

Groton Daily Independent

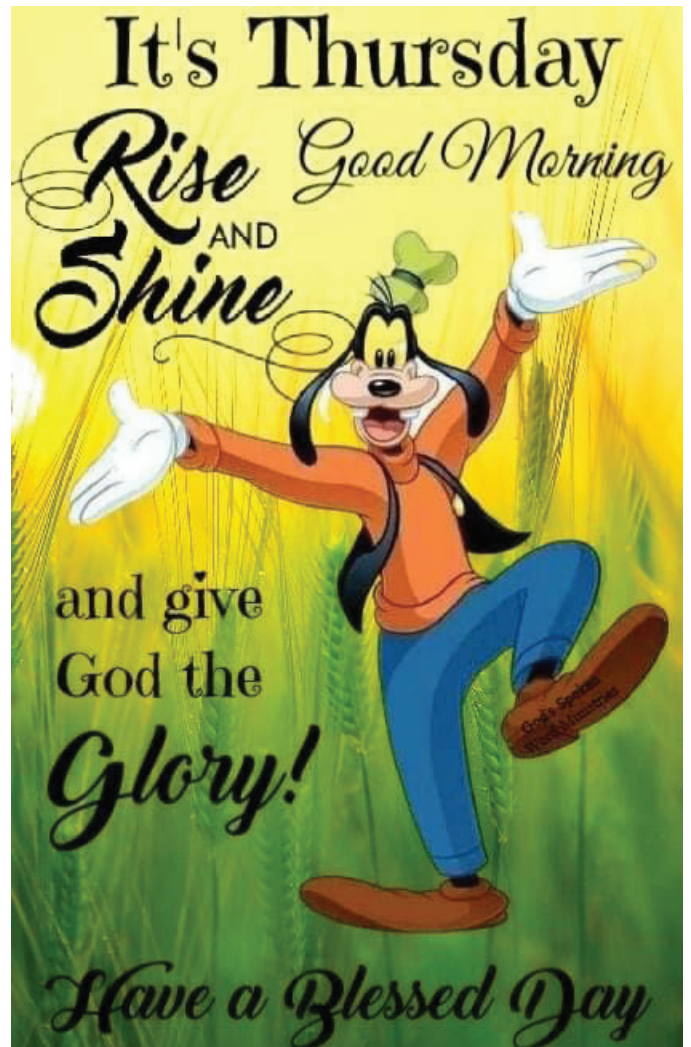
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Thursday, Aug. 1

Senior Menu: Chicken tetrazzini, green beans, honey fruit salad, whole wheat bread.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.

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



Friday, Aug. 2

Senior Menu: Taco salad, Mexican rice with beans, breadstick, cherry fluff.
State Legion Baseball Tournament in Salem

Saturday, Aug. 3

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 209 N Main, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Groton Christian & Missionary Alliance: Vacation Bible School, 6:15 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
State Legion Baseball Tournament in Salem
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.

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1440

Why 1440? The printing press was invented around the year 1440, spreading knowledge to the masses and changing the course of history. More facts: In every day, there are 1,440 minutes. We're here to make each one count.

Iran Vows Retaliation

Iran's Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has reportedly ordered a direct strike on Israel following the assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh Wednesday. Haniyeh's death has been widely attributed to Israel, which did not claim responsibility but has pledged to eliminate Hamas' leadership following the Oct. 7 attacks.

Haniyeh has led Hamas' political wing since 2017 and was seen as its overall leader. Based outside of Gaza, he acted as the group's representative in negotiations to secure a cease-fire deal and hostage release. He was killed early Wednesday in Tehran, where he attended the inauguration of President Masoud Pezeshkian alongside representatives from other Iranian-funded groups including Hezbollah, whose top commander was killed by Israel hours earlier.

It is not yet clear where or when Iran plans to strike; in April, it launched more than 300 missiles and drones at Israel following the killing of top Iranian commanders in Syria. An estimated 99% of the projectiles were intercepted.

Boeing's New Direction

Boeing's board announced yesterday industry veteran Kelly Ortberg will become the aerospace company's new CEO starting Aug. 8, replacing outgoing head Dave Calhoun. The leadership shift was announced as Boeing reported a 15% decline in overall revenues from a year earlier.

The former CEO of aeronautic technologies provider Rockwell Collins, Ortberg will inherit significant production slowdowns and increased regulatory scrutiny following several high-profile incidents with its planes in recent years, including a midflight door plug blowout in January. The world's largest aerospace company consists of three business units: commercial airplanes, defense, and international work, and has customers in over 150 countries, with a market valuation of roughly \$115B.

Adding to Boeing's woes is the continued delay of the company's flagship spacecraft Starliner's return to Earth, where a nine-day mission to the International Space Station has been extended 46 days to address technical issues.

World's First Peanut Program

Australia announced the world's first nationwide program to treat peanut allergies in babies yesterday. The approach, based on encouraging results from clinical trials, seeks to build tolerance through small-dose exposure in early development.

The free program applies to parents of babies under age 1 diagnosed with a peanut allergy at one of 10 participating hospitals. Babies will be provided a daily, individualized dose of peanut powder, with the dosage increasing until the child reaches their maximum tolerance level. After two years, the child will be given a food allergy test to measure reactivity. The program builds on existing research suggesting positive results from oral immunotherapy to treat peanut allergies; in the US, such dosing is available through specialized healthcare settings.

Australia—considered the allergy capital of the world—has a relatively high incidence of peanut allergies, with 3% of its population diagnosed by age 1. Only 20% of those diagnosed will outgrow a peanut allergy by the time they are teenagers.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Katie Ledecky wins women's 1500-meter freestyle, her eighth Olympic gold medal and 12th medal overall. Spanish men's tennis doubles team of Rafael Nadal and Carlos Alcaraz defeated by Team USA duo, likely ending Nadal's Olympic tennis career.

Longtime BBC presenter Huw Edwards pleads guilty to three counts of "making indecent images of children".

Lollapalooza 2024, headlined by Megan Thee Stallion, SZA, The Killers, and Blink-182, kicks off today from Chicago; see full lineup and streaming schedule.

Science & Technology

OpenAI rolls out hyper-realistic ChatGPT voice generator to select users.

Engineers develop "confidence thermometer" to measure how much users should trust different large language models.

The nose and nasal pathways are home to long-lived immune system B and T cells that learn from incoming pathogens, and act as the body's first line of defense against viruses, study finds.

Preliminary data suggest GLP-1 agonists—drugs to treat diabetes and obesity, like Wegovy and Ozempic—reduce brain shrinkage in Alzheimer's patients by 50%.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +1.6%, Dow +0.2%, Nasdaq +2.6%); S&P 500 and Nasdaq record best single-day gain since February as Federal Reserve holds interest rates steady, signals possibility of September rate cut.

Meta shares rise in after-hours trading on better-than-expected Q2 revenue and earnings.

Etsy to begin testing first-ever loyalty program in September as part of effort to boost sales.

StubHub sued by Washington, DC, attorney general over allegations it tricked consumers into overpaying for tickets.

Boar's Head recalls 7 million pounds of meat over listeria risk; at least 34 people have become sick across 13 states, including two people who died.

Politics & World Affairs

The Pentagon reaches a plea deal arrangement with Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and two others accused of planning the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks; deal would reportedly involve life sentences for all three and avoid a death-penalty trial.

Ukraine receives F-16 jets after monthslong delay; aircraft delivered via the Netherlands and Denmark ... and repels largest drone attack by Russia since January.

Former President Donald Trump attends National Association of Black Journalists conference, claims Vice President Kamala Harris did not always identify as Black.

Experts say polling data still early for Trump versus Harris.

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Water Restrictions Now In Effect



Water restrictions have been put in place for the City of Groton. Odd number houses may water on odd number days between 6 p.m. and 11 a.m. Even number houses may water on even number days between 6 p.m. and 11 a.m.

Absolutely no watering from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Thank you for your cooperation!

Special Needs Family Fun Night

4 AUGUST | **4PM-5:30PM**
Groton Swimming Pool.

For all children and adults with special needs, with their families and/or caregivers.

Sensory friendly time.
No radio or water features.

No Charge
Concessions Available

8TH ANNUAL DOGGIE DAY!



Sunday, September 8th 4-6pm
Groton Swimming Pool \$5/dog
Dogs must be accompanied by an adult.

New owners take over the Jungle Lanes & Lounge

After a fire in 1972 destroyed the S&A Bowling Alley at the junction of Highways 12 & 37, four local entrepreneurs worked together to replace it.

Ben Schaller, James Oliver, Robert Lapham, and Jerry Larson purchased Lots 12 and 13 on the south end, east side of Main Street, naming it the Jungle for the Groton School tiger mascot.

Following its completion, Steve Schaller and Rodney Boehmer became the owners and opened Jungle Lanes and Lounge for business.

In the early 1980's Boehmer bought out Schaller and brought Hot Stuff Pizza to the lounge, a popular addition. In 2005 Boehmer sold the Jungle Lanes and Lounge to Chris and Nicole Kassube who later sold it to Dion and Samantha Bahr. The Bahrs recently sold the Jungle to Tim Janusz and his daughter Jillian Schaunaman.

"After I retired from 3M," Janusz explained, "I needed something to do so I started to help around at my daughter's pre-school, Mangrove Montessori." I enjoyed the work and discovered that helping her out was a good idea."

"Now we have a new challenge," Schaunaman admitted. "Previously I was not only teaching at the pre-school, but I also was a manager / bartender at Village Bowl in Aberdeen. This gave me some knowledge and experience to tackle this job at the Jungle."

"I will continue as the administrator of the pre-school as well as teaching there," she explained, "but I will have reduced hours since I will no longer be doing after the after-school program. This gives me the time I need to be at the Jungle during the evening hours. My dad will be at the Jungle every day and most evenings."

"The Jungle will be open Monday through Saturdays with a few new changes," Schaunaman stated. "There will be pizza and the entire food menu every day, but the hours it will be available will be extended on Fridays and Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. with appetizers available until closing time."

"On Sundays during football season, the Jungle will be open from 11 a.m.– 9 p.m. with the entire food menu available during that time," she explained. "The Jungle will be closed during the Brown County Fair week in order to do some minor remodeling. Starting the week of August 19th the hours will be Monday – Saturday, 11 a.m. to close."

"We plan to change the name to just the Jungle in order to create a family friendly restaurant feeling," Janusz stated. "I will do the cooking while someone else handles the pizza orders."

"During the high school football season, the Jungle will be open from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.," he listed. "We also want to add local historic City of Groton items and Groton Tiger memorabilia as decorations in the Jungle. Such items as lettermen's jackets, photos of the teams, historic photos, and other items of sentimental value to the community will be welcome for display. Once we are up and running for a while, we will be reaching out to the community for suggestions as well as items to be placed on the walls or throughout the building."

"Bowling leagues will continue as before with no changes being planned in this area. There is a possibility of starting a Friday night league as well," Janusz stated.

"We would also ask the community to be patient during this transition and that we will always be open to suggestions on how to improve everyone's experience at the Jungle," he stated.



Jillian Schaunaman in front of the sign on the building. (Photo by Dorene Nelson)

Custer County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash
Where: Carroll Creek Road and US 385, 5 miles south of Custer, SD
When: 10:30 a.m., Wednesday, July 31, 2024

Vehicle 1: 2017 Freightliner M2 Medium Duty
Driver 1: 27-year-old male, serious, non-life-threatening injuries
Seatbelt Use: Yes

Vehicle 2: 2013 Chevrolet Express G2500
Driver 2: 24-year-old male, fatal injuries
Seatbelt Use: Under investigation

Custer County, S.D.- A 24-year-old man died and another was seriously injured Wednesday morning in a two-vehicle crash at Carroll Creek Road and US Highway 385 near Custer, SD.

The names of the people involved have not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2017 Freightliner was traveling northbound on US 385 at the intersection of Carroll Creek Road. At the same time, the driver of a 2013 Chevrolet Express G2500 was also northbound on US 385, approaching the intersection. The Chevrolet failed to stop and wait for the Freightliner to make the left turn and collided with the rear of the Freightliner.

The driver of the Chevrolet was pronounced deceased at the scene. The driver of the Freightliner suffered serious, non-life-threatening injuries.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol is investigating the crash. All information released so far is only preliminary.

The Highway Patrol is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

Lincoln County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash

Where: US Highway 18, mile marker 430 and 466th Ave, five miles south of Lennox, SD

When: 3:27 p.m., Tuesday, July 30, 2024

Vehicle 1: 2019 Chevrolet Silverado

Driver 1: 68-year-old male, no injuries

Seatbelt Use: Yes

Passenger 1: 64-year-old female, no injuries

Seatbelt Use: Yes

Vehicle 2: 2024 Harley Davidson

Driver 2: 60-year-old male, fatal injuries

Helmet Use: No

Lincoln County, S.D.- A motorcyclist died Tuesday afternoon in a two-vehicle crash on US Highway 18 near Lennox, SD.

The names of the people involved have not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2019 Chevrolet Silverado was traveling eastbound on US 18 in the left turning lane to turn northbound onto 466th Avenue. The driver of a Harley Davidson was westbound on US 18. The Silverado collided with the Motorcycle, ejecting the rider, who was pronounced deceased at the scene. The driver and a passenger in the Silverado were not injured.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol is investigating the crash. All information released so far is only preliminary.

The Highway Patrol is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

Lawrence County Fatal Crash

What: Single motorcycle fatal crash
Where: US Highway 85, mile marker 3, 13 miles southwest of Cheyenne Crossing
When: 5:15 p.m., Tuesday, July 30, 2024

Vehicle 1: 2023 Harley Davidson Street Glide
Driver 1: 53-year-old female, fatal injuries
Helmet Use: No

Lawrence County, S.D.- A motorcyclist died Tuesday evening in a single-vehicle crash on US Highway 85, 13 miles southwest of Cheyenne Crossing.

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

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2023 Harley Davidson Street Glide was traveling northbound on US 85 near mile marker three. Failing to negotiate a curve, the motorcycle left the roadway and lost control. The motorcycle overturned as it entered the east ditch where it came to final rest. The driver suffered fatal injuries from the crash.

Butte County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash
Where: US 85 and SD Highway 168, 30 miles north of Belle Fourche, SD
When: 12:59 p.m., Tuesday, July 30, 2024

Vehicle 1: 2017 Harley Davidson Trike
Occupant 1: 73-year-old male, fatal injuries
Helmet Use: No

Vehicle 2: 2002 Chevrolet Venture
Driver2: 20-year-old male, serious, non-life-threatening injuries
Seatbelt Use: Under investigation

Butte County, S.D.- One man died and another was injured this afternoon in a two vehicle crash on US 85, 30 miles north of Belle Fourche, SD.

The names of the people involved have not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2017 Harley Davidson trike was northbound on US 85 near the intersection of SD Highway 168. The driver of a Chevrolet minivan was southbound in same location. The minivan turned left onto SD 168 in front of the trike and they collided. The rider was thrown from the trike and pronounced deceased on scene. He was not wearing a helmet.

The driver of the minivan suffered serious, non-life-threatening injuries and was transported to a nearby health center.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol is investigating the crash. All information released so far is only preliminary.

The Highway Patrol is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

Names Released in Roberts County Fatal Crash

What: Single vehicle/Pedestrian fatal crash

Where: SD Highway 123, mile marker 180, three miles south of Wilmot, SD

When: 1:23 a.m., Sunday, July 28, 2024

Vehicle 1: 2004 Chevrolet Tahoe

Occupant 1: Alyssa Joan Feather, 19-year-old female from Wilmot, SD, no injuries

Seatbelt Use: No

Pedestrian: Darius Christopher Small, 20-year-old male from Summit, SD, fatal injuries

Roberts County, S.D.- A pedestrian walking along SD Highway 123 died after being struck by a vehicle near Wilmot, SD early Sunday morning.

Preliminary crash information indicates Darius C. Small, a 20-year-old male, was walking in the southbound lane of SD Highway 123 early Sunday morning when he was struck by Alyssa J. Feather, the driver of a 2004 Chevrolet Tahoe, also in the southbound lane. Feather was taken into custody for DUI and has other charges pending.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol is investigating the crash. All information released so far is only preliminary.

The Highway Patrol is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

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

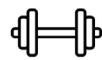
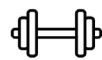
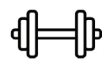
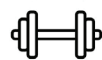
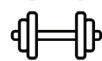
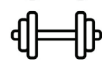
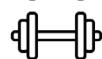
- ☞ for people 60 years of age and older
- ☞ for those who need equipment for physical therapy!



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

Call/Text Tina at 605-397-7285

More schools joining the device-free bandwagon

Kimball School District



Will be going
Device - Free

NUGERM CASES

All students grades 5-8 will be device - free. Students will lock their devices in a NuGerm case.

A NuGerm case locks with a magnet. Students in grades 9-12 will be able to access their device at lunch. All students will be able to unlock their case when leaving the school.



Each student (5-12) will receive a case that will be theirs. If the case is destroyed or lost, a new case must be purchased for \$20.

More Information can be obtained at our open house on August 14th, 5:00 - 6:30.

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More schools joining the device-free bandwagon

CLARK SCHOOL DISTRICT 12-2

DEVICE-FREE

School

Starting this year, we will be adopting a device-free policy at our school. This means that students will not be permitted to use cell phones or other electronic devices connected to their phone during school hours.

Who? *Students in Grades K-12
This includes smartphones, smartwatches, bluetooth earbuds, and really anything connected to a student's phone*

2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR

More Information Coming Soon!

WHY?

WE BELIEVE THAT THIS POLICY WILL FOSTER A MORE ENGAGING AND PRODUCTIVE LEARNING ATMOSPHERE. OUR GOAL IS TO PROVIDE THE BEST POSSIBLE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE FOR YOUR CHILDREN, AND WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT THIS CHANGE WILL CONTRIBUTE POSITIVELY TO THEIR ACADEMIC SUCCESS.



To ensure that cell phones do not become a distraction during school hours, all cell phones will be stored securely in a locked case. Students will turn in their cell phones before school and retrieve them at the end of the school day. This will help us provide a focused and engaging educational experience for your children.

PARENT EDUCATION NIGHT

August 14th @ 7:00 PM

CLARK HS GYM

Guest Speaker Zachary Seefeldt

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Interesting cloud formations as a disturbance passes through Groton on Thursday. (Photos by Paul Kosel)



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West Nile Virus Update -SD

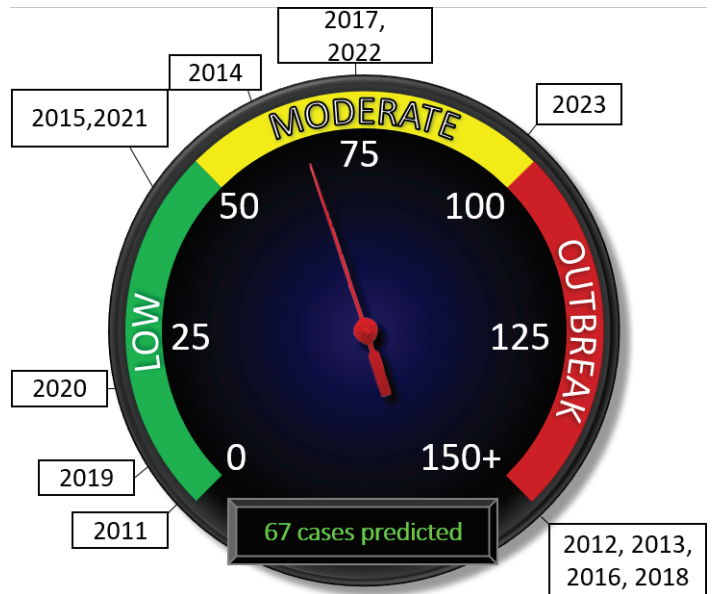
SD WNV (as of July 31):

2 human cases (Beadle, Kingsbury)

8 counties with positive mosquito pools (Beadle, Brookings, Brown, Davison, Hughes, Lincoln, Minnehaha, Pennington)

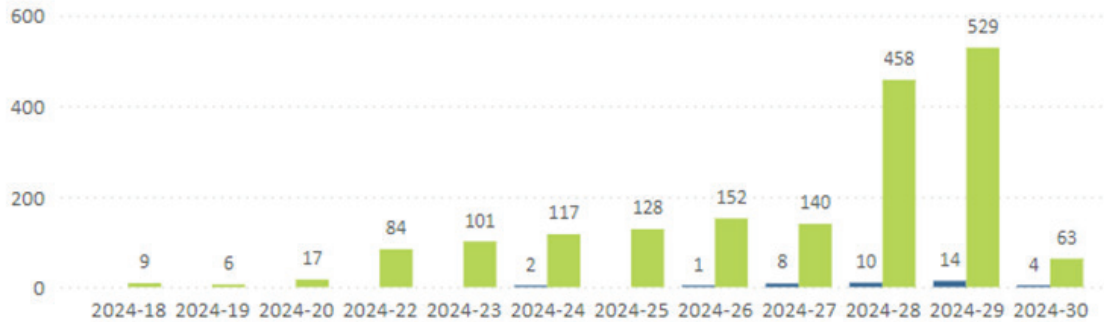
US WNV (as of July 30): 72 cases (AR, AZ, CA, IL, IN, KS, LA, MD, MN, MS, NC, ND, NE, NV, OK, PA, SD, TN, TX)

WNV Prediction Model – Total Number of Cases Projected for 2024, South Dakota (as of July 31)

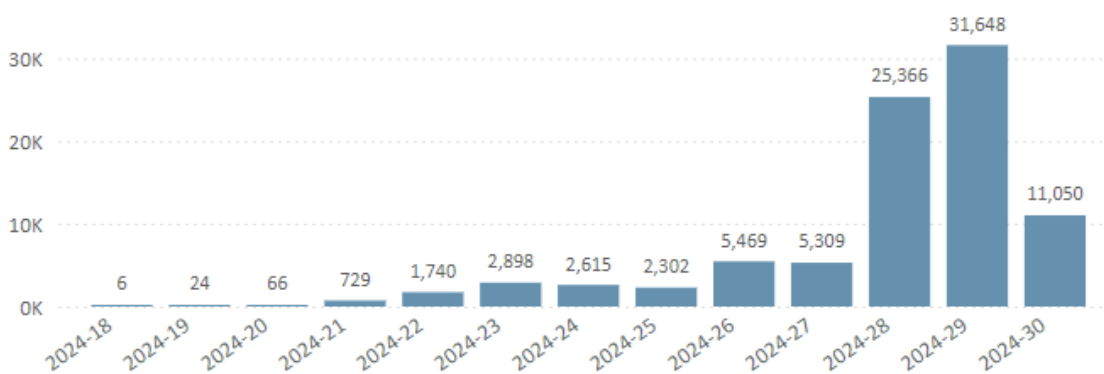


Number of Mosquito Pools Tested by MMWR Week and Status

Test Status: ● Positive ● Negative



Culex Mosquitoes Collected by MMWR Week



Mosquito Surveillance Summary for 2024, South Dakota, Week Ending July 27, 2024 (MMWR Week 30)

Total sites collecting mosquitoes: 76

Total mosquito pools tested: 1,876

% positivity: 2.08%



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Head of state prison system wants to 'close the doors' to public scrutiny of security incidents

Wasko tells lawmakers she doesn't want to report to citizen commission

BY: JOHN HULT - JULY 31, 2024 6:09 PM

The leader of the South Dakota Department of Corrections told lawmakers she doesn't want to answer to the state's Corrections Commission, a body that exists to provide oversight and guidance to prison officials.

Some commission members told South Dakota Searchlight in recent weeks that they've felt uninformed and uninvolved lately, noting that they've heard no details about two bouts of violence in the space of four months in two of the state's prisons. Some even questioned the value of the commission and suggested it serves no purpose.

According to the DOC's own website, "state law requires the Corrections Commission to undertake a continuing study of criminal justice issues in South Dakota, which may include a review of current felonies, felony sentences, sentencing options, practices, programs, trends and initiatives."

The DOC has taken the position, however, that the commission's only role is to sign off on funding requests from the prison industries where inmates work. That role is also listed in state law.

The shift in focus came recently, according to two of the commission's longest-serving members.

DOC Secretary Kellie Wasko told the Legislature's Government Operations and Audit Committee on Wednesday in Pierre that she also questions the commission's purpose, and suggested that lawmakers ought to take "another look" at what the commission does.

Rep. Ernie Otten, R-Tea, chairs the audit committee and is a member of the Corrections Commission.

For weeks, Otten did not return calls from South Dakota Searchlight seeking comment on the commission. During Wednesday's meeting, he offered a sentiment similar to the corrections commissioners who did respond.

"I've been thinking about how to phrase this, but me being me, I'll just do it my way," Otten said. "It's the biggest waste of time I've ever had to endure. And so to have it rethought, we need to do that."

Lawmakers: Information gap after security failures

Wasko told lawmakers she believes she ought to answer to lawmakers, not a commission that includes community members.

Wasko was on hand at the audit committee meeting to present the agency's annual "performance metrics," something state agencies are required to do.

After her presentation, Sen. Tim Reed, R-Brookings, wanted to know if the Corrections Commission might be able to offer more oversight and information on security issues than audit committee members can in their once-a-year meetups with prison officials.

Reed's taken plenty of questions lately about the prisons, he said.

The South Dakota State Penitentiary saw two nights of violence, sparked in part by the shutdown of tablet-based text messaging, in March. That incident included injuries to staff and inmates, and led to 11 inmate indictments.

Mike Durfee State Prison in Springfield saw two skirmishes between inmates July 9-10.

Before Wednesday's meeting, the DOC had released only two pieces of information about the Springfield incidents: that six inmates were injured, and that order was restored.

Reed told Wasko it's difficult to talk with constituents about prison issues without information, noting that the committee only sees her once a year. Members of the Legislature's budget committee see Wasko

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more often to talk about funding, most recently on Tuesday, but those meetings are also infrequent and lack representatives from the general public.

At some point, Reed said, "the incidents probably need to be reviewed by a broader group of people."

Wasko: Public wants information too quickly

Wasko disagreed.

She didn't know anything about the commission or its role before her arrival from Colorado in the spring of 2022. The commission's role as an overseer of prison industries "made sense to me," she said, because Colorado had a similar commission made up of similar people.

The commission in South Dakota has four legislators, as well as judges and representatives from the labor, manufacturing and retail sectors.

Wasko described the non-lawmakers on the committee as "people from industries in the community."

"I don't feel like some of my high-security, high-risk incidents, I'm not accountable to share that with somebody from the community," Wasko said. "And those are public meetings."

Wasko told the committee members she's comfortable "being accountable to you" because she's legally required to be.

The problem, she said, is that "people want information within 24 hours of what happened."

"In those first 24 hours, we're still trying to figure out what happened," she said.

At one point, she'd heard that 40 "shanks" – a slang term for items fashioned by prisoners into knife-like weapons – were found after the Springfield violence.

There were actually only four, she said. With regard to the number of inmates involved in the fighting, she said, "I got four numbers in four weeks."

Wasko did not specify where those numbers – on shanks or inmates involved – may have come from.

The public wants answers before they're ready, she said.

"That's the problem. They're firing at us when we're in the midst of this: I wanna know this, I wanna know this."

She's willing to "close the doors and get into the nitty-gritty" with lawmakers once the DOC completes an after-incident report, she said. She also trumpeted the DOC's annual statistical report, which she said is more detailed than recent annual reports to the Corrections Commission.

The DOC secretary is obligated by law to call at least two Corrections Commission meetings a year. Based on her experience in Colorado and her review of the group's annual reports, she said, she's conducted the group's meetings "the way I understood it to work and that made sense to me."

Commission: Either involve us or change it

Reed told Wasko he understands the difficulty of responding with public information when information is in flux. But he also said he wasn't asking about reviews in the immediate aftermath of a problem.

Once there is an after-incident report, he said, there ought to be a way for lawmakers and the public to learn what happened and how the situations were addressed.

He said the commission's makeup could be changed, but that the information ought to be available.

"There's probably actions that have been taken since things happened, and those should be reported out and talked about to a group," Reed said.

Otten offered his take on the commission being a waste of time, then closed the discussion by asking for a motion to accept the DOC's performance measures report.

Dave McGirr is a representative for retailers on the Corrections Commission, as well as the former mayor of Huron and the former liaison to the police department for the Huron City Commission. McGirr now lives in the Sioux Falls area.

He said Wednesday he's been pushing the commission to take up more serious matters for several years, and that he intends to bring up the issue again at the commission's September meeting.

Outside perspectives can be helpful for any agency, he said, and he argued that the role of the com-

mission is meant to reflect that.

There are labor and business representatives on the commission to address prison industries, but he said the presence of judges and lawmakers suggests it's meant to address broader issues than metal shop operations.

"The staff would prefer, and apparently Secretary Wasko would also prefer, that they not communicate any of that to us," McGirr said. "And yet state law would seem to indicate that they need to."

McGirr pointed to the issues surrounding the proposed new men's prison in Lincoln County as an example of why outside voices and transparency matter. Neighbors to the project – some of whom have sued the state over its site selection process – have repeatedly complained about a lack of information and consultation on the project.

One neighbor a half-mile from the site told South Dakota Searchlight she first learned of the DOC's site plans less than 24 hours before the agency announced them to the public.

Had the public been consulted and informed up front, McGirr said, the current controversies might have been avoided. Wasko may be experienced in corrections, but he said she clearly doesn't have much experience dealing with the public as he does.

"I've served in elected positions for over 20 years, been on many, many boards, and gone through many, many trials and tribulations," McGirr said. "And the worst thing you can do is not tell them as much as you're legally allowed to."

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

Former prison employees, current inmates indicted on drug, arson, assault allegations

Charges follow drama surrounding prisoners' tablets and outbreaks of violence

BY: JOHN HULT - JULY 31, 2024 7:12 PM

Two former Department of Corrections employees, three inmates and another person were indicted Tuesday for a series of incidents at the South Dakota State Penitentiary.

DOC Secretary Kellie Wasko told lawmakers during a committee meeting Wednesday that some "bad apples" had been indicted, during a discussion on staffing.

Attorney General Marty Jackley, whose office prosecutes criminal cases that take place behind the prison walls, sent a news release hours later listing six defendants indicted in five separate cases for crimes including arson, drug distribution and possession of "synthetic cannabinoids."

The indictments on file at the Minnehaha County Clerk of Courts office do not include detailed narratives on how the alleged crimes took place.

DOC spokesman Michael Winder did not reply to a message seeking more details about the allegations. Gov. Kristi Noem's spokesman, Ian Fury, also did not reply.

In one of the cases, former DOC medication aide Madyson Alexis Bixby was charged with conspiracy to commit second-degree arson and possession of an unauthorized article (a cell phone). Also charged in that case are 28-year-old inmate Tyler Dane Larvie and 30-year-old Merced Patlan, who's listed as a Sioux Falls resident in the news release but as an Iowa resident in the indictment, and is not an inmate or an ex-DOC employee. Patlan is charged with criminal solicitation and arson-related charges.

The indictment in that case says Larvie and Bixby conspired to direct Patlan "and/or any other known or unknown co-conspirators," to start a vehicle fire.

On Jan. 4, the indictment said, Larvie asked Bixby about the location of a person identified as "A" in the court documents. Bixby allegedly told Larvie, who in turn communicated with Patlan and directed Patlan to set the vehicle ablaze.

Jackley's news release says the trio conspired to "destroy another person's vehicle" between Dec. 1,

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2023, and Jan. 4, the day the arson occurred in Sioux Falls.

In another case, a former DOC nurse named Alexis Rose Hiller, 27, of Sioux Falls, was charged with possession of a controlled substance, possession with intent to distribute and possession of contraband with intent to deliver to an inmate. All three alleged crimes took place around Jan. 31 and involve the synthetic opioid buprenorphine.

There were three other indictments filed Wednesday involving the penitentiary.

Inmate Seth Thomas Peplinski, 24, was charged with aggravated assault and simple assault for an alleged attack on "another person in the prison" on May 6.

Inmate Kelly Michael Irby, 64, was charged with possession of a weapon by an inmate for allegedly having a blade on May 8.

Larvie, charged for the reported arson, faces nine counts of synthetic cannabinoid possession in a separate indictment.

None of the accused have made their initial court appearances, which had yet to be scheduled as of Wednesday.

The indictments add to the recent drama swirling around the state's prisons.

The DOC shut down inmates' electronic tablets on March 10 and issued a memo saying it had done so as the result of an "ongoing investigation."

In the hours following two days of violent unrest at the penitentiary later in March, Gov. Kristi Noem said the tablet shutdown served to spark the incidents. In the weeks following the shutdown, inmates and their family members complained about being cut off from each other by the change.

Noem said prior to the shutdown that inmates had been using tablets – which had delivered \$1.25 million in commissions revenue to the state since 2021 – for "nefarious" purposes.

Earlier this month, Mike Durfee State Prison in Springfield experienced two skirmishes between inmates, resulting in injuries to six of them.

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

Federal government pays \$53M for SD farmer discrimination, \$2.2B nationwide

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JULY 31, 2024 3:49 PM

More than 360 South Dakota agricultural producers are receiving a total of \$53.4 million through the Discrimination Financial Assistance Program, the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced Wednesday.

Eligible applicants allege they experienced discrimination in USDA farm lending programs before 2021, including on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, religion, age and disability. An earlier USDA notice about the program also identified membership in a Native American tribe as a potential basis for a discrimination claim.

More than 43,000 producers nationwide will receive financial assistance through the \$2.2 billion program, funded through the Inflation Reduction Act. More than 58,000 people applied.

President Joe Biden vowed to support agricultural producers who experienced discrimination before he took office. The program was created after the Biden administration tried to provide \$4 billion of debt relief for Black farmers, which was shut down amid lawsuits.

"While this financial assistance is not compensation for anyone's losses or pain endured, it is an acknowledgement," Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said in a news release. "My hope is that this will ensure that many farmers can stay on their farms, contribute to our nation's food supply, and continue doing what they love."

About half of the nationwide recipients are farmers or ranchers who are receiving \$10,000 to \$500,000, or an average of about \$82,000. South Dakota had 333 such awards. About 20,000 individuals who said they were unable to get a USDA loan are receiving an average of \$5,000 to start a farming or ranching

operation. South Dakota had 29 such awards.

Payments were awarded to people in every state and three territories, but residents of Alabama and Mississippi alone received almost half of the money. Vilsack said the discrimination resulted in loan denials, loan delays, higher interest rates and an overall lack of assistance.

According to The New York Times, the USDA said it was still analyzing the applications and payouts to determine demographic information about payment recipients. John Boyd, the president of the National Black Farmers Association, told the news outlet that Black farmers received about \$1.5 billion of the available funds.

Applications were vetted by independent consulting firms that the Agriculture Department hired.

The USDA did not immediately respond to questions from South Dakota Searchlight.

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.

Lawmakers plan October hearing on alleged \$1.8 million theft by former state employee

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - JULY 31, 2024 2:32 PM

South Dakota lawmakers will hold a hearing in October on a former state employee's alleged theft of \$1.8 million from Child Protection Services.

The Legislature's Government Operations and Audit Committee met Wednesday in Pierre and discussed plans for the hearing.

"We find out what went on, and how do we stop it," said Committee Chair and Rep. Ernie Otten, R-Tea.

The committee will call witnesses from various state departments to understand how the theft occurred, with a goal of preventing similar incidents in the future.

A Hughes County grand jury indicted Lonna Carroll, 68, on July 15 for two felony counts of aggravated grand theft. Carroll, a former Department of Social Services employee, allegedly diverted funds intended for foster care and child protective services from 2010 to 2023. She was arrested in Iowa and extradited to South Dakota. Bail is set at \$50,000.

During the committee meeting, several members pressed Auditor General Russ Olson for more detailed information regarding the theft. Olson had been tasked with sharing recent audit findings with the committee. He declined to provide additional specifics, citing the ongoing criminal case.

Carroll's initial court appearance was Thursday. Her arraignment is scheduled for Aug. 27.

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

Appeals court blocks Title IX rule protecting LGBTQ kids, reversing Alabama federal judge

BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA - JULY 31, 2024 12:25 PM

Just a day after a federal judge struck down an attempt by Alabama, Florida, Georgia and South Carolina to halt enforcement of the Biden administration's final rule for Title IX, a federal appeals court granted the states' request for an administrative injunction Wednesday — temporarily blocking the updated regulations from taking effect in those Southern states.

The ruling from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit on the eve of the updated regulations taking effect brings the total number of states where the rule is temporarily blocked to 26.

The administration's rule — which seeks to extend federal discrimination protections for LGBTQ students — has been met with a wave of GOP pushback since being announced by the Department of Education

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in April.

The final rule is slated to go into effect Thursday, but faces mounting legal uncertainty.

"This is a big win in our fight to protect children," South Carolina Attorney General Alan Wilson said in a statement following the appeals court ruling. "We've argued that the Biden administration does not have the authority to make this change, and with this temporary injunction, we now have time to make our case in court without our children being put in danger."

The 11th Circuit decision reversed what had been a victory for the final rule's advocates in federal court in Alabama on Tuesday.

In a 122-page opinion, Judge Annemarie Carney Axon of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Alabama wrote that "in short, although Plaintiffs may dislike the Department's rules, they have failed to show a substantial likelihood of success in proving the Department's rulemaking was unreasonable or not reasonably explained."

Axon, who was appointed by then-President Donald Trump, also wrote that "the evidentiary record is sparse, and the legal arguments are conclusory and underdeveloped."

In late April, the group of Southern states, all with GOP attorneys general, sued the administration in federal court in Alabama over the regulations. Multiple organizations also tacked onto the lawsuit, including the Independent Women's Law Center, the Independent Women's Network, Parents Defending Education and Speech First.

They quickly appealed Tuesday's ruling later in the day to the 11th Circuit.

In a statement on Tuesday, Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall said "we are surprised by district court's decision today to deny the State's request to immediately halt Biden's Title IX degradation."

He added that "Alabama's young women deserve better."

Since the department released the final rule, 26 states in total have signed onto lawsuits seeking to block the updated regulations from taking effect.

Across multiple temporary injunctions, the final rule is also blocked in Alaska, Arkansas, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia and Wyoming.

On Wednesday, Judge Jodi W. Dishman of the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Oklahoma halted the final rule from taking effect in the state. Oklahoma individually sued the administration back in May.

Oklahoma Attorney General Gentner Drummond praised the ruling, saying: "Our students deserve the protections that have long been provided by Title IX," per a statement Wednesday.

To further complicate the matter, when Judge John Broomes of the U.S. District Court for the District of Kansas temporarily blocked the measure in the Sunflower State, Alaska, Utah and Wyoming earlier in July, he extended it to also include "the schools attended by the members of Young America's Foundation or Female Athletes United, as well as the schools attended by the children of the members of Moms for Liberty," all groups that sued alongside those four states.

This means the final rule is blocked in schools across the country, including in states that never challenged the updated regulations. Despite Axon's Tuesday ruling, the final rule was still set to be halted in any K-12 school or college in Alabama, Florida, Georgia and South Carolina that is impacted by the earlier Kansas decision.

The Department of Education did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Janelle Stecklein contributed to this report.

Shauneen Miranda is a reporter for States Newsroom's Washington bureau. An alumna of the University of Maryland, she previously covered breaking news for Axios.

Worried about bird flu mutation, feds seek livestock worker vaccinations

BY: JARED STRONG, IOWA CAPITAL DISPATCH - JULY 31, 2024 10:01 AM

Federal health officials are encouraging farm workers who tend livestock and poultry to get vaccinated for seasonal influenza to help prevent a bird flu mutation that might spark a pandemic in people.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Tuesday it would devote up to \$5 million to pay for the vaccinations, and that it will rely on states to implement the initiative.

There are 14 known human infections of highly pathogenic avian influenza that resulted from contact with infected dairy cattle and poultry in the United States, and all but one has happened in the past four months.

The virus has been circulated by wild birds for more than two years and has sporadically transmitted to domestic birds. A variation of the virus has been infecting U.S. dairy cattle since December, and four people who worked closely with infected cattle also became ill.

In recent weeks, nine people in Colorado who were tasked with culling infected poultry contracted the virus.

The CDC has maintained that the virus' risk to humans is low — those who have been infected so far had minor symptoms of respiratory illness or pinkeye, or both.

It has not been shown to transmit between people, but the virus has the potential to rapidly gain that ability if it infects someone who also has a seasonal flu virus.

"Such dual infections, while rare, could potentially result in an exchange of genetic material between two different influenza viruses," Dr. Nirav Shah, principal deputy director for the CDC, said in a call with reporters Tuesday.

Shah said that "reassortment" process could pose a "significant public health concern" if bird flu gains the ability to spread person-to-person the way seasonal flu does, potentially resulting in a virus that spreads easily and causes severe symptoms.

A new vaccination campaign

Shah said the CDC will devote up to \$10 million for farm workers' health related to avian flu. Half will be spent educating and training farm workers about how to avoid being infected.

The other half will pay for seasonal flu vaccines for an estimated 200,000 farm workers who tend livestock and poultry. The CDC hopes to vaccinate all of them but acknowledges that less than half of the general population typically gets a flu shot.

How the voluntary vaccination effort will proceed is unclear. State health officials are expected to implement them, most immediately in the 13 states that have confirmed infections among cows.

That includes Iowa, where 13 dairy herds have been infected. However, no new infections have been reported in the state in the past month.

A spokesperson for the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services — which presumably would coordinate with the CDC — did not immediately respond to a request to comment for this article.

The vaccine will not protect the workers from contracting bird flu, Shah said, nor will it guarantee they won't be infected by seasonal flu. But he said it's an important component of the public health response to the new virus' threat.

"The risk here is a theoretical but important risk," Shah said.

Colorado has most recent infections

The confirmations of new bird flu infections among cattle have waned significantly in most states, except for in Colorado. In the past 30 days, two-thirds of the nation's 32 newly infected herds were in that state, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture data.

Some of that might be due to Colorado's robust testing protocols, but it's also "a quirk of history and

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geography," said Eric Deeble, deputy under secretary for marketing and regulatory programs for the USDA.

The state has far fewer dairy farms than the leading milk-producing states, but most of them are concentrated in one county.

"They are all in very close proximity to one another, and so there is a lot of sharing of equipment, a lot of sharing of personnel and a lot of movement on and off farms to adjacent farms," Deeble said.

The USDA has identified the movement of equipment and people between dairy farms as a primary vector for virus transmissions from herd to herd and from herd to flock.

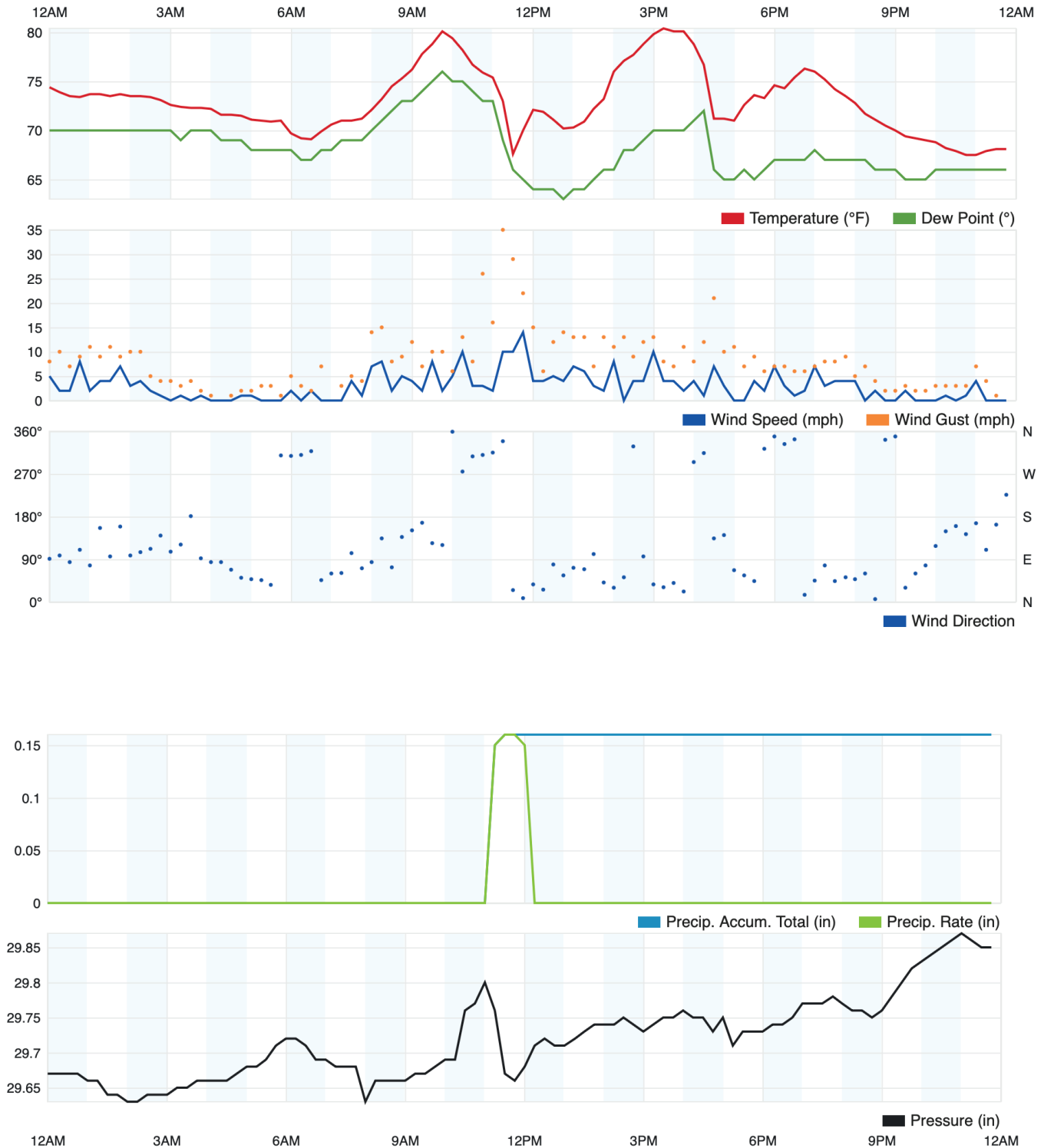
The virus has been identified in 172 dairy herds in the United States this year. Fifty of them are in Colorado. In Texas, where the infections originated, the virus was confirmed in 22 herds, although there were many that went untested because they recovered before bird flu was identified as the culprit.

Jared Strong is the senior reporter for the Iowa Capital Dispatch. He has written about Iowans and the important issues that affect them for more than 15 years, previously for the Carroll Times Herald and the Des Moines Register. His investigative work exposing police misconduct has notched several state and national awards. He is a longtime trustee of the Iowa Freedom of Information Council, which fights for open records and open government. He is a lifelong Iowan and has lived mostly in rural western parts of the state.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



High: 91 °F

Patchy Fog
then Sunny

Tonight



Low: 65 °F

Clear

Friday



High: 93 °F

Hot

Friday Night



Low: 65 °F

Clear

Saturday



High: 91 °F

Hot

Today



Highs: 83-95°F
Lows: 65-69°F

Friday



Highs: 88-99°F
Lows: 65-70°F

Saturday



Highs: 88-99°F
Lows: 61-65°F



Aberdeen, SD

Dry and sunny conditions are expected going into the weekend. Highs are expected to be 5-15 degrees above average with highs in the 80s to almost 100. Take precautions if spending time outdoors

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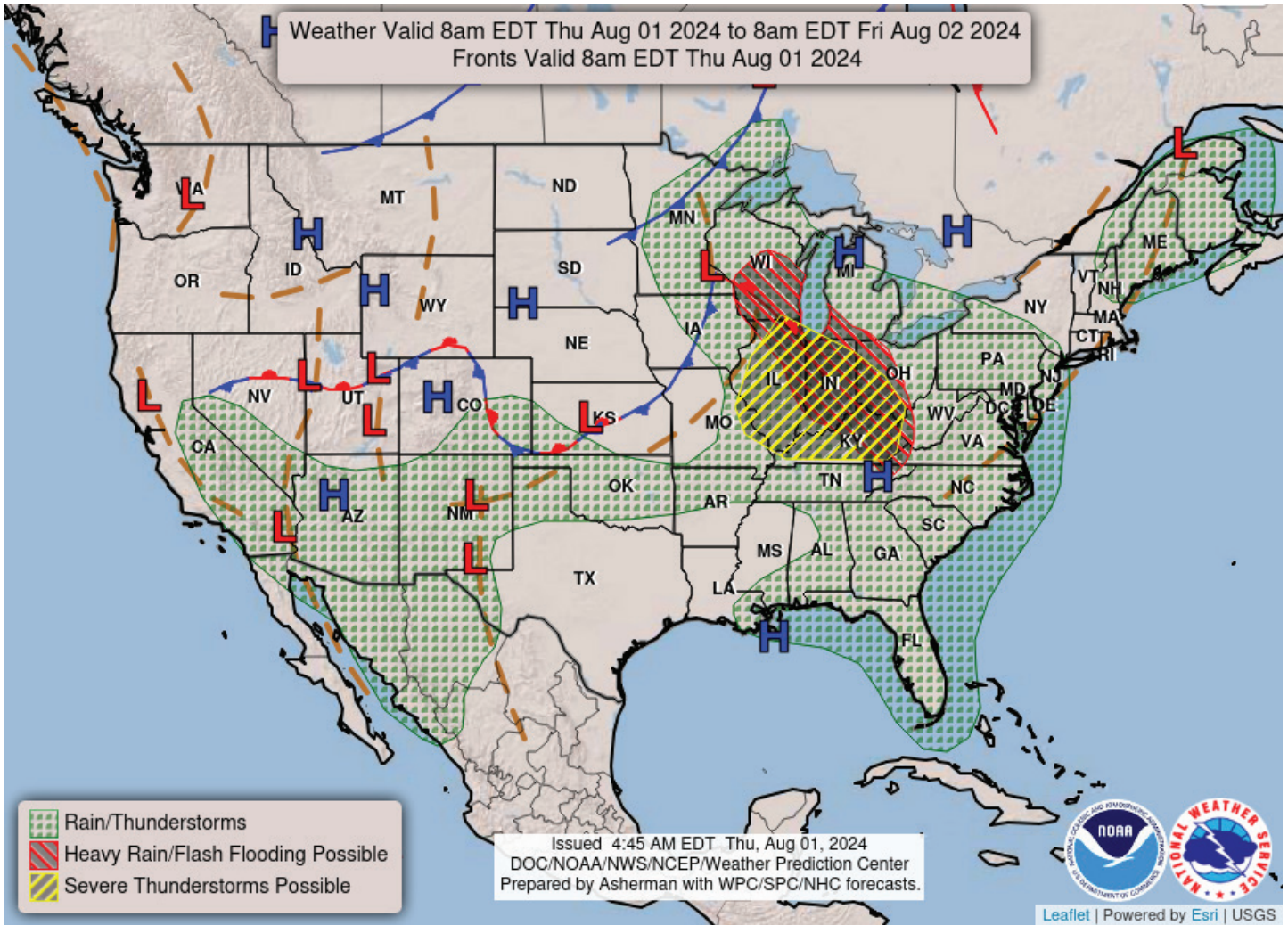
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 81 °F at 3:38 PM
Low Temp: 67 °F at 10:52 PM
Wind: 35 mph at 11:14 AM
Precip: : 0.16

Day length: 14 hours, 45 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 106 in 2006
Record Low: 39 in 1971
Average High: 85
Average Low: 60
Average Precip in July.: 3.01
Precip to date in July: 3.94
Average Precip to date: 14.02
Precip Year to Date: 14.89
Sunset Tonight: 9:01:31 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:17:02 am



Today in Weather History

August 1, 1978: A severe thunderstorm developed in west-central Beadle County during the afternoon hours and moved southeast. High winds near 80 mph and hail up to golf ball size pelted several counties along the storm path. Hail piled up to six inches deep and up to three feet in ditches. Hail remained visible in some areas up to thirty-six hours after the storm passed. Approximately 480,000 acres of crops were severely damaged or destroyed. Damage to crops and personal property were estimated to be nearly four million dollars.

August 1, 2000: A severe thunderstorm produced large hail up to golf ball size and damaging winds estimated at 90 to 110 mph across northeastern Wyoming and western South Dakota during the evening hours. The northern foothills of the Black Hills and the communities of Spearfish and Sturgis received the brunt of the storm. Considerable F0 and F1 wind damage (90 to 110 mph) occurred in and around Spearfish. The strong winds blew down trees, business and road signs, and damaged tents for the 60th Annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, destroying vendor merchandise and mobile homes.

1954 - Mount Rainier in Washington State was still covered with sixteen inches of snow at the 5500 foot level following a big snow season. (David Ludlum)

1983: During the early afternoon hours, a strong microburst swept across Andrews Air Force Base in Washington, D.C. Although the base anemometer was not calibrated at extreme wind speeds, the peak gust hit 149 mph. It was reported that Air Force One, with President Reagan on board, landed less than 10 minutes before the peak gust.

1985 - A nearly stationary thunderstorm deluged Cheyenne, WY, with rain and hail. Six inches of rain fell in six hours producing the most damaging flash flood of record for the state. Two to five feet of hail covered the ground following the storm, which claimed twelve lives, and caused 65 million dollars property damage. (Storm Data)

1986 - A powerful thunderstorm produced 100 mph winds and large hail in eastern Kansas and southwestern Missouri causing 71 million dollars damage, and injuring nineteen persons. It was one of the worst thunderstorms of record for Kansas. Crops were mowed to the ground in places and roofs blown off buildings along its path, 150 miles long and 30 miles wide, from near Abilene to southeast of Pittsburg. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Record heat gripped parts of the Midwest. A dozen cities reported record high temperatures for the date, including Lincoln, NE, with a reading of 105 degrees, Moline, IL, with an afternoon high of 103 degrees, and Burlington, IA, with a reading of 102 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Two dozen cities in the Upper Midwest reported record high temperatures for the date, including La Crosse WI with a reading of 105 degrees. Highs of 103 degrees at Milwaukee, WI, and South Bend, IN, were records for the month of August. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Hurricane Chantal made landfall along the Upper Texas coast about sunrise. Chantal deluged parts of Galveston Island and southeastern Texas with 8 to 12 inches of rain. Unofficial totals ranged up to twenty inches. Winds gusted to 82 mph at Galveston, and reached 76 mph in the Houston area. Tides were 5 to 7 feet high. The hurricane claimed two lives, and caused 100 million dollars damage. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



IS IT HOW LONG OR HOW WELL?

Most people who read the Bible at least know that Methuselah lived to be 969 years old. Some might even remember that he was the son of Enoch and the grandfather of Noah. Some will be able to recall that he “walked and talked with God,” but we have no idea what they talked about, or when or where this occurred.

Imagine holding the world record for having more birthdays than anyone else who ever lived but being remembered for nothing else.

According to the Bible, Methuselah lived when the earth was full of wickedness. Everywhere he walked, he was surrounded by sin and sinners. But, he never mentioned a word about God or godliness, or God’s grace or goodness. He knew God but did not serve Him.

Imagine the positive influence he could have had on the multitudes of individuals whom he knew. Consider what he might have done for God if he had followed in the footsteps of his father, Enoch. Scripture tells us, “he enjoyed a close relationship with God throughout all of his life - then he suddenly disappeared because God took him!”

Methuselah lived almost three times as long as his father, Enoch. Yet, when he died, he left no legacy of having made a difference for God or good. In the final analysis, it is not how long we live but what we do. What matters most is whether or not our relationship with God empowered us to leave a legacy of serving God and others through our lives.

Prayer: Help each of us, Father, to recognize the importance of living for You and professing our faith. May our lives reflect Your love and salvation each day we live. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: When Enoch was 65 years old, he became the father of Methuselah. Genesis 5:21

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:
07.30.24

19 23 30 33 50 25

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$358,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 26
Mins 7 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.31.24

15 27 28 49 51 1

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$6,340,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 41
Mins 7 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.31.24

10 16 20 31 44 12

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 56 Mins 7
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.31.24

9 18 25 31 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$54,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 56
Mins 7 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.31.24

10 24 41 48 61 9

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 25
Mins 7 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.31.24

23 34 37 50 58 7

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$171,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 25
Mins 7 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
CANCELLED: 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 **AP** Associated Press

Families face food insecurity in Republican-led states that turned down federal aid this summer

KATE PAYNE Associated Press/Report for America

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — Crystal Ripolio had tears in her eyes as she walked the produce line at the Good News Outreach food bank in Tallahassee. It was the bags of ripe peaches that did her in.

"We don't have anything in our fridge," Ripolio said.

Ripolio and her 8-year-old daughter, Isabella, walked away with paper bags filled with those peaches, other produce, bread and canned goods — grateful for the help she said they desperately need.

Millions of American children are going without extra food this summer, after 13 states declined to participate in a federal program that helps families in need buy groceries.

Thirty-seven states, four U.S. territories and five Native American tribes are benefitting from the program, according to the Department of Agriculture. Qualifying families with children who rely on school meals to get enough to eat are getting an extra \$120 per child this summer to help feed their kids.

Ripolio, who has two school-aged daughters, could have received an extra \$240 deposited directly onto an electronic benefits transfer or EBT card, but Republican-led Florida isn't taking part.

She said she has been helping Isabella deal with some challenging medical issues lately and hasn't been able to work. The extra money would have really helped by allowing her to buy more basics such as bread, milk and cereal, Ripolio said.

"Are you kidding? I've been holding onto \$17 for three months," she said, referring to her dwindling finances.

The federal program known as Summer EBT or SUN Bucks gives money to qualifying families who can then use it to shop at grocery stores and farmers markets. The initiative is designed to help feed children who receive free or reduced-priced meals at school, but who often go hungry during the summer.

According to an analysis by the advocacy group Food Research and Action Center, for every 100 children who received a free or reduced-price meal during the 2021-2022 school year, only 11 got a summer lunch in July 2022.

Layla Santiago, a single mom from Jacksonville, said she's been piling her five kids — all between the ages of 2 months and 10 years — into an Uber to get to local food pantries this summer, because she lacks consistent access to transportation.

"I know there's other mothers like me that don't have transportation, that may need the food but just can't get to it," Santiago said.

The states that declined to participate in the program cited reasons such as problems with aging state computer systems, philosophical opposition to welfare programs, and a belief that existing free meal programs are sufficient. All 13 are led by Republican governors.

Under the terms of the Summer EBT program, the federal government covers the cost of the benefits for families, but states must split the administrative costs 50/50.

An estimated 2 million Florida children could have benefited from more than \$258 million in aid this summer if state officials hadn't turned it down. Nationwide, roughly 21 million kids are being fed by the program this year.

Asked whether the state would participate next summer, a spokesperson for Gov. Ron DeSantis directed inquiries to the Florida Department of Children and Families, which did not respond. A spokesperson for the DCF previously told the Orlando Sentinel that the state's current programs are sufficient.

"We anticipate that our state's full approach to serving children will continue to be successful this year without any additional federal programs that inherently always come with some federal strings attached," spokesperson Mallory McManus said.

Ripolio, standing outside the food bank just a short walk from the governor's mansion in Florida's capital,

said she didn't understand why the state passed up federal money that could have made a difference to her family.

"If other states are able to do it, why can't we?" she asked. "That doesn't make sense."

Service providers have applauded the work of a state-administered summer meal program that operates out of schools, public libraries and community centers. But such programs only reach a fraction of the children who are eligible.

"There's a huge gap that we're not meeting," said Paco Vélez, the president of the food bank Feeding South Florida. "The easiest way to meet that gap is to fill the EBT card with dollars."

A recent report by the United Way found that nearly half of Florida families are struggling to make ends meet. Food bank operators say that although demand has stabilized since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the need still exceeds pre-pandemic levels, as families grapple with inflation.

Advocates are urging state officials to apply to participate in the program next summer. States face an initial deadline of Aug. 15 to notify the federal government of their intent to participate, with a subsequent deadline of Feb. 15.

In the meantime, Santiago said she's trying to take her kids to a summer meal program at the local library when she can and stretching what she has left in the pantry each month.

"I have to try to find a way with my kids," Santiago said. "I'm trying my best. But ... it's still not enough."

Iran's supreme leader prays over the coffin of Hamas leader Haniyeh, whose killing risks a wider war

By ABBY SEWELL Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Iran's supreme leader and representatives of Palestinian militias he backs prayed Thursday over the coffins of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh and his bodyguard who were killed in a shocking assassination blamed on Israel that risked escalating into an all-out regional war.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei prayed over Haniyeh's coffin at Tehran University while Iran's new President Masoud Pezeshkian stood next to him. State television later showed the coffins placed in a truck and moved on the street toward Azadi Square in Tehran and people throwing flowers at them.

After the funeral services in Tehran, Haniyeh's remains are to be transferred to Qatar for burial Friday.

Haniyeh came to Tehran to attend the inauguration of Pezeshkian. Associated Press photos showed the Hamas leader seated alongside leaders from the Palestinian Islamic Jihad militant group and Hezbollah, and Iranian media showed him and Pezeshkian hugging. Haniyeh had met earlier with Khamenei.

Hours later, he was killed in an airstrike that hit a residence Haniyeh uses in Tehran. Iranian authorities said the attack is under investigation but haven't provided details.

Israel had pledged to kill Haniyeh and other Hamas leaders over the group's Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel that sparked the war in Gaza. The strike came just hours after Israel targeted a top commander in Iran's ally Hezbollah in the Lebanese capital Beirut.

Iran supports Hamas, as well as Hezbollah and other Palestinian militant groups fighting Israel in Gaza.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said "all parties" in the Middle East must avoid escalatory actions that could plunge the region into further conflict.

Speaking in the Mongolian capital of Ulaanbataar on Thursday, Blinken appealed for countries to "make the right choices in the days ahead" and said a cease-fire between Israel and Hamas in Gaza was the only way to begin to break the current cycle of violence and suffering. Blinken did not mention Israel, Iran or Hamas by name in his comments.

Bitter regional rivals, Israel and Iran risked plunging into war earlier this year when Israel hit Iran's embassy in Damascus in April. Iran retaliated, and Israel countered in an unprecedented exchange of strikes on each other's soil, but international efforts succeeded in containing that cycle before it spun out of control.

During Pezeshkian's inauguration ceremony, in his speech, he spoke in support of Palestinians, saying "Iran demands a world where no Palestinian child's dreams are buried under the rubble of their home."

"We are seeking a world where the proud people of Palestine are freed from occupation, oppression and imprisonment and genocide," Pezeshkian said.

Hopes of finding more survivors in the mud and debris wane after landslides in India kill 194

By RISHI LEKHI and RAFIQ MAQBOOL Associated Press

WAYANAD, India (AP) — Hopes of finding more than 180 missing people alive waned as rescue workers searched through mud and debris for a third day Thursday after landslides set off by torrential rains killed at least 194 people in southern India.

The rescue work was challenging in a forested, hilly area while more rain fell, said P.M Manoj, a spokesman for Kerala state's top elected official. Nearly 40 bodies were found downstream after being swept some 30 kilometers (20 miles) down the Chaliyar River from the area in Wayanad district where the main landslides occurred. Body parts were also recovered.

Torrents of mud and water swept through tea estates and villages in hilly areas in the district early Tuesday. They flattened houses and destroyed bridges, and rescuers had to pull out people stuck under mud and debris. "This is one of the worst natural calamities Kerala state has ever witnessed," Kerala's top elected official, Pinarayi Vijayan, said.

Manoj said 187 people were unaccounted for as of Thursday. In addition to the dead and missing, 186 people were injured. Local media reported most of the victims were tea estate workers.

More than 5,500 people have been rescued, Vijayan said, with some 1,100 rescue personnel, helicopters and heavy equipment involved.

The army was constructing a temporary bridge after the main bridge in one of the worst-affected areas was swept away. Images from the site show rescue workers making their way through muck and floodwaters, while a land excavator was clearing the debris.

O.S. Jerry, a cardamom estate manager, said he regularly traveled through the district. "There was a lovely school over here," he said, adding that many houses were now gone.

The Mundakkai and Chooralmala areas are destroyed with extreme devastation, Vijayan said.

Manoj said more than 8,300 people have been moved to 82 government-run relief camps. The government is ensuring food delivery and essential items to the relief camps.

Kerala, one of India's most popular tourist destinations, is prone to heavy rains, flooding and landslides. The Indian Meteorological Department said Wayanad district had up to 28 centimeters (11 inches) of rain on Monday and Tuesday.

Heavy rains also wreaked havoc in other parts of India this week.

New Delhi, the Indian capital, shut schools on Thursday after torrential downpours the previous day submerged roads, left residents stranded and killed at least two people, news agency Press Trust of India reported. More rains were expected this week.

In the mountainous state of Himachal Pradesh, popular with tourists, three people were killed and around 40 were reported missing after heavy rains and two cloudbursts washed away homes, flooded roads and damaged infrastructure, authorities told PTI on Thursday. Four people were also killed Wednesday in the neighboring Uttarakhand state following heavy rains.

Meanwhile, at least 13 people, including three children, were killed in lightning strikes in eastern Bihar state on Thursday, a statement from the chief minister's office said. Most of the victims had gone to plant paddy in the fields when lightning struck them.

India regularly has severe floods during the monsoon season, which runs between June and September and brings most of South Asia's annual rainfall. The rains are crucial for rainfed crops planted during the season, but often cause extensive damage.

Scientists say monsoons are becoming more erratic because of climate change and global warming.

For Iran and Hezbollah, calibrating response to Israeli strikes leaves no room for error

By ABBY SEWELL Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Two back-to-back strikes in Beirut and Tehran, both attributed to Israel and targeting high-ranking figures in Hamas and Hezbollah, have left Hezbollah and Iran in a quandary.

Analysts agree that both strikes hit too close to home to pass without a response, and were serious security breaches for Iran and Hezbollah. Calibrating that response to restore deterrence without sparking an even more damaging escalation may be the most delicate balancing act in nearly a year of teetering on the brink of a regional war.

Tuesday's rare strike in Beirut's southern suburbs killed a top Hezbollah commander who Israel says was responsible for a missile strike on a soccer field in the town of Majdal Shams in the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights, killing 12 children and teenagers. Hezbollah has denied responsibility for the attack.

While the target of the strike in Beirut was a military figure, it hit a densely populated urban neighborhood on the outskirts of the capital where Hezbollah has many of its offices, killing at least five civilians — three women and two children — and wounding dozens more.

Less than 12 hours later, the Palestinian militant group Hamas — a Hezbollah ally also backed by Iran — announced that the chief of its political bureau, Ismail Haniyeh, had been killed in an Israeli airstrike in Tehran, where he was attending the inauguration of the new Iranian president.

Israel has neither claimed nor denied responsibility for that strike, which comes nearly 10 months into the brutal war in Gaza sparked by Hamas' deadly Oct. 7 attack on Israel. It also coincides with another push by mediators to close a cease-fire and hostage-exchange deal.

Haniyeh's assassination left Iran's new president, the reformist politician and heart surgeon Masoud Pezeshkian, facing a major crisis within hours of taking office. The decision on how to retaliate will fall to Iran's national security council, of which the president is the chief, although in practice the country's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has the final say.

Analysts said both Hezbollah and Iran will feel compelled to retaliate, but their calculations differ.

Mohanad Hage Ali, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Middle East Center who researches Hezbollah, said that although Israel also struck in Beirut's southern suburbs in a January attack that killed Hamas official Saleh Arouri, Tuesday's strike targeted a top Hezbollah commander and killed civilians.

"This time, we're too far into the war, and a Hezbollah commander is the target. Hezbollah has to respond, and if they don't, this would be a new rule: Killing civilians on the Israeli side would lead to targeting of" the Beirut suburbs, he said. "Hezbollah cannot afford this."

Hezbollah began firing rockets over the Lebanon-Israel border the day after the war in Gaza began, in what it described as a "support front" for Hamas. Although the near-daily clashes have been deadly and have displaced tens of thousands in both Lebanon and Israel, they have remained mostly confined to the border region.

In order to reestablish deterrence after Tuesday's strike, Ali said, "Hezbollah would need to respond beyond its now-limited geographical scope of operations. They need to strike deeper in Israeli territories, and this brings with it great risks."

Andreas Krieg, a military analyst and senior lecturer in security studies at King's College London, agreed that Hezbollah will feel the need to carry out a significant retaliatory strike.

"I think Hezbollah has been hit much harder, much more where it hurts" than Iran, he said. "In the Israeli-Hezbollah confrontation, this is a major escalation whereby Hezbollah has to respond adequately in a more or less timely fashion" to restore deterrence.

However, the militant group will probably hit a significant military target — such as an air force base near Haifa that appeared in a video of surveillance drone footage the group released in July — rather than a civilian target, he said, and will most likely try to calibrate the attack to cause only material damage to limit further escalation.

Nabih Awada, a Lebanese political and military analyst close to the Iranian-backed "axis of resistance"

and a former fighter with the Lebanese Communist Party who spent a decade in Israeli prisons along with some of the current Hamas leaders, said Hezbollah saw the strike in Beirut as a "violation of all rules of engagement" because it targeted a civilian residential area and because Hezbollah commander Fouad Shukur was targeted "in his home rather than in a military headquarters."

Hezbollah, he said, "has developed many equations," including that the response to a strike in Beirut's southern suburbs will be in Haifa.

For Iran, the situation is more complicated.

In some ways, the current moment mirrors the time in April when Israel and Iran risked plunging into a war after Israel hit an Iranian consular building in Damascus, killing two Iranian generals. Iran retaliated with an unprecedented direct strike on Israel. At that time, diplomatic efforts managed to contain the escalation.

But there are key differences. The assassination of Haniyeh took place on Iranian soil, embarrassing Tehran and making clear that Israel can easily hit targets there.

While some analysts believe that will be mitigated by the fact the target was not an Iranian figure, Iranian officials have vowed a harsh response.

Krieg said that while Haniyeh's death was "damaging reputationally" for Iran and "humiliating" because it showed that Tehran was unable to protect high-profile visitors, "Haniyeh is not an integral part of the axis of resistance."

"His death has no strategic implications for Iran other than it being a slap in the face because you're the host and your guest was killed while you were on watch," he said.

As such, Krieg said he believes Iran could choose to mitigate its response.

Nomi Bar-Yaacov, an associate fellow in the International Security Programme at Chatham House, said Iran might turn to its proxies to retaliate.

"They have got their people, training, arming, planning everywhere, and they can reach anywhere in the world," she said. "They can also hit Israeli or Jewish targets globally."

Trita Parsi, executive vice president of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, said he expects Iran's response to be another direct hit on Israel.

The strike on Haniyeh "wasn't just on Iranian territory, it was in Tehran," he said. "It was at the inauguration. It doesn't matter who was targeted" and whether or not the target was Iranian.

Iranians, he said, are likely feeling that "if the demonstration of force in April managed to restore deterrence in the short run, that deterrence is now gone" and that they are "going to have to do way more than what they did in April in order to be able to restore the balance of power."

The exchange in April did not spiral because of the diplomatic intervention by the United States and others, and the Iranian strike itself appeared carefully choreographed to cause minimal damage.

Still, Parsi said, there was also "a lot of luck" that went into keeping the escalation limited.

"It's a pivotal moment in this conflict. I don't think we've been in as difficult a moment in this conflict, given that we've seen what Iran is capable of in April," Bar-Yaacov said.

If the response to the strikes does not cause Israeli casualties, a wider war could still be avoided, Ali said.

But, he added, "We are in the territory of too many 'ifs' to avoid a war, and this doesn't bode well."

F-16s have arrived to help Ukraine fight Russia. Here's what to know about their possible impact

By BARRY HATTON and ANDREW MELDRUM Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — The American-made F-16 is an iconic fighter jet that's been the front-line combat plane of choice for the NATO alliance and numerous air forces around the world for 50 years.

Western countries have pledged F-16s to Kyiv, and some have arrived in Ukraine, officials in Washington confirmed to The Associated Press. The fighter jets are expected to start flying sorties in Ukrainian skies soon and will be a much-needed boost to the country's current fleet of Soviet-era jets to counter Russia's

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invasion.

United States President Joe Biden gave the go-ahead in August 2023 for used F-16s to be deployed to Ukraine, though the U.S. won't be providing any of its own planes. Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway have committed to providing Ukraine with more than 60 of them over coming months in what could be a slow trickle of deliveries.

Though Russia's recent battlefield gains have been incremental, its steady forward movement is adding up as Ukraine gradually yields ground.

The F-16s will enhance Ukraine's military strength, especially by upgrading its air defenses. But analysts say they won't turn the tide of the war on their own.

Here's what to know:

What can F-16s bring to the Ukrainian war effort?

The F-16s will likely have three core missions, says Federico Borsari of the Center for European Policy Analysis in Washington.

They will seek to intercept Russian missiles and drones that have relentlessly bombarded Ukraine; suppress enemy air defense systems; and strike Russian troop positions and ammunition depots with air-to-ground missiles.

"They will be able to affect some of the dynamics (of the war)," Borsari says.

A lot of information about the F-16 deployment is classified, including what Western governments allow them to hit and what weapons they will send with the aircraft.

The F-16s could carry United Kingdom-supplied Storm Shadow air-launched cruise missiles with a range of more than 250 kilometers (155 miles), potentially striking targets inside Russia. They might also get long-range air-to-air missiles that would threaten Russian bombers and fighter jets. The plane's advanced radars will allow Ukrainian pilots to pinpoint targets further away than they can in their MiG-29s, Su-27s and Su-24s.

Commanding the skies is an essential part of a war's ground campaign, as planes offer air cover to troops. But supporting Ukrainian troop movements on the front line with ground attacks may be too risky for the F-16s, given Russia's sophisticated air defense systems.

At the very least, the fighter jets could have a psychological effect on Russian pilots, and offer a morale boost for Ukrainians toiling against the Kremlin's forces.

What are the challenges for Ukraine?

Marina Miron of the Defense Studies Department at King's College London ticks off a long list of challenges the F-16s will bring for Ukraine.

The roughly nine-month training in the U.S. and Europe for Ukrainian pilots amounted to a crash course compared with the usual three-year course for Western pilots in what Miron calls "a very complex piece of machinery." That will mean limitations on their performance.

The F-16s also require a large number of support personnel, such as skilled maintenance engineers, munitions loaders, intelligence analysts and emergency crews.

Ukraine must also establish a network of radar stations, reinforced hangars, a supply of spare parts and refueling systems. Quality airfields are also a must as the F-16 air intake is close to the tarmac and runs the danger of sucking debris and dirt into the engine.

"So many associated issues need to be sorted out," Miron says.

Ukrainian pilots with no combat experience in F-16s may shy away from engaging in dogfights.

How will Russia react?

Russian President Vladimir Putin would savor the image that destroying F-16s from NATO countries would bring.

The Kremlin's forces will likely try to destroy the F-16s on the ground with long-range missiles. They have already been targeting Ukraine's limited number of suitable airfields.

The Ukrainians will need to park the F-16s in hardened hangars, disperse them between various locations, station decoy model aircraft and be ready to take off quickly in the event of an air raid warning, analysts say.

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Ukraine has said it might keep some of the fighter jets at foreign bases to protect them from Russian strikes. That prompted a harsh response from Putin, who warned that any Western air base hosting the Ukrainian fighter jets would be a "legitimate target" for the Kremlin's forces.

U.S. officials said the F-16s would be based in Ukraine.

In the air, the Ukrainian F-16s will be up against Russia's formidable S-300 and S-400 mobile surface-to-air missile systems that can target multiple aircraft at a time. Russia's military also has what are estimated to be several hundred operational fighter jets, as well as sophisticated air surveillance radars.

Russia's Su-35 fighter jet will be one of the biggest threats to the F-16, Borsari of CEPA says. It has a long-range radar that allows it to track and engage up to eight targets at a time across a wide area.

Even so, the Russians are aware that they'll be up against a more formidable aircraft than they have met so far in the war and will likely adopt a more careful approach.

How will Ukraine protect the F-16s?

Although Russian forces will try to strike the F-16s at the airbases where they are kept, Ukraine has robust defenses to protect the fighter jets against such attacks, says Ukrainian aviation expert Anatolii Khrapchynskyi.

Ukraine has robust capabilities "to protect its airfields with anti-aircraft defenses to deflect (Russian) attacks," Khrapchynskyi told The Associated Press. "During the entire time since Russia has invaded Ukraine, it has been actively trying to hit Ukrainian airfields, but they have been somewhat unsuccessful."

Khrapchynskyi said the F-16s will significantly increase the capabilities of the Ukrainian Air Force to protect the country's air space from Russian attacks and increase the range that Ukraine can strike strategic targets in Russia.

"With the acquisition of F-16 aircraft, we will be able to solve a number of problems that are currently hurting Ukraine. These include: Russia's massive missile attacks, its use of guided aerial bombs, and the deployment of S300 installations in the border regions of Sumy and Kharkiv," says Khrapchynskyi. "We are talking about receiving F-16 aircraft, in my opinion, this will significantly help Ukraine to cope with the Russian aggression that is taking place now."

Extended drought parches Sicily, and farmers worry about being forced to sell off animals

By PAOLO SANTALUCIA Associated Press

CAMMARATA, Italy (AP) — On a scorching July afternoon, a municipal water truck rolls up in a cloud of dust on Liborio Mangiapane's farm in southern Sicily. Some of the precious liquid gets transferred to a smaller cistern on a tractor that Mangiapane's son will use to fill troughs for 250 cattle and sheep, but by tomorrow, all 10,000 liters from the truck will be gone.

Crippling drought from a nearly rainless year, coupled with record-high temperatures, has burned out much of the region's hay and is pushing farmers to the limit. For Mangiapane, every day is a struggle to find water, with frantic phone calls, long trips to faraway wells and long waits for municipal tankers.

If rain doesn't come by the end of August, he's afraid he'll have to sell off his livestock.

"We are in a moment of extreme heat and therefore animals need a lot of water," Mangiapane said. "It's a constant anxiety to keep the animals from suffering, but also just to have a chance to wash ourselves."

The worst year for rainfall in more than 20 years has sent fodder production down 70% across Sicily, according to Coldiretti, Italy's primary farmers association. The main water basins are almost empty and authorities are strictly rationing water.

The region is one of Italy's breadbaskets, producing 20% of the country's durum wheat that goes into pasta. Coldiretti estimated that the drought could reduce production on the island by as much as 70%, leading to greater reliance on imports. In coming months, the dry year may hit olive oil and peach production. Hot weather has caused the grape harvest to start nearly four weeks early, though that crop is so far undamaged.

In May, the national government declared a state of emergency in Sicily and allocated 20 million euros

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(\$21.7 million) to buy water tankers, dig new wells and fix leaky aqueducts. Coldiretti has donated 1.5 million tons of fodder and the regional government allocated subsidies for farmers forced to buy hay from third parties.

Parts of Sicily have had rainfall deficits of up to 60%, according to the meteorology department at Italy's National Research Council. The regional meteorological service reported above-average temperatures throughout June, with highs frequently topping 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) in many areas.

Farmers have seen basins, lakes and ponds that used to be reliable watering spots vanish.

Luca Cammarata watched as his sheep searched for water on his farm in the province of Caltanissetta, one of the hardest-hit parts of Sicily. The area has seen almost no rain for a year, reservoirs are all but empty, and wells and aquifers will have to be tapped at critical levels if it doesn't rain soon.

"Here in this small basin, water has never been lacking," Cammarata said, as his sheep's bells tinkled as they searched for water in the place they used to find it. Soon, the animals would have to return to their barns to avoid the blazing sun.

Nearby Lake Pergusa used to be a haven for migratory birds — a natural basin with an area of 1.4 square kilometers (0.5 square mile) and an average depth of about 2 meters. Now it looks like a puddle.

The story was the same on Mangiapane's place, a little over an hour to the northwest near the municipality of Cammarata. He peered from his barn toward an area where rainwater usually collected in a large pond, providing water for his animals, but the pond was now "as dry as a football pitch."

August typically brings the start of the winter rainy season, said Mangiapane, a longtime rancher who has gained a reputation as an outspoken supporter of natural grazing and small-scale cheese-making over industrial-scale agriculture.

"I wish it will be a bit better than the past season, because this year we had to make a huge effort, both economically and in terms of human resources, with zero profits," he said. "We worked the whole year without profits. No wheat, nor fodder for the cows. And neither the regional government, nor the national one have taken strong measures."

Local authorities have rushed to open new wells, fix desalination equipment and bring in water. In late July, the first Italian navy tanker ship docked in Licata to supply 12 million liters (3.2 million gallons) to the most affected areas.

The local water basin authority is tightly rationing water for almost a million residents, with water flowing as little as two to four hours a week in the most affected areas. While the taps are off, households and farms are being supplied by tankers since Sicily's aqueducts lose up to 60% of the water they carry, according to local water company AICA.

As climate change has made rainfall more erratic and driven temperatures higher, there's hope that aqueduct renovations, new reservoirs and deep wells will help Sicily adapt.

Giulio Boccaletti, scientific director of the Euro-Mediterranean Center on Climate Change, said Sicily is experiencing "the new normal" of climate change, and the region will have to examine whether its scarce water is used for the right things — including what farmers produce.

From Gaza to Kyiv, a Palestinian doctor lives between two wars

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — In war-torn Ukraine, he is Alya Shabaanovich Gali, a popular doctor with a line of patients waiting to see him. To his family thousands of kilometers away in the besieged Gaza Strip, he is Alaa Shabaan Abu Ghali, the one who left.

For the past 30 years, these identities rarely had cause to merge: Gali moved away amid instability in Gaza, settled into his new home in Kyiv, adopted a different name to better suit the local tongue, and married a Ukrainian woman. Through calls, he kept up with his mother and siblings in Gaza's southernmost city, Rafah. But mostly, their lives played out in parallel.

In February 2022, Russia's invasion of Ukraine threw Gali's life into chaos, with air raids and missile attacks. Nearly 20 months later, the war between Israel and Hamas turned his hometown into a hellscape,

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uprooting his family.

Both are violent conflicts that have upset regional and global power balances, but they can seem worlds apart as they rage on. Ukraine has lambasted allies for coming to Israel's defense while its own troops languished on the frontlines. Palestinians have decried double standards in international support. In each place, rampant bombardment and heavy fighting have killed tens of thousands and wiped out entire towns.

In Gali's life, the wars converge. A month ago, his nephew was killed in an Israeli strike while foraging for food. Weeks later, a Russian missile tore through the private clinic where he's worked for most of his professional life. Colleagues and patients died at his feet.

"I was in a war there, and now I am in a war here," said Gali, 48, standing inside the hollowed-out wing of the medical center as workers swept away glass and debris. "Half of my heart and mind are here, and the other half is there.

"You witness the war and destruction with your family in Palestine, and see the war and destruction with your own eyes, here in Ukraine."

Gaza to Kyiv

There's an Arabic saying to describe a family's youngest child — the last grape in the bunch. Gali's mother would say the last is the sweetest; the youngest of 10, he was her favorite.

When Gali was 9, his father died. Money was tight, but Gali excelled in school and dreamed of becoming a doctor — specializing in fertility, after seeing relatives struggle to conceive.

In 1987, the first Palestinian intifada, or uprising, erupted in Gaza and the West Bank. Gali joined the youth arm of the Fatah Movement, a party espousing a nationalist ideology, long before the Islamist Hamas group would take root. One by one, friends were arrested and interrogated; some went to prison, others took up arms.

Gali had a choice: Stay and risk the same fate, or leave.

There was good news: an opportunity to study medicine in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Gali bade tearful good-byes to his family, not knowing if he'd see them again.

He traveled to Moscow, expecting to catch a train. Instead, he learned Almaty was no longer an option. But there was a spot in Kyiv.

And so a young Gali arrived in Ukraine in 1992, just after the Soviet Union's collapse.

It was like leaving one bedlam for another, he said: "The country was in a state of chaos, with no law and very difficult living conditions."

Many peers left. Gali stayed, enrolling in medical school.

New life, new name

In the Ukrainian language, there's no equivalent for Arabic's notoriously difficult glottal consonants. So in Kyiv, Alaa became Alya. He assumed a patronymic middle name, adding the usual suffix to his father's name — Shabaanovich.

While learning Russian — spoken by most Ukrainians who'd lived under the Soviet Union — Gali struggled with errands. Neighbors helped. Through them, he met his wife. They would have three children.

He finished medical school, becoming a gynecologist specializing in fertility. His career's early days were long, seeing dozens of patients. Eventually, he landed at a practice at the Adonis medical center, where he thrived.

When Gali drives to work, listening to songs in Arabic, he passes Kyiv's Maidan, a square where anti-government protests set the stage for Russia's seizure of Crimea in 2014. There was a war in Gaza that year, too, he remembers.

Gali mouths the lyrics as Ukrainian street signs whiz by: "You keep crushing us, oh world."

Wars collide

On July 8, Gali was at work, but his mind was on Gaza.

A week earlier, a relative reached out — Gali's 12-year old niece had been killed as Israeli tanks advanced to the edge of the Mawasi camp for displaced Palestinians, northwest of Rafah. Like tens of thousands of Gazans, his family had fled there on foot after Israel designated it a humanitarian zone.

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Gali had already been mourning. A nephew, Fathi, was killed the previous month. Gali saw it himself, he said, on television — his nephew's lifeless body on the screen, headlines flashing in Arabic. He described the image and Fathi's clothes to a relative, who confirmed it was him.

Their deaths weighed heavily on Gali. For nine months, he'd lived in fear for his family, of a text message saying they'd all been killed.

In the medical center that day, air raids rang out all morning. Before greeting his next patient, he shared a few words with the center director. She'd just driven by Okhmadyt Children's Hospital, struck hours earlier by a missile — a terrible sight, Ukraine's largest pediatric facility in ruins, she told him. He told her about the deaths of his niece and nephew, the darkness of his grief.

Not long after, Gali's world went even darker.

A Russian missile came hurtling toward the center, triggering an explosion that obliterated the third and fourth floors.

Gali worked on the fourth. In the dense cloud of debris, he sought out shadowy figures covered in blood. He saw a patient and, using his phone for light, pulled her out from under the collapsed roof, as colleagues and others died around him — nine killed in all.

He led the woman to his office to wait for rescuers. Amid bodies on the floor, he found a colleague, Viktor Bragutsa, bleeding profusely. Gali couldn't resuscitate him.

A room holding patients' documents had been reduced to debris, their records spanning decades up in smoke.

He felt pangs of déjà vu.

For months, he'd seen images of Gaza's war. It was as if they'd somehow bled into his life in Ukraine.

"Nothing is sacred," he said. "Killing doctors, killing children, killing civilians — this is the picture we are faced with."

Only pain

Two weeks later, Gali stood in the same spot, gazing at bombed-out walls as workers sifted through rubble. "What can I feel?" he said "Pain. Nothing else."

The center director's office is destroyed. So is the reception area. Ultrasound machines and operating tables lay haphazardly.

He had stayed in Ukraine, didn't evacuate his family — he took comfort in his office, in helping patients. And still, he said, he'll stay.

In Gaza, he knows, there's no safe place for his family to evacuate.

Communicating isn't easy, with telecommunications blackouts. Weeks go by without word, until a nephew or niece finds enough signal to tell him they're alive.

"No matter how difficult and impossible the situation is," he said, "their words are always filled with laughter, patience and gratitude to God.

"I am here, feeling the weight."

Senate Democrats tee up vote on child tax credit in election-year pitch to families

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democratic Senate Leader Chuck Schumer is daring Republicans to vote against a bipartisan tax cut package aimed at expanding the child tax credit for millions of families and restoring some business tax breaks.

And Republicans appear prepared to do just that on Thursday, with many arguing they will have more leverage to enact the tax changes they want if their party wins control of the White House and both chambers of Congress in November's election. Large parts of the tax cut package passed under Republican control in 2017 are set to expire after 2025, pushing tax issues to the forefront.

"I think we can do better next year," said Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas.

It's expected to be the final vote senators will take before heading home for the August recess, and

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underscores how both parties are trying to spotlight issues they believe will play well with voters in November. Democrats are also looking to counter assertions from Donald Trump's running mate, Sen. JD Vance of Ohio, that Democrats are "anti-family."

"The American people will get a chance to see which senators in reality support tax relief for parents and businesses and housing, and who opposes it," Schumer said.

The roughly \$79 billion package passed the House overwhelmingly in January, 357-70. But it has stalled in the Senate. The procedural vote to advance the measure will require support from 60 senators, which is unlikely.

The bill was fashioned through negotiations by Rep. Jason Smith, the Republican chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, and Sen. Ron Wyden, the Democratic chairman of the Senate Finance Committee. It would restore full, immediate deductions that businesses can take for the purchase of new equipment and machinery, and for domestic research and development expenses. It also would help more low-income families take fuller advantage of the child tax credit.

The changes in the child tax credit would lift as many as 500,000 out of poverty when the proposal is fully in effect, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. In all, the families of some 16 million children would benefit, the liberal think tank said.

The bill is paid for by speeding up the cut-off date by which companies could submit retroactive claims for employees they kept on the payrolls during the COVID pandemic. The IRS has said a significant majority of retroactive claims are at a high risk of fraud.

With the bill seemingly lacking the support necessary to overcome procedural hurdles, Schumer had opted for months not to bring it up for a vote. But election season has presented an opportunity for Democrats to lean in on the issue as well as put the spotlight on Vance. Schumer even referenced "the junior senator from Ohio" when speaking on the Senate floor, leaving no doubt he's part of their thinking in holding the vote.

Vance claimed in a Fox News interview that Vice President Kamala Harris was calling for an end to the child tax credit. But the Biden administration led the effort to bolster the child tax credit during the pandemic and fought unsuccessfully to continue the expansion, which temporarily increased the credit to \$3,000 a year, added 17-year-olds and boosted the amount to \$3,600 for children under six years old.

Schumer called Vance's claim "plain old nonsense" and said the 2021 expansion was one of the most significant achievements Democrats have had under the Biden-Harris administration.

Vance also suggested in 2021 that political leaders who didn't have biological children "don't really have a direct stake" in the country. He doubled down on those remarks after clips of the remarks resurfaced by saying earlier this week on the SiriusXM radio program "The Megyn Kelly Show" that the Democratic Party had become "anti-family and anti-child."

"The Republicans have been giving big speeches about how they are pro-family and pro-kids, and they say it again and again. But when it comes time for a vote, they're AWOL," Wyden said. "Now, they are going to get the vote, and we're going to be able to see who is going to be there for the kids and the families."

Democratic Sens. Sherrod Brown of Ohio and Bob Casey of Pennsylvania, both in competitive races this fall, spoke extensively on the Senate floor in support of the bill. But Cornyn, the Texas Republican, called Thursday's action the latest in a series of "show votes" designed to fail but would provide Democrats "with a talking point or two on the campaign trail." He said the bill should have been the subject of a Senate committee hearing that would allow lawmakers to shape it before it came to the floor.

Sen. John Thune, the second-ranking Senate Republican, said he expects a few Republicans to vote for the measure, but he anticipated that it would not be enough to meet the 60-vote threshold needed to advance the bill. He said there are good things in the legislation, but "if we're in a position to do this next year, it will be a much stronger bill."

Thune said it won't be hard for Republicans to rebuff criticism that they were insufficiently supportive of tax relief for businesses and families.

"There are certain issues that voters instinctively know that Republicans are better on," Thune said.

"They may try to make that argument in a political ad, but I think it'll be hard to sustain when most voters know that it was the Republicans in 2017 that cut taxes and that next year it will be Republicans who extend those tax cuts if we have the majority."

Scholarships help Lahaina graduates afford to attend college outside Hawaii a year after wildfire

By JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — College was the furthest thing from Keith Nove Baniqued's mind after her family's home burned down in a deadly wildfire that decimated her Hawaii town. The 17-year-old, who was 7 when she moved to Maui from the Philippines, was about to start her senior year of high school but shifted her focus to her family's struggles to find a place to live amid the tragedy.

Nearly a year after the fire that destroyed thousands of other homes and killed 102 people in historic Lahaina, Baniqued is headed to the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. And her family doesn't have to worry about how to pay for it, thanks to \$325,000 in college scholarships awarded Wednesday to 13 Lahainaluna High School graduates attending schools on the U.S. mainland.

"Even being a senior, I really didn't know if I was going to pursue higher education anymore, only because I didn't want to leave my family in the situation that we were in," she recalled of her feelings after the fire.

Her school survived the blaze, but was closed for two months. The reopening restored a small sense of normalcy and reignited her dream to attend college beyond Hawaii's shores. She also realized a college degree would put her in a better position to help her family's long-term recovery.

She applied to colleges with nursing programs, channeled her feelings about surviving the fire into scholarship essays and decided she would attend UNLV — partly because its popularity among Hawaii students would make it feel a bit like home.

Using a grant from the Maui Strong Fund of the Hawaii Community Foundation, the Downtown Athletic Club of Hawaii is providing Baniqued and her 12 classmates with about \$25,000 each — meant to cover out-of-state college costs after other scholarships and financial aid for the first year.

"A lifechanging opportunity like this can be beneficial to any Hawaii high school graduate, and even more so for Lahainaluna graduates and all they've gone through," said Keith Amemiya, president of athletic club, which has been spearheading a fundraising campaign to support the Lahainaluna student-athletes and coaches whose homes were destroyed by the fire.

In a separate effort after the fire, the University of Hawaii announced scholarships for 2024 Lahainaluna graduates to attend any campus in the statewide system. Nearly 80% of a graduating class of 215 applied to UH campuses, according to school data. As of last week, 105 students had registered at a UH school, leading to a record-number of college-bound Lahainaluna graduates, school officials said, who expect that number to increase by mid-August.

Ginny Yasutake, a Lahainaluna counselor, reached out to Amemiya to see if there was a way to do something similar to the UH scholarship for student athletes who opted to leave Hawaii for college.

With help from the Hawaii Community Foundation, they found funding to help even students who weren't athletes. Both organizations are committed to finding a way to provide the scholarships beyond freshman year of out-of-state college and also to underclassmen affected by the fire, Amemiya said.

"These scholarships kind of came in as a last-minute dream," said Principal Richard Carosso.

And the Hawaii scholarships provided an opportunity to many who never thought college was even possible, he said.

Pursuing college highlights the resilience of a graduating class whose freshman year of high school was disrupted by the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Carosso said.

Emily Hegrenes, headed to the University of California, Los Angeles, wrote in her scholarship essay about how she had to find a way to train as a swimmer because the Lahaina Aquatic Center was closed in a restricted burn zone.

"But for my final high school season, I worked harder than ever to recruit enough swimmers to hold

team practice at a pool forty-five-minutes away from my hometown," she wrote. "With my Lahaina cap on, I proudly dove straight into my fears."

Talan Toshikiyo, who plans to attend Oxnard College in California, said he aspires to become an engineer and attain financial stability because it was already difficult for Native Hawaiians like him, and other locals, to afford living in Hawaii before the fire.

"I hope Lahaina is not changed when I come back from the Mainland," he wrote in his essay. "I dream one day all the rent in Maui will be lower so locals will be able to afford it and not have to move far far away."

Venezuela's Maduro asks top court to audit the presidential election, but observers cry foul

By REGINA GARCIA CANO and GISELA SALOMON Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — President Nicolás Maduro on Wednesday asked Venezuela's high court to conduct an audit of the presidential election after opposition leaders disputed his claim of victory, drawing criticism from foreign observers who said the court is too close to the government to produce an independent review.

Maduro told reporters that the ruling party is also ready to show all the vote tally sheets from Sunday's election.

"I throw myself before justice," he said outside the Supreme Tribunal of Justice headquarters in the capital, Caracas, adding that he is "willing to be summoned, questioned, investigated."

This is Maduro's first concession to demands for more transparency about the election. However, the court is closely aligned with his government; the court's justices are proposed by federal officials and ratified by the National Assembly, which is dominated by Maduro sympathizers.

The Carter Center, which sent a delegation to Venezuela to monitor the election, criticized Maduro's audit request, saying the court would not provide an independent review.

"You have another government institution, which is appointed by the government, to verify the government numbers for the election results, which are in question," said Jennie K. Lincoln, who led the delegation. "This is not an independent assessment."

The Atlanta-based group said Tuesday night that it was unable to verify the announced results and criticized what it called a "complete lack of transparency" in declaring Maduro the winner. Venezuela's electoral authorities allowed the Carter Center to send 17 observers.

Maduro's main challenger, Edmundo González, and opposition leader Maria Corina Machado say they obtained more than two-thirds of the tally sheets that each electronic voting machine printed after polls closed. They said the release of the data on those tallies would prove Maduro lost.

Maduro insisted to reporters that there had been a plot against his government and that the electoral system was hacked. Asked later on during a news conference why electoral authorities have not released detailed vote counts, Maduro said the National Electoral Council has come under attack, including cyber-attacks.

"Engineers are fighting right now" to solve those attacks, he said without elaborating.

The government presented some videos that the president said showed people attacking and torching some electoral offices. The Associated Press was not immediately able to verify the images.

Attorney General Tarek William Saab said more than 1,000 people related to some of those attacks have been arrested.

Pressure has been building on the president since the election. The National Electoral Council, which is loyal to his United Socialist Party of Venezuela, has yet to release any results broken down by voting machine, which it did in past elections.

Colombian President Gustavo Petro, a close Maduro ally, joined other foreign leaders Wednesday in urging him to release detailed vote counts.

"The serious doubts that have arisen around the Venezuelan electoral process can lead its people to

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a deep violent polarization with serious consequences of permanent division," Petro said on the social platform X.

"I invite the Venezuelan government to allow the elections to end in peace, allowing a transparent vote count, with the counting of votes, and with the supervision of all the political forces of its country and professional international supervision," he added.

Petro proposed that Maduro's government and the opposition reach an agreement "that allows for the maximum respect of the (political) force that has lost the elections." The agreement, he said, could be submitted to the United Nations Security Council.

His comments came a day after another ally, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, along with U.S. President Joe Biden, called for the "immediate release of full, transparent, and detailed voting data at the polling station level."

Brazil's presidential office refused to comment Wednesday on whether an audit by the Supreme Tribunal of Justice would amount to an independent verification. Instead, it pointed to a Monday statement from the Ministry for Foreign Relations saying the government awaits "the publication by the National Electoral Council of data broken down by polling station, an indispensable step for the transparency, credibility and legitimacy of the election result."

Lula said of Maduro on Tuesday that "the more transparency there is, the greater his chance of having peace to govern Venezuela."

The Organization of American States convened for an extraordinary session Wednesday, but members were unable to reach a consensus on a resolution to pressure Venezuelan authorities to "immediately" publish the granular results and verify them in the presence of international observers. Seventeen nations voted in favor of the resolution, one short of the threshold required for passage. Eleven abstained, and five were absent.

According to Machado, the opposition leader, the vote tallies show González received roughly 6.2 million votes compared with 2.7 million for Maduro. That is widely different from the electoral council's report that Maduro received 5.1 million votes, against more than 4.4 million for González.

Venezuela has the world's largest proven crude reserves and once boasted Latin America's most advanced economy, but it entered into free fall after Maduro took the helm in 2013. Plummeting oil prices, widespread shortages and hyperinflation that soared past 130,000% led to social unrest and mass emigration.

More than 7.7 million Venezuelans have left the country since 2014, the largest exodus in Latin America's recent history. Many have settled in Colombia.

Speaking to reporters in Vietnam on Wednesday, the European Union's foreign affairs chief said the bloc won't recognize Maduro's claim of electoral victory without independent verification of voting records.

"They should have been provided immediately, as in any democratic electoral process," Josep Borrell said.

Within hours of the electoral council saying Maduro had won, thousands of protesters took to the streets of Caracas and other cities. The protests, which continued into Tuesday, turned violent at times, and law enforcement responded with tear gas and rubber pellets.

The Venezuela-based human rights organization Foro Penal said 11 people, including two minors, were killed in election-related unrest.

Maduro's closest ruling party allies quickly came to his defense. National Assembly President Jorge Rodríguez — his chief negotiator in dialogues with the U.S. and the opposition — insisted Maduro was the indisputable winner and called his opponents violent fascists. He called for Machado and González to be arrested.

Machado and González urged their supporters to remain calm.

"I ask Venezuelans to continue in peace, demanding that the result be respected and the tally sheets be published," González said on X. "This victory, which belongs to all of us, will unite us and reconcile us as a nation."

Trump ramps up his defense of Vance after one of the rockiest VP rollouts in recent memory

By STEVE PEOPLES, STEPHEN GROVES and MARC LEVY Associated Press
HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — Donald Trump is used to defending himself. But this week, the Republican presidential nominee has been put in the rare position of having to defend someone else — his running mate, Ohio Sen. JD Vance.

When Vance was first introduced at the Republican National Convention last month, many GOP officials said they didn't know much about him. Since then, the void has been filled with multiple reports of controversial statements — especially Vance's previous suggestion that Vice President Kamala Harris and other so-called "childless cat ladies" want to make the country miserable — that have made his rollout among the most turbulent in recent history.

"I'm just speaking for myself. And I think I'm speaking for him, too," Trump said during a contentious interview Wednesday at the National Association of Black Journalists conference in Chicago. "My interpretation is he's strongly family-oriented. But that doesn't mean that if you don't have a family, there's something wrong with that."

Conservative commentators, Republican strategists and GOP elected officials on Capitol Hill publicly and privately agree that Vance's introduction to America has not gone well, with Democrats highlighting his past statements on abortion rights and a suggestion that parents should have more of a vote than adults without children. Harris and her allies have started calling both Vance and Trump "weird," messaging that has taken off online.

Seventeen days later, Trump and his allies have yet to quiet criticism from within their own party.

"I think if he was thinking two years ago or three years ago, 'I might be on a presidential ticket in a couple of years,' he might have chosen different words," North Dakota Sen. Kevin Cramer, a longtime Trump ally, said Wednesday. Cramer also suggested that Vance could apologize for his comments about childless Americans, saying, "If he feels the need to apologize, people are very forgiving."

The Trump campaign stands by Vance

Vance has not apologized. And a senior Trump adviser said Tuesday there has been "zero conversation" about replacing Vance as his running mate.

Soon, the adviser predicted, voters would shift their attention away from Vance and toward Harris' choice for vice president on the Democratic ticket, which is expected in the coming days. The adviser spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal campaign strategy.

Vance, a 39-year-old Republican senator, has held office for less than 18 months but quickly established himself as a thought leader in the "Make America Great Again" movement.

The first-term Ohio senator was not the most popular choice of many Republicans on Capitol Hill, especially compared to more experienced candidates such as Sens. Tim Scott and Marco Rubio. Some believe that the pick came during a moment of overconfidence as Trump's team was predicting a blowout victory against a diminished President Joe Biden.

But the presidential contest changed profoundly once Biden stepped aside and endorsed Harris. And now, Trump's allies acknowledge that his victory in November is no sure thing.

Twice in the last century, vice presidential nominees were replaced after being announced. But it hasn't happened since George McGovern dropped Missouri Sen. Tom Eagleton in 1972 after it was revealed Eagleton had received electroshock therapy for a mental health issue.

More recently, Arizona Sen. John McCain's selection of Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin helped sink his 2008 campaign.

There is a sense that things would need to get much worse before Vance would become a serious political liability for Trump, who could theoretically replace him — a possibility that Democrats have been eager to promote in recent days.

"This is a short-term bump in the road," Republican pollster Neil Newhouse said.

Trump himself addressed the fallout on Wednesday in Chicago during an interview in which he questioned

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Harris' racial identity and falsely asserted she had downplayed being Black.

"This is well-documented, historically, the vice president in terms of the election does not have any impact, virtually no impact," Trump said when asked about Vance. "You can have a vice president that is outstanding in every way, and I think JD is, I think all of them would have been, but you're not voting that way. You're voting for the president. You're voting for me."

Trump's supporters disagree with Vance but aren't calling for a change

Attendees at Trump's Wednesday rally in swing-state Pennsylvania dismissed the idea that Trump should dump Vance, even though they disagreed with his previous suggestion that parents should have more voting power than childless adults.

"Trump should stick with the people he's picked," said Jeff Miller, 53, who has five kids, all grown.

Kenneth "Nemo" Niemann said Vance has an "appealing" personal story that makes him a good addition to the ticket and noted that no one agrees with someone else all the time anyway. "I don't agree 100% with what Trump says," Niemann said.

And at Vance's Wednesday night rally in Arizona, another closely contested state, Rachael Jensen, a 42-year-old mother of six, said she appreciates that what she called the "Washington establishment" doesn't appear to like him.

Jensen said she didn't think that parents should have more voting power than people without children.

"I believe it should be one citizen, one vote, regardless if you have 12 children or no children," Jensen said.

Meanwhile, Republican senators on Capitol Hill were peppered with a new round of questions about Vance.

Sen. Bill Cassidy, R-La., said of Vance that "he's going to take a few hits early on and he's going to get his traction."

"One of you guys once told me that as soon as somebody is announced for office, they'll have some combination of a colonoscopy and a CT scan. And I think he's seeing that right now," Cassidy told reporters.

Sen. John Kennedy, R-La., was asked about Vance as he was getting into one of the Capitol's elevators.

"I mean, it's a campaign. People are going to twist what you say," said the Louisiana Republican.

Sen. Alex Padilla, D-Calif., who was standing in the elevator with Kennedy, shot back, "They're not twisting it. They're quoting him."

"Politics is a full-contact sport," Kennedy responded. The elevator door then closed.

Hollywood's video game performers head to the picket line over AI protections

SARAH PARVINI AP Technology Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Hollywood's video game performers are heading to the Warner Bros. Studios lot Thursday to picket against what they call an unwillingness from top gaming companies to protect voice actors and motion capture workers equally against the unregulated use of artificial intelligence.

The protest marks the first large labor action since game voice actors and performance workers voted to strike last week. The work stoppage came after more than 18 months of negotiations with gaming giants, including divisions of Activision, Warner Bros. and Walt Disney Co., over a new interactive media agreement stalled over protections around the use of AI.

Union leaders have billed AI as an existential crisis for performers. Game voice actors and motion capture artists' likenesses, they say, could be replicated by AI and used without consent and fair compensation. The unregulated use of AI, the union says, poses "an equal or even greater threat" to performers in the video game industry than it does in film and television because the capacity to cheaply and easily create convincing digital replicas of performers' voices is widely available.

Audrey Cooling, a spokesperson for the video game producers, said the companies have offered AI protections as well as "a significant increase in wages for SAG-AFTRA represented performers in video games."

"We have worked hard to deliver proposals with reasonable terms that protect the rights of performers while ensuring we can continue to use the most advanced technology to create a great gaming experience for fans," Cooling said. "We have proposed terms that provide consent and fair compensation for anyone

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employed under the (contract) if an AI reproduction or digital replica of their performance is used in games.”

SAG-AFTRA’s negotiating committee argued that the studios’ definition of who constitutes a “performer” is key to understanding the issue of who would be protected.

“The industry has told us point blank that they do not necessarily consider everyone who is rendering movement performance to be a performer that is covered by the collective bargaining agreement,” SAG-AFTRA Chief Contracts Officer Ray Rodriguez said at a news conference last week, adding that some physical performances are being treated as “data.”

The union had been negotiating with an industry bargaining group consisting of signatory video game companies. Those companies are Activision Productions Inc., Blindlight LLC, Disney Character Voices Inc., Electronic Arts Productions Inc., Formosa Interactive LLC, Insomniac Games Inc., Llama Productions LLC, Take 2 Productions Inc., VoiceWorks Productions Inc. and WB Games Inc.

The global video game industry generated nearly \$184 billion in revenue in 2023, according to game market forecaster Newzoo, with revenues projected to reach \$207 billion in 2026.

“We are at the table because we want to include SAG-AFTRA-represented performers in our productions, and we will continue working to resolve the last remaining issue in these negotiations,” Cooling said. “Our goal is to reach an agreement with the union that will end this strike.”

What polling shows about the top VP contenders for Kamala Harris

By LINLEY SANDERS and SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

As Vice President Kamala Harris prepares to announce her running mate, a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds that several of the top contenders for the role are largely unknown to Americans. Arizona Sen. Mark Kelly stands out as one with more name recognition and higher favorability, particularly among Democrats.

The survey, which was conducted after President Joe Biden announced he was withdrawing from the race and Harris became the likely Democratic presidential nominee, highlights the strengths and weaknesses that different politicians could bring to the ticket — and the challenges they could face if selected.

Kelly, while better known and liked than some of the alternatives, is still unfamiliar to about half of Americans. And others, like Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro, while less known nationally, could draw on a deeper well of support in their home states and regions. Kelly and Shapiro are viewed among the front-runners, according to people familiar with the process, after the Harris campaign began its vetting with about a dozen names.

Harris said Tuesday she had not yet decided on her No. 2. But she, and whomever she selects, will head out on a seven-state swing of key battlegrounds, including Pennsylvania, Arizona and North Carolina, next week.

Arizona Sen. Mark Kelly

Of the four potential Democratic vice-presidential candidates included in the poll — Kelly, Shapiro, Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear and North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper, who publicly removed himself from consideration after the poll was fielded — Kelly has the highest name recognition and favorability, according to the AP-NORC poll.

Americans are more likely to have a positive view of Kelly than a negative view. About 3 in 10 U.S. adults have a very or somewhat favorable view of Kelly, while about 2 in 10 have a negative view. Drawing more good feelings than bad is a relative rarity in presidential politics these days: Biden and former President Donald Trump have been viewed more negatively than positively for several years now.

Like many of the other contenders, though, Kelly is nowhere near a household name. About half of Americans don’t know enough to have an opinion about him.

But Democrats are especially likely to have warm feelings about Kelly. Forty-five percent have a favorable view of Kelly. Only about 1 in 10 have an unfavorable view of him, and around 4 in 10 don’t know enough to say. Older Democrats — those 45 and older — are especially likely to have a positive view of Kelly, while younger Democrats are more likely to be unfamiliar with him.

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He's proven to be a battle-tested campaigner, winning a special election in 2020 to flip the Arizona Senate seat from Republican control and then retaining it two years later for a full, six-year term. The Navy veteran is a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee and has been an influential voice among Democrats on immigration and border security, long a political vulnerability for Harris that Republicans are seeking to exploit.

Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro

Shapiro is broadly unknown to Americans and Democrats, except in the Northeast, where he has more name recognition and higher favorability. The poll found that 6 in 10 U.S. adults — including 57% of Democrats — don't know enough to have an opinion about Shapiro. About 2 in 10 Americans view him favorably, and a similar share view him unfavorably.

The picture isn't very different among Democrats. About one-quarter of Democrats have a positive view of Shapiro, while 16% have a negative view. Older Democrats are more likely than younger ones to have a favorable opinion of Shapiro, but overall, most have yet to develop a view.

Shapiro was elected governor in 2022, defeating Republican Doug Mastriano — a controversial figure who drew opposition and criticism from members of his own party, including then-GOP Sen. Pat Toomey.

Unlike the other contenders asked about in the AP-NORC poll, though, he's significantly better known — and liked — in his home region. In the Northeast, 4 in 10 U.S. adults have a favorable view of him. Another 4 in 10, roughly, don't know enough to have an opinion of him, while about 2 in 10 Northeasterners view him negatively.

Democrat Gary Hines, a 68-year-old in Philadelphia, had high praise for his home-state governor and added: "I'd hate to see him leave, because he's just getting started in Pennsylvania."

Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear

If chosen, Beshear would need to introduce himself to most of the country. Around 7 in 10 Americans don't know enough to have an opinion about him. Those with a view are about evenly split: 17% of U.S. adults have a positive view, and 15% have a negative one.

However, Democrats have a more positive than negative opinion of Beshear. About one-quarter have a very or somewhat favorable view, while around 1 in 10 have a negative view. Nearly two-thirds don't know enough about Beshear to give an opinion.

The scion of a well-known Democratic family in the state, Beshear defeated then-Gov. Matt Bevin — a deeply unpopular figure, even in conservative Kentucky — then won reelection in 2023 against Republican Daniel Cameron, a longtime protégé of Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell. Beshear's victory last year was credited in part to his advocacy of abortion rights, including a campaign ad that featured a sexual assault survivor attacking Cameron for his stances.

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz

Like the other governors who are being discussed, Gov. Tim Walz doesn't have much of a national profile — and that also means he's a relatively blank slate. He wasn't included in the AP-NORC poll, but a new ABC News/Ipsos poll, which asked about favorability slightly differently, found that about 9 in 10 U.S. adults don't know enough to have an opinion on him. Among Americans with a view, opinions are split between positive and negative.

Walz, who also served for 12 years in the House, moved up on Harris' shortlist in recent days after he coined "weird" as a new talking point to describe the Republican ticket. It's a line now used widely by the vice president and other Democrats.

He currently leads the Democratic Governors Association.

Israel-Hamas war latest: Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh was assassinated in Tehran, Iran says

By The Associated Press undefined

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh was assassinated in Tehran, Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard said early Wednesday. No one immediately claimed responsibility but suspicion quickly fell on Israel, which has vowed to kill Haniyeh and other Hamas leaders over the group's Oct. 7 attack on Israel that sparked the war in Gaza.

Haniyeh was in Tehran to attend Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian's swearing-in ceremony on Tuesday. He was killed hours later by a predawn airstrike, which Iran says is under investigation. The country's supreme leader has vowed revenge against Israel.

Israel carried out a strike in Lebanon on Tuesday that it said killed Fouad Shukur, a top Hezbollah military commander whom the United States blames for planning and launching the deadly 1983 Marine bombing in the Lebanese capital. Hezbollah confirmed the death Wednesday.

Haniyeh left the Gaza Strip in 2019 and had lived in exile in Qatar. The top Hamas leader in Gaza is Yahya Sinwar, who masterminded the Oct. 7 attack.

Haniyeh's killing comes at a precarious time. U.S. President Joe Biden's administration has tried to push Hamas and Israel to agree to at least a temporary cease-fire and hostage release deal for the Israel-Hamas war. Senior officials from the U.S., Israel, Qatar and Egypt were set to meet for the latest round of talks.

Here's the latest:

Australia's prime minister urges citizens to avoid travel to Lebanon

SYDNEY — Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese urged thousands of Australian citizens in Lebanon to leave and warned Thursday that the Beirut airport could soon close.

"I take the opportunity to say to Australians: Do not travel to Lebanon at the moment," Albanese told reporters in Sydney.

"There is a risk that the Beirut airport might not be open for commercial flights and given the numbers of people who are there, there's no guarantee that we can just guarantee that people will be able to come home through other means if that airport is shut."

Albanese said he was "very concerned" that conflict in the Middle East would escalate following the killing of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Iran.

"We want to see a de-escalation, we want to see a cease-fire, we want to see the hostages released and we want to see a plan for peace and security in the Middle East where both Israelis and Palestinians can live in peace and security with prosperity," Albanese said.

Iran, Israel each press UN to condemn the other after airstrikes

UNITED NATIONS — Iran and Israel each pressed the U.N. Security Council to condemn the other after airstrikes killed two anti-Israel militant leaders in Iran and Lebanon and raised concerns that a regional war could erupt.

But the U.N.'s most powerful body issued no collective message after Wednesday's emergency meeting. The 15 members variously warned that the Middle East was at a precarious point, worried about potential escalation, called for restraint and diplomacy, and pointed fingers along longstanding fault lines.

Iran blames Israel for the killings of Hamas' political chief, Ismail Haniyeh, in Iran and of a top Hezbollah commander in Lebanon. Israel acknowledges the Lebanon strike, saying the target was behind a weekend rocket attack that killed 12 young people in the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights, but Israel has been silent on Haniyeh's death.

Iranian Ambassador Amir Saeid Irvani urged the council to hold Israel accountable and consider sanctions. He underscored that his country reserved the right to "respond decisively to this terrorist and criminal act" when "necessary and appropriate."

Israeli Deputy Ambassador Jonathan Miller exhorted the council to condemn Iran and increase sanctions on a country he called "the engine driving the machinery of death and destruction" through support for such groups as Hamas and Hezbollah.

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Lebanese Ambassador Hadi Hachem accused Israel of trying to kindle a region-wide conflict. He implored the council "to take a firm stand before it is too late."

UN holds emergency meeting

UNITED NATIONS — The U.N. Security Council is holding an emergency meeting after a set of airstrikes hours apart killed two anti-Israel militant leaders in the Middle East, raising concerns that a regional war could erupt.

The killings of Hamas' political chief, Ismail Haniyeh, in Iran and of a top Hezbollah commander in Lebanon have stirred a diplomatic scramble at the U.N. and elsewhere to try to contain the complex, mounting tensions in the region.

"The various attacks over the past few days represent a serious and dangerous escalation," U.N. Undersecretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo said as the council meeting began Wednesday. She called for diplomatic efforts "to change the trajectory and seek a path toward regional peace and stability."

It appears unlikely that the Security Council can coalesce around any joint message on the airstrikes. The United States, a key ally of Israel, and Russia, which has close ties with Iran, are both council members with veto power.

US raises Lebanon's travel advisory

BEIRUT — The United States State Department is raising Lebanon's travel advisory, calling on its citizens to no visit the country.

Wednesday's announcement comes a day after an Israeli drone strike killed a top Hezbollah commander in a rare Beirut strike shortly followed by a strike in Iran that killed Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh.

Politicians and diplomats fear that Hezbollah and Iran's retaliatory strikes could spark an all-out war away from the delicate rules of engagement that limited strikes to mostly areas near the Lebanon-Israel border.

Since Hezbollah and Israeli troops started clashing on Oct. 8, the U.S. has urged its citizens to reconsider traveling to the tiny Mediterranean country.

UN Security Council will hold an emergency meeting

UNITED NATIONS — The U.N. Security Council will hold an emergency meeting Wednesday after an airstrike killed Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran, and the U.N.'s top leader is pressing world nations to come together quickly to keep Mideast tensions from boiling over.

Secretary-General António Guterres sees the strike in Tehran and another in the Lebanese capital of Beirut as "a dangerous escalation," spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric said at a briefing.

He reiterated calls for de-escalation and said Guterres is urging the international community "to work together to urgently prevent any actions that could push the Middle East over the edge, with a devastating impact on civilians."

The Security Council meeting was scheduled after Iran pressed the U.N.'s most powerful body to address "Israeli aggression and terrorist attacks."

Turkish Parliament speaker condemns the assassination of Haniyeh

ANKARA, Turkey — Turkey's Parliament speaker is condemning the assassination of Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh and urging the international community to halt Israel's actions.

In an interview with the Associated Press, Numan Kurtulmus also expressed concerns that the conflict in Gaza could escalate into a "global conflict" if a fair peace agreement is not reached.

"Israeli government's lack of restraint, its excessive and reckless conduct, and its ongoing aggressive actions pose a threat to all nations globally," Kurtulmus stated. "It is imperative for all countries, institutions, and organizations to intervene against this aggression, as it endangers the safety of capitals worldwide."

Kurtulmus added that "endless support" granted by Western nations, and especially the United States, had emboldened Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Italy calls for moderation

ROME — Italy, which holds the rotating G7 presidency, is calling for moderation after Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh was killed. It's also reiterating its support for U.S. President Joe Biden's three-phase, hostage-for-truce plan for Gaza.

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"We absolutely do not want the Middle East to plunge into open war. It is not the interest of the peoples of the region, it is not in the interest of anyone," Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani told the lower chamber of Parliament.

"I call for everything possible to be done to avoid an escalation," he said.

The right-wing government of Premier Giorgia Meloni is a top Israeli ally but has also mobilized a humanitarian response for Gaza that has involved evacuating 150 Palestinians and an aid delivery program.

Al-Jazeera says 2 reporters were killed in a strike in Gaza

JERUSALEM — Al-Jazeera said two of its reporters were killed in an Israeli strike in northern Gaza on Wednesday, the latest Palestinian journalists working with the Qatari network to be killed in the enclave.

Correspondent Ismail al-Ghoul, cameraman Rami al-Rifi and a child were killed in a blast that struck a car the trio were traveling in in Gaza City, according to the network and the Emergency and Ambulance Service, which helps recover and transport casualties to hospitals

The two journalists were reporting at the Shati urban refugee camp, the birthplace of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, who was killed in a strike while he was in Tehran, Iran.

The Israeli army has not immediately commented on the journalists' deaths.

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, 111 journalists, including 106 Palestinians, have been killed since the Israel-Hamas war erupted in October.

The Israeli government shut down Al-Jazeera in Israel in May through a new law that enables it to close down media outlets that are deemed a security threat.

Al-Jazeera, a pro-Palestinian news channel, has accused Israel of targeting its journalists throughout the conflict. In December, Samer Abudaqa, one of the network's cameramen was killed in a strike. Wael Dahdouh, the outlet's bureau chief in Gaza, was reporting in late October when he received word on air that his wife, daughter, a son and grandchild were killed in an Israeli airstrike. In January, a strike killed another of his sons, who was also working for Al-Jazeera.

Iran asks UN Security Council for an emergency meeting

UNITED NATIONS — Iran is asking the U.N. Security Council to hold an emergency meeting to address "Israeli aggression and terrorist attacks" after the killing of Haniyeh in Tehran and the targeting of a top Hezbollah commander in the Lebanese capital.

Iranian U.N. Ambassador Amir Saeid Iravani in a letter on Wednesday blamed both strikes on Israel. He said they "suggest an intention to escalate conflict and expand the war through the entire region." He called on the international community for "decisive action to address these violations and hold the perpetrators accountable."

Israel has taken responsibility for the strike in Beirut, saying it killed a top Hezbollah commander. But Israel has been silent about the strike that killed Haniyeh, though it had vowed to kill him and other Hamas leaders over the group's Oct. 7 attack that sparked the war in Gaza.

Lebanon says civilian death toll from strike in Beirut is now 5

BEIRUT — Lebanon's Health Ministry says the death toll of an Israeli attack on Tuesday in southern Beirut has risen to five civilians.

Israel said the attack targeted top Hezbollah commander Fouad Shukur, who it blamed for the weekend rocket attack that killed 12 youths in the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights.

Hezbollah said Shukur was in the targeted building, but civil defense workers were still searching for him under the rubble. The five civilians killed were two children and three women. Many more were wounded.

Hamas' military wing claims attacks in Hebron as retaliation

RAMALLAH, West Bank — Hamas' military wing says the West Bank city of Hebron will remain a "focal point" for its activities after announcing two attacks near the southern city that it called retaliation for the killing of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh.

According to the Israeli army, a militant in a car opened fire at an Israeli citizen northeast of Hebron before leaving the vehicle and stabbing the person, who was taken to a hospital. The attacker remains at large, the army said.

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The Hebron branch of the Hamas military wing said another attack took place near the Ibrahimi Mosque in the heart of the city. The Israeli army said it had no information on that.

Violence across the occupied West Bank has flared since the Israel-Hamas war erupted in October.

Israel says it is 'not interested in an all-out war'

Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz has sent a letter to dozens of foreign ministries around the world saying that "Israel is not interested in an all-out war, but the only way to prevent it is the immediate implementation of (United Nations Security Council) Resolution 1701." That resolution calls for a full cessation of hostilities along the Israel-Lebanon border and a demilitarized zone.

Katz writes that with Israel's killing of a top commander in Iran's ally Hezbollah on Beirut on Tuesday, "Israel sent a clear message: we will harm with great force whoever harms us."

Israel has kept silent on the killing of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in an airstrike in the Iranian capital, which Hamas and Iran have blamed on Israel.

Blinken urges mediator Qatar to keep working toward a Gaza cease-fire

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has spoken with the prime minister of Qatar, a key mediator in cease-fire talks for Gaza. The State Department says Blinken "emphasized the importance of continuing to work to reach a cease-fire to the conflict in Gaza that would secure the release of hostages, alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people and unlock the possibility of broader stability."

Blinken also said the U.S. would keep working to ensure a deal is reached in the 10-month war.

Concerns about cease-fire negotiations have soared in the hours after the killing of Hamas' top political leader, Ismail Haniyeh. Hamas has blamed Israel and could pull out of the negotiations. Hamas' top political officials were previously based in Qatar.

Blinken says the U.S. didn't know in advance

SINGAPORE — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken says the United States had not been aware of and had no involvement in the killing of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran. Both Hamas and Iran have blamed it on Israel.

Blinken declined to speculate on the impact Haniyeh's death would have on efforts to secure a cease-fire in Gaza between Israel and Hamas. But he said it made it more important to reach a deal to ease the suffering of civilians, free hostages held by Hamas and prevent the conflict from escalating.

"First, this is something we were not aware of or involved in," Blinken said in an interview with Channel News Asia, according to a transcript provided by the State Department. "I've learned over many years never to speculate on the impact that an event has had on something else. So I can't tell you what this means," Blinken added.

Dismay in Gaza, and rare open support for Hamas in Ramallah

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza — War-weary Palestinians in Gaza are mourning the killing of Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh. Some say it will complicate efforts to reach a cease-fire deal with Israel.

"This man could have signed the prisoner exchange deal with the Israelis," said Saleh al-Shannar, who was displaced from his home in northern Gaza. "Why did they kill him? They killed peace, not Ismail Haniyeh."

Nour Abu Salam, a displaced woman, said the killing shows that Israel doesn't want to end the war and establish peace in the region. "By assassinating Haniyeh, they are destroying everything," she said.

And hundreds of Palestinian demonstrators have marched through Ramallah in the occupied West Bank in protest against the killing. They carried dozens of green Hamas flags and chanted, "The people want al-Qassem Brigade," a reference to the militant group's military wing.

Open support in Ramallah for Hamas is rare. Ramallah is the administrative capital of the West Bank and is governed by the Fatah-dominated Palestinian Authority, long at odds with Hamas over the governance of the two Palestinian territories.

Iran's Supreme Leader Khamenei vows revenge against Israel over killing of Hamas' political chief

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Wednesday vowed revenge on Israel over the killing of Hamas' political chief.

Khamenei said Israel "prepared a harsh punishment for itself" after Ismail Haniyeh was killed in a pre-

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dawn airstrike in the Iranian capital Tehran.

"We consider his revenge as our duty," Khamenei said in a statement on his official website, saying Haniyeh was "a dear guest in our home."

Turkey's Erdogan denounces Haniyeh's killing

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan denounced Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh's killing Wednesday as a "despicable act" aimed at undermining the Palestinian cause and demoralizing and intimidating its people.

In a post on social media platform X, Erdogan said, "Zionist cruelty will never accomplish its objectives."

"Turkey will continue to try all avenues, force all doors and support our Palestinian brothers with all our means and strength," Erdogan said. "We will continue to work for the establishment of a free, sovereign and independent State of Palestine based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital."

Haniyeh was scheduled to deliver a speech in Turkey's parliament in August, said Omer Celik, spokesperson for Erdogan's ruling party.

Lebanon raises death toll from Israeli attack to 4 civilians as workers search for Shukur's body

BEIRUT — Lebanon's Health Ministry said Wednesday that the death toll of an Israeli attack in southern Beirut rose to four civilians, as the United Nations expressed concern of further escalation.

Israel said the attack Tuesday targeted top Hezbollah commander Fuad Shukur, whom they accused of launching a rocket on Majdal Shams in the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights that killed 12 youths.

Hezbollah said that Shukur was in the targeted building during the Israeli strike, but civil defense workers were still searching for him under the rubble. The four killed included two children and two women, and many more were wounded.

The strike hit deep into Lebanon, near the capital, stoking fears of the tense skirmishes turning into an all-out war and sparking regional conflict. Residents in the Beirut southern suburb of Haret Hreik told The Associated Press that they heard two strikes that they suspected was a drone attack.

A delegation of Lebanese government ministers visited the site of the attack. U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric expressed "grave concern" over the strikes in the densely populated neighborhood.

"As we await further clarity on the circumstances, we again urge the parties to exercise maximum restraint and call on all concerned to avoid any further escalation," said Dujarric.

Hezbollah and Israel began exchanging fire along the tense Lebanon-Israel border almost daily since the latest Israel-Hamas war began.

— The item above has been corrected to reflect that the day of the attack was Tuesday, instead of Wednesday.

China says it's concerned that Haniyeh's death could lead to further tensions in the Middle East

BEIJING — China said it condemns the assassination of Haniyeh, and said it was concerned that the leader's death would lead to further tensions in the region.

"We firmly oppose and condemn the act of assassination. We are deeply concerned that this incident may lead to escalation and turbulence in the region," said Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Lin Jian at a daily briefing Wednesday.

"China has always advocated resolving regional disputes through negotiations and dialogues. The Gaza Strip should achieve a comprehensive and permanent cease-fire as soon as possible to avoid further escalation of conflicts and confrontations."

China served as a mediator between Hamas and Fatah and had gathered the two Palestinian factions together in Beijing last Tuesday to sign an agreement to form a government together after the war. Beijing increasingly has influence in the Middle East and is playing an active role in diplomacy in the region.

Iran's president condemns Haniyeh's killing, which took place hours after Pezeshkian was sworn in

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian condemned the killing of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran on Wednesday.

He said in a post on the X platform that his country will defend its territorial integrity and make those responsible regret their actions. He ended the post with a Quran verse, saying "The God is all powerful

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and capable of revenge.”

Hamas has blamed Israel, which has declined to comment.

Haniyeh attended the Pezeshkian’s swearing-in ceremony Tuesday, along with other Hamas officials and officials from Hezbollah and allied groups.

Videos showed that after the ceremony, Pezeshkian hugged Haniyeh and raised his hand while they were laughing.

Regional allies of Hamas issue condolences after Haniyeh’s killing

BEIRUT — Hamas’ regional allies issued condolences and statements of defiance Wednesday in response to the killing of the group’s political leader Ismail Haniyeh in an alleged Israeli strike in Iran.

The Lebanese militant group Hezbollah called Haniyeh a “great and honest leader and dear brother” and extended condolences to his family “who have offered dozens of martyrs from among their men and women on the path to liberating Jerusalem and Palestine.”

Yemen’s Houthi rebels called Haniyeh’s assassination a “major escalation and a greater transgression, and a blatant violation of all international laws, norms and covenants” and said the group is “determined to stand by Hamas and all resistance factions in confronting the American-backed Zionist rampage.”

Palestinian Islamic Jihad, a smaller militant group that has been fighting alongside Hamas in Gaza, said that the “sinful assassination” will “not deter our people from continuing the resistance to put an end to the Zionist criminality that has crossed all limits.”

It remains unclear how Hamas’ allies in the region will respond to the killing, as well as to a separate Israeli strike in Lebanon on Tuesday that appears to have killed a top Hezbollah commander.

Haniyeh’s death won’t stop Hamas, and Israel won’t succeed, spokesperson says

CAIRO — Sami Abu Zuhri, a spokesperson for Hamas, said that the killing of the group’s leader, Ismail Haniyeh, won’t impact the group, saying that Israel won’t achieve its goals including eradicating the Palestinian.

“The occupation will not succeed in achieving its goals,” he told The Associated Press, adding that Hamas emerged stronger after past crises and assassination of its leaders.

He accused Israel of “spreading chaos and evil” in the region. He called for regional governments to speak out against Israel’s acts, and abandon “the state of silence, because more silence means more chaos.”

Palestinian detainees taken by Israeli authorities faced torture and mistreatment, UN report says

GENEVA — The United Nations human rights office issued a report Wednesday saying Palestinian detainees taken by Israeli authorities since the Oct. 7 attacks have faced waterboarding, sleep deprivation, electric shocks and other torture and mistreatment.

The report on detention says Israel’s prison service held more than 9,400 “security detainees” as of the end of June, and some have been held in secret without access to lawyers or respect for their legal rights.

A summary of the report, based on interviews with former detainees and other sources, decries a “staggering” number of detainees and raised concerns about arbitrary detention.

“The testimonies gathered by my office and other entities indicate a range of appalling acts, such as waterboarding and the release of dogs on detainees, amongst other acts, in flagrant violation of international human rights law and international humanitarian law,” said U.N. Human Rights Chief Volker Türk in a statement.

Findings in the report, one of the most extensive of its kind, could be used by International Criminal Court prosecutors who are looking into crimes committed in connection with the Oct. 7 attacks and its aftermath, including Israel’s blistering military campaign that is ongoing in Gaza.

Authors of the report said its content was shared with the Israeli government. The Associated Press has contacted the Israeli diplomatic mission for comment.

‘I don’t think that war is inevitable,’ US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin says

MANILA, Philippines — United States Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said that even with the events of the past 24 hours, Washington hoped that Israel would be able to come to a diplomatic solution and deescalate the situation.

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"I don't think that war is inevitable," he told reporters in Manila, Philippines. "I maintain that. I think there's always room and opportunity for diplomacy, and I'd like to see parties pursue those opportunities."

He added, however, that the United States has for some time been looking at events on Israel's border with Lebanon with "concern."

"Again, we're going to do everything we can to make sure that we keep things from turning into a broader conflict throughout the region."

Asked what the U.S. would do if the conflict did escalate into a wider war, Austin reiterated his comments from the previous day that "if Israel is attacked, we certainly will help defend Israel."

"You saw us do that in April, you can expect to see us do that again," he said. "But we don't want to see any of that happen. We're going to work hard to make sure that ... we're doing things to help take the temperature down and address the issues through diplomatic means."

Hezbollah says it is still searching for the body of commander targeted in Israeli strike

BEIRUT — The Lebanese militant group Hezbollah said Wednesday it was still searching for the body of a top commander targeted in an Israeli strike in Beirut.

The Iran-backed group's first comment after the strike targeting Fouad Shukur came hours after his death Tuesday and followed the overnight strike in Tehran that killed Haniyeh. Hezbollah did not comment about the Hamas leader's death.

Israel claimed late Tuesday that they had killed Shukur, who they said was behind a rocket attack on Majdal Shams in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights that killed 12 youths.

Hezbollah said civil defense workers were still searching for his body and others under the rubble of the building Israel struck.

Like most of Hezbollah's military officials, little is known about Shukur, who was also known as Sayed Mohsen. Washington blames him for planning and staging the truck bombing of a Marine Corps barracks in Beirut that killed 241 American service members in 1983.

The Lebanese Health Ministry said that at least two children and a woman were killed in the attack, while 74 others were wounded.

Palestinians leaders condemn Haniyeh's reported killing as a 'cowardly act'

In the West Bank on Wednesday, the internationally backed Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas condemned Haniyeh's killing, calling it a "cowardly act and dangerous development."

Political factions in the occupied territory called for strikes in protest at the killing.

Senior Palestinian official Hussein al-Sheikh in the West Bank also condemned Haniyeh's assassination as a "cowardly act."

"We strongly denounce and condemn the assassination of the head of the Political Bureau, the national leader, Ismail Haniyeh," the Palestinian Authority's civil affairs chief wrote on X. "We consider it a cowardly act, this pushes us to remain more steadfast in the face of the occupation, and the necessity of achieving the unity of the Palestinian forces and factions."

Hamas senior official Moussa Abu Marzouk, meanwhile, said that Haniyeh's assassination will not go unanswered, Iran's state-run IRNA news agency reported Wednesday. He also called the assassination a cowardly act.

Apparent assassination of Hamas leader comes at a precarious time for Biden

WASHINGTON — The apparent assassination comes at a precarious time, as United States President Joe Biden's administration has tried to push Hamas and Israel to agree to at least a temporary cease-fire and hostage release deal.

CIA Director Bill Burns was in Rome on Sunday to meet with senior officials from Israel, Qatar and Egypt in the latest round of talks. Separately, Brett McGurk, the White House Coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa, is in the region for talks with U.S. partners.

There was no immediate reaction to the reports of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh's assassination from the White House.

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh was assassinated in Tehran, Iran says

TEHRAN, Iran — Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh was assassinated in Tehran, Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard said early Wednesday.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the assassination but suspicion immediately fell on Israel, which has vowed to kill Haniyeh and other leaders of Hamas over the group's Oct. 7 attack on Israel that killed 1,200 people and saw some 250 others taken hostage.

Haniyeh was in Tehran to attend Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian's swearing-in ceremony on Tuesday. Iran gave no details on how Haniyeh was killed, and the Guard said the attack was under investigation.

Haniyeh left the Gaza Strip in 2019 and had lived in exile in Qatar. The top Hamas leader in Gaza is Yahya Sinwar, who masterminded the Oct. 7 attack.

Analysts on Iranian state television immediately began blaming Israel for the attack.

Israel itself did not immediately comment but it often doesn't when it comes to assassinations carried out by their Mossad intelligence agency.

Léon Marchand pulls off one of the most audacious doubles in swimming history at the Paris Olympics

By PAUL NEWBERRY AP National Writer

NANTERRE, France (AP) — Turns out, those comparisons to Michael Phelps weren't farfetched at all when it comes to Léon Marchand.

They certainly weren't a burden for the 22-year-old Frenchman.

Marchand completed one of the most audacious doubles in swimming history Wednesday night, winning the 200-meter butterfly and the 200 breaststroke about two hours apart in front of a home crowd cheering his every stroke.

Two grueling races. Two very different strokes. Two Olympic records. Two gold medals.

Take that, Phelps, who did several doubles of his own while claiming a record eight golds at the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

"I'm a really shy person," Marchand said. "I was kind of the center of attention during those two races. I was trying to get the energy from the whole crowd. They're amazing to me, pushing me in every final."

Thrilling the French fans and claiming the spotlight even on a night when Katie Ledecky romped to another gold medal, Marchand notched his second and third victories at La Defense Arena and stamped himself — with the Olympics not even a week old — as one of the faces of the Games.

After rallying to beat world-record holder and defending Olympic champion Kristóf Milák in the 200 fly with a finishing kick for the ages, Marchand made it look easy in the 200 breast.

He led all the way, touching in 2 minutes, 5.85 seconds as more than 15,000 fans — many of them holding up cardboard cutouts of his smiling face — nearly blew the roof off La Defense Arena.

"Léon! Léon! Léon!" they screamed, a chant that was sure to carry on through the night in Paris.

Marchand gets thing rolling

Trailing most of the way in the 200 fly, Marchand surged past the Hungarian Milák on the final lap to finish with an Olympic record of 1:51.71, touching first by just by four-hundredths of a second.

Marchand's final lap was nearly 0.66 faster than anyone else in the field — and 1.26 clear of Milák.

"I've been watching so many races from him," Marchand said. "I know he has a lot of speed, way more than me, so I was just trying to get as close as possible, and then just push it until the end."

The bronze went to Canada's Ilya Kharun.

Following up his dominating victory in the 400 individual medley on Sunday, Marchand waved one finger and shook his head just a bit, as if he couldn't quite believe what he had done.

Then, he hustled off the deck to another rousing cheer to begin his warm down, though those preparations were interrupted by a mandatory return for the victory ceremony.

After a boisterous rendition of "La Marseillaise," the other two medalists walked slowly around the pool, getting their pictures made.

Not Marchand. He hustled back to the practice pool. There was another race to go.

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Ledecky's record gold

The American star made the most of her guest appearance on The Marchand Show by romping to her seventh individual Olympic gold medal -- she also has a relay gold -- and 12th medal overall with a runaway victory in the 1,500 freestyle.

The 27-year-old Ledecky tied fellow Americans Dara Torres, Natalie Coughlin and Jenny Thompson for the most medals ever by a female swimmer. Ledecky already held the mark for most individual gold medals by a woman coming into these games.

"I try not to think about history very much," Ledecky said. "But I know those names, those people that I'm up there with, they're swimmers that I looked up to when I first started swimming. So it's an honor just to be named among them."

Ledecky led right from the start and steadily pulled away, touching in an Olympic-record 15:30.02 in an event that joined the women's program at the Tokyo Games in 2021.

This was similar to the race three years ago: Ledecky far in front and everyone else racing for a silver. France's Anastasiia Kirpichnikova finished nearly a half lap behind but thrilled the home fans by claiming the second spot on the podium in 15:40.35.

The bronze went to Germany's Isabel Gose at 15:41.16.

After starting the Paris Games with a bronze in the 400 freestyle, this result looked more familiar for Ledecky.

She was clearly thrilled to be on top again, splashing the water and pumping her fist several times walking across the deck — a rare show of emotion for a stoic athlete who performs with machine-like efficiency.

"I know a lot of other people expected it of me," Ledecky said. "That doesn't make it easy. I mean, it's not easy to always follow through and you get the job done."

Marchand returns for more gold

As Ledecky was walking off the deck with her gold medal, it was time for Marchand to go for his second of the night,

No problem. He blew away the field in the 200 breaststroke with an Olympic record of 2:05.85, knocking off another champion from Tokyo.

Australia's Zac Stubblety-Cook settled for the silver this time, nearly a second behind in 2:06.79. Claiming the bronze was Casper Corbeau of the Netherlands.

"The most exciting part of that whole race and watching him soak it all up and have his moment," Stubblety-Cook said. "I think it's awesome. It's great for the sport of swimming and it's great to see the better half of 15,000 people chanting one person's name and watching swimming live."

Marchand climbed out of the pool and stared at the scoreboard. He tussled his mop of curly hair a few times, then threw his arms in the air.

His work was done, at least for a few hours. Next up is the 200 individual medley, which begins with heats Thursday morning.

"I'm so very proud of him," said his coach, American Bob Bowman, who also was Phelps' coach. "That's a tremendous, historic effort."

China's Pan Zhanle sets first swimming world record of Paris Games

Nearly lost in all the hoopla was China's Pan Zhanle setting the first world record of these Games, breaking his own mark in the 100 freestyle.

He won in 46.40, easily knocking off the mark of 46.80 he set in February at the world championships in Doha.

It was an impressive performance given the shallow pool at La Defense Arena, which has been cited as the big reason no world records fell over the first four days of the meet.

Australia's Kyle Chalmers claimed the silver and David Popovici of Romania nabbed the bronze.

Swedish gold for 5-time Olympian Sjöström

Sarah Sjöström made her fifth Olympics a gold-medal celebration with a victory in the 100 freestyle.

Sjöström had pared down her program at the last two world championships, swimming only the 50 free.

She decided to add the 100 at the Paris Games, and boy did that decision pay off.

Her winning time was 52.16, with the U.S. settling for another silver medal -- its eighth of the swimming competition - when Torri Huske finished in 52.29. Siobhan Haughey of Hong Kong took the bronze.

Hezbollah confirms a top commander was killed in Israeli strike in Beirut

By BASSEM MROUE and TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — The Lebanese militant group Hezbollah confirmed Wednesday that Israel killed a top commander after a rare strike in Beirut.

The Iran-backed group said earlier that Fouad Shukur was in the building during the attack on Tuesday, and they were searching for him in the rubble to determine his fate.

Hezbollah's announcement came after an overnight strike in Tehran that killed Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, which Hamas and Iran blamed on Israel.

Israel said late Tuesday that it had killed Shukur, who it said was behind the weekend rocket attack in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights that killed 12 youths. The United States also blames Shukur for staging and planning a bombing of a Marine Corps barrack in Lebanon in 1983 that killed 241 American service members.

The Lebanese Health Ministry said at least five civilians — two children and three women — died in the strike in a busy neighborhood where Hezbollah has political and security operations.

Israel and Hezbollah have exchanged fire since Oct. 8, a day after Hamas attacked southern Israel and sparked the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.

Though Hezbollah issued a rare denial of involvement in the rocket attack Saturday in the town of Majdal Shams, Israel holds the militant group responsible. "Hezbollah crossed a red line," Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant posted on the platform X shortly after Tuesday's strike.

The two sides have exchanged near-daily strikes for the past 10 months against the backdrop of the war in Gaza, but they have previously kept the conflict at a low level that was unlikely to escalate into full-on war.

Lebanon's public health ministry said Tuesday's strike in a southern suburb of Beirut wounded 74 people, some of them seriously. The wounded were taken to nearby hospitals. Bahman Hospital near the site of the blast called for blood donations.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency reported that the strike was carried out with a drone that launched three rockets.

"The Israeli enemy has committed a great stupid act in size, timing and circumstances by targeting an entirely civilian area," Hezbollah official Ali Ammar told Al-Manar TV. "The Israeli enemy will pay a price for this sooner or later."

Lebanese caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati condemned the Israeli attack, saying it hit a few meters from one of the largest hospitals in the capital.

The office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu did not immediately release a statement, but minutes after the strike sent a photo of the prime minister with his national security adviser and other officials.

The airstrike on Beirut's southern suburb of Haret Hreik — a crowded urban neighborhood where Hezbollah has political and security operations but which is also full of small shops and apartment buildings — damaged several buildings.

The strike hit an apartment building near to a hospital, collapsing half of the targeted building and severely damaging one next to it. The hospital sustained minor damages, while the surrounding streets were littered with debris and broken glass.

Paramedics could be seen carrying several wounded people out of the damaged buildings.

A resident of the suburb whose home is about 200 meters (yards) away said that dust from the explosion "covered everything," and that the glass in his son's apartment was broken.

"Then people went down on the streets," he said. "Everyone has family. They went to check on them."

It was a lot of destruction.” He spoke on condition of anonymity out of concern about his security at a tense moment.

Talal Hatoum, a local official with the Shiite Amal Movement, Hezbollah’s key political ally in Lebanon, said Tuesday’s attack marked a shift in the rules of engagement in the conflict because it caused a significant number of civilian casualties.

The last time Israel targeted Beirut was in January, when an airstrike killed a top Hamas official, Saleh Arouri. That strike was the first time Israel had hit Beirut since the 34-day war between Israel and Hezbollah in the summer of 2006.

Israel had been expected to retaliate for the strike in Majdal Shams, but diplomats had said in recent days that they expected the response to stay within the boundaries of the ongoing low-level conflict between Hezbollah and Israel without provoking all-out war.

Many of them had not expected that Israel would hit Beirut, which might elicit a strike by Hezbollah on a major population center in Israel.

Hong Kong young people struggle to rebuild their lives after being jailed under Beijing’s crackdown

By KANIS LEUNG Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — After spending five months in jail for publishing seditious Instagram posts, Joker Chan returned to a harsh reality.

Chan, 30, was sentenced in 2022 for posts containing slogans like “Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times,” which were popularly chanted during massive anti-government protests in the city in 2019. Authorities said such slogans could imply separating Hong Kong from China — a red line for Beijing.

Upon his release, Chan’s criminal record barred him from returning to the hotel industry, where he previously worked as a chef. Tattoos on his arms, legs and the sides of his neck — some related to the protests — made his job search more difficult. Now, he works as a part-time waiter, earning about half of what he used to make.

Some of his friends severed ties with him, fearing their association might lead to police investigations. His family also expressed disappointment in him, and when he went out with other former protesters they asked him whether he planned to stir trouble.

“I felt helpless. I can’t understand this,” he said, wearing a black t-shirt that read “I am Hongkonger” and with a tattoo of his inmate number on his arm.

Five years after the protests erupted, the lives of some young people who were jailed or arrested during Beijing’s political crackdown on the city’s pro-democracy movement remain in limbo. Unlike famed activists, these former protesters usually receive little attention from most of the city, even though their activism for the same democratic goals has exacted a similarly heavy toll.

Since the protests broke out five years ago, more than 10,200 people have been arrested in connection with the often-violent social unrest sparked by a now-withdrawn extradition bill, which would have allowed suspects in Hong Kong to be sent to mainland China. According to police, about one-fifth of them have faced or were facing “legal consequences” as of the end of May.

The government crackdown expanded after Beijing imposed a national security law in 2020 and the enactment of similar, home-grown legislation in March. About 300 others were arrested under the two security laws and other offenses linked to endangering national security as of June, with half of them already convicted by courts, the city’s security bureau said.

Chan fought for a more democratic Hong Kong, a goal that many in the city have yearned for since the former British colony returned to China in 1997. Reflecting on his actions, Chan said he would have been more cautious if he could go back in time, but he doesn’t regret what he did.

“Regret can lead you to overturn what you originally firmly stood for,” he said.

Chan was an exception in agreeing for his full name to be published in this article. Two other interviewees The Associated Press spoke with asked to be identified only by partial names over fears of government

retribution.

Another former inmate, also surnamed Chan, said he panicked every time he saw police on the streets after he finished serving his sentence in 2022, worrying he would be arrested again. Chan, who is in his 20s, refused to provide more details about his prosecution since he feared being identified by authorities.

Before he landed his current job in the creative industry, he sent applications to about 40 companies seeking employment, with only a handful offering him an interview. He said one interviewer was concerned that convicted people like him could affect their corporate image.

Even when he secured a position at another firm, he said he was treated unfairly by former pro-China colleagues. He said they also did not allow him to work on certain projects.

"Some (who were jailed) for political cases like me, when released, are treated as pariahs in society in a hidden manner," he said.

Others who did not go to jail have also lived in fear for years. Nick, a former protester who was arrested in 2019, said he didn't know for years whether he would be charged until police this year confirmed they had dropped his case.

Brandon Yau, secretary of the prisoners' support group Waiting Bird, said while some former inmates could return to the industries they previously worked in, many teachers, medical professionals and social workers — whose positions are linked to a license or public sector organizations — face greater challenges in returning to their old sectors.

Convicted students who were formerly jailed are concerned about whether schools will accept them. Some institutions have been unsupportive of their students after they were arrested, Yau said.

According to his group, many of the hundreds of convicts they supported are expected to be released in the next two years. Yau said the city should plan for ways to accommodate them.

Official data show hundreds of people were sent to correctional services facilities each year over offenses linked to the protests or for allegedly endangering national security between 2020 and 2023. By the end of 2023, about 780 people were in custody for such offenses, up nearly 50% from a year earlier.

Hong Kong's security minister Chris Tang previously said many young people who were jailed over civil disturbances were influenced or incited by others and went astray. He said local society won't give up on them as long as they "genuinely" want to turn over a new leaf.

But critics say Tang's remarks overlook the deeper grievances and aspirations that drove young people to protest five years ago.

Paul Yip, a professor at The University of Hong Kong's department of social work and social administration, said local employers were becoming more accepting of these young people, possibly after seeing former inmates perform well in their jobs.

Yip, also the director of a suicide prevention research center, said the young people he hired were enthusiastic about their future and usually had a strong sense of responsibility.

He said it is important to help such people get back on track.

"We say young people are our future. They are the young people. If you don't give them a future, then how will we have a future?" he said.

Donald Trump falsely suggests Kamala Harris misled voters about her race

By MATT BROWN and MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Donald Trump falsely suggested Kamala Harris had misled voters about her race as the former president appeared Wednesday before the National Association of Black Journalists in Chicago in an interview that quickly turned hostile.

The Republican former president wrongly claimed that Harris, the first Black woman and Asian American to serve as vice president, had in the past only promoted her Indian heritage.

"I didn't know she was Black until a number of years ago when she happened to turn Black and now she wants to be known as Black. So, I don't know, is she Indian or is she Black?" Trump said while addressing

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the group's annual convention.

Harris is the daughter of a Jamaican father and an Indian mother, both immigrants to the U.S. As an undergraduate, Harris attended Howard University, one of the nation's most prominent historically Black colleges and universities, where she also pledged the historically Black sorority Alpha Kappa Alpha. As a U.S. senator, Harris was a member of the Congressional Black Caucus, supporting legislation to strengthen voting rights and to reform policing.

Trump has leveled a wide range of criticism at Harris since she replaced President Joe Biden atop the likely Democratic ticket last week. Throughout his political career, the former president has repeatedly questioned the backgrounds of opponents who are racial minorities.

Michael Tyler, the communications director for Harris' campaign, said in a statement that "the hostility Donald Trump showed on stage today is the same hostility he has shown throughout his life, throughout his term in office, and throughout his campaign for president as he seeks to regain power."

"Trump lobbed personal attacks and insults at Black journalists the same way he did throughout his presidency — while he failed Black families and left the entire country digging out of the ditch he left us in," Tyler said. "Donald Trump has already proven he cannot unite America, so he attempts to divide us."

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre was asked during her briefing with reporters on Wednesday about Trump's remarks and responded with disbelief, initially murmuring, "Wow."

Jean-Pierre, who is Black, called what Trump said "repulsive" and said, "It's insulting and no one has any right to tell someone who they are, how they identify."

Trump has repeatedly attacked his opponents and critics on the basis of race. He rose to prominence in Republican politics by propagating false theories that President Barack Obama, the nation's first Black president, was not born in the United States. "Birtherism," as it became known, was just the start of Trump's history of questioning the credentials and qualifications of Black politicians.

He has denied allegations of racism. And after Biden picked Harris as his running mate four years ago, a Trump campaign spokesperson then pointed to a previous Trump political donation to Harris as proof that he wasn't racist.

"The president, as a private businessman, donated to candidates across all aisles," the spokesperson, Katrina Pierson, told reporters. "And I'll note that Kamala Harris is a Black woman and he donated to her campaign, so I hope we can squash this racism argument now," Pierson said.

During this year's Republican primary, he once referred to former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley, the daughter of Indian immigrants, as "Nimbra."

Later Wednesday, Trump did not repeat his criticism of Harris' race at a campaign rally in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, although he called her "phony" and said she has been trying to change her image. He also repeatedly mispronounced her first name.

"If she becomes your president, our country is finished," Trump charged.

Before he took the stage, Trump's team displayed what appeared to be years-old news headlines describing Harris as the "first Indian-American senator" on the big screen in the arena.

Trump's appearance Wednesday at the annual gathering of Black journalists immediately became heated, with the former president sparring with interviewer Rachel Scott of ABC News and accusing her of giving him a "very rude introduction" with a tough first question about his past criticism of Black people and Black journalists, his attack on Black prosecutors who have pursued cases against him and the dinner he had at his Florida club with a white supremacist.

"I think it's disgraceful," Trump said. "I came here in good spirit. I love the Black population of this country. I've done so much for the Black population of this country."

Trump continued his attacks on Scott's network, ABC News, which he has been arguing should not host the next presidential debate, despite his earlier agreement with the Biden campaign. He also several times described her tone and questions as "nasty," a word he used in the past when describing women, including Hillary Clinton and Meghan the Duchess of Sussex.

The Republican also repeated his false claim that immigrants in the country illegally are "taking Black jobs." When pushed by Scott on what constituted a "Black job," Trump responded by saying "a Black job

is anybody that has a job," drawing groans from the room.

At one point, he said, "I have been the best president for the Black population since Abraham Lincoln."

The audience responded with a mix of boos and some applause.

Scott asked Trump about his pledge to pardon people convicted for their roles in the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the U.S. Capitol and specifically whether he would pardon those who assaulted police officers.

Trump said, "Oh, absolutely I would," and said, "If they're innocent, I would pardon them."

Scott pointed out they have been convicted and therefore are not innocent.

"Well, they were convicted by a very, very tough system," he said.

At one point, when he was defending his supporters who entered the Capitol on Jan. 6, he said, "Nothing is perfect in life."

He compared the 2021 insurrection to the protests in Minneapolis and other cities in 2020 following the death of George Floyd by Minneapolis police and to more recent protests at the Capitol last week by demonstrators opposed to the war in Gaza. Trump falsely claimed that no one was arrested in those other demonstrations and that only his supporters were targeted.

As Trump made the comparison, a man in the back of the room shouted out, "Sir, have you no shame?"

The former president's invitation to address the organization sparked an intense internal debate among NABJ that spilled online. Organizations for journalists of color typically invite presidential candidates to speak at their summer gatherings in election years.

As he campaigns for the White House a third time, Trump has sought to appear outside his traditional strongholds of support and his campaign has touted his efforts to try to win over Black Americans, who have been Democrats' most committed voting bloc.

His campaign has emphasized his messages on the economy and immigration as part of his appeal, but some of his outreach has played on racial stereotypes, including the suggestion that African Americans would empathize with the criminal charges he has faced and his promotion of branded sneakers.

Trump and NABJ also have a tense history over his treatment of Black women journalists. In 2018, NABJ condemned Trump for repeatedly using words such as "stupid," "loser" and "nasty" to describe Black women journalists.

The vice president is not scheduled to appear at the convention, but NABJ said in a statement posted on X that it was in conversation with her campaign to have her appear either virtually or in person for a conversation in September.

Harris addressed Trump's comments briefly Wednesday night while speaking at a gathering of Sigma Gamma Rho, a historically Black sorority, in Houston.

"It was the same old show," she said. "The divisiveness and the disrespect."

Harris added: "And let me just say, the American people deserve better."

Hamas' top political leader is killed in Iran in strike that risks triggering all-out regional war

By ABBY SEWELL Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Hamas' top political leader was killed Wednesday by a predawn airstrike in the Iranian capital, Iran and the militant group said, blaming Israel for a shock assassination that risked escalating into an all-out regional war. Iran's supreme leader vowed revenge against Israel.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel "will exact a very heavy price from any aggression against us on any front" but did not mention the killing. "There are challenging days ahead," he added.

Israel had pledged to kill Ismail Haniyeh and other Hamas leaders over the group's Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel that sparked the war in Gaza. The strike came just after Haniyeh had attended the inauguration of Iran's new president in Tehran — and hours after Israel targeted a top commander in Iran's ally Hezbollah in the Lebanese capital, Beirut.

The assassination was potentially explosive amid the region's volatile, intertwined conflicts because of

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its target, its timing and the decision to carry it out in Tehran. Most dangerous was the potential to push Iran and Israel into direct confrontation if Iran retaliates. The U.S. and other nations scrambled to prevent a wider, deadlier conflict.

In a statement on his official website, Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said revenge was "our duty" and that Israel had "prepared a harsh punishment for itself" by killing "a dear guest in our home."

Bitter regional rivals, Israel and Iran risked plunging into war earlier this year when Israel hit Iran's embassy in Damascus in April. Iran retaliated, and Israel countered in an unprecedented exchange of strikes on each other's soil, but international efforts succeeded in containing that cycle before it spun out of control.

Haniyeh's killing also could prompt Hamas to pull out of negotiations for a cease-fire and hostage release deal in the 10-month-old war in Gaza, which U.S. mediators had said were making progress.

And it could inflame already rising tensions between Israel and Hezbollah, which international diplomats were trying to contain after a weekend rocket attack that killed 12 young people in the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights.

Israel carried out a rare strike Tuesday evening in the Lebanese capital that it said killed a top Hezbollah commander allegedly behind the rocket strike. Hezbollah, which denied any role in the Golan strike, confirmed the death of Fouad Shukur on Wednesday, saying he was in the building that was hit. The strike also killed three women and two children, according to the Lebanese Health Ministry.

White House national security spokesman John Kirby said there was "no sign that an escalation is imminent" in the Middle East and that a cease-fire agreement for Gaza was still possible. He also said the U.S. could not independently confirm reports of what occurred in Tehran. A key question is whether Israel told the U.S., its top ally, ahead of time.

Asked about Haniyeh's killing, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said, "This is something we were not aware of or involved in." Speaking to Channel News Asia, Blinken said he would not speculate about the impact on cease-fire efforts.

The U.N. Security Council held an emergency meeting Wednesday to discuss the strikes with Iran and Israel each pressing the council to condemn the other. But the U.N.'s most powerful body issued no collective message after the meeting. The council's 15 members variously warned that the Middle East was at a precarious point, worried about potential escalation, called for restraint and diplomacy, and pointed fingers along longstanding fault lines.

Khalil al-Hayya, a powerful figure within Hamas who was close to Haniyeh, told journalists in Iran that whoever replaces Haniyeh will "follow the same vision" regarding negotiations to end the war — and continue in the same policy of resistance against Israel.

Hamas' main consultative body was expected to meet soon, likely after Haniyeh's funeral Friday in Qatar, to name a successor. A Hamas statement said a funeral service will be held in Tehran on Thursday, with Muslim funeral prayers on Friday in Doha followed by his burial in Lusail, Qatar's second largest city.

U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said he still had hopes for a diplomatic solution on the Israeli-Lebanon border. "I don't think that war is inevitable," he said. "I think there's always room and opportunity for diplomacy, and I'd like to see parties pursue those opportunities."

But international diplomats trying to defuse tensions were alarmed. One Western diplomat, whose country has worked to prevent an Israeli-Hezbollah escalation, said the strikes in Beirut and Tehran have "almost killed" hopes for a Gaza cease-fire and could push the Middle East into a "devastating regional war." The diplomat spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive situation.

Israel often refrains from commenting on assassinations carried out by its Mossad intelligence agency or strikes on other countries.

In a statement by his office, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said Israel doesn't want war after its strike on the Hezbollah commander in Beirut, "but we are preparing for all possibilities." He did not mention the Haniyeh killing, and a U.S.-provided summary of his call with Austin did not mention it.

The killing of Haniyeh abroad comes as Israel has not had a clear success in killing Hamas' top leadership in Gaza, who are believed to be primarily responsible for planning the Oct. 7 attack.

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Haniyeh left the Gaza Strip in 2019 and had lived in exile in Qatar. Israel has targeted Hamas figures in Lebanon and Syria during the war, but going after Haniyeh in Iran was vastly more sensitive. Israel has operated there in the past: It is suspected of running a yearslong assassination campaign against Iranian nuclear scientists. In 2020, a top Iranian military nuclear scientist, Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, was killed by a remote-controlled machine gun while traveling in a car outside Tehran.

During Haniyeh's last hours in Iran, a close ally of Hamas, he was smiling and clapping at the inauguration ceremony of the new President Masoud Pezeshkian. Associated Press photos showed him seated alongside leaders from the Palestinian Islamic Jihad militant group and Hezbollah, and Iranian media showed him and Pezeshkian hugging. Haniyeh had met earlier with Khamenei.

Hours later, the strike hit a residence Haniyeh uses in Tehran, killing him, Hamas said. One of his bodyguards was killed, Iranian officials said. Hamas official al-Hayya later said on Iranian state television that Haniyeh was killed by a missile.

Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guard warned Israel will face a "harsh and painful response" from Iran and its allies around the region. An influential Iranian parliamentary committee on national security and foreign policy was to hold an emergency meeting on the strike later Wednesday.

Hamas' military wing said in a statement that Haniyeh's assassination "takes the battle to new dimensions and will have major repercussions on the entire region."

Netanyahu has said Israel will continue its devastating campaign in Gaza until Hamas is eliminated. On Wednesday, he asserted that "everything" Israel has achieved in recent months was because it resisted pressure at home and abroad to end the war.

Israel's bombardment and offensives in Gaza have killed more than 39,300 Palestinians and wounded more than 90,900, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, whose count does not differentiate between civilians and combatants.

After months of pounding, Hamas has shown its fighters can still operate in Gaza and fire volleys of rockets into Israel. But it is unclear if it has the capacity to step up attacks in retaliation over Haniyeh's killing.

Besides a direct retaliation on Israel, Iran could work to increase attacks through its allies, a coalition of Iranian-backed groups known as the "Axis of Resistance," including Hezbollah, Hamas, mainly Shiite militias in Iraq and Syria and the Houthi rebels who control much of Yemen.

As a show of support for Hamas, Hezbollah has been exchanging fire almost daily with Israel across the Israeli-Lebanese border in a simmering but deadly conflict that has repeatedly threatened to escalate into all-out war.

Harris calls Trump's false claims about race 'the same old show' of divisiveness and disrespect

By CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris said Wednesday that former President Donald Trump's false assertions about her race were the "same old show" as she emphasized the need for Black women to organize for his defeat this November.

Addressing the Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Inc. — one of "Divine Nine" historically Black fraternities and sororities — in Houston, Harris told the crowd, "When I look out at everyone here, I see family."

She drew knowing chuckles from the audience as she mentioned Trump's comments earlier in the day at the annual meeting of the National Association of Black Journalists. Trump said Harris, the first Black woman and Asian American to serve as vice president, had in the past promoted only her Indian heritage.

"I didn't know she was Black until a number of years ago when she happened to turn Black and now she wants to be known as Black. So, I don't know, is she Indian or is she Black?" Trump said while addressing the NABJ in Chicago.

Harris responded briefly during her address to the sorority, saying Trump's display was "the same old show: the divisiveness and the disrespect."

She added: "And let me just say, the American people deserve better. The American people deserve

better.”

“Our differences do not divide us, they are an essential source of our strength,” Harris said.

Referencing the combative tone of Trump’s interview at the NABJ convention, she said, “The American people deserve a leader who tells the truth, a leader who does not respond with hostility and anger when confronted with the facts.”

Harris is the daughter of a Jamaican father and an Indian mother, both immigrants to the U.S. As an undergraduate, Harris attended Howard University, one of the nation’s most prominent historically Black colleges and universities, where she also pledged the historically Black sorority Alpha Kappa Alpha. As a U.S. senator, Harris was a member of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Speaking to Sigma Gamma Rho members, Harris said, “Our nation is counting on you” to register people to vote and ensure they go to the polls. “When we organize, mountains move,” she said.

Black Greek life is often seen as a lifelong involvement, leading many members to return to regular gatherings — or “boulés” in the organizations’ phrasing — that gather tens of thousands of members each. Harris has attended three such events in the last month, including the boulé for her own sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha.

The Divine Nine organizations, which are officially apolitical, emphasize public service as a mission and have deep networks in politics, business and media.

June Penny, 66, of Georgia, an attendee at Harris’ speech in Houston, said Trump’s comments about Harris’ race reminded her of how he tried to discredit then-President Barack Obama.

“I’m not surprised he would try to find something like that,” Penny said.

She said Trump’s views don’t reflect the reality of race in the country, noting, “I have biracial grandchildren” -- her son-in-law is white -- “and the world views them as black.”

More than 30 members of Congress are affiliated with a Black Greek letter organization. Close advisers to President Joe Biden, including Stephen Benjamin, Cedric Richmond and Keisha Lance Bottoms, are members of Divine Nine organizations. Harris has welcomed such connections to staff her operation and build her own network in Washington.

Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, accused as the main plotter of 9/11 attacks, agrees to plead guilty

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER, LARRY NEUMEISTER and MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, accused as the mastermind of al-Qaida’s Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States, has agreed to plead guilty, the Defense Department said Wednesday. The development points to a long-delayed resolution in an attack that killed thousands and altered the course of the United States and much of the Middle East.

Mohammed and two accomplices, Walid bin Attash and Mustafa al-Hawsawi, are expected to enter the pleas at the military commission at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, as soon as next week.

Defense lawyers have requested the men receive life sentences in exchange for the guilty pleas, according to letters from the federal government received by relatives of some of the nearly 3,000 people killed outright on the morning of Sept. 11.

Terry Strada, the head of one group of families of the nearly 3,000 direct victims of the 9/11 attacks, invoked the many relatives who have died while awaiting justice for the killings when she heard news of the plea agreement.

“They were cowards when they planned the attack,” she said of the defendants. “And they’re cowards today.”

Pentagon officials declined to immediately release the full terms of the plea bargains.

The U.S. agreement with the men comes more than 16 years after their prosecution began for al-Qaida’s attack. It comes more than 20 years after militants commandeered four commercial airliners to use as fuel-filled missiles, flying three of them into the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon.

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Al-Qaida hijackers headed the fourth plane to Washington. But crew members and passengers tried to storm the cockpit, and the plane crashed into a Pennsylvania field.

The attack triggered what President George W. Bush's administration called its war on terror, prompting the U.S. military invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and years of U.S. operations against armed extremist groups elsewhere in the Middle East.

The attack and U.S. retaliation brought the overthrow of two governments outright, devastated communities and countries caught in the battle, and played a role in inspiring the 2011 Arab Spring popular uprisings against authoritarian Middle East governments.

At home, the attacks inspired a sharply more militaristic and nationalist turn to American society and culture.

U.S. authorities point to Mohammed as the source of the idea to use planes as weapons. He allegedly received approval from al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden to craft what became the 9/11 hijackings and killings. U.S. forces killed bin Laden in 2011.

Authorities captured Mohammed in 2003. Mohammed was subjected to waterboarding 183 times while in CIA custody before coming to Guantanamo, along with other torture and coercive questioning.

The use of torture has proven one of the most formidable obstacles in U.S. efforts to try the men in the military commission at Guantanamo, owing to the inadmissibility of evidence linked to abuse. Torture has accounted for much of the delay of the proceedings, along with the courtroom's location a plane ride away from the United States.

Daphne Eviatar, a director at the Amnesty International USA rights group, said Wednesday she welcomed news of some accountability in the attacks.

She urged the Biden administration to close the Guantanamo Bay detention center, which holds people taken into custody in the so-called war on terror. Many have since been cleared, but are awaiting approval to leave for other countries.

Additionally, Eviatar said, "the Biden administration must also take all necessary measures to ensure that a program of state-sanctioned enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment will never be perpetrated by the United States again."

Strada, national chairperson of a group of families of victims called 9/11 Families United, had been at Manhattan federal court for a hearing on one of many civil lawsuits when she heard news of the plea agreement.

Strada said many families have just wanted to see the men admit guilt.

"For me personally, I wanted to see a trial," she said. "And they just took away the justice I was expecting, a trial and the punishment."

Michael Burke, one of the family members receiving the government notice of the plea bargain, condemned the long wait for justice, and the outcome.

"It took months or a year at the Nuremberg trials," said Burke, whose fire captain brother Billy died in the collapse of the World Trade Center's North Tower. "To me, it always been disgraceful that these guys, 23 years later, have not been convicted and punished for their attacks, or the crime. I never understood how it took so long."

"I think people would be shocked if you could go back in time and tell the people who just watched the towers go down, 'Oh, hey, in 23 years, these guys who are responsible for this crime we just witnessed are going to be getting plea deals so they can avoid death and serve life in prison,'" he said.

Burke's brother, New York City fire captain Billy Burke, ordered his men out but remained on the 27th floor of the North Tower with two men who'd stayed behind: a quadriplegic who, because the elevators had gone out, was essentially stuck there in his wheelchair and that man's friend.

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A complete list of Paris Olympics medal winners

PARIS (AP) — The 2024 Olympics are underway. The United States led the medal standings after the fourth day of competition with host France second, but more winners will join the list every day from July 27-Aug. 11. See which countries lead the medal count and the highlights in today's schedule. Below is a list of all the medal winners, day by day.

Wednesday, July 31

GYMNASTICS

MEN'S ALL AROUND

Gold: Shinnosuke Oka, Japan

Silver: Zhang Boheng, China

Bronze: Xiao Ruoteng, China

CANOE

WOMEN'S SINGLE

Gold: Jessica Fox, Australia

Silver: Elena Lilik, Germany

Bronze: Evy Leibfarth, United States.

CYCLING

BMX FREESTYLE

WOMEN'S PARK

Gold: Deng Yawen, China

Silver: Perris Benegas, United States

Bronze: Natalya Diehm, Australia

MEN'S PARK

Gold: Jose Torres Gil, Argentina

Silver: Kieran Darren David Reilly, Britain

Bronze: Anthony Jean Jean, France

DIVING

SYNCHRONIZED 10-METER PLATFORM

WOMEN

Gold: Chen Yuxi and Quan Hongchan, China

Silver: Jo Jin Mi and Kim Mi Rae, North Korea

Bronze: Andrea Spendolini Sirieix and Lois Toulson,

Britain

FENCING

MEN'S SABRE TEAM

Gold: South Korea

Silver: Hungary

Bronze: France

JUDO

WOMEN'S 70KG

Gold: Barbara Matic, Croatia

Silver: Miriam Butkerei, Germany

Bronze: Michaela Polleres, Austria, and Gabriella

Willems, Belgium

MEN'S 90KG Gold: Lasha Bekauri, Georgia

Silver: Sanshiro Murao, Japan

Bronze: Maxime-Gael Ngayap Hambou, France, and Theodoros Tselidis, Greece

ROWING

MEN'S QUADRUPLE SCULLS

Gold: Netherlands (Lennart van Lierop, Finn Florijn, Tone Wieten, Koen Metsemakers)

Silver: Italy (Luca Chiumento, Luca Rambaldi, Andrea Panizza, Giacomo Gentili)

Bronze: Poland (Dominik Czaja, Mateusz Biskup, Miroslaw Zietarski, Fabian Baranski)

WOMEN'S QUADRUPLE SCULLS

Gold: Britain (Lauren Henry, Hannah Scott, Lola Anderson, Georgina Brayshaw)

Silver: Netherlands (Laila Youssifou, Bente Paulis, Roos de Jong, Tessa Dullemans)

Bronze: Germany (Maren Voelz, Tabea Schendekuhl, Leonie Menzel, Pia Greiten)

SWIMMING

WOMEN'S 100M FREESTYLE

Gold: Sarah Sjoestroem, Sweden

Silver: Torri Huske, United States

Bronze: Siobhan Haughey, Hong Kong

WOMEN'S 1,500M FREESTYLE

Gold: Katie Ledecky, United States

Silver: Anastasiia Kirpichnikova, France

Bronze: Isabel Gose, Germany

MEN'S 100M FREESTYLE

Gold: Pan Zhanle, China

Silver: Kyle Chalmers, Australia

Bronze: David Popovici, Romania

MEN'S 200M BREASTSTROKE

Gold: Leon Marchand, France

Silver: Zac Stubblety-Cook, Australia

Bronze: Caspar Corbeau, Netherlands

MEN'S 200M BUTTERFLY

Gold: Leon Marchand, France

Silver: Kristof Milak, Hungary

Bronze: Ilya Kharun, Canada

SHOOTING

WOMEN'S TRAP

Gold: Adriana Ruano, Guatemala

Silver: Silvana Maria Stanco, Italy

Bronze: Penny Smith, Australia

TRIATHLON

WOMEN

Gold: Cassandre Beaugrand, France

Silver: Julie Derron, Switzerland

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Bronze: Beth Potter, Britain
MEN
Gold: Alex Yee, Britain
Silver: Hayden Wilde, New Zealand
Bronze: Leo Bergere, France
Tuesday, July 30
FENCING
WOMEN'S EPEE TEAM
Gold: Italy
Silver: France
Bronze: Poland
GYMNASTICS
WOMEN'S TEAM
Gold: United States
Silver: Italy
Bronze: Brazil
JUDO
WOMEN'S 63KG
Gold: Andreja Leški, Slovenia
Silver: Prisca Awiti Alcaraz, Mexico
Bronze: Clarisse Agbegnenou, France and Laura
Fazliu, Kosovo
MEN'S 81KG
Gold: Takanori Nagase, Japan
Silver: Tato Grigalashvili, Georgia
Bronze: Lee Joon-hwan, South Korea and Somon
Makhmadbekov, Tajikistan
RUGBY SEVENS
WOMEN'S
Gold: New Zealand
Silver: Canada
Bronze: United States
SHOOTING
MIXED TEAM 10M AIR PISTOL
Gold: Zorana Arunovic and Damir Mikec, Serbia
Silver: Sevval Ilayda Tarhan and Yusef Dikec,
Turkey
Bronze: Manu Bhaker and Sarabjot Singh, India
MEN'S TRAP
Gold: Nathan Hales, Britain
Silver: Qi Ying, China
Bronze: Jean Pierre Brol, Guatemala
SWIMMING
WOMEN'S 100M BACKSTROKE
Gold: Kaylee McKeown, Australia
Silver: Regan Smith, United States
Bronze: Katharine Berkoff, United States
MEN'S 800M FREESTYLE
Gold: Daniel Wiffen, Ireland
Silver: Bobby Finke, United States
Bronze: Gregorio Paltrinieri, Italy
MEN'S 4x200M FREESTYLE RELAY
Gold: Britain
Silver: United States
Bronze: Australia
TABLE TENNIS
MIXED DOUBLES
Gold: Wang Chuqin and Sun Yingsha, China
Silver: Ri Jong-sik and Kim Kum-yong, North Korea
Bronze: Lim Jong-hoon and Shin Yu-bin, South
Korea
Monday, July 29
ARCHERY
MEN'S TEAM
Gold: South Korea
Silver: France
Bronze: Turkey
ARTISTIC GYMNASTICS
MEN'S TEAM
Gold: Japan
Silver: China
Bronze: United States
CANOE SLALOM
MEN'S CANOE SINGLE
Gold: Nicolas Gestin, France
Silver: Adam Burgess, Britain
Bronze: Matej Benus, Slovakia
CYCLING MOUNTAIN BIKE
MEN'S CROSS-COUNTRY
Gold: Tom Pidcock, Britain
Silver: Victor Koretzky, France
Bronze: Alan Hatherly, South Africa
DIVING
MEN'S SYNCHRONIZED 10M PLATFORM
Gold: Lian Junjie and Yang Hao, China
Silver: Tom Daley and Noah Williams, Britain
Bronze: Rylan Wiens and Nathan Zsombor-Murray,
Canada
EQUESTRIAN
EVENTING TEAM
Gold: Britain
Silver: France
Bronze: Japan
FENCING
WOMEN'S SABER INDIVIDUAL
Gold: Manon Apithy-Brunet, France
Silver: Sara Balzer, France
Bronze: Olga Kharlan, Ukraine
MEN'S FOIL INDIVIDUAL

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Gold: Cheung Ka Long, Hong Kong
Silver: Filippo Macchi, Italy
Bronze: Nick Itkin, United States
JUDO
WOMEN'S 57KG
Gold: Christa Deguchi, Canada
Silver: Mimi Huh, South Korea
Bronze: Sarah Leonie Cysique, France and Haruka Funakubo, Japan
MEN'S 73KG
Gold: Hidayat Heydarov, Azerbaijan
Silver: Joan-Benjamin Gaba, France
Bronze: Soichi Hashimoto, Japan and Adil Osmanov, Moldova
SHOOTING
WOMEN'S 10M AIR RIFLE
Gold: Ban Hyo-jin, South Korea
Silver: Huang Yuting, China
Bronze: Audrey Gogniat, Switzerland
MEN'S 10M AIR RIFLE
Gold: Sheng Lihao, China
Silver: Victor Lindgren, Sweden
Bronze: Miran Maricic, Croatia
SKATEBOARDING
Gold: Yuto Horigome, Japan
Silver: Jagger Eaton, United States
Bronze: Nyjah Huston, United States
SWIMMING
WOMEN'S 100M BREASTSTROKE
Gold: Tatjana Smith, South Africa
Silver: Tang Qianting, China
Bronze: Mona McSharry, Ireland
WOMEN'S 200M FREESTYLE
Gold: Mollie O'Callaghan, Australia
Silver: Ariarne Titmus, Australia
Bronze: Siobhan Bernadette Haughey, Hong Kong
WOMEN'S 400M INDIVIDUAL MEDLEY
Gold: Summer McIntosh, Canada
Silver: Katie Grimes, United States
Bronze: Emma Weyant, United States
MEN'S 100M BACKSTROKE
Gold: Thomas Ceccon, Italy
Silver: Xu Jiayu, China
Bronze: Ryan Murphy, United States
MEN'S 200M FREESTYLE
Gold: David Popovici, Romania
Silver: Matthew Richards, Britain
Bronze: Luke Hobson, United States
Sunday, July 28
ARCHERY
WOMEN'S TEAM
Gold: South Korea
Silver: China
Bronze: Mexico
CANOE SLALOM
WOMEN'S KAYAK SINGLE
Gold: Jessica Fox, Australia
Silver: Klaudia Zwolinska, Poland
Bronze: Kimberley Woods, Britain
CYCLING MOUNTAIN BIKE
WOMEN'S CROSS-COUNTRY
Gold: Pauline Ferrand-Prevot, France
Silver: Haley Batten, United States
Bronze: Jenny Rissveds, Sweden
FENCING
WOMEN'S FOIL INDIVIDUAL
Gold: Lee Kiefer, United States
Silver: Lauren Scruggs, United States
Bronze: Eleanor Harvey, Canada
JUDO
WOMEN'S 52KG
Gold: Diyora Keldiyorova, Uzbekistan
Silver: Distria Krasniqi, Kosovo
Bronze: Larissa Pimenta, Brazil and Amandine Buchard, France
MEN'S 66KG
Gold: Hifumi Abe, Japan
Silver: Willian Lima, Brazil
Bronze: Gusman Kyrgyzbayev, Kazakhstan and Denis Vieru, Moldova
SHOOTING
MEN'S 10M AIR PISTOL
Gold: Xie Yu, China
Silver: Federico Nilo Maldini, Italy
Bronze: Paolo Monna, Italy
SWIMMING
MEN'S 400M INDIVIDUAL MEDLEY
Gold: Léon Marchand, France
Silver: Tomoyuki Matsushita, Japan
Bronze: Carson Foster, United States
WOMEN'S 100M BUTTERFLY
Gold: Torri Huske, United States
Silver: Gretchen Walsh, United States
Bronze: Zhang Yufei, China
SHOOTING
WOMEN'S 10M AIR PISTOL
Gold: Oh Ye-jin, South Korea
Silver: Kim Ye-ji, South Korea
Bronze: Manu Bhaker, India

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SKATEBOARDING

WOMEN'S STREET

Gold: Coco Yoshizawa, Japan

Silver: Liz Akama, Japan

Bronze: Rayssa Leal, Brazil

Saturday, July 27

CYCLING

MEN'S INDIVIDUAL TIME TRIAL

Gold: Remco Evenepoel, Belgium

Silver: Filippo Ganna, Italy

Bronze: Wout van Aert, Belgium

WOMEN'S INDIVIDUAL TIME TRIAL

Gold: Grace Brown, Australia

Silver: Anna Henderson, Britain

Bronze: Chloe Dygert, United States

DIVING

WOMEN'S SYNCHRONIZED 3M SPRINGBOARD

Gold: Chang Yani and Chen Yiwen, China

Silver: Sarah Bacon and Cassidy Cook, United States

Bronze: Yasmin Harper and Scarlett Mew Jensen, Britain

FENCING

WOMEN'S EPEE INDIVIDUAL

Gold: Vivian Kong, Hong Kong

Silver: Auriane Mallo-Breton, France

Bronze: Eszter Muhari, Hungary

MEN'S SABER INDIVIDUAL

Bronze: Luigi Samele, Italy

JUDO

WOMEN 48KG

Gold: Natsumi Tsunoda, Japan

Silver: Baasankhuu Bavuudori, Mongolia

Bronze: Shirine Boukli, France, and Tara Babulfath,

Sweden

MEN 60KG

Gold: Yeldos Smetov, Kazakhstan

Silver: Luka Mkheidze, France

Bronze: Ryuju Nagayama, Japan and Francisco Garrigos, Spain

RUGBY SEVENS

Gold: France

Silver: Fiji

Bronze: South Africa

SHOOTING

10M AIR RIFLE MIXED TEAM

Gold: Huang Yuting and Sheng Lihao, China

Silver: Keum Ji-hyeon and Park Ha-jun, South Korea

Bronze: Alexandra Le and Islam Satpayev, Kazakhstan

SWIMMING

MEN'S 400M FREESTYLE

Gold: Lukas Maertens, Germany

Silver: Elijah Winnington, Australia

Bronze: Kim Woo-min, South Korea

MEN'S 4X100M FREESTYLE RELAY

Gold: United States

Silver: Australia

Bronze: Italy

WOMEN'S 400M FREESTYLE

Gold: Ariarne Titmus, Australia

Silver: Summer McIntosh, Canada

Bronze: Katie Ledecky, United States

WOMEN'S 4X100M FREESTYLE RELAY

Gold: Australia

Silver: United States

Bronze: China

British police charge 17-year-old with murder over a stabbing attack that killed 3 children

By BRIAN MELLEY and JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British police said Thursday they have charged a 17-year-old with murder over a stabbing attack that left three little girls dead and several more in critical condition. The charges came as the traumatized town of Southport cleaned up after a bout of far-right violence, and agitators fired up by anger and misinformation clashed with police near the prime minister's residence in London.

The Merseyside Police force said the teenager, who has not been named because of his age, faces three counts of murder and 10 of attempted murder over people injured in the attack during a Taylor Swift-themed summer holiday dance and yoga class.

He is due to appear in court in Liverpool later Thursday.

About two dozen children were attending the summer vacation workshop on Monday when an attacker with a knife burst in. Alice Dasilva Aguiar, 9, Elsie Dot Stancombe, 7, and Bebe King, 6, died from their injuries. Ten other people were injured, among whom five girls and two adults are in critical condition.

Far-right demonstrators have launched several violent protests, ostensibly in response to the attack, clashing with police outside a mosque in Southport on Tuesday.

A few hundred protesters hurled beer cans and flares near British Prime Minister Keir Starmer's residence in Downing Street in central London on Wednesday evening. More than 100 people were arrested for offenses including violent disorder and assault on an emergency worker, London's Metropolitan Police force said.

Police also faced violent demonstrators in the town of Hartlepool in northeast England, as far-right groups seek to stir anger over an attack they have sought to link — without evidence — to immigrants.

Hours earlier, residents of Southport swept shattered glass and broken bricks from streets after far-right protesters clashed with police outside a mosque in the seaside town.

On Tuesday night a crowd of several hundred people hurled bricks and bottles at riot police in Southport, set garbage bins and vehicles on fire and looted a store, hours after a peaceful vigil for the girls, aged 6, 7 and 9, were killed. More than 50 officers were injured, including more than two dozen who were taken to hospitals, officials said.

"I am absolutely appalled and disgusted at the level of violence that was shown towards my officers," Merseyside Chief Constable Serena Kennedy said. "Some of the first responders who attended that awful scene on Monday ... then were faced with that level of violence."

Five men have been arrested in connection with the riots in Southport, mainly for violent disorder; one was arrested for possessing a knife and fighting. Kennedy said more arrests were expected.

Starmer condemned the "thuggery" and said the protesters "hijacked" the community's grief.

Norman Wallis, chief executive of the Southport Pleasureland amusement park, was one of dozens of people who turned up with brushes and shovels to clear the debris.

"It's horrendous what those hooligans have done last night," he said. "But none of those people were the people of Southport," he added. "The people of Southport are the ones here today cleaning the mess up."

The protesters, who police said were supporters of the far-right English Defence League, were apparently fueled false online rumors about the suspect.

Police said a name circulating on social media — spread by far-right activists and accounts of murky origin purporting to be news organizations — was incorrect and that he was born in Britain, contrary to online claims he was an asylum-seeker. The names of suspects under the age of 18 are usually not made public in Britain.

Patrick Hurley, the local lawmaker, said the violence by "beered-up thugs" was the result of "propaganda and lies" spread on social media.

"This misinformation doesn't just exist on people's internet browsers and on people's phones. It has real world impact," he said.

Chanaka Balasuryla, whose corner store was looted for booze and cigarettes, said he watched from home on a surveillance camera as a gang broke in. He was terrified because a woman and her daughter

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lived upstairs and he feared the looters would set the shop on fire.

He learned later that the woman had confronted the mob and told them the Windsor Mini Mart was her shop and asked them to stop. The next morning he went get down to his shop were people waiting to help him clean up.

"I feel safe again because people are here to protect us," he said.

The rampage in Southport is the latest shocking attack in a country where a recent rise in knife crime has stoked anxieties and led to calls for the government to do more to clamp down on bladed weapons, by far the most commonly used instruments in U.K. homicides.

Witnesses described hearing screams and seeing children covered in blood in the mayhem outside the Hart Space, a community center that hosts everything from pregnancy workshops to women's boot camps.

Joel Verite, a window cleaner riding in a van on his lunch break, said his colleague slammed on the brakes and reversed to where a woman was hanging on the side of a car covered in blood.

"She just screamed at me: 'He's killing kids over there. He's killing kids over there,'" Verite told Sky News.

"It was like a scene you'd see on a disaster film," he said. "I can't explain to you how horrific it is what I saw."

Britain's worst attack on children was in 1996, when 43-year-old Thomas Hamilton shot and killed 16 kindergartners and their teacher in a school gymnasium in Dunblane, Scotland. The United Kingdom subsequently banned the private ownership of almost all handguns.

While knives are used in about 40% of homicides each year, mass stabbings are unusual.

Hawaii Gov. Josh Green tells AP a \$4 billion settlement for 2023 Maui wildfire could come next week

By AUDREY McAVOY Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — The parties involved in Lahaina wildfire lawsuits against the state of Hawaii, Maui County and utilities are close to a global settlement of claims that will be worth a little over \$4 billion, Gov. Josh Green told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

Green said he's hoping to finalize the details in coming days, perhaps as soon as Aug. 6, which would be two days before the one-year anniversary of the fire that killed 102 people and wiped out historic Lahaina.

"If that could happen, it would be great. I humbly invite all the parties to finalize the agreement," Green said in an interview at his office. "It appears that we are almost there, and we only have a very tiny hold-out remaining."

He said all the plaintiffs and defendants have agreed to the global settlement number but final details are pending.

More than 600 lawsuits have been filed over the deaths and destruction caused by the fires. In the spring, a judge appointed mediators and ordered all parties to participate in settlement talks.

"Then on July 18, 2024, the Court, along with undoubtedly many others, learned for the first time details of what media reports purported to be a 'global settlement,'" Judge Peter Cahill, who is overseeing the coordination of the lawsuits, wrote in a scheduling order last week. "These reports proved to be premature."

Cahill noted that he hadn't received any notice for any party "of any settlement let alone one of a global nature." However, he also hadn't been informed of any impasse in the negotiation process, he wrote.

Jake Lowenthal, a Maui attorney selected as one of five liaisons for the coordination of the cases, said Wednesday, "as of now, there's no settlement."

Hawaiian Electric Company spokesperson Darren Pai said in an email that the mediation process is confidential and the company would not comment. Maui County didn't respond to an email seeking comment.

Jim Bickerton, a lawyer who filed the first lawsuit against Bishop Estate — one of the landowners sued over allegations of failing to maintain vegetation that fueled the fire — wouldn't comment on the status of current negotiations. But he said, "Any settlement process would include a method for those who have not yet hired lawyers or made claims to have their claim be considered."

Green said he was traveling out of state for several weeks but ended up working on the settlement

while he was away because bringing \$4 billion to Lahaina would accelerate the community's recovery. Settlements of wildfire lawsuits elsewhere have often taken years.

"As I watched other regions that have gone through these disasters, I learned that they didn't reach settlement for many years, and that left people in a tangled web of despair because they couldn't really recover," Green said.

Victims would get insurance, but it was never enough, the governor said.

"I acknowledge that the \$3 billion that's coming from insurance is very helpful," Green said. "But the additional \$4 billion of settlement will hopefully make it possible for people to rebuild however they feel they need to."

In 2019, Pacific Gas and Electric settled all major claims related to deadly Northern California wildfires of 2017-2018 for \$13.5 billion. The deal resolved claims over the 2018 Camp Fire, which killed 85 people and all but incinerated the town of Paradise, the 2015 Butte Fire and Oakland's 2016 Ghost Ship fire.

Separately, three years later, former PG&E executives and directors agreed to pay \$117 million to settle a lawsuit over 2017-2018 wildfires.

PG&E is the nation's largest utility, with an estimated 16 million customers in central and Northern California.

Venezuelan migrants in Mexico worry for their loved ones as political unrest roils their homeland

By MARIANA MARTÍNEZ BARBA Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Yenny Morales, 33, left her native Venezuela because she felt she had no other option. Her 9-year-old son has a mental health disability, and in a country where 80% of people live in poverty, she couldn't afford a specialist.

"I had to flee, because my son couldn't see a neurologist. The health of my kids comes first," said Morales, who has been waiting in Mexico for an appointment to request asylum in the United States.

Since Sunday's presidential election in Venezuela, in which both incumbent President Nicolás Maduro and the country's main opposition coalition claimed victory, her worries have shifted to her family back home. "This is fraud," she said, referring to the widely criticized results. "And now that's what our families are fighting against."

She said she had not heard from her family since Tuesday morning.

Morales, who lives in a makeshift camp in the heart of Mexico City, is among the millions of Venezuelan migrants growing increasingly anxious for their friends and family back home. After having trekked through Central America in search of a better life, they are closely following the protests triggered by the announcement that Maduro had secured a third six-year term.

Sunday's election was one of the most peaceful in the country's recent memory, reflecting a widespread hope that Venezuela could avoid bloodshed and end 25 years of single-party rule.

"I'm very disappointed with what I'm seeing," said Gerardo Uzcategui, 56, who spent four years in Cali, Colombia before beginning his journey to the U.S.

The former police officer who oversaw the security of a government minister said all of his family has now fled. He has a daughter in Argentina and a son in Mexico.

"We were happy around 3 p.m. on Sunday, thinking there was going to be change," he said. "But 11 p.m. came around and everything changed. It's really, really hard on us."

Plummeting oil prices, widespread shortages and hyperinflation that soared past 130,000% have led to social unrest and mass emigration in Venezuela – pushing more than 7.7 million people to migrate in the last decade.

Morales' phone is flooded with information about what is happening in her home country. She shared an audio of a friend warning protesters to cover their faces, videos of children banging pots and pans — and a photo of a close friend who she said was killed after the first day of protests.

The Venezuela-based human rights organization Foro Penal reported Tuesday that 11 people, including

two minors, had been killed in unrest related to the election.

Herberto Lugo, 48, said he's relieved his family back in Venezuela is OK, since they live in the coastal city of Maracaibo, where violent protests haven't reached them. But that doesn't change his views on Maduro's iron grip on Venezuela.

"We're uncomfortable, and we won't conform to what is happening in our country," said Lugo, who thinks opposition leader and former diplomat Edmundo González was the clear winner of the election. If given the chance to go back, he said, he would join in the protests.

"People in Venezuela are fighting, and we hope he leaves this week," he said, referring to Maduro. "If he doesn't leave this week, he'll never leave."

Why Harris and Democrats keep calling Trump and Vance 'weird'

By MEG KINNARD Associated Press

Vice President Kamala Harris and her Democratic allies are emphasizing a new line of criticism against Republicans — branding Donald Trump and his running mate, Ohio Sen. JD Vance, as "weird."

Democrats are applying the label with gusto in interviews and online, notably to Vance's comments on abortion and his previous suggestion that political leaders who didn't have biological children "don't really have a direct stake" in the country.

The "weird" message appears to have given Democrats a narrative advantage that they rarely had when President Joe Biden was still running for reelection. Trump's campaign, which so often shapes political discussions with the former president's pronouncements, has spent days trying to flip the script by highlighting things about Democrats it says are weird.

"I don't know who came up with the message, but I salute them," said David Karpf, a strategic communication professor at George Washington University.

Karpf said labeling Republican comments as "weird" is the sort of concise take that resonates quickly with Harris supporters. Plus, Karpf noted, "it frustrates opponents, leading them to further amplify it through off-balance responses."

"So far, at least, Trump-Vance has been incapable of finding an effective response," Karpf said.

Harris and her allies have used the label frequently

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, a Democrat who is on Harris' short list for vice president, called Trump and Vance "just weird" last week in an MSNBC interview, which the Democratic Governors Association — of which Walz is chair — amplified in a post on X. Walz reiterated the characterization Sunday on CNN, referencing Trump's repeated mentions of the fictional serial killer Hannibal Lecter from the film "Silence of the Lambs" in stump speeches.

Responding to Trump's Thursday appearance on Fox News, the Harris campaign — in a news release with the subject line "Statement on a 78-Year-Old Criminal's Fox News Appearance" — included "Trump is old and quite weird?" in a bulleted list of takeaways.

A day later, multiple news releases from the Harris campaign described her opponents similarly, declaring simply that "JD Vance is weird" in part due to his stances on abortion, and Harris' campaign spokesperson saying that Vance had "spent all week making headlines for his out-of-touch, weird ideas."

Two of Harris' allies, Sens. Brian Schatz of Hawaii and Chris Murphy of Connecticut, on Friday posted a video on X calling Vance's past comments about limiting the political power of childless Americans "a super weird idea."

And then, at her first fundraiser since becoming the Democrats' likely White House nominee, Harris used the characterization herself, calling out some of Trump's "wild lies about my record and some of what he and his running mate are saying, it is just plain weird."

"I mean that's the box you put that in, right?" she added.

Many of Democrats' comments appear to be allusions to a 2021 interview with Vance in which he slammed some prominent Democrats without biological children — including Harris — as "childless cat ladies" with "no direct stake" in America.

But Harris' own characterization of Trump as "weird" may date back even further. In his 2021 book, political reporter Edward-Isaac Doveve wrote that Harris reportedly gathered with aides in 2018 to prepare for her own presidential bid.

As staff aimed to prepare her for how she'd react if, during a debate, Trump stood over her as he did Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton in 2016, Harris reportedly quipped, "I'd turn around and say, 'Why are you being so weird? What's wrong with you?'"

Trump's campaign has tried to flip the script

On Sunday, Trump spokesman Steven Cheung posted video of Walz calling Trump and Vance "weird" as he stumped for Harris and said the likely Democratic nominee and her backers were themselves out of line for "trying to gaslight everyone into thinking the shooting was staged," a reference to the assassination attempt at Trump's rally in Pennsylvania.

More broadly, some of Trump's allies have angled to turn the conversation back to Harris and what they portray as her failed policy ideas.

Donald Trump Jr., the former president's oldest son, took to X on Monday to ask, "You know what's really weird? Soft on crime politicians like Kamala allowing illegal aliens out of prison so they can violently assault Americans."

On Saturday, Vance reposted an X video Trump Jr. shared in which Harris talked about "climate anxiety, which is fear of the future and the unknown of whether it makes sense for you to even think about having children."

"It's almost like these people don't want young people starting families or something," Vance wrote. "Really weird stuff."

Democrats are co-opting Republican attack lines to support Harris

Republicans have long shared clips of Harris' laugh and some of her jokes or stories to try to make the vice president seem weird — notably an anecdote she told last year about her mother scolding her, "You think you just fell out of a coconut tree?"

The "coconut tree" story has itself become a Democratic in-joke in the days since Harris took over the campaign. Many of her supporters have embraced coconut emojis in their online accounts.

Calling Republicans "weird" may be a way to take Republicans' previous tactics and make them their own, said Matt Sienkiewicz, a communication professor at Boston College.

University at Buffalo political communication professor Jacob Neiheisel compared the "weird" message to Arizona Sen. John McCain's 2008 attempt to portray Barack Obama as a celebrity with no real accomplishments.

"At a functional level, I think that this might be part of a concerted attempt to mitigate some of the longstanding efforts on the right to paint Harris in a similar way," Neiheisel said.

Biden is adjusting to a new reality, coming to terms with his departure from 2024 race

By ZEKE MILLER and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It was President Joe Biden's first public appearance since he dropped out of the race, and the applause for him from the crowded auditorium in Austin, Texas, just kept going. He put his hand on his heart in thanks, looked down and, for the briefest of moments, took it all in.

The ovation on Monday was most certainly not for the stated topic of his speech but for what had come before — Biden's decision to step aside in the 2024 race and throw his support behind his vice president.

Not to say it's been easy for him. Ten days since ending his reelection campaign, Biden still is coming to terms with the political whiplash that he — and the country — have experienced.

Privately, the Democratic president is smarting over those who orchestrated the abrupt end of his 50-year political career and processing a mixture of emotions — bitterness and regret among them, but also relief at not having to run a grueling race against Republican Donald Trump. Nor will Biden have to confront the

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risk of what his potential loss might have done to his legacy and the country.

At the same time, the Democratic Party's swift embrace of Vice President Kamala Harris as Biden's replacement has sparked pride in the quick consolidation of the party at his encouragement — and also served as an unwelcome reminder of his soon-to-be political irrelevance.

Biden, to use a turn of phrase that Harris popularized, is struggling to make sense of what will no longer be, burdened by how his political future has ended.

This story is based off interviews with eight longtime Biden aides and allies, many of whom spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal conversations.

Biden never wanted to step aside. He was shoved slowly toward the door by an ever-growing chorus of Democrats. In the end, he willingly put aside personal ambition, and did so for the unity of the party. It was received as a stunning act of selflessness and he's been widely praised. But that doesn't mean he's at peace with it.

"President Biden has goodwill for everyone involved, whatever their opinions were — and a deep appreciation for the values that we share," said White House spokesman Andrew Bates in a statement.

In the days since sending his fateful tweet bowing out of the race and delivering his Oval Office address on the matter, the president has kept a lower profile. Reminders of his diminishing relevance have been manifest in both subtle and obvious ways.

The stepped-up travel schedule that Biden had embarked upon to attempt to salvage his campaign after his devastating debate with Trump is no more. Replacing it are policy briefings — often behind closed doors — meant to show Biden is still working through his lame duck era.

Biden has told aides he intends to run through the tape on his term in office and has tasked them with finding additional actions he can take before Jan. 20, 2025, to secure his legacy. But what those actions might be remains a work in progress.

Press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre acknowledged that Biden and the White House are still "recalibrating" after his decision.

"We are trying to figure out what the next six months are going to look like," she said. "Just give us a beat."

Even the president's regular lunches with Harris on Wednesdays have taken on a new dimension, as the balance of power in their relationship has shifted.

Harris, days away from being the official Democratic nominee in her own right, has taken on a more visible role while Biden has stepped back. On Tuesday, she spoke from the tarmac in Atlanta on Israel's apparent assassination of a top Hezbollah militant before the White House had released a statement.

The enthusiasm for Harris already has far exceeded what Biden could generate for this campaign. Thousands turned out for a raucous rally for the vice president in Georgia on Tuesday night. Roughly 8 in 10 Democrats say they would be somewhat or very satisfied if Harris became the Democratic nominee for president, according to a new survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

No longer will Biden deliver the marquee address on the closing night of the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Instead, he's expected to speak on the lower-rated first night. One plan under discussion is for him to watch from the arena stands as Harris formally accepts the party's nomination that Thursday.

Should Harris win — and Biden knows that how history will view him depends in part on how she performs against Trump — the satisfaction of selecting and positioning his vice president for victory and ensuring a graceful end for his time in public service may well win out.

Biden aides and allies insist that he's happy with how his former campaign rallied to support Harris after he handed her the keys and with how Democrats — even those who abandoned him — rushed to embrace her. But at the same time, he's had little patience for the paeans from those who pushed for him to exit and now praise his decision to step aside, aides and allies said. And he has had difficulty containing the "what-ifs" — he'll never know for sure if he could have pulled out one last victory.

"President Biden appreciates the work of all of the members of the diverse coalition that is dedicated to defeating Donald Trump and the threat he poses to democracy," said Biden personal spokesman TJ

Ducklo. "He is focused on building as much support as possible for Vice President Harris and is pleased with the clear enthusiasm she has received so far."

Outwardly, Biden has tried to remain magnanimous.

Rep. Lloyd Doggett, the first Democratic lawmaker to call for Biden to step aside, was invited to welcome the president on the tarmac in Austin on Monday and he described a cordial conversation with Biden to reporters.

"I think he made a great sacrifice," Doggett told KVUE in Austin as he recounted their conversation. "And the country will be the better off for it. And Biden responded, 'Thank you for calling for my doing this.'"

Still, Biden aides have expressed some worry to one another about how his lingering frustrations might surface.

Some pointed to his comments in the early hours of Tuesday morning, when a reporter asked Biden about his legacy with regard to LGBTQ Americans. The president harked back to his 2011 comments supporting same-sex marriage that caught then-President Barack Obama off guard. It came off as a subtle dig at the former president, who in recent weeks was among those working behind the scenes to push Biden toward the exits.

"Well, I'm really proud of my position," Biden said. "I was the first guy to come out for gay marriage. Remember that little problem with the Obama administration?"

MrBeast, YouTube's biggest star, acknowledges past 'inappropriate language' as controversies swirl

By JAMES POLLARD and THALIA BEATY Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — MrBeast, YouTube's biggest star and a philanthropic force with nearly unrivaled influence among young audiences, acknowledged Wednesday that he used "inappropriate language" in his early online days, as numerous controversies bubbled up around him and a former collaborator.

MrBeast, whose real name is Jimmy Donaldson, and his reported \$700 million empire have come under new fire in recent weeks after accusations of past racist comments by Donaldson surfaced along with allegations that a longtime colleague made inappropriate sexual comments to minors.

"When Jimmy was a teenager he acted like many kids and used inappropriate language while trying to be funny," a spokesperson for the YouTuber said in a statement to The Associated Press. "Over the years he has repeatedly apologized and has learned that increasing influence comes with increased responsibility to be more aware and more sensitive to the power of language. After making some bad jokes and other mistakes when he was younger, as an adult he has focused on engaging with the MrBeast community to work together on making a positive impact around the world."

His highly produced videos of whimsical challenges and lavish gifts, often accompanied by expressive thumbnails and punchy titles, have drawn a record 307 million Youtube subscribers. His latest uploads include "Ages 1 - 100 Decide Who Wins \$250,000" and "I Built 100 Houses And Gave Them Away!" which, like most of his videos, garnered more than 100 million views.

The philanthropic sector has received this content with a mix of praise for encouraging direct generosity and criticism of exploitative "inspiration porn." Donaldson's greater ambition made itself plain in recent years through the launch of his snack brand Feastables, a branded burger chain with reviews bad enough that he sued the company behind it, and an Amazon Prime Video deal for a 1,000-contestant reality competition show.

But before overtaking YouTube with his often-absurd charitable acts, Donaldson built a sizable following as a gaming content creator who sometimes interacted with viewers on livestreams.

'Blind ambition for attention'

In a 2017 clip circulated by YouTube influencer Rosanna Pansino in a July 24 post on X, Donaldson responded to a viewer who commented about selling Black people for money and said that "the most I would pay is probably 300." Donaldson also used a homophobic slur at multiple points. After one commenter

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repeated a racial slur, Donaldson eventually instructed his audience to stop using that word in the chat. Pansino told AP she'd worked on various potential business ventures with Donaldson over the last several years, though none ever launched. Last fall, she complained publicly about an edit of her appearance in a MrBeast video, though eventually deleted the posts after she said she received death threats from fans. Pansino said that contrary to popular opinion, it's "just not true" that Donaldson has always made "family friendly content."

"His first videos, where he was trying to be an edgy gamer and streamer, and he said horrible things and nasty things — I didn't know that," Pansino said. "I had no idea that history was there."

In a separate clip from a May 2017 podcast appearance, Donaldson suggested he would have sex with the rapper Bhad Bhabie, whose real name is Danielle Bregoli and who was 14 years old at the time. The video has since been removed for "violating YouTube's community guidelines."

Podcast co-host Leon Lush defended Donaldson in a video posted on X last week. Lush said Donaldson clarified later on the episode that he "wouldn't do that" because Bregoli was "way too young" and had joked they should "say something offensive that people can take out of context."

Lush added that the recording is "cringe in hindsight" and dismissed the outcry as "a molehill turning into a mountain."

"Being unfunny seems like the worst offense here. When you mix a propensity for dark humor with blind ambition for attention, you get" this content sometimes, Lush said. "Was being edgy the best strategy? Certainly not, although it did work sometimes as far as getting attention."

Collaborator controversy

Those clips emerged as internet sleuths alleged that longtime MrBeast collaborator Ava Kris Tyson interacted inappropriately with minors online.

Under scrutiny are Tyson's past conversations with an underage teenage fan, including public posts where the two discussed nude images and anime pornography. The fan denied any exploitation in a July 22 post on X, describing such accusations as "massive lies and twisting the truth."

In a July 24 post on X, Nate Weyman said he and the fan had done unpaid technical work running Tyson's streams and would all play video games together "for hours on end." Weyman said Tyson had a private Discord server with about 10 people, mostly other minors around 14 years old, and would frequently spam the server with pornographic images.

Tyson announced her departure from "all things MrBeast and social media" in a July 23 post on X. Donaldson posted on July 24 that he was "disgusted and opposed to such unacceptable acts" and is hiring independent investigators to look into the allegations.

Tyson has been the target of transphobic attacks since she came out last year as transgender. Last April, Donaldson defended his close friend against a video describing her as a "nightmare" for MrBeast. Donaldson wrote on X then that "this is getting absurd," affirmed their friendship and said "this transphobia" was starting to anger him.

Giveaways questioned

Last week, a former employee accused Donaldson of rigging the contests in his videos, running illegal lotteries and deceiving his fans. The person made the sweeping accusations under an alias in a YouTube video that has reached over 6.9 million views since it was posted last week.

Donaldson has not publicly responded to the unsubstantiated claims. Chucky Appleby, who co-founded YouTube analytics platform ViewStats alongside Donaldson, said the former employee was fired within a month after displaying "erratic behavior." In a July 29 post on X, Appleby denied accusations that MrBeast fakes videos and said it "would have been impossible to hide" scripted segments from the "countless people on set."

"Jimmy spends unfathomable amounts of money and time to ensure the integrity of what he does," Appleby said. "I hate to see it come into question with a bunch of lies."

AP direct messaged several social media users behind the range of accusations, as well as the underage fan.

Matthew Wade, a La Trobe University sociology lecturer focused on ethics of charity, credited Beast Philanthropy for establishing partnerships with esteemed philanthropic organizations. The “gauche tone and occasional crassness” of Donaldson’s style might have been well worth his “truly extraordinary reach” for nonprofits eager to drive support toward their causes, Wade told AP in an email.

But risk calculations could shift, he said.

“Charities and philanthropic foundations cannot gamble with their reputation,” Wade said. “They must be seen as above reproach, and the steady accumulation of controversies around the MrBeast brand may too easily tarnish the pristine glow of their own.”

What’s next for Katie Ledecky? Another race and a relay as she goes for more records

NANTERRE, France (AP) — Katie Ledecky has tied one of swimming’s most impressive records. Chances are, she’ll have it all to herself by the time she completes the Paris Olympics.

The 27-year-old Ledecky bumped her career total to 12 medals with a dominating victory in the 1,500-meter freestyle Wednesday night, equaling three fellow Americans — Dara Torres, Natalie Coughlin and Jenny Thompson — for the most ever by a female swimmer.

Ledecky was first an Olympian in 2012

Ledecky won her first gold in London when she was just 15.

“It’s not easy, it doesn’t get any easier, so I do try to enjoy it each year and there’s different perspective that I have different years and different challenges that you face each year,” Ledecky said after winning the 1,500.

What’s next for Ledecky?

—She is expected to compete in the final of the 4x200 freestyle relay on Thursday. The U.S. took silver in that event at the Tokyo Games after winning gold in the two previous Olympics, so that seems like a pretty sure bet for lucky medal No. 13.

—Ledecky will be going for her fourth straight gold medal in the 800 freestyle, with the preliminaries set for Friday morning and the final to follow Saturday next evening.

“I have the relay tomorrow, that’s my next focus,” she said after the race. “Then, I’ll think about the 800.”

The American star now has eight gold medals in her career, seven of them coming in individual races. She came into these games already holding the record for the most individual golds by a female swimmer.

Trump’s appearance before Black journalists leads to memorable confrontation with ABC’s Rachel Scott

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

Primarily due to sharp questioning by ABC News correspondent Rachel Scott, former President Donald Trump’s appearance before a gathering of Black journalists turned remarkably contentious on Wednesday.

Scott pressed Trump on past statements about Black leaders, his support of Jan. 6, 2021, rioters and diversity hiring — leading the former president to repeatedly complain about how he was treated.

“She was very rude,” the former president said, pointing at Scott.

Trump’s appearance at a meeting of the National Association of Black Journalists was dripping with bad vibes from the start. Some members objected to the Republican candidate for president’s invitation to address the group in the first place, while others said it was their obligation as journalists to question him.

The onstage panel — with Trump questioned by Scott, Fox News Channel’s Harris Faulkner and Semafor’s Kadia Goba — was delayed for more than a half hour due to technical issues.

Scott, ABC News’ senior congressional reporter and a campaign correspondent, has worked at ABC News since 2016, her visibility increasing lately when she anchored the network’s live coverage of President Joe Biden dropping out of the presidential race. In her first question, Scott referred to the controversy over Trump’s appearance, and specifically cited several Trump statement about Black leaders in the past,

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including his false accusations about former President Barack Obama's birthplace, and rude remarks to members of Congress, district attorneys and journalists.

"Now that you are asking Black voters to vote for you, why should Black voters trust you after you've used language like that?" Scott asked.

Trump immediately went after the questioner.

"I don't think I've ever been asked a question in such a horrible manner, a first question," he replied. "You don't even say 'hello, how are you.' Are you with ABC? Because I think they're a fake news network."

The opening haymaker was directly reminiscent of Trump's first campaign debate in 2016, when then-Fox News Channel reporter Megyn Kelly brought up things he had said about women and asked, "Does this sound to you like the temperament of a man we should elect as president?"

When Trump began talking Wednesday about what his administration did for Black Americans, Scott attempted to cut him off, saying, "Mr. President, I would love for you to answer the question on your rhetoric and why you believe Black voters can trust you for another term."

Trump said he was doing so, and made a claim he's made before, that he was the best President for Black people since Abraham Lincoln.

"Better than President Johnson, who signed the Civil Rights Act"? Scott asked.

Scott then asked whether Trump backed supporters who suggested that his Democratic opponent, Vice President Kamala Harris, was a DEI hire, leading to a back-and-forth between them over what the phrase — for diversity, equity and inclusion — meant.

"Do you think Vice President Kamala Harris is only on the ticket because she's a Black person? Scott asked, leading to Trump's most newsworthy statements of the session, questioning Harris' racial background.

Scott also asked pointedly about Trump's support of people convicted for their actions in the attack on the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

"One hundred and forty police officers were assaulted that day," she said. "Their injuries included broken bones, at least one police officer lost an eye, one had cracked ribs, two smashed spinal discs, another had a stroke. Were the people who assaulted these 140 officers ... patriots who deserve pardons?"

Trump turned the subject to demonstrations held by those in support of liberal causes.

The panel ended in some degree of confusion. Scott, who was the moderator, cut off an attempt by Faulkner to ask about the Project 2025 blueprint, saying Trump's time was limited.

After the session, Trump posted on his Truth Social account that "the questions were Rude and Nasty, often in the form of a statement, but we CRUSHED IT!"

A student journalist attending the conference, Kelly Arrington of Savannah State University, said, "I assumed that Trump came just so he could win over more Black voters ... But, unfortunately, in this conversation, he did not answer the questions that were given to him."

The session became a quick topic on social media, with some people praising Scott for asking tough questions, and others who suggested Trump was led into an ambush.

Fed Chair Powell says September interest rate cut could be 'on the table' as inflation cools

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell on Wednesday set the stage for the central bank's first rate cut in four years, citing greater progress toward lower inflation as well as a cooler job market that no longer threatens to overheat the economy.

Still, the Fed kept its key interest rate unchanged at a 23-year high of 5.3%, despite calls from some economists and Democratic politicians to implement a cut Wednesday. Instead, Powell said that, if inflation continues to fall, "a reduction in our policy rate could be on the table" when the Fed next meets Sept. 17-18.

"We're getting closer to the point at which it'll be appropriate to reduce our policy rate," Powell said, "but we're not quite at that point."

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A rate cut by the Fed is unlikely to have much immediate impact because it is largely expected by financial markets. Yet over time, lower Fed rates should reduce borrowing costs for consumers and businesses, including mortgage and auto-loan rates.

Rate cuts could also bolster the economy and potentially improve Vice President Kamala Harris' prospects in the upcoming presidential election. Former President Donald Trump has said the Fed shouldn't cut rates before the election. After September, the Fed's next meeting is two days after the election in November.

In a statement Wednesday, the Fed said that "job gains have moderated" and acknowledged that the unemployment rate has risen. The Fed is required by Congress to pursue stable prices and maximum employment, and the statement said the central bank is "attentive to the risks" to both goals.

The focus on both inflation and employment is a major shift after several years of Fed officials focusing exclusively on combatting rising prices.

"They're ready to cut, just as long as we don't get an inflation surprise between now and September, which we won't," said Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's Analytics. "Better late than never."

But Powell provided little guidance on how many times the Fed might reduce rates in the coming months.

"I can imagine a scenario in which it would be everywhere from zero cuts to several cuts," by the end of this year, he said.

Before the Fed's decision, financial market traders had priced in 100% odds that the central bank would reduce its benchmark rate at its September meeting, according to futures markets. The Fed typically seeks to avoid surprising investors with its rate decisions.

Stocks added a bit to earlier gains and Treasury yields eased after the Federal Reserve held its main interest rate at a two-decade high but gave some indication that an easing may soon be on the way. The S&P 500 ended Wednesday up 1.6%.

The Fed is seeking to strike a delicate balance: It wants to keep rates high enough for long enough to quell inflation, which has fallen to 2.5% from a peak two years ago of 7.1%, according to its preferred measure. But it also wants to avoid keeping borrowing costs so high that it triggers a recession.

Powell portrayed the economy as in something of a sweet spot, with inflation falling and hiring occurring at a solid pace. At the same time, wage growth has cooled, which can reduce inflationary pressure in the economy, as many businesses will lift prices to offset higher labor costs.

"It's neither an overheating economy nor is it a sharply weakening economy," Powell said. "It's kind of what you would want to see."

Earlier Wednesday, a key gauge of wages grew more slowly in the second quarter, compared to the first three months of this year, though the increase was still faster than inflation.

"Wage increases are still at a strong level, but that level continues to come down to a more sustainable level over time," he said. "That's exactly the pattern than we want to be seeing."

Yet with the unemployment rate ticking higher for three months in a row, some economists have raised concerns that the Fed should cut rates more quickly later this year.

"The finish line is in sight and it would be tragic for the Fed to stumble and fall, with one-tenth of a mile left in the marathon, which is what I think they would be doing if they don't start cutting," Bharat Ramamurti, an advisor at the American Economic Liberties Project and former economist in the Biden White House, said on a call Monday with reporters.

Also Wednesday, three Democratic senators, led by Elizabeth Warren from Massachusetts, urged Powell in a letter to cut rates. The letter charged that a failure to reduce borrowing costs soon would suggest the Fed is "giving in to bullying" and would itself be a political move.

Powell said Wednesday that the upcoming elections would have no influence on the Fed's decisions.

"We don't change anything in our approach to address other factors like the political calendar," he said.

In the latest piece of good news on price increases, last Friday the government said that yearly inflation fell to 2.5% in July, according to the Fed's preferred inflation measure. That is down from 2.6% the previous month and the lowest since February 2021, when inflation was just starting to accelerate.

At the same time, the unemployment rate has risen by nearly a half-percentage point this year to a still-

low 4.1% and hiring has slowed.

The government will issue the latest jobs numbers on Friday, and economists forecast that it will say employers added 175,000 jobs in July, while the unemployment rate remained 4.1%.

The Fed may be among the last of the major central banks to cut its benchmark rate. The European Central Bank reduced borrowing costs in June and may do so again in September. The Bank of England meets Thursday and may implement its first cut, though economists think it could also keep rates unchanged.

The Bank of Japan is in a different boat, as the country has long sought higher prices after decades of slow deflation. Its inflation rate has moved higher and the Bank of Japan responded earlier Wednesday by increasing its key rate.

UN report says Palestinians detained by Israeli authorities since Oct. 7 faced torture, mistreatment

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — The U.N. human rights office issued a report Wednesday saying Palestinians detained by Israeli authorities since the Oct. 7 attacks faced waterboarding, sleep deprivation, electric shocks, dogs set on them, and other forms of torture and mistreatment.

The report said Israel's prison service held more than 9,400 "security detainees" as of the end of June, and some have been held in secret without access to lawyers or respect for their legal rights.

A summary of the report, based on interviews with former detainees and other sources, decried a "staggering" number of detainees — including men, women, children, journalists and human rights defenders — and said such practices raise concerns about arbitrary detention.

"The testimonies gathered by my office and other entities indicate a range of appalling acts, such as waterboarding and the release of dogs on detainees, amongst other acts, in flagrant violation of international human rights law and international humanitarian law," said U.N. Human Rights Chief Volker Türk in a statement.

Findings in the report, one of the most extensive of its kind, could be used by International Criminal Court prosecutors who are looking into crimes committed in connection with Hamas' Oct. 7 attacks and Israel's blistering ongoing military campaign in Gaza.

In May, the ICC's chief prosecutor sought arrest warrants for leaders of Israel and Hamas, including Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, over war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Gaza Strip and Israel.

Authors of the report said its content was shared with the Israeli government.

In response, the Israeli military said that abuse of detainees was illegal and against military orders. It said since the war began there have been cases where correctional staff have been dismissed for violating military rules in their treatment of detainees. Investigations are launched into all detainee deaths in custody, it said.

Israel's prison services did not respond to an Associated Press request for comment.

Israel's prison authorities previously told the AP that all Palestinian prisoners are treated according to Israeli law. However, Israel's Ministry of National Security, the body in charge of prisons, says it has actively made conditions worse and purposefully overcrowded cells for Palestinians held on security charges since the war broke out as a policy of deterrence.

The ministry is headed by ultranationalist minister Itamar Ben Gvir, who has long called for harsher punishment, including the death penalty, for Palestinians held on terror charges.

The report also said detainees were taken from Gaza, Israel and the West Bank, and says Israel has not provided information regarding the fate or whereabouts of many, adding that the International Committee of the Red Cross has been denied access to facilities where they are held.

"Detainees said they were held in cage-like facilities, stripped naked for prolonged periods, wearing only diapers. Their testimonies told of prolonged blindfolding, deprivation of food, sleep and water, and being subjected to electric shocks and being burnt with cigarettes," a summary of the report said.

"Some detainees said dogs were released on them, and others said they were subjected to waterboarding, or that their hands were tied and they were suspended from the ceiling," it added. "Some women and men also spoke of sexual and gender-based violence."

The report said the Palestinian Authority, which administers parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank, had also "continued to carry out arbitrary detention and torture or other ill-treatment in the West Bank, reportedly principally to suppress criticism and political opposition."

In New York, when asked at a news briefing about U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' reaction to the report, U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said: "Our reaction is one of shock and one of horror in seeing these reports," adding that it's "critical that there be accountability for those responsible."

On Wednesday, an Israeli military court extended the detention of eight out of nine soldiers being held over what a defense lawyer said were allegations of sexual abuse of a Palestinian at Sde Teiman — a shadowy facility where Israel has held prisoners from Gaza during the war. The soldiers' detention triggered angry protests by supporters demanding their release.

The war in Gaza erupted after Hamas' surprise attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7, killing some 1,200 people that day and taking 250 others hostage. Israel's retaliatory operation has obliterated entire neighborhoods in Gaza and forced some 80% of the population to flee their homes. Over 39,000 Palestinians have been killed, according to Gaza's Health Ministry which doesn't distinguish between civilians and combatants in its count.

Biden prods Congress to act to curb fentanyl from Mexico as Trump paints Harris as weak on border

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is prodding Congress to help him do more to combat the scourge of fentanyl before he leaves office.

The Democratic administration is making the new policy push as Republican former President Donald Trump steps up attacks against Vice President Kamala Harris, painting her as Biden's feckless lieutenant in the battle to slow the illegal drugs and immigrants without authorization coming into the United States from Mexico.

The White House on Wednesday announced a series of proposals from Biden aimed at curbing the ongoing drug epidemic. These include a push on Congress to pass legislation to establish a pill press and tableting machine registry and enhance penalties against convicted drug smugglers and traffickers of fentanyl.

Biden also wants to tighten rules on importers shipping small packages into the United States, requiring shippers to provide additional information to Customs and Border Protection officials. The move is aimed at improving the detection of fentanyl precursor chemicals that frequently find their way into the United States in relatively low-value shipments that aren't subject to customs and trade barriers.

The president's new efforts at combating fentanyl may also benefit Harris, the likely Democratic nominee, as Trump and his surrogates are trying to cast her as a central player in the Biden administration's struggles at the U.S.-Mexico border throughout his term.

"Still, far too many of our fellow Americans continue to lose loved ones to fentanyl," Biden said in a statement. "This is a time to act. And this is a time to stand together — for all those we have lost, and for all the lives we can still save."

Biden also signed a national security memorandum aimed at improving the transfer of information between law enforcement and federal agencies. The hope is to better understand the flows of production and smuggling of the synthetic opioid that has ravaged huge swaths of America. In the last five months, more than 442 million doses of fentanyl were seized at U.S. borders, according to the White House.

"Since day one, the administration, President Biden, Vice President Harris, have prioritized action to combat the scourge of illicit fentanyl and beat this crisis," White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said during a briefing with reporters on Wednesday. Biden was briefed on the issue Wednesday afternoon by his top aides and senior Cabinet officials, including Attorney General Merrick Garland and Homeland

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Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas.

The Trump campaign launched its first television ad of the general election cycle on Tuesday, dubbing Harris the "border czar" and blaming her for a surge in illegal crossings into the United States during the Biden administration. After displaying headlines about crime and drugs, the video brands Harris as "Failed. Weak. Dangerously liberal."

Border crossings hit record highs during the Biden administration but have dropped more recently.

The Trump campaign has so far reserved \$12.2 million in television and digital ads through the next two weeks, according to data from the media tracking firm AdImpact.

Biden tasked Harris early in his administration with addressing the root causes of migration. Border crossings became a major political liability for Biden when they reached historic levels. Since June, when Biden announced significant restrictions on asylum applications at the border, arrests for illegal crossings have fallen.

House Republicans passed a symbolic resolution last week criticizing Harris' work on the border on behalf of the Biden administration.

The White House reiterated its call on Congress to pass sweeping immigration legislation that includes funding for more border agents and drug detection machines at the border. GOP senators earlier this year scuttled months of negotiations with Democrats on legislation intended to cut back record numbers of illegal border crossings after Trump eviscerated the bipartisan proposal.

The proposed pill-pressing registry floated by Biden aims to help law enforcement crackdown on drug traffickers who use pill presses to press fentanyl into pills.

Authorities say most illicit fentanyl is produced clandestinely in Mexico, using chemical precursors from China. Synthetic opioids are the biggest killers in the deadliest drug crisis the U.S. has ever seen. In 2014, nearly 50,000 deaths in the U.S. were linked to drug overdoses of all kinds. By 2022, the total was more than 100,000, according to a tally by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. More than two-thirds of those deaths — more than 200 per day — involved fentanyl or similar synthetic drugs.

Meanwhile, administration officials and Chinese government officials are expected to meet Wednesday to discuss efforts to curb the flow of chemical precursors coming from China, according to a senior administration official.

Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping announced at a November summit in California that Beijing had agreed to press its chemical companies to curtail shipments to Latin America and elsewhere of the materials used to produce fentanyl. China also agreed to a resumption of sharing information about suspected trafficking with an international database.

But a special House committee focused on countering the Chinese government in April issued a report that China still is fueling the fentanyl crisis in the U.S. by directly subsidizing the manufacturing of materials that are used by traffickers to make the drug outside the country.

The official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the White House, said China had taken "important steps" but there is much more to do.

About 8 in 10 Democrats are satisfied with Harris in stark shift after Biden drops out: AP-NORC poll

By SEUNG MIN KIM and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris appears to have energized Democrats in the early days of her candidacy, with the surge in warm feelings extending across multiple groups, including some key Democratic constituencies that had been especially tepid about President Joe Biden, a new poll shows.

About 8 in 10 Democrats say they would be somewhat or very satisfied if Harris became the Democratic nominee for president, according to the survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, which was conducted after Biden withdrew from the race.

In a separate AP-NORC poll, taken before Biden dropped out but after his debate against Republican

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former President Donald Trump, only about 4 in 10 Democrats said they were somewhat or very satisfied that he was the Democratic Party's likely nominee for president.

The rapidly changing views among Democrats in such a short time span underscore how swiftly the party — from rank-and-file voters to elected officials — has coalesced behind Harris as its standard-bearer, motivated by the fresh face at the top of the ticket and newfound confidence in the party's prospects against Trump in November.

Gary Hines, a Democrat from Philadelphia, said he wasn't particularly impressed by Harris' first presidential bid but now, she's shown "she's up to the task, can do the work, has proven that she's running a strong campaign so far and maybe on a bigger level, she's somebody that can beat Donald Trump." All those factors have ignited an enthusiasm in Hines that wasn't there when Biden was still in the race, he said.

"I really want to go out and maybe knock on doors, which I would've never done," said Hines, 68. "It's jazzed me up quite a bit."

Americans are also more likely to say that Harris would make a good president than they were earlier in July, a shift that was primarily driven by Democrats. They still see a tough contest looming, though: A majority of U.S. adults, 56%, say that if Trump and Harris are their parties' nominees for the general election in November, Trump is more likely to win.

Lauren Schulman, a Democrat from Pompano Beach, Florida, said she admires Biden and what he has accomplished during his presidency. But she said with him at the top of the ticket, "I have just been so terrified that we were going to lose."

With Harris, on the other hand, "she's been a bright, shining star," said Schulman, 66, noting that the vice president is "smart and she's younger, and she even comes off younger than she is. That makes such a huge contrast with Trump."

Growing enthusiasm for Harris — especially compared to Biden

About 7 in 10 Black adults and about half of Hispanic adults would be satisfied with Harris as the Democratic nominee — a marked increase from earlier in July, when about half of Black adults and 15% of Hispanic adults felt satisfied with Biden as the Democrats' expected nominee. (The poll did not include enough Asian adults to analyze their responses separately.)

The share of younger adults (those under the age of 45) who say they would be satisfied with Harris as the nominee, at around 4 in 10, is higher than the 17% who said they were satisfied with Biden in July.

Bryan Seigler, a Democrat from Raleigh, North Carolina, praised Harris' "broad appeal" and pointed to a contrast that Democrats weren't able to make before.

"Donald Trump is the old guy now," said Seigler, 36.

The new poll shows that Harris' overall favorability has risen slightly, from 39% at the beginning of the summer — before the debate — to 46% now. Democrats' opinions of Harris have also shifted in a slightly more positive direction. Eight in 10 Democrats have a positive view of Harris, up slightly from around 7 in 10 in early June.

Harris would be a historic candidate — she would be the first woman to win the presidency, as well as the first Black woman, the first South Asian American, and the first Asian American. Around 4 in 10 Americans say that it would be a good thing for the country to elect either a woman or a person of color to be president. Even more — about 6 in 10 when asked about electing a person of color and about half when asked about electing a woman — say it does not matter.

Majorities of Democrats, however, say it would be good for the country to elect a woman or person of color.

Views of Biden's decision

Most Americans, 54%, say they have heard or read a lot about Biden's decision to withdraw from the 2024 presidential race. About three-quarters of Americans approve of his decision to withdraw as the Democratic nominee for president, including most Democrats and Republicans.

For many Democrats, Biden's catastrophic June 27 debate showed that — even if they were largely satisfied with his accomplishments during his time in office — the incumbent president should not be running

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for a second term because of concerns about how his age was affecting his public performance or his ability to campaign effectively against Trump.

"When I watched the debate, you could just tell his cognitive ability was hardly there," said Julian Castañeda, a Democrat in Pocatello, Idaho. "He had a hard time forming sentences and a lot of his responses, I couldn't even understand what he was saying. At his age right now, it was appropriate for him to stand aside."

Biden's choice to endorse Harris as the Democratic nominee for president is slightly more divisive, with about half of U.S. adults in support, though Democrats overwhelmingly approve. There are similar levels of support for Biden's decision to serve out the rest of his presidential term.

Withdrawing from the race didn't do much to change Americans' views of Biden overall. About 4 in 10 Americans approve of how Biden is handling his job as president. That number is roughly in line with where it has been for the last two years. Biden's favorability ratings are similar to where they were before he dropped out of the race, with about 4 in 10 adults and about three-quarters of Democrats holding a positive view.

Americans see a tough election contest for Harris

Even as the new Harris campaign has reasons for optimism, the vice president faces an opponent who is better known by the country and who has a reputation for a loyal base of support.

Most Americans perceive Trump as having the advantage going into the November election. A majority of U.S. adults say that if Trump and Harris are the candidates, Trump is more likely to win. About 9 in 10 Republicans say Trump is more likely to become president, while only about 7 in 10 Democrats say that about Harris.

Schulman thinks Harris is more likely to win this fall. Still, she added: "Democrats, we're like a real, nervous, paranoid bunch these days."

Al-Jazeera says two of its journalists killed in Israeli strike in Gaza

By JACK JEFFERY Associated Press

RAMALLAH, West Bank (AP) — Two Al-Jazeera reporters were killed in an Israeli strike in northern Gaza on Wednesday, the satellite news network said, the latest Palestinian journalists working with the Qatari network to be killed in the war-torn enclave.

Correspondent Ismail al-Ghoul, 27, cameraman Rami al-Rifi and a child who was not identified were killed in a blast that struck a car in Gaza City that the three were traveling in, according to the network and the Emergency and Ambulance Service, which helps recover and transport casualties to hospitals across Gaza.

The two journalists had been reporting together at the Shati Refugee Camp, the birthplace of slain Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh who was killed in a strike in the early hours of the day in the Iranian capital, Tehran. Haniyeh had attended the swearing-in ceremony on Tuesday for Masoud Pezeshkian, the new president of Iran, a Hamas ally.

The latest journalism deaths bring the number of journalists killed in Gaza since the Israel-Hamas war erupted last October to 111, including 106 Palestinians, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists which tally's the casualties. The other five journalists killed are two Lebanese and three Israelis.

The bodies of the two Al-Jazeera journalists were taken to the nearby al-Ahli hospital from where their Al-Jazeera colleague, Anas al-Sharif, went on air in a phone interview with the channel. No information about the slain child was immediately available.

The Israeli army did not immediately comment on the strike.

United Nations spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric called for a full investigation and accountability for the killings of the Al-Jazeera journalists and others, saying that journalists everywhere need to be protected.

The Palestinian Journalist Syndicate and Hamas both accused Israel of assassinating the two journalists.

The Israeli government closed Al-Jazeera offices in Israel in May, based on a new law that enables it to close down media outlets it says are a security threat and incite against Israeli troops. The Israeli government says the network has close ties to Hamas — a claim Al-Jazeera denies — as many of the militant

group's leading officials are based in the Qatari capital.

Throughout the latest Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, now in its tenth month, the openly pro-Palestinian Al-Jazeera has accused Israel of targeting its journalists.

In December, Samer Abudaqa, one of the network's cameramen was killed in a strike. Wael Dahdouh, the outlet's bureau chief in Gaza, was reporting in late October when he received word on air that his wife, daughter, a son and grandchild were killed in an Israeli airstrike. In January, a strike killed another of his sons, who was also working for Al-Jazeera.

Gymnast-turned-shooter Adriana Ruano wins Guatemala's first Olympic gold

CHATEAURoux, France (AP) — A spinal injury ended Adriana Ruano's chances of competing at the Olympics as a gymnast. She came back as a shooter and won Guatemala's first gold medal on Wednesday.

Ruano was training for the 2011 world championships in gymnastics, a qualifier for the London Olympics the following year, when she felt pain in her back.

Scans showed she had six damaged vertebrae — a career-ending injury at age 16 — and she spent a year recovering, wearing a brace. Ruano's doctor recommended she take up shooting if she wanted to stay in sports without aggravating her injured back.

"When I had my injury, I didn't have anything. I started to get desperate, and I was frustrated. Then the door opened for me with this sport," Ruano said.

More than a decade after Ruano swapped the balance beam and vault for a shotgun, her doctor's advice paid off Wednesday when she won the women's trap with an Olympic-record score of 45 out of 50.

Ruano closed her eyes and took a deep breath before hitting her 43rd target to make sure Italian silver medalist Silvana Stanco couldn't catch her for the gold. She missed her next two shots after that, but it didn't matter.

It was a stint volunteering at the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro that put her on the path back to elite-level sports.

"I said to myself, 'If I can't be there as an athlete, maybe I can be there as a volunteer', so I applied," she said. "They put me on shooting, and I was able to watch my teammates. I could see the competition, and that was the moment that inspired me to think, 'OK, maybe if not in gymnastics, I can do it in shooting.'"

Ruano placed 26th at the last Olympics in Tokyo, shortly after her father had died.

Coming into Paris, though, she was the defending Pan-American Games champion.

Now she has given her country an Olympic gold medal, a day after Jean Pierre Brol won bronze in the men's trap to claim Guatemala's first medal since race walker Erick Barrondo's silver at the 2012 London Olympics.

Stanco won the silver on 40 and Australia's Penny Smith took the bronze.

Federal protections of transgender students are launching where courts haven't blocked them

By ANDREW DeMILLO, GEOFF MULVIHILL and HANNAH SCHOENBAUM Associated Press

New federal protections for transgender students at U.S. schools and colleges will take effect Thursday with muted impact because judges have temporarily blocked enforcement in 21 states and hundreds of individual colleges and schools across the country.

The regulation also adds protections for pregnant students and students who are parents, and details how schools must respond to sexual misconduct complaints.

For schools, the impact of the court challenges could be a combination of confusion and inertia in terms of compliance as the academic year begins.

"I think it is likely that school district-to-school district or state-to-state, we're going to see more or less a

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continuation of the current status quo," said Elana Redfield, federal policy director at the Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law.

The rights of transgender people — and especially young people — have become a major political battleground in recent years as trans visibility has increased. Most Republican-controlled states have banned gender-affirming health care for transgender minors, and several have adopted policies limiting which school bathrooms trans people can use and barring trans girls from some sports competitions.

In April, President Joe Biden's administration sought to settle some of the contention with a regulation to safeguard rights of LGBTQ+ students under Title IX, the 1972 law against sex discrimination in schools that receive federal money. The rule was two years in the making and drew 240,000 responses — a record for the Education Department.

The rule declares that it's unlawful discrimination to treat transgender students differently from their classmates, including by restricting bathroom access. It does not explicitly address sports participation, a particularly contentious topic.

It also enhances protections for students who are pregnant or have children, widens the scope of the sexual misconduct cases schools must investigate, and removes a Trump administration rule requiring schools to let the accused cross-examine their accusers in live hearings.

The U.S. Department of Justice has asked the Supreme Court for permission to enforce components of the rule that were not challenged by states, but it's not clear when the justices might rule.

Meanwhile, Title IX enforcement remains highly unsettled.

In a series of rulings, federal courts have declared that the rule cannot be enforced in most of the Republican states that sued while the litigation continues. In a ruling Tuesday, a judge in Alabama went the other way, allowing enforcement to start in Alabama, Florida, Georgia and South Carolina.

A Kansas-based federal judge appointed by former President Donald Trump added another wrinkle, asserting power over states led by Democrats: He said the rule cannot be enforced in schools attended by the children of members of Moms for Liberty or colleges with members of Young America's Foundation or Female Athletes United. That's keeping the regulation from taking effect in hundreds of colleges and some 1,700 schools in states where it can otherwise be enforced.

In many school districts across the country, the rule is to be enforced in some schools but can't be followed in others.

"There aren't many other parallels I can give you of two different sets of rules applying in the very same place, one school on one side of the street operating from a different playbook from a school on the other side of the street," said Brett Sokolow, chair of the Association of Title IX Administrators.

Administrators have been frustrated by lack of guidance from the Biden administration, he said. When the Education Department recently sent schools information about implementing the new policies, it noted that they don't apply in many places. Sokolow said some districts may need to consider having two separate teams — one trained on the previous rules, the other on the 2024 version — to be prepared for either scenario.

Jay Warona, the deputy executive director and general counsel for the New York State School Boards Association, said his state already offers transgender students some similar protections, but not all of the other components of the new regulation are addressed in state policy.

Warona said he's fielding messages from school districts wondering what to do, and he's telling them to check with their district lawyers.

Caius Willingham, senior policy advocate at the National Center for Transgender Equality, said it's important to note that the injunctions don't prevent school districts from having similar policies, even as they bar the federal government from enforcing its new regulations in some places.

Meanwhile, students are facing real impacts. Some people barred from using the bathroom that aligns with their gender hold their bladder all day, avoid hydrating or even drop out of school, he said.

"If you can't meaningfully participate in the educational systems as your true self," Willingham said, "you're not going to be able to thrive."

For Kaemo Mainard O'Connell, a transgender and nonbinary high school senior in Arkansas, the lack of

federal protections seems like a signal to encourage behavior such as deadnaming and bullying.

"It means I'm going to have to work much harder to be respected by teachers and by students," they said. "What not having federal protection does is, it makes it seem like my issues are not real issues."

Since Arkansas now prohibits transgender students from using bathrooms that align with their gender identity, Kaemo has instead been using a single-person restroom at the school, and is required to sign in and often wait before using it.

Similar worries are shared by families of trans kids in Utah, where lawmakers in June passed resolutions instructing state employees to disregard the Title IX directive. Utah is among the states challenging the rules in court, but is struggling to enforce its bathroom restrictions meanwhile: A tip form to report possible violations has been flooded with hoax submissions, and the state official tasked with filtering through them has made his lack of enthusiasm known.

"The bathroom law brought unpleasant conversations and definitely made our kiddo feel othered," said Utah mom Grace Cooper, whose child is nonbinary. "It also brought a lot of allies out of the woodwork, but without federal protections, my worries as a mother are ever-present."

The careers of Olympians like Simone Biles mirror the rise of adult gymnastics. 'I'm never leaving.'

By WILL GRAVES AP National Writer

Every few years when the Olympics would roll around, the unmistakable pangs Jen Castellano knew were coming but was powerless to stop would hit.

Of chalk on her hands. The beam underneath her feet. The sounds and smell of a packed gym. The intoxicating mix of frustration, determination and joy while trying to master a new skill.

Only, as her 20s turned into her 30s, the director of investment operations at a firm in Raleigh, North Carolina, felt she had nowhere to go to turn those pangs into something tangible.

"I never thought I would do gymnastics again," Castellano said.

Then, in the summer of 2021, she watched Simone Biles (23 at the time) and 33-year-old mother of two Chellsie Memmel compete at the U.S. championships. Castellano soon found herself on a website ordering a couple of leotards.

Not long after the Tokyo Olympics, inspired by what she'd watched, Castellano summoned the courage to visit Triumph Gymnastics in Cary, North Carolina, the rare gym that offered adult classes. She quickly discovered those familiar pangs were not unique to her.

The demographics surrounding the sport are shifting, and not just at the elite level, where Biles and the oldest women's team the U.S. has ever sent to the Olympics — the aptly nicknamed "Golden Girls" — returned to the top of the podium in the team final on Tuesday night.

On Thursday, Biles will try to become the oldest Olympic all-around champion in 72 years. Her stiffest competition figures to come from 25-year-old Brazilian Rebeca Andrade in an event that also includes Ellie Black of Canada and Filipa Martins of Portugal, both 28.

Their longevity is reflective of a global movement of a sport long considered the realm of the very young. Not so much anymore, as doors long thought shut have swung back open.

A rising tide

Participation in adult gymnastics — from former competitors like Castellano who returned after a long hiatus to novices trying to get the hang of a forward roll — is soaring.

The National Association of Intercollegiate Gymnastics Clubs serves as a landing spot for gymnasts over 18 at the non-elite, non-NCAA level. While the majority of its membership consists of college students who compete as part of a club, it also offers a "non-student" division, meaning anyone at any age can compete at one of its meets, including its national championships.

NAIGC executive director Ilana Shushansky estimates that 20% of the participants at nationals earlier this year in Albuquerque, New Mexico, registered as "non-students." It's a percentage Shushansky believes will continue to rise, fueled in part by former gymnasts rediscovering — and in many cases redefining — their

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relationship with the sport that drew them in as kids only to seemingly abandon them as young adults.

"This is allowing them to meet the sport on their terms," Shushansky said.

That's the way it is for many of those who have made their way to one of the adult camps hosted by Memmel, who retired for good in 2021 and now serves as the co-lead for the USA Gymnastics women's national team when she's not running the gym she and her father, Andy, run in Wisconsin.

Mommel's mission

Mommel wasn't trying to prove a point when she came out of retirement in 2021. She did anyway. Messages of support poured into her social media accounts as other 30 and 40-somethings latched onto her journey.

The comments often included a common refrain, some version of "hey, we want to get back into gymnastics, too, but how do we do it?"

"It's that unfinished business," said 44-year-old Angela Fuller, who like Castellano quit in her teens only to feel the itch to return while watching Memmel in 2021 and now competes at 5280 Gymnastics outside Denver. "It's that dangling carrot. We needed someone to lead the way and show us that it's possible and that's what Chellsie Memmel did for gymnastics."

In the summer of 2022, Memmel opened registration for an adults-only camp. She hoped 40 people would sign up. Within hours she had to cap enrollment at 75 out of fear she couldn't find enough coaches to handle the workload.

Now several times a year athletes from their 20s to their 50s with various levels of experience — and in the case of some, none at all — spend a weekend at a camp led by an Olympic medalist who has become a touchstone for a movement.

While Memmel sees it as a way of giving back, selfishly there's something in it for her, too. The vibe in the camps are a stark contrast to the culture at the elite level she grew up in, in the best way possible.

"This fills up my cup so much," said Memmel, whose most recent camp in June had 90 participants. "Their energy, enthusiasm, love for the sport. When we have new coaches come in, they're just like in awe of the gymnasts, the camaraderie and all of the support they give each other."

Reaching critical mass

Gina Paulhus' expectations were low when she began running a website and created the Facebook group "Aging Like Fine Wine" centered on giving adult gymnasts a place where they could connect to the sport and each other.

The group now boasts more than 13,000 members. The website — which has the phrase "this sport is not just for kids anymore!" in all caps on the front page — offers training videos, forums and ways for interested athletes to find classes or a team.

Paulhus also runs an adults-only camp in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Back in 2015, she believed hers was the only camp of its kind. Now there are more than 30, not to mention hundreds of meets across the country every year that are open to athletes over 18.

"I think it's one of those cases where 'monkey see, monkey do' and now it's sort of reached this critical mass," she said.

Things are evolving so rapidly that it's becoming apparent that supply is struggling to keep up with demand.

Mommel says the feedback she hears most often at camps comes from those who essentially coach themselves back at their home gyms because there is no one to fill the void.

One of the biggest issues is insurance. Policies to cover adult classes are substantially more expensive than ones that cover children because of the risk of injury, leading some gym owners to shy away from the opportunity.

That didn't stop Debra Bell when she and her husband opened Triumph Gymnastics, where Castellano trains. One of their main tenets was creating a space where adults could come because, as the former competitive gymnast pointed out, "for some of us, it never leaves you."

A lifelong love affair

It never did for Castellano, who briefly got into coaching during college before immersing herself in the

corporate world.

She believes she is better now at 34 than she was as a teenager, even if her training looks far different than it did two decades ago. She's at the gym for an hour on Tuesdays and Thursdays and two hours on Sundays. It's not just her schedule that's changed. Her mindset has, too.

"When I got back into it, I didn't take it for granted at all because I knew what it was like to not have gymnastics in my life," she said.

It's a common refrain among her peers. They're not doing this because their parents signed them up. Most of them have families and careers. Their relationship with the sport has evolved from something they are to something they do, a critical shift.

Fuller spent decades bothered by both an ankle injury from the balance beam and the constant sense she needed to excel to earn validation from her parents.

It's not that way anymore. She is part of an adult team at 5280 that boasts more than 40 members. She travels all over the world competing, sometimes in both men's and women's events.

Occasionally she'll receive notes of encouragement from young girls who see the mother of two teenage sons do her thing and realize their love of doing gymnastics doesn't need an expiration date.

"They tell me 'I can do this at your age,'" Fuller said. "'I can do this forever.' ... And that's great. Because I'm never leaving."

Delta CEO says airline is facing \$500 million in costs from global tech outage

By MICHELLE CHAPMAN AP Business Writer

Delta Air Lines CEO Ed Bastian says the airline is facing \$500 million in costs related to a global tech outage this month that disrupted emergency services, communications and thousands of businesses.

Speaking on CNBC, Bastian said Wednesday that the monetary amount represents lost revenue as well as "the tens of millions of dollars per day in compensation and hotels" for the five-day period.

A week ago, CrowdStrike blamed a bug in an update that allowed its cybersecurity systems to push bad data out to millions of customer computers, setting off the global tech outage that grounded flights, took TV broadcasts off air and disrupted banks, hospitals and retailers.

Cybersecurity company CrowdStrike also outlined measures it will take to prevent the problem from recurring, including staggering the rollout of updates, giving customers more control over when and where they occur, and providing more details about the updates that it plans.

Among airlines, Delta was by far the hardest hit hard by the outage, having to cancel thousands of flights, because key systems were crippled by the incident.

The U.S. Department of Transportation is investigating why Delta failed to recover as quickly as other airlines. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said last week that the department would also examine Delta's customer service, including "unacceptable" lines for assistance and reports that unaccompanied minors were stranded at airports.

Bastian said on CNBC that Delta will be seeking damages from the disruptions. CrowdStrike has not made any offers to help Delta financially so far, he added. It has offered free consulting advice.

Storm disrupts high-speed trains from Paris, leaving travelers stranded during Olympics

PARIS (AP) — A storm Wednesday interrupted all high-speed train traffic connecting Paris to the southeast of the country as well as Switzerland in both directions, France's rail company said, leaving thousands of travelers stranded amid the Olympics and departures for summer vacation.

The SNCF said all the fast trains leaving from and arriving at the Gare de Lyon train station in the French capital were immobilized due to a tree that fell on the tracks and was hit by a train in Burgundy, southeast

of the French capital. Regular-speed trains use separate tracks and haven't been affected.

Authorities cut the power off the track and a logging operation has already started to remove the tree and repair the electrical system, the SNCF said, adding that all passengers on that line were being brought back to a station in order to help people find alternatives travel modes, the company added.

"The priority remains to bring customers stranded in trains back (to stations)," the company said.

It said no trains will run on the high-speed line before 5 p.m. (1500 GMT). Even then, trains will start departing "very gradually" and traffic will remain "very disrupted," the company warned.

This comes after France's train traffic was severely disrupted last week after acts of sabotage ahead of the Olympic Games opening ceremony. High-speed train services had been fully restored earlier this week.

National weather agency Meteo France warned about a risk of "locally strong" thunderstorms, including heavy rains and wind, in most French regions on Wednesday. The storm warning has been placed on the lower level on a three-tier scale in the Paris region, and on the middle level in most parts of central and southeastern France.

Most of France was also under heat warnings Wednesday for the third consecutive day, with temperatures in Paris hitting 31 degrees Celsius (88 degrees Fahrenheit), Meteo France said.

Lice, scabies, rashes plague Palestinian children as skin disease runs rampant in Gaza's tent camps

By WAFAA SHURAFI and MOHAMMED JAHJOUH Associated Press

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip (AP) — A steady stream of miserable children and worried parents flowed into the dermatology office at Nasser Hospital in central Gaza.

A toddler with a blue hair bow sobbed as her mother showed how the red and white spots covering her face have spread to her neck and chest. Another woman lifted her little boy's clothes to reveal the rashes on his back, butt, thighs and stomach. On his wrists, he had open sores from scratching. A father stood his daughter on the desk so the doctor could examine the lesions on her calves.

Skin diseases are running rampant in Gaza, health officials say. The cause, they say, is the appalling conditions in overcrowded tent camps housing hundreds of thousands of Palestinians driven from their homes, along with the summer heat and the collapse of sanitation that has left pools of open sewage amid 10 months of Israel's bombardment and offensives in the territory.

Doctors are wrestling with more than 103,000 cases of lice and scabies and 65,000 cases of skin rashes, according to the World Health Organization. In Gaza's population of some 2.3 million, more than 1 million cases of acute respiratory infections have been recorded since the war began, along with more than half a million of acute diarrhea and more than 100,000 cases of jaundice, according to the United Nations Development Program.

Cleanliness is impossible in the ramshackle tents, basically wood frames hung with blankets or plastic sheets, crammed side by side over wide stretches, Palestinians say.

"There's no shampoo, no soap," said Munira al-Nahhal, living in a tent in the dunes outside the southern city of Khan Younis. "The water is dirty. Everything is sand and insects and garbage."

Her family's tent was crammed with her grandchildren, many of whom had rashes. One little boy stood scratching the red patches on his belly. "One child gets it, and it spreads to all of them," al-Nahhal said.

Palestinians in the camp said clean water was almost impossible to get. Some wash their children in salt water from the nearby Mediterranean. People have to wear the same clothes day after day until they're able to wash them, then they wear them again immediately. Flies are everywhere. Children play in garbage-strewn sand.

"First it was spots on her face. Then it spread to her stomach and arms, all over her forehead. And it hurts. It itches. And there's no treatment. Or if there is we can't afford it," said Shaima Marshoud, sitting next to her little daughter in a cinder block structure they'd settled in among the tents.

More than 1.8 million of Gaza's 2.3 million people have been driven from their homes, often moving

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multiple times over the past months to get away from Israeli ground assaults or bombardment. The vast majority are now crowded into a 50-square-kilometer (20-square-mile) area of dunes and fields on the coast with almost no sewage system and little water.

The distribution of humanitarian supplies, including soap, shampoo and medicines, has slowed to a trickle, U.N. officials say, because Israeli military operations and general lawlessness in Gaza make it too dangerous for relief trucks to move.

Israel launched its campaign vowing to destroy Hamas after its Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel, in which some 1,200 people were killed and 250 abducted. Israel's assault has killed more than 39,000 people, according to Gaza health authorities.

"The solid waste management system has collapsed," said Chitose Noguchi, the deputy special representative of the U.N. Development Program's Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People.

In a report released Tuesday, the UNDP said Gaza's two pre-war landfills were unreachable amid the fighting and it had set up 10 temporary sites. But Noguchi said there were more than 140 informal dumping sites that have cropped up. Some of them are giant pools of human waste and garbage.

"People are having tents and living next to dumping sites, which is really, really critical situation in terms of the health crisis," Noguchi said.

Nassim Basala, a dermatologist at Nasser Hospital, said they get 300 to 500 people a day coming in with skin diseases. After the most recent Israeli evacuation orders, more people have crowded into agricultural fields outside the city of Khan Younis, where insects are rife in the summer.

Scabies and lice are at epidemic proportions, he said, but other fungal, bacterial and viral infections and parasites are also running wild.

With the flood of patients, even simple cases can be dangerous.

For example, Basala said, impetigo is a simple bacterial infection treatable with creams. But sometimes by the time the patient gets to a doctor, "the bacteria have spread and affected the kidneys," he said. "We've had cases of kidney failure" as a result. Scratched rashes get infected in the pervasive dirt.

He said creams and ointments were in short supply at the hospital.

Children are the most affected. But adults suffer as well. At the hospital's dermatology office, one man untied his dirt-covered shoes to show the painful looking sores on the tops of his feet and ankles where his rash had rubbed open. A woman held up her hands, chapped raw and red.

Mohammed al-Rayyan, several of whose children in a tent outside Khan Younis, have rashes or spots, said he has taken them to doctors.

"They give us creams, but it's no use when you don't have anything to wash with," he said. "You put a cream and it gets better but then the next day it's back the same."

Parents are left struggling to comfort children with painful conditions that won't go away.

Manar al-Hessi's toddler cried as she spread cream on her forehead and chest, covered in scabs, sores and spots.

"It's horrible," al-Hessi said. "There are always flies on her face. She goes in the toilet or the garbage, and it gets in her hands. The filth is huge."

Washington, DC, sues StubHub, saying the resale platform inflates ticket prices with deceptive fees

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The attorney general for Washington, D.C., sued StubHub on Wednesday, accusing the ticket resale platform of advertising deceptively low prices and then ramping up prices with extra fees.

The practice known as "drip pricing" violates consumer protection laws in the nation's capital, Attorney General Brian Schwalb said.

"StubHub intentionally hides the true price to boost profits at its customers' expense," he said in a statement.

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The company said it is disappointed to be targeted, maintaining its practices are consistent with the law and competing companies as well as broader industry norms. "We strongly support federal and state solutions that enhance existing laws to empower consumers, such as requiring all-in pricing uniformly across platforms," the company said in a statement.

The lawsuit, meanwhile, says StubHub hides mandatory "fulfillment and service" fees until the end of a lengthy online purchasing process that often requires more than a dozen pages to complete as a countdown timer creates a sense of urgency.

That makes it "nearly impossible" for buyers to know the true cost of a ticket and compare to find the best price, he said. Fees vary widely and can total more than 40% of the advertised ticket price, the lawsuit alleges.

StubHub, which is based in New York, is one of the world's largest resale platforms for tickets to sports, concerts, and other live events.

Sally Greenberg, CEO of the nonprofit advocacy group National Consumers League, applauded the lawsuit. "Hidden fees in the ticketing industry have truly gotten out of control. The price that is advertised is the price that we should pay — full stop," she said. Ticket fees were also part of a sweeping antitrust lawsuit the Justice Department filed against Ticketmaster and its parent company in May.

StubHub used to advertise the "all-in" cost of a ticket about a decade ago, but changed after finding that people are more likely to buy tickets at higher prices with the "drip pricing" model, he said.

Washington residents' per-capita spending on live entertainment outpaces that of many other major U.S. cities and since 2015, StubHub has sold nearly 5 million tickets in Washington and reaped about \$118 million in fees, the suit states.

The lawsuit seeks damages and to block the pricing practices. Schwalb settled another lawsuit last year with the Washington Commanders over fans' season ticket deposit money.

Today in History: August 1, America gets its MTV

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Thursday, Aug. 1, the 214th day of 2024. There are 152 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On August 1, 1981, MTV began its American broadcast; the first music video aired on the new cable TV network was "Video Killed the Radio Star," by The Buggles.

Also on this date:

In 1876, Colorado was admitted as the 38th state in the Union, less than a month after the US Centennial (earning it the nickname "the Centennial State").

In 1907, a week-long boys' camping event began on Brownsea Island in southern England, organized by Robert Baden-Powell; the event is now marked as the beginning of the Scout Movement.

In 1936, the Olympics opened in Berlin with a ceremony presided over by Adolf Hitler.

In 1944, an uprising broke out in Warsaw, Poland, against Nazi occupation; the revolt lasted two months before collapsing.

In 1957, the United States and Canada announced they had agreed to create the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD).

In 1966, Charles Joseph Whitman, 25, went on an armed rampage at the University of Texas in Austin that killed 14 people, most of whom were shot by Whitman while he was perched in the clock tower of the main campus building.

In 1971, The Concert for Bangladesh, an all-star benefit organized by George Harrison of The Beatles and sitar player Ravi Shankar, was held at Madison Square Garden in New York.

In 1975, a 35-nation summit in Finland concluded with the signing of a declaration known as the Helsinki Accords dealing with European security, human rights and East-West contacts.

In 2001, Pro Bowl tackle Korey Stringer, 27, died of heat stroke, a day after collapsing at the Minnesota

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Vikings' training camp on the hottest day of the year.

In 2004, the Ycua Bolanos supermarket fire in Asuncion, Paraguay killed more than 400 people.

In 2007, the eight-lane Interstate 35W bridge, a major Minneapolis artery, collapsed into the Mississippi River during evening rush hour, killing 13 people.

In 2011, the U.S. House of Representatives passed, 269-161, emergency legislation to avert the nation's first-ever financial default.

In 2014, a medical examiner ruled that a New York City police officer's chokehold caused the death of Eric Garner, whose videotaped arrest and final pleas of "I can't breathe!" had sparked outrage.

In 2018, the remains of dozens of presumed casualties of the Korean War were returned to U.S. soil; in an emotional ceremony in Hawaii, military members carried 55 boxes draped with American flags off two military transport planes.

In 2023, former President Donald Trump was indicted by a federal grand jury on conspiracy and obstruction charges related to his alleged attempts to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Ramblin' Jack Elliott is 93. Actor Giancarlo Giannini is 82. Basketball Hall of Fame coach Roy Williams is 74. Blues singer-musician Robert Cray is 71. Rock singer Joe Elliott (Def Leppard) is 65. Rapper Chuck D (Public Enemy) is 64. Actor Demian Bichir is 61. Actor John Carroll Lynch is 61. Rock singer Adam Duritz (Counting Crows) is 60. Film director Sam Mendes is 59. Actor Tempestt Bledsoe is 51. Football Hall of Famer Edgerrin James is 46. Actor Jason Momoa is 45.

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