

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Thursday, July 18

Senior Menu: Baked cod, parsley buttered potatoes, creamy coleslaw, tapioca pudding mandarin oranges, whole wheat bread.

Legion hosts Clark, 5:30 p.m. (1)

Jr. Legion hosts Clark, 7:30 p.m. (1)

Story Time at Wage Memorial Library 10 a.m.

Middle School (upcoming 6th graders) Moonlight Swim, 8:30-10:30 p.m., Swimming Pool

## Friday, July 19

Senior Menu: Ham salad on bun, cauliflower/pea/carrots, salad, fresh fruit, cookie.

Jr. Legion hosts Britton, 5:30 p.m. (DH)

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

## Good Morning

**Have a Blessed  
Thankful Thursday**

**May your  
Thursday be filled  
with Happy  
moments,  
Thankful  
thoughts, Love in  
your heart, Peace  
in your soul, and  
Divine health in  
your body.**



God's Spoken  
Word Ministries

*Have a Wonderful Day.*

## Saturday, July 20

Common Cents Community Thrift Store open, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.

## Sunday, July 21

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion: St. John's at 9 a.m.; Zion at 11 a.m.

United Methodist: Worship: Conde at 8:30 a.m.; Groton at 10:30 a.m.; Coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.

Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.

# 1440

In partnership with **smartasset**

## Trump Takes the Stage

Former President Donald Trump is set to speak in Milwaukee today, on the final day of the Republican National Convention. Tonight's speech will mark Trump's first public address since last week's assassination attempt.

The keynote address comes on the heels of three days of speeches, including from former rivals and primary challengers Nikki Haley, Ron DeSantis, and Vivek Ramaswamy. Yesterday, the convention heard from Trump's pick for vice president, Sen. JD Vance (R-OH). Today, Trump will formally accept the party's nomination for president in a speech he said he rewrote following last week's attack. Trump has said the address will center on the need for unity.

Separately, President Joe Biden yesterday tested positive for COVID-19. The White House says he is experiencing mild symptoms and will isolate in Delaware. The news comes amid ongoing pressure from some Democrats—most recently Rep. Adam Schiff (D, CA-30)—to have Biden exit the race before his nomination in August.

## Long-Living Mice

An intervention to suppress a protein in mice increased their lifespans by up to 25%, according to a new study.

The protein, interleukin-11, is found in a variety of species. In fish and tadpoles, it can help regenerate lost limbs. In humans, it is critical for bone and joint development. Still, prevalence of IL-11 can be associated with inflammation, linked to higher rates of chronic diseases, autoimmune disorders, and cancer.

Researchers tried two methods to suppress the protein in mice: In one group, they genetically engineered mice so they could not produce it. In another, they regularly administered an antibody later in life. Both interventions resulted in lower rates of cancer, healthier fur and muscles, and longer lives.

The study marks the first to target IL-11 for antiaging and sparks hope interventions can achieve a similar impact in humans. It comes as clinical trials to suppress the protein are underway in people with cancer and fibrotic lung disease.

## 'Shōgun' Leads Emmys

Nominations for the 76th annual Primetime Emmy Awards were announced yesterday, with Netflix topping all networks with 107, followed by FX's best showing ever with 93. HBO dropped to third for the first time since 1996 after its flagship series "Succession"—the best drama winner in three of the last four years—ended last year.

FX's Japanese historical epic "Shōgun"—based on James Clavell's 1975 novel—received the most nominations at 25, followed by the network's "The Bear" with 23, a record for a comedy. This year marks only the second time an Indigenous actor was nominated, with three receiving the nod. Longtime "Survivor" host Jeff Probst returned to the lineup after 13 years.

Due to last year's writers and actors strikes in Hollywood, 33% fewer series (229) were submitted for awards consideration. The ceremony will be broadcast live on Sept. 15 (ABC, 8 pm ET).

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## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

The 152nd British Open kicks off today from Royal Troon Golf Club in Scotland; see preview and opening round tee times.

"Rust" armorer Hannah Gutierrez-Reed requests her March conviction be tossed after Alec Baldwin's case dismissal.

Naomi Pomeroy, James Beard Award-winning chef and "Top Chef Masters" star, dies at 49 in tubing accident.

Angel City FC becomes world's most valuable woman's sports franchise after Willow Bay and her husband, Disney CEO Bob Iger, buy majority stake, valuing the soccer club at \$250M.

## Science & Technology

The hallucinogen psilocybin temporarily resets entire brain circuits that govern a person's sense of space and time when taken at high enough doses; study sheds light on the mechanism behind "tripping" on the drug.

Engineers unveil smallest, lightest solar-powered drone to date; vehicle is roughly 8 inches in size and can fly indefinitely in the sun.

Crown-of-thorns starfish larvae, a prolific eater of coral reefs, thrive on toxic blue-green algae; discovery suggests increased presence of the bacteria could drive the starfish population, further threatening reefs.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 -1.4%, Dow +0.6%, Nasdaq -2.8%); Nasdaq records worst day since December 2022 as tech stocks fall on report of Biden administration considering trade restrictions against China.

Ray Ban-maker EssilorLuxottica to buy streetwear brand Supreme from VF Corporation for \$1.5B; deal represents the eyewear maker's first venture into apparel.

United Airlines reports 23% year-over-year rise in Q2 profits, partly due to demand for international travel.

## Politics & World Affairs

Department of Homeland Security's inspector general announces an investigation into Secret Service's handling of Saturday assassination attempt.

House Oversight Committee subpoenas Secret Service director.

US military to dismantle Gaza pier designed to carry aid to Palestinians via Cyprus after being damaged by weather; future aid will be delivered to Ashdod, Israel, and transported by truck.

Former CIA analyst Sue Mi Terry charged with espionage, accused of spying for South Korea in exchange for \$37K and gifts including luxury goods, bags, and meals.

## Service Notice: Sandra Knudson

A Celebration of Life for Sandra Knudson, 70, of Aberdeen will be held at Sunset Memorial Gardens on Saturday, July 20th at 1:00 p.m. Rev. Rob Moorlach will officiate. Inurnment will follow under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

Sandy passed away July 16, 2024 at Aberdeen Health and Rehab.

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**50th Wedding Celebration  
Honoring Neal & Wynella Abeln  
Saturday, July 20, 2024  
Food & Visiting 6 pm – 8 pm  
Barn Dance 8 pm – 11 pm  
AT: Tim & Lacey Grabow's  
15689 456th Ave  
South Shore, SD 57263  
FUN FOR ALL  
No gifts please**

## Groton Jr Teeners Claw Back, But Fall Just Short Against Britton in region championship game

By GameChanger Media

Despite a 4-run deficit in the third inning, Groton Jr Teeners 14U almost came all the way back, eventually falling 6-5 to Britton U14 Jr Teeners on Wednesday. Groton Jr Teeners 14U closed the gap by scoring on a single, a ground out, and a single. Britton will advance to the state tournament.

Groton Jr Teeners 14U lost despite out-hitting Britton U14 Jr Teeners four to two. TC Schuster, Kason Oswald, Ethan Kroll, and Ryder Schelle each collected one hit for Groton Jr Teeners 14U.

An error put Britton U14 Jr Teeners on the board in the bottom of the first.

Britton U14 Jr Teeners added to their early lead in the bottom of the third inning when Colton Chapin was struck by a pitch, driving in a run, and Drew Heitmann hit a sacrifice fly, scoring two runs.

Chaz Viotor earned the win for Britton U14 Jr Teeners. The starting pitcher allowed three hits and four runs (zero earned) over six innings, striking out four and walking two. Schuster took the loss for Groton Jr Teeners 14U. They went four and one-third innings, giving up six runs (four earned) on two hits, striking out two and walking nine.

Kroll led Groton Jr Teeners 14U with two runs batted in. The right-handed hitter went 1-for-2 on the day. Groton Jr Teeners 14U turned one double play in the game.

Chapin drove the middle of the lineup, leading Britton U14 Jr Teeners with three runs batted in. They went 1-for-2 on the day. Chapin and Mitch Burger each collected one hit for Britton U14 Jr Teeners. Ben Suther led Britton U14 Jr Teeners with three walks. Overall, the team had a strong eye at the plate, collecting nine walks for the game. Britton U14 Jr Teeners turned one double play in the game.

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**The Groton 14U baseball team and coaches pose after game after a close hard fought championship game.** (Photo by Bruce Babcock)

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**Groton starting pitcher TC Schuster throws while in the background 2nd baseman Kason Oswald moves to cover 2nd base in last nights game.** (Photo by Bruce Babcock)



**Prior to the start of the Region VFW Championship game last night, the Groton and Britton players and coaches recited the VFW Sportsman Creed lead by Webster VFW Post Commander, Kevin Bohn.** (Photo by Bruce Babcock)

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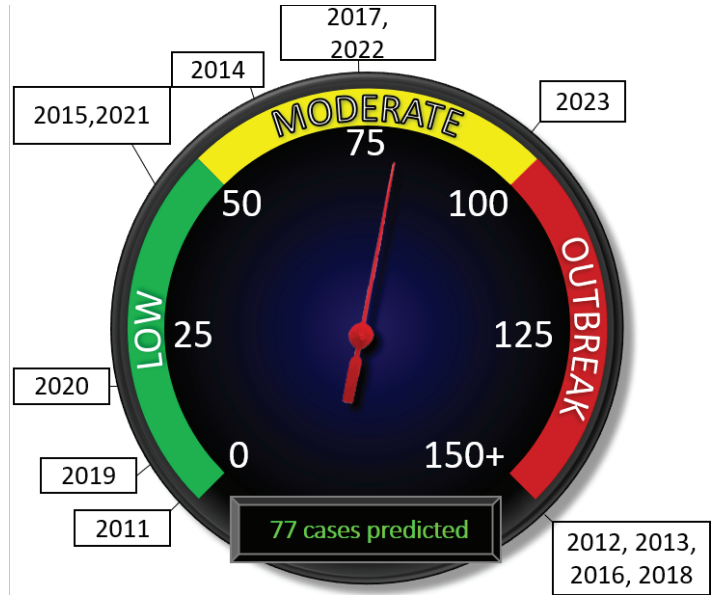
## West Nile Virus Update -SD

SD WNV (as of July 17):

1 human case (Beadle)  
 6 counties with positive mosquito pools (Brookings, Brown, Davison, Hughes, Lincoln, Minnehaha)

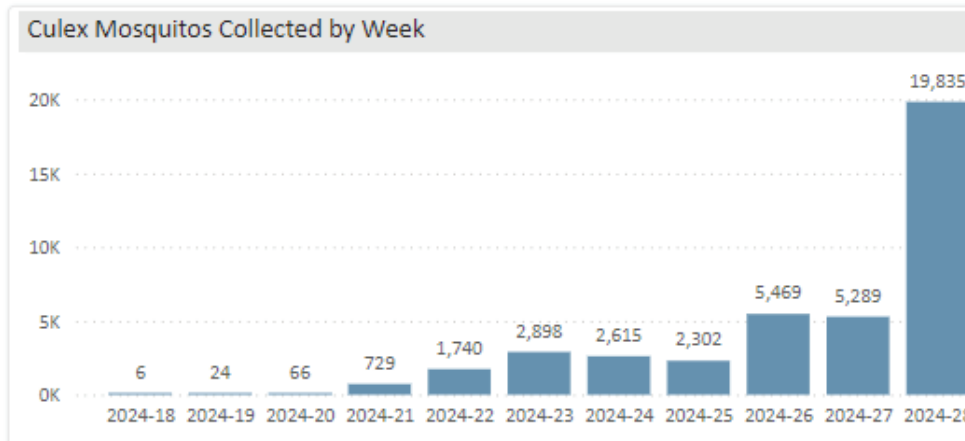
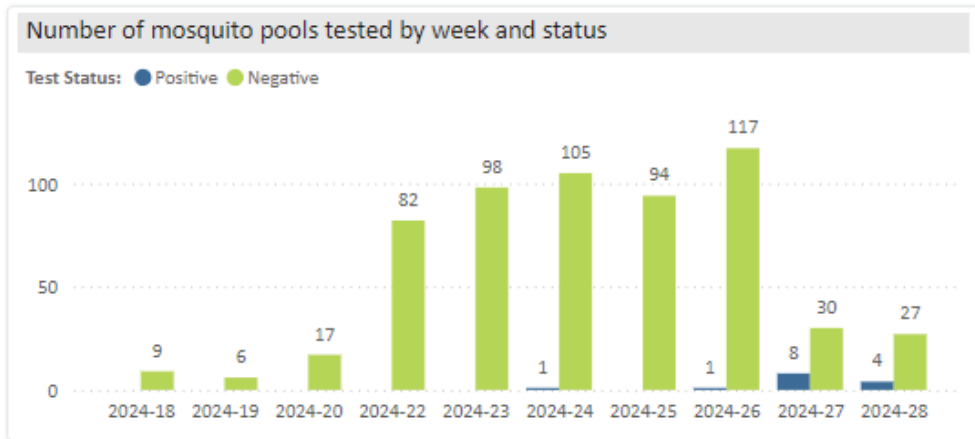
US WNV (as of July 16): 25 cases (AR, AZ, KS, MD, MS, NC, ND, NE, OK, SD, TN, TX)

WNV Prediction Model – Total Number of Cases Projected for 2024, South Dakota (as of July 16)



Mosquito Surveillance Summary for 2024, South Dakota, Week Ending July 13, 2024 (MMWR Week 28)

Total sites collecting mosquitoes: 69  
 Total mosquito pools tested: 596  
 % positivity: 2.35%





## Flags at Half-Staff in Honor of Corey Comperatore

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, Governor Kristi Noem ordered that flags be flown at half-staff statewide from sunrise until sunset on Thursday, July 18th, 2024, in honor of Corey Comperatore. Corey was a husband, father, and former Fire Chief of the Buffalo Township Volunteer Fire Company who tragically lost his life while protecting his wife and daughters from the shots fired during the assassination attempt against former President Donald J. Trump.

Governor Noem also proclaimed Thursday, July 18th, 2024, as “Corey Comperatore Day” in South Dakota.

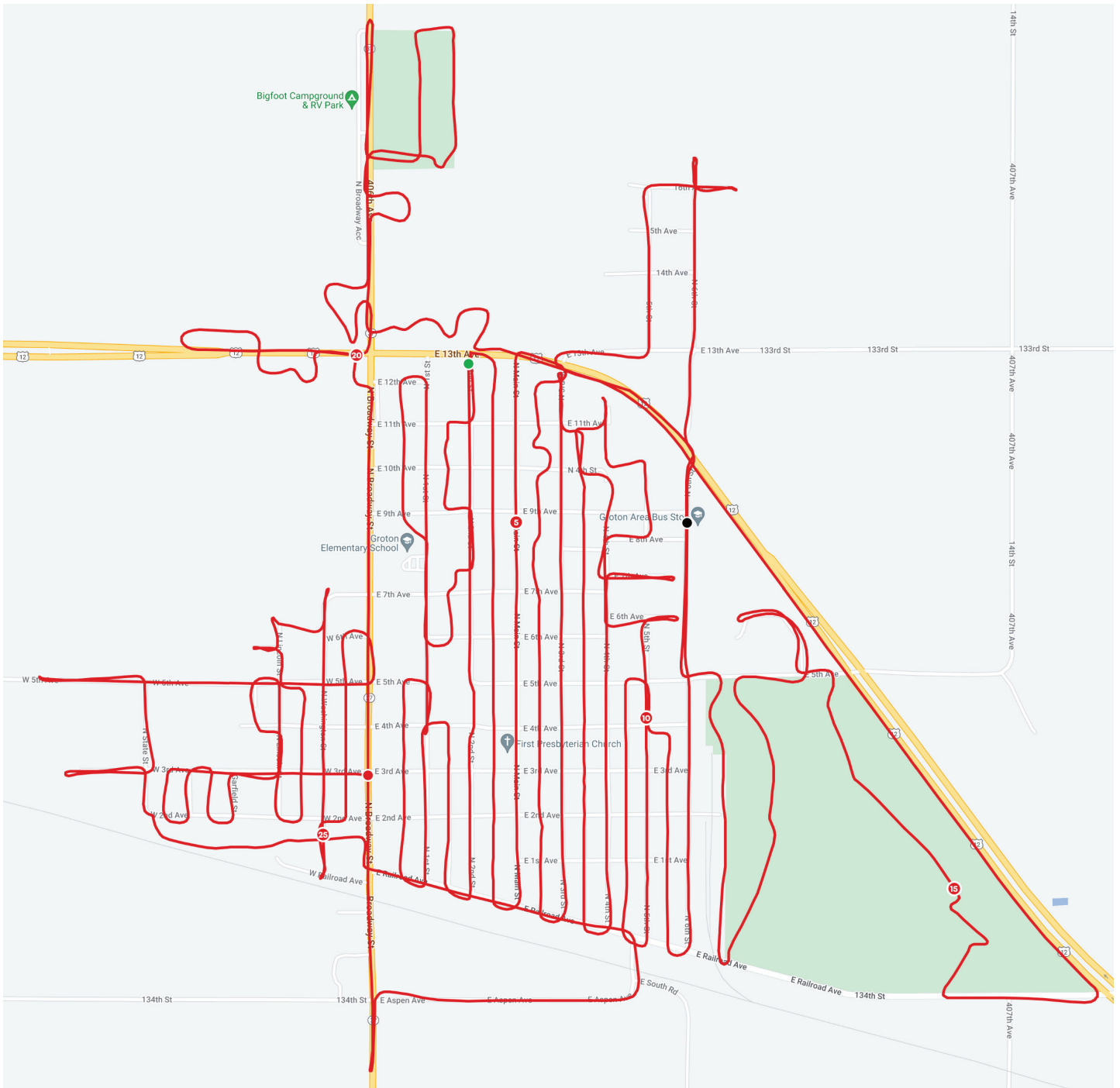
“Corey died as he lived – a hero who dedicated himself to saving lives. It is fitting and proper as Governor to honor great American heroes for the sacrifice that they make,” Governor Noem wrote in the proclamation.



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## Adult Mosquito Control conducted Wednesday night



The City of Groton conducted adult mosquito control Wednesday night. The wind was east, at 3 to 5 mph. Temperature was in the mid 60s to low 70s. About 8 gallons of Perm-X UL was used.

## Brand New Program at

15 N Main St. - Ste. 101  
Downtown Groton

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



### \$20 Monthly Membership

- ☞ for people 60 years of age and older
- ☞ for those who need equipment for physical therapy!



Downtown  
Groton

24/7 access to the facility ~ Cancel any time

**Staying fit and practicing healthy nutrition  
can be linked to benefits, such as:**

- 🏋️ Reduced levels of stress and anxiety
- 🏋️ Improved cognitive function
- 🏋️ Increased energy levels and productivity
- 🏋️ Controlled blood pressure
- 🏋️ Better blood flow circulation
- 🏋️ Strengthened bones and muscles
- 🏋️ Reduced risk of heart disease and other illnesses

Call/Text Paul at 605-397-7460

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### J.D. Vance pitches for swing-state votes in accepting Trump VP nomination

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT AND ASHLEY MURRAY - JULY 17, 2024 11:57 PM

MILWAUKEE — J.D. Vance — the freshman Ohio senator who used to rebuke Donald Trump’s character and policies before becoming one of his most ardent supporters in Congress — formally accepted the nomination as Trump’s running mate Wednesday at the Republican National Convention.

Vance spoke directly to the swing-state voters who will determine the outcome of the presidential election as well as control of the Congress during his 38-minute prime time speech on the third night of the convention.

“This moment is not about me. It’s about all of us. It’s about who we’re fighting for,” Vance said, as Trump looked on from a special seating section inside Fiserv Forum.

“It’s about the autoworker in Michigan, wondering why out-of-touch politicians are destroying their jobs,” Vance said. “It’s about the factory worker in Wisconsin, who makes things with their hands and is proud of American craftsmanship.”

“It’s about the energy worker in Pennsylvania and Ohio, who doesn’t understand why Joe Biden is willing to buy energy from tinpot dictators across the world when he could buy it from his own citizens right here in our own country,” he added.

Biden-Harris 2024 communications director Michael Tyler released a statement after Vance’s acceptance speech concluded, arguing that working and middle class Americans would be harmed if Trump and Vance are elected later this year.

“J.D. Vance is unprepared, unqualified, and willing to do anything Donald Trump demands,” Tyler wrote.



**Republican vice presidential candidate and U.S. Sen. J.D. Vance, R-Ohio, speaks on stage on the third day of the Republican National Convention at the Fiserv Forum on July 17, 2024, in Milwaukee.** (Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images)

#### **Raised by grandmother**

Vance spoke at length about his upbringing and his family during his speech, including his mother, who is close to reaching 10 years clean and sober, as well as his grandmother, who raised him while his mother was struggling with addiction.

He said that his mother should reach that benchmark in January 2025 and that they should celebrate in the White House.

Vance rolled in a story about his grandmother to emphasize the GOP’s support for gun rights, receiving loud cheers from the crowd.

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He noted that in 2005, just before he deployed to Iraq as part of the Marine Corps, she died and while going through her home, he and his family found 19 loaded handguns.

"They were stashed all over her house; under her bed, in a closet and in the silverware drawer," Vance said.

"We wondered what was going on. And it occurred to us that towards the end of her life (she) couldn't get around so well," Vance said. "And so this frail old woman made sure that no matter where she was, she was within arm's length of whatever she needed to protect her family. That's who we fight for. That's the American spirit."

Vance said that his version of the American dream wasn't becoming a senator or starting a business, but having the type of family he wasn't able to grow up in.

"My most important American dream was becoming a good husband and a good dad," Vance said. "I wanted to give my kids the things that I didn't have when I was growing up. And that's the accomplishment that I'm proudest of."

## Vance emerges as favorite despite inexperience

Trump announced Monday that he had selected Vance to be his running mate after narrowing down a shortlist that included several other GOP senators with more experience in Congress.

The relationships that a vice president has with both Republicans and Democrats in the upper chamber are especially important given that bills must gain the support of at least 60 senators to advance toward final passage. It's also the chamber responsible for approving judicial and executive branch nominees.

Additionally, the vice president is responsible for casting tie-breaking votes in the Senate, a job that could take up much of the vice president's time if the election yields another two years with a 50-50 split.

Vance has been a member of Congress for less than two years and is best known as the author of *Hillbilly Elegy*, a controversial book about rural poverty in Appalachia, that was later turned into a movie.

The delegates at the convention moved to formally nominate Vance as their vice presidential nominee the same day Trump announced him as his running mate. Vance's speech on Wednesday night served as his official acceptance.

## Foreign affairs

Vance doesn't have a lengthy record on domestic or foreign policy issues given his especially brief tenure as a lawmaker, but he has repeatedly opposed funding for Ukraine.

Speaking on the floor of the convention to an enthusiastic crowd, Vance said that "we will make sure our allies share in the burden of securing world peace."

"No more free rides for nations that betray the generosity of the American taxpayer," Vance said, seemingly referring to NATO countries that have yet to reach the benchmark of spending at least 2% of their GDP on defense.

NATO allied countries agreed to move toward that goal in 2014 after Russia invaded Crimea in Eastern Ukraine. Twenty-three of the 32 countries in the alliance are expected to meet that target this year.

Vance said if reelected, Trump "will send our kids to war only when we must."

Vance also spoke about China and the Chinese Communist Party throughout his speech.

"We will protect the wages of American workers and stop the Chinese Communist Party from building their middle class on the backs of American citizens," he said.

## 'A meat and potatoes kind of guy'

Vance's acceptance speech, which largely served as an introduction to GOP voters, followed a lengthy night of more speeches, including by his wife, Usha Chilukuri Vance, and Donald J. Trump, Jr., who pressed for his father to choose Vance as his running mate.

Chilukuri Vance said she wanted "to explain from the heart why I love and admire J.D. and stand here beside him today, and why he will make a great vice president of the United States."

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Telling the story of how they met at Yale Law School, Usha said Vance approached their differences with "curiosity" and that she learned he had "overcome childhood traumas that I could barely fathom."

"My background is very different from J.D.'s. I grew up in San Diego, in a middle-class community with two loving parents, both immigrants from India and a wonderful sister," Chilukuri Vance said. "That J.D. and I could meet at all, let alone fall in love and marry, is a testament to this great country."

Chilukuri Vance spoke for just under five minutes and told the crowd that although her husband is a "meat and potatoes kind of guy," he learned to cook Indian vegetarian food for her mother. She said he's the same person now that she met when they were younger, "except the beard."

"It's safe to say that neither J.D. nor I expected to find ourselves in this position. But it's hard to imagine a more powerful example of the American dream," Chilukuri Vance said. "A boy from Middletown, Ohio, raised by his grandmother through tough times, chosen to help lead our country through some of its greatest challenges. I am grateful to all of you for the trust you placed in him and in our family."

## Ties between Vance and Donald Trump Jr.

Though he largely spoke about his father, Trump Jr. used his platform to spotlight the friendship between him and Vance. He used the differences in their upbringings as an invitation for voters to support his father in November.

"For everyone watching at home, no matter who you are, you can be a part of this movement to make America great again. Look at me and my friend J.D. Vance. A kid from Appalachia and a kid from Trump Tower in Manhattan. We grew up worlds apart," Trump Jr. said. "Yet now we're both fighting side by side to save the country we love. And by the way, J.D. Vance is going to make one hell of a vice president."

Trump Jr. spoke for nearly 20 minutes prior to Vance taking the stage, focusing most of his speech on defending his father and taking sharp jabs at Biden.

He said he had "never been prouder" of his father than he was Saturday after the former president survived an assassination attempt at a rally in Butler, Pennsylvania.

He compared his father standing up and raising his fist after the shooting to how the "America we all grew up with" will return again.

"We're like that man who stood on that platform and felt the bullet pierce his flesh just days ago in Pennsylvania. He may have moved to the ground, but he stood back up. And when he did, my father raised his fist into the air, he looked out at the crowd, and what did he say?"

"Fight, fight, fight," the crowd at the RNC shouted back.

"And we will fight. We will fight with our voices. We will fight with our ideas. And then November 5, we will fight with our vote," Trump Jr. said.

Prior to speaking, Trump Jr. called his oldest daughter Kai Madison Trump — the former president's eldest granddaughter — to the stage briefly.

She accused the left of attacking her grandfather and told stories of him calling her to ask about her golf game and telling his friends that she made the high honor roll.

"The media makes my grandpa seem like a different person, but I know him for who he is. He's very caring and loving," Kai Madison said. "He truly wants the best for this country and he will fight every single day to make America great again."

## Bashing Biden

Dozens of other politicians spoke on the third night of the Republican National Convention, with the vast majority praising Trump while criticizing Biden.

Former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich, R-Ga., said voters need to elect Trump to the White House in November to prevent Biden and Democrats from implementing their preferred policies.

"We have to remember that the greatest threat to American safety is not Biden's brain," Gingrich said. "The greatest threat is Biden's policies, and the people he appoints."

Gingrich added that Americans could "vote for weakness and war with Biden," or they could "vote for

strength and peace with President Trump.”

North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum, who was on Trump’s shortlist for a running mate but wasn’t selected, said during a brief speech that Trump would be better for fossil fuel production than Biden.

“When President Trump unleashes American energy, we unleash American prosperity and we ensure our national security,” Burgum said.

The crowd inside Fiserv Forum chanted “drill baby drill” during part of his speech.

Kellyanne Conway, senior counselor to Trump during his first administration, told attendees at the RNC that the GOP ticket is the best path forward for the country.

“The answer to weakness is strength. The antidote to division is unity. And the alternative to failure and incompetence, to Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, is to send them packing and send Donald Trump and J.D. Vance to the White House,” Conway said.

U.S. Rep. Anna Paulina Luna of Florida told the GOP delegates and guests that Trump — who never served in the military and made up an injury to avoid being drafted into the Vietnam War — “respects our military and understands the true cost of war.”

“President Trump knows what it means to put your life on the line,” Luna said. “Our service members and their families make immense sacrifices, and they deserve a president who respects that sacrifice and who will lay down his own life in defense of this great nation.”

*Lia Chien contributed to this report.*

*Jennifer covers the nation’s capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.*

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

## **Program seeking temporary homes for kids in court system struggles with recruitment, retention**

**State and counties have money for initiative but need more host families**

**BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JULY 17, 2024 4:29 PM**

Rich Ohm was going to say no. He and his wife are busy with their Watertown-based business, their children are all grown, and they aim to spend up to two months each year traveling out of the country.

But he surprised himself — and his wife. He said yes to becoming the first court resource family in the state, becoming a licensed foster family and opening their home to low-risk juvenile offenders.

“It’s rewarding,” Ohm said. “You’re building good, positive relationships with someone who might not have that opportunity with many adults.”

Ohm and his wife, Beret, have one of two licensed South Dakota court resource homes, which is a new program aiming to keep children out of detention and the justice system as a whole. The need for the program is reflected in juvenile justice statistics: At the end of fiscal year 2023, 84 South Dakota children were placed in a facility or program, such as a detention center, shelter care program, group home or the Human Services Center, while another 93 were receiving aftercare.

A court resource home is used for children who can’t remain with their family or be placed with extended family while working through the legal process. The program is meant to be a cost-efficient alternative for mid-sized counties instead of sending children to facilities in cities such as Sioux Falls.

Studies show children placed in detention unnecessarily are negatively impacted mentally and physically, and their education and future employment suffer. The cost to keep a child at the Juvenile Detention Center or Arise Shelter Care in Sioux Falls is hundreds of dollars a day, not including the cost to drive the child hours away from home and remove one law enforcement officer from the streets for transport.

The program is in its third year of operation, but is only active in Codington County, where Ohm lives, and in Davison County. Yankton County was awarded funding this year to start its own program, while Brown

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County has been searching for a family to commit to the project since 2021.

"Our youth will eventually be back within our community and reunited with their families," said Katie Buschbach, Davison County youth diversion coordinator, "so getting services set up right away and fixing the issues within our own community while supporting the family with wrap-around services is the most beneficial way to begin the healing process."

Finding and keeping a family in place to serve such children is the most difficult part of the program. Davison County's original family moved shortly after being licensed, but the county licensed a new family earlier this year.

Kelsi Vinger, the diversion and juvenile detention alternative initiative coordinator for Brown County, said counties seek families who can be flexible, are willing to work with the court system and have connections to services within the community for the child.

Children can stay with a court resource home for up to seven days, and hosts must be willing to accept a child on short notice. In 2023, seven Brown County kids were identified as being good fits for a court resource home, but they were "unnecessarily held in secure detention" because there wasn't a licensed family, Vinger said.

Ohm served as a law enforcement officer for 15 years before he retired from the profession, choosing to teach self defense and martial arts and lead a ministry center in Watertown. Being a cop fit his values, but he wanted to prevent bad things from happening instead of reacting to them. His wife has professional training in human services.

"We know how to start wading through those crises with people based on our experience. Unfortunately, there's not a lot of people who do what we do or have done what we've done in general," Ohm said.

The Ohms serve as short-term role models and mentors to children. They have served two children since they've become licensed. The Davison County family, licensed earlier this year, has served one child.

It's less children served than either county estimated, but it's still worth it, said Louis Canfield, the director of youth diversion for Codington County.

"It just wouldn't make sense to have a standalone facility," Canfield said. "Even if it's just one kid a year that has to sit in jail, that isn't fair to that child. It's traumatizing."

The South Dakota Council of Juvenile Services oversees state awards for court resource homes from the federal Formula Grants Program. This summer, the council awarded \$30,000 to Brown County, \$21,860 to Codington County, \$25,564 to Yankton County and \$29,500 to Davison County.

Counties can apply for up to \$30,000 a year, which covers the cost of operating the program. Costs can include a coordinator salary stipend, a family home study or a licensing renewal fee, and monthly monitoring services from Lutheran Social Services.

The foster family receives an on-call stipend of \$100 a week with increased compensation up to \$550 a week when the family takes in a child. That money is used at the discretion of the foster family for things such as food, transportation to school or court, or any other needs of the child.

Ohm would like to see the licensing process streamlined so it's easier for interested families. He said



**The exterior of the Minnehaha County Juvenile Detention Center in Sioux Falls, pictured on Oct. 21, 2022.** (John Hult/South Dakota Searchlight)

the process was “cumbersome” and took months to complete when most of the training — intended for foster parents — wasn’t relevant to his family’s situation.

“They make you go through it,” he said.

Diversion coordinators across the state want to see court resource homes expanded to other counties. Vinger said the state might need to consider regionalization, since not all counties can afford the program. Such a decision might require guidance from the Unified Judicial System or the Legislature.

“I hope that we can get these programs up and running across the state so we have fewer kids unnecessarily going into our secure detention facilities,” Vinger said. “That plays a role in recidivism and keeping the public safe if we can meet these kids where they’re at, rather than throwing them into a facility because it’s closest and easiest for us.”

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

## The nation’s 911 system is on the brink of its own emergency

**South Dakota among at least eight states with outages this year**

**BY: STEPHANIE ARMOUR, KFF HEALTH NEWS - JULY 17, 2024 1:05 PM**

Just after lunchtime on June 18, Massachusetts’ leaders discovered that the statewide 911 system was down.

A scramble to handle the crisis was on.

Police texted out administrative numbers that callers could use, Boston Mayor Michelle Wu gave outage updates at a press conference outlining plans for the Celtics’ championship parade, and local officials urged people to summon help by pulling red fire alarm boxes.

About 7 million people went roughly two hours with no 911 service. Such crashes have become more of a feature than a bug in the nation’s fragmented emergency response system.

Outages have hit at least eight states this year. They’re emblematic of problems plaguing emergency communications due in part to wide disparities in the systems’ age and capabilities, and in funding of 911 systems across the country. While some states, cities, and counties have already modernized their systems or have made plans to upgrade, many others are lagging.

911 is typically supported by fees tacked on to phone bills, but state and local governments also tap general funds or other resources.

“Now there are haves and have-nots,” said Jonathan Gilad, vice president of government affairs at the National Emergency Number Association, which represents 911 first responders. “Next-generation 911 shouldn’t be for people who happen to have an emergency in a good location.”

Meanwhile, federal legislation that could steer billions of dollars into modernizing the patchwork 911 system remains waylaid in Congress.

“This is a national security imperative,” said George Kelemen, executive director of the Industry Council for Emergency Response Technologies, a trade association that represents companies that provide hard-



(Photo illustration by Seth Tupper/South Dakota Searchlight)



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ware and software to the emergency response industry.

"In a crisis — a school shooting or a house fire or, God forbid, a terrorist attack — people call 911 first," he said. "The system can't go down."

The U.S. debuted a single, universal 911 emergency number in February 1968 to simplify crisis response. But instead of a seamless national program, the 911 response network has evolved into a massive puzzle of many interlocking pieces. There are more than 6,000 911 call centers to handle an estimated 240 million emergency calls each year, according to federal data. More than three-quarters of call centers experienced outages in the prior 12 months, according to a survey in February by NENA, which sets standards and advocates for 911, and Carbyne, a provider of public safety technology solutions.

In April, widespread 911 outages affected millions in Nebraska, Nevada, South Dakota, and Texas. The shutdown was blamed on workers' severing a fiber line while installing a light pole.

In February, tens of thousands of people in areas of California, Georgia, Illinois, Texas, and other states lost cellphone service, including some 911 services, from an outage.

And in June, Verizon agreed to pay a \$1.05 million fine to settle a Federal Communications Commission probe into a December 2022 outage that affected 911 calls in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

The fires that raced across the Hawaiian island of Maui last August highlighted the critical importance of 911 systems. Dispatchers there fielded more than 4,500 contacts, meaning calls and texts, on Aug. 8, the day the fires broke out, compared with about 400 on a typical day, said Davlynn Racadio, emergency services dispatch coordinator in Maui County.

"We're dying out here," one caller told 911 operators.

But some cell towers faltered due to widespread service outages, according to county officials. Maui County in May filed a lawsuit against four telecommunications companies, saying they failed to inform dispatchers about the outages.

"If 911 calls came in with no voice, we would send text messages," Racadio said. "The state is looking at upgrading our system. Next-generation 911 would take us even further into the future."

Florida, Illinois, Montana, and Oklahoma passed legislation in 2023 to advance or fund modernized 911 systems, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. The upgrades include replacing analog 911 infrastructure with digital, internet-based systems.

Instead of just fielding calls, next-generation systems can pinpoint a caller's location, accept texts, and enable residents in a crisis to send videos and images to dispatchers. While outages can still occur, modernized systems often include more redundancy to minimize the odds of a shutdown, Gilad said.

Lawmakers have looked at modernizing 911 systems by tapping revenue the FCC gets from auctioning off the rights to transmit signals over specific bands of the electromagnetic spectrum.

But the U.S. Senate, in March 2023, for the first time allowed a lapse of the FCC's authority to auction spectrum bands.

Legislation that would allocate almost \$15 billion in grants from auction proceeds to speed deployment of next-generation 911 in every state unanimously passed the House Energy and Commerce Committee in May 2023. The bill, HR 3565, sponsored by Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-Wash.), would also extend the FCC's auction authority.

Other bills have been introduced by various lawmakers, including one in March from Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) and legislation from Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.) to extend the auction authority. For now, neither effort has advanced. Nine former FCC chairs wrote lawmakers in February, urging them to make 911 upgrades a national priority. They suggested Congress tap unspent federal covid-19 money.

"Whatever the funding source, the need is urgent and the time to act is now," they wrote.

Ajit Pai, who served as chair of the FCC from 2017 to 2021, said outages often occur in older, legacy systems.

"The fact that the FCC doesn't have authority to auction spectrum is a real hindrance now," Pai told KFF Health News. "You may never need to call 911, but it can make the difference between life and death. We need more of an organized effort at the federal level because 911 is so decentralized."

Meanwhile, some safety leaders are making backup plans for 911 outages or conducting investigations into their causes. In Massachusetts, a firewall designed to prevent hacking led to the recent two-hour outage, according to the state 911 department.

"Outages bring to everyone's attention that we rely on 911 and we don't think about how we really rely on it until something happens," said April Heinze, chief of 911 operations at NENA.

Mass General Brigham, a health system in the Boston area, sent out emergency alerts when the outage happened letting clinics and smaller practices know how to find their 10-digit emergency numbers. In the wake of the outage, it plans to keep the backup numbers next to phones at those facilities.

"Two hours can be a long time," said Paul Biddinger, chief preparedness and continuity officer at the health system.

*Stephanie Armour, senior health policy correspondent for KFF News, has reported on the Affordable Care Act, Medicaid, Medicare, covid-19, abortion, and how politics and regulations in Washington, D.C., affect patients, providers, and the health care industry. She has previously worked at The Wall Street Journal, Bloomberg, USA Today, The Des Moines Register, and the Daily Tribune in Ames, Iowa. She is a graduate of the University of Minnesota. Her journalism awards include earning a first-place National Headliner Award from the Press Club of Atlantic City, a first-place Sigma Delta Chi Award from the Society of Professional Journalists, and a first-place Consumer Journalism award from the National Press Club.*

## **Biden tests positive for COVID, will return home to Delaware**

**BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - JULY 17, 2024 5:28 PM**

President Joe Biden tested positive for COVID-19 on Wednesday, according to statements from White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre and the president's doctor.

"Earlier today following his first event in Las Vegas, President Biden tested positive for COVID-19," Jean-Pierre wrote in her statement. "He is vaccinated and boosted and he is experiencing mild symptoms."

Biden will return to Delaware to isolate while continuing to work and the White House will provide "regular updates," she said.

An accompanying statement from the president's physician said that Biden began experiencing a runny nose, cough and "general malaise" on Wednesday afternoon.

"He felt okay for his first event of the day, but given that he was not feeling better, point of care testing for COVID-19 was conducted, and the results were positive for the COVID-19 virus," the doctors statement said, later adding that a PCR confirmation test is pending.

"His symptoms remain mild, his respiratory rate is normal at 16, his temperature is normal at 97.8 and his pulse oximetry is normal at 97%," the doctor said. "The President has received his first dose of Paxlovid. He will be self-isolating at his home in Rehoboth."

Biden arrived at the Las Vegas, Nevada, airport around 3:20 p.m. local time to fly back to the East Coast, according to a White House pool report.

The president said he felt "good" before walking "cautiously up the stairs" to Air Force One, according to the report.

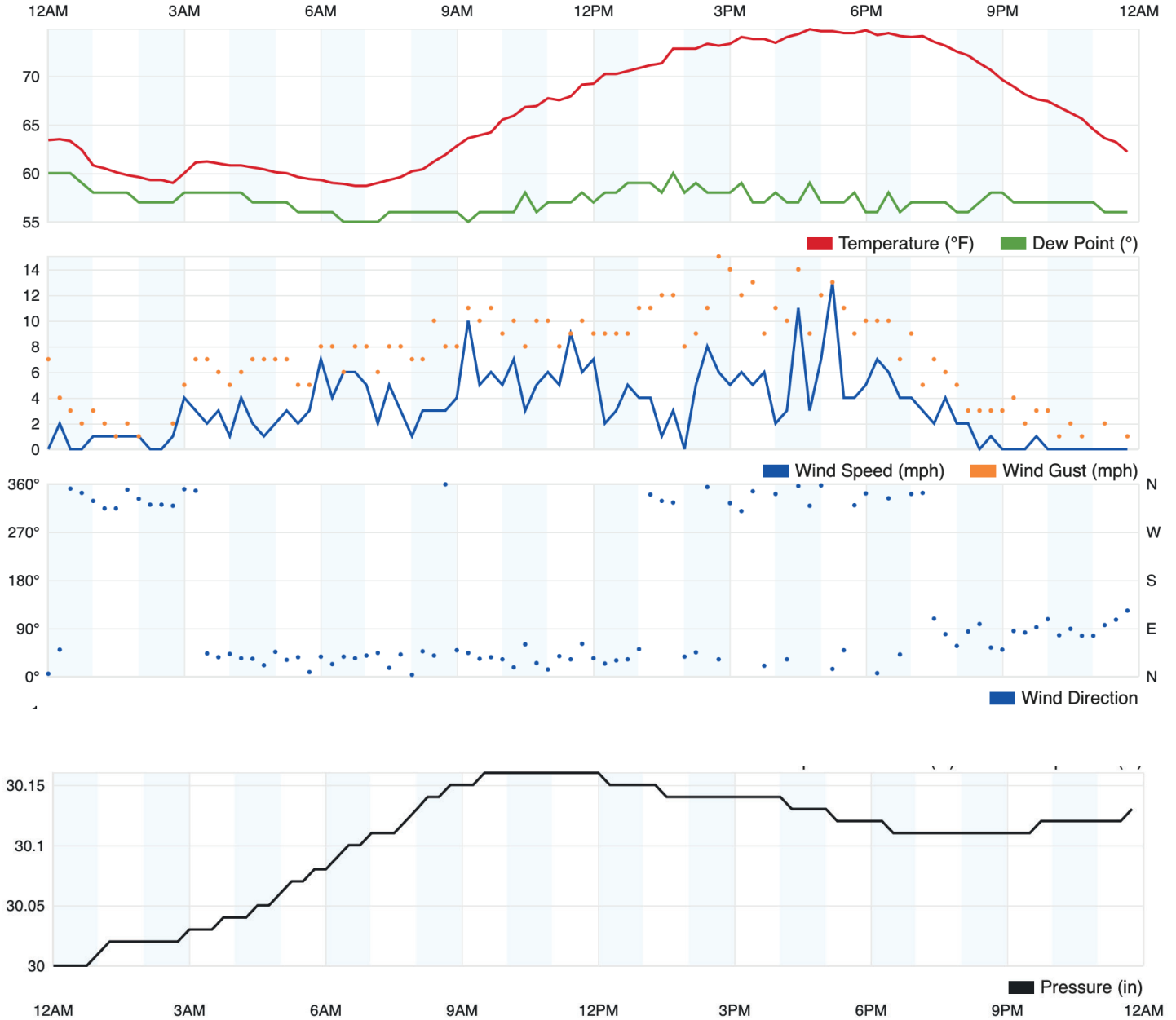
Biden previously tested positive for COVID-19 in July 2022 before being diagnosed with a rebound case later the same month.

*Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.*

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today

Tonight

Friday

Friday Night

Saturday



High: 84 °F

Sunny



Low: 61 °F

Mostly Clear



High: 85 °F

Chance  
T-storms



Low: 62 °F

Slight Chance  
T-storms



High: 84 °F

Mostly Sunny  
then Chance  
T-storms



## Rest of the Week Forecast

July 18, 2024  
4:01 AM

Today



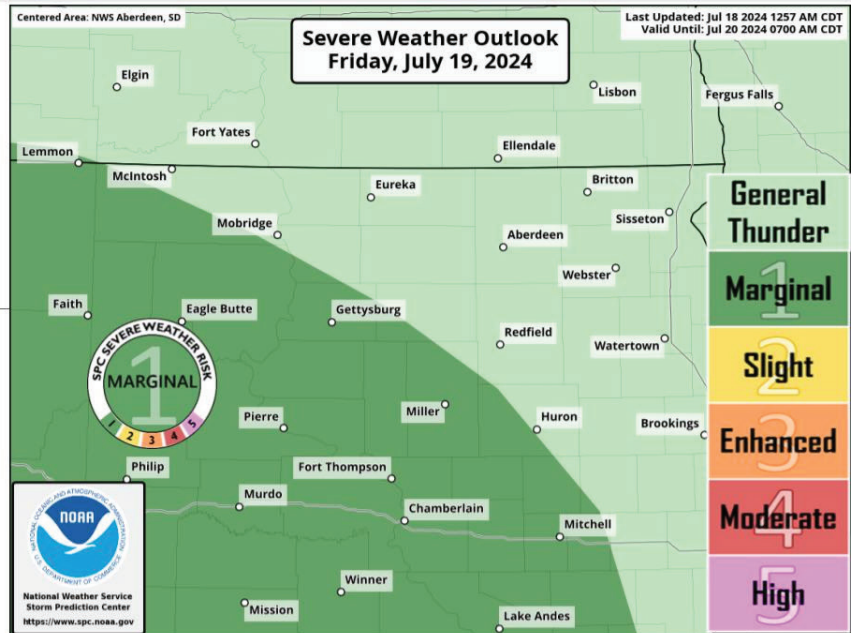
Highs: 78-89°

Friday



20-75% chance,  
highest over central  
SD

Highs: 80-89°



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

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

A beautiful day today with sunny skies and temperatures ranging in the upper 70s to the upper 80s, warmest around and west of the Missouri River. A system will bring a 20-75% chance of showers and thunderstorms Friday. A few strong to severe storms are possible Friday afternoon into the evening over portions of central SD.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 75 °F at 4:52 PM

Low Temp: 58 °F at 6:52 AM

Wind: 15 mph at 2:44 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 16 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 106 in 1936

Record Low: 40 in 1915

Average High: 85

Average Low: 60

Average Precip in July.: 1.99

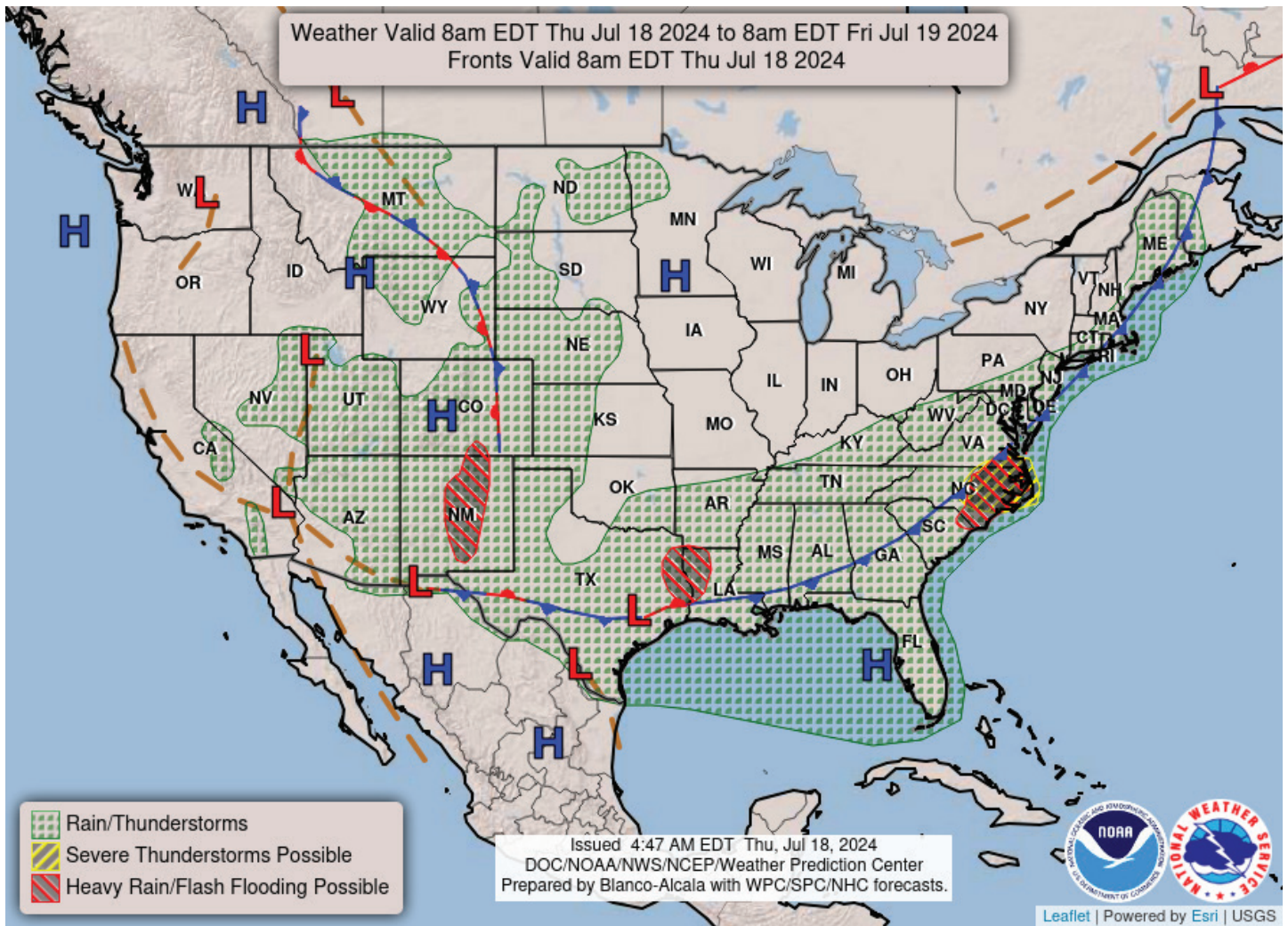
Precip to date in July: 3.56

Average Precip to date: 13.00

Precip Year to Date: 14.51

Sunset Tonight: 9:16:56 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:01:30 am



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## Today in Weather History

July 18, 1883: An estimated F3 tornado moved southeast from south of Redfield to north of Hitchcock, to 6 miles southeast of Crandon in Spink County. At least one farm house was destroyed and swept away. Three people were killed on one farm.

July 18, 1986: In the afternoon, an F2 tornado that touched down in the northern suburbs of Minneapolis became one of the most observed and photographed tornadoes ever. The detailed coverage included video from a Minnesota DOT traffic camera and a remarkable aerial video taken from a helicopter by a television camera crew. The tornado began in Brooklyn Park and moved slowly northeast, causing light to moderate damage. It then turned east and slowed as it crossed the Mississippi River. Also on this day, an F2 tornado touched down two miles southeast of Bryant, in Hamlin County. This tornado traveled near Dolph Creek and moved east along the creek to the Lake Norden area. The tornado damaged many trees and destroyed a barn. A second F2 tornado touched down three miles west of Toronto and moved southeast. The tornado destroyed a barn, silo, and six other buildings and caused extensive damage to farm equipment on a farm one mile south and a half mile west Astoria.

July 18, 2008: Severe thunderstorms developed across parts of central and north-central South Dakota bringing large hail up to the size of golf balls and damaging winds to near 80 mph. Some tree, vehicle, and building damage occurred with some of the storms. Eighty mph winds or higher brought down many branches along with some trees in Fort Pierre. Power was cut off for parts of Fort Pierre when branches fell on power lines. Several truck trailers and feed silos were tipped onto their sides by the high winds. Also, some buildings were damaged. A loaded train was pushed down the tracks almost a quarter of a mile by the strong winds. Seventy mph winds or greater brought down many tree branches along with some trees in Pierre. There were power outages in Pierre along with some buildings receiving damage. Damaging thunderstorm winds also downed six power poles between Sully Buttes and Onida knocking power out to over 800 homes in and around Onida.

64: The great fire of Rome breaks out and destroys much of the city on this day. Despite the well-known stories, there is no evidence that the Roman emperor, Nero, either started the fire or played the fiddle while it burned. The fire began in the slums of a district south of the legendary Palatine Hill. The area's homes burned very quickly, and the fire spread north, fueled by high winds.

1889 - A cloudburst in West Virginia along the small creeks in Wirt County, Jackson County and Wood County claimed twenty lives. Rockport, WV, reported nineteen inches of rain in two hours and ten minutes that Thursday evening. Tygart Creek rose 22 feet in one hour, and villages were swept away on Tygart, Slate, Tucker, and Sandy Creeks. (The Weather Channel)

1936 - The all time record high temperature for the state of Kansas was set when a 121-degree high temperature fried Fredonia. (US National Weather Service Wichita)

1942 - A record deluge occurred at Smethport in northern Pennsylvania, with 30.7 inches in just six hours. The downpours and resultant flooding in Pennsylvania were devastating. (David Ludlum)

1986 - One of the most photo-genic tornadoes touched down in the northern suburbs of Minneapolis, MN, during the late afternoon. The very slow moving tornado actually appeared live on the evening news by way of an aerial video taken by the KARE-TV helicopter crew. The tornado, unlike most, was quite the prima donna, staying visible to tens of thousands of persons for thirty minutes. It was moderate in intensity, with winds of 113-157 mph, and caused 650 thousand dollars damage. (Storm Data)

1988 - Sweltering heat continued in California, with record highs of 111 degrees at Redding and 112 degrees at Sacramento. Death Valley, CA, hit 127 degrees. Late afternoon and evening thunderstorms in the Central Plains Region produced baseball size hail at Kimball, NE, wind gusts to 79 mph at Colby, KS, and six inches of rain near Lexington, NE. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1996: A massive rainstorm in north central and northeast Illinois led to widespread flooding. Aurora reported 16.94 inches of rain, establishing a state record for the most rain in a single day. Other heavy totals included 13.60 inches at Joliet, 9.24 inches in Wheaton, 8.09 inches in DeKalb, and 7.82 inches at Elgin. This event is often called "the second most damaging weather disaster in Illinois History."

Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### THE GENERAL'S LAST REQUEST

As General Grant lay dying, his heart was troubled, and he desired to make things right with God. Turning to someone nearby he asked for a minister to come visit him.

"General," said the minister, "'The Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.' If you'll sincerely call upon Him from your heart, you'll receive mercy from Him and abundant pardon."

The minister then fell to his knees and prayed for the general, and General Grant received Jesus as His Savior. At that moment, he was wonderfully converted.

Thrilled, the minister said, "God's Kingdom has received a great acquisition in your conversion, General."

General Grant, thinking for a moment responded, "God doesn't need great men, but great men need God."

On the cross of Christ, God leveled the playing field. No one stands above the crowd. Each time we are reminded of the death of Jesus we must also remind ourselves that the "Son of man has come to seek and to save those who are lost."

No one is saved as a result of a great heritage or popularity. Our background or previous lifestyle does not matter. God saves us by "His special favor when we believe...in Him...because it is a gift from God."

Prayer: We thank You, Lord, for making it possible for all men everywhere to have equal access to Your grace and salvation and that there are no requirements. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Ephesians 2:8



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: 07.16.24

5 35 42 58 66 22

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$251,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 54 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.17.24

6 9 15 44 49 3

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$5,370,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 15 Mins 54 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.17.24

7 18 20 39 46 10

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 30 Mins 53 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.17.24

16 20 21 24 25

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$41,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 30 Mins 53 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.17.24

3 24 49 56 60 17

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 59 Mins 53 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.17.24

24 27 32 47 66 26

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$91,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 59 Mins 54 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
- 11/16/2024 Groton American Legion "Turkey Raffle" 6:30-11:30pm
- 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
- 04/12/2025 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt at the City Park 10am Sharp
- 05/03/2025 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 05/26/2025 Memorial Day Services Groton Union Cemetery with lunch at Legion Post #39, 12pm
- 07/04/2025 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/13/2025 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm
- 09/06/2025 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 10/31/2025 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
- 11/27/2025 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm

## News from the Associated Press

### Money from Washington's landmark climate law will help tribes face rising seas, climate change

By GENE JOHNSON and HALLIE GOLDEN Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Tens of millions of dollars raised by a landmark climate law in Washington state will go to Native American tribes that are at risk from climate change and rising sea levels to help them move to higher ground, install solar panels, buy electric vehicles and restore wetlands, Gov. Jay Inslee announced Tuesday.

The money — \$52 million — comes from the 2021 Climate Commitment Act, which auctions off allowances for heavily polluting companies to emit carbon, with the revenue invested in education, transportation and other programs. Conservative critics who blame it for increased gas prices are seeking to repeal the law in November.

Nearly every Native American tribe in Washington is receiving money. Among them is the 3,000-member Quinault Indian Nation on the Pacific coast of the Olympic Peninsula, which is getting \$13 million to help relocate its two main villages to higher ground, away from the tsunami zone and persistent flooding. Part of one of the villages is below sea level, separated from the roaring ocean by a seawall, and high tides and storm surges have flooded homes and government buildings.

"The Quinault is a perfect example of two things: people who are threatened by climate change, and people who are willing to do something about it and are confident in our ability to do something about it," Inslee said. "So when I think about what you're doing, it's very inspirational to me."

The tribe has spent at least a decade on the relocation effort, but so far a patchwork of federal and state grants has fallen far short of the expected cost.

The money will help fund a new building to house child and elder services, an emergency shelter and a new water tank and pump house on high ground to serve residents, government buildings and a relocated public school. It will also help pay for the development of a master plan and architectural drawings for a new museum and cultural center.

"We are incredibly grateful for this funding allowing us to take a big step forward in our mission to get our people, our homes and our critical infrastructure out of harm's way," Quinault President Guy Capoeman said in a statement issued by the state Commerce Department. "It will allow us to serve our elders and children, our most precious resource, in a safe space while providing an emergency shelter and operations base when we need to respond to inevitable flooding and other natural disasters that are part of life on the coast."

Inslee, a Democrat who is in his third and final term as governor, has frequently touted the Climate Commitment Act. Washington is in the process of connecting its carbon market with California and Quebec, which also have emission allowance auctions, but the law faces a ballot-box challenge in Initiative 2117, backed by conservative hedge fund executive Brian Heywood.

Inslee joined Capoeman and Commerce Director Mike Fong for a news conference Tuesday in Taholah, one of the Quinault villages being relocated, to announce the grants.

Twenty-eight federally recognized tribes in Washington, plus four others that are based elsewhere but have land in the state, are receiving at least \$750,000 each.

The Legislature made the \$52 million available in the 2023-25 budget, and the Commerce Department worked with the tribes to figure out how they wanted to use the money.

For the Skokomish Tribe north of Olympia, it's \$2 million to weatherize homes. For the Makah Tribe on the northwestern tip of the Olympic Peninsula, it's \$620,000 to install solar panels and battery backup at a community warming center, and \$750,000 for new wells that will help respond to drought by providing more access to drinking water.

The Lummi Nation in northwestern Washington will use some of its money to restore salmon in the

Nooksack River, and the Spokane Tribe in eastern Washington is looking to improve energy efficiency. The Shoalwater Bay Tribe, on a small peninsula at the mouth of a harbor on the Pacific coast, was also awarded funding to help plan a relocation to higher ground, about \$2.8 million.

## Far-right Israeli minister visits sensitive Jerusalem holy site, threatening Gaza cease-fire talks

By MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's far-right national security minister visited Jerusalem's most sensitive holy site on Thursday, threatening to disrupt Gaza cease-fire talks.

Itamar Ben-Gvir, an ultranationalist settler leader, said he had gone up to the contested Jerusalem hilltop compound of Al-Aqsa Mosque to pray for the return of the hostages "but without a reckless deal, without surrendering."

The move threatens to disrupt sensitive talks aimed at reaching a cease-fire in the 9-month-old Israel-Hamas war. Israeli negotiators landed in Cairo on Wednesday to continue talks.

The visit also came just days before Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu leaves for a trip to the United States, where he will address Congress.

Ben-Gvir said while standing in front of the golden dome of Al-Aqsa Mosque that he "is praying and working hard" to ensure that Netanyahu will not give in to international pressure and will continue with the military campaign in Gaza.

Ben-Gvir last visited the site in May to protest countries unilaterally recognizing Palestinian statehood.

He has been convicted eight times for offenses that include racism and supporting a terrorist organization. As a teen, his views were so extreme that the army banned him from compulsory military service.

As security minister, Ben-Gvir oversees the country's police force. As a key coalition partner, Ben-Gvir also has the power to rob Netanyahu of his parliamentary majority and try to force early elections.

Ben-Gvir has used his influence to push forward pet projects and encourage Netanyahu to press ahead with the war in Gaza in the face of widespread calls to reach a cease-fire deal that would bring home hostages.

Jews and Muslims both claim the Jerusalem hilltop compound, which is considered the holiest site for Jews.

Palestinians consider the mosque a national symbol and view such visits as provocative, though Ben-Gvir has frequently visited the site, revered by Jews as the Temple Mount, and Muslims as Haram al-Sharif, during tense periods. Tensions over the compound have fueled past rounds of violence.

In an overnight session that lasted into Thursday morning, Israel's parliament overwhelmingly passed a resolution rejecting the establishment of a Palestinian state. The vote was largely symbolic and meant to send a message ahead of Netanyahu's trip to the U.S.

Overnight Israeli strikes Thursday in central Gaza killed at least 11 people, according to the Hamas-run Civil Defense organization and hospitals. At least two children and two women were killed in air strikes on a house and a car.

In recent weeks, Israel has stepped up strikes in central Gaza, where many Palestinians have fled to escape fighting in other parts of the beleaguered territory. Israel's military said it targeted a senior commander from the militant Palestinian group Islamic Jihad's naval forces in Gaza City, and another Islamic Jihad commander responsible for launches in the city of Shejajiah.

The war in Gaza, which was sparked by Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel, has killed more than 38,600 people, according to the territory's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians in its count. The war has created a humanitarian catastrophe in the coastal Palestinian territory, displaced most of its 2.3 million population and triggered widespread hunger.

Hamas' October attack killed 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and militants took about 250 hostage. About 120 remain in captivity, with about a third of them believed to be dead, according to Israeli authorities.

## Student protesters vow 'complete shutdown' in Bangladesh as clashes continue

By JULHAS ALAM Associated Press

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP) — Police clashed Thursday with student protesters attempting to impose a “complete shutdown” in Bangladesh’s capital, following days of violent confrontations during demonstrations over a system of allocating government jobs.

Students have been demonstrating for weeks against a quota system for government jobs they say favors allies of the ruling party, but the protests have escalated since violence broke out between protesters, police and pro-government student activists on the campus of Dhaka University on Monday. Six people were killed on Tuesday, leading the government to ask universities across the country to close and police to raid the main opposition party’s headquarters.

As violence continued to take place on Thursday, Bangladesh’s Law Minister Anisul Huq said in the afternoon that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina asked him to sit with the protesters for a dialogue, and he was ready to sit down on Thursday if protesters were willing.

On Wednesday night, the protesters announced they would enforce “a complete shutdown” across the country on Thursday in response to security officials’ continued attacks on the campus demonstrators. The opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party said that it would do what it could to make the shutdown a success.

Clashes continued as protesters attempted to enforce the shutdown Thursday morning. In Dhaka’s Uttara neighborhood, hundreds of protesters were chased by police after they blocked the road and chanted. In other places, police fired tear gas and charged with batons to disperse the protesters, who threw stones in response. Scores, including police, were injured in the violence, said a spokesperson for the Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

Police said protesters attacked and set fire to a traffic police box and vandalized police vehicles amid clashes across the city.

Traffic was thin on Dhaka’s usually clogged streets on Thursday morning, while many malls closed. Offices and banks opened, but commuters complained that transport was limited. Police set up checkpoints at the entrances to Dhaka University.

Local television reported violence in other cities including Chattogram and Khulna, while protesters also blocked some major highways.

Salma Rahman, an official at a financial institution in Dhaka, said that she left her car at home and caught a ride on a motorcycle. “Our office has alerted us to stay safe on streets, as there is fear that violence could happen during the shutdown.”

Protesters are demanding an end to a quota system that reserves up to 30% of government jobs for family members of veterans who fought in Bangladesh’s war of independence in 1971. They argue that the system is discriminatory and benefits supporters of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, whose Awami League party led the independence movement, and they want it replaced with a merit-based system.

Hasina’s government halted the quotas after mass student protests in 2018. But last month, Bangladesh’s High Court nullified that decision and reinstated the quotas after relatives of the 1971 veterans filed petitions, triggering the latest demonstrations. The Supreme Court then suspended the High Court’s ruling and is expected to rule on Aug. 7. The government has also appealed the High Court decision in the wake of the protest, according to the attorney general’s office.

Huq said the government was seeking an early hearing.

“I have already asked the attorney general to appeal in the Supreme Court on Sunday seeking early hearing,” he told reporters. The Supreme Court had earlier set Aug. 7 to make decision on the quota issue. Friday and Saturday are parts of the weekend in Bangladesh. The court opens Sunday.

“I am requesting all to wait with patience until the verdict is delivered,” Hasina said in a televised address Wednesday evening. “I believe our students will get justice from the apex court. They will not be disappointed.”

While job opportunities have expanded in Bangladesh's private sector, many people prefer government jobs because they are stable and well paid. Each year, some 400,000 graduates compete for 3,000 jobs in the civil service exam.

Hasina said there would be a judicial probe into Tuesday's deaths and vowed that those responsible would be brought to justice.

"Some precious lives have been lost unnecessarily," she said. "I condemn every killing."

U.N. Human Rights chief Volker Türk said in a post on the social media platform X that all acts of violence and deadly use of force must be investigated and the perpetrators held accountable. Türk said freedom of expression and peaceful assembly are fundamental human rights.

Bangladesh's ruling party blamed the BNP for the chaos, and Dhaka police raided the party's headquarters late Tuesday. Detective Chief Harun-or-Rashid said police arrested seven members of the party's student wing, and said detectives found 100 crude bombs, 500 wooden and bamboo sticks, and five to six bottles of gasoline in the raid.

Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, a senior BNP leader, said the raid was a government attempt to divert attention from the protests.

## US journalist appears in court in Russia for second hearing on espionage charges that he denies

By KIRILL ZARUBIN and EMMA BURROWS Associated Press

YEKATERINBURG, Russia (AP) — Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich appeared in court in Russia on Thursday for the second hearing in his trial on espionage charges that he, his employer and the U.S. government vehemently deny.

The court said Gershkovich, 32, appeared for his trial, which is taking place behind closed doors in Yekaterinburg, a city in the Ural Mountains where the journalist was detained while on a reporting trip.

At the first hearing last month the court had adjourned until mid-August. But Gershkovich's lawyers petitioned the court to hold the second hearing earlier, Russian state news agency RIA Novosti and independent news site Mediazona reported Tuesday, citing court officials.

Gershkovich's employer and U.S. officials have denounced the trial as sham and illegitimate.

"Evan has never been employed by the United States government. Evan is not a spy. Journalism is not a crime. And Evan should never have been detained in the first place," White House national security spokesperson John Kirby said last month.

Authorities arrested Gershkovich on March 29, 2023, and claimed without offering any evidence that he was gathering secret information for the U.S.

The Russian Prosecutor General's office said last month that the journalist is accused of "gathering secret information" on orders from the CIA about Uralvagonzavod, a plant about 150 kilometers (90 miles) north of Yekaterinburg that produces and repairs tanks and other military equipment.

Gershkovich faces up to 20 years in prison if convicted.

Russia has signaled the possibility of a prisoner swap involving Gershkovich, but it says a verdict — which could take months — would have to come first. Even after a verdict, it still could take months or years.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Wednesday that Moscow and Washington's intelligence services are discussing Gershkovich's exchange according to Russian state news agency Tass.

Lavrov also suggested the "fuss" made by "the Americans" about any possible exchange is not helping talks to secure Gershkovich's release.

Gershkovich is almost certain to be convicted. Russian courts convict more than 99% of the defendants who come before them, and prosecutors can appeal sentences that they regard as too lenient, and they even can appeal acquittals.

The American-born son of immigrants from the USSR, Gershkovich is the first Western journalist arrested on espionage charges in post-Soviet Russia. The State Department has declared him "wrongfully detained," thereby committing the government to assertively seek his release.

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## The Latest | Israeli delegation arrives in Cairo for Gaza cease-fire talks

By The Associated Press undefined

An Israeli delegation has arrived in Egypt to press ahead with cease-fire talks, as Israel and Hamas consider the latest proposal. That's according to three Egyptian airport officials, who did not provide further details. International mediators are pushing Israel and Hamas toward a phased deal that would halt the fighting and free about 120 hostages held by the militant group in Gaza.

Talks were rattled over the weekend when Israel said it targeted the Hamas military commander in a massive strike. His status remains unclear.

Hamas' Oct. 7 attack sparked the war when militants stormed into southern Israel, killing some 1,200 people — mostly civilians — and abducting about 250. Since then, Israeli ground offensives and bombardments have killed more than 38,600 people in Gaza, according to the territory's Health Ministry. It does not distinguish between combatants and civilians in its count.

Two international courts have accused Israel of war crimes and genocide — charges Israel denies. Most of Gaza's 2.3 million people are crammed into squalid tent camps in central and southern Gaza. Israeli restrictions, fighting and the breakdown of law and order have limited humanitarian aid efforts, causing widespread hunger and sparking fears of famine.

Here's the latest:

Lebanese militant group says one of its leaders was killed in an Israeli drone strike

BEIRUT — Israeli drone strikes early Thursday in Lebanon killed at least one person, reported to be a militant leader of the Sunni al-Jamaa al-Islamiya, or the Islamic Group.

In a statement, the political and militant group identified him as Mohammad Hamed Jabbara, and said he was killed in a strike in the western Bekaa area in Lebanon not far from the Syrian border. The group gave no further details but Lebanon's state-run National News Agency said the drone fired a rocket at Mohammad Jabbara while he was driving a pickup truck.

The armed wing of the Islamic Group, the Fajr Forces, has also attacked northern Israel alongside its allies, Hamas and the Lebanese group Hezbollah. Similarly to Hamas in the Gaza Strip, the group's founded was inspired by the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Elsewhere in Lebanon, an Israeli drone struck a civilian vehicle in a village near the southern coastal city of Tyre. It's unclear who was in the vehicle and whether they were killed or wounded.

The Israeli military did not immediately comment on the strikes, though it has acknowledged in previous instances that its attacks have targeted Hezbollah militants and allies.

Hezbollah launched attacks against Israel after the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza on Oct. 7 with the Hamas attack on southern Israel.

Since then, Israeli airstrikes on Lebanon have killed over 450 people, mostly Hezbollah fighters but also more than 80 civilians and non-combatants. On the Israeli side, 21 soldiers and 13 civilians have been killed since the war in Gaza began.

Tens of thousands of people on both sides of the tense Lebanon-Israel frontier have been displaced in the monthslong war.

Israel extends law restricting foreign media on security grounds

JERUSALEM — Israel's parliament extended a temporary law which allows the country to shut down foreign media outlets they consider a threat to Israel's security. In a marathon session that lasted until early Thursday morning, the parliament gave final approval to extend the emergency law until Nov. 30.

Israeli officials used the new law on May 5 to close Qatar-based Al Jazeera within Israel, confiscating its equipment, banning its broadcasts and blocking its websites.

Under the law, Israel's Communications Ministry also briefly seized AP broadcasting equipment from southern Israel after accusing it of violating a new media law by providing images to Al Jazeera. The government returned the equipment to AP several hours later.

A bill that would make the emergency legislation permanent is currently making its way through the Israeli parliament. The draft said a permanent bill is needed because Israel "has faced serious security

threats since its establishment and is expected to continue to face them in the future, possibly even more severely.”

Critics say the measure passed earlier this year is undemocratic and a threat to press freedom.

Israeli strikes kill at least 11 people in central Gaza

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip — Overnight Israeli strikes Thursday in central Gaza killed at least 11 people, including women and children.

Early Thursday an Israeli strike hit a house in central Gaza, killing at least six people, while another strike later hit a car, killing at least three. The dead were taken to the Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, where an Associated Press journalist counted the bodies.

Among the six killed in the early strike in Zawaida were two children and two women. The area struck is close to Deir al-Balah, where many Palestinians displaced from across the war-torn Gaza Strip have fled.

Meanwhile, Gaza’s Civil Defense organization said they pulled two dead bodies and seven wounded from the rubble following an Israeli airstrike in Bureij that hit a family house.

Israel’s military said it had targeted two commanders from the militant Palestinian group Islamic Jihad, one from the group’s naval forces and the other responsible for launches in the city of Shujaiya.

## **President Joe Biden tests positive for COVID-19 while campaigning in Las Vegas, has ‘mild symptoms’**

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — President Joe Biden tested positive for COVID-19 while traveling Wednesday in Las Vegas and is experiencing “mild symptoms” including “general malaise” from the infection, the White House said.

Press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Biden will fly to his home in Delaware, where he will “self-isolate and will continue to carry out all of his duties fully during that time.” The news had first been shared by UnidosUS President and CEO Janet Murguía, who told guests at the group’s convention in Las Vegas that president had sent his regrets and could not appear because he tested positive for the virus.

Dr. Kevin O’Connor, the president’s physician, said in a note that Biden, 81, “presented this afternoon with upper respiratory symptoms, to include rhinorhea (runny nose) and non-productive cough, with general malaise.” After the positive COVID-19 test, Biden was prescribed the antiviral drug Paxlovid and has taken his first dose, O’Connor said.

Biden was slated to speak at the UnidosUS event in Las Vegas Wednesday afternoon as part of an effort to rally Hispanic voters ahead of the November election. Instead, he departed for the airport to fly to Delaware, where he had already been planning to spend a long weekend at his home in Rehoboth Beach.

The president’s diagnosis comes amid intense scrutiny of his health and stamina after a disastrous debate with former President Donald Trump that sparked a flurry of concern among Democrats that Biden is not up to the rigors of winning another presidential term.

Biden gingerly boarded Air Force One and told reporters traveling with him, “I feel good.” The president was not wearing a mask as he walked onto Air Force One.

The president had previously been at the Original Lindo Michoacan restaurant in Las Vegas, where he was greeting diners and sat for an interview with Univision.

Biden has been vaccinated and is current on his recommended annual booster dose for COVID-19. The vaccines have proven highly effective at limiting serious illness and death from the virus, which killed more than 1 million people in the U.S. since the pandemic began in 2020. Paxlovid has been proven to curtail the chances of serious illness and death from COVID-19 when prescribed in the early days of an infection, but has also been associated with rebound infections, where the virus comes back a few days after clearing up.

Biden last tested positive for COVID-19 twice in the summer of 2022, when he had a primary case and a rebound case of the virus.

Health officials have reported recent upticks in emergency room visits and hospitalizations from COVID-19. There has also been a pronounced increase in positive test results in much of the country — particularly the southwestern U.S.



## European leaders will discuss migration and Ukraine at a UK summit amid worry about Trump

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

WOODSTOCK, England (AP) — Leaders from across Europe gather at an English country mansion on Thursday for a summit clouded by worries about whether the United States would remain a reliable ally if Donald Trump secures a second presidency.

Newly elected U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer is welcoming some 45 heads of government to discuss migration, energy security and the threat from Russia as he seeks to restore relations between the U.K. and its European Union neighbors, four years after their acrimonious divorce.

The government said he'll tell the European Political Community gathering that the U.K. plans to "take a more active and greater convening role on the world stage," especially by helping Ukraine fight Russia's invasion and working to crack down on the people-smuggling gangs organizing irregular migration.

"We cannot let the challenges of the recent past define our relationships of the future," Starmer said. "That is why European security will be at the forefront of this government's foreign and defense priorities, and why I am focused on seizing this moment to renew our relationship with Europe."

When Britain agreed earlier this year to hold the one-day summit, Conservative leader Rishi Sunak was prime minister. His defeat in a July 4 election means it's Starmer who will welcome leaders to Blenheim Palace, a Baroque country house that was the birthplace of World War II Prime Minister Winston Churchill.

The guest list includes German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, French President Emmanuel Macron, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk and NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg.

"It's an incredibly useful occasion for Keir Starmer, because it gives him the chance to get to know a lot of European leaders," said Jill Rutter, a senior research fellow at the Institute for Government think-tank. "It's like Rishi Sunak organized a dating party for him."

The meeting is the fourth for the EPC group, a brainchild of Macron. It was established in 2022 as a forum for countries both inside and outside the 27-nation EU after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine shattered Europe's sense of security. Previous summits have been in Czech capital Prague; Chisinau, Moldova; and Granada, Spain.

The U.K. hopes this will be the best-attended summit to date, though EU chief Ursula von der Leyen is staying away as she fights to secure a second term as European Commission president from lawmakers in the European Parliament. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan also is not expected to attend.

Starmer's center-left government aims to rebuild ties with the EU strained by years of ill-tempered wrangling over Brexit divorce terms. A key priority is a new U.K.-EU security pact that Starmer hopes to strike soon.

The U.K. plans to work more closely with the European police agency Europol against people smuggling, part of measures to beef up border security following Starmer's decision to scrap the Conservatives' contentious and unrealized plan to send migrants arriving in the U.K. by boat on a one-way trip to Rwanda.

Participants also plan to discuss ways to defend democracy against interference and disinformation from Russia and others.

"We will only be able to secure our borders, drive economic growth and defend our democracies if we work together," Starmer said.

Delegates gathered at Blenheim Palace, about 60 miles (100 kilometers) northwest of London, will be treated to full British hospitality, including strawberries with cream and a reception hosted by King Charles III.

Many thoughts will likely stray to the U.S., where the weekend assassination attempt on Trump, the Republican presidential nominee, underscored how febrile and polarized politics has become ahead of the Nov. 5 election.

Trump's skepticism about NATO has long worried U.S. allies. Trump's choice of Sen. J.D. Vance, an opponent of U.S. military aid to Ukraine, as vice-presidential running mate has heightened concerns.

A senior EU official said that Trump was considered unpredictable and that the prospect of his return

was "one of the issues that's on everybody's minds."

The leaders planned to discuss "how we can prepare" for Trump's potential return, the official said, speaking on customary condition of anonymity because the official was not authorized to speak on the record.

## **The uncertainty that plagues life in crisis-ridden Venezuela is also wreaking havoc on relationships**

By REGINA GARCIA CANO Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Victoria Estevez finally met someone who saw past her shyness. They spent two months learning about their likes and dislikes, texting about their families and friends, and walking around their hometowns on Venezuela's Caribbean coast. On a trip to the capital in December, they held each other for the first time.

I-like-yous followed, and by February, they were calling it a relationship.

And then came heartbreak.

"Remember I had told you that I have a brother in the Dominican Republic? Well, I am going to leave the country, too," Estevez, 20, recalled reading in an early March WhatsApp message from her new boyfriend. He was the second guy in a row to blindside her with imminent plans to emigrate.

Nothing, not even love, has been spared the uncertainty that plagues everyday life in crisis-ridden Venezuela, which has seen several million people leave in the last decade or so. As a presidential election looms this month along with questions about Venezuela's future, many more are considering emigrating, wreaking havoc on the country's economy, its politics and its dating scene.

Young people are debating online and among themselves whether it's worth it to start a relationship — or whether to end one. Others are wondering when it is too soon or too late to ask the crucial question: Will you leave the country?

In a country rife with instability, dating is not spared

The last 11 years under President Nicolás Maduro have transformed Venezuela and Venezuelans.

In the 2000s, a windfall of hundreds of billions of oil dollars allowed then- President Hugo Chávez's government to launch numerous initiatives, including providing ample public housing, free health clinics and education programs.

But a global drop in oil prices, government mismanagement and widespread corruption pushed the country into the political, social and economic crisis that has marked the entirety of his successor's presidency: Decent paying jobs are rare. Water, electricity and other public services are unreliable. Food prices have skyrocketed.

The country that once welcomed Europeans fleeing war and Colombians escaping a bloody internal conflict has now seen more than 7.7 million people flee its shores. The government now faces its toughest test in decades in a July 28 election.

Accountant Pedro Requena has seen many a friend leave, but the news hit differently when the woman he had spent three "incredible" months dating in 2021 told him she was moving with her mom to Turkey. Requena, 26, was swooning over her, but he was committed to finishing his university degree and did not consider migrating.

With no guarantee of when they could visit each other, they still decided to give long-distance a try. They woke up early or went to bed late so that they could have video calls despite their seven-hour difference. They watched movies and TV shows simultaneously. They texted and texted and texted.

"Venezuelans adapt to anything," he said. "The crisis changes you."

Indeed, Venezuelans adapted their diets when food shortages were widespread and again when groceries became available but unaffordable. They sold cars and switched to motorcycles or stopped driving, when lines at gas stations stretched kilometers (miles). They stocked up on candles when power outages became the norm. They used the U.S. dollar when the Venezuelan bolivar became worthless.

But that unpredictability is disastrous for forming lasting bonds.

"The political instability actually introduces the instability into the relationship or into dating in general,"

said Dr. Amir Levine, a psychiatrist and research professor at Columbia University.

A disillusioned generation

For many of the young people fleeing Venezuela now, migration was not their first choice. First, they protested, standing on the front lines of massive anti-government demonstrations in 2017, when they were students.

The movement was met with repression and sometimes deadly force — and nothing changed: Maduro is still president, well paying jobs are nonexistent, and a car, a house and other symbols of adulthood did not materialize for this generation.

Now, instead of planning demonstrations, they plan one-way trips abroad.

Half of Kelybel Sivira's graduating class from law school — including people involved in the protests — has left the country.

The 29-year-old commercial lawyer reconnected online with a former classmate in May 2021, after he had already emigrated to the U.S. with his family. Their friendly conversations turned romantic, and they began to consider a relationship toward the end of 2022.

They have not seen each other in person for years. He is seriously considering returning to Venezuela in August regardless of the election outcome. She does not want that.

"I'm afraid that he will return to the country and say, 'Venezuela, I still hate you. This is not what I want,'" Sivira said. "I don't want to feel guilty."

Requena is also in a kind of limbo. Though he and his long-distance girlfriend decided to see other people, he still longs for the person he said was his perfect match.

"We keep in touch. The affection is always present," he said. "It ended, but the future is uncertain, and even more so with this country."

## **The uncertainty that plagues life in crisis-ridden Venezuela is also wreaking havoc on relationships**

By REGINA GARCIA CANO Associated Press

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Young people are debating online and among themselves whether it's worth it to start a relationship — or whether to end one. Others are wondering when it is too soon or too late to ask the crucial question: Will you leave the country?

"How had he not told me that there was a possibility he would leave?" Estevez asked after she was crushed.

In a country rife with instability, dating is not spared

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In the 2000s, a windfall of hundreds of billions of oil dollars allowed then- President Hugo Chávez's government to launch numerous initiatives, including providing ample public housing, free health clinics

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But a global drop in oil prices, government mismanagement and widespread corruption pushed the country into the political, social and economic crisis that has marked the entirety of his successor's presidency: Decent paying jobs are rare. Water, electricity and other public services are unreliable. Food prices have skyrocketed.

The country that once welcomed Europeans fleeing war and Colombians escaping a bloody internal conflict has now seen more than 7.7 million people flee its shores.

The government faces its toughest test in decades in a July 28 election.

A nationwide poll conducted in April by the Venezuela-based research firm Delphos showed that roughly a fourth of people are thinking about emigrating. Of those, about 47% said a win by the opposition would make them stay and roughly the same amount indicated that an improved economy would keep them in their home country. The poll had a margin of error of plus or minus 2 percentage points.

Accountant Pedro Requena has seen many a friend leave, but the news hit differently when the woman he had spent three "incredible" months dating in 2021 told him she was moving with her mom to Turkey. Requena, 26, was swooning over her, but he was committed to finishing his university degree and did not consider migrating.

With no guarantee she would ever return or he would ever be able travel across the world to see her, they still decided to give long-distance a try. They woke up early or went to bed late so that they could have video calls despite their seven-hour time difference. They watched movies and TV shows simultaneously. They texted and texted and texted.

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But that unpredictability is disastrous for forming lasting bonds.

"With the dating scenarios in Venezuela now, there's like a certain built-in insecurity, or lack of safety, in the system because people don't know what's going to happen," said Dr. Amir Levine, a psychiatrist and research professor at Columbia University. "The political instability actually introduces the instability into the relationship or into dating in general."

A blow to self-confidence

Bumble, Tinder, Grindr and other dating apps are available in Venezuela, but education student Gabriel Ortiz has used a feature of the messaging app Telegram to connect with people near him. That is how he found a man in October with whom he exchanged messages for a month before they met up.

A few dates followed and by the time they headed off to spend Christmas and New Year with their families, the 18-year-old thought he might soon be able to call the guy his boyfriend.

They exchanged text and voice messages while apart. A plan to leave Venezuela never came up.

"He gives me the news that he is leaving for the United States," Ortiz said of the WhatsApp messages he received in January.

It was a Sunday night. The man was leaving on Tuesday — and there wouldn't even be time for a goodbye.

Ortiz tried to be supportive in the conversation. The tears came later.

He said he understands many people choose to leave because of the economic and political upheaval — but the unexpected news was a blow to his self-confidence.

"This fosters insecurities in you because you ask yourself questions like: Could it be that he didn't like me enough to be honest with me from the beginning?" Ortiz said.

Levine, who co-authored the relationship book "Attached," said that just as people should be blunt on dating profiles and first dates about their expectations for marriage and children, Venezuelans should talk about their migration plans. It is never too soon to ask.

"Let yourself ask the right questions and not believe that everything is going to work out," he said.

Estevez learned that lesson the hard way. Caught off guard first by a guy who left her for Spain and

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now one who is moving to the Dominican Republic, she is very clear about what any future first date will look like.

"The first thing I'm going to ask is, 'Are you going to leave the country?'" she said. "You can't leave everything to fate! One has to say from the beginning, 'Look, I'm leaving.'"

A disillusioned generation

For many of the young people fleeing Venezuela now, migration was not their first choice. First, they protested, standing on the front lines of massive anti-government demonstrations in 2017, when they were students.

The movement was met with repression and sometimes deadly force — and nothing changed: Maduro is still president, well paying jobs are nonexistent, and a car, a house and other symbols of adulthood did not materialize for this generation.

Now, instead of planning demonstrations, they spend their time planning one-way trips abroad.

Half of Kelybel Sivira's graduating class from law school has left the country, worn out, as she put it, by devoting so much of themselves to the protests only to see that "the country simply moved on as if nothing happened."

In turn, the dating pool for her generation shrank.

Sivira, a 29-year-old commercial lawyer, reconnected online with a former classmate in May 2021, after he had already emigrated to the U.S. with his family. Their friendly conversations turned romantic, and they began to consider a relationship toward the end of 2022.

They have not seen each other in person for years. They don't know when they will even be able to hold hands. He lives in the U.S. illegally; her tourist visa was denied last year and her two applications for a special permit to enter the U.S. are pending approval. He is seriously considering returning to Venezuela in August regardless of the election outcome. She does not want that.

"I'm afraid that he will return to the country and say, 'Venezuela, I still hate you. This is not what I want,'" Sivira said. "I don't want to feel guilty."

Sivira just earned a degree in actuarial science and thinks that may open up job opportunities in Spain or another country where the two could eventually move. But even with an outline of a plan, uncertainty persists.

Requena is also in a kind of limbo. Though he and his long-distance girlfriend decided to see other people after a year living on different continents, he still longs for the person he said was his perfect match.

"We keep in touch. The affection is always present," he said. "It ended, but the future is uncertain, and even more so with this country."

## **GOP vice presidential pick Vance talks Appalachian ties in speech as resentment over memoir simmers**

By LEAH WILLINGHAM and JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — Newly minted vice presidential nominee JD Vance built his Wednesday night speech to the Republican National Convention around his own Appalachian roots, but it wasn't the first time he had shared his personal story.

Long before he was a U.S. senator from Ohio, Vance rose to prominence on the wings of "Hillbilly Elegy," a bestselling memoir that many thought captured the essence of Donald Trump's political resonance in a rural white America ravaged by joblessness, opioid addiction and poverty.

The 2016 book set off a fierce debate in the region. Many Appalachian scholars thought it trafficked in stereotypes and blamed working-class people for their own struggles, without giving enough weight to the decades of exploitation by coal and pharmaceutical companies that figure prominently in Appalachia's story.

Some of the resentment sparked by the book crossed party lines.

"A lot of us born and raised natives of Appalachia are just highly sensitive to the fact that knocking hillbilly is the final frontier of accepted prejudice in America," said TJ Litafik, an eastern Kentucky Republican

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political consultant and Trump supporter.

Litafik said he would vote for Trump no matter whom he chose as vice president, but Vance was not anywhere near the top of his list. That's in part because Vance had strong words to say against Trump around the time the book was published, even suggesting once that he might be "America's Hitler" in a text to a former roommate that later became public.

Litafik, who read "Hillbilly Elegy," subtitled "A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis," and saw the 2020 film adaptation, said Vance might come off as condescending to some voters. But he called the senator "dynamic and intelligent" and said Vance's accomplishments are undeniably impressive.

"I think to me and to a lot of my friends, JD Vance is something of an enigma," Litafik said. "We appreciate some of his recent convictions, but based on past history, there's a hesitancy there."

He said he's open to giving Vance a chance if he's willing to show his commitment to rural and blue-collar Americans by protecting them from policy proposals like those that would roll back expanded Medicaid, especially for drug treatment.

Vance was raised by his grandparents in Middletown, in southwestern Ohio, while his mother, whom he introduced during his speech Wednesday, battled an addiction he said she put behind her 10 years ago. He spent a significant amount of time traveling to Kentucky with his grandparents to visit family and said he hoped to be buried in a small mountain cemetery there.

He vowed in the speech to be "a vice president who never forgets where he came from."

Many conservatives loved the book. Among them were some who lobbied for Vance to be Trump's vice presidential pick. They include Donald Trump Jr.; Kevin Roberts, who leads the Heritage Foundation; and Turning Point USA's Charlie Kirk.

In an interview before Vance was selected, Illinois native Kirk said he thought both the book and movie were excellent.

"It's incredibly persuasive, and he's lived the experience that many Trump voters have," he said. "So it's not talking down to Trump voters, or people in the Midwest. He grew up in southwestern Ohio, in Appalachia, you know, raised by his Mamaw, and understands kind of how that part of the world stopped working. And he also now, of course, has an agenda and a vision and a passion to try to bring it back to prominence and greatness."

Roberts, a native of Lafayette, Louisiana, said he couldn't put the book down after discovering it, so true was it to his own life story.

"I think it's one of the most important books written in the past 20 years," he told The Associated Press before Vance's selection. "Not because he's in the Senate. It's just such an authentic portrayal of an experience that tens of millions of Americans have had."

Some critics acknowledge Vance's right to tell his own story. Where they have trouble is when he makes sweeping generalizations.

At one point, for example, Vance describes his grandmother's violent reaction to his grandfather coming home drunk after she had threatened to kill him if it happened again. In another scene, his grandparents curse out a store employee and smash a toy after one of their children was told not to play with it without paying.

"Destroying store merchandise and threatening a sales clerk were normal to Mamaw and Papaw," Vance wrote. "That's what Scots-Irish Appalachians do when people mess with your kid."

Ray Jones, the judge-executive of Pike County, Kentucky, and a former Democratic state senator, said he recognized nothing about his family's experience in "Hillbilly Elegy."

"Maybe that's his life story, but I thought the overall depiction of the people in eastern Kentucky was offensive," said Jones, whose grandfathers were both union coal miners. "I don't think that book is a fair depiction of the people of this region, and most certainly not the hard-working men and women here."

"The book paints the people of this region as white trash, and that's just not true," he said, before adding, "His story is obviously compelling to people who aren't from here."

Neema Avashia, a public educator and author from West Virginia who now lives in Boston, said she was unsettled by the book's tone, by its lack of representation of Appalachia's nonwhite residents and by what

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she called “sweeping generalizations” about working-class white people.

Avashia responded with her own memoir, “Another Appalachia,” about growing up Indian-American and queer in a West Virginia chemical plant community.

“People are allowed to write memoirs about whatever they want — it’s their life,” Avashia said. “I think where I really started to struggle was with the attempt to draw lines in terms of claiming sort of expertise around culture and characterizing like, entire groups of people.”

“I would never claim to say that my Appalachian story is the Appalachian story. It is an Appalachian story. It’s called ‘Another Appalachia’ for a reason. It’s ‘another’ because there are many.”

Avashia said the book’s popularity “is rooted in a desire to have your biases confirmed.”

Vance, whose office didn’t return a request for comment Wednesday, has acknowledged some criticism. He recently told The New York Times he’d distanced himself from “Hillbilly Elegy,” in order not to “wake up in 10 years and really hate everything that I’ve become.”

Sam Workman, a professor of political science at West Virginia University, called the book “poverty porn.” He said the reception to it has more to say about the disconnect between intellectual pundits in academics, politics, the media and rural working-class people than anything else.

“‘Hillbilly Elegy’ was so popular at the start, and all of a sudden everyone now dislikes it, because they realize the rabbit’s out of the hat in a way,” said Workman, who runs WVU’s Institute for Policy Research and Public Affairs. “This is really about a lot of liberal intellectuals being caught off guard as to what the real purposes of ‘Hillbilly Elegy’ were. It was the first foray into a really potent, conservative political career.”

On the heels of the book’s popularity, Vance started a charity called “Our Ohio Renewal” that he said he would use as a vehicle for helping solve the scourge of opioid addiction that he had lamented in the book. He shuttered the nonprofit shortly after clinching the Senate nomination in 2022.

## Democrats making a fresh push for Biden to reconsider running in runup to their own party convention

By LISA MASCARO, ZEKE MILLER and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrats worried about President Joe Biden’s ability to win this November are making a renewed push for him to reconsider his reelection bid, using mountains of data, frank conversations and now, his own time off the campaign trail after testing positive for COVID, to encourage a reassessment.

Biden has insisted he is not backing down, adamant that he is the candidate who beat Republican Donald Trump before and will do it again this year. But publicly and privately, key Democrats are sending signals of concern, and some hope he will assess the trajectory of the race and his legacy during this few days’ pause.

Over the past week, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries have spoken privately to the president, candidly laying out the views of Democrats on Capitol Hill, including their concerns.

Separately, the chair of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, Rep. Suzan DelBene of Washington, spoke with the president last week armed with fresh data. The campaign chief specifically aired the concerns of frontline Democrats who are seeking election to the House.

And on Wednesday, California Rep. Adam Schiff, a close ally of Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi, became the highest-profile House Democrat to call for Biden to drop his reelection bid, saying that while the decision is Biden’s alone to make, he believes it’s time to “pass the torch.”

While the tensions over Biden’s ability to carry on a winning campaign subsided some, particularly after the Trump assassination attempt and as the Republican National Convention was underway in Milwaukee, Democrats know they have limited time to resolve the party turmoil after the president’s faltering debate performance last month.

To be sure, many Democrats want Biden to stay in the race. And the Democratic National Committee is

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pushing ahead with plans for a virtual vote to formally make Biden its nominee in the first week of August, ahead of the Democratic National Convention that begins Aug. 19 in Chicago.

Late Wednesday, ABC News reported new details about Biden's private meeting over the weekend with Schumer at the president's beach home in Delaware. It said Schumer told the president it would be "better for the Democratic Party, and better for the country if he were to bow out."

A Schumer spokesperson called the report "idle speculation. Leader Schumer conveyed the views of his caucus directly to President Biden on Saturday."

White House spokesman Andrew Bates said Biden told Schumer, as well as Jeffries, that "he is the nominee of the party, he plans to win, and looks forward to working with both of them to pass his 100 days agenda to help working families."

But among Democrats nationwide, nearly two-thirds say Biden should step aside and let his party nominate a different candidate, according to a new AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll. That sharply undercuts Biden's post-debate claim that "average Democrats" are still with him even if some "big names" are turning on him.

Biden tested positive for COVID-19 while traveling Wednesday in Las Vegas and is experiencing "mild symptoms" including "general malaise" from the infection, the White House said.

The president, who has spent the past several days campaigning, had already been scheduled to return to his Delaware beach home even before the diagnosis.

Schiff's announcement brings to nearly 20 the number of Democratic members of Congress calling on Biden to withdraw from the presidential race in the wake of his dismal debate performance against Trump last month.

Schiff said that by bowing out, Biden would "secure his legacy of leadership by allowing us to defeat Donald Trump in the upcoming election."

Schiff is a prominent Democrat on his own, and his statement will also be watched because of his proximity to Pelosi.

It was Pelosi who revived questions about Biden post-debate, when she said recently that "it's up to the president" to decide what to do — even though Biden had already fully stated he had no intention of stepping aside. The former House speaker publicly supports the president, but has fielded calls from Democrats since debate night questioning what's next.

In response to Schiff's comments, the Biden campaign pointed to what it called "extensive support" for him and his reelection bid from members of Congress in key swing states, as well as from the Congressional Black and Hispanic caucuses. The campaign noted that Biden had been joined on his trip to Nevada this week by nearly a dozen Congressional Black Caucus members.

Still, Schiff's announcement came after Schumer and Jeffries encouraged the party to delay for a week plans to hold the virtual vote to renominate Biden, which could have taken place as soon as Sunday, according to two people familiar with the situation who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations.

The Democratic National Committee's rulemaking arm is set to meet on Friday to discuss how the virtual vote plans will work and to finalize them next week.

"We will not be implementing a rushed virtual voting process, though we will begin our important consideration of how a virtual voting process would work," Bishop Leah D. Daughtry and Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, co-chairs of the rules committee for the Democratic National Convention wrote in a letter Wednesday.

## **Hundreds attend vigil for man killed at Trump rally in Pennsylvania before visitation Thursday**

By MICHAEL SISAK Associated Press

SARVER, Pa. (AP) — Hundreds of people who gathered to remember the former fire chief fatally shot at a weekend rally for former President Donald Trump were urged to find "unity" as the area in rural



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Pennsylvania sought to recover from the assassination attempt.

Wednesday's public event was the first of two organized to memorialize and celebrate Corey Comperatore's life. The second, a visitation for friends, was planned for Thursday at Laube Hall in Freeport.

Outside Lernerville Speedway in Sarver, where the vigil was held for Comperatore, a sign read: "Rest in Peace Corey, Thank You For Your Service," with the logo of his fire company.

On the rural road to the auto racing track — lined with cornfields, churches and industrial plants — a sign outside a local credit union read: "Our thoughts and prayers are with the Comperatore family."

Comperatore, 50, had worked as a project and tooling engineer, was an Army reservist and spent many years as a volunteer firefighter after serving as chief, according to his obituary.

He died Saturday during the attempt on Trump's life at the rally in Butler.

Comperatore spent the final moments of his life shielding his wife and daughter from gunfire, officials said.

Vigil organizer Kelly McCollough told the crowd Wednesday that the event was not political in nature, adding that there was no room for hate or personal opinions other than an outpouring of support for the Comperatore family.

"Tonight is about unity," McCollough said. "We need each other. We need to feel love. We need to feel safe. We need clarity in this chaos. We need strength. We need healing."

Dan Ritter, who gave a eulogy, said he bought Comperatore's childhood home in 1993 — sparking a friendship that grew with their shared values of family, Christian faith and politics.

"Corey loved his family and was always spending time with them," Ritter said. "This past Saturday was supposed to be one of those days for him. He did what a good father would do. He protected those he loved. He's a true hero for us all."

Jeff Lowers of the Freeport Fire Department trained with Comperatore and said at the vigil that he always had a smile on his face.

Afterward, Heidi Powell, a family friend, read remarks from Comperatore's high school economics teacher, who could not attend the vigil.

"What made Corey truly extraordinary was his indomitable spirit, unyielding courage, his unflappable optimism," the teacher, Mark Wyant, wrote.

Comperatore's pastor, Jonathan Fehl of Cabot Methodist Church in Cabot, said the family "has been humbled by the way this community has rallied around them," and by the support they have received from people around the world.

The vigil concluded with people in the crowd lighting candles and raising cellphones, glow sticks and lighters as Comperatore's favorite song — "I Can Only Imagine," by Christian rock band MercyMe — played while pictures of him and his family were shown on a screen.

Two other people were injured at the rally: David Dutch, 57, of New Kensington, and James Copenhaver, 74, of Moon Township. As of Wednesday night, both had been upgraded to serious but stable condition, according to a spokesperson with Allegheny Health Network.

In a statement, Dutch's family thanked the "greater western Pennsylvania community and countless others across the country and world" for the incredible outpouring of prayers and well wishes.

Trump suffered an ear injury but was not seriously hurt and has been participating this week in the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee.

## **Bedwetting, nightmares and shaking. War in Gaza takes a mental health toll, especially on children**

By FATMA KHALED and WAFAA SHURAFI Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Nabila Hamada gave birth to twin boys in Gaza early in the war, in a hospital reeking of decaying bodies and full of displaced people. When Israeli forces threatened the hospital, she and her husband fled with only one of the babies, as medical staff said the other was too weak to leave. Soon after, Israeli forces raided the hospital, Gaza's largest, and she never saw the boy again.

The trauma of losing one twin left the 40-year-old Hamada so scared of losing the other that she became

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frozen and ill-equipped to deal with the daily burden of survival.

"I'm unable to take care of my other, older children or give them the love they need," she said.

She is among hundreds of thousands of Palestinians struggling with mental health after nine months of war. The trauma has been relentless. They have endured the killing of family and friends in Israeli bombardments. They have been wounded or disfigured. They have huddled in homes or tents as fighting raged and fled again and again, with no safe place to recover.

Anxiety, fear, depression, sleep deprivation, anger and aggression are prevalent, experts and practitioners told The Associated Press. Children are most vulnerable, especially because many parents can barely hold themselves together.

There are few resources to help Palestinians process what they are going through. Mental health practitioners say the turmoil and overwhelming number of traumatized people limit their ability to deliver true support. So they're offering a form of "psychological first aid" to mitigate the worst symptoms.

"There are about 1.2 million children who are in need of mental health and psychosocial support. This basically means nearly all Gaza's children," said Ulrike Julia Wendt, emergency child protection coordinator with the International Rescue Committee. Wendt has been visiting Gaza since the war began.

She said simple programming, such as playtime and art classes, can make a difference: "The goal is to show them that not only bad things are happening."

Repeated displacement compounds trauma: an estimated 1.9 million of Gaza's 2.3 million people have been driven from their homes. Most live in squalid tent camps and struggle to find food and water.

Many survivors of the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas in southern Israel that precipitated the war in Gaza also bear the scars of trauma, and are seeking ways to heal. The militants killed more than 1,200 Israelis and took around 250 hostage.

Sheltering near the southern city of Khan Younis, Jihad El Hams said he lost his right eye and fingers on his right hand when he picked up what he thought was a can of food. It was an unexploded ordnance that detonated. His children were almost hit.

Since then, he experiences sleeplessness and disorientation. "I cry every time I take a look at myself and see what I've become," he said.

He reached out to one of the few mental health initiatives in Gaza, run by the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees, known as UNRWA.

Fouad Hammad, an UNRWA mental health supervisor, said they typically encounter 10 to 15 adults a day at shelters in Khan Younis with eating and sleeping disorders, extreme rage and other issues.

Mahmoud Rayhan saw his family shattered. An Israeli strike killed his young son and daughter. His wife's leg was amputated. Now he isolates himself inside his tent and sleeps most of the day. He talks to almost no one.

He said he doesn't know how to express what's happening to him. He trembles. He sweats. "I've been crying and feel nothing but heaviness in my heart."

A relative, Abdul-Rahman Rayhan, lost his father, two siblings and four cousins in a strike. Now when he hears a bombardment, he shakes and gets dizzy, his heart racing. "I feel like I'm in a nightmare, waiting for God to wake me up," the 20-year-old said.

For children, the mental toll of war can have long-term effect on development, Wendt said. Children in Gaza are having nightmares and wetting their beds because of stress, noise, crowding and constant change, she said.

Nashwa Nabil in Deir al-Balah said her three children have lost all sense of security. Her eldest is 13 and her youngest is 10.

"They could no longer control their pee, they chew on their clothes, they scream and have become verbally and physically aggressive," she said. "When my son Moataz hears a plane or tank, he hides in the tent."

In the central town of Deir al-Balah, a psychosocial team with the Al Majed Association works with dozens of children, teaching them how to respond to the realities of war and giving them space to play.

"In the case of a strike, they place themselves in the fetal position and seek safety away from buildings or windows. We introduce scenarios, but anything in Gaza is possible," said project manager Georgette

Al Khateeb.

Even for those who escape Gaza, the mental toll remains high.

Mohamed Khalil, his wife and their three children were displaced seven times before they reached Egypt. His wife and children arrived in January and he joined them in March. Their 8-year-old daughter would hide in the bathroom during shelling and shooting, saying, "We are going to die."

Their 6-year-old son could sleep only after his mother told him that dying as a martyr is an opportunity to meet God and ask for the fruits and vegetables they didn't have in hunger-ravaged Gaza.

Khalil recalled their terror as they escaped on foot down a designated "safe corridor" with Israeli guns firing nearby.

Even after arriving in Egypt, the children are introverted and fearful, Khalil said.

They have enrolled in a new initiative in Cairo, Psychological and Academic Services for Palestinians, which offers art and play therapy sessions and math, language and physical education classes.

"We saw a need for these children who have seen more horror than any of us will ever see," said its founder, psychologist Rima Balshe.

On a recent field trip, she recalled, 5-year-old twins from Gaza who were playing and suddenly froze when they heard helicopters.

"Is this an Israeli warplane?" they asked. She explained it was an Egyptian aircraft.

"So Egyptians like us?" they asked. "Yes," she reassured them. They had left Gaza, but Gaza had not left them.

There is hope that children traumatized by the war can heal, but they have a long way to go, Balshe said.

"I wouldn't say 'recovering' but I certainly see evidence of beginning to heal. They may not ever fully recover from the trauma they endured, but we are now working on dealing with loss and grief," she said. "It's a long process."

## **US Army honors Nisei combat unit that helped liberate Tuscany from Nazi-Fascist forces in WWII**

ROME (AP) — The U.S. military is celebrating a little-known part of World War II history, honoring the Japanese-American U.S. Army unit that was key to liberating parts of Italy and France even while the troops' relatives were interned at home as enemies of the state following Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor.

Descendants of the second-generation "Nisei" soldiers traveled to Italy from around the United States — California, Hawaii and Colorado — to tour the sites where their relatives fought and attend a commemoration at the U.S. military base in Camp Darby ahead of the 80th anniversary Friday of the liberation of nearby Livorno, in Tuscany.

Among those taking part were cousins Yoko and Leslie Sakato, whose fathers each served in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, which went on to become the most decorated unit in the history of the U.S. military for its size and length of service.

"We wanted to kind of follow his footsteps, find out where he fought, where he was, maybe see the territories that he never ever talked about," said Yoko Sakato, whose father Staff Sgt. Henry Sakato was in the 100th Battalion, Company B that helped liberate Tuscany from Nazi-Fascist rule.

The 442nd Infantry Regiment, including the 100th Infantry Battalion, was composed almost entirely of second-generation American soldiers of Japanese ancestry, who fought in Italy and southern France. Known for its motto "Go For Broke," 21 of its members were awarded the Medal of Honor.

The regiment was organized in 1943, in response to the War Department's call for volunteers to form a segregated Japanese American army combat unit. Thousands of Nisei — second-generation Japanese Americans — answered the call.

Some of them fought as their relatives were interned at home in camps that were established in 1942, after Pearl Harbor, to house Japanese Americans who were considered to pose a "public danger" to the United States. In all, some 112,000 people, 70,000 of them American citizens, were held in these "relocation centers" through the end of the war.

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The Nisei commemoration at Camp Darby was held one week before the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Livorno, or Leghorn, on July 19, 1944. Local residents were also commemorating the anniversary this week.

In front of family members, military officials and civilians, Yoko Sakato placed flowers at the monument in memory of Pvt. Masato Nakae, one of the 21 Nisei members awarded the Medal of Honor.

"I was feeling close to my father, I was feeling close to the other men that I knew growing up, the other veterans, because they had served, and I felt really like a kinship with the military who are here," she said.

Sakato recalled her father naming some of the areas and towns in Tuscany where he had fought as a soldier, but always in a very "naïve" way, as he was talking to kids.

"They were young, it must have been scary, but they never talked about it, neither him nor his friends," Sakato said of her father, who died in 1999.

Her cousin Leslie Sakato's father fought in France and won a Medal of Honor for his service. "It was like coming home," she said of the commemoration.

## **JD Vance introduces himself as Trump's running mate and makes direct appeal to his native Rust Belt**

By JILL COLVIN, STEVE PEOPLES and JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

MILWAUKEE (AP) — JD Vance introduced himself to a national audience Wednesday after being chosen as Donald Trump's running mate, sharing the story of his hardscrabble upbringing and making the case that his party best understands the challenges facing struggling Americans.

Speaking to a packed arena at the Republican National Convention, the Ohio senator cast himself as fighter for a forgotten working class, making a direct appeal to the Rust Belt voters who helped drive Trump's surprise 2016 victory and voicing their anger and frustration.

"In small towns like mine in Ohio, or next door in Pennsylvania, or in Michigan, in states all across our country, jobs were sent overseas and children were sent to war," he said.

"To the people of Middletown, Ohio, and all the forgotten communities in Michigan, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Ohio, and every corner of our nation, I promise you this," he said. "I will be a vice president who never forgets where he came from."

The 39-year-old Ohio senator is a relative political unknown, having served in the Senate for less than two years. He rapidly morphed in recent years from a bitter critic of the former president to an aggressive defender and is now positioned to become the future leader of the party and the torch-bearer of Trump's "Make America Great Again" political movement.

The first millennial to join the top of a major party ticket, Vance enters the race as questions about the age of the men at the top — 78-year-old Trump and 81-year-old President Joe Biden — have been high on the list of voters' concerns. He also joins Trump after an assassination attempt against the former president — in which Trump came perhaps millimeters from death or serious injury — underscoring the importance of a potential successor.

But Trump's decision to choose Vance wasn't about picking a running mate or the next vice president, said Indiana Rep. Jim Banks, who introduced the senator at a fundraiser earlier Wednesday.

"Donald Trump picked a man in JD Vance that is the future of the country, the future of the Republican Party, the future of the America First movement," he said.

Vance shared his story and introduced his family

In his speech, Vance shared his story of growing up poor in Kentucky and Ohio, his mother addicted to drugs and his father absent. He later joined the Marines, graduated from Yale Law School, and went on to the highest levels of U.S. politics — an embodiment of an American dream he said is in now in short supply.

"Never in my wildest imagination could I have believed that I'd be standing here tonight," he said.

Vance gained prominence following the publication of his bestselling 2016 memoir "Hillbilly Elegy," which tells the story of his blue-collar roots. The book became a must-read for those seeking to understand the cultural forces that propelled Trump to the White House that year. Vance spent years as a Trump critic,

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assailing the former president with insults, before he changed his mind.

Vance, who had never attended, let alone spoken at a previous Republican convention, spent much of his speech talking up Trump and going after Biden, using his relative youth to draw a contrast with the 81-year-old president.

Vance says he was in fourth grade when "a career politician by the name of Joe Biden supported NAFTA, a bad trade deal that sent countless good American manufacturing jobs to Mexico."

"Joe Biden has been a politician in Washington as long as I've been alive," he added. "For half a century, he's been a champion of every single policy initiative to make America weaker and poorer."

The crowd inside the convention hall welcomed Vance warmly. They erupted into chants of "Mamaw!" in honor of his grandmother, and chanted "JD's Mom!" after he introduced his mother, a former addict who has been sober for 10 years.

Vance was introduced Wednesday night by his wife, Usha Chilukuri Vance, who talked of the stark difference between how she and her husband grew up — she a middle-class immigrant from San Diego, and he from a low-income Appalachian family. She called him "a meat and potatoes kind of guy" who respected her vegetarian diet and learned to cook Indian food for her mother.

Trump, again wearing a bandage over his injured ear, watched Vance speak from his family box and was often seen smiling.

Most Americans — and Republicans — didn't know much about Vance before Wednesday night. According to a new poll from the AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, which was conducted before Trump selected the freshman senator as his choice, 6 in 10 Americans don't know enough about him to have formed an opinion. That includes 61% of Republicans.

Democrats have attacked Vance for his past support for a national abortion ban, his criticism of U.S. involvement in Ukraine, and his eagerness to blame Democrats for Trump's assassination attempt. But the young senator steered clear of such controversies in his remarks, which were light on the red-meat conservative attacks that convention audience typically expect.

Biden's campaign responded with a blistering statement calling Vance "unprepared, unqualified, and willing to do anything Donald Trump demands."

"Tonight, J.D. Vance, the poster boy for Project 2025, took center stage. But it's working families and the middle class who will suffer if he's allowed to stay there," said Michael Tyler, Biden campaign communication director.

A Trump aide just released from prison electrified the crowd

Convention organizers had stressed a theme of unity, even before Trump survived an attempted assassination at a rally in Pennsylvania Saturday. Trump's refusal to accept the results of the 2020 election and the subsequent attack on the U.S. Capitol, officials said, would be absent from the stage.

But that changed with former White House official Peter Navarro, who was greeted with a standing ovation hours after being released from a Miami prison where he served four months for defying a subpoena from the congressional committee investigating the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol by a mob of the former president's supporter.

"If they can come for me, if they can come for Donald Trump, be careful. They will come for you," he said in a fiery speech, comparing his legal troubles to those faced by Trump, who earlier this year was convicted on 34 felony charges in his criminal hush money trial.

Also spotted on the floor of the convention: Paul Manafort, Trump's 2016 campaign chair, and Roger Stone, who were both convicted as part of the investigation into Russia's meddling in that election. Trump pardoned both Manafort and Stone.

Families blamed Biden for the losses of their loved ones

Beyond Vance's primetime speech, the Republican Party focused Wednesday on a theme of American global strength.

In a particularly powerful moment, the relatives of service members killed during Biden's disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan took the stage, holding photographs of their loved ones.

Christy Shamblin, whose daughter-in-law Marine Sgt. Nicole Gee died in the attack, spoke of the six

hours she said Trump spent with her family in Bedminster, New Jersey and “spoke to us in a way that made us feel understood.”

“Donald Trump carried the weight for a few hours with me. And for the first time since Nicole’s death I felt I wasn’t alone in my grief,” she said.

Herman Lopez, whose son, Marine Cpl. Hunter Lopez, was among those killed, read aloud the names of all 13 U.S. service members who died in the Aug. 26, 2021, attack.

Also featured were the parents of Omer Neutra, one of eight Americans still being held hostage in Gaza after the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas.

His parents, Ronen and Orna, said Trump called them after their son, a soldier in the Israeli army, was captured, and offered support. As they spoke, the crowd chanted “Bring them home!”

## **FACT FOCUS: Trump, in Republican convention video, alludes to false claim 2020 election was stolen**

By MELISSA GOLDIN Associated Press

DONALD TRUMP, alluding that the 2020 vote was stolen: “Whether you vote early, absentee, by mail or in person, we are going to protect the vote. That’s the most important thing we have to do is protect the vote. Keep your eyes open because these people want to cheat and they do cheat. And frankly, it’s the only thing they do well.”

THE FACTS: In a prerecorded video at the Republican National Convention on Wednesday, former President Donald Trump referenced baseless claims he made repeatedly after he lost the 2020 presidential race — that the election was “rigged” and that Democrats cheated to put President Joe Biden in the White House.

The election was not stolen.

Biden earned 306 electoral votes to Trump’s 232, the same margin that Trump had when he beat Hillary Clinton in 2016, which he repeatedly described as a “landslide.” (Trump ended up with 304 electoral votes because two electors defected.) Biden achieved victory by prevailing in key states such as Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, Arizona and Georgia.

Trump’s allegations of massive voting fraud have been refuted by a variety of judges, state election officials and an arm of his own administration’s Homeland Security Department.

In 2020, then-Attorney General William Barr told the AP that no proof of widespread voter fraud had been uncovered. “To date, we have not seen fraud on a scale that could have effected a different outcome in the election,” he said at the time.

## **‘One screen, two movies’: Conflicting conspiracy theories emerge from Trump shooting**

By DAVID KLEPPER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A former president is shot, the gunman quickly neutralized, and all of it is caught on camera. But for those who don’t believe their eyes, that’s just the start of the story.

For some supporters of former President Donald Trump, the failure of the Secret Service to prevent the attempted assassination point to a conspiracy orchestrated by President Joe Biden. For some of Trump’s critics, however, the details of the shooting don’t add up. They wonder if Trump somehow staged the whole thing.

Two dueling conspiracy theories are taking root online following Trump’s attempted assassination, one for each end of America’s polarized political spectrum. In this split-screen republic, Americans are increasingly choosing their own reality, at the expense of a shared understanding of the facts.

“One screen, two movies,” is how Ron Bassilian describes the online reaction to Saturday’s shooting. Bassilian is a prolific user of social media and has used X to broadcast his conjecture about the shooting.

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"People have their beliefs, and they're going to come up with theories that fit their beliefs."

Bassilian is one of many Republicans now questioning how the suspected gunman, Thomas Matthew Crooks, was able to climb to the roof of a building providing a clear shot at Trump, and whether law enforcement looked the other way to allow the attempt. Bassilian acknowledged that he doesn't have proof to back up his conjecture. But the Culver City, California, resident said many people will be distrustful of explanations until an independent review of the facts is completed.

"It seems highly suspicious," Bassilian said of the attack on Trump and the law enforcement response. "Something was going on that was more than a slip up."

Authorities have so far released no information about Crooks' possible motive, though they have said they believe he acted alone. But a lack of details from law enforcement and mounting questions about the Secret Service's performance have led online sleuths to speculate — often in ways that reveal their own ideological leanings.

Some of the claims about the shooting have already been debunked. Despite claims that the Secret Service refused to give Trump extra security before the rally, the agency says it actually increased staffing. A post from someone claiming to be a law enforcement sniper at the rally — who said they were ordered not to fire on the suspect — was discredited after it turned out no sharpshooter by his name was working on Saturday. And a photo that supposedly showed an uninjured Trump after the rally turned out to be a picture from 2022.

Humans have an inherent drive to share information and conjecture following big events like disasters, political assassinations or seemingly inexplicable events — a process experts call "collective sensemaking." Often, experts say, we look for information that makes us feel safe, or in control of uncertainty. Trump's attempted assassination is only the most recent example on a list that also includes the JFK assassination, the Moon landing, the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, the Sandy Hook school shooting, COVID-19 and the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

Many of the claims about the Trump assassination attempt emerged first on fringe social media platforms like 4chan before migrating to larger sites like X or TikTok where they were seen by far more people.

"Rumoring under these conditions is a normal thing that humans do," said Kate Starbird, a University of Washington professor who studies misinformation and how people use the internet following crises. Attempts to put the shooting in a political context began within minutes of the shooting, Starbird said. "People tried almost from the beginning to frame the event in a way that benefits their political goals."

Many of those rumors may contain exaggerations, missing context or outright falsehoods that generate conspiracy theories. The misleading information is then amplified by online trolls, politicians, internet influencers and online merchants trying to hawk merchandise tied to the assassination attempt. With few guardrails in place to combat bad information online, such claims can quickly spread, impacting the election in 2024 and potentially persisting for years to come.

The flood of false or misleading information about the shooting will only make it harder for voters to find trustworthy information ahead of the 2024 election, according to Imran Ahmed, the CEO and founder of the Center for Countering Digital Hate, a nonprofit that tracks online misinformation and hate speech. Ahmed blames social media platforms like X, TikTok and Facebook for not enforcing basic content moderation policies and for making the spread of misinformation and hate speech into a lucrative business model.

Ahmed's group analyzed 100 posts about the shooting that were recommended to users on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, and found that many contained conspiracy theories. Only about 1 in 20 false posts had been flagged for inaccuracies or missing context using X's "community note" feature to add needed information. In two days, the posts had been seen more than 215 million times. Some of the viral posts also contained hate speech, such as those suggesting Saturday's shooting was a plot by Jewish people.

"The algorithms take the most outlandish content and amplify it exponentially until the entire digital world is flooded with conspiracism, disinformation and hate," Ahmed said. As a result, he said, "People seem to feel that they can only fight lies with more lies."

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Russian state media and some pro-Kremlin influencers are already seizing on the shooting with content blaming Democrats for the incident or questioning authorities' explanations, based on recent posts from users with ties to Russia.

"Almost makes you think they let it happen and then got rid of the guy because dead men tell no tales," wrote John Mark Dougan, a former Florida sheriff's deputy turned online influencer who now writes pro-Kremlin content.

Russia, as well as China and Iran, have used social media disinformation in the past in efforts to undermine Americans' trust in government and democracy and increase polarization ahead of elections. The goal is to exploit the understandable confusion, anger and concern that many Americans feel following the attempted assassination. Federal officials say they expect Russia and other adversaries to expand their disinformation campaigns targeting the U.S. as November nears.

Conspiracy theories have played an outsized role in recent American politics, and much of the attention has focused on right-leaning theories like QAnon, a movement which claims that Democrats are involved in a global ring of Satanic, child molesting cannibals. But the onslaught of misinformation and conspiracy theories following the attempted assassination show conspiracy theories know no party.

"They target the left and right, and the same goes for homegrown domestic sources of misinformation," said David Salvo, a senior fellow and managing director of the Alliance for Securing Democracy, a Washington-based group that tracks foreign disinformation. He has this advice for anyone interested in finding reliable, trustworthy information about the shooting: "Check your sources, and check the agenda behind those sources."

## **Uncertainty is the winner and incumbents the losers so far in a year of high-stakes global elections**

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Discontented, economically squeezed voters have turned against sitting governments on both right and left during many of the dozens of elections held this year, as global power blocs shift and political certainties crumble.

From India to South Africa to Britain, voters dealt blows to long-governing parties. Elections to the European Parliament showed growing support for the continent's far right, while France's centrist president scrambled to fend off a similar surge at home.

If there's a global trend, Eurasia Group president Ian Bremmer said at a summit in Canada in June, it's that "people are tired of the incumbents."

More than 40 countries have held elections already this year. More uncertainty awaits — nations home to over half the world's population are going to the polls in 2024. The world is already anxiously turning to November's presidential election in the U.S., where an acrimonious campaign was dealt a shocking blow by an assassination attempt against Republican nominee and former president, Donald Trump.

Unpopular incumbents

Aftershocks from the COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts in Africa, Europe and the Middle East, and spiking prices for food and fuel have left dissatisfied voters eager for change.

"Voters really, really don't like inflation," said Rob Ford, professor of political science at the University of Manchester. "And they punish governments that deliver it, whether they are at fault or not."

Inflation and unemployment are rising in India, the world's largest democracy, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party unexpectedly lost its parliamentary majority after a decade of dominance. Modi was forced to rely on coalition partners to govern as the opposition doubled its strength in parliament.

In South Africa, sky-high rates of unemployment and inequality helped drive a dramatic loss of support for the African National Congress, which had governed ever since the end of the apartheid system of white minority rule in 1994.

The party once led by Nelson Mandela lost its parliamentary majority for the first time and was forced



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to enter a coalition with opposition parties.

In Britain, the center-left Labour Party won election in a landslide, ousting the Conservatives after 14 years. As in so many countries, Prime Minister Keir Starmer faces a jaded electorate that wants lower prices and better public services — but is deeply skeptical of politicians' ability to deliver change.

US-China tensions

Caught between world powers China and the United States, Taiwan held one of the year's most significant elections.

Lai Ching-te, of the Democratic Progressive Party, won a presidential election that was seen as a referendum on the island's relationship with China, which claims Taiwan as its own.

Beijing regards Lai as a separatist and ramped up military pressure with drills in the Taiwan Strait. Lai has promised to strengthen the defenses of the self-governing island, and the U.S. has pledged to help it defend itself, heightening tensions in one of the world's flashpoints.

In Bangladesh, an important partner of the U.S. that has drawn closer to China, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina won a fourth successive term in an election that opposition parties boycotted. The U.S. and U.K. said the vote was not credible, free or fair.

Political dynasties

In several countries, family ties helped secure or cement power.

Pakistan held messy parliamentary elections — under the eye of the country's powerful military — that saw well established political figures vie to become prime minister. The winner, atop a coalition government, was Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, younger brother of three-time premier Nawaz Sharif.

Opponents say the election was rigged in his favor, with opponent and former prime minister, Imran Khan, imprisoned and blocked from running. The situation remains unstable, with Pakistan's Supreme Court ruling that Khan's party was improperly denied some seats.

In Indonesia, Southeast Asia's largest democracy, former Defense Minister Prabowo Subianto was officially declared president more than two months after an election in which he won over 58% of the vote.

His two losing rivals alleged fraud and nepotism — Subianto's vice president-elect is outgoing leader Joko Widodo's son, and Subianto was the son-in-law of Indonesia's late dictator, Suharto. The country's highest court rejected their arguments.

Some outcomes were predictable. Russian President Vladimir Putin was reelected to a fifth term in a preordained election that followed his relentless crackdown on dissent. Rwanda's election extended the 30-year rule of President Paul Kagame, an authoritarian leader who ran almost unopposed.

Far right's uneven march

The far right has gained ground in Europe as the continent experiences economic instability and an influx of migrants from troubled lands.

Elections for the parliament of the 27-nation European Union shifted the bloc's center of gravity, with the far right rocking ruling parties in France and Germany, the EU's traditional driving forces.

The EU election triggered a political earthquake in France. After his centrist, pro-business party took a pasting, President Emmanuel Macron called a risky snap parliamentary election in hope of stemming a far-right surge.

The anti-immigration National Rally party won the first round, but alliances and tactical voting by the center and left knocked it down to third place in the second round and left a divided legislature.

New faces, daunting challenges

A presidential election tested Senegal's reputation as a stable democracy in West Africa, a region rocked by a recent spate of coups.

The surprise winner was little-known opposition figure Basirou Diomaye Faye, released from prison before polling day as part of a political amnesty.

Faye is Africa's youngest elected leader, and his rise reflects widespread frustration among Senegal's youth with the country's direction. Senegal has made new oil and gas discoveries in recent years, but the population has yet to see any real benefit.

Mexico elected Claudia Sheinbaum as the first female president in the country's 200-year history. A

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protege of outgoing President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, the 61-year-old former Mexico City mayor vowed to continue in the direction set by the popular leftist leader.

She faces a polarized electorate, daunting drug-related violence, an increasingly influential military and tensions over migration with the U.S.

Uncertainty is the new normal

On July 28, Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro will seek to extend a decade-plus presidency marked by a complex political, social and economic crisis that has driven millions into poverty or out of the country. Opposition parties have banded together, but the ruling party has tight control over the voting process, and many doubt votes will be counted fairly.

South Sudan, the world's youngest country, is scheduled to hold its long-delayed first elections in December. That would represent a key milestone, but the vote is rife with danger and vulnerable to failure.

Looming above all is the choice U.S. voters will make Nov. 5 in a tense and divided country. The July 13 shooting at a Trump rally in Pennsylvania, in which the former president was wounded and a rallygoer was killed, came as Democrats agonize over the fitness of President Joe Biden, who has resisted calls to step aside.

The prospect of a second term for Trump, a protectionist wary of international entanglements, is evidence of the world's shifting power blocs and crumbling political certainties.

"The world is in the transition," said Neil Melvin, director of international security at defense think tank the Royal United Services Institute.

"There are very broad processes on the way which are reshaping international order," he added. "It's a kind of anti-globalization. It's a growing return to the nation state and against multilateralism."

## **Ex-North Korean diplomat appointed a vice minister in South Korea, the highest post for any defector**

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea's president on Thursday appointed a former North Korean diplomat as a vice minister, the highest-level government job for any of the thousands of North Koreans who have resettled in South Korea.

Tae Yongho was a minister of the North Korean Embassy in London when he defected to South Korea in 2016. Tae is the highest-ranking North Korean who has resettled in South Korea in recent years. He has said he did so because he didn't want his children to live "miserable" lives in North Korea and he fell into "despair" over leader Kim Jong Un's executions of officials and nuclear ambitions.

North Korea called him "human scum" and accused him of embezzling government money and committing other crimes.

President Yoon Suk Yeol appointed Tae secretary general the Peaceful Unification Advisory Council, which gives the president policy advice on peaceful Korean unification.

The appointment made Tae the first North Korean defector appointed to a vice-ministerial job in South Korea, among about 34,000 North Koreans who have resettled in South Korea, according to Seoul's Unification Ministry.

In 2020, Tae was elected to South Korea's parliament. There have been other North Korean defectors who have served as lawmakers in South Korea.

Yoon's office said in a statement that Tae was the right person for the post because he can utilize his living experience in North Korea and work experiences as a member of South Korea's parliament's committee on foreign policy and unification issues.

Most of the defectors left North Korea after a devastating famine in the mid-1990s. Upon arrival in South Korea, North Korean defectors are given citizenships, almost-free apartments, resettlement money and other benefits. But coming from authoritarian, impoverished and nominally socialist North Korea, many experience diverse discrimination and severe difficulties in adjusting to new lives in capitalistic, highly competitive South Korea, according to their interviews and surveys.

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Yoon promised to provide greater government support to improve the lives of North Korean defectors on the inaugural "North Korean Defectors' Day" on Sunday.

Most of the North Korean defectors are women from the North's poorer northern regions along the a long, porous border with China. But in recent years, the number of North Korean elites to flee to South Korea has steadily increased, according to the Unification Ministry.

On Tuesday, South Korea's spy agency said that Ri Il Kyu, a counselor of political affairs at the North Korean Embassy in Cuba, had defected to South Korea last November.

## **FACT FOCUS: A look at Biden's economic policies related to rising prices**

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's economic policies have been slammed by several speakers at the Republican National Conference. But some of the criticism was off base.

Here's a look at the facts.

North Carolina Gov. Doug Burgum on the economy: "Biden's red tape has raised the price of the gas in your car, the cost of food on your table, the clothes on your back and it has even raised your rent."

THE FACTS: The statement is misleading. Republicans and some economists have blamed Biden's \$1.9 trillion pandemic aid for contributing to higher inflation. But there are few signs that regulation was the culprit.

Gasoline prices climbed coming out of the pandemic due to lower production levels, but the market data show it further climbed after Russia invaded Ukraine in early 2022.

The war in Ukraine also contributed to higher food inflation. The consumer price index shows clothing costs are up under Biden, but, again, there is no evidence that red tape explains the problem.

As for housing costs, most economists and industry analysts say the problem is a lack of new construction and available homes to buy. There are regulations inhibiting new construction, but those are primarily at the state and local level. \_\_\_\_

## **What would make Joe Biden drop out of the presidential race? Here are the four reasons he's cited**

By SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden has made it clear basically any which way you ask him: he's definitely, assuredly, "one thousand percent" staying in the presidential race.

But in response to questions from journalists over the last few weeks, the embattled Democratic president has given some clues as to what could make him step aside — especially as the calls from his own party to end his candidacy continue unabated.

Here are the things Biden has cited — some serious, others not — that would make him reconsider his run:

Divine intervention

It was a defiant answer that indicated Biden had no intention whatsoever of dropping out.

During an ABC News interview that marked the first major test of his fitness for office, anchor George Stephanopoulos asked the 81-year-old Biden whether he had convinced himself that only he could defeat his Republican opponent, Donald Trump.

"I have convinced myself of two things," Biden said. "I'm the most qualified person to beat him, and I know how to get things done."

Stephanopoulos pressed a little further: "If you can be convinced that you cannot defeat Donald Trump, will you stand down?"

"It depends," Biden responded. "I mean, if the Lord Almighty comes out and tells me that, I might do that."

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Cold, hard data

No politician ever wants to lose — and it seems Biden would be willing to exit if he had numerical proof that that's what would happen.

In a news conference at the close of the NATO summit in Washington last week, Biden was asked whether he would step aside if aides showed him that Vice President Kamala Harris would be a stronger opponent than he would be against Trump.

Biden's initial response was "no," but then he elaborated.

"Unless they came back and said, 'there's no way you can win.' Me," he said. "No one is saying that. No poll says that."

The limited polling available suggests a competitive race with several months before the election. Several polls of voters give Trump a slight advantage, while others show neither candidate with an advantage.

A fateful accident

Biden wasn't directly asked the hypothetical, but he threw in a new scenario anyway.

As Speedy Morman, a host on the entertainment network Complex, was wrapping up his interview with Biden last week in Detroit, he had one more closing question for the president: "We will 1,000 percent — in your words — see you on the ballot this November?"

Quipped Biden: "Unless I get hit by a train, yeah."

Morman responded: "Let's hope that doesn't happen, for your safety's concern."

A not-yet-diagnosed medical ailment

Biden spoke with BET journalist Ed Gordon for an interview set to air Wednesday night. During the conversation, Gordon asked Biden if there were any factors that would make him reevaluate his candidacy.

He didn't repeat the other reasons that he had previously listed — but rather surfaced a new one.

"If I had some medical condition that emerged," Biden told Gordon. "If doctors came to me and said, 'you got this problem, that problem.'"

The health of Biden, the oldest person to be U.S. president, has been scrutinized well before his catastrophic debate performance.

After his latest physical in February, presidential doctor Kevin O'Connor said Biden "remains fit to successfully execute the duties of the presidency." A neurological exam, taken more than a month prior, showed no signs of a stroke, multiple sclerosis or Parkinson's disease, according to O'Connor. The physician also said a cognitive exam was unnecessary.

Biden tested positive for COVID-19 Wednesday while trying to shore up support among disenfranchised voters key to his reelection chances. The diagnosis prompted him to cancel a meeting with members of a Latino civil rights organization in the battleground state of Nevada.

## Ukraine defense chief says his nation will find a way no matter who wins US election

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

ASPEN, Colorado (AP) — Ukraine will find a way to deal with whatever comes if former President Donald Trump wins a second term, throwing into doubt vital U.S. support for its defense against Russia's invading forces, Ukraine's defense minister said Wednesday.

In carefully framed comments to an audience of U.S. policymakers and journalists, Defense Minister Rustem Umerov reflected the diplomatic and military difficulty facing Ukraine as Trump and running mate JD Vance gain momentum in the U.S. presidential race.

Vance, an Ohio senator, has battled in Congress to block U.S. military and financial aid to Ukraine as it fights Russian forces and cross-border attacks, while Trump has said he will bring the war to an immediate end if he wins in November.

Trump, a Republican, has not said how he would do that. Analysts say that could include withdrawal of U.S. aid to Ukraine unless it agrees to a cease-fire on Russian terms, including surrendering Ukrainian territory to Russia.

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"We believe in U.S. leadership, and we believe America wants its partners and allies to be strong as well," Umerov said, speaking remotely to an audience of government officials and others at the annual Aspen Security Forum in Colorado.

"At this stage, we will focus on the battlefield," Umerov said.

"Whatever the outcome" of the U.S. elections, "we will find solutions," he said.

Umerov, much like Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the NATO summit in Washington last week, stopped short of saying whether Ukraine would attempt to keep fighting or would agree to a cease-fire deal that ceded territory to Russia if the U.S. were to withdraw its support.

While other members of the military alliance of European and North American countries also help provide arms, money and other aid to Ukraine, U.S. support has been the most invaluable since Russia launched its war in early 2022.

For now, Umerov insisted that Ukraine — which has broadened its mobilization efforts to bring in more troops than the 4 million Umerov said were now registered — would keep fighting to regain territory already lost to the Russians.

It was "within our goals" to take back the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, seized by Russians early in their offensive, he said.

The defense minister also pushed back against President Joe Biden on one point, although not by name. While Biden has been the most important single backer of Ukraine's defense, he has resisted growing pressure to roll back tough restrictions placed on Ukraine's use of U.S. weapons against military targets in Russia. Biden suggested at the NATO summit that Ukraine might use the weapons to hit Moscow.

Umerov said Ukraine couldn't stop Russian strikes on its cities and infrastructure unless it could hit the airbases and other military sites in Russia from which the strikes come.

"We want to say it loudly: We are focusing on military targets, so that they are not able to hit the civilians" in Ukraine, he said.

## **Russian minister blames US media for hindering prisoner swap talks on jailed reporter Gershkovich**

By JADE LOZADA Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Russia's foreign minister blamed American journalists Wednesday for helping delay talks with his U.S. counterparts about a possible prisoner exchange involving imprisoned Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich.

A day before Gershkovich is scheduled to appear in court on espionage charges, Sergey Lavrov told a U.N. news conference that confidential negotiations are still "ongoing."

Gershkovich, the Journal and the U.S. vehemently deny the allegations against him and denounce the trial as a sham and illegitimate.

On March 29, 2023, Gershkovich was arrested while on a reporting trip in Yekaterinburg, a city in the Ural Mountains. He is charged with espionage, but Russian authorities have not offered any evidence that he was gathering secret information for the United States.

If he is convicted, he faces up to 20 years in prison, though Russia has indicated it is open to a prisoner swap after a verdict.

Russian courts convict more than 99% of defendants. Prosecutors can appeal sentences that they consider too lenient, and they even can appeal acquittals.

## **Trump has given no official info about his medical care for days since an assassination attempt**

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

MILWAUKEE (AP) — Four days after a gunman's attempt to assassinate former President Donald Trump at a Pennsylvania rally, the public is still in the dark over the extent of his injuries, what treatment the Re-

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publican presidential nominee received in the hospital, and whether there may be any long-term effects on his health.

Trump's campaign has refused to discuss his condition, release a medical report or records, or make the doctors who treated him available, leaving information to dribble out from Trump, his friends and family.

The first word on Trump's condition came about half an hour after shots rang out and Trump dropped to the ground after reaching for his ear and then pumped his fist defiantly to the crowd with blood streaming down his face. The campaign issued a statement saying he was "fine" and "being checked out at a local medical facility."

"More details will follow," his spokesperson said.

It wasn't until 8:42 p.m., however, that Trump told the public he had been struck by a bullet as opposed to shrapnel or debris. In a post on his social media network, Trump wrote that he was "shot with a bullet that pierced the upper part" of his right ear.

"I knew immediately that something was wrong in that I heard a whizzing sound, shots, and immediately felt the bullet ripping through the skin," he wrote.

Presidents and major-party candidates have long had to balance their right to doctor-patient confidentiality with the public's expectations that they demonstrate they are healthy enough to serve, particularly when questions arise about their readiness. Trump, for example, has long pressed President Joe Biden to take a cognitive test as the Democrat faces doubts after his stumbling performance in last month's debate.

After a would-be assassin shot and gravely wounded President Ronald Reagan in 1981, the Washington, D.C., hospital where he was treated gave regular, detailed public updates about his condition and treatment.

Trump has appeared at the Republican National Convention the past three days with a bandage over his right ear. But there has been no further word since Saturday from Trump's campaign or other officials on his condition or treatment.

Instead, it has been allies and family members sharing news.

Rep. Ronny Jackson, R-Texas, who served as Trump's White House doctor and traveled to be with him after the shooting, said in a podcast interview Monday that Trump was missing part of his ear — "a little bit at the top" — but that the wound would heal.

"He was lucky," Jackson said on "The Benny Show," a conservative podcast hosted by Benny Johnson. "It was far enough away from his head that there was no concussive effects from the bullet. And it just took the top of his ear off, a little bit of the top of his ear off as it passed through."

He said that the area would need to be treated with care to avoid further bleeding — "It's not like a clean laceration like you would have with a knife or a blade, it's a bullet track going by," he said — but that Trump is "not going to need anything to be done with it. It's going to be fine."

The former president's son Eric Trump said in an interview with CBS on Wednesday that his father had "no stitches but certainly a nice flesh wound."

The lack of information continues a pattern for Trump, who has released minimal medical information throughout his political career.

When he first ran in 2016, Trump declined to release full medical records, and instead released a note from his doctor that declared Trump would be "the healthiest individual ever elected to the presidency."

Dr. Harold Bornstein later revealed that the glowing, four-paragraph assessment was written in 5 minutes as a car sent by Trump to collect it waited outside.

Jackson, after administering a physical to Trump in 2018, drew headlines for extolling the then-president's "incredibly good genes" and suggesting that "if he had a healthier diet over the last 20 years he might live to be 200 years old."

When Trump was infected with the coronavirus in the midst of his 2020 re-election campaign, his doctors and aides tried to downplay the severity of his condition and withheld information about how sick he was and key details of his treatment.

Former White House chief of staff Mark Meadows wrote in his book that Trump's blood oxygen dropped to a "dangerously low level" and that there were concerns that Trump would not be able to walk on his own if he had waited longer to be transported to Walter Reed for treatment.

## Prominent Democrat Schiff calls for Biden to withdraw, but party aims to nominate before convention

By ZEKE MILLER, WILL WEISSERT and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — California Rep. Adam Schiff on Wednesday became the highest-profile Democrat to call for President Joe Biden to drop his reelection bid, even as the party pushed ahead with plans for a virtual vote to formally make Biden its nominee in the first week of August.

The move to schedule the roll call, which would come weeks before the Democratic National Convention opens in Chicago on Aug. 19, follows nearly 20 Democratic members of Congress calling on Biden to withdraw from the presidential race in the wake of his dismal debate performance against Republican former President Donald Trump last month.

Late in the evening, ABC News reported new details about Biden's private meeting over the weekend with Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer at his beach home in Delaware. It said Schumer told the president it would be "better for the Democratic party, and better for the country if he were to bow out."

A Schumer spokesperson called the report "idle speculation. Leader Schumer conveyed the views of his caucus directly to President Biden on Saturday."

White House spokesman Andrew Bates said Biden told Schumer, as well as House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries, that "he is the nominee of the party, he plans to win, and looks forward to working with both of them to pass his 100 days agenda to help working families."

Among Democrats nationwide, nearly two-thirds say Biden should step aside and let his party nominate a different candidate, according to a new AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll — sharply undercutting Biden's post-debate claim that "average Democrats" are still with him even if some "big names" are turning on him.

Biden tested positive for COVID-19 while traveling Wednesday in Las Vegas and is experiencing "mild symptoms" including "general malaise" from the infection, the White House said.

"While the choice to withdraw from the campaign is President Biden's alone, I believe it is time for him to pass the torch," Schiff said in a statement. "And in doing so, secure his legacy of leadership by allowing us to defeat Donald Trump in the upcoming election."

Schiff is a prominent Democrat on his own, and his statement will also be watched because of his proximity to Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi.

It was Pelosi who revived questions about Biden post-debate, when she said recently that "it's up to the president" to decide what to do — even though Biden had fully stated he had no intention of stepping aside. The former House speaker publicly supports the president, but has fielded calls from Democrats since debate night questioning what's next.

In response to Schiff's comments, the Biden campaign pointed to what it called "extensive support" for him and his reelection bid from members of Congress in key swing states, as well as from the Congressional Black and Hispanic caucuses. Biden is traveling in Nevada this week, and the campaign noted that he's been joined on the trip by "nearly a dozen" Congressional Black Caucus members.

Still, Schiff's announcement came after Schumer and House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries encouraged the party to delay for a week plans to hold the virtual vote to renominate Biden, which could have taken place as soon as Sunday, according to two people familiar with the situation who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations.

The Democratic National Committee's rulemaking arm is set to meet on Friday to discuss how the virtual vote plans will work and to finalize them next week.

"We will not be implementing a rushed virtual voting process, though we will begin our important consideration of how a virtual voting process would work," Bishop Leah D. Daughtry and Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, co-chairs of the rules committee for the Democratic National Convention wrote in a letter Wednesday.

The letter also said that the virtual roll call vote won't take place before Aug. 1, but that the party is still committed to holding a vote before Aug. 7, which had been the filing deadline to get on Ohio's presidential ballot.

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The Democratic convention runs in person from Aug. 19-22, but the party announced in May that it would hold an early roll call to ensure Biden would qualify for the ballot in Ohio. That state originally had an Aug. 7 deadline but has since changed its rules.

The Biden campaign insists that the party must operate under Ohio's initial rules to ensure Republican lawmakers can't mount legal challenges to keep the president off the ballot.

Sen. Peter Welch, a Vermont Democrat who wrote last week that Biden should leave the race "for the good of the country," applauded the decision to move back setting a date.

"No shortcuts, no end around," he said. "This process shouldn't be rushed."

Even if Democrats conduct a virtual roll call vote ahead of their convention, meanwhile, it wouldn't necessarily lock Biden into the nomination. The DNC rulemaking arm could vote to hold an in-person roll call in Chicago, said Elaine Kamarck, a longtime member of the party's rules committee and expert on the party's nominating process. But since the Ohio law doesn't go into effect until Sept. 1, Biden appearing on the state's ballot remains a real concern, Kamarck said.

"This is a failsafe for the Democrats," Kamarck said, adding that "the convention is the highest authority" in the nominating process.

The AP-NORC poll, conducted as Biden works to salvage his candidacy two weeks after his debate flop, also found that only about 3 in 10 Democrats are extremely or very confident that he has the mental capability to serve effectively as president, down slightly from 40% in an AP-NORC poll in February.

The letter from Daughtry and Walz follows a contingent of House Democrats wary of swiftly nominating Biden as the party's pick for reelection circulated another letter raising "serious concerns" about plans for a virtual roll call. Their letter to the DNC, which has not been sent, says it would be a "terrible idea" to stifle debate about the party's nominee with the early roll call vote.

"It could deeply undermine the morale and unity of Democrats," said the letter obtained by the AP.

A spokesperson said that Huffman was pleased with the decision to delay and would hold off sending the letter from House Democrats as they continue monitoring the situation.

## Storms flood the Ozarks and strand drivers in Toronto.

### New York community is devastated by tornado

By ANDREW DeMILLO and ED WHITE Associated Press

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) — Another wave of severe storms pummeled a wide swath of the United States and Canada, leading to flash floods and water rescues Wednesday in the Ozark Mountains, dropping a tornado that ravaged a community in upstate New York and stranding drivers in high water around Toronto.

The relentless series of storms has caused deaths or damage from the Plains to New England this week. Hundreds of thousands of people have lost power and air conditioning during days of sweltering heat.

As much as 11 inches (nearly 28 centimeters) of rain fell overnight into Wednesday on parts of the Ozarks in Arkansas and Missouri, the National Weather Service said.

Buses and ambulances evacuated 86 people from a nursing home in Yellville, Arkansas, where water rose to about 4 feet (1.2 meters) during flash flooding, Marion County Sheriff Gregg Alexander said. A section of a bridge washed out and a historic courthouse flooded.

Cities across upstate New York were cleaning up after a storm swept through Tuesday with high winds and spectacular lightning and flying debris that killed one person.

In the small city of Rome, New York, a tornado ripped off roofs, tipped over vehicles and turned several buildings into piles of rubble.

Steeple crumbled and roofs were torn apart at First Presbyterian Church and the St. Mary's Church, both built in the 1800s. Copper sheets from the roof of First Presbyterian were found wrapped around utility poles a quarter mile away.

The winds were fierce enough to move a multi-ton tourist attraction, a B-52 bomber displayed at Griffiss Business and Technology Park. A mural of a Revolutionary War figure on horseback — a Rome landmark — was destroyed, along with the building on which it was painted. All that remained was an image of a



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horse hoof.

Speaking outside St. Mary's, Gov. Kathy Hochul said it was "miraculous" no one was killed in the city of 31,000. She toured the downtown Wednesday and said 22 buildings were damaged or destroyed. She described seeing trees "collapsed like toothpicks" and told of mobile homes tipped over with people inside. The governor marveled at narrow escapes, including two children in a medical waiting room who emerged unscathed even though the building was partially "obliterated."

A National Weather Service preliminary damage survey released Wednesday night estimated the Rome tornado's top winds at 135 mph (217 kph) and gave it an EF2 rating, considered "significant," on the Enhanced Fujita scale.

Chiropractor Kingsley Kabari was with a patient in his second-floor office in Rome when his cellphone blared with a tornado alert Tuesday afternoon. By the time he could pick it up to mute it, the storm had arrived, he said, blowing out windows, tearing at the roof of the two-story brick building and sending debris flying.

"It was like a bomb dropped on the building with very high-power wind. Things were just flying everywhere — and this was inside," he said Wednesday.

The tornado cut a path between two nursing homes operated by Grand Healthcare, sparing them of the most severe damage but pelting the buildings with powerful winds and heavy rains that knocked out their power, regional vice president Bruce Gendron said.

He said he was at one of the nursing homes when the storm hit, and staffers moved residents away from the windows in case trees came toppling into the building.

The facilities' backup generators kicked in, keeping most systems intact until normal power was restored Wednesday afternoon, he said.

"To our residents of Rome: Do not be discouraged. This community is resilient and we will build back," Mayor Jeff Lanigan said.

A weaker tornado given an initial EF1 rating, with a top estimated wind speed of 110 mph (177 kph), also touched down about 230 miles (370 kilometers) away in Lyme, New Hampshire on Tuesday night, the weather service said. It remained on the ground for about 1.8 miles (2.9 kilometers) and knocked down at least 100 trees, said Jon Palmer, a weather service meteorologist in Gray, Maine.

About 30 miles (48 kilometers) away in Canastota, storm debris hit and killed an 82-year-old man, village administrator Jeremy Ryan said. Hochul said three homes collapsed and 30 other structures were damaged in the community.

A thousand miles (1,600 kilometers) away in Flippin, Arkansas, people went door to door to get as many as 40 residents to flee dangerous conditions before floodwaters began to recede. At least 30 residents were evacuated from an apartment complex in Greenbrier, 34 miles (55 kilometers) north of Little Rock, state emergency managers said.

"We're not griping, because we absolutely needed the rain, but it will take a little while for us to drain out and clean the roadways back up," said Alexander, the Marion County sheriff.

Bill Scruggs and his crew from Wild Bill's Outfitter, based south of Yellville, scrambled to save their canoes and kayaks from a sandbar in the Buffalo National River as waters quickly rose before dawn Wednesday.

Nearly 5 inches (12.7 centimeters) of rain fell overnight on the tourist hub of Branson, Missouri. Taney County Sheriff Brad Daniels said several campgrounds were evacuated and people had to be rescued from a flooded mobile home park in nearby Hollister.

Trees fell on houses and cars Tuesday in Keene, New Hampshire, forcing some residents to evacuate. Around Toronto, flooding temporarily closed several major roads and left drivers stranded. Authorities said they rescued at least 14 people from flooding on the highway.

More than 140,000 homes and businesses lacked power Wednesday evening in Northeastern U.S. states, according to PowerOutage.us. The East Coast from Maine to the Carolinas was warned of weather that could feel hotter than 100 degrees (37.8 Celsius) in some places.

A storm helped bring under control a forest fire burning at a military bombing range in New Jersey as it dropped half an inch of rain, the state forest fire service said.

This week's severe weather struck the Chicago area especially hard. The weather service said it so far has confirmed at least 18 tornadoes in northern Illinois and northwestern Indiana: six on Sunday and 12 during a frightening stretch Monday night.

The larger bunch emerged from a derecho, long-lasting windstorms that began in Iowa and rolled east for hours, according to senior meteorologist Brett Borchardt.

"It's not unprecedented, but it's very unusual. When we have a line of storms like that, they're prolific tornado producers," he said.

Across the U.S., the storms have led to at least five deaths, including the one in New York. Flooding killed an 88-year-old couple who were in their car near Elsau, Illinois, on Tuesday, and a 76-year-old passenger in a pickup in Rockford, Illinois, on Sunday. A fallen tree killed a 44-year-old woman in Cedar Lake, Indiana, on Monday.

A cold front is forecast to cause scattered showers and thunderstorms in the East over the next few days but will also provide relief from the heat in the eastern and central United States, according to the weather service. However, excessive heat is forecast for parts of the West and Southeast.

## **Syrian official who oversaw prison where alleged abuse took place arrested by US officials**

By CHRISTOPHER WEBER and JAIMIE DING Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A former Syrian military official who oversaw a prison where human rights officials say torture and abuse routinely took place has been arrested, authorities said Wednesday.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security agents took Samir Ousman al-Sheikh into custody last week at Los Angeles International Airport, said agency spokesperson Greg Hoegner.

The 72-year-old has been charged with immigration fraud, specifically that he denied on his U.S. visa and citizenship applications that he had ever persecuted anyone in Syria, according to a criminal complaint filed on July 9 and reviewed by The Associated Press. Investigators are considering additional charges against al-Sheikh, the complaint shows.

He was in charge of Syria's infamous Adra Prison from 2005 to 2008 under President Bashar Assad. Human rights groups and United Nations officials have accused the Syrian government of widespread abuses in its detention facilities, including torture and arbitrary detention of thousands of people, in many cases without informing their families about their fate. Many remain missing and are presumed to have died or been executed.

"This is the highest-level Assad regime official arrested anywhere in the world. ... This is a really big deal," said Mouaz Moustafa, executive director of the Syrian Emergency Task Force, a U.S.-based opposition organization.

Moustafa said Wednesday that one of his staff members, a former Syrian detainee, was first tipped off in 2022 by a refugee that there was "potentially a war criminal" in the United States. His organization alerted several federal agencies and began working with them to build a case against al-Sheikh.

His attorney, Peter Hardin, called it a "simple misunderstanding of immigration forms" that has been politicized and said al-Sheikh "finds himself being made a pawn caught up in a larger international struggle."

"He vigorously denies these abhorrent accusations," Hardin said.

Investigators interviewed five former inmates at the Syrian prison, who described being hanged by their arms from the ceiling, severely beaten by electrical cables, and witnessing other prisoners being branded by hot rods, according to court documents. One inmate described how he had his back broken by guards.

According to the complaint, al-Sheikh, a resident of Los Angeles since 2020, stated in his citizenship application that he had "never persecuted (either directly or indirectly) any person because of race, religion, national origin, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion" and "never been involved in killing or trying to kill someone." This was false, as al-Sheikh persecuted political dissidents and ordered the execution of prisoners while he was head of Adra, the complaint states.

He began his career working police command posts before transferring to Syria's domestic intelligence agency, which focused on countering political dissent, the complaint says. He later became head of Adra Prison and brigadier general in 2005. He also served for one year as the governor of Deir Ez-Zour, a region northeast of the Syrian capital of Damascus, where there were violent crackdowns against protesters.

He had purchased a one-way plane ticket to depart LAX on July 10, en route to Beirut, Lebanon, which shares a border with Syria, according to the complaint. After his arrest, al-Sheikh made his first appearance in Los Angeles federal court last Friday. He has family in the United States, including a daughter living in the Los Angeles area, according to the Syrian Emergency Task Force.

Syria's civil war, which has left nearly half a million people dead and displaced half the country's prewar population of 23 million, began as peaceful protests against Assad's government in March 2011.

Other players in the war, now in its 14th year, have also been accused of abuse of detainees, including insurgent groups and the U.S.-backed, Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, which guard suspected and convicted Islamic State members imprisoned in northeastern Syria.

In May, a French court sentenced three high-ranking Syrian officials in absentia to life in prison for complicity in war crimes in a landmark case against Assad's regime and the first such case in Europe.

The court proceedings came as Assad had begun to shed his longtime status as a pariah because of the violence unleashed on his opponents. Human rights groups involved in the case hoped it would refocus attention on alleged atrocities.

## **Multiple failures, multiple investigations: Unraveling the attempted assassination of Donald Trump**

By COLLEEN LONG, MIKE BALSAMO, MARY CLARE JALONICK and MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press BUTLER, Pa. (AP) — The young man was pacing around the edges of the Donald Trump campaign rally, shouldering a big backpack and peering into the lens of a rangefinder toward the rooftops behind the stage where the former president would stand within the hour.

His behavior was so odd, so unlike that of the other rallygoers, that local law enforcement took notice, radioed their concerns and snapped a photo. But then he vanished.

The image was circulated by officers stationed outside the security perimeter on that hot, sunny Saturday afternoon. But the man didn't appear again until witnesses saw him climbing up the side of a squat manufacturing building that was within 135 meters (157 yards) from the stage.

That's where he opened fire, six minutes after Trump began speaking, in an attempt to assassinate the presumptive GOP presidential nominee. The gunman killed one rallygoer and seriously wounded two others. Trump suffered an ear injury but was not seriously hurt, appearing just days later at the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee with a bandage over the wound.

Now come the questions, and there are plenty. Multiple investigations have been launched, both into the crime itself and how law enforcement allowed it to happen. It's becoming increasingly clear this was a complicated failure involving multiple missteps and at least nine local and federal law enforcement divisions that were supposed to be working together. Law enforcement has also warned of the potential for copycat attacks and more violence.

This story is based on interviews with eight law enforcement officials and four people familiar with a law enforcement briefing given to senators Wednesday, some of whom spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss the investigations into the attempt on Trump's life.

Multiple agencies work together to secure events

The Secret Service always partners with local law enforcement when a president, political candidate or other high-level official comes to town, and Saturday's rally was no different. An advance team comes early to scope out the scene and identify potential areas of concern. They order vehicles moved. They set up barriers. They block off roads.

In some larger cities, one or two local agencies may work alongside the federal teams. In more rural

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areas, one local agency won't have enough manpower so multiple agencies are often involved. On Saturday, the show of force included members of at least six different agencies, including two sheriff's offices, local police, state police and multiple teams within the Secret Service, plus fire and emergency rescue officials. Within those agencies are individual divisions that have different duties.

In theory, more manpower is better. But it can often create communication problems, and it's unclear how the information about 20-year-old Thomas Matthew Crooks was transmitted. For instance, it's not clear how widely his photo was circulated or whether everyone was equally aware of the potential threat.

All the extra officers can be a drain on resources, leaving agencies stretched thin. The Secret Service at any given time is protecting the president, candidates and others, plus running point on major national security events. It's the same for local police, who told the Secret Service they didn't have enough people to station officers outside the building all day.

The Secret Service controls the area inside the perimeter, after people pass through metal detectors. Local law enforcement is supposed to handle outside the perimeter.

Reports of someone on the roof

The shooter, later identified as Crooks, disappeared from the crowds of Trump supporters decked out in red, white and blue. The stream of supporters entering through the metal detectors was slowing. Trump was getting ready to go on.

The rooftop from which Crooks fired is in a complex of buildings that form AGR International Inc., a supplier of automation equipment for the glass and plastic packaging industry. The building was closed for the day, except to law enforcement.

Crooks was spotted again when members of a local SWAT team, stationed inside the building complex, noticed him walking around and looking at the roof. One officer took a photo of Crooks and radioed to others to be on the lookout for a suspicious person looking through a rangefinder — a small device resembling binoculars that hunters use to measure distance from a target.

Not long after, witnesses reported seeing him scaling the squat building closest to the stage. He then set up his AR-style rifle and lay on the rooftop, a detonator in his pocket to set off crude explosive devices that were stashed in his car parked nearby.

Outside, a local officer climbed up to the roof to investigate. The gunman turned and pointed his rifle at him. The officer did not — or could not — fire a single shot. But Crooks did, firing into the crowd toward the former president and sending panicked spectators ducking for cover as Secret Service agents shielded Trump and pulled him from the stage. Two countersniper teams were stationed on buildings behind Trump, and the team further away from Crooks fired once, killing him.

In the congressional briefing Wednesday, FBI and Secret Service officials laid out a clearer timeline: Crooks was identified as a potential threat a full hour before the shots were fired, they saw him with the rangefinder roughly 40 minutes before the shooting, and then spotted him again looking through the rangefinder, about 20 minutes before the shooting.

Many investigations, few answers

"We are speaking of a failure," Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas told CNN. "We are going to analyze through an independent review how that occurred, why it occurred, and make recommendations and findings to make sure it doesn't happen again."

House Oversight Committee Republicans have subpoenaed Secret Service Director Kim Cheatle. House Speaker Mike Johnson said he would set up a task force to investigate, and some Republicans have called on Cheatle to resign.

Cheatle herself said the shooting was "unacceptable," in an interview with ABC News. "And it's something that shouldn't happen again."

Security has been stepped up for Trump and President Joe Biden, and independent presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. also received a protective detail.

Biden has ordered an independent review of the shooting. The Department of Homeland Security's inspector general also opened an investigation into the Secret Service's handling of the shooting.

But it's a big task. There were special agents, presidential protective teams, counterassault and coun-

tersniper teams all there that day. There were also roughly 50 firefighters and emergency personnel, plus dozens of officers from the Butler Township police, deputies from Beaver County and Butler County and Pennsylvania State Police troopers.

It will take weeks — if not months — to interview all the officers involved and determine exactly how Crooks was able to pull off the most serious attempt to kill a president or presidential candidate since Ronald Reagan was shot in 1981.

The shooter had prepared for carnage. Investigators found he brought multiple loaded magazines. He also bought 50 rounds on the day of the shooting. The rifle was purchased legally by his father years earlier.

Investigators found a bulletproof vest in his car and another rudimentary explosive device at his home, where over the past few months he had received several packages, including some that had potentially hazardous material. The FBI gained access to Crooks' cellphone, scoured his computer, home and car, and interviewed more than 100 people so far.

But much of his communication was done in encrypted messages; investigators were reviewing more than 14,000 images on his cellphone and have learned Crooks had also searched online to study bullet trajectory.

But the investigation has of yet failed to lift the mystery surrounding the biggest question: Why did he do it?

## **House Oversight panel subpoenas Secret Service director to testify on Trump assassination attempt**

By REBECCA SANTANA and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Republican chairman of the House Oversight and Accountability Committee issued a subpoena Wednesday to the Secret Service director compelling her to appear before the committee on Monday for what is scheduled to be the first congressional hearing into the attempted assassination of former President Donald Trump.

And even before the first hearing Republican calls for Director Kimberly Cheatle to resign intensified Wednesday with top Republican leaders from both the House and the Senate saying she should step down. The director has said she has no intention of resigning.

Rep. James Comer said initially that the Secret Service committed to her attendance but that Homeland Security officials appeared to intervene and there has been no "meaningful updates or information" shared with the committee.

Comer said the "lack of transparency and failure to cooperate" with the committee called into question Cheatle's ability to lead the Secret Service and necessitated the subpoena.

Cheatle has said the agency understands the importance of a review ordered by Democratic President Joe Biden and would fully participate in it as well as with congressional committees looking into the shooting.

In response to the subpoena and an earlier letter from Comer, Zephra Buetow, an assistant secretary at Homeland Security, said that while the department was "disappointed that the Committee rushed to issue a subpoena," Cheatle welcomes the chance to testify. The official said that given Cheatle's focus on securing the ongoing Republican National Convention, the department would appreciate if she could appear on July 25 or July 26, or the following week, instead of Monday.

The Oversight panel rejected that request for a change of date and committee spokesperson Jessica Collins said, "Director Cheatle has agreed to comply with Chairman Comer's subpoena and the hearing will take place as scheduled."

"Americans demand and deserve answers from the director about the attempted assassination of President Trump and the Secret Service's egregious failures," Collins said.

The subpoena was just one of a series of developments that occurred Wednesday in the wake of the Saturday assassination attempt.

The fact that a shooter was able to get so close to the former president while he's supposed to be

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closely guarded has raised questions about what security plans the agency tasked with taking a bullet for its protectees put in place and who is ultimately responsible for allowing the 20-year-old gunman to climb a roof where he had a clear line of sight to a former president.

House Speaker Mike Johnson announced he would be setting up a task force to investigate security failures that occurred during the assassination attempt. He also said he would be calling on Cheatle to resign from her post as director of the Secret Service, saying on Fox News Channel without elaborating, "I think she's shown what her priorities are."

He said the task force would be made up of Republicans and Democrats and its formation would speed up the investigative process.

"We must have accountability for this. It was inexcusable," Johnson said. "Obviously, there were security lapses. You don't have to be a special ops expert to understand that. And we're going to get down to the bottom of it quickly."

Sen. Mitch McConnell, the Republican leader in the Senate, added his name to the list of lawmakers calling for Cheatle to step down. He said on the social media platform X that the near assassination was a "grave attack on American democracy."

"The nation deserves answers and accountability," McConnell tweeted. New leadership at the Secret Service would be an important step in that direction."

The House Homeland Security Committee also invited several state and local law enforcement officials from Pennsylvania to testify at a hearing in the coming days with Rep. Mark Green, the committee's chairman, saying their accounts of events were critical to the investigation.

A key issue in the unfolding aftermath of the shooting is how security responsibilities were divided between Secret Service and local law enforcement at the rally and what breakdowns occurred that eventually allowed the gunman onto the roof.

Cheatle said during an interview Monday with ABC News that the shooting should never have happened, but also said she has no plans to resign.

When asked who bears the most responsibility for the shooting happening, she said: "What I would say is the Secret Service is responsible for the protection of the former president."

"The buck stops with me. I am the director of the Secret Service," she said.

Anthony Guglielmi, a spokesman for the U.S. Secret Service, on Wednesday said: "Director Kimberly Cheatle is proud to work alongside the dedicated men and women of the U.S. Secret Service and has no intention to resign."

So far, she has the support of the administration.

"I have 100% confidence in the director of the United States Secret Service. I have 100% confidence in the United States Secret Service," Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said Monday.

But in addition to the Congressional inquiries, Cheatle and the Secret Service are also facing an inquiry by the Department of Homeland Security's inspector general.

In a brief notice posted to the inspector general's website Tuesday, the agency said the objective of the probe is to "Evaluate the United States Secret Service's (Secret Service) process for securing former President Trump's July 13, 2024 campaign event."

The agency also said Wednesday it is launching a review of the agency's Counter Sniper Team's "preparedness and operations."

"Our objective is to determine the extent to which the Secret Service Counter Sniper Team is prepared for, and responds to, threats at events attended by designated protectees," the inspector general's office said.

Biden on Sunday said he was ordering an independent review of the security at the rally. No one has yet been named to lead that inquiry.

Since the shooting, Cheatle and the Security Service have come under intense scrutiny over how a gunman could get in position to fire at a former president.

The shooter, Thomas Matthew Crooks, was able to get within 135 meters (157 yards) of the stage where the Republican former president was speaking when he opened fire. That's despite a threat on Trump's life from Iran leading to additional security for the former president in the days before the Saturday rally.

A bloodied Trump was quickly escorted off the stage by Secret Service agents, and agency snipers killed the shooter. Trump said the upper part of his right ear was pierced in the shooting. One rallygoer was killed, and two others critically wounded.

Cheatle said her agency was working to understand how Saturday's shooting happened and to make sure something like it never does again.

Cheatle and FBI Director Christopher Wray participated in a telephone briefing Wednesday afternoon with senators. Republicans came away critical.

Sen. John Barrasso, R-Wyo., tweeted on X that it was a "100% cover-your-ass briefing." Sen. Rick Scott, R-Fla., called for administration officials to hold a daily press conference to share updates with the public, and Sen. Mike Rounds, R-S.D., said "they are so disjointed that they don't have their own facts together yet."

The Secret Service has roughly 7,800 staff members and is responsible for protecting presidents, vice presidents, their families, former presidents, their spouses and their minor children under the age of 16 and a few other high-level Cabinet officials such as the Homeland Security secretary.

## **John Deere ends support of 'social or cultural awareness' events, distances from inclusion efforts**

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS and CLAIRE SAVAGE AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — Farm equipment maker John Deere says it will no longer sponsor "social or cultural awareness" events, becoming the latest major U.S. company to distance itself from diversity and inclusion measures after being targeted by conservative backlash.

In a statement posted Tuesday to social media platform X, John Deere also said it would audit all training materials "to ensure the absence of socially-motivated messages" in compliance with federal and local laws. It did not specify what those messages would include.

Moline, Illinois-based John Deere added "the existence of diversity quotas and pronoun identification have never been and are not company policy." But it noted that it would still continue to "track and advance" the diversity of the company, without providing further details.

The move from the company known on Wall Street as Deere & Co. arrives just weeks after rural retailer Tractor Supply ended an array of its corporate diversity and climate efforts. Both announcements came after backlash piled up online from conservative activists opposed to diversity, equity and inclusion efforts, sponsorship of LGBTQ+ Pride events and climate advocacy.

Conservative political commentator and filmmaker Robby Starbuck appeared to lead the criticism of both companies on X.

Starbuck posted that John Deere's announcement marked "another huge win in our war on wokeness," but said that it still wasn't enough, calling on the company to completely eliminate its DEI policies and no longer participate in Corporate Equality Index scoring from the Human Rights Campaign, the largest advocacy group for LGBTQ+ rights in the U.S.

Starbuck, a 35-year-old Cuban American, told The Associated Press that "it's not lost on me my kids would benefit from this stuff," but he opposes hiring decisions that factor in race, as well as DEI initiatives, employee resource groups that promote non-professional activities and any policies that in his view allow social issues and politics to become part of a company culture.

"People should go to work without having to feel like they have to behave a certain way in order to be acceptable to their employer," he said.

Starbuck and other conservative activists celebrated Brentwood, Tennessee-based Tractor Supply for taking a more aggressive approach than John Deere last month by pledging to eliminate all of its DEI roles while retiring current DEI goals and stop submitting data to the Human Rights Campaign.

But the move also sparked outrage from critics of the new position, who have argued that Tractor Supply is giving in to hate.

John Deere's move has faced similar pushback. Eric Bloem, vice president of programs and corporate advocacy at the Human Rights Campaign, called the announcement "disappointing" and "a direct result

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of a coordinated attack by far-right extremists on American business.”

National Black Farmers Association President John Boyd Jr. called for the resignation of Deere & Co CEO John C. May and a boycott of the company on Wednesday.

The organization said that Deere “continues to move in the wrong direction” in regards to DEI and has “failed to show its support” for Black farmers since NBFA’s founding. It also noted Tuesday’s announcement arrives one month after the company agreed to pay \$1.1 million in back wages and interest to 277 Black and Hispanic job applicants after the Labor Department alleged hiring discrimination.

The conservative backlash against DEI has extended to companies across industries, including previous boycott campaigns against Bud Light and Target over their LGBTQ+ marketing. Starbuck said he has a list of companies he is thinking of posting content about, starting with ones that have traditionally conservative customer bases. He declined to name his next target.

The ensuing changes to policy and corporate commitments aren’t just coming from company boardrooms. Leading HR organization Society for Human Resource Management last week announced that the 340,000-member lobbying and advocacy group will drop “equity” from its diversity and inclusion approach, although it said it remains committed to advancing it.

“Effective immediately, SHRM will be adopting the acronym ‘I&D’ instead of ‘IE&D,’” the group said in a statement posted on LinkedIn. “By emphasizing Inclusion-first, we aim to address the current shortcomings of DE&I programs, which have led to societal backlash and increasing polarization.”

The move, in turn, triggered a backlash among LinkedIn users, some calling it “backward” and “shameful.” Others replied that they were planning to cancel their SHRM memberships.

Still others stress that prioritizing equity is critical for leveling the playing field, saying this kind of omission signals a shift in messaging that could have chilling consequences on efforts toward workplace equality.

In an interview with The AP on Wednesday, SHRM’s president and CEO Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. said the organization’s focus groups found general consensus around prioritizing diversity and inclusion, but “the E triggered like all sorts of emotions and responses.”

“You either loved it, you hated it,” he said. “If it’s so polarizing that people just abandon it, then we all lost.”

Legal attacks against companies’ diversity, equity and inclusion efforts have also drawn more attention following the Supreme Court’s 2023 ruling to end affirmative action in college admissions. Many conservative and anti-DEI activists have been seeking to set a similar precedent in the working world.

“The blowback and the potential vulnerabilities are real,” said Jen Stark, co-director of the Center for Business and Social Justice at BSR, a consulting network of more than 300 companies.

A vast majority of companies are “not taking the bait” and keeping policies in place “because it makes good business sense and it’s also the right thing to do,” she said. Still, she added, external pressures are building up.

The U.S. is also in a fraught presidential election year, with bubbling conversations about the prospect of Project 2025 — a term for the Heritage Foundation’s nearly 1,000-page handbook for the next Republican administration, which has become a cudgel Democrats are wielding against former President Donald Trump.

Stark noted that companies across industries are bracing for the prospects of potential changes in terms of their federal contracts, for example, which have historically been a powerful way to promote equity in workplaces.

That doesn’t mean companies will stop their DEI efforts entirely, she added, but they may have to change language or find new workarounds.

“All these flash points that companies are, sort of, limping between is the new normal,” she said.



## The stepped-up security around Trump is apparent, with agents walling him off from RNC crowds

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

MILWAUKEE (AP) — On the floor of the Republican National Convention Tuesday evening, vice presidential candidate JD Vance greeted and shook hands with excited delegates as he walked toward his seat.

It was a marked contrast from former President Donald Trump, who entered the hall a few minutes later and was separated from supporters by a column of Secret Service agents. His ear still bandaged after an attempted assassination, Trump closely hugged the wall. Instead of handshakes or hellos for those gathered, he offered fist pumps to the cameras.

The contrast underscores the new reality facing Trump after a gunman opened fire at his rally in Pennsylvania Saturday, raising serious questions about the agency that is tasked with protecting the president, former presidents and major-party candidates. Trump's campaign must also adjust to a new reality after he came millimeters from death or serious injury — and as law enforcement warns of the potential for more political violence.

Trump campaign officials declined to comment on the stepped-up security and how it might impact his interactions going forward.

"We do not comment on President Trump's security detail. All questions should be directed to the United States Secret Service," said Trump campaign spokesperson Steven Cheung.

Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, whose agency oversees the Secret Service, said Monday that he could not discuss "specifics of the protection or the enhancements made, as they involve sensitive tactics and procedures. I can say, however, that personnel and other protective resources, technology, and capabilities have been added."

The Secret Service had already stepped up Trump's protection in the days before the attack following an unrelated threat from Iran, two U.S. officials said Tuesday. But that extra security didn't stop the gunman, who fired from an adjacent roof, from killing one audience member and injuring two others along with Trump.

The FBI and Homeland Security officials remain "concerned about the potential for follow-on or retaliatory acts of violence following this attack," according to a joint intelligence bulletin by Homeland Security and the FBI and obtained by The Associated Press. The bulletin warned that lone actors and small groups will "continue to see rallies and campaign events as attractive targets."

Underscoring the security risks, a man armed with an AK-47 pistol, wearing a ski mask and carrying a tactical backpack was taken into custody Monday near the Fiserv Forum, where the convention is being held.

The attack has led to stepped-up security not only for Trump. President Joe Biden's security has also been bolstered, with more agents surrounding him as he boarded Air Force One to Las Vegas on Monday night. Independent candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. also received Secret Service protection in the shooting's wake.

Trump's campaign has also responded in other ways, including placing armed security at all hours outside their offices in Florida and Washington, D.C.

Trump has already scheduled his next rally in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on Saturday. That's where he will appear with Vance for their first event as a presidential ticket.

But the new posture complicates, at least for now, the interactions Trump regularly has with supporters as he signs autographs, shakes hands and poses for selfies at events and on airplane tarmacs.

In many cities he visits, the campaign assembles enthusiastic supporters in public spaces like restaurants and fast food joints. Sometimes Trump stops by unannounced. The images and video of his reception and interactions — circulated online by his campaign staffers and conservative media — have been fundamental to his 2024 campaign.

During the GOP primaries, in particular, his easy interactions served as a contrast to his more awkward top rival, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis.

But those events can get rowdy and chaotic. While he was in New York during his criminal hush money trial, Trump aides arranged a series of visits to a local bodega, a local firehouse and a construction site.

Before his arrival at the bodega in Harlem, thousands of supporters and onlookers gathered behind metal barricades for blocks to watch his motorcade arrive and cheer. But others in the neighborhood were frustrated by the visit, including people being dropped off at a bus stop just in front of the store, and others trying to enter their apartments after work.

At one point, an individual who lived in the building started shouting from a window that was just above the entrance where Trump would eventually stand and give remarks to the cameras and answer reporters' questions.

Long before the shooting, convention organizers had clashed with the Secret Service over the location of protest zones at the convention. RNC leaders repeatedly asked officials to keep protesters farther back than had been originally planned, arguing that an existing plan "creates an elevated and untenable safety risk to the attending public."

One person familiar with the dispute said that the original plan would have put protesters "a softball throw away" from delegates and close enough to throw projectiles over the fence.

The protest area was eventually moved, but the episode still raises frustrations and suspicions among some Trump allies.

## **Selena Gomez gets her due, Netflix and FX top HBO and 2 Queen Elizabeths get nominated for Emmys**

By ALICIA RANCILIO Associated Press

With less overall entries due to the shortened TV season, this year's Emmy nominations probably won't spark any protest campaigns. The folks at FX should be popping bottles though for a stand-out year, with 93 nominations — including 25 nods for "Shogun" and 23 for "The Bear."

The nominations bring overdue acknowledgement for critical favorites like FX's "Reservation Dogs" and "What We Do in the Shadows" and fresh competition, including "Shogun" actors Anna Sawai and Hiroyuki Sanada.

Lily Gladstone and Kali Reis became the first female Indigenous actors to be nominated for Emmys — Gladstone for "Under the Bridge" and Reis for "True Detective: Night Country." "Reservation Dogs" was nominated in the best comedy series category, for what is its final season. D'Pharaoh Woon-A-Tai of "Reservation Dogs," will compete for lead actor in a comedy.

The Emmy Awards show will be held Sept. 15 at the Peacock Theater in Los Angeles and air on ABC.

Here are other talking points, "snubs" and surprises from the Emmy nominations:

Competition for HBO

This year, HBO didn't have "Succession" or "The White Lotus" to bolster its Emmy nominations count, giving Netflix and FX an edge. Netflix leads with 107 nominations for programs including "Baby Reindeer" and "Ripley." FX comes in second, thanks in part to the continued roar of "The Bear" and newcomer "Shogun." HBO has 91 nominations. Even without "Ted Lasso," Apple TV+ also did well with 70 nods including for "The Morning Show" and "Slow Horses."

Justice for Selena

Hulu's "Only Murders in the Building" is a three-hander comedic mystery starring Steve Martin, Martin Short and Selena Gomez. Until now, Emmy voters have acknowledged only Martin and Short in the best actor category. That changed Wednesday morning, with Gomez receiving a best actress nomination. She will compete against Quinta Brunson, Ayo Edebiri, Maya Rudolph, Jean Smart and Kristin Wiig.

"The Morning Show" wakes up Emmy voters

"The Morning Show" on Apple TV+ has always included current events in storylines, but the series about behind-the-scenes drama at a TV network took it up a notch with its third season, earning it its first Emmy nomination for outstanding drama.

The show's 10 episodes tackled topics including the hacking of a corporation, a media merger and fallout

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from the Jan. 6 insurrection in Washington.

Jennifer Aniston and Reese Witherspoon are both up for lead actress. Jon Hamm joins 2020 winner Billy Crudup and previous nominee Mark Duplass in the supporting actor category. "The Morning Show" also dominates the supporting actress field with nominations for Nicole Beharie, Greta Lee, Karen Pittman and Holland Taylor.

Emmy nods and a snub for Oscar winners

Emma Stone, the best actress winner at this year's Oscars for "Poor Things," did not get nominated for Showtime's "The Curse." Stone was mentioned in a number of predictions as a possible lead actress contender. The show itself was also overlooked in the drama series category.

Her fellow 2024 Oscar winners had better luck.

Robert Downey, Jr., who won the supporting actor Oscar for "Oppenheimer," is nominated in the supporting actor category for HBO's "The Sympathizer." He plays four characters in the spy drama.

Da'Vine Joy Randolph, who took home the best supporting actress Oscar for "The Holdovers," is also now an Emmy nominee. Randolph is nominated in the guest actress category for an appearance on "Only Murders in the Building."

2 out of 3 Queen Elizabeths get a nomination

Claire Foy, whose portrayal of Queen Elizabeth II in "The Crown" earned her a lead actress Emmy Award in 2018 and a guest actress Emmy in 2021, is now nominated again for a guest spot. Foy appeared in the final episode of the series as Imelda Staunton's Queen Elizabeth II pondered abdicating the throne. Olivia Colman, who portrayed the queen in the third and fourth seasons, also made an appearance in the same episode but was not nominated. This isn't due to a snub, however, but a technicality where Colman didn't meet the nomination qualifications. She wasn't on camera long enough. Staunton, by the way, is nominated for best actress.

## Another Texas migrant aid group asks a judge to push back on investigation by Republican AG

By VALERIE GONZALEZ Associated Press

EDINBURG, Texas (AP) — A prominent aid group along the U.S.-Mexico border asked a Texas judge on Wednesday to push back on a widening Republican-led investigation into nonprofits that help migrants, weeks after a separate court rejected efforts by the state to shutter an El Paso shelter.

Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley provides temporary shelter and food to as many as 2,000 migrants a day when border crossings are high. In recent months, the nonprofit and at least three others in Texas that help migrants have come under scrutiny from state officials following a directive from Republican Gov. Greg Abbott, who has aggressively pushed boundaries in his efforts to curb illegal crossings.

Without citing evidence, Abbott in 2022 alleged that some border nonprofits may be acting "unlawfully," including by helping migrants enter the U.S. illegally. Leaders of Catholic Charities have denied the accusations and say the state has presented nothing to back up the claims.

During a hearing Wednesday in Edinburg, state District Judge J.R. Flores said he would rule as early as next week whether the state can depose a member of Catholic Charities, which is fighting to block the deposition and says it has already turned over more than 100 pages of documents to state investigators.

"I am glad we had a chance to present our case in court today," said Sister Norma Pimentel, the group's executive director. "The small staff at Catholic Charities works tirelessly around the clock to serve needy people throughout our communities."

An attorney for the state Attorney General Ken Paxton's office referred questions after the hearing to the agency's press office, which did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

Among the evidence that Paxton's office submitted during the hearing was a letter from Republican Rep. Lance Gooden of Texas in 2022 that accuses Catholic Charities USA, without citing any evidence, of assisting illegal border crossings. Attorneys for the state told Flores that a deposition could help them determine whether to sue Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley.

William Powell, an attorney for Catholic Charities, told the judge that the two organizations operate separately. He said the state hasn't produced evidence of wrongdoing and argued that there would be no benefit to letting a deposition proceed.

Crossings along the U.S.-Mexico border are down and Catholic Charities has been serving fewer than 1,000 migrants a day of late. According to figures released Monday by U.S. Customs and Border Protection, arrests for illegally crossing the border from Mexico plunged 29% in June.

Other organizations that have come under scrutiny by Texas officials include Team Brownsville, an organization that helps migrants along the border in Brownsville, and Annunciation House, a migrant shelter network in El Paso.

In early July, an El Paso judge ruled in favor of Annunciation House to shield them from what he called "harassment" from state investigators. On Monday, Paxton said his office would appeal that decision.

## Democrats consider expelling Menendez from the Senate after conviction in bribery trial

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Bob Menendez has shown no sign he will voluntarily resign from the Senate following his conviction on bribery charges, leaving Democratic senators contemplating an expulsion effort to force him from office.

While Menendez, a New Jersey Democrat, has six months remaining in his term, Democrats have made clear they don't want him in office any longer. Within minutes of the guilty verdict on Tuesday, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer called for his resignation and New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy, who would name Menendez's replacement, said that the Senate should expel Menendez if he refused to step down.

Expulsion, which requires a two-thirds majority, is an exceedingly rare step in the Senate. The last time it was even seriously considered by the chamber was almost 30 years ago, and only 15 senators — almost all during the Civil War — have ever been expelled.

Still, senators are preparing to make the push.

"He must stand up now and leave the Senate. He must do that, and if he refuses to do that, many of us, but I will lead that effort to make sure he is removed from the Senate," Sen. Cory Booker, New Jersey's other Democratic senator, told MSNBC late Tuesday. "That is the right thing to do. That is the just thing to do."

After a jury found Menendez, 70, guilty of accepting bribes of gold and cash from three New Jersey businessmen and acting as a foreign agent for the Egyptian government, the senator did not comment on his political plans in brief remarks as he left the courthouse. But he vowed to appeal the verdict.

"I have never violated my public oath. I have never been anything but a patriot of my country and for my country," Menendez told reporters.

It was a familiar refrain from Menendez, who has taken a defiant stand ever since he was first indicted in September last year.

While under indictment, Menendez stepped down as chair of the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee, but continued to attend classified briefings — a move that irked his fellow senators. And while they mostly ostracized him in the day-to-day workings of the Senate and over half of the Senate Democratic caucus called for his resignation, there was little they could do to force him from office, especially when Schumer maintained that Menendez should get his day in court.

Now that Schumer has urged Menendez to resign, there will be a concerted effort to put as much pressure as possible on Menendez to voluntarily step aside. That started Tuesday as the Senate Ethics Committee released a statement saying that it would "promptly" complete an investigation into Menendez that started when he was first indicted. The committee also made it clear that recommending expulsion to the Senate was on the table.

In the meantime, any individual senator could move to hold a snap vote on expulsion for Menendez, though that effort could be blocked by an objection from any other senator — including Menendez himself.

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That means that many in the Senate will likely wait for the ethics committee to release its recommendation. In the past, an expulsion recommendation from the panel has been enough for disgraced senators to voluntarily resign. In 1982, the panel recommended that former Sen. Harrison A. Williams, Jr., a New Jersey Democrat, be expelled and he resigned before it went to a vote in the full Senate. In 1995, Sen. Robert W. Packwood, an Oregon Republican, announced he would resign just a day after the committee released its recommendation.

"Most people, even most members of Congress, have enough of a sense of shame that they would rather not have the last big news item about them be that they got expelled," said Josh Chafetz, a professor at Georgetown University Law Center who has studied congressional powers.

As the November election approaches, the appetite among Democrats to rid themselves of a besmirched colleague will only increase. Several Democrats in tough reelection races, including Sens. Bob Casey of Pennsylvania, Jacky Rosen of Nevada, Sherrod Brown of Ohio, Jon Tester of Montana and Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin, have already indicated they support expulsion.

If Menendez resigns or is expelled, it would be left to Murphy, the Democratic governor, to fill the seat. Several prominent New Jersey Democrats have called for Rep. Andy Kim, who won his party's nomination for the Senate seat, to be appointed. Kim, a third-term congressman, said Tuesday he would accept if offered the seat.

Kim's strength in the race drove Tammy Murphy, the wife of the governor, out of the primary. Tammy Murphy had backing from much of the state's political establishment, but Kim outpolled her and she withdrew from the race in March.

It is still possible the governor could appoint his wife to the seat, even temporarily, although he ruled out that scenario during a radio interview in October. A spokesperson for the governor said Wednesday he would not comment on potential replacements for Menendez, who has previously said he is running for the seat as an independent.

## **'Shogun' leads all Emmy nominees with 25 and 'The Bear' sets comedy series record with 23**

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — "The Bear" went on a tear at Wednesday morning's Emmy nominations with a comedy-series record 23, and "Shogun" led all nominees with 25 in a dominant year across categories for FX.

Nominations for the "The Bear," up for its second season in which its rag-tag band of sandwich makers tries to create an elite restaurant, included best comedy series and best actor in a comedy series for Jeremy Allen White — both awards it won at January's strike-delayed ceremony — along with best actress for Ayo Edebiri, who won best supporting actress last time around.

It was also boosted by a bounty of guest acting nominations, including Jamie Lee Curtis and Olivia Colman, two of many Oscar winners who landed nominations.

"Shogun" took full advantage of the absence of last year's top three nominees — "Succession," "The White Lotus" and "The Last of Us" — to dominate in drama and give FX, with 93 overall nominations, the kind of strong year often reserved for HBO, which even in this "off" year received 91.

Its nominations included best drama series, best actress in a drama series for Anna Sawai and best actor for Hiroyuki Sanada.

The show shook up the drama race when its makers said in May that despite reaching the end of the story of James Clavell's novel about political machinations in early 17th century Japan, they would explore making more than one season, shifting the critical darling from the limited series category to the more prestigious drama one.

"True Detective: Night Country" was a bright spot for HBO, which lost "Succession" to retirement and is between seasons on "The White Lotus" and "The Last of Us."

The show, a semi-spinoff of the "True Detective" franchise, led all limited or anthology series nominees

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with 19, including a best actress nomination for Jodie Foster for playing a police chief investigating mysterious deaths in the darkness of a north Alaskan winter.

Kali Reis, who plays Foster's investigating partner and rival on the show and is nominated for best supporting actress in a limited series, joins Lily Gladstone, in the same category for "Under the Bridge," as the first Indigenous woman to get Emmy acting nominations. D'Pharaoh Woon-A-Tai of "Reservation Dogs" becomes the first Indigenous actor to be recognized for lead with his best actor in a comedy nom.

The only previous Indigenous acting nominee, according to Variety, was August Schellenberg, who received an Emmy nomination in 2007 for his performance as Sitting Bull in the HBO TV movie "Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee."

"True Detective" is expected to vie for the best limited series Emmy with " Fargo," which had 15 nominations and gives FX a shot at a triple crown if its favorites win drama and comedy series.

Netflix has its own pair of contenders in the category. "Baby Reindeer" became a minor cultural phenomenon and Emmy upstart in recent months. It got 11 nominations, including best actor for star and creator Richard Gadd. "Ripley," a black-and-white retelling of Patricia Highsmith's novel "The Talented Mr. Ripley," got 13 nominations including acting nods for Andrew Scott and Dakota Fanning. The shows along dozens of acknowledgements in craft and comedy special categories, helped Netflix lead all outlets with 107 nominations.

Foster was another of the Academy Award winners to get Emmy nods, along with fellow multiple Oscar winner Meryl Streep, up for best supporting actress in a comedy for "Only Murders in the Building," reigning best supporting actor winner Robert Downey Jr., up for best supporting actor in a limited series for playing several characters in "The Sympathizer;" and Gary Oldman, up for best actor in a drama series for "Slow Horses."

"Only Murders," a perennial Emmy nominee for Hulu with few wins, outdid itself this year with 21, behind only "Shogun" and "The Bear." Leads Steve Martin and Martin Short were nominated for best actor, and, in her first Emmy nomination as a performer, Selena Gomez got a nod for best actress.

Old Emmy favorites also returned. Jon Hamm, who had one Emmy from 16 previous nominations, most of them for "Mad Men," got two nominations, one for actor in a limited or anthology series for " Fargo" and another for supporting actor in a drama for "The Morning Show." His "Morning Show" castmate Jennifer Aniston is considered by many the favorite to win the best drama actress Emmy to go with the comedy actress trophy she won for "Friends."

And four-time Emmy winner Tony Shalhoub has a shot at his fifth for reprising his role as Adrian Monk in "Mr. Monk's Last Case: A Monk Movie."

Former "Saturday Night Live" and "Bridesmaids" co-stars Kristen Wiig and Maya Rudolph each landed best actress in a comedy noms for Apple TV+ shows about wealthy women: Wiig for "Palm Royale" and Rudolph for "Loot." Each also were nominated for their returns to host "SNL."

Getting back to its traditional schedule, the show will be held Sept. 15 at the Peacock Theater in Los Angeles and air on ABC.

Many still-airing shows didn't fall into this year's eligibility window of June 2023 through May 2024, whether because of streaming and elite cable calendar quirks or the strikes – including "House of the Dragon," "Bridgerton," "Yellowjackets" and "Severance."

And, as happened last year, "The Bear" has had an entire new season drop after the one that it's nominated for on Hulu, the FX streaming partner that was a major driver of viewers and voters for its shows.

"The Crown" with 19 nominations and "Hacks" with 16 each make triumphant returns to the Emmys after their own years off. Each had especially acclaimed seasons.

Elizabeth Debicki is considered the closest thing in these Emmys to a lock to win best supporting actress in a drama for playing Princess Diana in the last days before her death in the sixth and final season of "The Crown."

And Jean Smart will vie with Edebiri for best actress in a comedy for the third season of "Hacks," in which her comedian Deborah Vance tries to land a late-night show.

Quinta Brunson also was nominated in the category. ABC's "Abbott Elementary," which she also created,

remains a driver of Emmy diversity with another slate of Black acting nominees, including Janelle James, Sheryl Lee Ralph and Tyler James Williams. And it remains the lone bright spot in the major categories for shows from traditional broadcast networks.

Ralph and fellow Emmy winner Tony Hale announced the nominations Wednesday morning.

## **US military pier for carrying aid to Gaza will be dismantled after weather and security problems**

By LOLITA C. BALDOR and TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. military-built pier to carry humanitarian aid to Gaza will be dismantled and brought home, ending a mission that has been fraught with repeated weather and security problems that limited how much food and other supplies could get to starving Palestinians.

Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, deputy commander at U.S. Central Command, told reporters in a Pentagon briefing on Wednesday that the pier achieved its intended effect in what he called an “unprecedented operation.”

As the U.S. military steps away from the sea route for humanitarian aid, questions swirl about Israel’s new plan to use the port at Ashdod as a substitute. There are few details on how it will work and lingering concerns about whether aid groups will have enough viable land crossings to get assistance into the territory besieged by war between Israel and Hamas.

Cooper said the Ashdod corridor will be more sustainable and it has already been used to get more than a million pounds of aid into Gaza.

“Having now delivered the largest volume of humanitarian assistance ever into the Middle East, we’re now mission complete and transitioning to a new phase,” said Cooper. “In the coming weeks, we expect that millions of pounds of aid will enter into Gaza via this new pathway.”

He said there is currently 5 million pounds of aid in Cyprus, awaiting transit to Ashdod, and they expect delivery to start “in the coming days.”

Sonali Korde, assistant to the administrator of United States Agency for International Development’s Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, told reporters that aid groups have confidence that “Ashdod is going to be a very viable and important route into Gaza.”

But, she said, “the key challenge we have right now in Gaza is around the insecurity and lawlessness that is hampering the distribution once aid gets into Gaza and to the crossing points.”

Israel controls all of Gaza’s border crossings and most are open.

Critics call the pier a \$230 million boondoggle that failed to bring in the level of aid needed to stem a looming famine. The U.S. military, however, has maintained that it served as the best hope as aid only trickled in during a critical time of near-famine in Gaza and that it got close to 20 million pounds (9 million kilograms) of desperately needed supplies to the Palestinians.

President Joe Biden, who announced the building of the pier during his State of the Union speech in March, expressed disappointment in the pier, saying, “I was hopeful that would be more successful.”

Planned as a temporary fix to get aid to starving Palestinians, the project was panned from the start by aid groups that condemned it as a waste of time and money. While U.S. defense officials acknowledged that the weather was worse than expected and limited the days the pier could operate, they also expressed frustration with humanitarian groups for being unable and unwilling to distribute the aid that got through the system, only to have it pile up onshore.

A critical element that neither the aid groups nor the U.S. military could control, however, was the Israeli defense forces whose military operation into Gaza put humanitarian workers in persistent danger and in a number of cases cost them their lives.

As a result, the pier operated for fewer than 25 days after its installation May 16, and aid agencies used it only about half that time due to security concerns.

Stuck in the middle were the more than 1,000 U.S. soldiers and sailors who largely lived on boats off the Gaza shore and struggled to keep the pier working but spent many days repairing it or detaching it,

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moving it and reinstalling it due to the bad weather.

Cooper declined to provide any details on how or when the troops would return home.

The tensions played out until the final moments, as senior Biden administration officials signaled the end of the pier project days ago but U.S. Central Command balked, holding out hope the military could reinstall it one last time to move any final pallets of aid ashore.

Most would agree that use of the maritime route and what is known as the Army's Joint Logistics Over the Shore capability, or JLOTS, fell short of early expectations. Even at the start, officials warned of challenges because the sea is shallow, the weather is unpredictable and it was an active war zone.

The U.S. also had to train Israeli troops and others on how to anchor the pier to the shore because no U.S. troops could step foot on Gaza soil, a condition Biden has had since the beginning of the Hamas-Israel conflict in October.

However, enough aid to feed 450,000 people for a month flowed through the pier, according to USAID, which coordinated with the United Nations and others to get supplies to people in need. As important, humanitarian leaders say, the pier operation laid the groundwork for a coordination system with the Israeli government and military that they can expand on.

The one place where deconfliction with the Israeli military worked well was at the pier, which came on-line at a time of some of the greatest despair and food shortages, USAID Administrator Samantha Power said. She said Israel and the military have now agreed to extend that coordination plan to "all of Gaza."

Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said Tuesday that a new Pier 28 will soon be established at Israel's Ashdod port for delivering aid to the Gaza Strip as a replacement for the U.S. military-built pier. He did not say when it would start operating.

Other aid groups, however, slammed the U.S. military pier as a distraction, saying the U.S. should have instead pressured Israel to open more land crossings and allow the aid to flow more quickly and efficiently through them.

Everyone has agreed all along that land crossings are the most productive way to get aid into Gaza, but the Israeli military routinely has blocked routes and slowed deliveries due to inspections. Aid groups also were terrorized by attacks, from Hamas, gunmen who stripped convoys of supplies and the Israeli military. More than 278 workers have been killed in the conflict, Power said.

As the Pentagon and the Army take stock of how the pier did, questions will loom about whether officials underestimated the persistent weather challenges and security hurdles that hindered the operation.

The system is run by the Army's 7th Transportation Brigade (Expeditionary) at Joint Base Langley-Eustis in Virginia. And it's like a huge LEGO system — an array of 40-foot-long (12-meter-long) pieces of steel that can be locked together to form a pier and causeway.

Nine days after the pier was installed on the Gaza shore, bad weather broke it, forcing troops to dismantle it and take it to the Israeli port at Ashdod for more than two weeks for repairs. And weather forced troops to detach the pier from the shore two more times and move it to Ashdod. It was detached for the final time on June 28.

Aid groups struggled to distribute the supplies from the pier into Gaza, and their efforts came to an abrupt halt after a June 8 Israeli military raid that rescued four hostages but killed hundreds of Palestinians.

Troops used an area near the pier to land a helicopter and fly out the hostages. To have even a small part of an Israeli military operation so close to the pier creates problems for aid groups who rely on being independent and separate from troops to remain safe.

As a result, the U.N. suspended all World Food Program deliveries while it conducted a review, which has not been released. WFP personnel have not distributed aid from the pier since but hired contractors to move aid that piled up on shore to warehouses so it would not spoil.



## Navy exonerates 256 Black sailors unjustly punished in 1944 after a deadly California port explosion

By TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Navy has exonerated 256 Black sailors who were found to be unjustly punished in 1944 following a horrific port explosion that killed hundreds of service members and exposed racist double standards among the then-segregated ranks.

On July 17, 1944, munitions being loaded onto a cargo ship detonated, causing secondary blasts that ignited 5,000 tons (4,535 metric tonnes) of explosives at Port Chicago naval weapons station near San Francisco.

The explosion killed 320 sailors and civilians, nearly 75% of whom were Black, and injured another 400 personnel. Surviving Black sailors had to pick up the human remains and clear the blast site while white officers were granted leave to recuperate.

The pier was a critical ammunition supply site for forces in the Pacific during World War II, and the job of loading those ships was left primarily to Black enlisted sailors overseen by white officers.

Before the explosion, the Black sailors working the dock had expressed concerns about the loading operations. Shortly after the blast, they were ordered to return to loading ships even though no changes had been made to improve their safety.

The sailors refused, saying they needed training on how to more safely handle the bombs before they returned.

What followed affected the rest of their lives, including punishments that kept them from receiving honorable discharges even as the vast majority returned to work at the pier under immense pressure and served throughout the war. Fifty sailors who held fast to their demands for safety and training were tried as a group on charges of conspiracy to commit mutiny and were convicted and sent to prison.

The whole episode was unjust, and none of the sailors received the legal due process they were owed, Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro said in an interview with The Associated Press.

It was "a horrific situation for those Black sailors that remained," Del Toro said. The Navy's office of general counsel reviewed the military judicial proceedings used to punish the sailors and found "there were so many inconsistencies and so many legal violations that came to the forefront," he said.

Thurgood Marshall, who was then a defense attorney for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, defended the 50 sailors who were convicted of mutiny. Marshall went on to become the first Black justice on the Supreme Court.

On Wednesday, the 80th anniversary of the Port Chicago disaster, Del Toro signed paperwork officially clearing the sailors, who are now deceased. Del Toro handed the first pen to Thurgood Marshall Jr., the late justice's son.

The exonerations "are deeply moving," Marshall Jr. said. "They, of course, are all gone, and that's a painful aspect of it. But so many fought for so long for that kind of fairness and recognition."

President Joe Biden said the decision to exonerate is "righting a historic wrong."

In the appeal of their courts martial convictions, then-NAACP attorney Marshall wrote that "justice can only be done in this case by a complete reversal of findings," Biden said in a statement. "With this action, we are answering that call."

The events have stung surviving family members for decades, but an earlier effort in the 1990s to pardon the sailors fell short. Two additional sailors were previously cleared — one was found mentally incompetent to stand trial, and one was cleared on insufficient evidence. Wednesday's action goes beyond a pardon and vacates the military judicial proceedings carried out in 1944 against all of the men.

"This decision clears their names and restores their honor and acknowledges the courage that they displayed in the face of immense danger," Del Toro said.

The racism that the Black sailors faced reflected the military's views at the time — ranks were segregated, and the Navy had only reluctantly opened some positions it considered less desirable to Black service members.

The official court of inquiry looking into why the explosion occurred cleared all the white officers and praised them for the "great effort" they had to exert to run the dock. It left open the suggestion that the Black sailors were to blame for the accident.

Del Toro's action converts the discharges to honorable unless there were other circumstances surrounding them. After the Navy upgrades the discharges, surviving family members can work with the Department of Veterans Affairs on past benefits that may be owed, the Navy said.

## Traces of cyanide are found in the blood of Vietnamese and Americans found dead in a Bangkok hotel

By JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI and NAPAT KONGSAWAD Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Initial autopsy results showed traces of cyanide in the blood of six Vietnamese and American guests at a luxury hotel in central Bangkok and one of them is believed to have poisoned the others over a bad investment, Thai authorities said Wednesday.

The bodies were found Tuesday in the Grand Hyatt Erawan Bangkok, a landmark at a central intersection in the capital busy with malls, government buildings and public transit.

The six had last been seen alive when food was delivered to the room Monday afternoon. The staff saw one woman receive the food, and security video showed the rest arriving one by one shortly after. There were no other visitors, no one was seen leaving and the door was locked from the inside. A maid found them Tuesday afternoon when they failed to check out of the room.

Upon entering the room, hotel staff found that food ordered from the previous day was left untouched, with some servings of fried rice still under plastic wrap. While the food was untouched, several used tea-cups were on a nearby table, next to two thermos bottles.

Lt. Gen. Trairong Piwpan, chief of the Thai police force's forensic division, said there were traces of cyanide in the cups and bottles.

Initial results from autopsies of the six bodies, performed at Bangkok's Chulalongkorn Hospital, were shared later Wednesday. Kornkiat Vongpaisarnsin, head of the forensic medicine department at Chulalongkorn University's medical school, said at a news conference that there was cyanide in the blood of all six, and a CAT scan showed no signs of blunt force trauma, reinforcing the hypothesis that they had been poisoned.

Chulalongkorn's dean of medicine, Chanchai Sittipunt, said the team knew enough from the cyanide to determine it was likely the cause of death.

Bangkok police chief Lt. Gen. Thiti Sangsawang identified the dead as two Vietnamese Americans and four Vietnamese nationals, and said they were three men and three women. Their ages ranged from 37 to 56, according to Noppasin Punsawat, Bangkok deputy police chief. He said the case appeared to be personal and would not impact the safety of tourists.

A husband and wife among the dead had invested about 10 million baht (\$278,000) with two of the others, and that could be a motive, said Noppasin, citing information obtained from relatives. The investment was meant to build a hospital in Japan and the group might have been meeting to settle the matter. Police say one killed the rest but did not say which of the six was the suspect.

Bangkok police chief Lt. Gen. Thiti Sangsawang said Tuesday that four bodies were in the living room and two in the bedroom. He said two of the people appeared to have tried to reach the door but collapsed before they could.

Noppasin said Wednesday that a seventh person whose name was part of the hotel booking was a sibling of one of the six and left Thailand on July 10. Police believe the seventh person had no involvement in the deaths.

The Vietnamese and United States embassies have been contacted over the deaths, and the American FBI was en route, Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin said.

"This wasn't an act of terrorism or a breach in security. Everything is fine," he said.

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Trairong said a mass suicide was unlikely because some of them had arranged future parts of their trip, such as guides and drivers. He said the bodies being in different parts of the hotel room suggested they did not knowingly consume poison and wait for their deaths together.

U.S. State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller in Washington offered condolences to the families of the dead. He said the U.S. is closely monitoring the situation and would communicate with local authorities. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke with his Thai counterpart on Tuesday, but Miller said he thought that call happened before the deaths were reported and he didn't know if it came up in their conversation.

The five-star Grand Hyatt Erawan is one of Bangkok's landmark hotels. The Erawan Shrine that sits on the corner of its block has been a major tourist attraction since it was erected on the advice of astrologers during the hotel's construction in 1956 to ward off bad luck.

Visitors worship at the shrine, requesting divine intervention on issues from relationship troubles to exam preparation. The shrine was the target of a 2015 bombing that killed 20 people and injured more than 100.

In 2023, Thailand was rocked by reports of a serial killer who poisoned 15 people with cyanide over a span of years. Sararat Rangsiwuthaporn, or "Am Cyanide" as she would later be called, killed at least 14 people whom she owed money to. One person survived.

## Relatives of those killed when MH17 was shot down mark 10 years since tragedy that claimed 298 lives

By MIKE CORDER and ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

VIJFHUIZEN, Netherlands (AP) — Grieving families recited the names and ages Wednesday of all 298 passengers and crew killed when Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 was shot down over Ukraine 10 years ago, as they marked the anniversary of the tragedy at a solemn ceremony near Amsterdam.

The relatives, some weeping or choking back tears, named brothers, sisters, parents, grandchildren, grandparents nieces and nephews in a litany of lost lives that lasted 30 minutes.

"It's a black day," said Evert van Zijtveld, who lost his daughter and son, Frederique, 19, and Robert-Jan, 18, along with their grandparents.

"What's very important is that we mentioned the name of the loved ones ... and it's very important that we remember them," he added.

An international investigation concluded that the Buk missile system that destroyed MH17 belonged to the Russian 53rd Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade and was fired from territory controlled by pro-Moscow separatists. The investigation concluded the missile launcher was driven into Ukraine from a Russian military base near the city of Kursk and returned there after the plane was shot down.

Moscow has repeatedly denied responsibility. In 2022, a Dutch court convicted in absentia two Russians and a Ukrainian separatist for their role in the jet's downing.

"Although the court formally found Russian puppets guilty, the Kremlin authorities led by Putin and his accomplices are behind this crime," Ukraine's General Staff said in a statement published on Facebook.

Commemoration services took place Wednesday in the Netherlands, Australia and the site of the crash in the Russia-controlled part of the Donetsk region, as the war in Ukraine raged on.

Hundreds of family members were joined by Dutch King Willem-Alexander, politicians and diplomats at a memorial in the Netherlands close to Schiphol, the airport the Kuala Lumpur-bound Boeing 777 departed from on July 17, 2014.

Australian Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus represented his country at the Dutch memorial site, where 298 trees commemorate each victim.

"Today we remain unwavering in our determination to ensure truth, justice and accountability for the victims and their loved ones," Dreyfus said.

Many of the families carried sunflowers like those that grew at the scene of the crash, and laid them next to trees. Flags of the countries that lost citizens hung at half-staff next to a field of blooming sunflowers.

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Dutch Prime Minister Dick Schoof pledged to keep up the fight to hold accountable those responsible. "And I know it too: justice takes time," he said. "But we have the time. And the patience. And the perseverance. That is my message to the guilty parties, and my promise to you."

The ceremony in Australia was held at the Parliament House in Canberra.

"I don't think anyone intended to bring down a passenger plane. So in that sense, I'm heartbroken that the (Ukraine) conflict continues," Paul Guard told Australian Broadcasting Corp. His parents, Roger and Jill Guard were among 38 Australian citizens and permanent residents killed.

"But I think that a lot of families would really have just liked an acknowledgment that what happened was wrong and that Russia should not have been waging war," the son added.

Russia continues to be pursued under international law by the Netherlands in the European Court of Human Rights and by Australia and the Netherlands jointly through the International Civil Aviation Organization Council, or ICAO, over its alleged role in bringing down MH17.

Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong told Wednesday's service in Canberra that she was "appalled" that Russia had withdrawn from the ICAO proceedings in June.

"The case will continue and we will not be deterred in our commitment to hold Russia to account," Wong told the gathering.

At the crash site in the village of Hrabov, several dozen local residents brought flowers, stuffed animals and even a model airplane to a small memorial stone installed in a field near where some of the wreckage was found. Some struggled to hold back tears, recalling the explosion that shattered windows in their homes and bodies falling from the sky. "It hurts," one woman said. "I feel sorry for the people."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov refused to comment on Wong's remarks, reiterating that Moscow's position on the matter is "well known." He said: "No arguments from the Russian side were taken into account, we did not participate in the investigation, and therefore our attitude to these conclusions is well known."

The Netherlands was home to 196 of the victims while 38 hailed from Australia. Victims also came from Malaysia, Indonesia, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Germany, the Philippines, Canada, New Zealand, Vietnam, Israel, Italy, Romania, the United States and South Africa.

Malaysia also reiterated its commitment to seek justice and hold those responsible for the tragedy accountable.

"The Government of Malaysia is resolute that the process must pursue truth, justice and accountability," the transport ministry said in a statement.

## **Don't work in bed, and other tips for creating a peaceful sleep zone in a studio apartment**

By KIM COOK Associated Press

There's a lot to be said for the work/play energy of a nice studio or other small apartment during the day. But how do you bring that energy down to get a good night's sleep?

With electronics, cookery, clothes and books all in one space, it can be a challenge to create a restful refuge.

Design and sleep experts have some tips:

Prioritize a sleep space, starting with the bed

Everyone needs good sleep to stay healthy.

"The primary rule, maybe the only rule of small space design, is people have to be honest about how they really live," says Olivia Hosken, House Beautiful's deputy managing editor. "When there's limited square footage, there's less allowance for things that don't function optimally."

So, spend your money on a proper bed or a quality sleep sofa. Skip big tables or chairs you won't use, she added.

Andrea Morris of Lancaster Place Interiors in Wilmington, North Carolina, is a fan of wall beds, which

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rest flush with the wall when closed, then flip down for sleeping. They're better known as Murphy beds, named after William Murphy, who came up with his version in 1900 while living in his own San Francisco studio apartment.

Some Murphy beds combine a sofa with a wall bed.

Create a buffer zone

To separate your sleep area from the rest of the apartment, you could get a freestanding screen, room divider or "floating" (hanging) wall.

And as much as you can, keep that area strictly for sleeping.

"Avoid doing work or anything stressful from your bed," says Jeff Kahn, co-founder of the Chicago-based sleep-research company Rise Science, which developed a sleep-tracking app, Rise.

"This helps to maintain what sleep medicine practitioners call 'stimulus control,' which helps your brain associate the bed with sleep, rather than wakefulness and stress," he says.

If the bed is the only place of refuge, still do what you can to keep wakefulness and sleep in separate zones. Lisa Strauss, a psychologist specializing in cognitive behavioral treatment of sleep disorders, has suggested designating different sides or ends of the bed for reading and sleeping.

Freshen the air. Lower the lights. Cut the noise.

"Make sure your space is well ventilated, and consider an air purifier," says Kahn. This is especially important if you're cooking in the same space you're sleeping in.

Consider a diffuser for similar reasons, says Spruce editor Mia Ingui. She suggests using calming scents like lavender or chamomile just at bedtime, to "set the tone for restful sleep."

Also, be sure that computer, TV and other screens, which are just a short distance away, are turned off. Their light at night can disrupt our internal clocks, or circadian rhythm.

If the buzz of nearby appliances or street sounds are keeping you up, consider a noise machine. Ingui likes the Hatch Restore, a "sunrise lamp" that provides soothing sounds and lights up gradually in the morning. She also suggests blackout curtains.

Keep things tidy

"One of my don'ts when it comes to studio living is leaving beds unmade," says Morris. "It's amazing how much better you feel after a hard day entering a space with a made bed. And in a studio, it's often the sofa, too. So make it inviting for yourself and others."

Stow away electronics overnight and out of sight; side tables with plugs and ports are handy and an efficient way to reduce clutter.

Choose flexible, storable bedding

Ingui recommends choosing breathable materials for bedding if it's difficult to regulate your studio's heating and cooling.

"It's also great to invest in a duvet cover/insert rather than a bulky comforter — this way, you can easily keep multiple foldable, storable covers on hand and swap them out, rather than hoarding a bunch of large comforters you don't have space for," she says.

With some thoughtful choices, your small space can have the vibes we all want from home life: cohesive, calming and sleep-friendly.

## Nearly two-thirds of Democrats want Biden to withdraw, new AP-NORC poll finds

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE, AMELIA THOMSON-DEVEAUX and EMILY SWANSON Associated Press WASHINGTON (AP) — Nearly two-thirds of Democrats say President Joe Biden should withdraw from the presidential race and let his party nominate a different candidate, according to a new poll, sharply undercutting his post-debate claim that "average Democrats" are still with him even if some "big names" are turning on him.

The new survey by the AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, conducted as Biden works to salvage

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his candidacy two weeks after his debate flop, also found that only about 3 in 10 Democrats are extremely or very confident that he has the mental capability to serve effectively as president, down slightly from 40% in an AP-NORC poll in February.

The findings underscore the challenges the 81-year-old president faces as he tries to silence calls from within his own party to leave the race and tries to convince Democrats that he's the best candidate to defeat Donald Trump. The poll was conducted mostly before Saturday's assassination attempt on Trump at a campaign rally in Pennsylvania. It's unclear whether the shooting influenced people's views of Biden, but the small number of poll interviews completed after the shooting provided no early indication that his prospects improved.

Meanwhile, as Vice President Kamala Harris receives additional scrutiny amid the talk about whether Biden should bow out, the poll found that her favorability rating is similar to his — but the share of Americans who have an unfavorable opinion of her is slightly lower.

The poll provides some evidence that Black Democrats are among Biden's strongest supporters, with roughly half in the survey saying he should continue running, compared to about 3 in 10 white and Hispanic Democrats. Overall, seven in 10 Americans think Biden should drop out, with Democrats only slightly less likely than Republicans and independents to say that he should make way for a new nominee.

"I do have genuine concerns about his ability to hold the office," said Democrat Andrew Holcomb, 27, of Denver. "I think he's frankly just too old for the job."

Janie Stapleton, a 50-year-old lifelong Democrat from Walls, Mississippi, held the opposite view, saying Biden is the "best candidate" for president.

People aren't just sour on Biden on as they size up their choices this election season.

About 6 in 10 Americans want Trump to withdraw -- but relatively few Republicans are in that camp.

As for Biden, younger Democrats are especially likely to want to see him bow out – and to say they're dissatisfied with him. Three-quarters of Democrats under the age of 45 want Biden to drop out, compared to about 6 in 10 of those who are older.

"I just feel like these two individuals are a sad choice," said Alexi Mitchell, 35, a civil servant who lives in Virginia. She identifies as a Democratic-leaning independent, and while she thinks Biden is probably still mentally up to the job, she worries that the past few weeks' unraveling of support makes him a weak candidate, no matter what happens next. "If he doesn't have control over his own party, that's a fatal flaw," she said. "He's put us in a bad position where Trump might win."

Despite bullish talk from the Biden campaign heading into the debate, the faceoff only left the president in a deeper hole. Democrats are slightly more likely to say they're dissatisfied with Biden as their nominee now than they were before his halting performance. About half are dissatisfied, an uptick from about 4 in 10 in an AP-NORC poll from June.

By contrast, most Republicans – about 6 in 10 – came out of the debate very or somewhat satisfied with Trump as their candidate. Too few interviews were conducted after the assassination attempt to provide a clear indication of whether Republicans or Americans overall have rallied further around Trump since then.

David Parrott, a Democrat from Soddy-Daisy, Tennessee, was willing to give Biden the benefit of the doubt given the president's age, but he still voiced concerns about a potential second term.

"I don't know if he can make it another four years or not," said Parrott, a 58-year-old retiree. "Shouldn't he be sitting at his beach house taking it easy?"

All of the recent churn has left Americans much more likely to think Trump is capable of winning the 2024 election than is Biden – 42% to 18%. About a quarter thought the two men equally capable of winning. Even Democrats are relatively dour about their party's prospects come November.

Only about a third of Democrats believe Biden is more capable of winning than is Trump. About 3 in 10 think the two are equally capable of winning and 16% say victory is more likely to go to the Republican. By contrast, Republicans are overwhelmingly convinced that Trump is in the best position to win.

Trump also has the edge on Biden when Americans consider who is most capable of handling a crisis, 38% to 28%. And people are about equally divided on which candidate has the better vision for the country, with 35% saying Biden and 34% Trump.

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For all of the disenchantment Biden is up against, the president insists it's not too late to turn things around, saying past presidents have come back from a deficit at this stage in the campaign. In an interview Tuesday with BET News, he said many voters haven't focused yet, adding, "The point is, we're just getting down to gametime right now."

The poll did also offer a bright spot for Biden: 40% of adults say he's more honest than Trump, while about 2 in 10 think the opposite.

Most Democrats — around 6 in 10 — say that Vice President Harris would make a good president, while 22% think not and 2 in 10 don't know enough to say. The poll showed that 43% of U.S. adults have a favorable opinion of her, while 48% have an unfavorable opinion. Somewhat more have a negative view of Biden: approximately 6 in 10 Americans.

The survey was conducted before Trump selected freshman Sen. JD Vance of Ohio as his running mate. It showed that for most Americans, Vance is still an unknown. Six in 10 don't know enough about him to form an opinion, while 17% have a favorable view and 22% view him negatively.

## Paris mayor dips into the Seine River to showcase its improved cleanliness before Olympic events

By TOM NOUVIAN Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo took a dip Wednesday in the Seine River, fulfilling a promise to show that the long-polluted waterway was clean enough to host swimming competitions during the 2024 Olympics as well as part of the opening ceremony, now only nine days away.

Daily water quality tests in early June indicated unsafe levels of E. coli bacteria, followed by recent improvements.

Clad in a wetsuit and goggles, Hidalgo plunged into the river near the imposing-looking City Hall, her office, and the Notre Dame Cathedral. Paris 2024 chief Tony Estanguet and the top government official for the Paris region, Marc Guillaume, joined her, along with swimmers from local swimming clubs.

"The Seine is exquisite," said Hidalgo from the water. After emerging, she continued to rave, "The water is very, very good. A little cool, but not so bad." She also said today was "a dream" and a "testimony that we have achieved a lot of work," referencing the city's "swimming plan" that was launched in 2015.

They swam down the river for about 100 meters, switching between crawl and breaststroke.

"After twenty years of doing sports in the river, I find it admirable that we are trying to clean it up," said Estanguet, who has three Olympic gold medals in canoeing.

It's part of a broader effort to showcase the river's improved cleanliness ahead of the Summer Games which will kick off July 26 with a lavish open-air ceremony that includes an athletes' parade on boats on the Seine.

Swimming in the Seine has been banned for over a century. Since 2015, organizers have invested \$1.5 billion to prepare the Seine for the Olympics and to ensure Parisians have a cleaner river after the Games. The plan included constructing a giant underground water storage basin in central Paris, renovating sewer infrastructure, and upgrading wastewater treatment plants.

Originally planned for June, Hidalgo's swim was postponed due to snap parliamentary elections in France. On the initial date, the hashtag "jehiedanslaSeine" ("I'm pooping in the Seine") trended on social media as some threatened to protest the Olympics by defecating upstream.

That didn't deter Hidalgo, who carefully entered the river Wednesday using a ladder on an artificial pond, set up for the event. Seven security boats were deployed for the occasion.

The upper banks were crowded with curious spectators.

"I wouldn't have missed that for anything in the world," said Lucie Coquereau, who woke up early to get the best view of Hidalgo's up from the Pont de Sully bridge that oversees the swimming site.

Enzo Gallet, a competitive swimmer who has taken part in France's national open-water championship, was among athletes invited to test the Seine alongside the Paris mayor.

The 23-year-old swam just a few meters from Hidalgo. "Her crawl form was pretty good," he said,

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emerging from the water. "It's pretty special to be among those who swam in the middle of Paris for the first time in a long, long time."

After the officials had left the Seine river banks, many swimmers were still in the water, some playing catch with a ball and others practicing their dives from the artificial pond — all in a very festive mood.

Other politicians have promised to clean up the Seine. Jacques Chirac, the former French president, made a similar pledge in 1988 when he was Paris mayor, but it was never realized.

Hidalgo followed in the footsteps of French Sports Minister Amélie Oudéa-Castéra, who swam in the Seine on Saturday wearing a full-body suit.

Concerns over the Seine's flow and pollution levels have persisted, prompting daily water quality tests by the monitoring group Eau de Paris. Results in early June indicated unsafe levels of E. coli bacteria, followed by recent improvements.

The Seine will host several open water swimming events during the Games, including marathon swimming at the Olympic Games and the swimming legs of the Olympic and Paralympic triathlons.

## Today in History: July 18, Nadia's perfect 10

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, July 18, the 200th day of 2024. There are 166 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 18, 1976, at the Summer Olympics in Montreal, Nadia Comaneci of Romania became the first gymnast to receive a perfect score of 10 from Olympic judges for her performance on the uneven bars.

Also on this date:

In 1536, the English Parliament passed an act declaring the authority of the pope void in England.

In 1863, during the Civil War, Union troops spearheaded by the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, made up of Black soldiers, charged Confederate-held Fort Wagner on Morris Island, S.C. The Confederates were able to repel the Northerners, who suffered heavy losses; the 54th's commander, Col. Robert Gould Shaw, was among those who were killed.

In 1918, South African anti-apartheid leader and president Nelson Mandela was born in the village of Mvezo.

In 1925, Adolf Hitler published the first volume of his autobiographical manifesto, "Mein Kampf (My Struggle)."

In 1944, Hideki Tojo was removed as Japanese premier and war minister because of setbacks suffered by his country in World War II.

In 1947, President Harry S. Truman signed a Presidential Succession Act which placed the speaker of the House and the Senate president pro tempore next in the line of succession after the vice president.

In 1964, nearly a week of rioting erupted in New York's Harlem neighborhood following the fatal police shooting of a Black teenager, James Powell, two days earlier.

In 1994, a bomb hidden in a van destroyed a Jewish cultural center in Buenos Aires, Argentina, killing 85.

In 2005, an unrepentant Eric Rudolph was sentenced in Birmingham, Alabama, to life in prison for an abortion clinic bombing that killed an off-duty police officer and maimed a nurse.

In 2013, Detroit became the biggest U.S. city to file for bankruptcy, its finances ravaged and its neighborhoods hollowed out by a long, slow decline in population and auto manufacturing.

In 2020, Canadian officials said the Toronto Blue Jays baseball team would not be able to play its home games in Toronto during the shortened 2020 season because it wasn't safe for players to travel back and forth from the United States. (The Blue Jays would play "home" games in the ballpark of their minor league affiliate in Buffalo, N.Y.)

Today's Birthdays: Skating champion and commentator Dick Button is 95. Olympic gold medal figure skater Tenley Albright is 89. Movie director Paul Verhoeven is 86. Singer Dion DiMucci is 85. Actor James Brolin is 84. Baseball Hall of Famer Joe Torre is 84. Singer Martha Reeves is 83. Business mogul Richard



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Branson is 74. Actor Margo Martindale is 73. Musician Ricky Skaggs is 70. World Golf Hall of Famer Nick Faldo is 67. Actor Elizabeth McGovern is 63. Broadcaster Wendy Williams is 60. Actor Vin Diesel is 57. Author Elizabeth Gilbert is 55. Retired NBA All-Star Penny Hardaway is 53. Singer-songwriter M.I.A. is 49. Actor Elsa Pataky ("The Fast and the Furious" films) is 48. Movie director Jared Hess is 45. Actor Kristen Bell is 44. Actor Priyanka Chopra is 42. Actor Chace Crawford is 39. Boxer Canelo Alvarez is 34. Olympic sprinter Noah Lyles is 27.