seatbelt Use: Yes

Vehicle 2: Bicycle

Driver 2: John L. Lambert, 82-year-old male from Fort Collins, CO, fatal injuries

Helmet Use: Yes

Custer County, S.D.- An 82-year-old man died July 3 from injuries received in a June 27 crash in Pringle, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates Heather Marie Whitney, the driver of a 2006 Chevrolet Impala, was traveling southbound on US 385, approaching the intersection at SD Highway 89. At the same time, John L. Lambert, a bicyclist, was traveling northbound on SD Highway 89 and failed to stop at the stop sign at the intersection and the two vehicles collided. The driver and passenger in the Impala were not injured. Lambert was lifeflighted to a nearby hospital and passed away on July 3 from his injuries.

Names Released in Meade County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash

Where: SD Highway 34, mile marker 38, two miles east of Sturgis, SD

When: 10:10a.m., Monday, July 1, 2024

Vehicle 1: 2017 Chevrolet Silverado

Driver 1: John Joseph Lundin, 82-year-old male from Sturgis, SD, fatal injuries

Seatbelt Use: No

Vehicle 2: 2005 Dodge Ram 2500

Driver 2: Jerry Lee Seaman, 72-year-old male from Newell, SD, serious, non-life-threatening injuries

Seatbelt Use: Yes

Passenger 1: Dixie Lee Seaman, 72-year-old female from Newell, SD, serious, non-life-threatening injuries

Seatbelt Use: No

Meade County, S.D.- An 82 year-old man died July 4 from injuries sustained in a two vehicle crash July 1 near Sturgis, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates John J. Lundin, the driver of a 2017 Chevrolet Silverado, was traveling eastbound on SD Highway 34 near mile marker 38. At the same time, Jerry L. Seaman, the driver of a 2005 Dodge Ram 2500, was traveling westbound on SD Highway 34. While initiating a left-hand turn into a gas station, Lundin turned in front of the Dodge Ram and the vehicles collided head-on. The driver and passenger of the Dodge Ram were transported to a nearby hospital with serious, non-life-threatening injuries. Lundin was life-flighted to a Rapid City hospital, where he passed away July 4 from his injuries.

Names Released in Codington County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash

Where: 455th Ave and 156th Street, 16 miles north of Watertown, SD

When: 9:59 a.m., Thursday, June 27, 2024

Vehicle 1: 2019 Chevrolet Equinox

Driver 1: Carol Fay McFarland, 87-year-old female from Webster, SD, no injuries

Seatbelt Use: Yes

Passenger 1: Delwin Henry McFarland, 88-year-old male from Webster, SD, fatal injuries

Seatbelt Use: Yes

Vehicle 2: 2022 AGCO 8300C Terragator (Crop Sprayer)

Driver 2: Micah Martin Sergey Dietmeier, 21-year-old male from Milbank, SD, no injuries

Seatbelt Use: Yes

Codington County, S.D.- One person died July 3 from injuries received in a June 27 crash north of Watertown, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates Micah Dietmeier, the driver of a 2022 AGCO Terragator crop sprayer was making a left turn from 455th Avenue into a field approach when Carol F. McFarland, the driver of a 2019 Chevrolet Equinox, attempted to pass and collided with the sprayer. Both drivers were not injured. A passenger in the Equinox, Delwin H. McFarland, suffered serious, life-threatening injuries and was transported by ambulance to a local hospital. McFarland passed away on July 3 from his injuries.

Weekly Vikings Roundup

By Jordan Wright

With a heavy heart, we must begin this week's column with some Vikings-related news. Khyree Jackson, the Vikings fourth-round pick in the most recent draft, was killed in a car accident on Saturday morning. He and two friends were traveling in a vehicle that was struck by a drunk driver who was traveling at high speeds. The collision forced the vehicle Jackson was in off the road where it struck multiple tree stumps, tragically killing all three occupants. The Vikings' front office, head coach Kevin O'Connell, and several teammates have all put out messages, and it is clear Jackson was a great person on and off the field with an infectious personality who brought joy into any room he was in.

This is his story

Khyree Jackson attended Dr. Henry Wise High School in Maryland. He played wide receiver, and despite leading his team to a perfect season and a state championship, Jackson's grades forced him to continue his football journey at the junior college level. He enrolled at Arizona Western College, but in 2018 he decided to drop out of school and return to his home state of Maryland. Thinking his football career was over, Jackson got a job at his local grocery store, where he excelled, even earning employee of the month honors. However, Jackson wasn't ready to give up on his dreams without giving it one more shot, so in 2019, he enrolled at Fort Scott Community College. Just like in high school, Khyree began as a wide receiver. However, thinking he had a better shot to move up the ranks, he switched to cornerback. And that is when his football career finally began to take off.

Khyree Jackson was named the nation's top junior college prospect on defense and the number one overall player in the ESPN JC50. Despite receiving numerous offers from D1 schools, Jackson decided to play for Nick Saban at Alabama. After two seasons at Alabama, Jackson decided to transfer to Oregon for the 2023 season, where he led the Ducks with three interceptions (2nd in the Pac-12), and ten passes defended (4th in the Pac-12). Despite only playing 12 games for the Ducks, Jackson earned First-Team All-Pac-12 honors. Those accomplishments led to a Senior Bowl invite and eventually hearing his name called in the NFL Draft.

"Khyree brought a contagious energy to our facility and our team. His confidence and engaging personality immediately drew his teammates to him. In our short time together, it was evident Khyree was going to develop into a tremendous professional football player, but what was more impressive was his desire to become the best person he could be for his family and those around him." – Vikings' head coach Kevin O'Connell

"RIP Khyree... Love you @Real_Khyree. at a loss for words. I will miss your smile. Great player better person." – Oregon Ducks' head coach Dan Lanning

"As we got to know him throughout the pre-draft process, it was clear the goals Khyree wanted to accomplish both professionally and personally. His story was one of resilience. He was taking steps to become the best version of himself not just for him, but for those who cared about and looked up to him. Khyree's personality captured every room he was in. I'm devastated that his life and everything he had in front of him has been cut short. My thoughts are with Khyree's family and friends, those who played with and coached him in college, and his teammates and coaches here at the Vikings." – Vikings' General Manager Kwesi Adofo-Mensah

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What's in a (Medical Specialty) Name?

Doctors are taught medical terms and jargon in medical school like a secret code. Many medical terms are rooted in Greek and Latin. Over the course of our training, these words become second nature and we become fluent in this medical "language", although we are also expected to talk to our patients using simple terminology. However, most specialties in medicine still use the original Greek and Latin roots for their names. Once you know where these names come from, everything makes sense.

Most names start with a Greek or Latin word followed by "ologist" or "ology" from Greek word "Logos" which means "the study of" or "Science of". Instead of calling themselves a "heart doctor" we call them Cardiologists. Cardiology comes from the Greek word "Kardia" which means "heart." This trend follows for several other specialties. Lung doctors are Pulmonologists from the Latin "Pulmon" which means "lung". Obstetrics is from the Latin term "obstetrix" which means "midwife" or literally, "one who stands opposite". However, Gynecologist comes from the Greek term "gyne" meaning "woman".

Liver doctors are called Hepatologists using the Greek terms "Hepar" or "Hepato" meaning "of liver". Hematologists are doctors who study blood and the term comes from the Greek work "haimo" meaning "blood". Your skin specialists, the Dermatologists, get their name from the Greek work "Dermatos" which means "skin" or "hide". The Nephrologists, or kidney doctors, have taken the Greek root for kidney, which is "nephros" to get their name. Neurologists study nerves, and the Greek term "neuro" or "neuron" means "string or nerve".

A Pathologist looks at tissue samples under a microscope in order to diagnose diseases. Their Greek root "Pathos" comes from the terms for "suffering" or "disease". This branch of medicine looks for the cause, development, as well as the natural progression of diseases. The term anesthesia was first used in the 1880's, but it also comes from the Greek prefix "an" which means "without" combined with "aisthesis" which means "feeling" or "perception". That describes their goal for patients during surgery – to go "without feeling" pain during a procedure.

Just when you think you know the rules, there is Endocrinology. Endocrinology studies the endocrine system which are the organs in the body that secrete hormones. "Endo" is the Latinized form of the Greek word "krinein" meaning "secreting internally". The term Rheumatologist is not quite as literal as some of the others. They specialize in diseases like arthritis and the name originates from the Greek word "Rheuma" meaning "that which flows" or "current/stream". This comes from a 17th Century idea that arthritis would flow throughout the body affecting many areas.

Hopefully this helps "crack the code" of why different specialties have such different and unique names. You can impress your friends and family with this newfound knowledge. However your Cardiologist will be just as sweet if you call him/her a "heart doctor", because as Shakespeare's Juliet asked, "What is in a name?"

Jill Kruse, D.O. is part of The Prairie Doc® team of physicians and currently practices as a hospitalist in Brookings, South Dakota. Follow The Prairie Doc® at www.prairiedoc.org and on Facebook and Instagram featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc®, a medical Q&A show providing health information based on science, built on trust, on SDPB streaming live on Facebook most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.



Jill Kruse, DO

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Groton Locke Electric 2024 With Tough Game Against Redfield Dairy Queen

By GameChanger Media

Groton Locke Electric 2024 had trouble keeping up with Redfield Dairy Queen in a 9-1 loss on Sunday. Redfield Dairy Queen got on the board in the bottom of the first inning after Brent Osborn doubled, scoring one run, Peyton Osborn homered to left field, scoring two runs, and Nolan Gall singled, scoring one run.

A single by Cooper Hainy extended the Redfield Dairy Queen lead to 5-1 in the bottom of the third inning.

Osborn earned the win for Redfield Dairy Queen. They allowed three hits and one run over seven innings, striking out four and walking one. Alex Morris took the loss for Groton Locke Electric 2024. They went six innings, surrendering nine runs (seven earned) on 11 hits, striking out three and walking three.

Ty Sieber went 1-for-2 at the plate as the infielder led the team with one run batted in. Sieber, Ben Althoff, and Brian Hansen each collected one hit for Groton Locke Electric 2024.

Redfield Dairy Queen accumulated 11 hits in the game. Camden Osborn led Redfield Dairy Queen with three hits in four at bats from the leadoff position. Osborn and Osborn each drove in two runs for Redfield Dairy Queen. Keaton Rohlf and Hainy each collected multiple hits for Redfield Dairy Queen. Christain DeYoung and Bennett Osborn each stole multiple bases for Redfield Dairy Queen. Redfield Dairy Queen stole eight bases in the game. Redfield Dairy Queen were sure-handed and didn't commit a single error. Owen Osborn made the most plays with five.

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Groton Locke Electric 2024 Fall Victim To Redfield Dairy Queen Rally

By GameChanger Media

Groton Locke Electric 2024 lost to Redfield Dairy Queen 25-7 on Sunday even though they once led by four runs.

Groton Locke Electric 2024 jumped out to the lead in the bottom of the first inning after Brian Hansen singled, scoring two runs, Alex Morris singled, scoring one run, and Hansen scored after tagging up.

Redfield Dairy Queen flipped the game on its head in the top of the second, scoring five runs on five hits to take a 5-4 lead. The biggest blow in the inning was a single by Camden Osborn on a full count that drove in two.

Redfield Dairy Queen added to their early lead in the top of the third inning when Christain DeYoung singled, scoring two runs, and Owen Osborn drew a walk, scoring one run.

Redfield Dairy Queen scored 11 runs on four hits in the top of the seventh inning. An error scored one run, Bennett Osborn doubled, scoring one run, an error scored two runs, DeYoung drew a walk, scoring one run, Osborn singled, scoring one run, Osborn was struck by a pitch, driving in a run, Nolan Gall tripled, scoring three runs, and Cooper Hainy drew a walk, scoring one run.

Tom Gregg earned the win for Redfield Dairy Queen. The starting pitcher surrendered seven hits and seven runs (three earned) over four innings, striking out five and walking three. Chandler Larson took the loss for Groton Locke Electric 2024. The starting pitcher went three innings, surrendering 10 runs (nine earned) on eight hits, striking out two and walking eight.

Hansen provided pop in the middle of the lineup, and led Groton Locke Electric 2024 with three runs batted in. They went 1-for-3 on the day. Morris went 3-for-4 at the plate to lead Groton Locke Electric 2024 in hits. Ben Althoff collected two hits for Groton Locke Electric 2024 in four at bats. Cole Simon led Groton Locke Electric 2024 with three walks. Overall, the team had a strong eye at the plate, collecting six walks for the game.

Redfield Dairy Queen piled up 13 hits in the game. DeYoung, the number seven hitter for Redfield Dairy Queen, led the way with five runs batted in. The catcher went 2-for-4 on the day. Gall led Redfield Dairy Queen with three hits in five at bats. Kole DeSpiegler and Osborn each collected multiple hits for Redfield Dairy Queen. Hainy paced Redfield Dairy Queen with four walks. Overall, the team had patience at the plate, collecting 18 walks for the game. DeYoung stole two bases. Redfield Dairy Queen stole five bases in the game.

Next up for Groton Locke Electric 2024 is a game at Aberdeen on Wednesday.

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Groton Locke Electric 2024 1 - 9 Redfield Dairy Queen

📍 Away 📅 Sunday July 07, 2024

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	R	H	E
GRTN	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	3	1
RDFL	4	0	1	0	1	3	X	9	11	0

BATTING

Groton Locke Electric 2024	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
D Frey #6 (LF)	4	1	0	0	0	0
S Knecht #8 (CF)	2	0	0	0	0	0
T Sieber #19 (SS)	2	0	1	1	1	0
B Althoff #1 (3B)	3	0	1	0	0	1
B Hansen #37 (2B)	3	0	1	0	0	0
A Morris #13 (P)	3	0	0	0	0	0
C Simon #2 (RF)	3	0	0	0	0	1
S Locke #15 (C)	2	0	0	0	0	2
A Severs... #33 (1B)	2	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	24	1	3	1	1	4

TB: T Sieber, B Althoff, B Hansen, **HBP:** S Locke, S Knecht 2, A Severson, **LOB:** 7

PITCHING

Groton Locke Electric 2024	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
A Morris #13	6.0	11	9	7	3	3	1
Totals	6.0	11	9	7	3	3	1

L: A Morris, **P-S:** A Morris 118-76, **BF:** A Morris 34

Redfield Dairy Queen	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
C Osborn #2 (CF)	4	2	3	2	0	0
B Osborn #3 (RF)	3	1	1	1	1	1
B Osborn #29 (3B)	3	1	0	1	1	0
P Osborn #15 (P)	4	1	1	2	0	1
C Hainy #19 (SS)	3	1	2	1	0	1
K Rohlfs #10 (C)	3	1	2	1	0	0
N Gall #17 (LF)	3	0	1	1	0	0
N Hainy #26 (1B)	3	0	0	0	0	0
O Osborn #5 (2B)	3	1	1	0	0	0
C DeYoung #12	2	1	0	0	1	0
Totals	31	9	11	9	3	3

2B: B Osborn, **3B:** C Osborn, **HR:** P Osborn, **TB:** K Rohlfs 2, O Osborn, C Osborn 5, B Osborn 2, N Gall, P Osborn 4, C Hainy 2, **SB:** K Rohlfs, B Osborn 2, O Osborn, C DeYoung 2, N Gall, C Hainy, **LOB:** 7

Redfield Dairy Queen	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
P Osborn #15	7.0	3	1	1	1	4	0
Totals	7.0	3	1	1	1	4	0

W: P Osborn, **P-S:** P Osborn 92-59, **HBP:** P Osborn 4, **BF:** P Osborn 29

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Redfield Dairy Queen 25 - 7 Groton Locke Electric 2024

📍 Home 📅 Sunday July 07, 2024

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	R	H	E
RDFL	0	5	3	2	2	2	11	25	13	2
GRTN	4	0	1	2	0	0	0	7	8	4

BATTING

Redfield Dairy Queen	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
C Osborn #2 (LF)	4	2	1	2	1	1
N Gall #17 (DH)	5	3	3	4	1	1
B Osborn #29 (CF)	4	2	2	1	2	0
P Osborn #15 (3B)	2	3	1	2	2	0
C Hainy #19 (SS)	2	4	1	1	4	0
K Rohlfs #10 (RF)	0	1	0	0	0	0
B Osborn #3 (RF)	1	1	0	0	1	1
B Roth #4 (RF)	1	1	0	0	1	1
C DeYoung #12 (C)	4	2	2	5	1	0
N Hainy #26	2	0	0	0	2	1
C Jessen #7	1	0	0	0	0	0
O Osborn #5 (2B)	2	3	1	3	3	0
K DeSpie... #21 (1B)	4	3	2	1	0	1
Totals	32	25	13	19	18	6

2B: P Osborn, B Osborn, C Hainy, K DeSpiegler, **3B:** N Gall, **TB:** P Osborn 2, B Osborn 3, N Gall 5, O Osborn, C Hainy 2, C Osborn, C DeYoung 2, K DeSpiegler 3, **SAC:** B Osborn, **SF:** P Osborn, **CS:** B Osborn, **HBP:** P Osborn, C Osborn, K Rohlfs, K DeSpiegler, **SB:** P Osborn, B Osborn, C DeYoung 2, K DeSpiegler, **LOB:** 10

Groton Locke Electric	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
D Frey #6 (LF)	3	2	0	0	1	0
C Simon #2 (CF)	1	1	0	0	3	1
T Sieber #19 (1B)	3	0	0	0	0	1
A Sever... #33 (P)	0	0	0	0	0	0
B Althoff #1 (SS)	4	2	2	2	0	0
B Hansen #37 (DH)	3	1	1	3	0	0
A Morris #13 (C)	4	0	3	1	0	0
C Camac... #12 (2B)	3	0	0	1	1	0
G Knebel #9	4	0	0	0	0	3
J Cogley #3 (3B)	2	0	1	0	1	1
A Jones #7 (RF)	3	1	1	0	0	0
Totals	30	7	8	7	6	6

2B: B Althoff, A Morris, **TB:** A Jones, B Hansen, B Althoff 3, J Cogley, A Morris 4, **SF:** B Hansen, **HBP:** T Sieber, **LOB:** 10

EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: Is there any hope of an international treaty to ban or cut back significantly on plastic waste?
- W. Smith, Los Angeles, CA

The global plastic waste crisis has reached alarming proportions, prompting widespread calls for global action. Some 300 million tons of plastic are produced worldwide each year, with a significant portion ending up in oceans and waterways, devastating marine life and ecosystems. The need for coordinated action is evident, as plastic pollution transcends national borders and requires a unified approach.

Efforts towards an international treaty to regulate plastic waste have gained momentum through platforms like the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) and the Basel Convention. These forums have provided avenues for countries to discuss and negotiate agreements on plastic waste management. Key proposals include limiting the export of plastic waste to countries ill-equipped to handle it, promoting sustainable alternatives to single-use plastics, and establishing all-inclusive recycling and waste management systems.

The Basel Convention, in particular, made significant strides in 2019 by amending its regulations to include plastic waste in its framework for controlling transboundary movements of hazardous waste. This amendment requires countries to obtain prior informed consent before shipping plastic waste across borders, thus curbing the careless disposal of plastics in developing countries. Moreover, several countries and regions have taken proactive steps independently. The European Union, for one, has adopted ambitious plans to ban single-use plastics and promote an economy where plastic waste is minimized, reused and recycled. Such regional initiatives serve as models for broader international cooperation.

Public awareness and advocacy have played crucial roles in driving political will for a global treaty. Environmental organizations, grassroots movements and concerned citizens have mobilized campaigns highlighting the detrimental impacts of plastic pollution and demanding policy action at all levels.

Challenges remain, though, mainly due to economic interests and differing national priorities. Plastic production is deeply intertwined with industries and economies worldwide, making significant reductions or bans controversial. Developing countries, despite being excessively affected by plastic pollution, often lack the resources and infrastructure to manage waste effectively. Nevertheless, the momentum for change is building. International agreements on environmental issues historically start with incremental steps and gradually evolve into more comprehensive treaties. The emergence of coalitions of like-minded countries committed to tackling plastic waste provides optimism for a collective approach.

A 2022 United Nations resolution saw 175 countries endorse a historic resolution to end plastic pollution and create an international legally binding agreement by the end of 2024. The resolution calls for the establishment of an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) tasked with creating a draft legally binding agreement by the end of 2024. Environmentalists are keeping their fingers crossed that this draft resolution can become a legally binding instrument to significantly reduce plastic pollution.



Environmentalists are keeping their fingers crossed for an international treaty to ban single-use plastics. Credit: Pexels.com.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Company applies to build 68-turbine, \$261 million wind project in northeast SD

BY: SETH TUPPER - JULY 7, 2024 7:00 AM

An energy company has applied to construct another wind farm in northeastern South Dakota.

The company is Chicago-based Invenergy. It wants to build up to 68 turbines through its South Dakota subsidiary, Deuel Harvest Wind Energy South. The turbines would be spread across 54 square miles of privately owned land near the small town of Brandt in Deuel County. The project's estimated cost is \$621 million.

The "south" in the project's name distinguishes it from the 109-turbine Deuel Harvest Wind Farm, which Invenergy completed in 2021 and sold to Atlanta-based Southern Power.

The new project would be located about six miles south of the existing Deuel Harvest wind farm. Another wind farm, Tatanka Ridge, is adjacent to the southwest edge of the proposed project area. If the new project is approved and built, it would raise the number of wind turbines in Deuel County to 233.

The new project could deliver up to 250 megawatts of electricity. South Dakota ranks 13th in the nation with 3,462 megawatts of installed wind energy capacity, according to the American Wind Power Association.

The South Dakota Public Utilities Commission issued a public notice Wednesday about Invenergy's application. People with a direct interest in the project have until Aug. 27 to apply for "intervenor" status, which would allow them to participate in hearings, file motions, request facts or documents, and engage in other aspects of the permitting process.

The new application says Invenergy will not use eminent domain, which is a legal procedure to obtain land from unwilling landowners.

"South Deuel Wind has entered into long-term, voluntary lease and easement agreements for the placement of Project Facilities with private landowners within the Project Area," the application says.

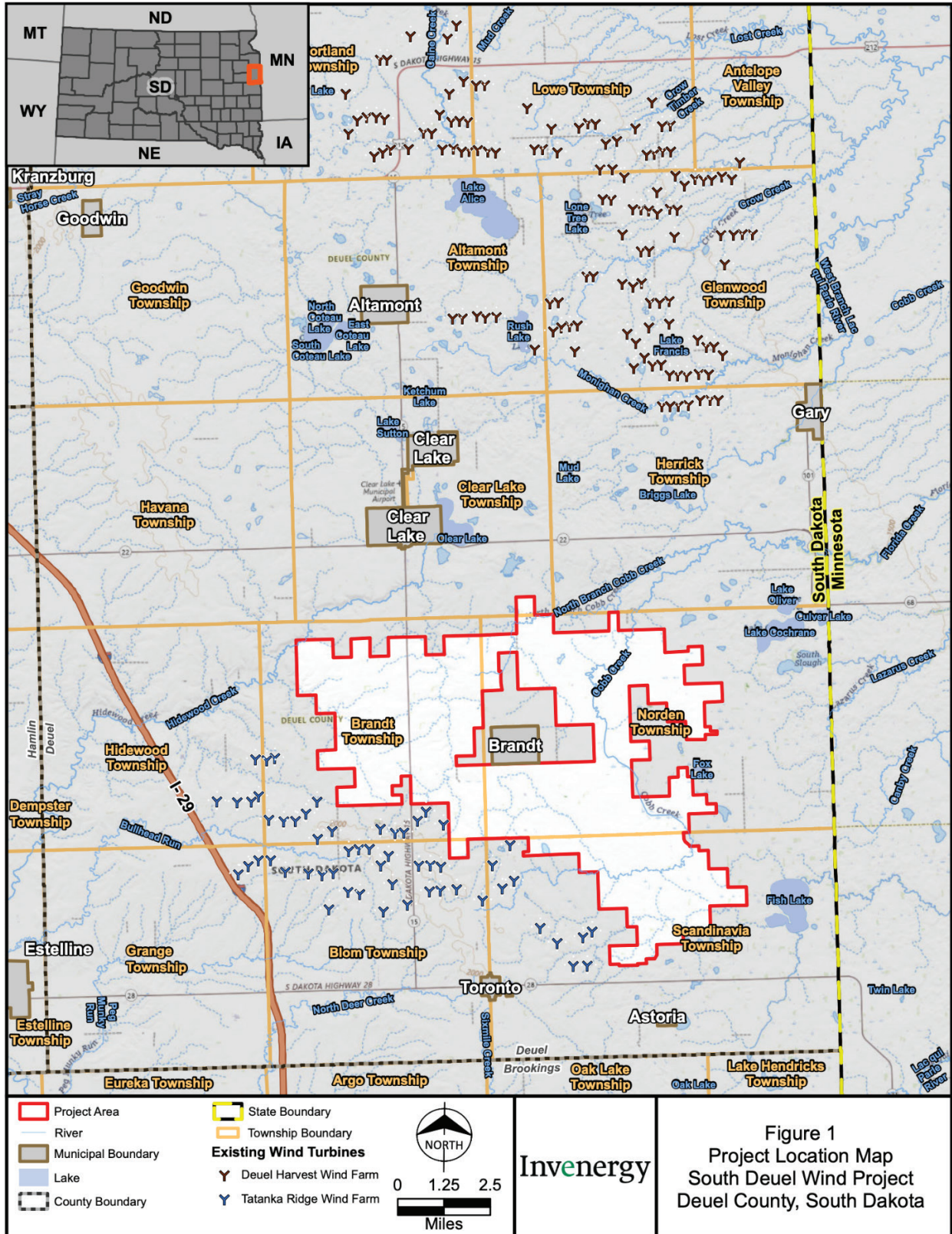
Invenergy estimates the project will generate payments to landowners totaling \$78 million over the next 30 years, and property tax revenue generated for local governments will total \$38 million during the same period. The project is expected to create 243 jobs during construction and eight long-term operational jobs.

While Invenergy was working on its previous project, some local residents challenged special exception permits issued to the company by Deuel County. The permits were ultimately upheld by the state Supreme Court.

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

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Source: ESRI, Census TIGER Data, NHD, Invenergy, Burns & McDonnell

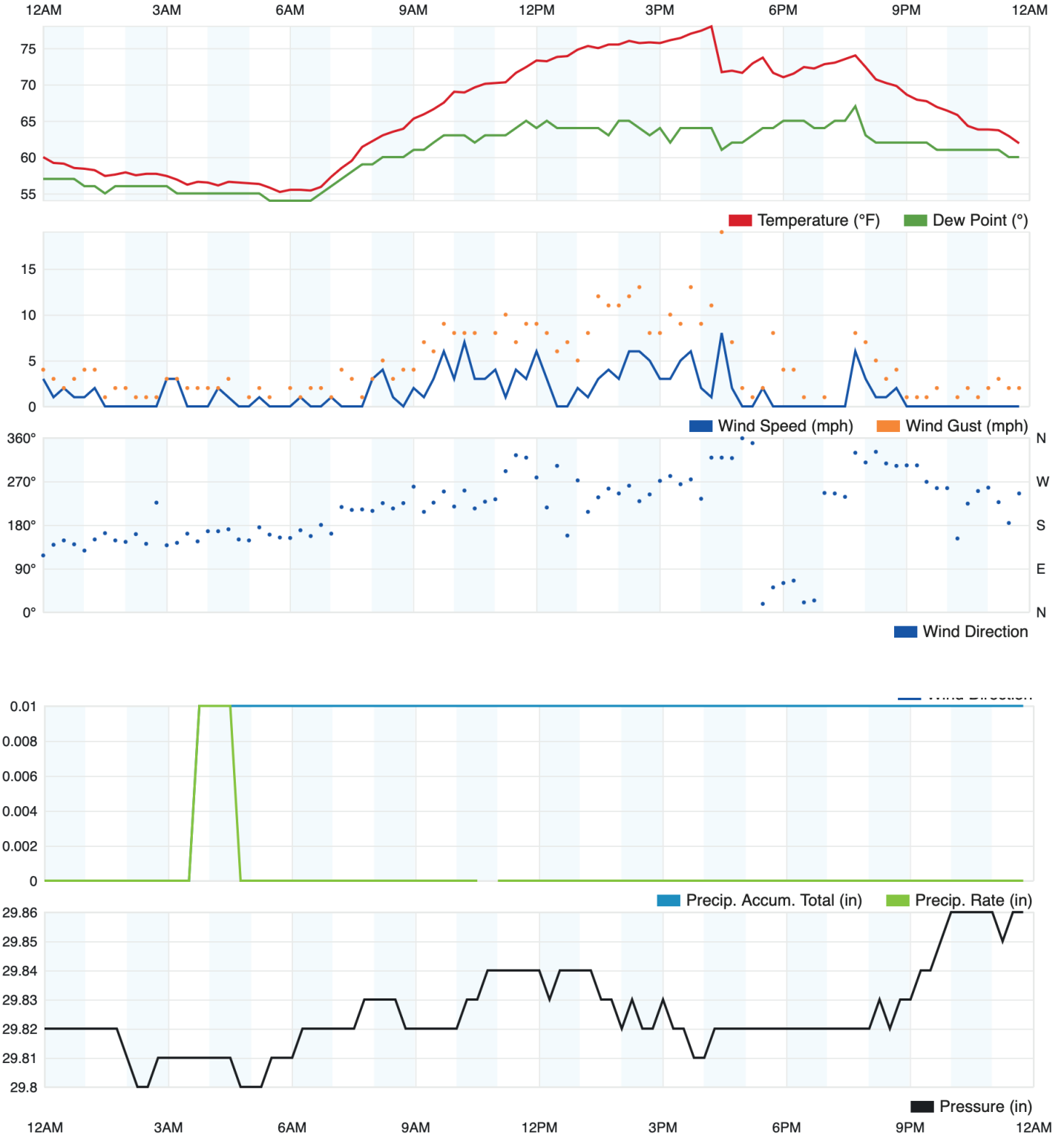
Invenergy

The Deuel Harvest Wind Energy South project map. (Courtesy of South Dakota Public Utilities Commission)

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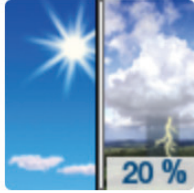
Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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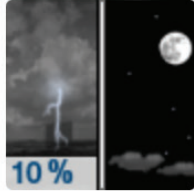
Today



High: 83 °F

Sunny then
Slight Chance
T-storms

Tonight



Low: 59 °F

Slight Chance
T-storms then
Mostly Clear

Tuesday



High: 85 °F

Sunny then
Slight Chance
T-storms

Tuesday Night



Low: 62 °F

Mostly Clear

Wednesday



High: 86 °F

Sunny



Upcoming Heat Key Messages

July 8, 2024
3:58 AM

Key Messages

- Steady warming trend over next several days
- Heat & Humidity peaks this upcoming weekend
- Highs/Lows Friday - Sunday 5-10 degrees above normal

Maximum Temperature Forecast (°F)

Maximum Dew Point Forecast (°F)

	Maximum Temperature Forecast (°F)							Maximum Dew Point Forecast (°F)						
	7/8 Mon	7/9 Tue	7/10 Wed	7/11 Thu	7/12 Fri	7/13 Sat	7/14 Sun	7/8 Mon	7/9 Tue	7/10 Wed	7/11 Thu	7/12 Fri	7/13 Sat	7/14 Sun
Aberdeen	84	87	86	89	94	96	97	63	64	64	65	68	69	68
Britton	79	82	82	86	90	90	92	62	64	64	65	68	69	68
Brookings	78	81	80	82	86	88	90	61	63	63	64	67	67	68
Chamberlain	84	88	86	89	94	95	98	60	62	64	65	68	68	67
Clark	79	82	81	83	87	89	87	61	61	62	63	67	67	66
Eagle Butte	81	85	86	91	95	95	95	57	58	59	61	63	64	62
Ellendale	82	85	84	87	93	94	89	63	64	65	65	68	69	68
Eureka	81	85	85	89	95	95	95	61	61	61	62	64	66	65
Gettysburg	81	85	84	88	92	94	91	62	61	63	64	66	67	66
Huron	82	86	85	86	91	92	95	62	63	64	64	68	69	69
Kennebec	83	88	86	89	95	95	97	59	60	63	64	67	67	67
McIntosh	80	85	85	90	94	93	94	59	59	61	62	63	65	63
Milbank	80	82	82	85	89	91	92	65	66	66	66	70	70	71
Miller	81	85	84	87	92	93	96	62	63	65	66	69	69	69
Mobridge	85	89	89	93	97	98	93	60	60	62	62	65	66	64
Murdo	82	87	86	91	95	95	96	57	56	59	61	63	64	63
Pierre	86	90	89	94	98	99	95	59	60	63	63	67	67	65
Redfield	83	86	85	88	92	94	96	62	63	64	65	68	68	67
Sisseton	81	83	83	86	91	92	89	63	63	63	64	68	68	68
Watertown	79	82	81	83	88	89	91	61	63	64	65	68	69	69
Webster	77	81	80	83	87	88	91	59	61	61	61	65	65	65
Wheaton	80	83	84	85	89	91	89	63	64	65	65	68	69	68



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Isolated afternoon and evening thunderstorms will give way to a clear and quiet night. Seasonal temperatures are expected Monday with another round of daytime heating showers and thunderstorms possible. A warming trend is expected through the work week.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 78 °F at 4:08 PM

Low Temp: 55 °F at 5:41 AM

Wind: 19 mph at 4:26 PM

Precip: : 0.01

Day length: 15 hours, 32 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 106 in 1936

Record Low: 43 in 1905

Average High: 85

Average Low: 60

Average Precip in July.: 0.94

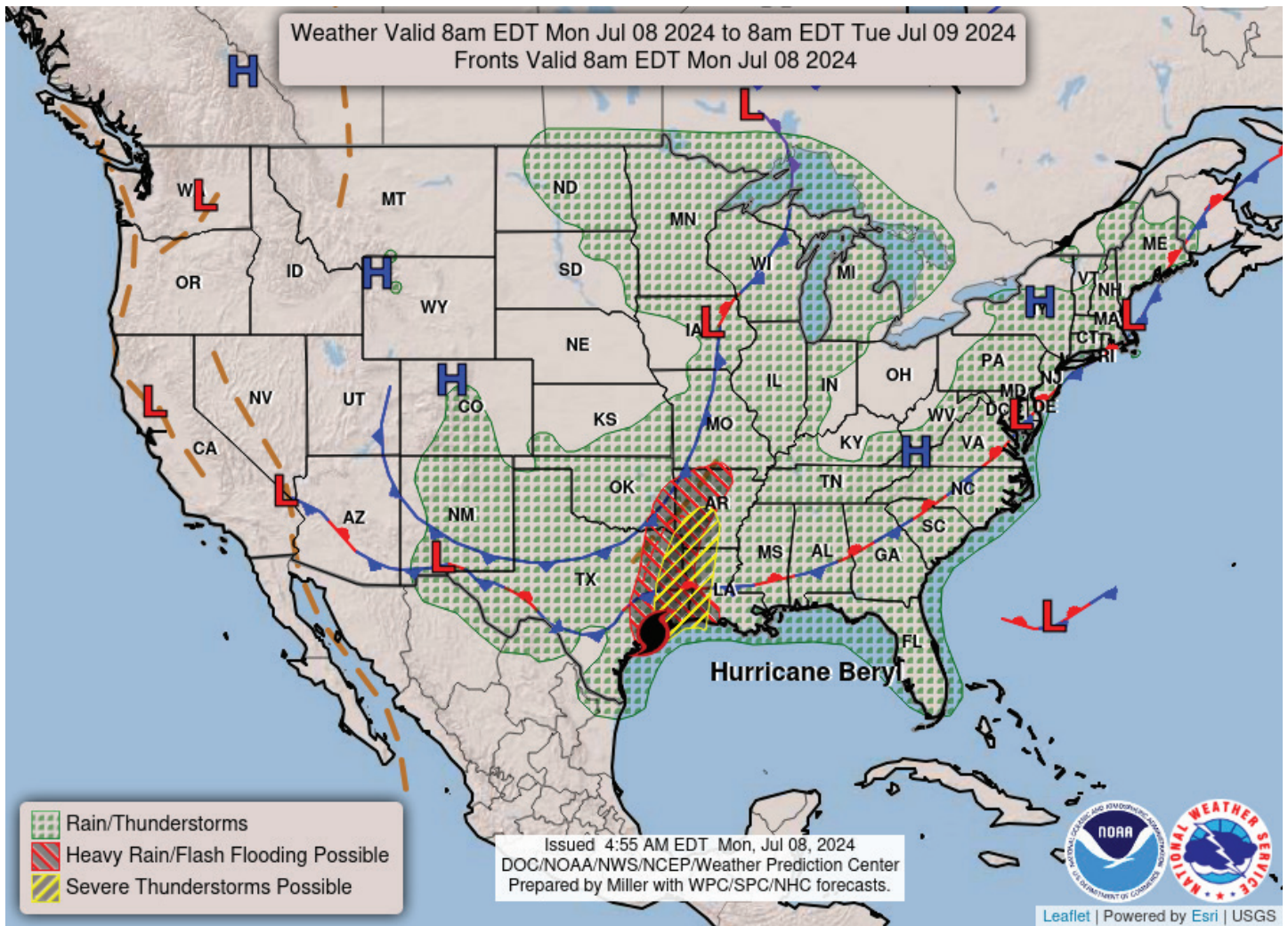
Precip to date in July: 3.07

Average Precip to date: 11.95

Precip Year to Date: 14.02

Sunset Tonight: 9:23:50 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:52:14 am



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Today in Weather History

July 8, 1922: Two tornadoes occurred near the southern border of South Dakota, with one at St. Charles in Gregory County, and the other on the south shore of Lake Andes, in Charles Mix County. The distance apart was about 30 miles. The tornado in Gregory County missed the town of Lake Andes. However, it destroyed about 29 cottages and five large barns. Fifteen people were injured, but no one was killed.

July 8, 1951: An F2 touched down in open country and moved northeastward, passing three miles northwest of Corona in Roberts County. Thirteen buildings were destroyed on a farm with only the house left standing. Three cows and 20 pigs were killed.

July 8, 2009: A tornado passed through the city of Dickinson, ND, on the far south side, mainly just south of the Heart River. From their eyewitness accounts, and from video obtained from the Dickinson Police Department, it is likely that this was a rain-wrapped tornado, and very difficult if not impossible to see. The tornado occurred before sunset, yet it was described as being as dark as night during the event. Over 450 structures were damaged, of which nearly 100 were declared destroyed or beyond repair. Numerous vehicles were damaged or destroyed; some were on their roofs. From that, it was determined that peak wind speeds in the tornado were on the order of 150 mph.

July 8, 2011: Historical releases on the Oahe Dam of 160,000 CFS kept the Missouri River from Pierre to Chamberlain at record flood levels throughout July. Extensive sandbagging and levee building had been done earlier to hold back the river. Residents in the Pierre, Fort Pierre, and Oacoma areas continued to be the most affected by the river. Many homes, along with roads, crop, and pastureland remained flooded throughout the month. The Missouri River at Pierre continued from 5 to 6 foot above flood stage throughout July. The Missouri River at Chamberlain reached a record stage of 75.1 feet on July 8th. Flood stage at Chamberlain is 65 feet. The flooding on the river began in late May and continued into August.

July 8, 2013: A thunderstorm complex moving across central and north central South Dakota produced gusty winds up to 70 mph. These strong winds brought down several tree branches around the area with Dewey County the hardest hit location. In Timber Lake, downed tree branches fell on houses and vehicles causing damage.

1680: The first confirmed tornado death in the United States occurred in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The funnel was filled with, stones, bushes, and other things. The tornado also unroofed a barn and snapped many large trees.

1816 - Frost was reported in low places throughout New England. (David Ludlum)

1950 - The town of York, NE, was deluged with 13.15 inches of rain in 24 hours to establish a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1975 - Three people were killed and six others were injured when lightning struck a walnut tree near Mayo, FL. The nine people were stringing tobacco under a tin shed when the bolt hit the nearby tree. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms in the central U.S. produced wind gusts to 90 mph at Waterloo, IA, 6.38 inches of rain at Tescott, KS, and twenty-five minutes of ping-pong ball size hail at Drummond, OK. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thirty cities in the north central and northeastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Beckley, WV, equalled their all-time record with a high of 93 degrees. Afternoon and evening thunderstorms spawned seven tornadoes in Adams and Logan counties of eastern Colorado, and hail caused 2.3 million dollars damage in Adams, Logan and Washington counties. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Sixteen cities in the central and western U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. The high of 103 degrees at Denver, CO, equalled their record for July, and a 110 degree reading at Rapid City, SD, equalled their all-time record high. Denver reported a record five straight days of 100 degree heat, and Scottsbluff, NE, reported a record eight days in a row of 100 degree weather. (The National Weather Summary)

2003: What may be the world's highest dew point temperature was recorded at Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, in the Persian Gulf. A dew point of 95 degrees was recorded at 3 PM while the air temperature was 108 degrees. The apparent temperature at that time would have been 172 degrees.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

DOING WHAT'S RIGHT!

It was a dream come true. Robert Gonzales had practiced hard and worked long hours to become the racquetball champion. Finally, the day came when he made it to the pro circuit and had an opportunity to play for the championship.

At match point he made a powerful shot into the front wall. The referee and linesman said it was good, and he was declared the winner. However, he stunned the crowd. He shook his head back and forth while talking to the referee and said, "That shot hit the floor first, and therefore I am not the winner."

Sitting quietly after the match a reporter asked, "Why? Why did you admit that the ball hit the floor first?"

"Because it was the only thing I could do to maintain my integrity," came the answer. "I can win another match, but I could never regain my integrity."

Few things in life are as fragile as our integrity. It is our code of conduct, the very standard by which we live our lives and maintain our reputation.

However, there is more. Our reputation is who others think we are. But our character is who God knows us to be. Others may never realize that we have compromised our integrity. But God knows. And ultimately, finally, He is our judge and keeps the record.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may we remain close to You by reading Your Word, spending time in prayer and in fellowship with others as we guard our integrity. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Don't leave me to the mercy of my enemies, for I have done what is just and right. Psalm 119:121



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:
07.05.24

6 15 32 54 67 4

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$181,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 8
DRAW: Mins 15 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.06.24

11 15 25 38 42 5

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$4,610,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 23 Mins 16
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.07.24

7 13 15 30 34 4

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT 16 Hrs 38 Mins 16
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.06.24

1 12 18 24 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$29,000

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 38
DRAW: Mins 15 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.06.24

22 27 52 62 69 4

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 17 Hrs 7 Mins 15
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
07.06.24

5 32 35 39 49 21

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$29,000,000

NEXT 17 Hrs 7 Mins 16
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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Upcoming Groton Events

- 07/04/2024 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/09/2024 FREE SNAP Application Assistance 1-6pm at the Community Center
- 07/14/2024 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm
- 07/17/2024 Legion Auxiliary #39 Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar at the Groton Legion 11am-1pm
- 07/17/2024 Pro Am Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/25/2024 Dairy Queen Miracle Treat Day
- 07/25/2024 Summer Downtown Sip & Shop 5-8pm
- 07/25/2024 Treasures Amidst The Trials 6pm at Emmanuel Lutheran Church
- 07/26/2024 Ferney Open Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Start
- 07/27/2024 1st Annual Celebration in the Park 1-9:30pm
- 08/05/2024 School Supply Drive 4-7pm at the Community Center
- 08/02/2024 Wine on 9 at Olive Grove Golf Course 6pm
- 08/08/2024 Family Fun Fest 5:30-7:30pm
- 08/9-11/2024 Jr. Legion State Baseball Tournament
- 08/12/2024 Vitalant Blood Drive at the Community Center 1:15-7pm
- 09/07/2024 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 09/07-08/2024 Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
- 09/08/2024 Sunflower Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10am
- 10/05/2024 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
- 10/11/2024 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am
- 10/31/2024 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
- 10/31/2024 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
- 11/28/2024 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm
- 12/01/2024 Groton Snow Queen Contest, 4:30 p.m.
- 12/07/2024 Olive Grove 8th Annual Holiday Party & Tour of Homes with Live & Silent Auctions 6pm-close

News from the Associated Press

Russian missiles hit a children's hospital in the Ukrainian capital and kill at least 20 elsewhere

By HANNA ARHIROVA and ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian missiles killed at least seven people and struck a children's hospital in the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, Monday, while another attack in the central Ukrainian city of Kryvyi Rih killed at least 10.

The Russian barrage targeted five Ukrainian cities with more than 40 missiles of different types, hitting apartment buildings and public infrastructure, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a social media post.

At least 20 people were killed and around 50 people were injured across the country in the Monday morning onslaught, Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko said. In Kryvyi Rih, 31 people were injured in addition to the 10 deaths in what the head of city administration, Oleksandr Vilkul, said was a massive missile attack. Explosions were also reported by local officials in Ukraine's central Dnipropetrovsk region.

At the Okhmatdyt children's hospital in Kyiv, rescuers were searching for people under the rubble of a partially collapsed wing of the facility, Zelenskyy said, adding that the number of casualties was not yet known.

"It is very important that the world should not be silent about it now and that everyone should see what Russia is and what it is doing," Zelenskyy said on social media.

The attack comes on the eve of a three-day NATO summit in Washington, which will look at how to reassure Ukraine of the alliance's unwavering support and offer Ukrainians hope that their country can come through Europe's biggest conflict since World War II.

A two-story building at the children's hospital was partly destroyed. On the hospital's main 10-story building, windows and doors were blown out and walls were blackened.

Medical personnel and local people helped shift the rubble as they searched for children and medical workers who could be trapped underneath. Volunteers formed a line, passing stones and debris to each other. Smoke still rose from the building, and volunteers and emergency crews worked in protective masks.

It was the heaviest Russian bombardment of Kyiv in almost four months. The daylight attacks included Kinzhal hypersonic missiles, one of the most advanced Russian weapons, the Ukrainian air force said. The Kinzhal flies at 10 times the speed of sound, making it hard to intercept. City buildings shook from the blasts. An entire section of a residential multistory building in one district of Kyiv was destroyed, officials said.

The Kyiv city administration reported falling debris, presumably from intercepted missiles, in a handful of Kyiv areas, starting fires. Thick plumes of smoke rose from several Kyiv neighborhoods.

The head of Ukraine's presidential office, Andrii Yermak, said the attack occurred at a time when many people were in the city's streets.

Kyiv Mayor Vitalii Klitschko said official assessments of the attack's consequences were still being carried out.

Beryl makes landfall on Texas coast as a Category 1 hurricane, National Weather Service says

By MARK VANCLEAVE and VALERIE GONZALEZ Associated Press

MATAGORDA, Texas (AP) — Beryl made landfall on the Texas coast near Matagorda early Monday with a dangerous storm surge and strong winds, the National Weather Service reported.

The storm's center hit land as a Category 1 hurricane around 4 a.m. Central Standard Time about 85 miles southwest of Houston with top sustained winds of 80 mph (128.7 kph) while moving north at 12

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mph (19.3 kph).

Beryl strengthened and become a hurricane again late Sunday. The storm had weakened after leaving a path of deadly destruction through parts of Mexico and the Caribbean. In southern Texas, the storm's outer bands lashed the coast with rain and intensifying winds Sunday as residents prepared for the storm's arrival.

A hurricane warning remains in effect for the Texas coast from Mesquite Bay north to Port Bolivar, the center said.

Beryl is expected to weaken to a tropical storm Monday and a tropical depression Tuesday, the weather service said, forecasting a turn to the northeast and increase in speed Monday night and Tuesday.

The storm's center is expected to move over eastern Texas on Monday and then through the lower Mississippi Valley into the Ohio Valley on Tuesday and Wednesday, the weather service said.

People on the Texas coast boarded up windows and left beach towns under evacuation order. The storm was projected to come ashore early Monday in the middle of the Texas coast around Matagorda Bay, an area about 100 miles (161 kilometers) south of Houston, but officials cautioned the path could still change.

As the storm neared the coast, Texas officials warned Sunday it could cause power outages and flooding but also expressed worry that not enough residents and beach vacationers in Beryl's path had heeded warnings to leave.

"One of the things that kind of trigger our concern a little bit, we've looked at all of the roads leaving the coast and the maps are still green," said Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, who is serving as the state's acting governor while Gov. Greg Abbott is travelling overseas. "So we don't see many people leaving."

Tropical storm winds extended 115 miles (185 kilometers) from the center and the hurricane center warned residents to be prepared for possible flash flooding in parts of middle, upper and eastern Texas as well as Arkansas as the storm gradually turns to the north and then northeast later Monday.

Along the Texas coast, many residents and business owners took the typical storm precautions but also expressed uncertainty about the storm's intensity.

In Port Lavaca, Jimmy May fastened plywood over the windows of his electrical supply company and said he wasn't concerned about the possible storm surge. He recalled his business had escaped flooding in a previous hurricane that brought a 20-foot (6-meter) storm surge.

"In town, you know, if you're in the low-lying areas, obviously, you need to get out of there," he said.

At the nearby marina, Percy Roberts showed his neighbor Ken Waller how to properly secure his boat as heavy winds rolled in from the bay Sunday evening.

"This is actually going to be the first hurricane I'm going to be experiencing," Waller said, noting he is a little nervous but feels safe following Roberts' lead. "Pray for the best but expect the worst, I guess."

The earliest storm to develop into a Category 5 hurricane in the Atlantic, Beryl caused at least 11 deaths as it passed through the Caribbean on its way to Texas. The storm ripped off doors, windows and roofs with devastating winds and storm surge fueled by the Atlantic's record warmth.

Three times during its one week of life, Beryl has gained 35 mph (56 kph) in wind speed in 24 hours or less, the official weather service definition of rapid intensification.

Beryl's explosive growth into an unprecedented early whopper of a storm indicates the hot water of the Atlantic and Caribbean and what the Atlantic hurricane belt can expect for the rest of the storm season, experts said.

Texas officials warned people along the entire coastline to prepare for possible flooding, heavy rain and wind. The hurricane warning extended from Baffin Bay, south of Corpus Christi, to Sargent, south of Houston.

Beryl lurked as another potential heavy rain event for Houston, where storms in recent months have knocked out power across the nation's fourth-largest city and flooded neighborhoods. A flash flood watch was in effect for a wide swath of the Texas coast, where forecasters expected Beryl to dump as much as 10 inches (25 centimeters) of rain in some areas.

Potential storm surges between 4 and 7 feet (1.22 and 2.13 meters) above ground level were forecast around Matagorda. The warnings extended to the same coastal areas where Hurricane Harvey came

ashore in 2017 as a Category 4 hurricane, far more powerful than Beryl's expected intensity by the time the storm reaches landfall.

Those looking to catch a flight out of the area found a closing window for air travel as Beryl moved closer. Hundreds of flights from Houston's two major commercial airports were delayed by midafternoon Sunday and dozens more canceled, according to FlightAware data.

In Corpus Christi, officials asked visitors to cut their trips short and return home early if possible. Residents were advised to secure homes by boarding up windows if necessary and using sandbags to guard against possible flooding.

The White House said Sunday that the Federal Emergency Management Agency had sent emergency responders, search-and-rescue teams, bottled water and other resources along the coast.

Several coastal counties called for voluntary evacuations in low-lying areas that are prone to flooding. Local officials also banned beach camping and urged tourists traveling on the Fourth of July holiday weekend to move recreational vehicles from coastal parks.

Beryl battered Mexico as a Category 2 hurricane last week, toppling trees but causing no injuries or deaths before weakening to a tropical storm as it moved across the Yucatan Peninsula.

Before hitting Mexico, Beryl wrought destruction in Jamaica, Barbados and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Three people were reported dead in Grenada, three in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, three in Venezuela and two in Jamaica.

Israel deepens its operation in Gaza City, as pockets of militancy confront the military

By SAMY MAGDY and WAFAA SHURAFU Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israeli forces deepened an operation in the Gaza Strip's largest city in what the military said was meant to weed out militants, sending thousands of Palestinians fleeing on Monday from an area already ravaged in the early weeks of the nine-month-long war.

The incursion into the eastern part of Gaza City expands Israel's engagement in the northern part of the beleaguered territory, an area Israel said it had seized control of months ago yet which has seen pockets of militant resurgence that have scaled back Israeli military gains and drawn forces back into such operations. Israel had ordered evacuations in the area before the raid was launched, the military said.

Heavy fighting in the area in the initial weeks of the war all but emptied out Gaza City and its environs, and the Israeli military has prevented most people from returning to their homes there. But several hundred thousands of Palestinians remain in the area, living in the shells of their homes or shelters. The fresh fighting meant new displacement for many residents there.

"We fled in the darkness amid heavy strikes," said Sayeda Abdel-Baki, a mother of three children who was sheltering at her relatives' home in the Daraj neighborhood of Gaza City. "This is my fifth displacement."

Residents reported artillery and tank fire in the area, as well as airstrikes. The Gaza Health Ministry, which has limited access to northern Gaza, did not immediately report casualties. The Hamas-run Civil Defense also did not disclose casualty numbers immediately, saying the area was inaccessible because of the fierce clashes.

The fighting comes as Israel and Hamas appeared to be the closest they have been in months to agreeing to a cease-fire deal that would bring a pause in the war in exchange for the release of dozens of Israelis held hostage by Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

But obstacles remained, even after Hamas agreed days ago to relent on its key demand that Israel commit to ending the war as part of any agreement. A key part of that shift in its stance, officials told The Associated Press, is the level of destruction in the Gaza Strip caused by Israel's intense bombing campaign.

Hamas does however want to include in the deal that the mediators "guarantee" that negotiations conclude with a permanent cease-fire deal, according to two officials with knowledge of the talks. The current draft says that the mediators — the United States, Qatar and Egypt — "will do their best" to ensure that the negotiations lead to an agreement to wind down the war.

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That could remain a sticking point for Israel, which has rejected any deal that would force it to end the war with Hamas still intact — a condition reiterated Sunday by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The officials said that another term that remains at an impasse is whether Hamas should be allowed to choose the high-profile prisoners held by Israel that it wants released as part of the deal. Some of the veteran prisoners were convicted of serious crimes against Israelis and Israel opposes letting Hamas determine those who are to be freed.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the sensitive talks with the media.

While diplomatic efforts to bring an end to the war were ramping up, people in Gaza were seeing no end in sight to their suffering.

Residents fleeing eastern Gaza Strip neighborhoods early Monday said Israel was carrying out heavy strikes on the area, which prompted some Palestinians sheltering in neighborhoods that were not under evacuation orders to seek refuge elsewhere.

Maha Mahfouz fled her home along with her two children and many neighbors in Gaza City's Zaytoun neighborhood. She said their area was not included in evacuation orders but "we are panicked because the bombing and gunfire are very close to us."

Fadel Naeem, the director of the Al-Ahli hospital said patients and their companions fled the facility in panic even though there was no specific evacuation for the area around the hospital. He said people had "left for fear of the worst," adding that patients in critical condition had been evacuated to other hospitals in northern Gaza.

The Israeli military said it launched the operation after it received intelligence that showed the area was housing militants from Hamas and the Islamic Jihad group as well as weapons and investigation and detention rooms. The military said a facility belonging to UNRWA, the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, was also being used by the militants, without providing evidence.

Mahmoud Bassal, a spokesman for the Hamas-linked civil defense department, said the neighborhoods of Tufah, Daraj, Shijaiyah — the latter still enduring an Israeli incursion launched last month — had become inaccessible because of intense Israeli bombing.

In a voice message late Sunday, he said the Israeli military shelled residential houses in the Jaffa area of Gaza City, and that first responders "saw people lying on the ground and were not able to retrieve them because of the bombing."

The war has killed more than 38,000 people in the Gaza Strip, according to the Health Ministry in Gaza, which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians in its count. The fighting has decimated large swaths of Gaza's urban landscape, sparked a humanitarian catastrophe and displaced most of the territory's 2.3 million population.

The war erupted with Hamas' surprise cross-border raid on Oct. 7, which killed 1,200 people in southern Israel, most of them civilians, according to Israeli authorities. The militants took roughly 250 people hostage, and about 120 are still in captivity, with about a third of those said to be dead.

French vote splits among left, center and far-right. With no majority, political paralysis threatens

By JOHN LEICESTER, LORI HINNANT and SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — French voters divided their legislature among left, center and far right, with no single political faction getting even close to the majority needed for form a government. The risk of paralysis loomed Monday for the European Union's second-largest economy.

President Emmanuel Macron gambled that his decision to call snap elections would give France a "moment of clarification," but the outcome showed the opposite, less than three weeks before the start of the Paris Olympics thrusts the country on the international stage. France's main share index opened with a dip in response to the vote.

According to the second-round results tallied early Monday, a leftist coalition surged to take the most

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seats in parliament. Macron's centrists have the second-largest faction and the unpopular president will have to form alliances to run the government. Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally, which led in the first round of voting, came in third after political maneuvering to keep its candidates from power.

Prime Minister Gabriel Attal said he would present his resignation Monday, but could stay on through the Olympics or longer if needed. Newly elected and returning lawmakers were expected to arrive at the National Assembly to begin negotiations in earnest.

Macron himself will leave later in the week for a NATO summit in Washington.

Political deadlock could rattle markets and have far-ranging implications for the war in Ukraine, global diplomacy and Europe's economic stability.

According to official results released early Monday, all three main blocs fell far short of the 289 seats needed to control the 577-seat National Assembly, the more powerful of France's two legislative chambers.

The results showed just over 180 seats for the New Popular Front leftist coalition, which placed first, ahead of Macron's centrist alliance, with more than 160 seats. Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally and its allies were restricted to third place, although their more than 140 seats were still way ahead of the party's previous best showing of 89 seats in 2022.

Macron has three years remaining on his presidential term.

In announcing his resignation, Attal made clearer than ever his disapproval of Macron's shock decision to call the election, saying "I didn't choose this dissolution" of the outgoing National Assembly, where the president's centrist alliance used to be single biggest group, albeit without an absolute majority.

Rather than rallying behind Macron as he'd hoped, millions took the vote as an opportunity to vent anger about inflation, crime, immigration and other grievances — including his style of government.

The New Popular Front's leaders immediately pushed Macron to give them the first chance to form a government and propose a prime minister. The faction pledges to roll back many of Macron's headline reforms, embark on a costly program of public spending, and take a tougher line against Israel because of its war with Hamas. But it's not clear, even among the left, who could lead the government without alienating crucial allies.

"We need someone who offers consensus," said Olivier Faure, head of the Socialist Party, which joined the leftist coalition and was still sorting out how many seats it won on Monday.

Macron warns that the left's economic program of many tens of billions of euros in public spending, partly financed by taxes on wealth and hikes for high earners, could be ruinous for France, already criticized by EU watchdogs for its debt.

A hung parliament is unknown territory for modern France.

Despite the uncertainty, supporters on the left cheered in Republique plaza in eastern Paris when the first results came in, with people spontaneously hugging strangers and several minutes of nonstop applause.

Marielle Castry, a medical secretary, was on the Metro in Paris when projected results were first announced.

"Everybody had their smartphones and were waiting for the results and then everybody was overjoyed," said the 55-year-old. "I had been stressed out since June 9 and the European elections. ... And now, I feel good. Relieved."

The political agreement between the left and center to block the National Rally was largely successful. Many voters decided that keeping the far right from power was more important to them than anything else, backing its opponents in the runoff, even if they weren't from the political camp they usually support.

"Disappointed, disappointed," said far-right supporter Luc Doumont, 66. "Well, happy to see our progression, because for the past few years we've been doing better."

National Rally leader Le Pen, who was expected to make a fourth run for the French presidency in 2027, said the elections laid the groundwork for "the victory of tomorrow."

Racism and antisemitism marred the electoral campaign, along with Russian disinformation campaigns, and more than 50 candidates reported being physically attacked — highly unusual for France.

Unlike other countries in Europe that are more accustomed to coalition governments, France doesn't

have a tradition of lawmakers from rival political camps coming together to form a majority. France is also more centralized than many other European countries, with many more decisions made in Paris.

Gaza destruction likely helped push Hamas to soften cease-fire demands, several officials say

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Several officials in the Middle East and the U.S. believe the level of devastation in the Gaza Strip caused by a nine-month Israeli offensive likely has helped push Hamas to soften its demands for a cease-fire agreement.

Hamas over the weekend appeared to drop its longstanding demand that Israel promise to end the war as part of any cease-fire deal. The sudden shift has raised new hopes for progress in internationally brokered negotiations.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday boasted that military pressure — including Israel's ongoing two-month offensive in the southern Gaza city of Rafah — "is what has led Hamas to enter negotiations."

Hamas, an Islamic militant group that seeks Israel's destruction and took control of Gaza in 2007, is highly secretive and little is known about its inner workings.

But in recent internal communications seen by The Associated Press, messages signed by several senior Hamas figures in Gaza urged the group's exiled political leadership to accept the cease-fire proposal pitched by U.S. President Joe Biden.

The messages, shared by a Middle East official familiar with the ongoing negotiations, described the heavy losses Hamas has suffered on the battlefield and the dire conditions in the war-ravaged territory. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to share the contents of internal Hamas communications.

It was not known if this internal pressure was a factor in Hamas' flexibility. But the messages indicate divisions within the group and a readiness among top militants to reach a deal quickly, even if Hamas' top official in Gaza, Yahya Sinwar, may not be in a rush. Sinwar has been in hiding since the war erupted last October and is believed to be holed up in a tunnel deep underground.

U.S. officials declined to comment on the communications.

But a person familiar with Western intelligence who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive matter said the group's leadership understands its forces have suffered heavy losses and that has helped Hamas move closer to a cease-fire deal.

Two U.S. officials say the Americans are aware of internal divisions within Hamas and that those divisions, the destruction in Gaza or pressure from mediators Egypt and Qatar could have been factors in the militant group softening its demands for a deal. The U.S. officials spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the Biden administration's view of the current situation.

The Middle Eastern official shared details from two internal Hamas communications, both written by senior officials inside Gaza to the group's exiled leadership in Qatar, where Hamas' supreme leader, Ismail Haniyeh, is based.

The communication suggested that the war had taken a toll on Hamas fighters, with the senior figures urging the militant's political wing abroad to accept the deal despite Sinwar's reluctance.

Hamas spokesperson Jihad Taha dismissed any suggestions of divisions within the group.

"The movement's position is unified and is crystallized through the organizational framework of the leadership," he said.

The intelligence official showed the AP a transcript of the communications in Arabic, but declined to share specific details about how the information was obtained, or the raw form of the communications.

The official said the communications took place in May and June and came from multiple senior officials inside the group's military wing in Gaza.

The messages acknowledged Hamas fighters had been killed and the level of devastation to the Gaza Strip wrought by the Israeli campaign in the enclave. They also suggest that Sinwar either isn't fully aware

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of the toll of the fighting or isn't fully communicating it to those negotiating outside of the territory.

It was not known whether Haniyeh or any other top officials in Qatar had responded.

Israeli officials declined to comment on the communications. Egypt and Qatar also had no immediate comment.

Egypt and Qatar have been working with the United States to broker a cease-fire and end the devastating nine-month war. After months of fits and starts, talks resumed last week and are scheduled to continue in the coming days.

A deal is still not guaranteed. Netanyahu's office announced over the weekend that "gaps still remain." The U.S. officials said they are cautiously optimistic about the prospects for a cease-fire based on the latest developments, but stressed that numerous efforts had looked promising only to fall through.

Still, the sides appear closer to a deal than they have been in months.

Israel launched the war in Gaza after Hamas' October attack in which militants stormed into southern Israel, killed some 1,200 people — mostly civilians — and abducted about 250. Israel says Hamas is still holding about 120 hostages — about a third of them thought to be dead.

Since then, the Israeli air and ground offensive has killed more than 38,000 people in Gaza, according to the territory's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians. The offensive has caused widespread devastation and a humanitarian crisis that has left hundreds of thousands of people on the brink of famine, according to international officials.

The war in Gaza has prompted international legal scrutiny of Israel's conduct, including a case at the top U.N. court on charges of genocide brought by South Africa and a request for arrest warrants against Netanyahu by the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, who also sought warrants for Hamas leaders.

Both Hamas and Egyptian officials confirmed Saturday that Hamas has dropped a key demand that Israel commit upfront to end the war. Netanyahu has repeatedly rejected this demand, leaving the talks stalled for months.

Instead, the officials, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss ongoing negotiations, said the phased deal would start with a six-week cease-fire during which older, sick and female hostages would be released by Hamas in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners. Talks on a broader deal, including an end to the war, would only begin during this phase, they said.

Netanyahu has vowed to keep fighting until Israel destroys Hamas' military and governing capabilities, even if hostages are freed.

Japan and the Philippines sign a defense pact in the face of shared alarm over China

By JIM GOMEZ and HARUKA NUGA Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — Japan and the Philippines signed a key defense pact Monday allowing the deployment of Japanese forces for joint military exercises, including live-fire drills, to the Southeast Asian nation that came under brutal Japanese occupation in World War II but is now building an alliance with Tokyo as they face an increasingly assertive China.

The Reciprocal Access Agreement, which similarly allows Filipino forces to enter Japan for joint combat training, was signed by Philippine Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro and Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa in a Manila ceremony witnessed by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. It would take effect after ratification by the countries' legislatures, Philippine and Japanese officials said.

Kamikawa called the signing of the defense agreement "a groundbreaking achievement" that should further boost defense cooperation between Japan and the Philippines.

"A free and open international order based on the rule of law is the foundation of regional peace and prosperity," she said. "We would like to work closely with your country to maintain and strengthen this."

Kamikawa and Japanese Defense Minister Minoru Kihara later held talks with their Philippine counterparts on ways to further deepen relations.

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The defense pact with the Philippines is the first to be forged by Japan in Asia. Japan signed similar accords with Australia in 2022 and with Britain in 2023.

Under Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, the Japanese government has taken steps to boost its security and defensive firepower, including a counterstrike capability that breaks from Japan's postwar principle of focusing only on self-defense, amid threats from North Korea and China's growing assertiveness. It's doubling defense spending in a five-year period to 2027 in a move to bolster its military power and make Japan the world's third-biggest military spender after the United States and China.

Many of Japan's Asian neighbors, including the Philippines, came under Japanese aggression until its defeat in World War II and Japan's efforts to bolster its military role and spending could be a sensitive issue. Japan and the Philippines, however, have steadily deepened defense and security ties.

Kishida's moves dovetail with Marcos' effort to forge security alliances to bolster the Philippine military's limited ability to defend Manila's territorial interests in the South China Sea. The busy sea passage is a key global trade route which has been claimed virtually in its entirety by China but also contested in part by the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan.

The United States has also been strengthening an arc of military alliances in the Indo-Pacific to better counter China, including in any future confrontation over Taiwan, and reassure its Asian allies. Japan and the Philippines are treaty allies of the U.S. and their leaders held three-way talks in April at the White House, where President Biden renewed Washington's "ironclad" commitment to defend Japan and the Philippines.

Japan has had a longstanding territorial dispute with China over islands in the East China Sea. Chinese and Philippine coast guard and navy ships, meanwhile, have been involved in a series of tense confrontations in the South China Sea since last year.

In the worst confrontation so far, Chinese coast guard personnel armed with knives, spears and an axe aboard motorboats repeatedly rammed and destroyed two Philippine navy supply vessels on June 17 in a chaotic faceoff in the disputed Second Thomas Shoal that injured several Filipino sailors. Chinese coast guard personnel seized seven navy rifles.

The Philippines strongly protested the Chinese coast guard's actions and demanded \$1 million for the damage and the return of the rifles. China accused the Philippines of instigating the violence, saying the Filipino sailors strayed into what it called Chinese territorial waters despite warnings.

Japan and the United States were among the first to express alarm over the Chinese actions and call on Beijing to abide by international laws. Washington is obligated to defend the Philippines, its oldest treaty ally in Asia, if Filipino forces, ships and aircraft come under an armed attack, including in the South China Sea.

Israeli protesters block highways, call for cease-fire to return hostages 9 months into war in Gaza

By MELANIE LIDMAN and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Marking nine months since the war in Gaza started, Israeli protesters blocked highways across the country Sunday, calling on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to step down and pushing for a cease-fire to bring back scores of hostages held by Hamas.

The demonstrations come as long-running efforts to broker a truce gained momentum last week when Hamas dropped a key demand for an Israeli commitment to end the war. The militant group still wants mediators to guarantee a permanent cease-fire, while Netanyahu is vowing to keep fighting until Israel destroys Hamas' military and governing capabilities.

"Any deal will allow Israel to return and fight until all the goals of the war are achieved," Netanyahu said in a statement Sunday that was likely to deepen Hamas' concerns about the proposal.

Sunday's "Day of Disruption" started at 6:29 a.m., the same time Hamas militants launched the first rockets toward Israel in the Oct. 7 attack that triggered the war. Protesters blocked main roads and demonstrated outside of the homes of government ministers.

Near the border with Gaza, Israeli protestors released 1,500 black and yellow balloons to symbolize those fellow citizens who were killed and abducted.

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Hannah Golan said she came to protest the “devastating abandonment of our communities by our government.” She added: “It’s nine months today, to this black day, and still nobody in our government takes responsibility.”

Palestinian militants killed some 1,200 people in the surprise attack and took 250 others hostage. Israel’s retaliatory offensive has killed over 38,000 Palestinians, according to the territory’s Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians in its count.

About 120 hostages remain captive after more than 100 hostages were released as part of a November cease-fire deal. Israel has already concluded that more than 40 of the remaining hostages are dead, and there are fears that the number will grow as the war drags on.

The United States has rallied the world behind a proposal for a phased cease-fire in which Hamas would release the remaining captives in return for a lasting cease-fire and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza. But Hamas wants guarantees from mediators that the war will end, while Israel wants the freedom to resume fighting if talks over releasing the last batch of hostages drag on.

Israel continues to battle pockets of Palestinian militants across Gaza after months of heavy bombing and ground operations that have devastated the territory’s main cities and displaced most of its population of 2.3 million people, often multiple times. On Sunday, Israel issued new evacuation orders for parts of Gaza City, which was heavily bombed and largely emptied early in the war.

Bodies found with hands tied

The Nasser Hospital in the southern Gaza town of Khan Younis said the bodies of three Palestinians were retrieved from the area of the Kerem Shalom crossing with Israel. A hospital statement said they were handcuffed, and an Associated Press reporter saw one of the bodies with bound hands.

Abdel-Hadi Ghabaen, an uncle of one of the deceased, said they had been working to secure the delivery of humanitarian aid and commercial shipments through the crossing. He said he saw soldiers detain them on Saturday, and that the bodies bore signs of beatings, with one having a broken leg.

The Israeli military said it was looking into the reports.

Thousands of Palestinians have been detained since the start of the war, and many of those who have been released, as well as some Israelis who have worked at detention facilities, say detainees have been tortured and held under harsh conditions. Israeli authorities have denied abusing prisoners.

Israeli airstrikes overnight and into Sunday meanwhile killed at least 13 Palestinians, including the undersecretary of labor in the largely dismantled Hamas-run government.

Ihab al-Ghoussein was among four people killed in a strike on a school-turned-shelter in Gaza City, according to the Civil Defense, a first responders group under the Hamas-run government. Hamas mourned his loss in a statement and said a strike earlier in the war had destroyed his house and killed his wife and daughter.

The Israeli military said it had struck a militant complex “in the area of a school building,” as well as a nearby Hamas weapons-making facility in Gaza City after taking steps to mitigate harm to civilians.

The military separately announced that one of its officers was killed in battle in the southern Gaza town of Rafah, bringing the total number of Israeli soldiers killed to 680 since the start of the war.

Israel trades fire with Hezbollah

The Lebanese militant group Hezbollah said early Sunday that it launched dozens of projectiles toward northern Israel, targeting areas more than 30 kilometers (20 miles) from the border, deeper than most launches. A 28-year-old man was seriously wounded, Israel’s national rescue service reported.

Another attack near the border wounded three people, one of them seriously, according to the Galilee Medical Center. Israeli media reported that the critically wounded individual was an American citizen. There was no immediate confirmation from the army.

Hezbollah began launching rocket and mortar attacks after the outbreak of the war in Gaza. The range and severity of the attacks and Israel’s counterstrikes have escalated in recent weeks, raising fears of an all-out war that would have catastrophic consequences for people on both sides of the border.

Mediators from the United States, Egypt and Qatar have intensified their efforts in the past week to

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broker an agreement between Israel and Hamas. Hezbollah has said it will halt its attacks if there is a cease-fire in Gaza.

The compromise on Saturday by Hamas could lead to the first pause in fighting since November and set the stage for further talks, though all sides still warned that a deal is not yet guaranteed.

Washington's phased deal would start with a "full and complete" six-week cease-fire during which older, sick and female hostages would be released in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners. During those 42 days, Israeli forces would withdraw from densely populated areas of Gaza and allow the return of displaced people to their homes in northern Gaza.

War-weary Palestinians in the Gaza Strip appeared pessimistic, after previous instances in which the two sides appeared to be closing in on a deal.

"We have lived nine months of suffering," said Heba Radi, a mother of six children living in a tent in the central city of Deir al-Balah, where she has been sheltering since they fled their home in Gaza City. "The cease-fire has become a distant dream."

Searing heat wave grills large parts of the US, causes deaths in the West and grips the East

By TY O'NEIL and CHRISTOPHER WEBER Associated Press

DEATH VALLEY, California (AP) — After causing deaths and shattering records in the West over the weekend, a long-running heat wave will again grip the U.S. on Monday, with triple digit temperatures predicted for large parts of the East Coast.

The dangerous temperatures caused the death of a motorcyclist in Death Valley.

The U.S. heat wave came as the global temperature in June was record warm for the 13th straight month and it marked the 12th straight month that the world was 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer than pre-industrial times, the European climate service Copernicus said in an early Monday announcement.

An excessive heat warning, the National Weather Service's highest alert, was in effect for about 36 million people, or about 10% of the population, weather service meteorologist Bryan Jackson said. Dozens of locations in the West and Pacific Northwest tied or broke previous heat records.

A high temperature of 128 F (53.3 C) was recorded Saturday and Sunday at Death Valley National Park in eastern California, where a visitor died Saturday from heat exposure and another person was hospitalized, officials said.

The two visitors were part of a group of six motorcyclists riding through the Badwater Basin area amid scorching weather, the park said in a statement.

The person who died was not identified. The other motorcyclist was transported to a Las Vegas hospital for "severe heat illness," the statement said. Due to the high temperatures, emergency medical helicopters were unable to respond, as the aircraft cannot generally fly safely over 120 F (48.8 C), officials said.

The other four members of the party were treated at the scene.

"While this is a very exciting time to experience potential world record setting temperatures in Death Valley, we encourage visitors to choose their activities carefully, avoiding prolonged periods of time outside of an air-conditioned vehicle or building when temperatures are this high," park Superintendent Mike Reynolds said.

Officials warned that heat illness and injury are cumulative and can build over the course of a day or days.

"Besides not being able to cool down while riding due to high ambient air temperatures, experiencing Death Valley by motorcycle when it is this hot is further challenged by the necessary heavy safety gear worn to reduce injuries during an accident," the park statement said.

Across the desert in Nevada, Las Vegas on Sunday set a record high of 120 F (48.8 C).

Triple-digit temperatures were common across Oregon, where several records were toppled, including in Salem, where on Sunday it hit 103 F (39.4 C), topping the 99 F (37.2 C) mark set in 1960. On the more-humid East Coast, temperatures above 100 degrees were widespread, though no excessive heat advisories

were in effect for Sunday.

"Drink plenty of fluids, stay in an air-conditioned room, stay out of the sun, and check up on relatives and neighbors," read a weather service advisory for the Baltimore area. "Young children and pets should never be left unattended in vehicles under any circumstances."

Heat records shattered across the Southwest

Rare heat advisories were extended even into higher elevations including around Lake Tahoe, on the border of California and Nevada, with the weather service in Reno, Nevada, warning of "major heat risk impacts, even in the mountains."

"How hot are we talking? Well, high temperatures across (western Nevada and northeastern California) won't get below 100 degrees (37.8 C) until next weekend," the service posted online. "And unfortunately, there won't be much relief overnight either."

More extreme highs are in the near forecast, including possibly 130 F (54.4 C) around midweek at Furnace Creek, California, in Death Valley. The hottest temperature ever officially recorded on Earth was 134 F (56.67 C) in July 1913 in Death Valley, though some experts dispute that measurement and say the real record was 130 F (54.4 C), recorded there in July 2021.

Fight with Kash: Trump loyalist mythologizes former president while building his own brand

By ALAN SUDERMAN and JULIET LINDERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Kash Patel was recruiting foot soldiers.

It was a Friday morning in February at one of America's biggest conservative conventions, and Donald Trump's trusted lieutenant was on center stage, pleading with the former president's supporters to help the now presumptive Republican nominee reclaim the White House.

Getting behind Trump was the only way to root out "government gangsters," Patel said, at once referring to the title of his recently published memoir and the entrenched and shadowy cabal of "deep state" operatives he believes are threatening the country.

"That's what it's going to take" to win in November, he told the crowd at the Conservative Political Action Conference in suburban Washington. "An entire army."

Then, draped in a green scarf emblazoned with a "K\$H" logo he once sought to trademark, Patel announced his book's upcoming film adaptation.

A trusted aide and swaggering campaign surrogate who mythologizes the former president while promoting conspiracy theories and his own brand, Patel is poised to take on an influential role in the federal government if Trump wins a second term. Patel has a pedigree that sets him apart from other Trump advisers, and he frequently cites his experience as a public defender, federal prosecutor, top House staffer and national security official to lend credibility to his plan to go after the very intelligence community he could one day help oversee.

There is little daylight between Patel and Trump: Patel has made it clear that he is in lockstep with the former president on most national security issues, including purging government officials deemed disloyal.

Many who worked with Patel before he joined the Trump administration said he was an ambitious if not exceptional lawyer whose quick rise and far-right tilt have left them stunned.

Tom Rooney, a former Republican congressman, worked with Patel on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. He described Patel as a smart and focused staffer, but said he hardly recognizes the man loudly defending the Jan. 6 rioters on far-right podcasts and radio shows.

"It's not the same person that I knew," Rooney said. "But Kash is still relevant and I'm not, so who's the smart one?"

Patel, 44, declined requests for interviews and did not respond to a list of questions. He provided a statement saying he was proud of his public service and blasted The Associated Press for "taking potshots at my private life."

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The Rapid Rise

During Trump's recent criminal trial in New York, Patel was part of a small group of supporters that included Republican lawmakers and Trump family members and accompanied him into court.

After a day's testimony, Patel addressed a throng of reporters outside the courthouse, arguing Trump was the victim of an "unconstitutional circus." His legal career provided the basis for his assertions, he said. But Patel hadn't always wanted to be an attorney. The son of Indian immigrants, Patel grew up in Queens, New York, and had dreamed of becoming a doctor before deciding law was a better course.

After graduating from law school at Pace University, Patel failed to get a job at the prestigious law firms he'd hoped to join. Instead, he became a public defender, and spent nearly nine years in local and federal courts in Miami before joining the Justice Department.

After working there for about three years, Patel was hired as a staffer for the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence led by Rep. Devin Nunes, a fierce Trump ally.

Nunes gave Patel a job running the committee's investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 campaign. Patel ultimately helped author what became known as the "Nunes Memo," a four-page report that detailed how it said the Justice Department had erred in obtaining a warrant to surveil a former Trump campaign volunteer. The memo's release faced vehement opposition from the Justice Department. A subsequent inspector general report identified significant problems with FBI surveillance during the Russia investigation, but also found no evidence that the FBI had acted with partisan motives in conducting the probe.

The memo caught Trump's attention, and soon Patel was working on the National Security Council and would later serve in increasingly influential roles. He was briefly the top adviser to the then-acting director of national intelligence and was tapped in November 2020 to be chief of staff to acting Defense Secretary Christopher Miller.

Patel was interviewed as part of an investigation into the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol, and said the former president "pre-emptively authorized" 10,000 to 20,000 troops to deploy days before the attack. But a Colorado court later found that Patel was "not a credible witness" on the topic.

In November 2022, Patel appeared before a grand jury investigating Trump's retention of classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate after being granted immunity for his testimony.

In his final months in office, Trump pushed the idea of installing Patel as the deputy director at either the FBI or CIA in an effort to strengthen the president's control of the intelligence community.

Trump dropped those plans after CIA Director Gina Haspel threatened to resign and Attorney General Bill Barr argued against such a move. "Patel had virtually no experience that would qualify him to serve at the highest level of the world's preeminent law enforcement agency," Barr wrote in his memoir.

Not everyone feels that way. Michael Sherwin, former acting U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia, who has known Patel since the two worked in Miami, said Patel has earned Trump's respect and that loyalty isn't his only asset, adding that Patel is particularly well versed in issues of national security.

"He is well respected by the Trump inner circle, and he is held in very high regard. His opinion matters," Sherwin said.

Patel has been open about what kind of changes he'd pursue if given the chance. His various proposals include reducing the FBI's footprint in Washington and "dramatically" limiting its authority. He hopes to curb the power of the Justice Department's Civil Division and jettison a Pentagon office that produces classified assessments of long-term trends and risks, arguing it is just a tool of the "deep state."

Patel has said he also intends to aggressively hunt down government officials who leak information to reporters, and change the law to make it easier to sue journalists. During an interview with Steve Bannon in December, Patel said he and others "will go out and find the conspirators not just in government but in the media."

"We're going to come after the people in the media who lied about American citizens who helped Joe Biden rig presidential elections," Patel said, referring to the 2020 presidential election in which Biden, the Democratic challenger, defeated Trump. "We're going to come after you, whether it's criminally or civilly. We'll figure that out. But yeah, we're putting you all on notice."

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Fight with Kash

In Patel's telling, Trump is facing off in a do-or-die battle with Democrats and bureaucrats who helped steal the election, an assertion that has been rejected by federal and local officials, dozens of courts, top former campaign staffers and even Trump's own attorney general. Patel reserves particular disdain for the media, which he has called "the most powerful enemy the United States has ever seen."

Shortly after Trump left office, Patel launched Fight with Kash, an organization that funds defamation lawsuits and peddles a wide variety of merchandise, including branded socks and water bottles, sweat-shirts and baseball hats, a deck of playing cards with Trump as the ace and a bumbling Joe Biden in a jester costume as the king.

The organization has since been rebranded as The Kash Foundation, a nonprofit that purports to support whistleblowers, law enforcement and education in "areas the mainstream media refuses to cover."

Patel has said he won't make money from the foundation and has publicly promised to be transparent about where it directs its resources. Two former FBI agents who accused the bureau of discrimination after their security clearances were revoked over their views of the Jan. 6 insurrection testified before Congress that they received money from Patel.

But the foundation has released few specifics about its finances, and Patel's comments about his organization's expenditures don't appear to align with public records.

Patel said in early 2023 that his charity had distributed nearly \$100,000 the previous year. The charity funded defamation lawsuits, covered the cost of sending kids to camp and provided holiday meals for the needy, Patel said. But the charity filed a report with the IRS a few months later showing it gave away only about \$55,000 in 2022 to unidentified entities.

In his statement to the AP, Patel said his charity is "approaching \$1 million in donations for legal funds, whistleblowers, scholarships, and support for veterans, active-duty soldiers, law enforcement, and communities affected by disasters and violent crime."

On a podcast in 2022, he boasted of having filed several defamation lawsuits, including one against a reporter for The New York Times. But court records show Patel did not take any necessary steps to proceed in that case after filing it in 2019 and it was dismissed two years later.

Such lawsuits suggest a broader strategy pursued by Patel, Trump and others to file often meritless lawsuits that seek to grind down political opponents and journalists, said Mark Zaid, who has represented defendants in such cases, including one funded by Patel's charity.

"They use it to show that they're tough and aggressive to their base to raise money," Zaid said.

The K\$H Brand

Since Trump left office, Patel has benefited from his close association with the former president.

In addition to his 2023 memoir, "Government Gangsters: The Deep State, the Truth, and the Battle for Our Democracy," Patel has published two children's books that lionize Trump. "The Plot Against the King" features a thinly veiled Hillary Clinton as the villain going after "King Donald," while Kash, a wizard called the Distinguished Discoverer, exposes a nefarious plot.

The line between his charitable work and money-making activities isn't clear. Patel promotes "K\$H" branded clothing lines for his nonprofit as well as for a company run by a close associate.

He's also a pitchman for a variety of goods marketed to Trump supporters. One dietary supplement he's promoting claims to be a COVID vaccine "detoxification system" made by a company whose co-founder was a defendant in a class-action lawsuit filed by people who say they were overcharged for Keto diet pills.

"Order this homerun kit to rid your body of the harms of the vax," Patel said in a recent Truth Social post promoting the supplements.

Records show that Patel has earned hundreds of thousands of dollars a year from his own business dealings with Trump-related entities.

He's on the board of Trump Media and Technology Group, which owns Truth Social, and has a consulting contract with the company that pays him \$120,000 a year.

The income from his books, clothing and endorsements is unknown, but his social media feeds show

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a well-traveled Patel attending high-end sporting events like the Super Bowl, Game 7 of the Stanley Cup and a UFC fight, in addition to stumping for Trump around the country.

Patel said in a 2022 podcast appearance that Truth Social was trying to incorporate QAnon, a set of conspiracy theories borne out of the idea that the government is run by a cabal of child predators, "into our overall messaging scheme to capture audiences."

"He should get credit for all the things he has accomplished," Patel said of the anonymous figurehead of the QAnon movement.

Patel has been a featured guest at rallies organized by Trump's former national security adviser Mike Flynn, who has been building a political movement mixing conspiracy theory with Christian nationalist ideas.

He's also joined Trump in defending those who were charged with crimes in connection with the Jan. 6 riot, and is listed as a producer of "And Justice For All," a rendition of the Star Spangled Banner sung by a group of defendants. In a social media post, Patel likened the song, which was briefly #1 on iTunes, to "We Are the World," a single written by Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie in 1985 to benefit Africa.

Trump's leadership PAC has paid Patel more than \$300,000 since the start of last year to serve as a national security adviser to the former president, according to campaign finance records and Truth Social's public filings. The campaign of Rep. Matt Gaetz, a Florida Republican close to Trump, paid Patel \$145,000 for "fundraising consulting" in 2021, campaign finance records show.

Loyal Lieutenant

Experts say the financial benefits of Patel's loyalty could present a potential conflict in a second Trump administration.

Douglas London, a retired CIA officer who briefly overlapped with Patel while working at the White House, expressed doubt that Patel would be willing to deliver hard truths about the consequences of certain policy decisions.

"Trump wants an echo chamber and he'll get that in Kash Patel," he said. "I do not see Kash Patel saying, 'Mr. President, if you do this, this bad thing's going to happen.'"

During his CPAC appearance, Patel left no doubt about the depth of his loyalty to Trump.

"We're blessed by God to have Donald Trump be our juggernaut of justice, to be our leader, to be our continued warrior in the arena," Patel said.

After 10 minutes of praising the former president and blasting the media, intelligence community and Democrats, Patel left the stage and traded his blazer for a Revere Payments hoodie. He went to Bannon's booth for a live episode of "War Room" to discuss the Christian merchant services platform he's marketing.

The notoriously unkempt Bannon, a former Trump adviser who is influential in right-wing politics, joked about Patel's informal attire.

"I've got to, you know, get my stuff out there," Patel replied.

After the interview Patel hustled to the vendor floor, where he whipped off the hoodie and his handlers scrambled to remove flecks of fuzz before putting his blazer back on. Then he was ready — to pose for pictures with fans in front of a booth for a cell phone service he's promoting.

Americans are split over whether Trump should face prison in the hush money case, AP-NORC poll finds

By BILL BARROW and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Americans are about evenly split on whether former President Donald Trump should face prison time for his recent felony conviction on hush money charges, according to a new poll from the AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Among U.S. adults, 48% say the former president and presumptive Republican nominee should serve time behind bars, and 50% say he should not. About 8 in 10 Democrats think Trump should face prison time, while independents are divided. About half, 49%, of independents say he should, and 46% say he should not.

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Most Republicans believe that Trump was mistreated by the legal system and say he should not face jail time. Democrats, conversely, are generally confident that the prosecutors, the judge and members of the jury treated Trump fairly as a defendant.

The results underscore the partisan divide in opinions about the case, which was the first brought against a current or former U.S. president. Both Trump and Democratic President Joe Biden have made the trial central to how they campaign to their respective bases: Biden frequently pointing out that Trump became the first former president to be convicted of a felony; Trump arguing that Democrats orchestrated the case against him for political purposes.

Trump's sentencing was delayed from Thursday, three days before the Republican National Convention opens, to September at the earliest — when early voting in multiple states will already be underway.

"I thought it was all a sham to begin with," said Dolores Mejia, a 74-year-old Republican in Peoria, Arizona, who has been closely following the trial. "I wasn't surprised he got convicted because the court was in New York, a very blue state. ... It seemed like it was thoroughly stacked against him."

A small but notable slice of Republicans have a different view from the rest of their party. The poll found that 14% of Republicans approve of Trump's conviction, while 12% believe he should spend time behind bars.

"I knew he had a big ego and questionable values when I voted for him the first time in 2016, but I thought the mantle of the presidency would be a humbling experience for him, and I was wrong," said Leigh Gerstenberger, a Pennsylvania Republican who said he agreed with jurors' finding in the New York case and believes Trump should spend at least some time behind bars.

"I could not be more disappointed in his conduct both in office and out of office," the 71-year-old retiree said. "There are plenty of Americans who have spent time behind bars for lesser offenses. President Trump should not be treated any differently."

About 4 in 10 U.S. adults are extremely or very confident that Trump has been treated fairly by either the jurors, the judge or the prosecutors. Slightly less than half, 46%, approve of the conviction in the case, in line with an AP-NORC poll conducted in June, while about 3 in 10 disapprove, and one-quarter are neutral.

Some Americans do not believe Trump should be imprisoned but reject his arguments that he's been treated unfairly by the justice system.

"I don't think the particular crime deserves time," said Christopher Smith, a 43-year-old independent in Tennessee. "I see what he did, lying on business records because of an affair, as more of a moral crime," Smith said, explaining that he believes prison should be a punishment for crimes that involve a convicted person actively harming another person.

The poll found that Americans are less divided about another recent high-profile case. Last month, Biden's son, Hunter Biden, was convicted of three felonies in federal court for lying about drug use when purchasing a gun. Six in 10 U.S. adults approve of Hunter Biden's conviction, with much smaller political differences: About 6 in 10 Democrats approve, as do around 7 in 10 Republicans.

About 6 in 10 U.S. adults believe Hunter Biden should be sentenced to serve time in prison because of his conviction in this case, with Republicans slightly more likely than Democrats to agree that prison time is warranted.

The plane is ready, the fundraisers are booked: Trump's VP search comes down to its last days

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The future Republican vice presidential candidate's plane is currently parked in an undisclosed hangar, an empty spot on its fuselage for where a decal featuring his or her name will soon be placed.

Fundraisers have been planned.

All that's left: an announcement from former President Donald Trump on who's his pick.

Senior advisers and longtime allies insist they still don't know who the presumptive GOP nominee will

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choose to join him on the ticket — with many believing the choice is still in flux.

The decision will come at an unprecedented time of upheaval in the presidential race. President Joe Biden and the Democratic Party continue to grapple with his dismal debate performance and the intensifying calls for the 81-year-old president to step aside in favor of a younger candidate.

The Democrats' crisis has given Trump little incentive to change the subject with a VP announcement that would be sure to draw a flurry of attention and focus to his pick.

But Trump will have plenty of opportunities this week to ratchet up the speculation about a process that his team has kept extraordinarily close to the vest.

Opportunities to announce

Trump has two rallies planned. The first is scheduled for Tuesday evening at his golf club in Doral, Florida, near Miami. The primetime scheduling and location would seem to provide an ideal opportunity to unveil his pick if it is Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, a Miami native who is one of his top contenders.

On Saturday he'll travel to the critical battleground state of Pennsylvania for an afternoon rally at the Butler Farm Show. The venue, outside of Pittsburgh, is not far from the border of Ohio, which is home to Sen. JD Vance, another potential pick.

Also said to be on Trump's short list is North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum, who has grown close to the former president since he dropped his own bid for the nomination before voting began.

Trump doesn't need a rally to unveil his pick. He could simply announce the news on his Truth Social platform at any moment between now and the Republican National Convention, which kicks off in Milwaukee on July 15. Or he could wait until the convention opens to make a grand, on-stage curtain reveal reminiscent of his days as the host of the "The Apprentice" reality TV show.

Trump has repeatedly said he intends to unveil his pick just before or during the convention. But he has been coy about his choice.

Late last month, before the debate, Trump told NBC News at a campaign stop in Philadelphia that he'd already made a decision.

"In my mind, yeah," he said.

But less than a week later, he told a local Virginia television station that his decision was still in flux.

"Well I have people in mind. I have so many good people. We have such a deep bench," he said. "But we'll be making a decision sometime early convention or before convention."

The front-runners say they don't know yet

"As President Trump has said himself, the top criteria in selecting a Vice President is a strong leader who could make a great President," Trump adviser Brian Hughes said in a statement he has issued repeatedly. "But anyone telling you they know who or when President Trump will choose his VP is lying unless that person is named Donald J. Trump."

That includes the front-runners for the job.

On CNN's "State of the Union" on Sunday, Rubio said he remained in the dark.

"Look, I've heard nothing, I know nothing, and you probably know more than I do about it," he said. "Donald Trump has a decision to make. He'll make it when he needs to make it. He'll make a good decision. I know for certain that I will be out there over the next three or four months, working on behalf of his campaign in some capacity."

He also dismissed questions about whether he has discussed changing his residence from Florida if he's chosen as "presumptuous." The Constitution bars the president and vice president from hailing from the same state.

"We'll confront those issues when they come," he said. "But we're not there yet. But we will be soon, one way or the other."

On NBC's "Meet the Press," Vance, too, said he has not received news one way or the other: "I have not gotten the call."

"But most importantly," he went on, "we're just trying to work to elect Donald Trump. Whoever his vice president is — he's got a lot of good people he could choose from — it's the policies that worked and the leadership style that worked for the American people. I think we have to bring that back to the White

House, and I'm fighting to try to do that."

A top ally is still pushing for Tim Scott

On CBS's "Face the Nation," Sen. Lindsey Graham, a longtime Trump ally, continued to push for his fellow South Carolinian, Sen. Tim Scott, the only Black Republican in the Senate.

"I don't think he's decided," he said, again making his case for Scott, who he said would be a particularly smart choice if Biden were to be replaced at the top of the ticket by Vice President Kamala Harris, the first Black woman and person of South Asian descent to serve in the office.

If Harris is picked, Graham said, "This is a dramatically different race than it is right now today. I hope people are thinking about that on our side."

Biden has insisted he won't drop out and said only "the Lord Almighty" could get him to change his mind.

Graham commended Trump's other choices at the same time. He called Burgum "solid as a rock" and said Vance "could be a good wingman," but questioned whether the Republican firebrand — who was once a vocal Trump critic but is now one of his fiercest defenders in the Senate — could bring in new states.

Rubio, he noted, has the issue of his residency to contend with, but called him a "very articulate conservative" who could help Trump "enormously." Rubio, the son of Cuban immigrants, also speaks Spanish.

"If I were President Trump, I would make sure I pick somebody that could add value in 2024. Expand the map," Graham said.

Biden's uncertain political future divides Democrats as they return to Capitol Hill

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Deeply torn over President Joe Biden's candidacy, Democratic lawmakers return to Washington at a pivotal moment as they decide whether to work to revive his campaign or edge out the party leader, a make-or-break time for his reelection and their own political futures.

Anxiety is running high as top-ranking Democratic lawmakers are joining calls for Biden to step aside after his dismal public debate performance and defiant response to the uproar. At the same time, some of the president's most staunch supporters are redoubling the fight for Biden's presidency, insisting there is no one better to beat Republican Donald Trump in what many see as among the most important elections of a lifetime.

As lawmakers weigh whether Biden should stay or go, there appear to be no easy answers in sight.

It's a tenuous and highly volatile juncture for the president's party. Democrats who have worked alongside Biden for years — if not decades — and cherished his life's work on policy priorities are now entertaining uncomfortable questions about his political future. And it's unfolding as Biden hosts world leaders for the NATO summit this week in Washington.

Time is not on their side, almost a month from the Democratic National Convention and just a week before Republicans gather in Milwaukee to renominate Trump as their presidential pick. Many Democrats are arguing the attention needs to be focused instead on the former president's felony conviction in the hush money case and pending federal charges in his effort to overturn the 2020 election.

It's what Biden himself might call an inflection point. As he defiantly says he will only step aside if the Lord almighty comes and tells him to, Democrats in the House and Senate are deciding how hard they want to fight the president to change course, or if they want to change course at all.

In an effort to "get on the same page," House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries is convening lawmakers for private meetings before he shows his own preference, according to a person familiar with the situation and granted anonymity to discuss it. He plans to gather Democrats on Monday whose bids for reelection are most vulnerable.

But a private call Sunday of some 15 top House committee members exposed the deepening divide as at least four more Democrats — Rep. Jerrold Nadler of New York, Rep. Jim Himes of Connecticut, Rep. Adam Smith of Washington state and Rep. Mark Takano of California — privately said Biden should step aside.

Nadler, as the most senior ranking member on the call, was the first person to speak up and say that

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Biden should step aside, according to a person familiar with the call who was granted anonymity to discuss it. He did so aware of his seniority and that it would allow others to join him.

Many others on the call raised concerns about Biden's capability and chance of winning reelection, even if they stopped short of saying Biden should step out of the race.

Still other members, including Rep. Maxine Waters of California and Rep. Bobby Scott of Virginia, both leaders in the Congressional Black Caucus, spoke forcefully in support of Biden, as did Rep. Richard Neal of Massachusetts, the top Democrat on the powerful Ways and Means Committee.

And several lawmakers appeared frustrated that leadership was not providing direction or a path forward, according to people familiar with the call. One Democratic lawmaker said regardless of the decision, the situation has to "end now," one of the people said.

Neal said afterward that the bottom line is Biden beat Trump in 2020 and "he'll do it again in November."

The upheaval also is testing a new generation of leaders, headed by Jeffries and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer. Both New Yorkers have refrained from publicly directing lawmakers on a path forward as they balance diverse opinions in their ranks.

Behind the scenes is Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi, who continues to field calls from lawmakers seeking advice about the situation, and is widely viewed as the one to watch for any ultimate decision on Biden's future because of her proximity to the president and vote-counting skills in party politics.

Pelosi spoke up last week, saying Biden's debate performance raised "legitimate" questions he needed to answer, but she has remained supportive of the president. And Biden called her last week when he reached out to other party leaders.

When Biden's prime-time ABC interview on Friday appeared to do little to calm worried Democrats, and some said made the situation worse, Pelosi stepped forward to publicly praise Biden on social media as a "great President who continues to deliver for America's kitchen table." She added, "and we're not done yet!"

Schumer has kept a lower profile throughout the ordeal but will convene Democratic senators Tuesday for their weekly lunch when senators are certain to air many views.

One Democrat, Sen. Mark Warner of Virginia, had intended to gather senators Monday to discuss Biden privately, but a person familiar with his thinking said those conversations will take place in Tuesday's regular caucus luncheon with all Democratic senators.

Another Democrat, Sen. Alex Padilla of California, said it was "time to quit the hand-wringing and get back to door knocking."

Padilla spoke with Biden over the weekend, and urged his campaign to "let Joe be Joe."

"Given the debate, I think the campaign has no choice," Padilla said Sunday, explaining that Biden needs to hold town halls and unscripted events to show voters "the Joe Biden I know, and that most people in American have come to grow and love."

While some deep-pocketed donors may be showing discomfort, strategists working on House and Senate races said they posted record fundraising as donors view congressional Democrats as a "firewall" and last line of defense against Trump.

House Democrats have had some of their better fundraising days yet, including a \$3 million haul last Friday night after the debate at an event with former President Barack Obama and Jeffries in New York City. That's on top of \$1.3 million that rolled into the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee during the debate and its immediate aftermath.

Senate Democrats are also seeing a "surge" of support, according to a national Democrat with knowledge of Senate races.

As Democratic candidates campaign alongside Biden, the advice has been to focus on building their own brands and amplifying the way the work that's done in Congress affects their local districts.

Biden's focus shifts to this week's NATO summit. But questions about his campaign may only intensify

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden will shift this week from focusing on campaigning for reelection to hosting a NATO summit. But that won't quiet the increasingly urgent questions about his precarious political situation now threatening to consume his own party.

European leaders gather in Washington starting Tuesday to celebrating the alliance's 75th anniversary. Biden will attend a series of official events and hold a news conference.

Congress is also heading back into session, meaning there will be face-to-face meetings where Democratic lawmakers can discuss concerns about Biden's ability to stay in the presidential race for its final four months — not to mention handle another term in the White House.

Already, five Democratic lawmakers have said the 81-year-old president should step aside. And several Democratic committee leaders privately say that Biden should bow out of the race. They could add to the public clamor in coming days — even as the Biden campaign, and the president himself, make calls to try to curb further defections.

Vice President Kamala Harris is most frequently mentioned as a possible replacement at the top of the Democratic presidential ticket. But Biden has said repeatedly that he's staying put, and he plans to campaign on Friday in the battleground state of Michigan — which may make internal Democratic Party divisions all the more bitter.

Here's a look at what's ahead for Biden:

NATO summit

Biden will have a chance to look presidential, but it comes with another key test.

The summit will focus on Russia's war with Ukraine, but likely overshadowing all of Biden's other duties during it is a news conference set for Thursday. His performance there will be as closely scrutinized as his ABC interview last week for further signs of frailty or mental struggles after his disastrous debate against Donald Trump late last month.

Also, those gathering for the summit have discussed "Trump-proofing," or safeguarding, NATO against a possible return of Trump to the White House — and those discussions could heat up because of the concerns about Biden's political future.

The gathering unfolds the week before Republicans gather in Milwaukee to formally nominate Trump, who during the debate simply shrugged when Biden asked him if he would "stay in NATO or you're going to pull out of NATO?"

More Democratic defections?

Will more Democratic lawmakers call for Biden to abandon his reelection bid this week? Will those who have done so privately make their stances public? Each day Congress is in session, the possibility that more lawmakers will turn on the president could grow.

Biden says his party is still unequivocally behind him. But that case will get harder to make if the ranks of those who have lost faith in the president swell. The Democratic National Convention opens in Chicago on Aug. 19, but the party has said it will nominate Biden via virtual roll-call before the in-person gathering begins — meaning Democrats face an increasingly tight window to pick a side.

House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries plans on Monday to gather Democrats who are the most vulnerable in seeking reelection. Senate Democrats are planning to talk about Biden's future during a regular caucus luncheon on Tuesday.

The Republican-controlled House Oversight and Accountability Committee, meanwhile, has announced plans to call on Biden's White House physician, Dr. Kevin O'Connor, to appear for a transcribed interview "regarding his medical assessments" of the president. Biden has rejected calls to undergo cognitive testing, saying that he is regularly evaluated medically and that the rigors of being president make his mental and physical acuity clear, which has only focused more attention on O'Connor.

Still a long way to go

Even if Biden is able to quell a potential mutiny within his own party, the four months remaining before Election Day means he will likely have to avoid serious mistakes or gaffes for the duration of the race.

Going long stretches without a major misstep is something he's failed to do over long stretches throughout his political career. But Biden has also built his political persona on resilience.

He won the presidency in 2020 after failed White House bids in 1988 and 2008. Even in 2020, his campaign looked doomed after embarrassing showings in Iowa and New Hampshire. But Biden rebounded with a resounding primary win in South Carolina, and that was enough for most of the Democratic establishment to line up behind him in the days before Super Tuesday and ensure he coasted to the party's nomination and eventual matchup against then-President Trump.

During the 2022 midterm elections, meanwhile, Democrats did far better than expected, holding the Senate and only narrowly ceding the House majority to the Republicans. Biden says he's ready to defy the odds again, even as many in his party seems less and less convinced.

"You've been wrong about everything so far. You were wrong in 2020. You were wrong in 2022," a defiant Biden told reporters traveling with him on Friday. "So, look, we'll see."

Pretrial hearing sets stage for Alec Baldwin's arrival in court in fatal shooting of cinematographer

By MORGAN LEE Associated Press

A New Mexico judge is setting the table for the involuntary manslaughter trial of actor Alec Baldwin in the fatal shooting of a cinematographer on the set of a Western movie.

Judge Mary Marlowe Sommer will consider an array of requests from prosecutors and defense attorneys that could restrict what evidence, testimony and court arguments are heard by a jury. The pretrial hearing Monday in Santa Fe is expected to last much of the day. Baldwin's attorneys have waived his appearance at all hearings before the trial.

Baldwin's trial starts July 9 with jury selection and is scheduled to last 10 days.

Last week, the judge cleared the way for crucial firearms experts for the prosecution to testify about Baldwin's handling of the revolver and whether the gun was functioning properly prior to the fatal shooting.

Defense attorneys have asked the judge to exclude consideration of Baldwin's secondary role as a co-producer on "Rust," arguing it's irrelevant to allegations of negligence, and might confuse jurors. Prosecutors disagree and say it was likely Baldwin's imposing role as a producer that emboldened him to act recklessly and disregard the safety of others in allegedly flouting gun-safety protocols.

The defense team and prosecutors disagree about Baldwin's contractual authority as producer over crew members who dealt with weapons and safety.

Prosecutors argue that a state workplace safety investigation, which found serious violations on set, was incomplete, untrustworthy and should be prohibited from the trial.

Baldwin is charged with a single felony count of involuntary manslaughter punishable by up to 18 months in prison if he's convicted.

Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, the armorer on set, was convicted of involuntary manslaughter in cinematographer Halyna Hutchins' death and sentenced to 18 months in prison. She is appealing the conviction.

In October 2021, Baldwin was rehearsing a cross-draw maneuver with the revolver when the gun went off, killing Hutchins and wounding director Joel Souza.

Baldwin has pleaded not guilty and claims the gun fired accidentally after he followed instructions to point it toward Hutchins, who was behind the camera. Unaware the gun contained a live round, Baldwin said he pulled back the hammer — not the trigger — and it fired.

Baldwin's attorneys also want to bar discussion at trial of actor Brandon Lee's death from a fatal shot to the abdomen while filming a scene from "The Crow" in 1993. In that instance, a makeshift bullet was mistakenly left in a gun from a previous scene and struck Lee while filming a scene that called for using blank rounds.

Prosecutors have agreed not to illicit testimony about "The Crow," but also contend that Baldwin knew about safety risks posed by guns — even when live rounds are not present. Attorneys for Baldwin argue that it was inconceivable that live rounds would wind up on set.

Prosecutors want to exclude a letter signed by crew members that disputes the characterizations of the "Rust" set as chaotic or dangerous prior to the fatal shooting.

Prosecutors also want to exclude from trial the conclusions of the safety investigation into the fatal shooting that places much of the blame on assistant director Dave Halls. Halls has pleaded no contest to negligent use of a firearm and may be called to testify at Baldwin's trial.

Rust Movie Productions paid a \$100,000 fine to resolve violations of state safety regulations that were characterized as "serious" but not willful, under a 2023 settlement agreement. Prosecutors say conclusions of the investigation are easily contradicted by more reliable information.

Baldwin's attorneys say the report can't be ruled out as evidence and that state occupational safety officer Lorenzo Montoya should be allowed to testify at trial.

Another pretrial motion might defuse sniping between the prosecution and defense teams. Prosecutors want the judge to preclude accusations of "prosecutorial misconduct" and "personal attacks."

Prosecutors also want the judge to exclude evidence and arguments designed to garner sympathy for Baldwin, including indications of remorse or the impact of events on his family, arguing that it has no bearing on determining guilt.

Persistent heat wave in the US shatters new records, causes deaths in the West and grips the East

By CHRISTOPHER WEBER and MARGERY A. BECK Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A long-running heat wave that has already shattered previous records across the U.S. persisted on Sunday, baking parts of the West with dangerous temperatures that caused the death of a motorcyclist in Death Valley and held the East in its hot and humid grip.

An excessive heat warning — the National Weather Service's highest alert — was in effect for about 36 million people, or about 10% of the population, said NWS meteorologist Bryan Jackson. Dozens of locations in the West and Pacific Northwest tied or broke previous heat records.

Many areas in Northern California surpassed 110 degrees (43.3 C), with the city of Redding topping out at a record 119 (48.3 C). Phoenix set a new daily record Sunday for the warmest low temperature: it never got below 92 F (33.3 C).

A high temperature of 128 F (53.3 C) was recorded Saturday and Sunday at Death Valley National Park in eastern California, where a visitor died Saturday from heat exposure and another person was hospitalized, officials said.

The two visitors were part of a group of six motorcyclists riding through the Badwater Basin area amid scorching weather, the park said in a statement.

The person who died was not identified. The other motorcyclist was transported to a Las Vegas hospital for "severe heat illness," the statement said. Due to the high temperatures, emergency medical helicopters were unable to respond, as the aircraft cannot generally fly safely over 120 F (48.8 C), officials said.

The other four members of the party were treated at the scene.

"While this is a very exciting time to experience potential world record setting temperatures in Death Valley, we encourage visitors to choose their activities carefully, avoiding prolonged periods of time outside of an air-conditioned vehicle or building when temperatures are this high," said park Superintendent Mike Reynolds.

Officials warned that heat illness and injury are cumulative and can build over the course of a day or days.

"Besides not being able to cool down while riding due to high ambient air temperatures, experiencing Death Valley by motorcycle when it is this hot is further challenged by the necessary heavy safety gear worn to reduce injuries during an accident," the park statement said.

The soaring temperatures didn't faze Chris Kinsel, a Death Valley visitor who said it was "like Christmas

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day for me" to be there on a record-breaking day. Kinsel said he and his wife typically come to the park during the winter, when it's still plenty warm — but that's nothing compared with being at one of the hottest places on Earth in July.

"Death Valley during the summer has always been a bucket list thing for me. For most of my life, I've wanted to come out here in summertime," said Kinsel, who was visiting Death Valley's Badwater Basin area from Las Vegas.

Kinsel said he planned to go to the park's visitor center to have his photo taken next to the digital sign displaying the current temperature.

Across the desert in Nevada, Natasha Ivory took four of her eight children to a water park in Mount Charleston, outside Las Vegas, which on Sunday set a record high of 120 F (48.8 C).

"They're having a ball," Ivory told Fox5 Vegas said. "I'm going to get wet too. It's too hot not to."

Jill Workman Anderson also was at Mount Charleston, taking her dog for a short hike and enjoying the view.

"We can look out and see the desert," she said. "It was also 30 degrees cooler than northwest Las Vegas, where we live."

Triple-digit temperatures were common across Oregon, where several records were topped — including in Salem, where on Sunday it hit 103 F (39.4 C), topping the 99 F (37.2 C) mark set in 1960. On the more-humid East Coast, temperatures above 100 degrees were widespread, though no excessive heat advisories were in effect for Sunday.

"Drink plenty of fluids, stay in an air-conditioned room, stay out of the sun, and check up on relatives and neighbors," read a weather service advisory for the Baltimore area. "Young children and pets should never be left unattended in vehicles under any circumstances."

Heat records shattered across the Southwest

Rare heat advisories were extended even into higher elevations including around Lake Tahoe, on the border of California and Nevada, with the weather service in Reno, Nevada, warning of "major heat risk impacts, even in the mountains."

"How hot are we talking? Well, high temperatures across (western Nevada and northeastern California) won't get below 100 degrees (37.8 C) until next weekend," the service posted online. "And unfortunately, there won't be much relief overnight either."

More extreme highs are in the near forecast, including possibly 130 F (54.4 C) around midweek at Furnace Creek, California, in Death Valley. The hottest temperature ever officially recorded on Earth was 134 F (56.67 C) in July 1913 in Death Valley, though some experts dispute that measurement and say the real record was 130 F (54.4 C), recorded there in July 2021.

Tracy Housley, a native of Manchester, England, said she decided to drive from her hotel in Las Vegas to Death Valley after hearing on the radio that temperatures could approach record levels.

"We just thought, let's be there for that," Housley said Sunday. "Let's go for the experience."

Deaths are starting to mount

In Arizona's Maricopa County, which encompasses Phoenix, there have been at least 13 confirmed heat-related deaths this year, along with more than 160 other deaths suspected of being related to heat that are still under investigation, according to a recent report.

That does not include the death of a 10-year-old boy last week in Phoenix who suffered a "heat-related medical event" while hiking with family at South Mountain Park and Preserve, according to police.

California wildfires fanned by low humidity, high temperatures

In California, crews worked in sweltering conditions to battle a series of wildfires across the state.

In Santa Barbara County, northwest of Los Angeles, the growing Lake Fire had scorched more than 25 square miles (66.5 square kilometers) of dry grass, brush and timber after breaking out Friday. There was no containment by Sunday. The blaze was burning through mostly uninhabited wildland, but some rural homes were under evacuation orders.

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French vote gives leftists most seats over far right, but leaves hung parliament and deadlock

By JOHN LEICESTER, LORI HINNANT and SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — A coalition of the French left won the most seats in high-stakes legislative elections Sunday, beating back a far-right surge but failing to win a majority. The outcome left France, a pillar of the European Union and Olympic host country, facing the stunning prospect of a hung parliament and political paralysis.

The political turmoil could rattle markets and the French economy, the EU's second-largest, and have far-ranging implications for the war in Ukraine, global diplomacy and Europe's economic stability.

In calling the election on June 9, after the far right surged in French voting for the European Parliament, President Emmanuel Macron said turning to voters again would provide "clarification."

On almost every level, that gamble appears to have backfired. According to the official results released early Monday, all three main blocs fell far short of the 289 seats needed to control the 577-seat National Assembly, the more powerful of France's two legislative chambers.

The results showed just over 180 seats for the New Popular Front leftist coalition, which placed first, ahead of Macron's centrist alliance, with more than 160 seats. Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally and its allies were restricted to third place, although their more than 140 seats were still way ahead of the party's previous best showing — 89 seats in 2022.

A hung parliament is unknown territory for modern France.

"Our country is facing an unprecedented political situation and is preparing to welcome the world in a few weeks," said Prime Minister Gabriel Attal, who plans to offer his resignation later in the day.

With the Paris Olympics looming, Attal said he was ready to stay at his post "as long as duty demands." Macron has three years remaining on his presidential term.

Attal made clearer than ever his disapproval of Macron's shock decision to call the election, saying "I didn't choose this dissolution" of the outgoing National Assembly, where the president's centrist alliance used to be single biggest group, albeit without an absolute majority. Still, it was able to govern for two years, pulling in lawmakers from other camps to fight off efforts to bring it down.

The new legislature appears shorn of such stability. When Macron flies to Washington for a summit this week of the NATO alliance, he will leave a country with no clear idea who may be its next prime minister and facing the prospect that the president may be obliged to share power with a politician deeply opposed to his policies.

Still, many rejoiced. In Paris' Stalingrad square, supporters on the left cheered and applauded as projections showing the alliance ahead flashed up on a giant screen. Cries of joy also rang out in Republique plaza in eastern Paris, with people spontaneously hugging strangers and several minutes of nonstop applause after the projections landed.

Marielle Castry, a medical secretary, was on the Metro in Paris when projected results were first announced.

"Everybody had their smartphones and were waiting for the results and then everybody was overjoyed," said the 55-year-old. "I had been stressed out since June 9 and the European elections. ... And now, I feel good. Relieved."

A redrawn political map

Even before votes were cast, the election redrew France's political map. It galvanized parties on the left to put differences aside and join together in the new leftist alliance. It pledges to roll back many of Macron's headline reforms, embark on a massively costly program of public spending and take a far tougher line against Israel because of the war with Hamas.

Macron described the left's coalition as "extreme" and warned that its economic program of many tens of billions of euros in public spending, partly financed by tax hikes for high earners and on wealth, could be ruinous for France, already criticized by EU watchdogs for its debt.

Yet, the New Popular Front's leaders immediately pushed Macron to give the alliance the first chance to form a government and propose a prime minister.

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The most prominent of the leftist coalition's leaders, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, said it "is ready to govern." While the National Rally took more seats than ever, the anti-immigration party with historical links to antisemitism and racism fell far short of its hopes of securing an absolute majority that would have given France its first far-right government since World War II.

"Disappointed, disappointed," said far-right supporter Luc Doumont, 66. "Well, happy to see our progression, because for the past few years we've been doing better."

After the party finished top of the first-round vote last weekend, its rivals worked to dash its hopes of outright victory Sunday, by strategically withdrawing candidates from many districts. That left many far-right candidates in head-to-head contests against just one opponent, making it harder for them to win.

Many voters decided that keeping the far right from power was more important to them than anything else, backing its opponents in the runoff, even if they weren't from the political camp they usually support.

Still, National Rally leader Le Pen, expected to make a fourth run for the French presidency in 2027, said the elections laid the groundwork for "the victory of tomorrow."

"The reality is that our victory is only deferred," she added. But Le Pen's older sister, Marie-Caroline, was among her party's losers Sunday, defeated by a leftist candidate and just 225 votes in her district.

Jordan Bardella, Le Pen's 28-year-old protégé who'd been hoping to become prime minister, rued that the national outcome "throws France into the arms of the extreme left."

A statement from Macron's office indicated that he wouldn't be rushed into inviting a potential prime minister to form a government. It said he was watching as results came in and would wait for the new National Assembly to take shape before taking "the necessary decisions."

Unknown territory

Unlike other countries in Europe that are more accustomed to coalition governments, France doesn't have a tradition of lawmakers from rival political camps coming together to form a majority. France is also more centralized than many other European countries, with many more decisions made in Paris.

The president was hoping that with France's fate in their hands, voters might shift from the far right and left and return to mainstream parties closer to the center — where Macron found much of the support that won him the presidency in 2017 and again in 2022.

But rather than rally behind him, millions of voters seized on his surprise decision as an opportunity to vent their anger about inflation, crime, immigration and other grievances — including Macron's style of government.

The sharp polarization of French politics — especially in this torrid and quick campaign — is sure to complicate any effort to form a government. Racism and antisemitism marred the electoral campaign, along with Russian disinformation campaigns, and more than 50 candidates reported being physically attacked — highly unusual for France.

Texas residents told to expect power outages, flooding as Beryl moves closer to landfall

By MARK VANCLEAVE and VALERIE GONZALEZ Associated Press

MATAGORDA, Texas (AP) — Beryl began lashing coastal Texas with rain and intensifying winds Sunday as residents boarded up windows, left beach towns under evacuation orders and prepared for the powerful storm that has already cut a deadly path through parts of Mexico and the Caribbean.

Beryl remained a tropical storm late Sunday as it churned toward the middle Texas coast but was expected to regain hurricane strength in the warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico before making landfall early Monday, the National Hurricane Center said. The storm was projected to come ashore around Matagorda Bay, an area about 100 miles (161 kilometers) south of Houston.

Tropical storm winds extended 115 miles (185 kilometers) from the center, and the hurricane center warned residents to be prepared for possible flash flooding in parts of middle, upper and eastern Texas as well as Arkansas as the storm gradually turns to the north and then northeast later Monday.

Texas officials warned the storm would cause power outages and flooding but also expressed worry

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that not enough coastal residents and beach vacationers in Beryl's path were heeding warnings to leave.

"One of the things that kind of trigger our concern a little bit, we've looked at all of the roads leaving the coast and the maps are still green," said Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, who is serving as the state's acting governor while Gov. Greg Abbott is travelling overseas. "So we don't see many people leaving."

Along the Texas coast, many residents and business owners took the typical storm precautions, but also expressed uncertainty about the storm's intensity.

In Port Lavaca, Jimmy May fastened plywood over the windows of his electrical supply company and said he wasn't concerned about the possible storm surge. He recalled that his business had escaped flooding in a previous hurricane that brought a 20-foot (6-meter) storm surge.

"In town, you know, if you're in the low-lying areas, obviously, you need to get out of there," he said.

At the nearby marina, Percy Roberts showed his neighbor Ken Waller how to properly secure his boat as heavy winds rolled in from the bay Sunday evening.

"This is actually going to be the first hurricane I'm going to be experiencing," Waller said, noting that he's a little nervous but feels safe following Roberts' lead. "Pray for the best but expect the worst, I guess."

Farther down the coast in Freeport, Mark Richardson, a 64-year-old retiree, said homeowners were busy "trying to tie everything down" and worried that Beryl had people unsure about where along the Texas coast it would make landfall. He spent Sunday morning on the beach and said ocean swells were quickly rising.

"The ocean is getting very angry, very fast," he said.

The earliest storm to develop into a Category 5 hurricane in the Atlantic, Beryl caused at least 11 deaths as it passed through the Caribbean on its way to Texas. The storm ripped off doors, windows and roofs with devastating winds and storm surge fueled by the Atlantic's record warmth.

Three times in its one week of life, Beryl has gained 35 mph (56 kph) in wind speed in 24 hours or less, the official weather service definition of rapid intensification.

Beryl's explosive growth into an unprecedented early whopper of a storm shows the literal hot water of the Atlantic and Caribbean, and what the Atlantic hurricane belt can expect for the rest of the storm season, experts said.

Texas officials warned people along the entire coastline to prepare for possible flooding, heavy rain and wind. The hurricane warning extended from Baffin Bay, south of Corpus Christi, to Sargent, south of Houston.

Beryl lurked as another potential heavy rain event for Houston, where storms in recent months have knocked out power across the nation's fourth-largest city and flooded neighborhoods. A flash flood watch was in effect for a wide swath of the Texas coast, where forecasters expected Beryl to dump as much as 10 inches (25 centimeters) of rain in some areas.

Potential storm surges between 4 and 7 feet (1.22 and 2.13 meters) above ground level were forecast around Matagorda. The warnings extended to the same coastal areas where Hurricane Harvey came ashore in 2017 as a Category 4 hurricane, far more powerful than Beryl's expected intensity by the time the storm reaches landfall.

Those looking to catch a flight out of the area could find that option all but impossible as Beryl closed in. Hundreds of flights from Houston's two major commercial airports had been delayed by midafternoon Sunday and dozens more canceled, according to FlightAware data.

In Corpus Christi, officials asked visitors to cut their trips short and return home early if possible. Residents were advised to secure homes by boarding up windows if necessary and using sandbags to guard against possible flooding.

The White House said Sunday that the Federal Emergency Management Agency had sent emergency responders, search-and-rescue teams, bottled water, and other resources along the coast.

Several coastal counties called for voluntary evacuations in low-lying areas that are prone to flooding. Local officials also banned beach camping and urged tourists traveling on the Fourth of July holiday weekend to move recreational vehicles from coastal parks.

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Beryl earlier this week battered Mexico as a Category 2 hurricane, toppling trees but causing no injuries or deaths before weakening to a tropical storm as it moved across the Yucatan Peninsula.

Before hitting Mexico, Beryl wrought destruction in Jamaica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Barbados. Three people were reported dead in Grenada, three in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, three in Venezuela and two in Jamaica.

Beryl would be the 10th hurricane to hit Texas in July since 1851 and the fourth in the last 25 years, according to Colorado State University hurricane researcher Phil Klotzbach.

While Biden campaigns in Pennsylvania, some Democratic leaders in the House say he should step aside

By COLLEEN LONG, WILL WEISSERT, MARC LEVY and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — President Joe Biden urged his supporters to stay unified during a series of stops in critical Pennsylvania on Sunday, even as some leading congressional Democrats privately suggested it was time for him to abandon his reelection bid because of intensifying questions about whether he's fit for another term.

Addressing a rousing church service in front of stained glass windows bathed in sunshine at Philadelphia's Mount Airy Church of God in Christ, the 81-year-old Biden joked, "I know I look 40" but "I've been doing this a long time."

"I, honest to God, have never been more optimistic about America's future if we stick together," he said.

There and during a subsequent rally with union members in Harrisburg, Biden offered short speeches that touched on familiar topics. But he also left plenty of room for key backers to discuss standing by him. In that way, the Pennsylvania swing seemed meant to showcase support for the president from key political quarters more than proving he's up to four more years.

His party, though, remains deeply divided.

As Congress prepares to resume this week, House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries convened top committee lawmakers Sunday afternoon to assess their views. Several Democratic committee leaders, including Rep. Jerry Nadler of New York, Rep. Jim Himes of Connecticut and Rep. Mark Takano of California, said privately that Biden should step aside, according to two people familiar with the meeting and granted anonymity to discuss it.

But other top Democrats, including members of the influential Congressional Black Caucus, argued just as forcefully that Biden remain the party's choice. The conversation was wide ranging, with the committee leaders sharing various views on the situation, but there was no unanimity on what should be done, the people said.

Biden was personally calling lawmakers through the weekend. He also joined a call with campaign surrogates and reiterated that he has no plans to leave the race. Instead, the president pledged to campaign harder going forward and to step up his political travel, according to two people who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations.

One Democrat the president spoke to, Sen. Alex Padilla of California, said he and others are pushing the Biden campaign to "let Joe be Joe, get him out there."

"I absolutely believe we can turn it around," Padilla told The Associated Press.

Meanwhile, a person familiar with Sen. Mark Warner's thinking said there will be no meeting on Monday to talk about Biden's future, as had been previously discussed, and that those discussions will take place in Tuesday's regular caucus luncheon with all Democratic senators. The person said a private meeting was no longer possible after it was made public that the Virginia Democrat was reaching out to senators about Biden, and that a variety of conversations among senators continue.

Five other, different Democratic lawmakers have already publicly called on Biden to abandon his reelection campaign ahead of November. Meeting this coming week in person means more chances for lawmakers to discuss concerns about Biden's ability to withstand the remaining four months of the campaign — not to mention four more years in the White House — and true prospects of beating Republican presumptive

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nominee Donald Trump.

Biden's campaign team was also calling and texting lawmakers to try to head off more potential defections, while increasingly asking high-profile Biden supporters to speak out on his behalf.

Calls to bow out nonetheless popped up from different directions.

Alan Clendenin, a Tampa city councilman and member of the Democratic National Committee, on Sunday called for Biden to "step aside and allow Vice President Kamala Harris to carry forward his agenda as our Democratic nominee." Director Rob Reiner, who has helped organize glitzy Hollywood fundraisers for Biden in the past, posted on X, "It's time for Joe Biden to step down."

The Democratic convention is fast approaching and Biden's Friday interview with ABC has not convinced some who remain skeptical.

Democratic fundraising bundler Barry Goodman, a Michigan attorney, said he's backing Biden but, should he step aside, he'd throw his support to Harris. That's notable since Goodman was also a finance co-chairman for both of the statewide campaigns of Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, who has also been mentioned as a top-of-the-ticket alternative.

"We don't have much time," Goodman said. "I don't think the president gets out. But if he does, I think it would be Kamala."

There was no such suggestion at Mount Airy, where Pastor Louis Felton likened the president to Joseph and the biblical story of his "coat of many colors." In it, Joseph was sold into slavery in Egypt by his jealous brothers, only eventually to obtain a high place in the kingdom of the pharaoh and have his brothers beg him for assistance without initially recognizing him.

"Never count Joseph out," Felton implored. Then, referring to Democrats who have called on Biden to step aside, he added, "That's what's going on, Mr. President. People are jealous of you. Jealous of your stick-to-itiveness, jealous of your favor. Jealous of God's hand upon your life."

Felton also led a prayer where he said, "Our president gets discouraged. But today, through your holy spirit, renew his mind, renew his spirit, renew his body."

After the church service, Biden visited a campaign office in Philadelphia, where Sen. John Fetterman, a Pennsylvania Democrat who won a tough 2022 race while recovering from a stroke, offered a forceful endorsement.

"There is only one guy that has ever beaten Trump," Fetterman said. "And he is going to do it twice and put him down for good."

Later stepping off Air Force One in Harrisburg, the president was asked if the Democratic Party was behind him and emphatically responded, "Yes."

Joining him at the union event, Rep. Madeleine Dean, also a Pennsylvania Democrat, said that "democracy is on the line. There's one man who understands it it's Joe Biden."

Isabel Afonso, who saw Biden speak in Harrisburg, said she was worried when she saw the president's debate performance, but doesn't think he should drop out of the race and that he can still win. "I know he is old, but I know if something happens to him, a reasonable person will replace him," said Afonso, 63.

At the same event, 73-year-old James Johnson said he knew what it was like to forget things as he's gotten older but called Biden "a fighter." He said replacing the president at the top of the Democratic ticket would only cause confusion.

"I'm talking about lifelong Democrats and people that have been in the Democratic Party for a long time," Johnson said. "They may just decide to jump ship, because of that."

Still, others aren't fully convinced.

Democratic Sen. Chris Murphy of Connecticut told CNN that Biden "needs to answer those questions that voters have" while adding, "If he does that this week, I think he will be in a very good position."

Biden has rejected undergoing independent cognitive testing, arguing that the everyday rigors of the presidency were proof enough of his mental acuity. Yet California Democratic Rep. Adam Schiff told NBC on Sunday that he'd be "happy if both the president and Donald Trump took a cognitive test."

As some Democrats have done, Schiff also seized on Biden suggesting during the ABC interview that

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losing to Trump would be acceptable "as long as I give it my all."

"This is not just about whether he gave it the best college try," Schiff said "but rather whether he made the right decision to run or to pass the torch."

June sizzles to 13th straight monthly heat record. String may end soon, but dangerous heat won't

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

Earth's more than year-long streak of record-shattering hot months kept on simmering through June, according to the European climate service Copernicus.

There's hope that the planet will soon see an end to the record-setting part of the heat streak, but not the climate chaos that has come with it, scientists said.

The global temperature in June was record warm for the 13th straight month and it marked the 12th straight month that the world was 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer than pre-industrial times, Copernicus said in an early Monday announcement.

"It's a stark warning that we are getting closer to this very important limit set by the Paris Agreement," Copernicus senior climate scientist Nicolas Julien said in an interview. "The global temperature continues to increase. It has at a rapid pace."

That 1.5 degree temperature mark is important because that's the warming limit nearly all the countries in the world agreed upon in the 2015 Paris climate agreement, though Julien and other meteorologists have said the threshold won't be crossed until there's long-term duration of the extended heat — as much as 20 or 30 years.

"This is more than a statistical oddity and it highlights a continuing shift in our climate," Copernicus Director Carlo Buontempo said in a statement.

The globe for June 2024 averaged 62 degrees Fahrenheit (16.66 degrees Celsius), which is 1.2 degrees (0.67 Celsius) above the 30-year average for the month, according to Copernicus. It broke the record for hottest June, set a year earlier, by a quarter of a degree (0.14 degrees Celsius) and is the third-hottest of any month recorded in Copernicus records, which goes back to 1940, behind only last July and last August.

It's not that records are being broken monthly but they are being "shattered by very substantial margins over the past 13 months," Julien said.

"How bad is this?" asked Texas A&M University climate scientist Andrew Dessler, who wasn't part of the report. "For the rich and for right now, it's an expensive inconvenience. For the poor it's suffering. In the future the amount of wealth you have to have to merely be inconvenienced will increase until most people are suffering."

Even without hitting the long-term 1.5-degree threshold, "we have seen the consequences of climate change, these extreme climate events," Julien said — meaning worsening floods, storms, droughts and heat waves.

June's heat hit extra hard in southeast Europe, Turkey, eastern Canada, the western United States and Mexico, Brazil, northern Siberia, the Middle East, northern Africa and western Antarctica, according to Copernicus. Doctors had to treat thousands of heatstroke victims in Pakistan last month as temperatures hit 117 (47 degrees Celsius).

June was also the 15th straight month that the world's oceans, more than two-thirds of Earth's surface, have broken heat records, according to Copernicus data.

Most of this heat is from long-term warming from greenhouse gases emitted by the burning of coal, oil and natural gas, Julien and other meteorologists said. An overwhelming amount of the heat energy trapped by human-caused climate change goes directly into the ocean and those oceans take longer to warm and cool.

The natural cycle of El Ninos and La Ninas, which are warming and cooling of the central Pacific that change weather worldwide, also plays a role. El Ninos tend to spike global temperature records and the strong El Nino that formed last year ended in June.

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Another factor is that the air over Atlantic shipping channels is cleaner because of marine shipping regulations that reduce traditional air pollution particles, such as sulfur, that cause a bit of cooling, scientists said. That slightly masks the much larger warming effect of greenhouse gases. That "masking effect got smaller and it would temporarily increase the rate of warming" that is already caused by greenhouse gases, said Tianle Yuan, a climate scientist for NASA and the University of Maryland Baltimore Campus who led a study on the effects of shipping regulations.

Climate scientist Zeke Hausfather, of the tech company Stripes and the Berkeley Earth climate-monitoring group, said in a post on X that with all six months this year seeing record heat, "that there is an approximately 95% chance that 2024 beats 2023 to be the warmest year since global surface temperature records began in the mid-1800s."

Copernicus hasn't computed the odds of that yet, Julien said. The U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration last month gave it a 50% chance.

Global daily average temperatures in late June and early July, while still hot, were not as warm as last year, Julien said.

"It is likely, I would say, that July 2024 will be colder than July 2023 and this streak will end," Julien said. "It's still not certain. Things can change."

Andrew Weaver, a climate scientist at the University of Victoria, said the data show Earth is on track for 3 degrees Celsius of warming if emissions aren't urgently curtailed. And he feared that an end to the streak of record hot months and the arrival of winter's snows will mean "people will soon forget" about the danger.

"Our world is in crisis," said University of Wisconsin climate scientist Andrea Dutton. "Perhaps you are feeling that crisis today — those who live in the path of Beryl are experiencing a hurricane that is fueled by an extremely warm ocean that has given rise to a new era of tropical storms that can intensify rapidly into deadly and costly major hurricanes. Even if you are not in crisis today, each temperature record we set means that it is more likely that climate change will bring crisis to your doorstep or to your loved ones."

Copernicus uses billions of measurements from satellites, ships, aircraft and weather stations around the world and then reanalyzes it with computer simulations. Several other countries' science agencies — including NOAA and NASA — also come up with monthly climate calculations, but they take longer, go back further in time and don't use computer simulations.

Crew of NASA's earthbound simulated Mars habitat emerge after a year

By BRIAN P. D. HANNON Associated Press

The crew of a NASA mission to Mars emerged from their craft after a yearlong voyage that never left Earth.

The four volunteer crew members spent more than 12 months inside NASA's first simulated Mars environment at Johnson Space Center in Houston, coming out of the artificial alien environment Saturday around 5 p.m.

Kelly Haston, Anca Selariu, Ross Brockwell and Nathan Jones entered the 3D-printed habitat on June 25, 2023, as the maiden crew of the space agency's Crew Health and Performance Exploration Analog project.

Haston, the mission commander, began with a simple, "Hello."

"It's actually just so wonderful to be able to say 'hello' to you all," she said.

Jones, a physician and the mission medical officer, said their 378 days in confinement "went by quickly."

The quartet lived and worked inside the space of 1,700 square feet (157 square meters) to simulate a mission to the red planet, the fourth from the sun and a frequent focus of discussion among scientists and sci-fi fans alike concerning a possible voyage taking humans beyond our moon.

The first CHAPEA crew focused on establishing possible conditions for future Mars operations through simulated spacewalks, dubbed "Marswalks," as well as growing and harvesting vegetables to supplement their provisions and maintaining the habitat and their equipment.

They also worked through challenges a real Mars crew would be expected to experience including limited

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resources, isolation and delays in communication of up to 22 minutes with their home planet on the other side of the habitat's walls, NASA said.

Two additional CHAPEA missions are planned and crews will continue conducting simulated spacewalks and gathering data on factors related to physical and behavioral health and performance, NASA said.

Steve Koerner, deputy director of Johnson Space Center, said most of the first crew's experimentation focused on nutrition and how that affected their performance. The work was "crucial science as we prepare to send people on to the red planet," he said.

"They've been separated from their families, placed on a carefully prescribed meal plan and undergone a lot of observation," Koerner said.

"Mars is our goal," he said, calling the project an important step in America's intent to be a leader in the global space exploration effort.

Emerging after a knock on the habitat's door by Kjell Lindgren, an astronaut and the deputy director of flight operations, the four volunteers spoke of the gratitude they had for each other and those who waited patiently outside, as well as lessons learned about a prospective manned mission to Mars and life on Earth.

Brockwell, the crew's flight engineer, said the mission showed him the importance of living sustainably for the benefit of everyone on Earth.

"I'm very grateful to have had this incredible opportunity to live for a year within the spirit of planetary adventure towards an exciting future, and I'm grateful for the chance to live the idea that we must utilize resources no faster than they can be replenished and produce waste no faster than they can be processed back into resources," Brockwell said.

"We cannot live, dream, create or explore on any significant timeframe if we don't live these principles, but if we do, we can achieve and sustain amazing and inspiring things like exploring other worlds," he said.

Science officer Anca Selariu said she had been asked many times why there is a fixation on Mars.

"Why go to Mars? Because it's possible," she said. "Because space can unite and bring out the best in us. Because it's one defining step that 'Earthlings' will take to light the way into the next centuries."

With Argentina's president skipping Mercosur, the future of the trade alliance looks doubtful

By NAYARA BATSCHKE Associated Press

ASUNCIÓN, Paraguay (AP) — The most notable thing about the Mercosur trade bloc's meetings on Sunday in Paraguay was an absence — that of Argentine President Javier Milei.

With the Argentine populist skipping the summit to star at a right-wing rally in Brazil, South America's biggest trade bloc — politically divided, notoriously slow-moving and beset by backsliding — faces an uncertain future. Milei has advocated for pulling Argentina, a leader of the alliance, out of the agreement altogether.

Overseeing preparations for the presidential summit kicking off Monday after initial meetings, President Santiago Peña of Paraguay — the bloc's rotating chair — set low expectations for what would be accomplished.

"I hope that this summit we are going to hold on Monday will be an opportunity to reflect, at a time when Mercosur is clearly not going through its best moment," Peña told journalists from Paraguay's capital of Asunción, where 33 years ago the presidents of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay signed the revolutionary free-trade treaty that soon became Mercosur.

In 1991, as countries across Latin America were shaking off military dictatorships and opening up to free-market ideas, the formation of Mercosur, a customs union of once-estranged neighbors, signaled a regional breakthrough that sent capital surging across borders.

But over recent decades, experts say, protectionism and political volatility have scuppered high hopes. The bloc has put up more barriers than it has broken down. The group's common external tariff is riddled with exceptions. Outside South America, the bloc has struck just two free trade deals, with Egypt and Israel.

The fact that the countries produce similar goods, mostly agricultural, hasn't helped matters. Trade within

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the bloc remains low, hovering around some 15% of its members' total commerce.

"These countries could be 5,000 miles apart and still do the trade that they're doing at the moment," said Christopher Ecclestone, a strategist with investment bank Hallgarten & Company. "It's not the best idea for a free trade area if you're all producing the same things at the same prices."

Politically powerful industries in Brazil and Argentina, the continent's two biggest economies, long have dominated deal-making in the bloc, stirring consternation among their smaller partners that increasingly feel shunted to the sidelines.

In 2021, the bloc hit a new low point when Uruguay announced that it would seek a deal with China outside the bloc. Mercosur's founding treaty forbade such bilateral agreements — extra sales for Uruguay would come at the expense of producers in Brazil and Argentina.

Uruguay's president, Luis Lacalle Pou, who has staked his economic legacy on opening up to China, said Mercosur has held his country "hostage."

Incensed over the breach of solidarity, Brazil announced it would pursue a broader trade deal with China on behalf of the bloc. But diplomats on Sunday reported no progress in those negotiations. Paraguay's strained ties with Beijing over its recognition of Taiwan complicates matters.

For the last 20 years, the bloc has also sought to finalize a free-trade agreement with the European Union to no avail. Argentines have criticized the draft deal as unfairly favoring Brazil. European countries, particularly France, have also opposed it.

"I'll tell you, honestly, I don't see the conditions for it," President Peña said of a prospective deal.

Although there was some optimistic chatter in the conference room Sunday about future deals with the United Arab Emirates, South Korea and Japan, experts have warned that the bloc's reputation for torturous yearslong negotiations could throw cold water on things.

Now, President Milei's shocking decision to skip the annual summit — and a critical chance to thaw relations with his ideological foe, left-wing Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva — has exacerbated internal discord. The last time an Argentine president bailed on a Mercosur meeting was in 2001, when then-President Fernando de la Rúa had the excuse of an unprecedented financial disaster.

Although libertarian President Milei advocates free trade, he has bashed Mercosur as "defective," a challenge to his free-market overhaul of Argentina's spiraling economy.

Under his left-leaning Peronist predecessors — as left-wing political parties dominated other Latin American countries — Mercosur took on a political dimension, a sort of rival project to Washington's free trade agenda.

With Milei shattering that consensus, it remains unclear whether other countries will follow Argentina's example. Uruguay holds presidential elections in October.

"This kind of attitude, previously from Brazil (under hard-right former President Jair Bolsonaro) and now from Argentina, weakens Mercosur as a whole," said Juan Gabriel Tokatlian, professor of international relations at the University Torcuato Di Tella in Buenos Aires.

Of Milei's absence, he added: "This is a serious problem."

Argentina's top diplomat on Sunday chimed in during meetings with thinly veiled criticism, going so far as to raise the possibility of the bloc breaking apart.

"Argentina is promoting a new foreign economic policy, strategically focused on freedom," Argentine Foreign Minister Diana Mondino told her counterparts in Paraguay. "If it's not possible to advance as Mercosur, let's think about the possibility of having bilateral agreements."

Brazilian Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira shot back that he still places stock in regional cooperation to achieve prosperity. "We must work constantly and constructively to strengthen and not to diminish Mercosur's institutions," he said.

Even as critics call Mercosur a relic of the past, the bloc is growing for the first time in years. During Monday's summit, presidents will ratify Bolivia as the fifth full member of the alliance.

"It means being part of an important space for regional integration," said socialist President Luis Arce of Bolivia ahead of his Paraguay visit, his first foreign trip since Bolivia's alleged military coup attempt.

Claims by Milei that President Arce himself orchestrated the coup — which he repeated onstage before a cheering crowd in southern Brazil Sunday — have sparked a political firestorm.

Argentine President Milei heads to CPAC in Brazil, snubbing Lula and escalating a political feud

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — Given the choice between a far-right convention to bash his enemies and a presidential summit to discuss regional trade policy, Argentine President Javier Milei preferred the stadium packed with cheering fans.

The libertarian leader on Sunday strode onto the stage of Brazil's CPAC, an extension of the conservative political action conference, to a soundtrack of heavy metal rock. Basking in his cult-like following, Milei rhythmically threw his hands up in the air, chanting, "Freedom!" as the audience hooted and pumped their fists.

Before delivering his go-to manifesto about the evils of socialism and virtues of the free market, Milei gave a hearty hug to Brazil's hard-right former President Jair Bolsonaro, who just days earlier was indicted by federal police in a scheme to embezzle Saudi diamonds.

"My friend Jair Bolsonaro is suffering judicial persecution," Milei said onstage from the conference in Brazil's southern city of Balneario Camboriu.

In skipping the Mercosur trade bloc summit in Paraguay and publicly backing Bolsonaro — who also stands accused of attempting to subvert Brazil's 2022 election result — Milei delivered another harsh rebuke to Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, escalating a risky feud with his country's biggest trading partner.

Apparently aware of those stakes, Milei made no mention of Lula in his speech Sunday after months of branding the leftist leader a "communist," calling him "corrupt" and refusing to deal with him. Local media was awash with reports citing Brazilian diplomats Sunday that they were considering the unprecedented move of pulling the Brazilian ambassador from Buenos Aires if Milei doubled down on his insults of the president while in Brazil.

When the crowd began shouting, "Lula, you thief, your place is in prison!" Milei allowed himself a quiet smile before returning to his speech.

"The winds of change are blowing in the world," he said. "The ideas of impoverishing socialism have failed and people know it."

Milei's photo-ops with disgraced ex-President Bolsonaro — shaking hands in front of their respective national flags as though they were counterparts — marked the latest example of Milei's provocative foreign policy, courting the global spotlight through friendships with hard-right allies rather than following diplomatic convention.

The night before, Bolsonaro opened the Brazilian CPAC with a fiery speech declaring his desire to see former U.S. President Donald Trump return to the White House next year. He and Milei were then spotted together in a downtown hotel lobby littered with drained wine glasses, watching Uruguay kick Brazil out of the 2024 Copa America.

Since the irascible Milei rode to power last December on a promise to fix Argentina's worst economic crisis in two decades, relations between the long-time allies and commodity powerhouses have rapidly deteriorated.

The ideological enemies crossed paths for the first time at the Group of Seven summit last month in Italy, where their efforts to avoid each other as much as physically possible grabbed local headlines. As their war of words intensified in recent weeks, Lula demanded an apology from Milei's government.

Experts say that mingling on the sidelines of the South American trade bloc meeting on Monday would have offered Milei a low-stakes opportunity to defuse tensions with Brazil, Latin America's biggest economy with a population of some 200 million.

Brazil buys nearly a sixth of Argentina's exports, supplies most of Argentina's auto industry and backs its neighbor's bids to get badly needed aid from International Monetary Fund.

Instead, Milei has doubled down on a foreign policy gamble that experts have criticized as misguided.

"He seems to be shooting himself in the foot," Michael Shifter, a scholar of Latin America at the Inter-

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American Dialogue in Washington, said of Milei. "It's shocking and counterproductive for him to thumb his nose at Lula in this way because there could be a lot of cost for Argentina, that could affect his ability to carry out his policies."

The president's ideologically driven strategy set off a political storm earlier this year in Spain, the second-largest foreign investor in Argentina, as Milei shunned meetings with the socialist government of Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez and instead gave a similar speech lambasting socialism at a far-right rally organized by the country's Vox Party.

The snub spiraled into a diplomatic crisis between the historic allies when Milei called Sánchez's wife corrupt and Spain pulled its ambassador from Buenos Aires.

Despite five trips to the United States since taking office, Milei has yet to enter the White House. But he has hugged Trump at CPAC in Washington, bonded over his love of free markets in Texas with billionaire Tesla executive Elon Musk and met top tech CEOs in Silicon Valley.

"He wants to present himself as a rock star of international politics which does generate admiration in some sectors of Argentina," said Fabio Rodriguez, director at Buenos Aires-based consultancy M&R Asociados. "But already polls indicate that this may be changing, that people are seeing this as a liability, feeling abandoned in the sense that their president spends his time on tour while things are not improving on a daily basis."

Pressures are building in Argentina, where annual inflation nears 300% and the local currency last week touched a historic low of 1,430 pesos per dollar on the black market, where Argentines sell their rapidly depreciating pesos. The government this week revised its own growth projections, saying it expected the economy to contract by more than 3% this year.

A US appeals court will review its prior order keeping banned books on shelves in a Texas county

By KEVIN MCGILL Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — A federal appeals court in New Orleans is taking another look at its own order requiring a Texas county to keep eight books on public library shelves that deal with subjects including sex, gender identity and racism.

Llano County officials had removed 17 books from its shelves amid complaints about the subject matter. Seven library patrons claimed the books were illegally removed in a lawsuit against county officials. U.S. District Judge Robert Pitman ruled last year that the books must be returned. Attorneys for Llano County say the books were returned while they appeal Pittman's order.

While the library patrons say removing the books constitutes an illegal government squelching of viewpoints, county officials have argued that they have broad authority to decide which books belong on library shelves and that those decisions are a form of constitutionally protected government speech.

On June 6, a panel of the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals split three ways on the case, resulting in an order that eight of the books had to be kept on the shelves, while nine others could be kept off.

That order was vacated Wednesday evening after a majority of the 17-member court granted Llano County officials a new hearing before the full court. The order did not state reasons and the hearing hasn't yet been scheduled.

In his 2023 ruling, Pitman, nominated to the federal bench by former President Barack Obama, ruled that the library plaintiffs had shown Llano officials were "driven by their antipathy to the ideas in the banned books." The works ranged from children's books to award-winning nonfiction, including "They Called Themselves the K.K.K.: The Birth of an American Terrorist Group," by Susan Campbell Bartoletti; and "It's Perfectly Normal: Changing Bodies, Growing Up, Sex and Sexual Health," by Robie Harris.

Pitman was largely upheld by the 5th Circuit panel that ruled June 6. The main opinion was by Judge Jacques Wiener, nominated to the court by former President George H. W. Bush. Wiener said the books were clearly removed at the behest of county officials who disagreed with the books' messages.

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Judge Leslie Southwick, a nominee of former President George W. Bush, largely agreed but said some of the removals might stand a court test as the case progresses, noting that some of the books dealt more with "juvenile, flatulent humor" than weightier subjects.

Judge Stuart Kyle Duncan, a nominee of former President Donald Trump, dissented fully, saying his colleagues "have appointed themselves co-chairs of every public library board across the Fifth Circuit."

The circuit covers federal courts in Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas.

The decision to rehear the case was a victory for Llano County, whose lawyers argued that there were numerous errors in the June 6 opinion, including the incorrect claim that the books had not been returned the shelves pending appeals.

'Despicable Me 4' debuts with \$122.6M as boom times return to the box office

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — After a historically bad first half of the year, the box office is suddenly booming.

"Despicable Me 4," the Illumination Animation sequel, led the way over the holiday weekend with \$75 million in ticket sales Friday through Sunday and \$122.6 million since opening on Wednesday, according to studio estimates Sunday.

The Independence Day holiday weekend haul for the Universal Pictures release further extends the considerable box-office reign of the Minions, arguably the most bankable force in movies today. And it also kept a summer streak going for Hollywood.

Though overall ticket sales were down more than 40% from levels prior to the COVID 19 pandemic, heading into the summer moviegoing season, theaters have lately seen a succession of hits. After Sony's "Bad Boys: Ride or Die" outperformed expectations, Pixar's "Inside Out 2" rapidly cleared \$1 billion in ticket sales worldwide, making it the first release since "Barbie" to reach that mark. Last weekend, the Paramount prequel "A Quiet Place: Day One" also came in above expectations.

With "Deadpool & Wolverine" tracking for a \$160 million launch later this month, Hollywood's summer is looking up.

"If you look at the mood of the industry about eight weeks ago, very different than today," says Paul Dergarabedian, senior media analyst for Comscore. "The song says what a difference a day makes. What a difference a month has made."

It helps to have the Minions at your disposal. Since first debuting in the 2010 original "Despicable Me," each entry of the franchise — including two sequels and two "Minions" spinoffs — has been seemingly guaranteed to gross around \$1 billion. The four previous movies all made between \$939 million (2022's "Minions: Rise of Gru") and \$1.26 billion (2015's "Minions") globally.

That run has helped give Illumination founder and chief executive Chris Meledandri one of the most enviable track records in Hollywood. "Despicable Me 4," directed by Chris Renaud and Patrick Delage, returns the voice cast led by Steve Carell and Kristen Wiig and doubles down on more Minion mayhem. Reviews (54% fresh on Rotten Tomatoes) weren't particularly good for the latest installment, which includes a witness protection plot and a group of Minions transformed into a superhero squadron. But in their 12-year run, little has slowed down the Minions.

"This is one of the most beloved franchises, quite frankly, in the history of film, and certainly animation," said Jim Orr, distribution chief for Universal. "Chris Meledandri and Illumination have their finger on the pulse of what families and audiences around the world want to see."

Family movies are powering the box office. "Despicable Me 4" performed strongly despite the still considerable drawing power of "Inside Out 2." In its fourth weekend of release, the Pixar sequel added another \$30 million domestically and \$78.3 million overseas.

"Inside Out 2," with \$1.22 billion in ticket sales thus far, is easily the year's biggest hit and fast climbing up the all-time ranks for animated releases. It currently ranks as the No. 5 animated release worldwide.

Instead of cannibalizing the opening weekend for "Despicable Me 4," "Inside Out 2" may have helped

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get families back in the habit of heading to theaters.

"What happened, I think, is the release calendar finally settled into a nice rhythm," said Dergarabedian, referencing the jumbled movie schedule from last year's strikes. "It's all about momentum."

The continued strong sales for "Inside Out 2" were enough to put the film in second place for the domestic weekend. Last week's top new film, "A Quiet Place: Day One," slid to third with \$21 million in its second weekend, with another \$21.1 million from overseas theaters. That was a steep decrease of 60%, though the Paramount prequel has amassed \$178.2 million worldwide in two weeks.

The run of hits has caused some studios to boost their forecasts for the summer movie season. Heading into the most lucrative season at theaters, analysts were predicting a \$3 billion summer, down from the more typical \$4 billion mark. Now, closer to \$3.4 billion appears likely.

The weekend's other top new release was Ti West's "MaXXXine," the third in a string of slasher films from A24 starring Mia Goth. In 2,450 locations, "MaXXXine" collected \$6.7 million in ticket sales, a franchise best. The film, which follows "X" and "Pearl" (both released in 2022), stars Goth as a 1980s Hollywood starlet being hunted by a killer known as the Night Stalker.

Angel Studios, which last year released the unexpected summer hit "Sound of Freedom," struggled to find the same success with its latest Christian film, "Sound of Hope: The Story of Possum Trot." It debuted with \$3.2 million.

Kevin Costner's big-budget gamble, "Horizon: An American Saga," didn't do much to turn around its fortunes in its second weekend. The first chapter in what Costner hopes will be a four-part franchise – including a chapter two Warner Bros. will release in August – earned \$5.5 million in its second weekend. The film, which cost more than \$100 million to make, has grossed \$22.2 million in two weeks.

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

1. "Despicable Me 4," \$75 million.
2. "Inside Out 2," \$30 million.
3. "A Quiet Place Day One," \$21 million.
4. "MaXXXine," \$6.7 million.
5. "Bad Boys: Ride or Die," \$6.5 million.
6. "Horizon: An American Saga, Chapter 1," \$5.5 million.
7. "Sound of Hope: The Story of Possum Trot," \$3.2 million.
8. "Kaiki 2898," \$1.8 million.
9. "The Bikeriders," \$1.3 million.
10. "Kinds of Kindness," \$860,000.

Scammers are swiping billions from Americans every year. Worse, most crooks are getting away with it

By MICHAEL RUBINKAM Associated Press

The scammers are winning.

Sophisticated overseas criminals are stealing tens of billions of dollars from Americans every year, a crime wave projected to get worse as the U.S. population ages and technology like AI makes it easier than ever to perpetrate fraud and get away with it.

Internet and telephone scams have grown "exponentially," overwhelming police and prosecutors who catch and convict relatively few of the perpetrators, said Kathy Stokes, director of fraud prevention at AARP's Fraud Watch Network.

Victims rarely get their money back, including older people who have lost life savings to romance scams, grandparent scams, technical support fraud and other common grifts.

"We are at a crisis level in fraud in society," Stokes said. "So many people have joined the fray because it is pretty easy to be a criminal. They don't have to follow any rules. And you can make a lot of money,

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and then there's very little chance that you're going to get caught."

A recent case from Ohio, in which an 81-year-old man was targeted by a scammer and allegedly responded with violence, illustrates the law enforcement challenge.

Police say the man fatally shot an Uber driver after wrongly assuming she was in on a plot to extract \$12,000 in supposed bond money for a relative. The driver fell victim to the same scammer, dispatched to the home midway between Dayton and Columbus to pick up a package for delivery, according to authorities.

Homeowner William Brock was charged with murder in the fatal March 25 shooting of Lo-Letha Hall, but the scammer who threatened Brock over the phone and set the tragic chain of events in motion remains on the loose more than three months later.

Brock pleaded not guilty, saying he was in fear for his life.

Advantage scammers

Online and telephone rackets have become so commonplace that law enforcement agencies and adult protective services don't have the resources to keep up.

"It's a little bit like drinking from a fire hose," said Brady Finta, a former FBI agent who supervised elder fraud investigations. "There's just so much of it, logistically and reasonably, it's almost impossible to overcome right now."

Gifts also can be difficult to investigate, particularly ones that originate overseas, with stolen funds quickly converted into hard-to-track cryptocurrency or siphoned into foreign bank accounts.

Some police departments don't take financial scams as seriously as other crime and victims wind up discouraged and demoralized, according to Paul Greenwood, who spent 22 years prosecuting elder financial abuse cases in San Diego.

"There's a lot of law enforcement who think that because a victim sends money voluntarily through gift cards or through wire transfers, or for buying crypto, that they're actually engaging in a consensual transaction," said Greenwood, who travels the country teaching police how to spot fraud. "And that is a big mistake because it's not. It's not consensual. They've been defrauded."

Federal prosecutors typically don't get involved unless the fraud reaches a certain dollar amount, Greenwood said.

The U.S. Justice Department says it does not impose a blanket monetary threshold for federal prosecution of elder financial abuse. But it confirmed that some of the 93 U.S. attorneys' offices nationwide may set their own thresholds, giving priority to cases in which there are more victims or greater financial impact. Federal prosecutors file hundreds of elder fraud and abuse cases annually.

The Federal Trade Commission says the "vast majority" of frauds go unreported. Often, victims are reluctant to come forward.

A 74-year-old woman recently charged with robbing a credit union north of Cincinnati was the victim of an online scam, according to her family. Authorities say they believe the woman was preyed on by a scammer, yet there is no record she made a formal police report.

"These people are very good at what they do, and they're very good at deceiving people and prying money out of them," said Fairview Township, Ohio, police Sgt. Brandon McCroskey, who investigated the robbery. "I've seen people almost want to fist fight the police and bank tellers because they ... believe in their mind that they need to get this money out."

A devastating scheme

Older people hold more wealth as a group and present a ripe target for scammers. The impact can be devastating since many of these victims are past their working years and don't have much time to recoup losses.

Elder fraud complaints to the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center rose by 14% last year, with losses increasing by 11% to \$3.4 billion, according to a recent FBI report.

Other estimates put the annual loss much higher.

A 2023 AARP study calculated that Americans over 60 lose \$28.3 billion each year to fraud. The Federal Trade Commission, seeking to account for unreported losses, estimated fraudsters stole a staggering \$137 billion in 2022, including \$48 billion from older adults. The authors of that study acknowledged a "consid-

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erable degree of uncertainty.”

In San Diego, 80-year-old William Bortz said criminals stole his family’s nest egg of almost \$700,000 in an elaborate scheme involving a nonexistent Amazon order, a fake “refund processing center” in Hong Kong, doctored bank statements and an instruction that Bortz needed to “synchronize bank accounts” in order to get his money back.

Bortz’s scammer was relentless and persuasive, harassing him with dozens of phone calls and, at one point, taking control of his computer.

Even though he was the victim of a crime, Bortz struggles with self-blame.

“I understand now why so much elder abuse fraud is never reported. Because when you look back at it, you think, ‘How could I have been so stupid?’” said Bortz, who retired after a career in banking, financial services and real estate.

His daughter, Ave Williams, said local police and the FBI were diligent in trying to track down the overseas scammer and recover the money, but ran into multiple dead ends. The family blames Bortz’s bank, which Williams said ignored multiple red flags and facilitated several large wire transfers by her father over the course of eight days. The bank denied wrongdoing and the family’s lawsuit against it was dismissed.

“The scammers are getting better,” Williams said. “We need our law enforcement to be given the tools they need, and we need our banks to get better because they are the first line of defense.”

The Justice Department contends industry needs to do more, saying the U.S. can’t prosecute its way out the problem.

“Private industry — including the tech, retail, banking, fintech, and telecommunications sectors — must make it harder for fraudsters to defraud victims and harder to launder victim proceeds,” the agency said in a statement to The Associated Press.

A way forward

Banking industry officials told a Senate subcommittee in May they are investing heavily in new technologies to stop fraud, “and some hold great promise.” The American Bankers Association says it’s working on a program to coordinate real-time communication among banks to better flag suspicious activity and reduce the flow of stolen funds.

But industry officials said the banks cannot singlehandedly prevent fraud. They said the U.S. needs an overarching national strategy to combat scammers, calling the federal government’s current efforts disjointed and uncoordinated.

Law enforcement agencies and industry need to join forces to fight fraud more quickly and efficiently, said Finta, the former FBI agent, who launched a nonprofit called the National Elder Fraud Coordination Center to cultivate better cooperation between law enforcement and major corporations like Walmart, Amazon and Google.

“There’s very, very smart people and there’s very powerful, wealthy companies that want this to stop,” he said. “So we do have the ability, I think, to make a greater impact and to help out our brothers and sisters in law enforcement that are struggling with this tsunami of fraud.”

To a defiant Biden, the 2024 race is up to the voters, not to Democrats on Capitol Hill

By COLLEEN LONG, ZEKE MILLER and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — To a defiant President Joe Biden, the 2024 election is up to the public — not the Democrats on Capitol Hill. But the chorus of Democratic voices calling for him to step aside is growing, from donors, strategists, lawmakers and their constituents who say he should bow out.

The party has not fallen in line behind him even after the events that were set up as part of a blitz to reset his imperiled campaign and show everyone he wasn’t too old to stay in the job or to do it another four years.

On Saturday, a fifth Democratic lawmaker said openly that Biden should not run again. Rep. Angie Craig of Minnesota said that after what she saw and heard in the debate with Republican rival Donald Trump,

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and Biden's "lack of a forceful response" afterward, he should step aside "and allow for a new generation of leaders to step forward."

Craig posted one of the Democrats' key suburban wins in the 2018 midterms and could be a barometer for districts that were vital for Biden in 2020.

With the Democratic convention approaching and just four months to Election Day, neither camp in the party can much afford this internecine drama much longer. But it is bound to drag on until Biden steps aside or Democrats realize he won't and learn to contain their concerns about the president's chances against Trump.

There were signs party leaders realize the standoff needs to end. Some of the most senior lawmakers, including Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi and Rep. James Clyburn, were now publicly working to bring the party back to the president. Pelosi and Clyburn had both raised pointed questions about Biden in the aftermath of the debate.

"Biden is who our country needs," Clyburn said late Friday after Biden's interview with ABC aired.

On Saturday, Biden's campaign said the president joined a biweekly meeting with all 10 of the campaign's nation co-chairs to "discuss their shared commitment to winning the 2024 race." Clyburn was among them.

But the silence from most other House Democrats on Saturday was notable, suggesting that lawmakers are not all being convinced by what they saw from the president. More House Democrats are likely to call for Biden to step aside when lawmakers return to Washington at the start of the week.

Biden had no public schedule Saturday, as he and aides stepped back from the fervor over the past few days. But the president will head out campaigning again on Sunday in Philadelphia, intent on putting the debate behind him. And this coming week, the U.S. is hosting the NATO summit and the president is to hold a news conference.

Vice President Kamala Harris campaigned Saturday in New Orleans, but she steered clear of questions about whether Biden should step away.

The president's ABC interview on Friday night — billed as an effort to get the campaign back on track — stirred carefully worded expressions of disappointment from the party's ranks, and worse from those who spoke anonymously. Ten days into the crisis moment of the Biden-Trump debate, Biden is dug in.

Even within the White House there were concerns the ABC interview wasn't enough to turn the page.

Campaign manager Julie Chavez Rodriguez has been texting lawmakers and administration officials are encouraging them not to go public with their concerns about the race and the president's electability, according to a Democrat granted anonymity to discuss the situation.

Democrats are wrestling over what they see and hear from the president but are not at all certain about a path forward. They were particularly concerned that Biden suggested that even if he were to be defeated in a rematch with Trump, he would know that he gave it his all. That seemed an insufficient response.

"A lot can change in the next 72 to 96 hours, because that's what happens nowadays," Hawaii Gov. Josh Green said Saturday. "You know, four months is an eternity in today's political world. I'm not worried about making sure we have a great ticket if the president chose some other road."

But Green said he also wants to "respect the president and give him the time to make this decision. And if he decides to be our nominee, he's it. And we'll go all in against Mr. Trump because he doesn't represent the right values for our people."

As Biden's camp encourages House lawmakers to give the president the chance to show what he can do, one Democratic aide said the Friday interview didn't help and in fact made things worse. The aide expects more Democrats will likely be calling on Biden to step aside.

Democratic leaders in the House and Senate, without breaking with Biden at this point, are pulling together meetings with members in the next few days to discuss options. Many lawmakers are hearing from constituents at home and fielding questions. One senator was working to get others together to ask him to step aside.

Following the interview, a Democratic donor reported that many of the fellow donors he spoke with were furious, particularly because the president declined to acknowledge the effects of his aging. Many of those donors are seeking a change in leadership at the top of the ticket, said the person, who spoke

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to AP on condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations.

Biden roundly swatted away calls Friday to step away from the race, telling voters at a Wisconsin rally, reporters outside Air Force One and ABC's George Stephanopoulos that he was not going anywhere.

"Completely ruling that out," he told reporters at the rally.

Biden dismissed those who were calling for his ouster, instead saying he'd spoken with 20 lawmakers and they had all encouraged him to stay in the race.

Concern about Biden's fitness for another four years has been persistent. In an August 2023 poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, fully 77% of U.S. adults said Biden was too old to be effective for four more years. Not only did 89% of Republicans say that, but so did 69% of Democrats. His approval rating stands at 39% in the most recent AP-NORC poll.

Biden has dismissed the polling, citing as evidence his 2020 surge to the nomination and win over Trump, after initially faltering, and the 2022 midterm elections, when many expected Republicans would sweep but they didn't, in part over the issue of abortion rights.

"I don't buy that," when he was reminded that he was behind in recent polls. "I don't think anybody's more qualified to be president or win this race than me."

At times, Biden rambled during the interview, which ABC said aired in full and without edits. Asked how he might turn the race around, Biden argued that one key would be large and energetic rallies like the one he held Friday in Wisconsin. When reminded that Trump routinely draws larger crowds, the president laid into his opponent.

"Trump is a pathological liar," Biden said, accusing Trump of bungling the federal response to the COVID pandemic and failing to create jobs. "You ever see something that Trump did that benefited someone else and not him?"

Republicans, though, are squarely behind their candidate, and support for Trump, who at 78 is three years younger than Biden, has been growing.

And that's despite Trump's 34 felony convictions in a hush money trial, that he was found liable for sexually abusing advice columnist E. Jean Carroll in 1996, and that his businesses were found to have engaged in fraud.

A Ukrainian drone triggers warehouse explosions in Russia as a war of attrition grinds on

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A village in a border region of western Russia was evacuated Sunday following a series of explosions after debris from a downed Ukrainian drone set fire to a nearby warehouse, local officials said.

Social media footage appeared to show rising clouds of black smoke in the Voronezh region while loud explosions could be heard in succession.

Gov. Aleksandr Gusev said that falling wreckage triggered the "detonation of explosive objects." No casualties were reported, but residents of a nearby village in the Podgorensky district were evacuated, he said. Roads were also closed with emergency services, military and government officials working at the scene.

A Ukrainian security official told The Associated Press that a strike had been carried out on a warehouse storing ammunition in the village of Serhiivka in the Voronezh region.

"The enemy stored surface-to-surface and surface-to-air missiles, shells for tanks and artillery, and boxes of cartridges for firearms," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to give the information to the media. "It is from this warehouse that the occupiers supply ammunition to their troops in Ukraine."

The official also said that Ukraine's State Security Service was behind a drone attack on an oil depot in Russia's Krasnodar region the previous day. Russian emergency services had reported that falling drone debris had started a fire at the site, which was successfully extinguished Sunday morning.

Russia's Ministry of Defense did not address either strike in their morning briefing, but said that air de-

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fense systems had destroyed a Ukrainian drone over the Belgorod region.

The strikes come after a Ukrainian military spokesperson told AP on Thursday that Kyiv's troops had retreated from a neighborhood on the outskirts of Chasiv Yar, a strategically important town in Ukraine's Donetsk region that has been reduced to rubble under a monthlong Russian assault.

Russian forces have for months tried to grind out gains in Ukraine's industrial east, in an apparent attempt to lock its defenders into a war of attrition. In a joint investigation published Friday, independent Russian news outlets Meduza and Mediazona reported that Moscow's forces were losing between 200 and 250 soldiers in Ukraine each day.

Military analysts say Chasiv Yar's fall could also compromise critical Ukrainian supply routes and put nearby cities in jeopardy, bringing Russia closer to its stated aim of seizing the entire Donetsk region.

Russian strikes have also heavily targeted Ukraine's energy infrastructure. Officials in Kyiv said Saturday that the city had restored two-thirds of its power generation capacity after recent Russian missile attacks destroyed key power plants.

"Colossal work has been carried out," said deputy head of the Kyiv city administration Petro Pantelev. "The city's energy facilities, which were built mainly in the Soviet period, are being modernized and become much more efficient."

Russia sent overnight into Sunday two ballistic missiles and 13 Shahed drones, Ukrainian air force officials said. All were shot down but the officials did not elaborate on the impact of the missiles.

Eight people were killed in Russian attacks across Ukraine in the past day, according to local regional authorities.

Four people were killed in the Kherson region, said Gov. Oleksandr Prokudin, while in Donetsk, Gov. Vadym Filashkin said another two people had been killed in the towns of Niu-York and Ukrainsk. In Dnipropetrovsk, a 65-year-old woman was killed in a Russian attack in the Nikopol district, while a 47-year old man was killed in the Kharkiv region, Governors Serhii Lysak and Oleh Syniehubov said in their respective statements.

Elsewhere in Ukraine, 14 people died after a bus collided with a cargo vehicle, leaving a single survivor, Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko said Saturday evening. The victims included a 6-year-old child.

Rafah is a dusty, rubble-strewn ghost town 2 months after Israel invaded to root out Hamas

By OHAD ZWIGENBERG Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Two months ago, before Israeli troops invaded Rafah, the city sheltered most of Gaza's more than 2 million people. Today it is a dust-covered ghost town.

Abandoned, bullet-ridden apartment buildings have blasted out walls and shattered windows. Bedrooms and kitchens are visible from roads dotted with rubble piles that tower over the Israeli military vehicles passing by. Very few civilians remain.

Israel says it has nearly defeated Hamas forces in Rafah — an area identified earlier this year as the militant group's last stronghold in Gaza.

The Israeli military invited reporters into Rafah on Wednesday, the first time international media visited Gaza's southernmost city since it was invaded May 6. Israel has barred international journalists from entering Gaza independently since the Hamas attack on Oct. 7 that sparked the war.

Before invading Rafah, Israel said Hamas' four remaining battalions had retreated there, an area of about 25 square miles (65 square kilometers) that borders Egypt. Israel says hundreds of militants have been killed in its Rafah offensive. Scores of women and children have also died from Israeli airstrikes and ground operations.

The military says it has been necessary to operate with such intensity because Hamas turned civilian areas into treacherous traps. Eight soldiers were killed last month by a single blast.

"Some of these tunnels are booby-trapped," the military's chief spokesman, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, said during Wednesday's tour as he stood over a shaft that led underground. "Hamas built everything

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in a civilian neighborhood among houses, among mosques, among the population, in order to create its terror ecosystem.”

An estimated 1.4 million Palestinians crammed into Rafah after fleeing fighting elsewhere in Gaza. The U.N. estimates that around 50,000 remain in Rafah, which had a pre-war population of about 275,000.

Most have moved to a nearby Israel-declared “humanitarian area” where conditions are grave. Many are clustering in squalid tent camps along the beach with scant access to clean water, food, bathrooms and medical care.

Efforts to bring aid into southern Gaza have stalled. Israel’s incursion into Rafah closed down one of two major crossings into the south of Gaza. The U.N. says little aid can enter from the other main crossing — Kerem Shalom — because the route is too dangerous and convoys are vulnerable to attacks by armed groups searching for smuggled-in cigarettes.

On Wednesday, a line of trucks on the Gaza side of Kerem Shalom was visible, but the trucks were hardly moving — a sign of how Israel’s pledge to keep the route safe in order to facilitate the delivery of aid inside Gaza has fallen flat.

U.N. officials say some commercial trucks have braved the route into Rafah, but not without hired armed guards riding atop their convoys.

Israel says it is close to dismantling the group as an organized military force in Rafah. In a reflection of that confidence, soldiers brought journalists in open-air military vehicles down the road that leads into the heart of the city.

Along the way, debris lying by the side of the road made clear the perils of aid delivery: carcasses of trucks lying baking in the hot sun; dashboards covered in fencing meant to protect drivers; aid pallets lying empty.

The longer the aid delivery is frozen, humanitarian groups say, the closer Gaza comes to running out of fuel, which is needed for hospitals, water desalination plants and vehicles.

“The hospitals are once again short on fuel, risking disruption of critical services,” said Dr. Hanan Balkhy, the World Health Organization’s regional director for the Eastern Mediterranean. “Injured people are dying because the ambulance services are facing delays due to fuel shortages.”

As the humanitarian situation worsens, Israel is pushing ahead with its offensive. Combat in Rafah is ongoing.

After journalists heard nearby gunshots on Wednesday, the soldiers told the group they would not be visiting the beach, as had been planned.

The group departed the city soon after, with clouds of dust kicked up by vehicles temporarily obscuring the mass of destruction behind them.

At Essence, Black Democrats rally behind Biden and talk up Kamala Harris

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — As President Joe Biden tries to revive his embattled reelection bid, Vice President Kamala Harris led a parade of Black Democrats who warned Saturday that the threat of another Donald Trump presidency remains the most important calculation ahead of November.

Yet in more than 20 minutes on stage at the Essence Festival of Culture, Harris did not acknowledge Biden’s dismal debate performance or calls for the 81-year-old president to end his reelection bid. In fact, she barely mentioned Biden at all — a stark contrast to the Congressional Black Caucus members who forcefully and repeatedly defended the president by name.

“This is probably the most significant election of our lifetime,” Harris said, before riffing on Trump musing about being a dictator, pushing the Supreme Court rightward and promising retribution on political enemies. “In 122 days, we each have the power to decide what kind of country we want to live in.”

Harris’s appearance at the nation’s largest annual celebration of Black culture underscores what a difficult task it is for the White House and campaign to navigate questions about the president’s aptitude.

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The dynamics are especially fraught for Harris, the first Black woman and person of south Asian descent to be elected vice president, and for the Black Democrats who were so instrumental in electing Biden and her in 2020.

On one hand, Harris fills the traditional role of loyal lieutenant, a job she did enthusiastically — and on the fly — in television appearances immediately after Biden's lackluster debate ended. Yet should Biden ultimately decide to step aside as presumptive nominee, she would be among the favorites, if not the favorite, to carry the Democratic banner against Trump.

Black leaders and voters who gathered in New Orleans, meanwhile, walked the line Saturday between backing Biden and insisting that, if he does end his campaign, the party should elevate the barrier-breaking vice president rather than consider governors like Gavin Newsom of California or Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan, both of whom are white.

"The purpose of a vice president is to be a No. 2, to be able to step in," said Glynda Carr, who leads the Higher Heights political action organization that works to elect more Black women. "If this was an all-white male ticket, would we be talking about other people who have less experience, less qualifications?"

Antjuan Seawright, a Black Democratic consultant who is close to House Rep. Jim Clyburn, a Biden ally, put it more plainly. "Joe Biden isn't going anywhere," he said. But if he does, "anyone other than Kamala would be malpractice — and it would tear the party apart."

Seawright argued that the pressure on Biden to step aside is coming from white Democrats or non-white minorities other than Black Democrats so far, at least publicly. He said that divide is mostly about Black voters' trust in Biden and their recognition of his record. But he said it's also about what's good for the party as a whole, including Black politicians. Risking a contested convention, even one that nominates Harris, could ensure widespread losses, and in turn, make it less likely than ever to see Democratic House leader Hakeem Jeffries become Speaker or Harris or another Black woman sit in the Oval Office.

Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Calif., and her colleagues echoed some of those sentiments.

"People say Joe Biden's too old. Hell, I'm older than Biden!" said the 85-year-old congresswoman. "It ain't gonna be no other Democratic candidate, and we better know it."

Rep. Joyce Beatty, D-Ohio, played up the power Harris already holds.

"We got a Black vice president of the United States of America, a sister who came here to be with us today," she said. "So, let's not get it twisted. I know who I'm voting for. I'm with the Biden-Harris team, because we're still going to have a sister in the White House fighting for us and making a difference."

Waters said Biden's support of Black communities and the contrast with Trump should be enough. She called the former president "a no-good, lying, despicable human being" with a white nationalist agenda. "Who the hell do you think he's going to come after?" Waters asked, noting Trump's support from groups like the Proud Boys. "You know he means business."

In more than a dozen interviews with Essence attendees, opinions varied on Biden's strength as a candidate and his abilities to serve another four years. But there was a clear consensus on several points: Only Biden can decide his fate; if he does step away, he should back Harris; and defeating Trump is the top priority.

"I'm with him, absolutely," said Erica Peterson of New Orleans. "He's delivered, and one debate is not going to change my mind. ... And if it's not Joe Biden, I'm with her."

Star Robert, a 37-year-old nurse in New York City, said if there's a shift, then Biden and Democrats could not credibly choose anyone other than Harris, given that the president, party and voters already chose her as second-in-line. Still, she was skeptical about Harris's prospects.

"I'm not sure that she's done enough to generate the trust of enough voters," Robert said. "I don't know if that's all her fault, I just haven't seen enough of her, we haven't. I don't know what her angle is."

Regardless, Robert added, "I'm not sure the country is ready for another Black president, and if we were ready for a woman, Hillary Clinton would have beaten the clown (Trump) the first time he ran."

Harris, for her part, answered that kind of skepticism even as she studiously avoided the immediate campaign drama.

"Ambition is a good thing. We do not need to step quietly," she said of being a woman of color in power-

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ful circles. "People in your life will tell you it's not your time. It's not your turn. Nobody like you has done it before. ... I like to say that I eat 'no' for breakfast."

Today in History: July 8, Thai cave rescue

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, July 8, the 190th day of 2024. There are 176 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 8, 2018, divers rescued four of the 12 boys who'd been trapped in a flooded cave in northern Thailand with their soccer coach for more than two weeks. (The remaining eight boys and their coach were rescued over the next two days.)

Also on this date:

In 1776, Col. John Nixon gave the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence, outside the State House (now Independence Hall) in Philadelphia.

In 1853, an expedition led by Commodore Matthew Perry arrived in Edo Bay, Japan, on a mission to seek diplomatic and trade relations with the Japanese.

In 1889, the first issue of The Wall Street Journal was published.

In 1947, a New Mexico newspaper, the Roswell Daily Record, quoted officials at Roswell Army Air Field as saying they had recovered a "flying saucer" that crashed onto a ranch; officials then said it was actually a weather balloon.

In 1950, President Harry S. Truman named Gen. Douglas MacArthur commander-in-chief of United Nations forces in Korea. (Truman would fire MacArthur for insubordination nine months later.)

In 1972, the Nixon administration announced a deal to sell \$750 million in grain to the Soviet Union. (However, the Soviets were also engaged in secretly buying subsidized American grain, resulting in what critics dubbed "The Great Grain Robbery.")

In 1994, Kim Il Sung, North Korea's communist leader since 1948, died at age 82.

In 2000, Venus Williams beat Lindsay Davenport for her first Grand Slam title, becoming the first Black female champion at Wimbledon since Althea Gibson in 1958.

In 2010, the largest spy swap between the U.S. and Russia since the Cold War unfolded as 10 people accused of spying in suburban America pleaded guilty to conspiracy and were ordered deported to Russia in exchange for the release of four prisoners accused of spying for the West.

In 2011, the 135th and final space shuttle mission began when space shuttle Atlantis launched from Kennedy Space Center.

In 2021, President Joe Biden said the U.S. military operation in Afghanistan would end on Aug. 31; in a speech in the White House East Room, Biden made an impassioned argument for exiting the nearly 20-year war without sacrificing more America lives, but acknowledged that there would be no "mission accomplished" moment to celebrate.

In 2022, former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was assassinated on a street in western Japan by a gunman who opened fire on him from behind as he delivered a campaign speech.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Jeffrey Tambor is 80. Drummer Jaimoe Johanson (The Allman Brothers Band) is 80. Actor Kim Darby is 77. Children's musician Raffi is 76. Celebrity chef Wolfgang Puck is 75. Actor Anjelica Huston is 73. Writer Anna Quindlen is 72. Author and politician Marianne Williamson is 72. Pro Football Hall of Famer Jack Lambert is 72. Actor Kevin Bacon is 66. Singer Joan Osborne is 62. Actor Rocky Carroll (TV: "Roc") is 61. Actor Lee Tergesen (TV: "Oz") is 59. Actor Billy Crudup is 56. Actor Michael Weatherly (TV: "NCIS") is 56. Musician Beck is 54. Actor Kathleen Robertson is 51. Christian rock musician Stephen Mason (Jars of Clay) is 49. Actor Milo Ventimiglia (MEE'-loh vehn-tih-MEEL'-yuh) is 47. Actor Lance Gross (TV: "Tyler Perry's House of Payne") is 43. Actor Sophia Bush is 42. Actor Maya Hawke is 26. Actor Jaden Smith is 26.