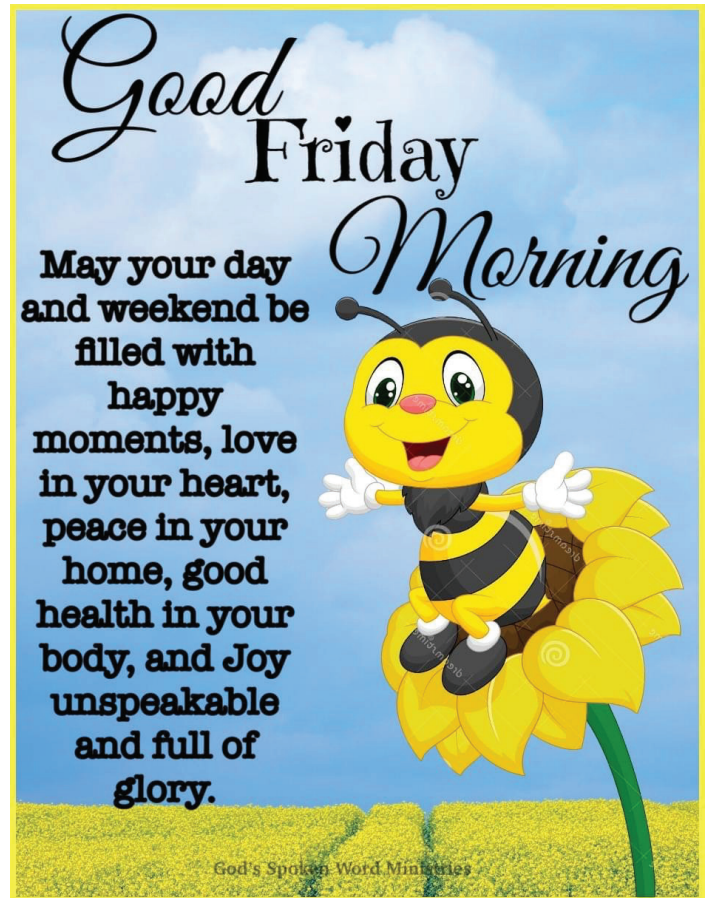


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## Friday, Aug. 2

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.

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

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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.**

## Americans Freed

Journalist Evan Gershkovich was among a group of Americans and Russian dissidents released from Russia yesterday as part of a seven-nation prisoner swap, the largest involving the US and Russia since the Cold War. The US and Europe released eight Russian prisoners in return, including professional hitman Vadim Krasikov, jailed in Germany in 2021 for murdering a Chechen separatist leader on Kremlin orders.

The complex, monthslong negotiations involved representatives from the US and Russia as well as Germany, Poland, Slovenia, Norway, and Turkey. Gershkovich, a Wall Street Journal reporter, had been jailed since March 2023 on espionage charges and was found guilty last month. American Paul Whelan and Russian-American reporter Alsu Kurmasheva were also released, as well as prominent Russian dissident and US resident Vladimir Kara-Murza.

Leaders of both Russia and the US touted the swap as a win, though senior US officials cautioned the deal does not indicate improving relations between the nations. The Americans landed in Maryland late yesterday.

## Simone Biles Takes Gold

Simone Biles made history at the 2024 Paris Olympics yesterday, winning gold in the women's gymnastics all-around final. The win marks the 27-year-old athlete's sixth Olympic gold medal and ninth overall. She also becomes the third woman ever to win the all-around gold twice, with a record eight-year gap between wins, and the oldest all-around Olympic champion since 1952. Teammate Suni Lee claimed bronze, becoming the first gymnast since 1980 to follow an all-around gold with a medal in the same event at the following Olympics.

In the pool, the US women's 4x200-meter freestyle relay team won gold, with Katie Ledecky breaking the record for most medals for an American woman in any sport with 13. Kate Douglass won her first Olympic gold in the 200-meter breaststroke, upsetting South Africa's Tatjana Smith.

Other highlights include the US women's basketball team beating Belgium 87-74 and Americans Taylor Fritz and Tommy Paul defeating Britain's Andy Murray—who announced he will retire after the Olympics—and Dan Evans, 6-2, 6-4.

## Virgin Shark Births

An endangered shark species was found to have reproduced asexually for the first time, according to a recent study. Parthenogenesis—also known as virgin birth—has been observed in 1,000 invertebrate species, including insects, and in 100 vertebrate species, including in lizards, crocodiles, and birds.

Researchers studied two female *Mustelus mustelus* sharks (known colloquially as common smooth-hound sharks) in an Italian aquarium for 13 years—exceeding the three months the species has been documented to store sperm. Despite no access to males, the female sharks managed to give birth annually since 2020. Genetic testing has confirmed the shark offspring were genetically identical to their mothers, implying parthenogenesis, and not the result of long-term sperm storage.

Research into reproductive behavior may help inform conservation efforts for smooth-hound sharks, whose presence in the Mediterranean, eastern Atlantic, and Indian oceans is projected to decrease by 50% in the coming decades. Illegal fishing and overfishing are considered largely to blame.

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## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Disney, Fox, and Warner Bros. Discovery to launch standalone sports streamer Venu at \$42.99 per month this fall; Venu will include ESPN networks as well as ABC, Fox, TNT, and more.

Universal Pictures acquires rights to Britney Spears biopic film with "Crazy Rich Asians" director Jon M. Chu to direct.

Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck reportedly to divorce after two years of marriage.

Cardi B files for divorce from fellow rapper and husband Offset.

## Science & Technology

New 3D-printed Band-Aid can be applied inside the body, in areas ranging from the heart to joints; technology may help internal injuries heal faster and improve drug delivery.

Researchers discover the evolution of thorns on plants is controlled by a single gene; feature has developed separately at least 28 known times, a phenomenon known as convergent evolution.

Computer simulations suggest use of self-driving cars could eliminate traffic jams, even if such vehicles were just 5% of traffic; at 60% or higher, flows became more efficient to using traffic lights.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -1.4%, Dow -1.2%, Nasdaq -2.3%) after latest round of economic data—including on jobless claims and factory activity—spurs concerns of a slowing economy.

Intel shares fall over 18% in after-hours trading after chipmaker announces it is cutting more than 15% of workforce, or over 15,000 jobs, and suspending dividends starting in Q4.

Apple beats revenue and earnings estimates, sees revenue rise 5% in Q3.

Amazon shares fall in after-hours trading after slightly missing revenue estimates; company still saw 10% year-over-year rise in revenue, partly due to a boost in sales from online advertising unit.

## Politics & World Affairs

Democratic Party kicks off virtual roll call yesterday to vote for Vice President Kamala Harris as the party's presumptive presidential nominee; delegates have until Monday to return their ballots.

Israel says Hamas military chief Mohammed Deif was killed last month in an Israeli airstrike in the Gaza Strip; Hamas has yet to confirm Deif's death.

US Justice Department alleges Texas Juvenile Justice Department routinely violated constitutional rights of juveniles at five of its detention facilities; finds instances of sexual abuse, discrimination, and use of excessive force.

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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.

## HEALTH & WELLNESS

### Sports Safety Spotlight: Mayo Clinic advises easing into summer sports to avoid Achilles injuries

**Amanda Dyslin, Mayo Clinic Health System Communications**

LA CROSSE, Wis. — The warm summer weather can make adults feel like kids again. The Weekend Warrior comes roaring out, and the excitement and bursts of exertion can lead to a very common injury among that group: Achilles tendinitis.

"Achilles tendinitis is most common in people who suddenly increase the intensity or duration of exercise. It's also common when someone hasn't been properly trained for their sport," says Jacob Erickson, D.O., Sports Medicine, Mayo Clinic Health System.

The Achilles tendon is a long band of tissue that connects calf muscles at the back of the lower leg to your heel bone. This tendon is used when walking, running, jumping or pushing up on your toes. But if it's injured, the pain, typically located in the back of your calf, and lack of function can throw you off your stride for months.

Recognizing when you're at risk for Achilles tendinitis and knowing how to prevent it can keep you walking, running and exercising without pain. Risk factors include:

- Your sex

Achilles tendinitis is most common in men.

- Age

You're at a higher risk as you get older.

- Flat feet

A naturally flat arch in your foot can put more strain on the Achilles tendon.

- Obesity

Carrying extra pounds also increases tendon strain.

- Poor footwear

Running in worn-out shoes or wearing footwear inappropriate for your sport can injure the tendon.

- Weather and terrain

Tendon pain occurs more frequently in cold weather than when it's warm out. Running on hills also can put more stress on your Achilles tendon.

- Medical conditions and medications

People with psoriasis, high blood pressure or who take certain types of antibiotics, called fluoroquinolones, are at higher risk of developing Achilles tendinitis.

"Although you may be at risk for this type of injury, there are things you can do to help prevent it," says Dr. Erickson. "For example, if you're beginning an exercise regimen, start slowly and gradually increase the duration and intensity of the training."

Other tips include avoiding activities that place excessive stress on your tendons, such as hill running. If you participate in a strenuous activity, warm up first by exercising at a slower pace. If you notice pain during a particular exercise, stop and rest.

Choose your shoes carefully. The shoes you wear while exercising should provide adequate heel cushioning and firm arch support to help reduce the tension in the Achilles tendon. Replace your worn-out shoes. If your shoes are in good condition but don't support your arch, try adding supports in both shoes.

Take the time to stretch your calf muscles and Achilles tendon in the morning, before exercise and after exercise to maintain flexibility. This is especially important to avoid a recurrence of Achilles tendinitis.

Strengthen your calf muscles. Strong calf muscles enable the calf and Achilles tendon to handle activity and exercise stress better.

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"If you do experience an Achilles injury, be sure to rest and avoid exercising the area," says Dr. Erickson. "Recognizing the pain early and avoiding exercising through the pain is key. Ignoring the pain and continuing to exercise can cause the problem to snowball and become chronic. Early recognition, resting and basic stretching can remedy the problem quickly."

If you are unable to get the problem to calm down after a few weeks, it is time to contact your healthcare team. Early medical treatment includes more intensive physical therapy exercises and sometimes topical treatment to assist with the pain.

Achilles tendinitis can become chronic and last for many months or even years if not appropriately treated early. Refractory cases of Achilles tendon pain may require surgery to repair the tendon. Healing can take months, so it's best to be aware of your risks and practice preventive strategies to keep you active and pain-free.

###

## About Mayo Clinic Health System

Mayo Clinic Health System consists of clinics, hospitals and other facilities that serve the healthcare needs of people in Minnesota and Wisconsin. The community-based healthcare professionals, paired with the resources and expertise of Mayo Clinic, enable patients in the region to receive the highest-quality physical and virtual healthcare close to home.

## Queen of Hearts

Week number 21 of the Queen of Hearts was held Thursday night. Ticket sales for the week were \$2,575. The jackpot at \$34,955 The name of Mike Siegler was drawn. He picked card number 13 which was the Five of Spades. He won the consolation prize of 10 percent of the ticket sales - \$257.



## Raccoon causes seven blinks early Thursday morning

JJ Jenkins called the city Thursday morning to report that he had experienced some electrical blinks. Lineman Landon Johnson called Paul Kosel to find out if the blink was just his house or more from the transformer feeding that block. Kosel ran a report which resulted in six pages - all with seven blinks. Kosel then called Johnson back and said it was the circuit feeding the east side and south side of Groton that had the blinks. Johnson went on line patrol. Then he called Kosel back. "I found the problem," he said. There was a raccoon that climbed a pole on the south side of the railroad tracks and got itself in a place it should not have gone. Johnson and Kosel went to the scene where Johnson was able to get the fried raccoon out of the system infrastructure.

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## **Corn gets flattened from strong wind and heavy rain**

**Jeff Howard took this picture of a cornfield in the Claremont area after a storm with strong wind and heavy rain went through the area. The corn was virtually flattened to the ground.**



## Band directors offer plan to keep live auditions for All-State Band

By Dana Hess

For the S.D. NewsMedia Association

PIERRE — The state's high school band directors have offered a plan that they hope will allow for live auditions for students trying out for All-State Band. The plan was approved at Thursday's meeting of the South Dakota High School Activities Association board of directors.

In the past, the association has used the state airplane to fly judges to audition sites across the state over two weekends in January. On the third weekend judges were driven to the audition site.

Over the past two years, winter weather has played havoc with that schedule. Two years ago, after two weekends of live auditions, bad weather forced the cancellation of the third weekend and those students had to submit taped auditions. This year bad weather canceled the first weekend, forcing all students to record their auditions.

The plan offered by band directors calls for grounding the state plane and driving judges to auditions. Auditions would get started on a Wednesday in January in Huron, move to Sioux Falls for auditions on Thursday, Friday and Saturday and finish with auditions on Monday in Rapid City.

"I feel like we made some progress," said Kimberly Carda, band director at Roncalli High School in Aberdeen. During the meeting, board members heard from six band directors, two parents of band students and one student band member.

Wendy Thorson, the band director at Northwestern, said students need the experience of auditioning live before a judge. "You're not going to get that in a video audition," Thorson said. "The majority of band directors and ADs (activities directors) want the live auditions"

In case of inclement weather, the auditions could be rescheduled over the next two weeks. The plan calls for a decision to be made on the Tuesday before auditions start to determine if the weather will be good enough to travel across the state.

At the board's June meeting, SDHSAA Assistant Executive Director Brooks Bowman, who oversees fine arts for the association, offered the board two options that both included taping students' auditions.

Bowman said his main concern was keeping students safe in winter weather. He also noted that holding the auditions over three weekends gave some students one or two more weeks to practice for their auditions. It was clear at Thursday's meeting that he was not a fan of the band directors' proposal.

"I really struggle with this," Bowman said, when asked to offer his opinion of the plan. "It doesn't fix everything."

Bowman and others in the SDHSAA office have taken heat over the past two years over the need to go to taped auditions. The band directors' support for the new plan, with the bad weather contingency, would have to be passed along to the parents of band students, Bowman said. "That would have to be a priority of the band directors."

The SDHSAA board unanimously approved the new audition plan during its Aug. 1 meeting.

—30—

## New policy may ease creation of football schedules

By Dana Hess

For the S.D. NewsMedia Association

PIERRE — If the state's high schools comply with some new policies, it may be easier for the South Dakota High School Activities Association to create football schedules.

The policies were approved at Thursday's meeting of the SDHSAA board of directors.

One policy requires schools to report certain changes by the board's February meeting during alignment years. For football, schools are ranked every two years by male average daily attendance to determine their classification so that they will play against teams from schools of a similar size.

Changes that must be reported in February include the addition or removal of football to the school's offerings, new football cooperatives or the dissolution of football cooperatives.

Dan Swartos, SDHSAA executive director, described the policy change as "giving us a little more flexibility." Another policy allows SDHSAA to release football schedules as they are completed. It's likely that schedules for the bigger schools, where there are rarely major changes in classifications, will be finished first. Forming football cooperatives is more common for smaller schools that field 11B and nine-man teams.

Getting schedules out to schools as they are finished will help them finalize their plans for homecoming, according to SDHSAA Assistant Executive Director Randy Soma who creates the football schedules.

Swartos said this time of year can create some scheduling problems as football practices begin and some smaller schools may realize that they don't have enough students to field a team.

The new policies earned unanimous approval from the SDHSAA board.

—30—

## SDHSAA to study success factor in high school sports

By Dana Hess

For the S.D. NewsMedia Association

PIERRE — One of the new goals for the South Dakota High School Activities Association is studying whether a success factor should be used when classifying sports teams.

SDHSAA Executive Director Dan Swartos said currently schools are classified by enrollment. Using a success factor would call for moving teams to a higher classification depending on how they do in state tournaments. He said the method is used in other states.

Some of the other goals that the SDHSAA board of directors discussed during its annual strategic planning session on Wednesday will be continued from the past year.

One continuing goal will be an economic impact study designed, according to Swartos, to offer information to chambers of commerce about the benefits of hosting state tournaments. He said this could result in some savings for schools on hotel lodging.

SDHSAA will also continue its sportsmanship initiative concerning the conduct of fans, coaches and student-athletes. In the past year the association has sought to highlight school sportsmanship initiatives and worked with student councils on how to address the issue.

The association will also convene a committee to study SDHSAA rules on the transfer of student eligibility and continue its initiative to recruit more coaches.

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## Lawrence County Fatal Crash

What: Single motorcycle fatal crash  
Where: Nemo Road and Estes Creek Road, one mile south of Nemo, SD  
When: 11:51 a.m., Wednesday, July 31, 2024

Vehicle 1: 2010 Harley Davidson FLTRX  
Driver 1: 46-year-old male, fatal injuries  
Helmet Use: Yes  
Passenger 1: 49-year-old male, serious, non-life-threatening injuries  
Helmet Use: Yes

Lawrence County, S.D.- One person died and another was seriously injured in a single motorcycle crash Wednesday morning near Nemo, SD.

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

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2010 Harley Davidson was traveling southbound on Nemo Road near Estes Creek Road. The vehicle left the roadway to the left, entered the ditch, became airborne and tripped, coming to final rest in the ditch. The driver and passenger were both ejected.

The passenger was life flighted to a Rapid City hospital with serious, non-life-threatening injuries. The driver sustained fatal 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.

## Pennington County Fatal Crash

What: Single motorcycle fatal crash  
Where: 12445 Old Hill City Road, Hill City, SD  
When: 6:12 p.m., Wednesday, July 31, 2024

Vehicle 1: 1994 Harley Davidson Cruiser  
Driver 1: 60-year-old male, fatal injuries  
Helmet Use: No

Pennington County, S.D.- A motorcyclist died Wednesday evening in a single-vehicle crash on Old Hill City Road, Hill City, SD.

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

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 1994 Harley Davidson Cruiser was traveling eastbound on Old Hill City Road. The driver lost control and began sliding on the right side, then flipped and came to rest on the shoulder of the road.

The driver was transported to a Rapid City hospital where he was pronounced deceased.

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.

## Girls-only cybersecurity camp challenges stereotypes

BY MARIIA NOVOSELIA  
South Dakota News Watch

MADISON, S.D. – The campus of Dakota State University came to life in the middle of summer break, when more than 100 middle school girls arrived to learn about cybersecurity.

One of the girls, Suzanna Koeters, traveled to Madison from Sioux City, Iowa, to participate in this year's GenCyber Girls in CybHER Security Middle School Residential camp.

"Earlier, when we were told about the classes, lock-picking was one of them, and I want to learn to lock-pick – probably just to annoy my family," Suzanna said, adding that she is also excited to learn to code.

When she grows up, Suzanna wants to be an "aerospace engineer or an electrician, or if those two don't work out, somebody who codes websites." Whatever career path she ends up following, she plans to use the knowledge from the camp to create safe and reliable websites.



**Lori Engebretson, retention specialist at Dakota State University, welcomes students on June 17, 2024, to the 10th GenCyber Girls in CybHER Security Middle School Residential Camp inside the Beacom College of Computer and Cyber Sciences in Madison, S.D.** (Photo: Mariia Novoselia / South Dakota News Watch)

### Initiative attracts girls to DSU

The number of female students in Dakota State's programs in cyber operations, network and security administration, and computer science increased by 595% between the Fall of 2013 and the Fall of 2019, according to the CybHER 2019-2020 annual report.

Similarly, the number of female first-year students in all majors within the Beacom College of Computer and Cyber Sciences at Dakota State grew by 313%, the same report shows.

Ashley Podhradsky, one of the CybHER co-founders, said this growth demonstrates that the organization's approach and consistency are paying off and that more women are discovering the field.

"It's something that we are proud of, but we're not satisfied with, and we're going to keep working to do better," Podhradsky said.

The science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) workforce in the United States grew from 29 million to 34.9 million between 2011 and 2021, according to the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics.

While the number of women in STEM also grew within the same 10 years – from 9.4 million to 12.3 million, it still does not equal the number of men in the field, nor is it similar to the number of men in STEM in 2011.

As of 2021, 35% of the STEM workforce was female, which is a slight improvement since 2011, when women made up 32% of all STEM professionals.

The report also said that 65% of female workers in STEM had at least a bachelor's degree, compared to 43% of their male counterparts who had an equivalent level of education.

Jane Utecht, strategic communications coordinator at Dakota State University, said in an email that out of the 580 students who took part in three GenCyber camps from 2018 to 2021, 18% chose to pursue a

bachelor's degree at Dakota State University.

### Guest speaker shares experience

The annual camp spans five days and includes multiple lectures and activities.

After receiving their laptops, backpacks, T-shirts and room keys, all the girls were split into three teams, each named after a notable woman who works in cybersecurity: Mary Horvath, senior digital forensic examiner with the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Computer Analysis Response Team; Jessica Hyde, consultant to Magnet Forensics and adjunct professor at George Mason University; and Cathy Johnston, vice president of mission integration at Peraton.

Johnston delivered a keynote presentation about the ubiquity of cyber. She used major political and social events, such as cyber attacks on critical infrastructure in Guam, as well as personal anecdotes, like the time she could not find a place to fuel her car because of a cyber attack, to stress the importance of cybersecurity literacy.

Though this was the first time Johnston worked with CybHER, she said she has been encouraging girls to get into STEM fields throughout her entire career.

She said the aim of her presentation was to show that cyber "is not a big scary thing" but something that is accessible and necessary.

"I hope that they see that there are all kinds of super exciting career opportunities for folks that study cyber and that they take on some personal responsibility for cybersecurity," Johnston said.

### Curriculum evolves to sustain interest

After Johnston's presentation, the three teams took on different hands-on activities.

Students from Team Cathy engaged in a breaker day activity, in which they learned what is inside hard drives. Meanwhile, Team Jessica students mastered lock-picking and made friendship bracelets using binary code.

Hailey Naber, a ninth grade student, said while the influence of technology is growing, so is the initiative to understand cybersecurity, which can "prevent people from being attacked and having (their) information stolen."

Hailey is one of several returning students. She first attended the camp after finishing sixth grade and decided to come back because of how much fun her experience was.

Kanthi Narukonda, director at CybHER Institute and associate professor at Dakota State University, said one of the goals of the camp is to diversify the curriculum to an extent that even returning students learn new things.

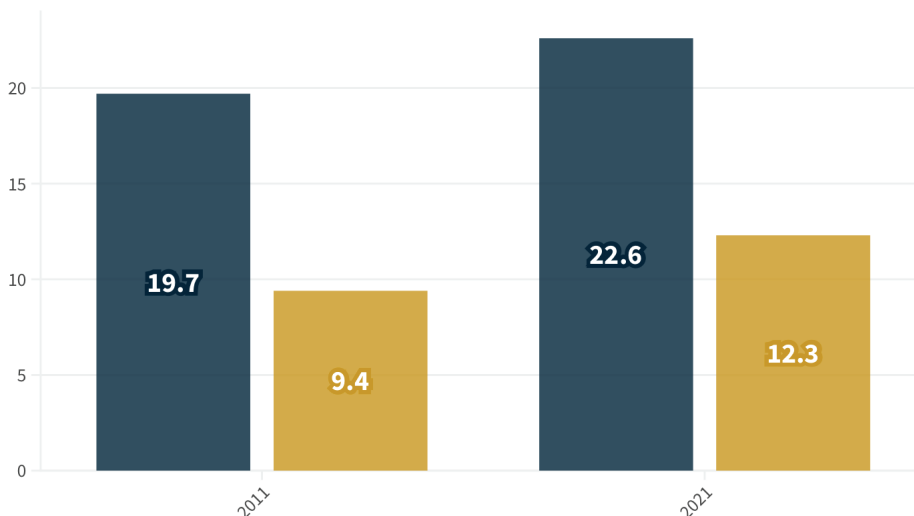
"There is one module called 'Cybersecurity Concepts and Ethics.' The definitions of each of those concepts do not differ, but the way that we explain it to (the students) and the activities that we do for those specific lessons differ every year," Narukonda said.

### Men and women in STEM careers in the United States

Number of men and women who were in the STEM workforce in 2011, compared to 2021. The numbers are in millions.



■ Men ■ Women



Source: [National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics](#) • Graphic by Mariia Novoselia / South Dakota News Watch

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Over the five days, participants of the camp took a variety of classes that covered topics from Python programming and block coding to notable women in cyber.

A hands-on activity that proved to be popular not only among the students but also those leading the camp was building Wobble Bots. Constructed out of Solo cups, a battery pack and a motor, these robots spun on their "legs" made of markers, leaving colorful traces.

## Representation matters for career aspirations

The camp also included an ice cream social that introduced the girls to women who work in cyber and STEM fields, which counters the belief among some people that cyber is a highly technical field not suitable for girls, Narukonda said.

"It's very important to have a space where young girls can learn and do activities on their own time, with their own peers, without the fear of being considered geeky or other terms," she said. "It's very important to have a space where they know that they will be supported, that they will be encouraged, and that they can look up to role models who look just like them."

One of Podhradsky's main aspirations is for women and girls to see cybersecurity as a viable career option. She said it is not uncommon for boys to want to be soldiers or police officers because they often see people they respect and admire have these jobs. Women in STEM careers often do not have such representation.

"I want girls to know that (cybersecurity) is an engaging, social, fun environment, and it's not some of the stereotypes that we see – not a hacker hiding in mom's basement," Podhradsky said.

Unlike camper Madelyn Engebretson, who said she is considering a career in cyber, Narukonda said she did not know she would end up working in the field until she was pursuing her bachelor's degree.

At first, she wanted to be a medical doctor. Then she changed her mind and got into a computer science and engineering program at a university in India. A fan of cryptography puzzles, she said she was fascinated by a class called information security.

"I never anticipated that I would be in cyber security because when I was in sixth or ninth grade, I didn't even know of cybersecurity," Narukonda said.

Similarly, Podhradsky wanted to be an attorney until a technology coordinator taught her how websites are made.

"She brought me to a server room and showed me how you go from a computer to a server and then to the internet, and that was really interesting to me," Podhradsky said. "In high school, I was captain of the basketball team and president of a computer club."



**"Cyber is so prevalent, so all-encompassing in our lives today that you have to be a cyber expert just to live," Cathy Johnston, vice president of mission integration at Peraton, said in her keynote on June 17, 2024, at the Beacom College of Computer and Cyber Sciences in Madison, S.D.** (Photo: Mariia Novoselia / South Dakota

News Watch)

## CybHER expands reach

Until recently, the cybersecurity camp was only open to students entering sixth through ninth grade.





**Hailey Naber picks a lock in her first class of the cybersecurity camp on June 17, 2024, at Dakota State University in Madison, S.D.** (Photo: Mariia Novoselia / South Dakota News Watch)

Things changed last year when a group of six fourth-grade girls joined the camp thanks to a partnership with the Palo Alto Networks cybersecurity company.

Narukonda said this year the number of fourth graders has doubled and that she foresees this addition to be a recurring practice.

"It's very important to have a space where young girls can learn and do activities on their own time, with their own peers, without the fear of being considered geeky or other terms."

Furthermore, in collaboration with AT&T, CybHER has taken cybersecurity classes to nine Native American reservations across the state.

Podhradsky said CybHER visits Boys and Girls Clubs associated with the reservations to teach core cyber competencies to the children who attend

them and online safety to their parents.

### **Gender diversity has improved, but not ideal**

Narukonda went on to complete a master of science degree in information assurance and is currently pursuing a doctorate degree in cyber defense at DSU.

She said from her experience, computer-related classrooms are more diverse in terms of gender in universities in India than they are in the United States, which was "mind-boggling" to her.

Now as a faculty member, Narukonda said she sees more female students in undergraduate programs than she did when she was doing her master's program.

"I'm pretty sure there were like two or three out of 10 students that were female," she said. "Now I see like four or five maybe."

Being the only woman at a table all too often and "wanting to be one of many" is the reason why Podhradsky co-founded CybHER with Pam Rowland.

"We decided to do whatever we can to help more women be interested in STEM," Podhradsky said, adding that research shows that girls who are curious about cyber or STEM careers tend to lose this interest by high school.

While most of the girls who ended up returning to DSU after the camp chose to pursue a bachelor's degree in cyber operations, Utecht said in an email that a fair share went on to get their degrees in majors like computer game design, digital arts and design, English and accounting.

"We know that a lot of these girls will go to college and their future careers will be different," Podhradsky said. "We want the people that are in retail, in manufacturing, in education, in health care, in law to be the ones who are not going to click on that malicious link and set off a cyberattack at their organization."



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Regents change political activity policy to allow employees to run for Legislature

**BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - AUGUST 1, 2024 11:57 AM**

The South Dakota Board of Regents changed its political activity policy at its Thursday meeting in Madison to allow public university employees to run for state legislative office.

The change comes six months after the state Supreme Court reversed its decision on whether state employees can run for elected office. For decades, state employees were restricted from running for the Legislature after a 2001 ruling from the court deemed their employment a conflict of interest.

Conflict of interest was a heated topic among legislators ahead of the 2024 legislative session, when Gov. Kristi Noem was tasked with appointing two empty seats in the Legislature. In February, the court announced in an advisory opinion that legislators can have contracts with state government if the money comes from the annual budget bill, but not if the money comes from any other bill.

The regents' earlier, restrictive policy was created as a reaction to the 2001 decision in *Pitts v. Larson*.

Rich Helsper, an attorney at Helsper, McCarty and Rasmussen Law Firm in Brookings, represented state lawmaker and South Dakota State University employee Carol Pitts in a conflict of interest lawsuit in front of the state Supreme Court in 2001.

The Supreme Court's February 2024 decision and the Regents' policy change allows for more perspectives in the legislative process, Helsper said. Any concerns about conflict of interest will be handled by voters.

"You don't want little groups to go out to Pierre and represent who they're employed by rather than their constituents," Helsper said. "That's not good either, but that's where the voters come in. If that issue comes up and the voters want a representative from DSU in Madison to represent their interests, then so be it."

DSU – Dakota State University – is one of six public universities in the state.

In 2001, Carol Pitts was a Republican Brookings legislator working at SDSU. Pitts told South Dakota Searchlight in a recent interview that she had asked several state officials and the Board of Regents if she was able to represent her district without conflict. The regents' policy at the time said employees could run for local and state offices, as long as it didn't conflict with their work.

Lyndell Petersen, for example, was elected to the Legislature in the 1970s while working for SDSU Extension. Petersen, a member of the South Dakota Hall of Fame, served in the Legislature for 18 years, including eight on the Appropriations Committee. Petersen had a significant impact on agricultural policy in the state.

"I really, really like this, because I think somebody like that would not have been able to serve under this prior to this," Regent Randy Frederick said of Petersen before the Regents unanimously approved the policy change. "And that would have been quite a loss to the state of South Dakota for years, because of his expertise that he brought to the Appropriations Committee in the South Dakota Senate."

The February announcement from the state Supreme Court was a "big deal" for Pitts and thousands of state employees, she said. The clarification promotes the "citizen" in South Dakota's citizen Legislature, and it allows people to focus on serving rather than "looking over their shoulder."

"For me, it was closure," Pitts said. "What I was fighting for was correct, and I'm glad that it had come back forward and was clarified."

Pitts chose to resign from SDSU after the state Supreme Court determined that she should not be paid by the university as long as she was serving at the Capitol. She moved to a company in the private sector, at the behest of the attorney general at the time, and resigned from the Legislature in 2002 when her legislative role interfered with a state contract her employer sought. She returned to the Legislature in 2007 and served two more terms.

*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.*

## COMMENTARY

### State should confront Indigenous foster care and prison numbers

ABIGAYLE MAXWELL

The Indian Child Welfare Act is a federal policy that seeks to keep Indigenous families and communities intact by regulating the removal of Native American children from their homes and the placement of children in foster care or adoptive homes. The goal of ICWA is the preservation of Indigenous communities and the safety and health of Native children.

In 2023, the U.S. Supreme Court reviewed ICWA through the case *Haaland v. Brackeen*, which challenged the constitutionality of ICWA based on discrimination. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that ICWA is constitutional.

During this time, the South Dakota Legislature considered adopting state-based protections similar to ICWA but decided to hold off until after the Supreme Court ruling. During the 2024 legislative session, the Legislature passed a bill to establish an advisory council to reflect on ICWA proceedings and begin to spark change.

This is the first step in a necessary approach to increasing protections for Indigenous communities, families and children. South Dakota is the only state in the Upper Midwest and Northern Plains that does not have state-based ICWA protections. This demonstrates a lack of attention to ICWA and the issue of the removal of Indigenous children from their homes.

In South Dakota, Native American children account for 13% of the child population but represent 74% of the foster care population. This reflects disparities faced by Indigenous children and their families and the importance of strengthening ICWA protections on a state level.

This is a systemic issue, and it is also deeply connected to the mass incarceration of Indigenous people in South Dakota.

There is a foster care-to-prison pipeline. Children placed in foster care are faced with a disproportionately higher risk of being incarcerated later in life. In South Dakota, Native Americans account for at least 35% of the prison population, but only 9% of the state's adult population.

This shows that the disproportionate use of foster care placement for Indigenous children may be connected to the disparities in the incarceration of Indigenous individuals. There must be an effort made to conduct research on this connection and to craft policies that protect Indigenous children, families and communities.

*Abigayle Maxwell is a master's degree candidate at the Virginia Commonwealth School of Social Work in Richmond, Virginia. Abigayle has focused her academic career on advocating for and researching social justice issues.*

### Native American public health officials are stuck in data blind spot

**Denials leave tribal leaders scrambling during public health emergencies**

**BY: JAZMIN OROZCO RODRIGUEZ, KFF HEALTH NEWS - AUGUST 1, 2024 6:00 AM**

It's not easy to make public health decisions without access to good data. And epidemiologists and public health workers for Native American communities say they're often in the dark because state and federal agencies restrict their access to the latest numbers.

The 2010 reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act gave tribal epidemiology centers public health authority and requires the federal Department of Health and Human Services to grant them access to and use of data and other protected health information that's regularly distributed to state and local officials. But tribal epidemiology center workers have told government investigators that's not often

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the case.

By July 2020, American Indians and Alaskan Natives had a COVID-19 infection rate 3½ times that of non-Hispanic whites. Problems accessing data predated the pandemic, but the alarming infection and death rates in Native American communities underscored the importance of making data-sharing easier so tribal health leaders and epidemiologists have the information they need to make lifesaving decisions.

Tribal health officials have repeatedly said data denials impeded their responses to disease outbreaks, including slowing contact tracing during the pandemic and an ongoing syphilis outbreak in the Midwest and Southwest.

"We're being blinded," said Meghan Curry O'Connell, the chief public health officer for the Great Plains Tribal Leaders' Health Board and a citizen of the Cherokee Nation. The sharing of data has improved somewhat in recent years, she said, but not enough.

Federal investigators and tribal epidemiologists have documented a litany of obstacles keeping state and federal public health information from tribes, including confusion about data-sharing policies, inconsistent processes for requesting information, data that's of poor quality or outdated, and strict privacy rules for sensitive data on health issues like HIV and substance misuse.

Limiting the ability of tribes and tribal epidemiology centers to monitor and respond to public health issues makes historical health disparities difficult to address. Life expectancy among American Indians and Alaskan Natives is at least 5½ years shorter than the national average.

Sarah Shewbrooks and her colleagues at the Great Plains Tribal Epidemiology Center are among those who've found themselves blinded by bureaucratic walls. Shewbrooks said the data dearth was particularly evident during the COVID pandemic, when her team couldn't access public health data available to other public health workers in state and local agencies. Her team was forced to manually record positive cases and deaths in the 311 counties of North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Iowa — the region the center serves.

Shewbrooks, director of the center's data-coordinating unit and its lead epidemiologist, estimates staffers spent more than a year's worth of their time during the pandemic scraping together their own datasets to steer information to tribal leaders making decisions about closing down reservations and asking residents to isolate at home.

She said the process was frustrating and stressful, especially since it robbed her team of hours they could've spent trying to save lives in the communities they serve. The tribes in their region were doing "incredible things," she said, by providing food and shelter for people who needed to quarantine.

"But they were having to do it all without being given real-time understanding of what's going on around them," Shewbrooks said.

Contact tracers who work for state governments cover Native American populations, but it's important to have people from within the community take the lead, Shewbrooks said. Tribal workers are better equipped to move around within their communities and meet people where they are.

Shewbrooks said state contact tracers relied on calling and texting patients, which is often not the most effective method. Tribal members can be a hard-to-reach community for state workers whose protocol is to move on to the next case if they don't get a response.

"So many cases were just getting closed," Shewbrooks said.

In 2022, the Government Accountability Office published a report that confirmed concerns raised by tribal health officials, including at the Great Plains tribal epidemiology center. Federal investigators found that health officials working to address public health issues in Native American communities dealt with federal agencies lacking clear processes, policies, and guidelines for sharing data with tribal officials.

In one example, officials said that as of November 2021, 10 of the 12 tribal epidemiology centers in the U.S. had access to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention COVID data, but not all had full data. Some centers had access to case surveillance data that included information on positive cases, hospitalizations, and deaths. Only half said they also had access to COVID vaccination data from HHS.

The GAO report also found that staffers responding to data requests at HHS, the CDC, and the Indian

Health Service did not consistently recognize tribal epidemiology centers as public health authorities. Center officials told federal investigators that they'd sometimes been asked to request data they needed as outside researchers or through the Freedom of Information Act.

The report recommended agencies make several corrections, including responding to tribal epidemiology centers as required by law and clarifying how agency staffers should handle requests from epidemiology centers.

HHS officials agreed with all the recommendations. The agency consulted with tribal leaders in fall 2022 and, this year, published a draft policy that clarifies what data centers can access.

Some tribal leaders say the proposal is a step in the right direction but is incomplete. Jim Roberts, senior executive liaison in intergovernmental affairs at the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, a nonprofit organization that provides care and advocacy for Alaskan tribes, said the GAO report focused on tribal epidemiology centers, which operate separately from tribal governments, each serving dozens of tribes divided into regions. The report left out tribes, which he said have a right to their data as sovereign nations.

HHS officials declined an interview request, but Samira Burns, principal deputy assistant secretary for public affairs, said the agency is reviewing feedback and recommendations it received from tribal leaders during consultation on the draft policy and will continue to consult with tribes before it's finalized.

Stronger federal policy on tribal data sharing would help with relationships with states, too, Roberts said. Tribal officials say problems they've experienced at the federal level are often worse in states, where laws might not recognize tribes or tribal epidemiology centers as authorities that can receive data.

At the Northwest Tribal Epidemiology Center, which works on behalf of tribes in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho, forging a data-use agreement with state governments in Washington and Oregon before the pandemic helped their response by providing immediate access to near real-time data on emergency room and other health care facility visits. The center's staff used this data to monitor for suspected COVID-related visits that could be shared with tribal leaders.

It took seven months for the center to get access to COVID surveillance data from the CDC, said Sujata Joshi, director of the Northwest center's Improving Data and Enhancing Access project, and about nine months for HHS vaccination data after vaccinations became available. Even after getting the information, she said, there were concerns about its quality.

*Jazmin Orozco Rodriguez is a Nevada correspondent for KFF Health News.*

## **U.S. Senate fails to advance expanded child tax credit, despite broad House support**

**BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - AUGUST 1, 2024 4:31 PM**

WASHINGTON — Senate Republicans and two independents blocked a bipartisan tax package Thursday that would have temporarily expanded the child tax credit and revived tax breaks for some business activities.

The 48-44 procedural vote to advance the package was largely viewed as a messaging exercise by Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer ahead of the August recess and continued ramp up to the general election in November, when the presidency and control of Congress are on the line. South Dakota Republicans John Thune and Mike Rounds both voted no.

The vote on the tax bill was the Senate's last until it returns in September. The House left for August recess a full week ahead of the Senate.

During a post-vote press conference, Schumer said, "American families lost."

"Today, Senate Republicans boldly told the American people we refuse to help you in 2024, and we want to be frank, Republicans voted no because of partisanship, not policy," the New York Democrat said.

Not all Senate Republicans voted against the bill. Those who voted yes included: Sens. Markwayne Mullin of Oklahoma, Josh Hawley of Missouri and Rick Scott of Florida.

Sens. Bernie Sanders of Vermont and Joe Manchin III of West Virginia, independents who generally

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caucus with the Democrats, voted no.

Schumer switched his vote from yes to no as a way to enter a motion to reconsider, a routine maneuver. Eight senators did not vote Thursday, including Democrat John Fetterman of Pennsylvania, and Republicans Marsha Blackburn of Tennessee, John Hoeven of North Dakota, Mitt Romney of Utah, Tim Scott of South Carolina, Mark Warner of Virginia, and Republican vice presidential candidate and Ohio Sen. J.D. Vance. Convicted felon and soon-to-be former Democrat Sen. Robert Menendez of New Jersey also did not vote.

## 'Show vote,' Republicans say

A large swath of Senate Republicans, including their top tax writer, Mike Crapo of Idaho, the ranking member of the Senate Committee on Finance, has remained opposed to the legislation, which needed 60 votes to advance in the closely divided upper chamber.

Crapo panned the cloture vote on the floor ahead of time as a "doomed-to-fail show vote" that is "focused on election year messaging."

"If the Democrats are serious about helping these working families, I'm ready to push for an extension of those changes beyond 2025. I've maintained a willingness to negotiate a bill that provides meaningful relief to Americans now," Crapo said.

Taxation has risen on the list of campaign issues as the Trump-era tax law is set to expire at the end of 2025, teeing up a major debate for the next administration and Congress.

"I offered to make changes," Sen. Ron Wyden, an Oregon Democrat and chair of the Senate Finance Committee, said on the floor ahead of the vote. "I met with a significant number of Senate Republicans personally."

"This is a thoroughly bipartisan bill — 357 votes in the House of Representatives. Every Republican on the House Ways and Means Committee voted for this bill."

## Child tax credit and the campaigns

In a recent interview with news personality Megyn Kelly, Vance accused the likely Democratic presidential nominee, Vice President Kamala Harris, of being opposed to the child tax credit, a statement that has been debunked.

Democrats, including Harris, are on the record advocating for a permanent expanded child tax credit similar to the pandemic-era version — a poverty reducer, according to census data — that eliminated the income requirement, raised the amount per child and provided the refund in monthly installments.

The Democratic Party immediately pounced on the absence of Vance from Thursday's vote.

"When the American people vote in November, they'll remember that when Vance had a chance to show up for working families, he was nowhere to be found," Democratic National Committee spokesperson Aida Ross said in a statement after the vote.

## Temporary tax cuts for families, businesses

The bicameral, bipartisan package brokered by Wyden and Missouri's Rep. Jason Smith, chair of the GOP-led House Committee on Ways and Means, received overwhelming approval in the House in January in a 357-70 vote. That included a yes vote from South Dakota Republican Dusty Johnson.

The lawmakers hailed their formula to pay for the bill by clawing back a fraud-ridden pandemic tax break. However, the nonpartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget warned that the policies "would add significantly to the already massive federal debt" if extended beyond their 2025 expiration dates.

The legislation would have increased the current \$2,000 child tax credit through 2025 by adjusting it for inflation to \$2,100 and raising the refundability limit — the actual amount families could see in their tax refunds — to \$1,800 for tax year 2023, \$1,900 for 2024 and \$2,000 for 2025, up from the current \$1,600 cap.

Additionally the bill includes a provision that would allow families to claim a previous year's income, if

higher than the current year, when calculating the tax credit — a measure that drew fierce opposition from Senate Republicans who likened it to welfare.

The bill also would have temporarily restored business' ability to fully expense domestic research and development as well as immediately deducting 100% of equipment purchases and other investments the same year of the transaction — both incentives under the 2017 Trump tax law that have phased out or are phasing out incrementally.

Business owners, CEOs and a union official urged the Senate Finance Committee in March to move forward on the bill.

Also included in the legislation: increasing the amount of low-income housing tax credits, relieving double taxation for residents of Taiwan, and tax exemption for relief payments to victims of the massive 2023 train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio — though the IRS largely took care of this in June.

Supporters of the legislation range from the Business Roundtable, which represents American CEOs, to the Economic Security Project, an organization that advocates for increased tax credits and guaranteed basic income initiatives.

Anna Aurilio, senior campaign director for Economic Security Project Action, said in a statement following the vote that Republican senators were "selfishly picking politics over parents and brazenly disregarding this important opportunity to help families succeed right now."

"The expanded Child Tax Credit was a critical tool for millions of parents who were struggling to afford the necessities and should be made permanent in the 2025 tax reform fight," Aurilio said.

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

## Much-attacked final Title IX rule goes into effect while still blocked in 26 states

**South Dakota among states where updated regulations are temporarily halted**

**BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA - AUGUST 1, 2024 1:48 PM**

WASHINGTON — Though the Biden administration's final rule for Title IX extending federal protections for LGBTQ students went into effect nationwide Thursday, a slew of legal challenges has temporarily blocked over half of all states from enforcing the updated regulations.

After the Department of Education released the final rule in April, 26 states — all with GOP attorneys general — rushed to challenge the measure. Given the myriad legal challenges, the updated regulations only went into effect Thursday in 24 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona and Catherine Lhamon, assistant secretary for the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, celebrated the final rule on Thursday during a briefing.

Cardona said the updated regulations "are the culmination of a lengthy and thorough process that included unprecedented public input from students, parents, educators, administrators, experts and other stakeholders."

"These regulations make crystal clear that everyone has the right to schools that respect their rights and offer safe, welcoming learning environments," he added.

Lhamon said it's "a very fluid legal environment" and the department continues "to defend the rule we believe in in these cases, with the Department of Justice as our counsel in the courts."

"We anticipated this moment when we were finalizing the 2024 regulations, and we know they are legally sound," she said, noting that the department has appealed the injunctions that have so far been issued and sought clarification of their application.

"While the appeals of these rulings are pending, we have asked the United States Supreme Court to allow the unchallenged provisions — which are the bulk of the final rule — to take effect in the enjoined states as scheduled," Lhamon said.

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But the Supreme Court has yet to decide on that emergency request, which came in a pair of filings from U.S. Solicitor General Elizabeth Prelogar last week.

## Discrimination protection

The final rule “protects against discrimination based on sex stereotypes, sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics,” per the department. The updated regulations are also aimed at “restoring and strengthening full protection from sexual violence and other sex-based harassment.”

The administration initially scored a legal win Tuesday when an Alabama federal judge rejected an attempt by Alabama, Florida, Georgia and South Carolina to halt enforcement of the final rule. But a federal appeals court granted the states’ request for an administrative injunction Wednesday, which temporarily blocked the final rule from taking effect in those Southern states.

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

The final rule is temporarily blocked in Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia and Wyoming.

## Challenges affect more schools

But the challenges to Title IX span beyond the 26 states that initially sued the administration — affecting schools across the country.

Judge John Broomes of the U.S. District Court for the District of Kansas expanded the temporary blockage 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.”

These groups sued alongside Kansas, Alaska, Utah and Wyoming earlier this year.

## House GOP tries to stop rule

Congressional Republicans have fiercely opposed the final rule.

In July, the GOP-controlled House passed a measure to reverse the updated regulations under the Congressional Review Act — a procedural tool Congress can use to overturn certain actions from federal agencies.

But the measure is unlikely to find success in the Democratic-controlled Senate, and President Joe Biden has vowed to veto the legislation should it land on his desk.

## LGBTQ students

LGBTQ advocacy groups have pushed back against GOP-led efforts to block the final rule from taking effect.

“Every student in this country deserves access to an education without fear of bullying and discrimination,” Brandon Wolf, national press secretary for the LGBTQ advocacy group Human Rights Campaign, said in an emailed statement to States Newsroom.

“But MAGA politicians, promoting blatant discrimination, have fueled eight preliminary injunctions blocking enforcement of the Biden administration’s new Title IX rules in 26 states.”

Wolf added that “we must continue to fight for LGBTQ+ students across the country because everyone deserves a safe educational experience — full stop.”

Meanwhile, the department has yet to decide on a separate rule establishing new criteria regarding transgender athletes.

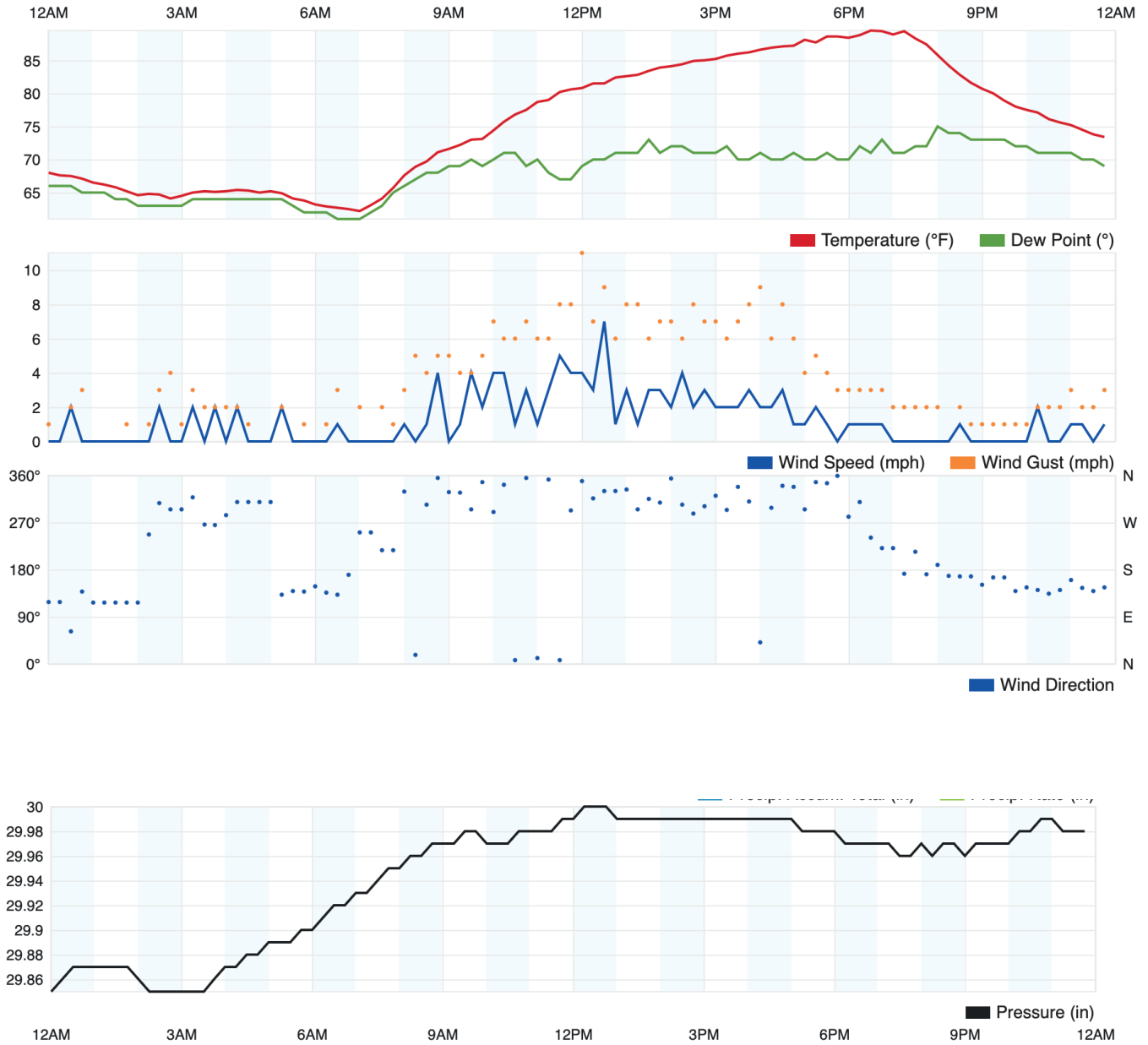
*Shauneen Miranda is a reporter for States Newsroom’s Washington bureau. An alumna of the University of Maryland, she previously covered breaking news for Axios.*



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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



High: 92 °F

Hot

Tonight



Low: 66 °F

Mostly Clear

Saturday



High: 95 °F

Sunny then  
Slight Chance  
T-storms

Saturday Night



Low: 62 °F

Slight Chance  
T-storms

Sunday



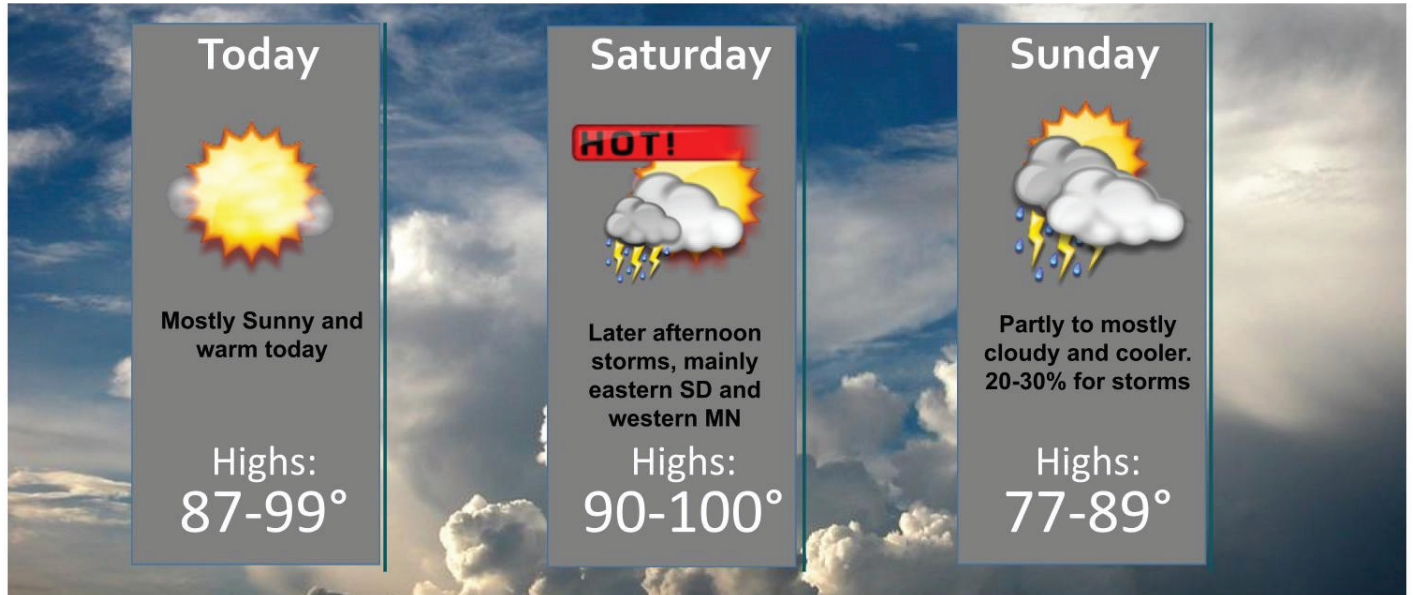
High: 80 °F

Slight Chance  
Showers



## Pattern Change on the Way

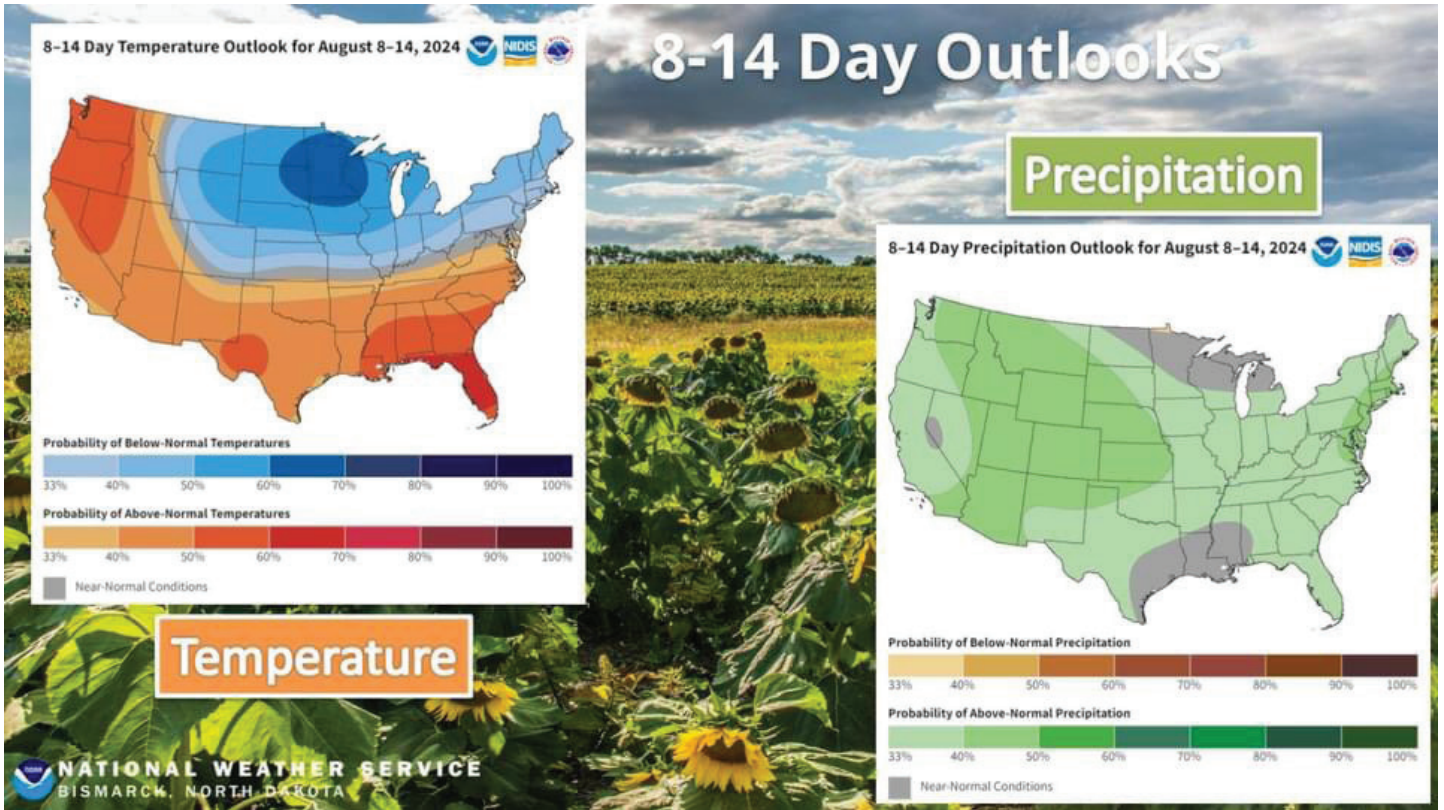
August 2, 2024  
5:21 AM



Hot and mostly dry conditions can be expected today through Saturday. A cold front sliding southward late Saturday afternoon will bring a 20-30% chance for storms. Cooler temperatures will move into the area on Sunday.

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We have good news for those of you who want a break from the heat! The upper ridge that was expected to stick around for much of August is now expected to shift back to the west, allowing for cooler air to filter into the region starting early next week. Average highs are generally in the mid 80s, so expect highs mainly in the 70s to lower 80s through mid-August!

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 90 °F at 6:27 PM

Low Temp: 62 °F at 6:57 AM

Wind: 11 mph at 11:59 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 14 hours, 43 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 105 in 1938

Record Low: 40 in 2018

Average High: 85

Average Low: 59

Average Precip in Aug.: .015

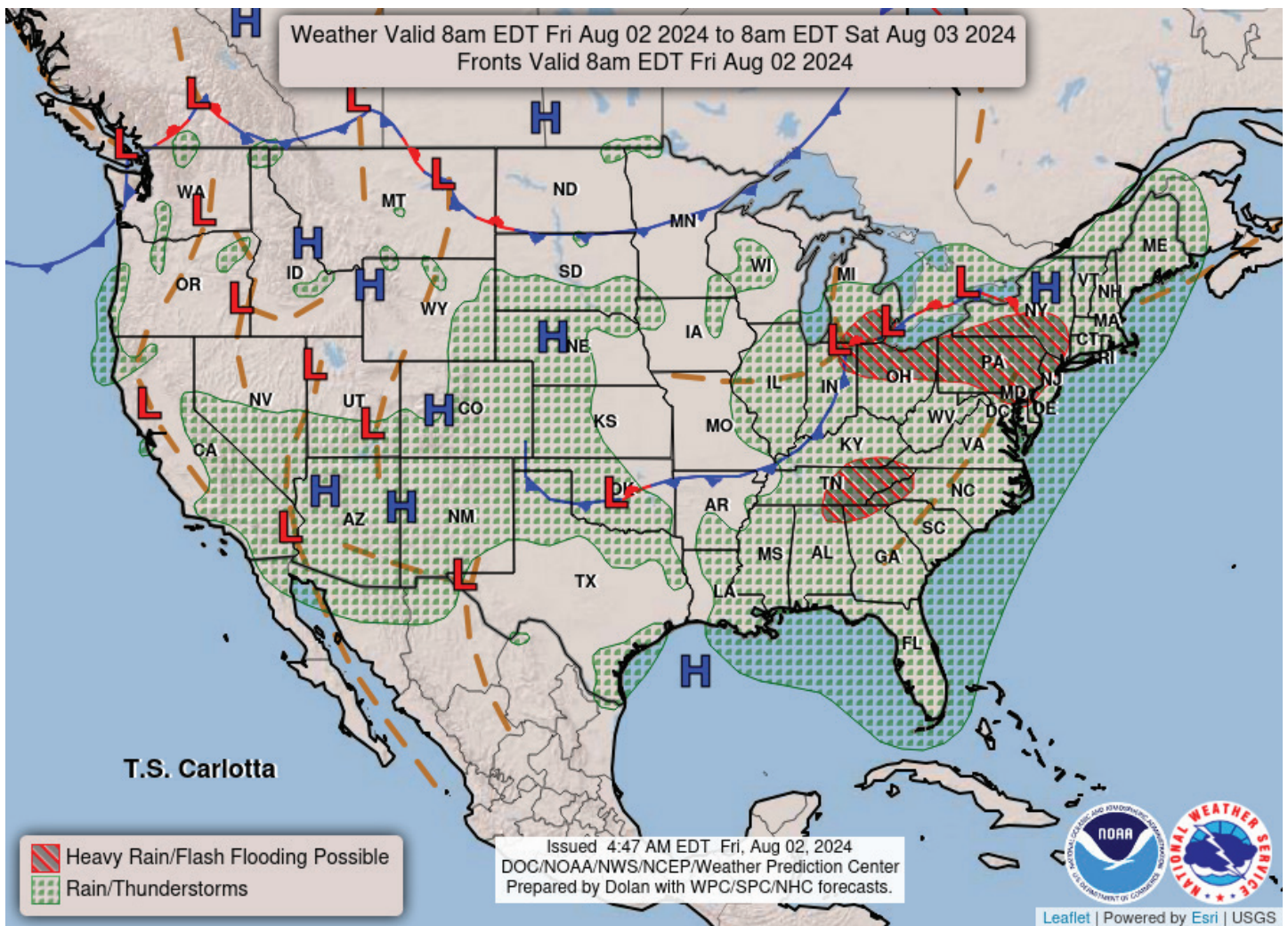
Precip to date in Aug.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 14.25

Precip Year to Date: 14.89

Sunset Tonight: 9:00:12 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:18:13 am



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## Today in Weather History

August 2, 1960: Hail, the size of a hen egg caused moderate damage to a total loss of corn, soybean, and grain crops on 50 to 75 farms in Marshall, Roberts, and Grant Counties. High winds caused damage to buildings and uprooted trees in Britton.

1985: A strong and sudden wind gusts cause a plane crash at the Dallas/Fort Worth Airport in Texas that kills 135 people. The rapid and unexpected formation of a supercell, an incredibly powerful form of a thunderstorm, led to the tragedy.

1954 - Severe thunderstorms produced golf ball size hail for thirty minutes in north central Kansas. One drift measured 200 feet long, seventy feet wide and three feet deep. (The Weather Channel)

1975 - Record heat gripped New England. Highs of 104 degrees at Providence, RI, and 107 degrees at Chester and New Bedford, MA, established state records. The heat along the coast of Maine was unprecedented, with afternoon highs of 101 degrees at Bar Harbor and 104 degrees at Jonesboro. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Hot weather continued in the central U.S. Fifteen cities reported record high temperatures for the date, including Concordia KS with a reading of 106 degrees, and Downtown Kansas City, MO, with a high of 105 degrees. Evening thunderstorms produced severe weather in the Ohio Valley and the north central U.S. Thunderstorms in South Dakota produced wind gusts to 70 mph at Philip, and hail two inches in diameter at Faulkton. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Searing heat continued from the Middle and Upper Mississippi Valley to the Middle and Northern Atlantic Coast States. Twenty-six cities reported record high temperatures for the date. Chicago IL reported a record seven days of 100 degree heat for the year. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Low pressure representing the remains of Hurricane Chantal deluged north central Texas with heavy rain. Up to 6.50 inches drenched Stephens County, and Wichita Falls reported 2.22 inches of rain in just one hour. Bismarck, ND, reported a record warm morning low of 75 degrees, and record hot afternoon high of 101 degrees, and evening thunderstorms in North Dakota produced wind gusts to 78 mph at Lakota. Early evening thunderstorms in Florida produced high winds which downed trees at Christmas. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2006: Johannesburg, South Africa residents see snow flurries for the first time in at least eight years.



## ASK AND ASK AND ASK AGAIN!

As she tucked little Lynn into bed, her Mom asked, "Have you said your prayers yet?"

"Well, not really," she answered. "I started to say them. I got down on my knees and when I started saying them I remembered that they were the same ones that I said last night. Since I didn't want to bore God, I told Him the story of the Three Bears. I hope He liked it."

Our prayers never bore God. In fact, Jesus said just the opposite. On one occasion when He was teaching people to pray, He advised them to "Continue to ask until you get what you want; continue to search until you find what you are looking for and continue to knock on the door that is closed until it is opened." So, there is an important lesson for us here.

God will always answer our prayers; but He will answer them in His time and in the way that reveals His perfect wisdom and perfect love. If He were to answer our prayers as soon as we offered them, it might be the worst possible thing for us. Often we ask for things that, if they were granted immediately, would be our ruin and bring about our destruction!

Jesus assures us that God will answer our prayers if we insist and persist. Not only will He answer them at the right time but that we will eventually and ultimately understand the wisdom, love and plan He has for us.

Prayer: Lord, we not only ask for the determination to keep on asking, seeking and knocking, but for the patience to wait upon You knowing that the answer will come. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Matthew 7:7-11

*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: 17 Hrs 25 Mins 48 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: 1 Days 16 Hrs 40 Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.01.24

3 25 36 41 42 14

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 55 Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.31.24

9 18 25 31 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$54,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 55 Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.31.24

10 24 41 48 61 9

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

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 24 Mins 48 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: 1 Days 17 Hrs 24 Mins 48 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

### **Rain-related disasters have killed more than 250 in a deadly week across Asia**

By KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

In India and China, torrential rains have killed more than 250 people in the past week. Three others died in Pakistan. Widespread flooding has been reported in North Korea near the border with China with no word on whether anyone died.

This time of year is monsoon and typhoon season in Asia, and climate change has intensified such storms. Heavy rains have triggered landslides and flooding, devastating crops, destroying homes and taking lives.

Historical data shows that China is having more extremely hot days and more frequent intense rains, according to a report released last month by the China Meteorological Administration, which forecasts more of both in the coming 30 years.

Governments have launched disaster prevention plans to try to mitigate the damage. Rescue teams scramble to evacuate people ahead of approaching storms and deliver relief goods by helicopter to cut-off areas. China has deployed drones for emergency communication in rain-prone provinces.

Sometimes it isn't enough, as the tragic consequences playing out in Asia show.

India: 201 dead, nearly 200 missing

Heavy rains sent torrents of mud and water through tea estates and villages in Kerala state in southern India early Tuesday, destroying bridges and flattening houses.

Hope of finding survivors has waned as the search entered its fourth day. Bodies have been found as many as 30 kilometers (20 miles) downriver from the main landslides.

The area is known for its picturesque tea and cardamom estates, with hundreds of plantation workers living in nearby temporary shelters. "This was a very beautiful place," a shopkeeper said. "I used to visit here many times. ... Now there is nothing left."

India regularly has severe floods during the monsoon season, which runs between June and September and brings rain that is crucial for crops.

China: 48 dead, 35 missing

Typhoon Gaemi was blamed for more than 30 deaths in the Philippines and 10 in Taiwan as it churned through the western Pacific last week, but it was still fatal after weakening to a tropical storm in China.

Rain drenched parts of inland Hunan province for several days. On Sunday morning, a mudslide slammed into a homestay house in a popular weekend spot, killing 15 people.

Elsewhere in Hunan, the bodies of three people were found on Monday, believed to be victims of another landslide. And authorities in nearby Zixing city announced Thursday that 30 people had died in floods, with 35 others missing.

One other death in China was apparently tied to the storm, a delivery driver on a scooter struck by falling tree branches during high winds in Shanghai.

China has recorded 25 major floods this year, the most since it began keeping statistics in 1998, the Ministry of Water Resources said this week.

North Korea: Damage, but no information on deaths

The tropical storm also generated heavy rain in northeast China on the border with North Korea, overflowing the Yalu River, which divides the two countries.

In North Korea, the rain flooded 4,100 houses, 3,000 hectares (7,400 acres) of farmland and many public buildings, roads and railways.

Its state media did not give information on deaths, though the nation's leader Kim Jong Un implied there were casualties when he was quoted blaming public officials who had neglected disaster prevention, causing "the casualty that cannot be allowed."

Military helicopters and navy and other government boats evacuated stranded residents. State TV aired

footage showing Kim and other officials riding on rubber boats to examine the scale of the damage. The footage showed houses submerged in muddy waters with only their roofs visible.

On the Chinese side, state television showed excavators in rushing water trying to clear debris after a mudslide in Jilin province. One city near North Korea asked people living below the third floor to move higher as the Yalu River rose.

In Dandong, a large Chinese city along the river, rescuers evacuated residents in rubber dinghies on streets turned into virtual lakes. There were no reports of deaths.

Pakistan: 3 dead

Record rainfall in the city of Lahore flooded streets and left at least three people dead in Pakistan on Thursday. The deaths at the start of August came on top of 99 rain-related fatalities the previous month.

Some parts of Lahore recorded 353 millimeters (14 inches) of rain in a few hours, breaking a 44-year-old record. The rain was so heavy that it entered some hospital wards in the capital of Punjab province.

The victims included two children, one who drowned in a flooded street and another who fell from the roof of her house.

## US recognizes opposition candidate González as the winner of Venezuela's presidential election

By REGINA GARCIA CANO, GABRIELA SÁ PESSOA and E. EDUARDO CASTILLO Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — The stakes grew higher for Venezuela's electoral authority to show proof backing its decision to declare President Nicolás Maduro the winner of the country's presidential election after the United States on Thursday recognized opposition candidate Edmundo González as the victor, discrediting the official results of the vote.

The U.S. announcement followed calls from multiple governments, including close allies of Maduro, for Venezuela's National Electoral Council to release detailed vote counts, as it has done during previous elections.

The electoral body declared Maduro the winner Monday, but the main opposition coalition revealed hours later that it had evidence to the contrary in the form of more than two-thirds of the tally sheets that each electronic voting machine printed after polls closed.

"Given the overwhelming evidence, it is clear to the United States and, most importantly, to the Venezuelan people that Edmundo González Urrutia won the most votes in Venezuela's July 28 presidential election," U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement.

Maduro responded with a quick admonishment: "The United States needs to keep its nose out of Venezuela!"

The U.S. government announcement came amid diplomatic efforts to persuade Maduro to release vote tallies from the election and increasing calls for an independent review of the results, according to officials from Brazil and Mexico.

Government officials from Brazil, Colombia and Mexico have been in constant communication with Maduro's administration to convince him that he must show the vote tally sheets from Sunday's election and allow impartial verification, a Brazilian government official told The Associated Press Thursday.

The officials have told Venezuela's government that showing the data is the only way to dispel any doubt about the results, said the Brazilian official, who was not authorized to speak publicly about the diplomatic efforts and requested anonymity.

A Mexican official, who also spoke on condition of anonymity for the same reason, confirmed the three governments have been discussing the issue with Venezuela but did not provide details.

Earlier, Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said he planned to speak with President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of Brazil and President Gustavo Petro of Colombia.

Later Thursday, the governments of Brazil, Colombia and Mexico issued a joint statement calling on Venezuela's electoral authorities "to move forward expeditiously and publicly release" detailed voting data, but they did not confirm any backroom diplomatic efforts to persuade Maduro's government to publish

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the vote tallies.

"The fundamental principle of popular sovereignty must be respected through impartial verification of the results," they said in the statement.

On Monday, after the National Electoral Council declared Maduro the winner of the election, thousands of opposition supporters took to the streets. The government said it arrested hundreds of protesters and Venezuela-based human rights organization Foro Penal said 11 people were killed. Dozens more were arrested the following day, including a former opposition candidate, Freddy Superlano.

Opposition leader Maria Corina Machado — who was barred from running for president — and González addressed a huge rally of their supporters in the capital, Caracas, on Tuesday, but they have not been seen in public since. Later that day, the president of the National Assembly, Jorge Rodríguez, called for their arrest, calling them criminals and fascists.

In an op-ed published Thursday in the Wall Street Journal, Machado said she is "hiding, fearing for my life, my freedom, and that of my fellow countrymen." She reasserted that the opposition has physical evidence that Maduro lost the election and urged the international community to intervene.

"We have voted Mr. Maduro out," she wrote. "Now it is up to the international community to decide whether to tolerate a demonstrably illegitimate government."

Government repression over the years has pushed opposition leaders into exile. After the op-ed was published, Machado's team told the AP that she was "sheltering." Machado later posted a video on social media calling on supporters to gather Saturday across the country.

The González campaign had no comment on the op-ed.

On Wednesday, Maduro asked Venezuela's highest court to conduct an audit of the election, but that request drew almost immediate criticism from foreign observers who said the court is too close to the government to produce an independent review.

Venezuela's Supreme Tribunal of Justice is closely aligned with Maduro's government. The court's justices are nominated by federal officials and ratified by the National Assembly, which is dominated by Maduro sympathizers.

On Thursday, the court accepted Maduro's request for an audit and ordered him, González and the eight other candidates who participated in the presidential election to appear before the justices Friday.

Asked why electoral authorities have not released detailed vote counts, Maduro said the National Electoral Council has come under attack, including cyberattacks, without elaborating.

The presidents of Colombia and Brazil — both close allies of the Venezuelan government — have urged Maduro to release detailed vote counts.

The Brazilian official said the diplomatic efforts are only intended to promote dialogue among Venezuelan stakeholders to negotiate a solution to the disputed election. The official said this would include the release of voting data and allowing independent verification.

López Obrador said Mexico hopes the will of Venezuela's people will be respected and that there's no violence. He added that Mexico expects "that the evidence, the electoral results records, be presented."

Pressure has been building on the president since the election.

The National Electoral Council, which is loyal to Maduro's United Socialist Party of Venezuela, has yet to release any results broken down by voting machine, as it did in past elections. It did, however, report that Maduro received 5.1 million votes, versus more than 4.4 million for González. But Machado, the opposition leader, has said vote tallies show González received roughly 6.2 million votes compared with 2.7 million for Maduro.

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.

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## Markets tumble, led by 5.8% drop in Tokyo following a tech-driven retreat on Wall Street

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — World shares tumbled Friday, with Japan's Nikkei 225 index slumping 5.8% as investors panicked over signs of weakness in the U.S. economy.

The declines followed a retreat on Wall Street after weak data raised worries the Federal Reserve may have missed its window to lower interest rates before they undercut economic growth. Fed Chair Jerome Powell said a cut could come in September after the U.S. central bank held steady at a meeting this week.

"The short-lived satisfaction of Fed Chief Powell communicating decent odds of a September rate cut has turned sour as investors are now panicking that the central bank isn't trimming soon enough," José Torres, a senior economist at Interactive Brokers, said in a report.

Bracing for a highly anticipated employment report coming on Friday, the future for the S&P 500 was down 0.9%, while that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average lost 0.5%.

A nearly 19% decline in Intel's shares in aftermarket trading deepened the gloom. The chipmaker said it was cutting 15% of its massive workforce — about 15,000 jobs — to better compete with more successful rivals like Nvidia and AMD.

In early European trading, Germany's DAX shed 1.4% to 17,834.67, while the CAC 40 slipped 0.7% to 7,315.93. In London, the FTSE 100 fell 0.4% to 8,245.92.

Japan's market retreated to where it was trading in January before surging to an all-time high last month of over 42,000. The Nikkei 225 lost 2,216.63 points to 35,909.70, with banks', technology-related and manufacturers' shares hit by heavy selling.

The Nikkei has lost 6.2% in the past three months.

Japanese shares were pummeled after the central bank raised its benchmark interest rate on Wednesday, to 0.25% from 0.1%. That pushed the value of the Japanese yen higher against the U.S. dollar, potentially hurting overseas earnings of major manufacturers and deflating a boom in tourism.

The dollar fell to 148.99 yen early Friday from 149.37 yen late Thursday. It had recently traded above 160 yen. The euro rose to \$1.0803 from \$1.0789.

Elsewhere in Asia on Friday, Hang Seng in Hong Kong dropped 2.1% to 16,950.46, while the Shanghai Composite index saw a more modest loss, of 0.9% to 2,905.34.

Chinese shares have extended losses as investors registered disappointment with the government's latest efforts to spur growth through various piecemeal measures instead of the hoped-for infusions of broader stimulus.

The Kospi in Seoul dropped 3.7% to 2,676.19 and Taiwan's Taiex sank 4.4%. Both markets tend to be hit hard by weakness in technology shares.

South Korea's Samsung Electronics dropped 4.2% while another maker of computer chips and other components, SK Hynix, dropped 10.4%. Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co., the world's largest chip maker, lost 5.9%.

Elsewhere in Asia, Australia's S&P/ASX gave up 2.1% to 7,943.20 and the Sensex in India was down 0.9%. Bangkok's SET fell 0.9%.

It has been a nerve wracking week for markets even as central banks in Japan, the United States and England followed through much as expected. Japan raised its benchmark, the Fed stood pat, and the Bank of England lowered its key rate by 0.25%, to 5%, its first cut in more than four years.

Commodity prices have also had a rough ride, with oil prices surging after the killings of leaders of Hamas and Hezbollah that fueled fears conflict in the Middle East might escalate into a wider war. But prices fell back Thursday and were only marginally higher early Friday.

Benchmark U.S. crude oil gained 79 cents to \$77.10 per barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, was up 76 cents at \$80.28 per barrel.

The price of gold, a traditional refuge for investors in uncertain times, surged to over \$2,500 an ounce.

Meanwhile, other commodities sank on concerns that weakness in the U.S. and other major economies

will hurt demand. The price of nickel dropped 2.4%, aluminum dropped 1% and copper was down 0.2%.

Worry is mounting that the Fed may have kept its main interest rate at a two-decade high for too long in its zeal to stifle inflation by making it more costly to borrow. It could take months to a year for a rate cut to filter through the economy.

On Thursday, the S&P 500 sank 1.4% after a report from the Institute for Supply Management showed U.S. manufacturing activity is still shrinking. The Dow fell 1.2%, and the Nasdaq composite dropped 2.3%. The small stocks in the Russell 2000 index dropped 3%.

Other reports Thursday showed the number of U.S. workers applying for jobless benefits hit its highest level in about a year and that productivity for U.S. workers improved in the spring. The data are likely to relieve pressure on inflation and give the Fed more leeway to cut rates.

Employment growth appears to be slowing more than expected, Philip Marey, senior U.S. strategist for Rabobank, said in a commentary.

"This suggests that the Fed's strategy to bring better balance between labor demand and supply through restrictive interest rates is working, but of course the risk is that employment growth is brought to a halt and the economy slides into a recession."

## **Simone Biles makes history with second all-around Olympic gymnastics title, 8 years after her first**

By WILL GRAVES AP National Writer

PARIS (AP) — Simone Biles huddled with Sunisa Lee. She looked to her husband Jonathan Owens in the stands. Lost in the moment. And maybe a touch frantic.

The American gymnastics star knew she was trailing Brazil's Rebeca Andrade and Algeria's Kaylia Nemour through two rotations during the Olympic all-around final Thursday.

After a sloppy uneven bars that included a mistake Biles can never remember making in competition, she sat in a chair, closed her eyes, ignored the sea of cameras around her and attempted to refocus.

She and Lee tried to do the math. How bad was it? They weren't sure. It had been a long time since it was this tight.

Biles checked with Owens, who reassured Biles that she was fine, even though she was in third. His wife of 15 months might not have believed him in the moment.

"I've just never been so stressed before," Biles said.

Maybe because she hadn't been pushed — not in a long time anyway — the way Andrade pushed inside an electric Bercy Arena.

Yet the jitters eventually faded. The 27-year-old who is redefining what a gymnast can do and how long she can do it went to work.

One stoic beam routine and one floor exercise that is unlike anything ever done in her sport later, Biles found herself accepting a gold medal from IOC president Thomas Bach for a second time, this time with Lee standing next to her with a bronze.

Eight years ago in Rio de Janeiro, Biles was a teenage prodigy. Now, she's an icon. One who remains peerless even when she's not perfect.

Biles now has nine Olympic medals, six of them gold. And while she says she doesn't keep track of these things, she sort of does. The GOAT necklace she rocked in the aftermath isn't a coincidence, even if she maintains she's just "Simone Biles from Spring, Texas, that loves to flip."

Maybe, but she's also the third woman to become a two-time Olympic champion, joining Larisa Latynina of the Soviet Union in 1956 and 1960 and Vera Caslavskaya of Czechoslovakia in 1964 and 1968. Oh, and the oldest to finish atop the all-around podium since then 30-year-old Maria Gorokhovskaya of the Soviet Union won the first-ever Olympic all-around in Helsinki in 1952.

The sport then is not what it is now. The days of "little girls in pretty boxes" are long gone. Biles has fueled that transformation one performance at a time. There's a reason stars like the U.S. men's basketball

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team and Kendall Jenner flock to watch her Thursday.

When Biles tried to downplay her impact, Lee corrected her.

"Honestly Simone, I think a lot of it has to do with you," Lee said.

Even if her 39th world or Olympic medal didn't come as easily as most of the 38 before it.

She misjudged a transition on uneven bars, the weakest of her four events, letting go of the upper bar too soon and forcing her to reach for a larger-than-expected gap.

While she didn't fall — Biles muscled her way back into the routine — it blunted her momentum and led to major deductions that left her behind Andrade through two rotations.

The deficit didn't last.

Biles responded with a largely wobble-free 14.566 on the balance beam, the highest of the night among the 24 finalists, while Andrade was forced to do a major balance check during her slightly easier set that dropped her down to second heading into floor exercise, Biles' signature event.

Andrade, the silver medalist behind Lee in 2021, needed the best floor set of her life to catch Biles. It didn't quite happen. Andrade stepped out of bounds at one point, a minor problem but enough to create plenty of wiggle room for Biles.

"I don't want to compete with Rebeca no more," Biles said. "I'm tired. Like, she's way too close. I've never had an athlete that close."

Biles incorporated music from pop icons Taylor Swift and Beyonce into her current routine, a 75-second set that began with the opening bars of Swift's hit "Ready For It?" and featured the hardest tumbling done by a woman in the history of the sport.

When she was done — sealing gold that served as a redemption of sorts three years after pulling out of multiple finals in Tokyo to focus on her mental health — Biles sprinted to hug Lee just off the podium and blew kisses to the cameras that have become fixtures wherever she goes under the Olympic rings.

After the final score was announced, Biles and Lee — both Olympic champions — bolted onto the floor, waving an American flag.

Lee, the Tokyo winner with Biles sidelined, is the first to win gold in all-around one Games then earn another medal in the next since Comaneci in 1976 and '80. She did it despite spending much of the last 15 months dealing with multiple kidney diseases that left her return to the Games very much in doubt.

"I just wanted to prove to myself that I could do it because I didn't think that I could," Lee said.

While there may be more medals on the way — Biles is in three event finals later in the Games — the all-around puts her into the conversation as perhaps the greatest American Olympian ever.

Yet she's also far more than that.

She's a vocal advocate for survivors of sexual abuse and the importance of proper mental health. She met virtually with her therapist before the Americans won gold in the team final on Tuesday. They kept their regular Thursday appointment too.

Biles relied on the internal work she's done over the years after that rocky bars routine. She sat with her legs crossed on a chair in her blue sequined leotard and joked she was "praying to every single God out there."

In reality, she was trying to re-center herself. And then she moved on. It's what she does.

Biles has said repeatedly over the last three years that what happened in Tokyo is a part of her past, not her present, and if critics have a problem with it, that's their issue, not hers.

She's moved on to bigger things. Like setting a standard that may never be reached. In her gymnastics for sure, and maybe others too. When trying to count the number of active Olympians who have stood atop their sport for 11 years and counting, no math is required.

There is only one.

## Things to know about the largest US-Russia prisoner swap in post-Soviet history

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. and Russia on Thursday completed their largest prisoner swap in post-Soviet history, a deal involving 24 people, many months of negotiations and concessions from other European countries who released Russians in their custody as part of the exchange.

Here are some things to know:

Who was freed

The 24 people — some prominent, some not — included a collection of journalists and political dissidents, suspected spies, a computer hacker and a fraudster. Even a man convicted of murder.

Russia released 16 people, including Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich and Paul Whelan, a corporate security executive from Michigan. Both were facing long prison sentences after being convicted in Russia's heavily politicized legal system of espionage charges that the U.S. government called baseless.

Also freed by Moscow was Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty journalist Alsu Kurmasheva, a dual U.S.-Russian citizen convicted in July of spreading false information about the Russian military — accusations her family and employer have rejected.

Gershkovich, Whelan and Kurmasheva all arrived late Thursday at Joint Base Andrews, Maryland, where they were greeted by President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris.

Russia also released Vladimir Kara-Murza, a Kremlin critic and Pulitzer Prize-winning writer serving 25 years on charges of treason widely seen as politically motivated.

The most infamous of the eight people Russia got back is Vadim Krasikov, who was convicted in Germany in 2021 of killing a former Chechen rebel in a Berlin park two years earlier, apparently on the orders of Moscow's security services. It also received two alleged "sleeper" agents who were jailed in Slovenia, three men charged by federal authorities in the U.S. and two men returned from Norway and Poland.

A breakthrough in US-Russia relations?

That's unlikely.

The U.S. and Russia have reached several prior prisoner swaps during the course of Russia's war with Ukraine, including a December 2022 trade in which Moscow freed WNBA star Brittney Griner in exchange for notorious arms trafficker Viktor Bout.

But none of those exchanges resulted in a meaningful warming of relations, particularly at a time when Russian President Vladimir Putin has refused to halt his aggression against Ukraine and as Washington continues to send significant military support to Kyiv.

Prisoner exchanges have been a rare source of compromise and an alignment of mutually agreeable interests rather than a reflection of anything broader. Even so, the fact that the countries were able to get the deal done at a time of open hostility is notable.

The Americans left behind

Though Thursday's deal involves the most well-known of the Americans held in Russia, including two who have been formally designated as wrongfully detained, there are still several others who remain.

That group includes Travis Leake, a musician convicted on drug charges and sentenced to prison; Gordon Black, an American soldier convicted of stealing and making threats of murder; Marc Fogel, a teacher also sentenced on drug charges; and Ksenia Khavana, who was arrested in Yekaterinburg in February on treason charges, accused of collecting money for Ukraine's military.

Khavana had returned to Russia to visit family. The owner of the spa in California where Khavana had been working previously told The Associated Press that Khavana actually was collecting funds for humanitarian aid.

In a statement after the deal was announced, Fogel's family said it was "inconceivable" that he had not been included and urged the Biden administration to prioritize his release.

A senior administration official, who briefed reporters before the swap on condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the White House, said the administration would be redoubling its efforts to get



remaining Americans home.

The imbalance in participants

In prisoner exchanges over the past few years, the U.S. government has released criminals convicted of significant crimes, including drug and weapons traffickers and a Taliban drug lord.

The latest deal was no exception, with the U.S. and Western allies agreeing to hand back to Russia criminals regarded as properly charged and convicted.

The most notable example of that, by far, was Vadim Krasikov, who was convicted in the Aug. 23, 2019, killing of Zelimkhan "Tornike" Khangoshvili, a 40-year-old Georgian citizen who had fought Russian troops in Chechnya and later claimed asylum in Germany.

At Krasikov's sentencing to life in prison in 2021, German judges said he had acted on the orders of Russian authorities, who gave him a false identity, passport and the resources to carry out the killing.

Throughout the course of negotiations, Russia remained adamant about getting Krasikov back, making it clear that he topped the wish list. Putin hinted earlier this year that he was interested in such a trade to free a "patriot" held in Germany.

By contrast, the Americans and Europeans released by Russia include people who were either designated by the U.S. as wrongfully detained — like Gershkovich and Whelan — or generally regarded as held on baseless charges.

"Deals like this one come with tough calls," Biden said but added: "There's nothing that matters more to me than protecting Americans at home and abroad."

It could have included Navalny

Central to the deal was a man who never got to be part of it: Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

At the time of his death in February, officials were discussing a possible exchange involving him and Krasikov as a way to satisfy Russia's relentless demand for Krasikov and unlock the imprisoned Americans.

Administration officials described the sudden and unexplained death of Navalny as a setback to that effort, but drew up a new plan to present to German Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

In the end, several associates of Navalny were released.

The politics of it all

Biden had foreshadowed his commitment to a deal last week, when he said in an Oval Office address announcing his plan to abandon his reelection bid: "We're also working around the clock to bring home Americans being unjustly detained all around the world."

On Thursday, he basked in the success of a diplomatic feat executed in the final months of his administration as he welcomed the families of the returning Americans to the White House. In an apparent jab at the "America First" mantra of Donald Trump, the former president and current Republican nominee, Biden said: "Today is a powerful example of why it's vital to have friends in this world."

Trump, who during his presidency had also taken an interest in hostages and wrongfully detained Americans, claimed during the June debate with Biden that he would get Gershkovich out as soon as he won the election.

On Thursday, he bashed the deal, suggesting incorrectly on his Truth Social platform that the U.S. had given Russia cash for the deal.

"Are we releasing murderers, killers, or thugs? Just curious because we never make good deals, at anything, but especially hostage swaps," Trump wrote.

## Prisoner Swap Latest: Freed Americans return to US soil and emotional welcome

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States and Russia completed a 24-person prisoner swap on Thursday, the largest in post-Soviet history, with Moscow releasing Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich and fellow American Paul Whelan in a multinational deal that set some two dozen people free, according to officials in Turkey, where the exchange took place.

Three freed Americans arrived at an Air Force Base outside Washington late at night to an emotional

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welcome from their families, President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris.

It's the latest exchange between Washington and Moscow in the past two years, following a December 2022 trade that brought WNBA star Brittney Griner back to the U.S. in exchange for notorious arms trafficker Viktor Bout.

Russia meanwhile secured the freedom of its own nationals convicted of serious crimes in the West.

Here's the Latest:

Soaking up the moment

On a warm, steamy night, the freed Americans lingered on the tarmac at Joint Base Andrews to soak up the moment of their return to the U.S.

They took selfies with family members and friends, shared hugs with Biden and Harris, patted loved ones on the back and smothered them with kisses.

At one point, Biden gave Paul Whelan the flag pin off his own lapel.

Biden: 'Wonderful' to greet freed Americans

President Joe Biden said it "feels wonderful" to welcome the freed Americans to U.S. soil.

And he gave giving special credit to the cooperation of nations including Germany and Slovenia for helping to make the global prisoner swap work, saying they agreed to difficult things that were "against their self-interests."

Speaking on the tarmac at Joint Base Andrews, Biden rejected the idea that such swaps could lead to other Americans being detained. "I don't buy this idea of ... let these people rot in jail because other people may be captured," the president said.

Vice President Kamala Harris called the deal an "extraordinary testament to the importance of having a president who understands the power of diplomacy."

American ex-prisoners freed from Russia are greeted by their families, Biden and Harris at US air base

Three Americans stepped off a plane and touched U.S. soil for the first time since they were freed in a complex 24-person prisoner exchange with Russia.

Journalists Evan Gershkovich and Alsu Kurmasheva, along with fellow American Paul Whelan, landed shortly before midnight at a U.S. air base outside Washington.

There were hugs and handshakes all around and even some squeals of joy as Biden, Harris and family members welcomed them.

Plane believed to be carrying swapped prisoners lands at US air base

A plane believed to be carrying three Americans freed in a prisoner swap with Russia after years in captivity has landed at a U.S. air base.

The jet touched down shortly before midnight at Joint Base Andrews outside Washington. President Joe Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris and relatives of the former prisoners waited to greet them.

The Americans landed nearly 12 hours after leaving Turkey, where they were among 24 exchanged in the largest post-Soviet prisoner swap. They were shown smiling on board the jet in a photo released by the White House.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz welcomes freed prisoners in Germany

Chancellor Olaf Scholz welcomed Germans and Russians freed in the prisoner swap to Germany and said he had "very moving" conversations with them.

Scholz said after they landed at Cologne/Bonn Airport late Thursday that "all arrived safe and sound" and they will undergo health checks in the coming days.

"Many did not expect this to happen now and are still full of the feelings that are connected with suddenly being free," he said, adding that "many feared for their health and their lives."

The 16 prisoners freed by Russia and Belarus included five German citizens, and the deal involved Germany deporting to Russia Vadim Krasikov, who was serving a life prison sentence for what judges concluded was a Russian state-ordered killing in Berlin in 2019.

Scholz said: "I think this is the right decision. And if you had any doubts, then you lose them after speaking with those who are now free."

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The German leader said it was "a special moment for me, a moment that certainly has also very much intensified the friendship between the U.S and Germany."

Gershkovich family says they 'can't wait to give him the biggest hug'

The family of Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich says in a statement that they "can't wait give him the biggest hug and see his sweet and brave face up close."

The family says that no one should have to go through what they did and that it's hard to describe what it feels like to have their son come home.

VP Harris applauds 'incredible courage' of formerly detained Americans

Vice President Harris told reporters that the newly released Paul Whelan, Alsu Kurmasheva, Evan Gershkovich and U.S. green card holder Vladimir Kara-Murza showed "incredible courage" after being "unjustly held in Russia."

Harris said she also spoke on Thursday with Yulia Navalnaya, the widow of deceased Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

Navalny died while imprisoned by the Russian government. As part of the swap, three people who worked with him were also released.

Harris told reporters before boarding her plane in Houston that she told Navalnaya, "The United States stands with all of those who are fighting for freedom in Russia."

Newly freed Americans shown smiling in newly released White House photo

Three newly freed Americans are shown smiling widely in a photo made public after their release from Russian custody Thursday.

The photo, given to news outlets by the White House, shows Americans Evan Gershkovich, Alsu Kurmasheva and Paul Whelan in a plane following their release in a complex multinational prisoner exchange with Russia.

All three are smiling and appear far more relaxed than in a video released by Russian security services just hours earlier, where they were still being transferred into American hands.

The White House gave no details on the circumstances of the photo. It shows other unidentified people holding an American flag just behind them.

Trump calls American negotiators 'an embarrassment'

Donald Trump posted on Truth Social, disparaging the Biden administration's prisoner exchange with Russia on Thursday, calling American negotiators "an embarrassment."

Trump asked in his post if the U.S. had paid cash for Thursday's releases, something National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan specifically denied. He also asked if the U.S. was handing over "murderers, killers, or thugs?" The Russians freed by Western countries as part of the deal, in fact, included a convicted hitman who had been imprisoned in Germany.

Trump prides himself on his success in brokering the release of Americans held by other nations. Thursday, it was President Joe Biden congratulating the families of newly freed Americans headed home, thanks to his administration's successful negotiations.

"Our 'negotiators' are always an embarrassment to us!" Trump wrote. "They're calling the trade 'complex' – That's so nobody can figure out how bad it is!" he wrote.

Michel and von der Leyen welcome released prisoners, criticize Moscow

European Council President Charles Michel and European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen welcomed the released prisoners while criticizing Moscow.

"I welcome the release of 16 people unjustly jailed by the Russian regime," Michel said on the social platform X. "Alsu, Evan, Paul, Vladimir and others, you belong home with your families and loved ones! I thank all those, also in Europe, who helped to make the diplomatic deal possible. EU will continue supporting and standing for all those illegally detained in Russia and elsewhere."

Von der Leyen hailed "the release of innocent citizens from EU & US and upright Russian democrats held captive in Russia."

She hit out at Russia, adding: "The Kremlin swapped them for convicted criminals and murderers. This shows the stark difference. This is a moment of great joy for all who have fought for their freedom."

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Putin greets ex-prisoners in Moscow

President Vladimir Putin met the returning ex-prisoners on the tarmac of Moscow's Vnukovo Airport as they descended from their plane. Putin stood at the foot of the mobile stairs and briefly embraced each returnee.

The group then moved into the terminal, where Putin made brief remarks. "You will all be nominated for state awards. We will see each other again and talk about your future. Now, I want to congratulate you on your return to your homeland," he said.

Biden thanks Turkish president for help in 'smooth' exchange

In a rare telephone conversation, President Joe Biden thanked Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan for his role in facilitating a "smooth" prisoner exchange, according to a statement from Erdogan's office.

The Biden administration has kept a distance toward the Turkish leader and interactions between the two presidents have been infrequent.

The statement said the two also discussed U.S.-Turkish relations and the war in Gaza, with Erdogan telling Biden that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government has shown "with every step" that it does not want a cease-fire.

German chancellor says the release of Krasikov was a 'difficult decision'

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz says the wide-ranging prisoner exchange between Russia and the West "in some cases saved the health and life" of the people who were freed.

Scholz interrupted his vacation to travel to Cologne/Bonn Airport, where he plans to greet released German and Russian citizens.

A central part of the swap was the release of Vadim Krasikov, who was serving a life sentence in Germany for what judges concluded was a Russian state-ordered killing in Berlin in 2019. Scholz told reporters that the "difficult decision" was made by his coalition government "after careful consideration." He said that "no one made this decision lightly to deport a murderer sentenced to life imprisonment after only a few years in detention."

Scholz said it was important "that we have a duty of protection toward German citizens, as well as our solidarity with the U.S."

He said that both he and German opposition leader Friedrich Merz agreed with the decision.

White House flies flag recognizing wrongfully detained Americans

It is the first time such a flag has been flown on the White House grounds.

The flag symbolizes other Americans who continue to be held hostage or are wrongfully detained abroad, according to the White House. It underscores the administration's "enduring commitment to ensuring the safety and security of our fellow Americans, and our sacred vow to continue working tirelessly until every American is accounted for and returns safely back home."

Putin called him a patriot. But who is Vadim Krasikov, a Russian released in the mass prisoner swap?

Vadim Krasikov, the Russian at the center of Thursday's mass prisoner swap, has long topped the Kremlin's list for an exchange. President Vladimir Putin hinted earlier this year that he was interested in such a trade to free a "patriot" held in Germany.

Now Krasikov, 58, is being released by Germany, where he has been imprisoned for murder. Krasikov was convicted for the Aug. 23, 2019, killing of Zelimkhan "Tornike" Khangoshvili, a 40-year-old Georgian citizen who had fought Russian troops in Chechnya and later claimed asylum in Germany.

Khangoshvili was gunned down from behind near Kleiner Tiergarten, a central Berlin park, with a silencer-fitted handgun. Witnesses saw the gunman throw a bike, a gun and a dark wig into the Spree River nearby. Police arrested him before he could escape on an electric scooter.

At his sentencing to life in prison in 2021, German judges said Krasikov had acted on the orders of Russian authorities, who gave him a false identity, passport and the resources to carry out the killing.

[Read more about Vadim Krasikov](#)

As a historic prisoner exchange unfolds, a look back at other famous East-West swaps

After years of isolation behind the bars and high walls of U.S. penitentiaries and Russian penal colonies,

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the prisoners will find themselves suddenly free, an emotional moment culminating from long, back-channel negotiations between Washington and Moscow.

Sometimes, they see those who are part of the swap as they pass each other on an airport tarmac or, as in the Cold War, the Glienicke Bridge connecting West Berlin to Potsdam. In decades of prisoner exchanges, those released have included spies, journalists, drug and arms dealers, and even a well-known athlete.

Thursday's historic exchange was an especially complex affair involving months of talks among several countries before planes flew the large number of prisoners to freedom.

□ Read more about some notable previous swaps

Norway confirms its part in the prisoner exchange

HELSINKI — Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre confirmed the prisoner exchange that includes Mikhail Mikushin, a suspected senior officer of Russian military intelligence GRU who was arrested in the Arctic city of Tromsø by the Nordic country's domestic security agency in October 2022.

"The exchange has been made possible through extensive international cooperation," Støre said in a statement. "For the Norwegian authorities, it has been important to contribute in such cooperation with our close allies. A close collaboration across several countries has made this possible."

Mikushin, who had entered Norway in 2021 as an academic researcher under a false Brazilian name and identity, was suspected by Norwegian authorities of being a spy for the Russian intelligence services and was later charged with espionage.

Before his arrest, Mikushin had acted, using an alias of "José Assis Giammaria", as a guest lecturer at Tromsø's Arctic University of Norway, focusing on researching the northern regions and hybrid threats.

UK foreign secretary welcomes prisoner swap that brought release of 2 British nationals

U.K. Foreign Secretary David Lammy welcomed the prisoner swap between Russia and the West that brought the release of two British nationals, Vladimir Kara-Murza and Paul Whelan.

Lammy said Kara-Murza is "a dedicated opponent of Putin's regime. He should never have been in prison in the first place: the Russian authorities imprisoned him in life-threatening conditions because he courageously told the truth about the war in Ukraine. I pay tribute to his family's courage in the face of such hardship and hope to speak to him soon."

He added: "Paul Whelan and his family have also experienced an unimaginable ordeal. I look forward to speaking to him as he returns home to his family in the United States after over five years in detention."

How the swap itself worked

The Turkish government has released some details on the execution of the swap that took place at Ankara's Esenboga Airport. A statement from the Turkish president's office stated that after arriving in Turkey the individuals involved were removed from their aircraft under the supervision of agents of the Turkish National Intelligence Agency, or MIT, and moved to "secure areas."

Following the approval of the exchange by the countries involved in the swap deal, the hostages received health checks and had their other needs addressed.

They were then escorted onto the aircraft that would take them to their respective destinations.

The planes were then given clearance to depart following authorization from MIT.

Biden and Harris will join families as they reunite with their loved ones this evening

President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris will join the families of Paul Whelan, Alsu Kurmasheva and Evan Gershkovich at Joint Base Andrews outside of Washington this evening to welcome them back to U.S. soil.

That's according to National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan.

Vladimir Kara-Murza, who was also released from Russia in the swap, will be returning to Germany but told Biden on a call today that he hopes to visit the U.S. soon.

Biden hits back at Trump's claim that he could get Putin to release prisoners

During his White House address earlier Thursday, President Joe Biden responded to former President Donald Trump's frequent claim that he could get Russia to release imprisoned Americans.

When asked about Trump's claim, Biden retorted, "Why didn't he do it when he was president?"

But most of the released Westerners were detained during Biden's presidency, though corporate security

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consultant Paul Whelan had been in custody since 2018 when Trump was in office.

Before the deal, Trump said Gershkovich, who was detained in 2023 during Biden's presidency, would "be released almost immediately after the election." He said Russian President Vladimir Putin "will do that for me and I don't believe he'll do it for anyone else."

Biden broke the news of the exchange to relatives of the American detainees

Biden invited relatives of the detained Americans into the Oval Office as the U.S. received word that the prisoners had been swapped in Turkey, White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said.

"He was able to give them the news directly that the exchange was complete," Sullivan said of Biden.

Biden then made two calls, one to Americans Gershkovich, Kurmasheva and Whelan and the other to Kara-Murza, a dual Russian-U.K. citizen. Each of the family members was able to talk to their relatives, Sullivan said.

Biden told the former prisoners he "welcomed their freedom" and said on behalf of the American people that "he was so proud to have them out."

Biden also reminisced with Kara-Murza about serving as pallbearers together at the 2018 funeral for former U.S. Sen. John McCain.

Exiled Belarus opposition leader hopes exchange sets precedent for the release of prisoners in her own country

The exiled leader of Belarus' opposition, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, hopes the prisoner exchange can be a heartening sign for her country's political prisoners.

"We welcome the freeing of political prisoners from Russian jails and the fact that such an exchange of captives is an important precedent that helps releases of Belarusians," she said in a statement.

Human rights observers say Belarus holds nearly 1,400 political prisoners, largely from the crackdown on widespread protests in 2020.

One of those released in today's exchange is a German Red Cross worker who was sentenced to death last month for terrorism but who was pardoned by the president this week.

US national security advisor says the swap's 'benefit outweighs the risk'

The U.S. believes the benefit of securing the release of wrongfully detained Americans outweighed the risk of incentivizing American adversaries from taking additional prisoners as leverage, U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said Thursday.

Sullivan acknowledged that "It is difficult to send back a convicted criminal to secure the release of an innocent American," saying it's a question U.S. policymakers "grapple with every time" a prisoner swap deal is discussed.

Sullivan says the U.S. conducted an assessment and determined that the "benefit outweighs the risk."

Sullivan says Roger Carsten, the Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs, conducted an analysis that suggests Americans are at no greater risk for being detained when the U.S. makes deals to secure their release.

Poland's part in the prisoner exchange

The prisoner released by Poland, Pavel Rubtsov, has been known since his arrest more than two years ago as Pablo Gonzalez, a journalist working for Spanish media.

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk thanked Polish President Andrzej Duda and the Polish security services for their work, which led to part of the exchange.

"The prisoner exchange operation has just ended, thanks to which Russian opposition heroes and citizens of NATO countries detained in Russia left Russia. The action was possible thanks to the involvement of our state. I would like to thank the President and the services for their exemplary cooperation," Tusk wrote on X.

Poland's Internal Security Agency said in March 2022 that they arrested a Spanish citizen of Russian origin on espionage charges the night of Feb. 27-28, 2022, in the border town of Przemysl, and read him "the charge of participating in foreign intelligence activities against Poland."

The agency said, "He carried out activities on behalf of Russia using his status as a journalist. This al-

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lowed him to move freely around Europe and the world, including to zones of armed conflict and regions of political tension.”

Former Russian President Medvedev: ‘I would like the traitors of Russia to rot in prison’

In comments apparently referring to the massive US-Russia prisoner exchange, former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said, “I would like the traitors of Russia to rot in prison or die in jail, as has often happened. But it is more useful to get out our own, who worked for the country, for the Fatherland, for all of us.”

Medvedev was regarded as a moderate during his 2008-2012 presidency, but since the 2022 start of the Ukraine has made vehemently anti-West and nationalist statements on the Telegram messaging app.

“Let the traitors now feverishly pick new names and actively disguise themselves under the witness protection program,” he wrote Thursday, without directly mentioning the exchange.

Navalny’s widow says there are more Russian prisoners ‘we still have to fight for’

Alexei Navalny’s widow Yulia Navalnaya said on X that “it was a huge, long, and very difficult work, with negotiations spanning several years.”

“In February, many different people came together for another attempt to save them all. And now, they are all free,” Navalnaya wrote.

“Every released political prisoner is a huge victory and a reason to celebrate. No one should be held hostage by Putin, subjected to torture, or left to die in his prisons,” adding that there are prisoners in Russia “we still have to fight for.”

Ally of Alexei Navalny laments the Russian opposition leader’s death

Russia’s late opposition leader Alexei Navalny should have been freed in the historic prisoner exchange that took place Thursday, his closest ally Leonid Volkov said on social media.

Navalny, Russia’s most prominent opposition leader, died in February at the age of 47 in a remote Arctic prison. Shortly after his death, his allies said that Moscow was in talks with the West about a prisoner exchange involving the politician. Weeks later, Russian President Vladimir Putin also said that he was prepared to release Navalny in a prisoner swap on condition that he never return to Russia.

“Today we’re reveling in the release of political prisoners, Putin’s hostages who were suffering in Putin’s gulag,” Volkov said on X. “But it still will be joy with tears in our eyes. ‘The Navalny swap’ has taken place ... But without Navalny. It hurts a lot.”

Who’s in the massive prisoner swap between Russia and the West?

One spent over 5½ years behind bars in Russia while other, higher-profile detainees were released ahead of him. Another was jailed for only a few months. They include journalists, veteran political activists and those simply opposed to the war in Ukraine. The youngest is 19, the oldest 71.

Among the Russians jailed in the West were alleged sleeper agents who lived double lives. Others were convicted of hacking computers. One was imprisoned for the brazen, daytime shooting death of a man in a Berlin park.

Who walked free in today’s civilian prisoner swap?

Biden pays respect to the families of those formerly detained

During his speech, Biden took Elizabeth Whelan’s hand and said she’d practically been living at the White House as they tried to free Paul.

He then motioned for Alsu Kurmasheva’s daughter Miriam to come closer, and took her hand, telling the room it was her 13th birthday before asking everyone to sing “Happy Birthday” with him. The teen was emotional as Biden hugged her across the shoulders with one arm and wiped away a tear after she walked away.

“Now she gets to celebrate with her mom,” Biden said. “That’s what this is all about — families able to be together again. Like they should have been all along.”

Family of detained former Marine thanks public officials, journalists and ordinary letter writers

The family of a former Marine is thanking everyone from top U.S. officials to GoFundMe donors and fellow military vets for his release from Russian detention after 2,043 days.

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Paul Whelan's family issued the statement Thursday after confirming the former Marine was among those coming home.

The family used the opportunity to thank President Joe Biden, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan. But they also expressed gratitude to Washington insiders, ordinary letter writers and journalists who all helped keep up pressure for Whelan's release.

In the statement, the family notes that Whelan lost his home and his job while wrongfully held by Russia. "We are unsure how someone overcomes these losses and rejoins society after being a hostage," his family wrote.

What are Germany's 'serious concessions'?

The German government says it didn't take lightly the decision to free Vadim Krasikov, convicted of carrying out a Russian-ordered murder in Berlin in 2019.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's spokesman, Steffen Hebestreit, said in a statement Friday that the release of 15 people held "wrongfully" in Russia and a German held in Belarus could only be achieved by deporting Russians "with an intelligence background" held in Europe such as Krasikov.

Hebestreit said that "the German government did not take this decision lightly." He added that "the freedom, physical well-being and — in some cases — ultimately the life of innocent people imprisoned in Russia and unjustly held political prisoners stood against the state's interest in the enforcement of the prison sentence of convicted criminal."

Hebestreit said that "our obligation to protect German citizens and solidarity with the U.S. were important motivations."

Biden acknowledges 'serious concessions from Germany' in prisoner exchange

Biden credited U.S. allies for the prisoner swap, saying it's "a powerful example of why it's vital to have friends in this world."

"For anyone who questions whether allies matter, they do," Biden said. "They matter."

But he also acknowledged that such prisoner swaps "come with tough calls."

The president said that he has a great sense of gratitude to German Chancellor Olaf Scholz. The deal, he said, "required me to get some serious concessions from Germany."

President Joe Biden says detained Americans are coming home and 'their brutal ordeal is over'

Addressing the nation from the White House State Room, Biden said it was a "feat of diplomacy" that brought home Whelan, Gershkovich, Kurmasheva and Kara-Murza. He said multiple countries worked together to get it done.

As Biden made his statement at the White House, he was joined by relatives of the freed Americans.

The U.S. president said he and the families had spoken to their relatives by phone from the Oval Office minutes before his address. Biden called the release an "incredible relief" for the families and a feat of diplomacy.

Biden said the work to bring home those wrongfully detained began during his transition into the presidency. And he said his administration has brought home 70 Americans, "many since before I took office."

US Senators react to prisoner exchange

Republicans in the Senate welcomed the news but also pointed out the deal came at a cost for the U.S.

Sen. Jim Risch, the top Republican on the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, said in a statement, "While I am glad to see the return of these wrongfully detained Americans, we must not forget those who were left behind: Marc Fogel and Ksenia Karelina. The United States paid a steep price for this exchange, as those returning to Russia are some of Putin's most valuable assets who will be glad to return to their villainous ways."

Meanwhile, Democrats also lauded the Biden administration for including Russian opposition leaders in the release.

Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., said it "speaks to a very smart policy by this administration to of course prioritize Americans, but also realize that we can't stand up for democracy globally if we are not supporting freedom fighters inside places like Russia."

Amnesty International says exchange leaves 'a bitter aftertaste'



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Amnesty International expressed relief at the release of prisoners held by Russia, but said the exchange leaves "a bitter aftertaste."

The deputy secretary general of Amnesty's German branch, Christian Mihr, said in a statement that "a murderer and other criminals who were convicted in a fair trial are now coming free in exchange for people who only used their right to freedom of expression."

He said that "therefore, the prisoner swap is also a step toward expanding impunity." He argued that the Russian government could feel encouraged to carry out further political detentions and human rights violations without having to fear consequences.

VP Harris reacts

Vice President Kamala Harris says in a statement the U.S. is celebrating the release of those "unjustly held in Russia."

Harris, the likely Democratic nominee for president, wrote: "It gives me great comfort to know that their horrible ordeal is over." She said the Biden administration will not stop working until every American wrongfully detained has been brought home.

Biden calls exchange a 'feat of diplomacy'

President Joe Biden praised the negotiations that brought four Americans home from Russian detention Thursday as a "feat of diplomacy."

In a White House statement, Biden cited the "unimaginable suffering and uncertainty" surrounding the prisoners' time in Russian custody.

"Today, their agony is over," Biden said.

Biden thanked allies including Germany, Poland, Slovenia, Norway and Turkey for their assistance.

Biden said his administration had brought home more than 70 Americans who had been wrongfully detained or otherwise held hostage. "I have no higher priority as President than bringing those Americans home," he wrote.

Turkey's intelligence chief facilitated talks between the US and Russia, per Turkish official

A Turkish security official said Turkey's intelligence chief, Ibrahim Kalin, personally facilitated talks between his U.S. and Russian counterparts for the prisoner swap.

The talks took place in Istanbul and Ankara, the official said.

According to the official, Washington and Moscow reached out to Turkey requesting its assistance. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan then instructed Kalin to "do whatever is necessary" to make the deal happen, according to the official, who provided the information on customary condition of anonymity.

Sen Graham says exchange is 'reinforcing bad behavior'

Sen. Lindsey Graham, a South Carolina Republican, said he was glad that the U.S. citizens would get to go home, but added that the exchange was "just reinforcing bad behavior."

Graham, who is known as a hawk on foreign policy, suggested that the next time an American is imprisoned under similar circumstances, the U.S. should "just pound the hell out of Russia."

The Wall Street Journal celebrates Gershkovich's release

Wall Street Journal Editor-in-Chief Emma Tucker says Gershkovich has walked free from a Russian plane and will soon board a flight home to the U.S.

"I cannot even begin to describe the immense happiness and relief that this news brings and I know all of you will feel the same," Tucker wrote in a note to the staff obtained by the AP. "This is a day of great joy for Evan and his family, and a historic day for The Wall Street Journal."

Wall Street Journal reporters broke into applause after his release was announced in the New York newsroom. Gershkovich's photo was projected onto a screen along with #IStandWithEvan, the hashtag supporters around the world used to call for his freedom.

The trade

The sprawling deal, the latest in a series of prisoner swaps negotiated between Russia and the U.S. in the last two years but the first to require significant concessions from other countries, was heralded by President Joe Biden as a diplomatic achievement in the final months of his administration. But the release of Americans has come at a price: Russia has secured the freedom of its own nationals convicted of seri-

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ous crimes in the West by trading them for journalists, dissidents and other Westerners convicted and sentenced in a highly politicized legal system on charges the U.S. considers bogus.

The Wall Street Journal confirms Gershkovich's release

The Journal confirmed the release, with top editor Emma Tucker saying in a staff email: "I cannot even begin to describe the immense happiness and relief that this news brings and I know all of you will feel the same."

Russia extended Gershkovich's detention several times

In February, a Moscow court ruled to keep him in custody pending his trial.

In March, the court ordered him to remain in jail on espionage charges until at least late June. The 32-year-old had spent nearly a year behind bars by then.

In April, the court rejected an appeal that sought to end his pretrial detention.

His arrest in the city of Yekaterinburg rattled journalists in Russia, where authorities have not detailed what, if any, evidence they have to support the espionage charges.

Gershkovich appeared in Russian court more than a dozen times

Since his detention, Gershkovich has appeared more than a dozen times in Russian courtrooms — first in Moscow, where he was held at the notorious Lefortovo Prison, and then at the Sverdlovsk Regional Court in the Ural Mountains city of Yekaterinburg.

His pretrial appearances became almost formulaic, as he was led in handcuffs over and over from a prison van to a glass defendant's cage. They offered his family and friends both a painful reminder of his detention but also a chance to lay eyes on him.

"It's always a mixed feeling. I'm happy to see him and that he's doing well, but it's a reminder that he is not with us. We want him at home," Gershkovich's mother, Ella Milman, told The Associated Press in an interview in March.

Although Gershkovich was often seen smiling in the brief appearances, friends and family said he found it hard to face a wall of cameras pointed at him as if he were an animal in a zoo.

As his trial started behind closed doors on June 26, Gershkovich stood in the defendants cage with a shaved head as the media were allowed briefly into the court.

Russia has detained many other journalists

The arrest of Gershkovich — the first U.S. journalist taken into custody on espionage charges since Nicholas Daniloff in 1986 at the height of the Cold War — came as a shock, even though Russia had enacted increasingly repressive laws on freedom of speech after the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

"He was accredited by the Russian Foreign Ministry. There was nothing to suggest that this was going to happen," said Emma Tucker, The Wall Street Journal's editor-in-chief in an interview in March.

Since the invasion, Russian authorities have detained several U.S. nationals and other Westerners, and Gershkovich knew the risks, said Washington Post correspondent and friend Francesca Ebel.

After his arrest, he knew "right from the very start that this was going to take a long time," she said.

Long before his arrest, Gershkovich lamented that many friends in Russia were being locked up

In early 2022, Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich wrote on social media that "reporting on Russia is now also a regular practice of watching people you know get locked away for years."

A year later, he was the one locked up — arrested in March 2023 on charges of spying that his employer and the U.S. government have denounced as fabricated. Last month, he was convicted and sentenced to 16 years in prison.

WSJ reporter freed in massive US-Russia prisoner swap

The United States and Russia completed their biggest prisoner swap in post-Soviet history on Thursday, with Moscow releasing journalist Evan Gershkovich and fellow American Paul Whelan in a multinational deal that set some two dozen people free, according to officials in Turkey, where the exchange took place.

Both had been convicted of espionage charges that the U.S. government considered baseless.

The trade followed years of secretive back-channel negotiations despite relations between Washington and Moscow being at their lowest point since the Cold War after Russian President Vladimir Putin's Febru-

ary 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

The sprawling deal, the latest in a series of prisoner swaps negotiated between Russia and the U.S. in the last two years but the first to require significant concessions from other countries.

Speculation had mounted for weeks that a swap was near because of a confluence of unusual developments, including a startlingly quick trial and conviction for Gershkovich that Washington regarded as a sham. He was sentenced to 16 years in a maximum-security prison.

Gershkovich was arrested March 29, 2023, while on a reporting trip to the Ural Mountains city of Yekaterinburg.

## **Few Americans trust the Secret Service after a gunman nearly killed Trump, an AP-NORC poll finds**

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON and AMELIA THOMSON-DEVEAUX Associated Press

Most Americans have doubts about the Secret Service's ability to keep presidential candidates safe after last month's attempt on former President Donald Trump's life, a new poll from the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds.

Only around 3 in 10 Americans are extremely or very confident that the Secret Service can keep the presidential candidates safe from violence before the election, according to the poll. The survey also found that about 7 in 10 Americans think the Secret Service bears at least a moderate amount of responsibility for the assassination attempt.

The law enforcement agency tasked with protecting presidents for more than a century is under intense scrutiny after a gunman got within 150 yards of Trump and fired several bullets from an AR-style rifle. Trump was injured in one ear but was millimeters away from being killed.

The poll was conducted after the resignation of director Kimberly Cheatle, who faced intense questioning at a congressional hearing that was broadcast live last week and in which she gave evasive answers. The new acting director Ronald Rowe said earlier this week that he was "ashamed" after the July 13 attack in Butler, Pennsylvania, saying he considered it indefensible that the roof used by the gunman was not secured.

The poll revealed that Americans were most likely to say that political division in the U.S. had "a great deal" of responsibility for the assassination attempt.

Half of U.S. adults say that, while about 4 in 10 say the Secret Service bears a high level of responsibility, and about 4 in 10 say the widespread availability of guns is greatly responsible.

Democrats were far more likely to blame the availability of guns while Republicans were more likely to blame the Secret Service.

Roger Berg, a 70-year-old farmer from Keota, Iowa, is planning to vote for Trump, the Republican nominee, in November. But he expressed discontent about Republicans blaming President Joe Biden for issues he thought Biden had no control over. Biden ended his reelection bid eight days after the shooting and has endorsed Vice President Kamala Harris, now the likely Democratic nominee.

"The people that are making everything about politics, I wish they would just quit," Berg said. "They pin it all on Biden, and I don't believe in that."

Democrats, meanwhile, are substantially more likely than independents or Republicans to say the availability of guns bears a great deal of responsibility. Six in 10 Democrats say this, compared to about one-third of independents and 15% of Republicans.

Republican respondents were more likely than independents and Democrats to blame the Secret Service: About half of Republicans think the Secret Service has a great deal of responsibility, compared to around 4 in 10 Democrats and independents.

George Velasco, a 65-year-old Navy veteran from Tucson, Arizona, said he thought both the Secret Service and local law enforcement were to blame along with poor communication and a lack of proper planning. The Secret Service's acting director said earlier this week that it was regrettable that local law enforcement had not alerted his agency before the shooting that an armed subject had been spotted on a roof, while also recognizing the Secret Service assumed that state and local police had presence.

"It was as if the Secret Service expected those guys to know what they had to do," Velasco said. "It was a very small area, a small town. How did they expect them to know how to prepare for something huge like that rally?"

The poll found that half of Americans think local law enforcement in Pennsylvania had at least a moderate amount of responsibility for the assassination attempt, although only about 2 in 10 said it had "a great deal" of responsibility.

The Secret Service was first created as part of the Treasury Department to investigate the counterfeiting of U.S. currency during the Civil War. The agency began informally protecting presidents in 1894, according to its records. Congress requested Secret Service protection of U.S. presidents after the assassination of William McKinley in 1901.

Protection was extended to the president's immediate family, presidents-elect and vice presidents after a White House police officer was shot and killed while protecting President Harry S. Truman in 1950. It was later extended to former presidents in 1965. After the 1968 assassination of U.S. Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, who was running for the Democratic presidential nomination, Congress authorized protection of major presidential and vice presidential candidates.

About one-third of Americans are extremely or very confident that the Department of Homeland Security, which oversees the Secret Service, will conduct a full and fair investigation of the assassination attempt, while about one-third are somewhat confident and about 3 in 10 are not very confident or not at all confident.

## **Thousands were arrested at college protests. For students, the fallout was only beginning**

By NAMU SAMPATH of The Springfield Republican, MONICA OBRADOVIC of The St. Louis Post-Dispatch, HILARY BURNS of The Boston Globe, and CHRISTOPHER L. KELLER of The Associated Press undefined AMHERST, Mass. (AP) — Since her arrest at a protest at the University of Massachusetts, Annie McGrew has been pivoting between two sets of hearings: one for the misdemeanor charges she faces in court, and another for violations of the college's conduct code.

It has kept the graduate student from work toward finishing her dissertation in economics.

"It's been a really rough few months for me since my arrest," McGrew said. "I never imagined this is how UMass (administration) would respond."

Some 3,200 people were arrested this spring during a wave of pro-Palestinian tent encampments protesting the war in Gaza. While some colleges ended demonstrations by striking deals with the students, or simply waited them out, others called in police when protesters refused to leave.

Many students have already seen those charges dismissed. But the cases have yet to be resolved for hundreds of people at campuses that saw the highest number of arrests, according to an analysis of data gathered by The Associated Press and partner newsrooms.

Along with the legal limbo, those students face uncertainty in their academic careers. Some remain steadfast, saying they would have made the same decisions to protest even if they had known the consequences. Others have struggled with the aftermath of the arrests, harboring doubts about whether to stay enrolled in college at all.

In St. Louis, Valencia Alvarez is waiting to hear what will come of the potential charges she and 99 others could face for a protest April 27 that lasted less than half a day at Washington University.

Twenty-three of those arrested were students. In June, the university gave them two options: They could face a hearing with the Office of Student Conduct, or they could "accept responsibility" and forgo further investigation. Alvarez took the first option.

"I don't really plan on being quiet about this, and I think that's the goal of the second option," Alvarez said.

The demonstrations swept public and private universities, on campuses large and small, urban and rural. As students return this fall, colleges are bracing for more protests against both Israel's military and Hamas, and strategizing over tactics including when to call in law enforcement — decisions that have had

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lasting reverberations.

Some college leaders said calling police was the only option to end protests that stood in the way of commencement ceremonies, disrupted campus life and included instances of antisemitic signs and language.

Student groups and some faculty members have blasted college leaders for inviting police inside their gates. In their view, the police actions often trampled peaceful demonstrations with unnecessary levels of force.

Which charges are worth pursuing?

The vast majority of the cases against the demonstrators — ranging from students and faculty to people without any ties to the colleges — involve misdemeanors or lower-level charges. Examples include trespassing, failure to disperse, disorderly conduct and resisting arrest.

More serious charges were filed against demonstrators who occupied a campus building at Columbia University, where some were arrested initially on felony trespassing charges. Those were lowered to misdemeanors, and dozens of students have had their charges dropped. In a decision criticized by Jewish groups, prosecutors said there was a lack of evidence tying them to acts of property damage, and none of the students had criminal histories.

Prosecutors in several cities are still evaluating whether to pursue charges. But in many cases, officials have indicated they do not intend to pursue low-level violations, according to AP's review of data on campuses with at least 100 arrests.

In upstate New York, the Ulster County district attorney asked judges to dismiss 129 cases stemming from arrests at the State University of New York at New Paltz.

"I have concluded that it is best to dismiss these charges now and relieve all concerned and the courts of any further burdens, expenses, and expenditures of scarce public and judicial resources," District Attorney Emmanuel Nneji wrote in June.

New Paltz students said they were sitting with their arms interlocked when officers hauled them away on May 2.

"It was handled very brutally," said Maddison Tirado, a student whose trespassing charge has been dismissed. Tirado said protesters were treated as if authorities saw them "like little terrorists running around."

One student demonstrator, Ezra Baptist, said he was taken to a hospital with a concussion and a cut after being thrown forward and hitting his head during his arrest by state troopers. He was supposed to avoid looking at screens because of his injury and could not complete one class he needed to graduate in May.

State police said if anyone believes troopers acted inappropriately, they should file a complaint so it can be investigated. Another police agency at the scene, the county sheriff's office, said officers showed restraint and that a trooper was injured when demonstrators threw bottles.

Tensions have run high on college campuses since Oct. 7, when Hamas militants assaulted southern Israel and killed 1,200 people, most of them civilians, and took about 250 hostages. Israel's offensive has killed more than 39,000 Palestinians, according to local health authorities.

Arrests put students' degrees on hold

For some students, the impact on their academic careers has affected them more than any legal jeopardy.

At Washington University, conduct hearings for arrested students began recently but have yet to result in disciplinary decisions. In the meantime, Alvarez does not have the master's degree in public health she would have received by now if not for her arrest.

Alvarez, who hopes to branch into social justice and community organizing, said she doesn't have regrets. But that's not to say the protest didn't come at a cost.

"I want that degree," Alvarez said. "I worked four jobs throughout my two years at Wash U to be able to afford tuition without pulling out any loans."

At Emerson College in Boston, 118 people were arrested when police were asked to enforce a city ordinance against camping on public property. All were charged with disturbing the peace and granted "pre-arrest diversion," which means no charges will be filed in exchange for 40 hours of community service, prosecutors said.

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Owen Buxton, an Emerson student, said he suffered a concussion when police shoved him into a bronze statue. It was his second arrest of the semester for protesting the war in Gaza. The experience made it hard for him to concentrate or participate in classes.

"It stifled all my creativity — I didn't make anything for months, which is not typical of me," said Buxton, a filmmaker.

Emerson allowed students to take the semester pass-fail following an outcry over the arrests.

A spokesperson for the Boston Police Department said anybody with concerns can file complaints with the internal affairs office. The department previously said there were no injuries during the Emerson arrests.

A reckoning over inviting police to campus

At the UMass campus in Amherst, students recalled a peaceful demonstration with singing and dancing before police arrived. It was the second tent encampment students had put up that week. UMass Chancellor Javier Reyes said he ordered the sweep after discussions broke down with protesters.

"Let me be clear — involving law enforcement is the absolute last resort," Reyes wrote to the campus community.

The law enforcement response, including 117 police vehicles on campus, unsettled protesters. McGrew remembers seeing police with riot gear rushing the crowd of students. A total of 134 people were arrested.

As arrestees were processed at the university's sports arena, graduate student Charles Sullivan, who is transgender, said they felt humiliated by campus police. An officer, Sullivan said, forced them to loudly describe their genitalia to gain access to a restroom.

Sullivan has since decided to leave the university to continue their studies, in part because of the arrest. Wrapping up a master's degree in anthropology, Sullivan will move to Ohio in the fall to pursue a Ph.D., instead of continuing at UMass.

"I think mostly I'm just kind of ready to get out of this place," Sullivan said.

Many campus organizations have rebuked Reyes for deploying police, including the UMass faculty senate, which passed a vote of no confidence against the chancellor.

In June, Reyes announced a task force to review campus policies on demonstrations, including the land-use policy many arrestees were charged with violating.

The group is just getting started with their work, said Anthony Paik, a member of the faculty senate and co-chair of the task force. It would have more information by the end of August, he said, just before the start of the new school year.

## Japan Osprey crash caused by cracks in a gear and pilot's decision to keep flying, Air Force says

By TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A deadly Osprey aircraft crash last November off Japan was caused by cracks in a metal gear and the pilot's decision to keep flying rather than heed multiple warnings that he should land, according to an Air Force investigation released Thursday.

The CV-22B Osprey crash killed eight Air Force Special Operations Command service members and led to a monthslong military-wide grounding of the fleet. There have been four fatal Osprey crashes in the past two years, driving investigations into the Osprey's safety record and creating a split among the services about the future role of the unique aircraft that can fly like an airplane but land like a helicopter.

For months, the Air Force would only say an unprecedented component failure caused the crash. On Thursday, it said a toothed piece called a pinion gear — a critical part of the proprotor gearbox — was to blame. The proprotor gearbox serves as the aircraft's transmission. Inside each gearbox, five pinion gears spin hard to transmit the engine's power to turn the Osprey's masts and rotor blades.

While the Air Force is confident it was the pinion gear that failed, it still does not know why.

But a Pentagon program office in charge of the V-22 Ospreys knew that "total loss of aircraft and crew were possible" if those proprotor gearbox components failed, lead investigator Lt. Gen. Michael Conley told reporters Wednesday before the report's official release. In a rare move, the investigation also faulted

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that office, saying it did not share safety data that could have educated crews on the severity of the risk. In an interview with The Associated Press, Conley said he believed it was the pilot's instinct to complete the military exercise that drove his decisions.

"To a degree, it's a way of life here. I mean, we want people in this command that that are biased toward 'yes,' biased toward getting the mission done," Conley said. "As we went through the investigation, I saw someone that was confident in the aircraft but not cocky."

On the day of the crash, the Osprey was flying along the coast of mainland Japan headed to Okinawa when the first indications of trouble began.

In aircraft, vibrations are monitored as signs of potential trouble. A data recorder noted vibrations on the left side of the driveshaft that links the two engines and acts as a fail safe in case one engine loses power.

A second vibration followed. This time one of the five pinion gears inside the left proprotor gearbox was vibrating.

But pilot Maj. Jeff Hoernemann and his crew never knew about the vibrations because that data can only be downloaded at the end of a flight.

Five minutes after the first vibration, a left proprotor gearbox chip burn warning posted in the cockpit. The warning lets the crew know there was metal flaking coming off the Osprey's gearing, another indication of stress.

Chipping is a common enough occurrence in rotary flight that there is a safety net designed into the Osprey. The chip detector can burn the chips off so they do not travel in the oil and destroy the transmission.

If the burn is successful, the warning clears.

The crew got six chip warnings that day. Each presented an opportunity for Hoernemann to heed the warning and land as a precaution, but he did not, and investigators found that decision was a causal factor in the crash.

When the third chip burn warning posted, the crew was close to mainland Japan and just 10 miles (16 kilometers) from its nearest airfield. The official guidance after three chip burns was to "land as soon as practical," guidance that still leaves that decision to the pilot's discretion.

According to the voice data recorder, Hoernemann and the crew were looking for secondary indications of a problem, such as the proprotor gearbox overheating, but saw none. So Hoernemann instead directed his co-pilot to keep monitoring the situation and elected to continue the 300-nautical-mile flight over water to Okinawa.

Hoernemann was likely balancing split priorities in his decision-making, the investigation found. He was leading the airborne portion of the military exercise and had spent months planning for it.

Until almost the final minutes of flight, he kept his primary focus on completing the exercise, not the evolving aircraft situation, the investigation found. He rejected his co-pilot's suggestions on using an alternative onboard mapping tool to identify the closest airfield to land. Throughout the flight, the co-pilot was also not direct about "his uneasiness with the evolving issues," the investigation found, based on the recovered voice data.

The fourth and fifth chip burn warnings came fast. Then with the sixth, escalation: just chips. It meant the Osprey could not burn them off. "Land as soon as practical" turned into "land as soon as possible." Still, the crew members did not act with urgency.

In the final minutes of flight, they had begun to position the aircraft to land. The Osprey was half a mile (0.8 kilometers) from an airfield at Yakushima, flying about 785 feet (240 meters) above the water.

But they elected to hold for local air traffic to take off, even as Hoernemann confirmed over the radio they had an in-flight emergency.

The Osprey gave its final chip-related warning three minutes before the crash: chip detector fail. Hoernemann told the crew he was no longer worried, that he now assumed the earlier warnings were errors due to a faulty chip detector.

Investigators later found the fail message occurred because the detector "had so many chips on it, it couldn't keep up," Conley said.

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Inside the proprotor gearbox, the pinion gear was breaking apart. At least one piece wedged into the teeth of the larger transmission gearing system, jamming and breaking off gearing teeth until the left proprotor gearbox could no longer turn the Osprey's left proprotor mast.

Within six seconds of the proprotor gearbox failing, catastrophic destruction splintered through the Osprey gearing and interconnected drive system. At that point, there was nothing the crew members could have done to save themselves or the aircraft, the investigation found.

The Osprey rolled violently, inverted twice with its left engine housing on fire and crashed into the water, killing all on board.

Following the crash, crews are now directed to land as soon as practical on a first chip burn and as soon as possible on the second. The joint program office is also working on a new system that would communicate vibration data in real time to pilots, to give them better awareness during flight.

Officials at the Japanese Defense Ministry said one of their Ospreys reported a first chip burn warning last August and made a precautionary landing. After the November crash, Japan grounded its fleet. It has restarted flying operations according to the tighter flight restrictions implemented by the U.S. military — operating within 30 minutes of a landing location and performing more frequent chip checks and maintenance.

Japanese Defense Minister Minoru Kihara told reporters Friday that even though the root cause of the cracking had not been determined, the new precautionary measures suffice.

"I believe Ospreys have no safety problems," Kihara said, but he added that Japan will continue to cooperate with the U.S. military "to ensure highest levels of safety measures are taken."

Kihara said that even though the cause of the gear damage remained unknown, Japan does not intend to conduct its own probe or ask the U.S. to do further investigation because the two sides have shared "unprecedented levels of classified information" about the accident. He said Japan expects further improvement are being made on the Osprey parts.

The V-22 Osprey is jointly produced by Bell Flight and Boeing.

The accident killed Maj. Eric V. Spendlove, 36, of St. George, Utah; Maj. Luke A. Unrath, 34, of Riverside, California; Capt. Terrell K. Brayman, 32, of Pittsford, New York; Tech. Sgt. Zachary E. Lavoy, 33, of Oviedo, Florida; Staff Sgt. Jake M. Turnage, 25, of Kennesaw, Georgia; Senior Airman Brian K. Johnson, 32, of Reynoldsburg, Ohio; Staff Sgt. Jacob M. Galliher, 24, of Pittsfield, Massachusetts; and Hoernemann, 32, of Andover, Minnesota.

## Federal judge overturns \$4.7 billion jury verdict in 'Sunday Ticket' lawsuit and rules for NFL

By JOE REEDY AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A federal judge overturned a jury's \$4.7 billion verdict in the class-action lawsuit filed by "Sunday Ticket" subscribers against the NFL and has granted judgment to the NFL.

U.S. District Judge Philip Gutierrez ruled Thursday that the testimony of two witnesses for the subscribers had flawed methodologies and should have been excluded.

"Without the testimonies of Dr. (Daniel) Rascher and Dr. (John) Zona, no reasonable jury could have found class-wide injury or damages," Gutierrez wrote at the end of his 16-page ruling.

On June 27 the jury awarded \$4.7 billion in damages to residential and commercial subscribers after it ruled the NFL violated antitrust laws in distributing out-of-market Sunday afternoon games on a premium subscription service.

The lawsuit covered 2.4 million residential subscribers and 48,000 businesses in the United States who paid for the package on DirecTV of out-of-market games from the 2011 through 2022 seasons.

"We are grateful for today's ruling in the Sunday Ticket class action lawsuit," the NFL said in a statement. "We believe that the NFL's media distribution model provides our fans with an array of options to follow the game they love, including local broadcasts of every single game on free over-the-air television. We thank Judge Gutierrez for his time and attention to this case and look forward to an exciting 2024 NFL season."



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Calls and emails to the attorneys representing "Sunday Ticket" subscribers were not returned.

The jury of five men and three women found the NFL liable for \$4,610,331,671.74 in damages to the residential class (home subscribers) and \$96,928,272.90 in damages to the commercial class (business subscribers).

Because damages can be tripled under federal antitrust laws, the NFL could have been liable for \$14,121,779,833.92.

Gutierrez did say in his decision that if he did not rule for the NFL as a matter of law, he would have vacated the jury's damages verdict and conditionally grant a new trial "based on the jury's irrational damages award."

Rascher's models were variations of a college football model. Rascher, an economist at the University of San Francisco, said during his testimony that "they figured it out in college sports, (so) they would certainly figure it out at the NFL."

Gutierrez said Rascher's testimony "was not the product of sound economic methodology" and that he needed to explain how out-of-market telecasts would have been available on cable and satellite without an additional subscription.

Gutierrez also found flaws in Zona's "multiple distributor" models because it predicted consumers would have paid more if another service besides DirecTV offered "Sunday Ticket" and there was an unsupported assumption that another distributor — either cable, satellite or streaming — would have been available.

"Without knowing what "direct-to-consumer" meant, it is impossible to determine if it would have been economically rational for consumers to purchase "Sunday Ticket" from an alternative distributor at a higher price," Gutierrez said. "And, that definition was necessary for determining whether a viable alternative distributor even existed during the class period. Without that information, the Court cannot determine whether the but-for worlds without exclusivity were modeled reliably.

The jury's amount also did not conform to Rascher's model (\$7.01 billion) by Daniel Rascher, or the model (\$3.48 billion) by Zona, who was an expert witness in the case.

Instead, the jury used the 2021 list price of \$293.96 and subtracted \$102.74, the average price actually paid by residential Sunday Ticket subscribers. The jury then used \$191.26, which it considered as the "overcharge," and multiplied that by the number of subscribers to come up with the damages amount.

Gutierrez said the jury did not follow his instructions and "instead relied on inputs not tied to the record to create its own 'overcharge.'"

It is not the first time the NFL has won a judgment as matter of law in this case, which has been going on since 2015.

In 2017, U.S. District Judge Beverly Reid O'Connell dismissed the lawsuit and ruled for the NFL because she said "Sunday Ticket" did not reduce output of NFL games and that even though DirecTV might have charged inflated prices, that did not "on its own, constitute harm to competition" because it had to negotiate with the NFL to carry the package.

Two years later, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals reinstated the case.

It is likely the plaintiffs will again appeal to the 9th Circuit.

## **Trump is making his 2024 campaign about Harris' race, whether Republicans want him to or not**

By STEVE PEOPLES and MATT BROWN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump has found tremendous success from the very first moment he stepped onto the presidential stage by stoking racial animus.

Democrats expressed new outrage this week at the former president's derisive and false charge that Vice President Kamala Harris, who is of Jamaican and Indian heritage, only recently "turned Black" for political gain. Some Republicans — even from within Trump's own campaign — seemed to distance themselves from the comment.

But Trump's rhetoric this week, and his record on race since he entered politics nearly a decade ago,

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indicate that divisive attacks on race may emerge as a core GOP argument in the three-month sprint to Election Day — whether his allies want them to or not.

A Trump adviser, granted anonymity Thursday to discuss internal strategy, said the campaign doesn't need to focus on "identity politics" because the case against Harris is that she is "so liberal it's dangerous." The adviser pointed to Harris' record on the Southern border, crime, the economy and foreign policy.

In a sign that Trump may not be coordinating his message with his own team, the Republican presidential nominee doubled down on the same day with a new attack on Harris' racial identity. He posted on his social media site a picture of Harris donning traditional Indian attire in a family photo.

Sen. Cynthia Lummis, a Wyoming Republican who has endorsed Trump, was among a number of lawmakers on Capitol Hill who said Thursday that the rhetoric around race and identity is not "helpful to anyone" this election cycle.

"People's skin color doesn't matter one iota," Lummis said in an interview.

Trump turned to an old tactic against Harris

It's been less than two weeks after President Joe Biden ended his reelection bid and endorsed Harris. Trump has had to pivot from campaigning against an 81-year-old white man showing signs of decline to facing a 59-year-old Black woman who is drawing much larger crowds and new enthusiasm from Democratic donors.

Trump went to the National Association of Black Journalists convention on Wednesday. In an appearance carried live on cable news and shared widely online, he falsely suggested Harris misled voters about her race.

"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 Wednesday.

At a Pennsylvania rally hours later, Trump's team displayed years-old news headlines describing Harris as the "first Indian-American senator" on the big screen in the arena. And Ohio Sen. JD Vance, Trump's running mate, told reporters traveling with him that Harris was a "chameleon" who changed her identity when convenient.

Harris attended Howard University, the historically Black institution where she pledged the Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority, and has often talked throughout her career about being both about being Black and Indian American.

Trump's team argued that his message on race is part of a broader pitch that may appeal to some Black voters, although very few allies defended his specific rhetoric this week.

"What impacts our historic gains with Black voters is President Trump's record when compared to Kamala's," said Trump campaign senior adviser Lynne Patton, pointing to the "cost of living, securing the border, deporting Kamala's illegal aliens, making neighborhoods safe again and keeping men out of women's sports."

Veteran Republican pollster Frank Luntz said he explored racial politics during a Wednesday focus group with swing voters almost immediately after Trump's interview. He found that Harris may be vulnerable to criticism based on her gender, but race-based attacks could hurt Trump among the voters that matter most this fall.

Much has changed, Luntz said, since Trump rose to prominence by questioning the citizenship of Barack Obama, the nation's first Black president.

"Trump seems to think that he can criticize her for how she's dealt with her race. Well, no one's listening to that criticism. It simply doesn't matter," Luntz said. "If it's racially driven, it will backfire."

Eugene Craig, the former vice chair of the Maryland Republican Party, said that Trump "got what he wanted" at the NABJ convention but that the substance of his argument risked being more offensive than appealing.

"The one thing that Black folks will never tolerate is disrespecting Blackness, and that goes for Black Republicans too," said Craig, who is Black and worked as a staffer for conservative pundit Dan Bongino's 2012 Senate campaign. He is now supporting Harris.

Trump has a long history of racist attacks  
Trump has frequently used race to go after his opponents since he stepped into presidential politics nearly a decade ago.

Trump was perhaps the most famous member of the so-called "birther" movement questioning where Obama was born. He kicked off his first campaign by casting Mexican immigrants as "rapists" and drug traffickers and later questioned whether a U.S. federal judge of Mexican heritage could be fair to him.

While in the White House, Trump defended a white supremacist march in Charlottesville, Virginia, and suggested that the U.S. stop accepting immigrants from "shithole" countries including Haiti and parts of Africa. In August 2020, he suggested Harris, who was born in California, might not meet the Constitution's eligibility requirements to be vice president.

And just two weeks after formally entering the 2024 campaign, he dined with notorious white supremacist Nick Fuentes at his Mar-a-Lago residence.

Trump won in 2016 but lost reelection in 2020 to Biden by close margins in several swing states. He swept the 2024 Republican primary even while facing a raft of criminal charges.

Some Trump critics worried that his racial strategy might resonate with a significant portion of the electorate anyway. Voters will decide in November whether to send a Black woman to the Oval Office for the first time in the nation's nearly 250-year history.

"I hope Trump's attacks on Harris are just him flailing about ineffectively. But put together Trump's shamelessness, his willingness to lie, his demagogic talent, and the issue of race — and a certain amount of liberal complacency that Trump is just foolish — and I'm concerned," Bill Kristol, a leading conservative anti-Trump voice, posted on social media Thursday.

The Harris campaign thinks there's little upside for Trump

A Harris adviser described the moment as an opportunity to remind voters of the chaos and division that Trump breeds. But the adviser, granted anonymity to discuss internal strategy, said it would be a mistake for Democrats to engage with Trump's attacks on race at the expense of the campaign's broader focus on key policies.

So long as the campaign does not get distracted, the adviser said, Harris' team believes there is little political upside for Trump to continue attacking Harris' racial identity.

Harris told a gathering of a historically Black sorority on Wednesday that Trump's attack was "the same old show: the divisiveness and the disrespect."

On the ground in at least one swing state, however, there were signs that Trump's approach may be resonating — at least among the former president's white male base.

Jim Abel, a 65-year-old retiree who attended a rally for Vance in Arizona on Wednesday, said he agreed with Trump's focus on Harris' racial identity.

"She's not Black," Abel said. "I've seen her parents. I've pictures of her and her family and she's not Black. She's looking for the Black vote."

But several high-profile Republican voices disagreed.

Conservative commentator Ben Shapiro posted on X a picture of a road sign with two directions. One led to, "Attack Kamala's record, lies and radicalism," while the other, "Is she really Black?"

"I dunno guys, I just think that maybe winning the 2024 election might be more important than having this silly and meaningless conversation," Shapiro wrote.

## 4 Las Vegas teens agree to plead guilty as juveniles in deadly beating of high school student

By SCOTT SONNER and KEN RITTER Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Four Las Vegas teenagers accused in the fatal beating of their high school classmate have agreed to plead guilty to voluntary manslaughter in a deal that will keep them from being tried as adults, lawyers said Thursday.

The teens originally were charged in January as adults with second-degree murder and conspiracy in

the November death of 17-year-old Jonathan Lewis Jr. Cellphone video of the fatal beating was shared across social media.

The deal announced during a hearing Thursday before Clark County District Judge Tierra Jones calls for the four to be sent to juvenile court and face an undetermined length of imprisonment in a juvenile detention center. The deal was first reported by the Las Vegas Review-Journal.

Should any of the teens back out of the deal, then all four would again be charged in adult court, Chief Deputy District Attorney John Giordani said.

"The offer is contingent on everyone's acceptance," Giordani said.

The Associated Press is not naming the students because they were juveniles at the time of the Nov. 1, 2023, attack.

The four were among nine teenagers who were arrested in Lewis' death. Lewis was attacked on Nov. 1 just off the campus of Rancho High School where all were students. Authorities have said the students agreed to meet in the alley to fight over a vape pen and wireless headphones that had been stolen from Lewis' friend. Lewis died from his injuries six days later.

Defense lawyer Robert Draskovich, representing one of the four defendants, called the deadly fight a tragedy, but said convicting the four students of murder as adults would have been a second tragedy.

"This negotiation enables my client to graduate high school, move on with his life and become a productive citizen," Draskovich told The Associated Press on Thursday.

The attorney said he'll ask at sentencing for his client to be released from custody with credit for time already served. Draskovich acknowledged that his client was among those who kicked Lewis while he was on the ground but said a jury also would have seen video showing at least one of the people in a group with Lewis had a knife.

Mellisa Ready, Lewis' mother, told KLAS-TV in Las Vegas on Thursday that she was "dumbfounded" by the plea agreement. She said that she had heard from the Clark County district attorney's office that the teens were going to plead guilty to murder in the adult court system.

Giordani declined to comment after the hearing Thursday but provided a statement to AP from Clark County District Attorney Steve Wolfson's office. It acknowledged Lewis' mother's comments and "the pain (she) is going through as she mourns the loss of her son." But it said she had been informed last week about the terms of the negotiations.

Wolfson's office defended the resolution of the case as a balance of "thoughtful consideration of the egregious facts" and potential legal challenges that prosecutors would have faced at trial.

The statement said juvenile court is "best equipped to punish the defendants for their heinous conduct" while also offering rehabilitation.

In Nevada, a teenager facing a murder charge can be charged as an adult if they were 13 or older when the crime occurred.

A homicide detective who investigated the case told a grand jury last year that cellphone and surveillance video showed Lewis taking off his red sweatshirt and throwing a punch at one of the students, according to court transcripts made public in January. The suspects then pulled Lewis to the ground and began punching, kicking and stomping on him, the detective said.

A student and a resident in the area carried Lewis, who was badly beaten and unconscious, back to campus after the fight, according to the transcripts. School staff called 911 and tried to help him.

## **Bookmaker to plead guilty in gambling case tied to baseball star Shohei Ohtani's ex-interpreter**

By STEFANIE DAZIO Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A Southern California bookmaker who took thousands of sports bets from the ex-interpreter for baseball star Shohei Ohtani has agreed to plead guilty to running an illegal gambling business, U.S. authorities announced Thursday.

Mathew Bowyer's business operated for at least five years in Southern California and Las Vegas and

took wagers from more than 700 bettors, including Ohtani's former interpreter Ipppei Mizuhara, the U.S. Attorney's office in Los Angeles said in a statement.

Bowyer has agreed to plead guilty to running an illegal gambling business, money laundering, and subscribing to a false tax return, the statement said. He is expected to enter the pleas in court Aug. 9.

"Mr. Bowyer is looking forward to accepting responsibility for his actions," said Diane Bass, Bowyer's attorney.

The prosecution against Bowyer follows several sports betting scandals that emerged this year, including one that prompted Major League Baseball to ban a player for life for the first time since Pete Rose was barred in 1989.

Operating an unlicensed betting business is a federal crime. Meanwhile, sports gambling is illegal in California, even as 38 states and the District of Columbia allow some form of it.

Bass said in March that she'd been working with federal prosecutors to resolve her client's case and confirmed an October raid at his home. She said Mizuhara was placing bets with Bowyer on international soccer but not baseball.

"Mr. Bowyer never had any contact with Shohei Ohtani, in person, on the phone, in any way," Bass told the AP in March. "The only person he had contact with was Ipppei."

Mizuhara pleaded guilty to bank and tax fraud for stealing nearly \$17 million from Ohtani's bank account.

Federal investigators say Mizuhara made about 19,000 wagers between September 2021 and January 2024. While Mizuhara's winnings totaled over \$142 million, which he deposited in his own bank account and not Ohtani's, his losing bets were around \$183 million — a net loss of nearly \$41 million.

Still, investigators did not find any evidence Mizuhara had wagered on baseball. He is scheduled to be sentenced in October.

Prosecutors said there also was no evidence Ohtani was involved in or aware of Mizuhara's gambling, and the player is considered a victim and cooperated with investigators.

Federal prosecutors said Bowyer's other customers included a professional baseball player for a Southern California club and a former minor league player. Ciaran McEvoy, a spokesperson for the U.S. attorney's office, declined to name either of the alleged bettors or say whether they faced criminal charges.

Last May, the AP reported MLB was expected to investigate former Los Angeles Angels player David Fletcher for gambling on sports through Bowyer. The information came from a person familiar with the situation who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because they weren't at liberty to discuss such impending matters.

MLB didn't immediately respond Thursday to a query about whether the Fletcher investigation had been launched. Fletcher and Ohtani were teammates on the Angels for six years. Ohtani now plays for the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Separately, the league in June banned San Diego Padres infielder Tucupita Marcano for life and suspended four others for betting on baseball legally. Marcano became the first active player in a century banned for life because of gambling.

Rose agreed to his ban in 1989 after an investigation found that he'd placed numerous bets on the Cincinnati Reds to win from 1985-87 while playing for and managing the team.

The league's gambling policy prohibits players and team employees from wagering on baseball, even legally. MLB also bans betting on other sports with illegal or offshore bookmakers. The penalty is determined at the discretion of the commissioner's office.

## **Algeria boxer Imane Khelif wins first Olympic fight when opponent Angela Carini quits**

By GREG BEACHAM AP Sports Writer  
VILLEPINTE, France (AP) — Imane Khelif and Angela Carini exchanged a few brisk punches in their 46 seconds of competition in the Paris ring. They were enough to persuade Carini that her Olympic debut was finished.

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The Italy boxer abruptly walked away from her Algerian opponent and went to her corner Thursday, abandoning her bout — an extremely rare occurrence in Olympic boxing.

Carini didn't shake Khelif's hand after the referee formally raised it, but she cried in the ring after sinking to her knees. Minutes afterward, a still-tearful Carini said she quit because of the pain from those opening punches.

"I felt a severe pain in my nose, and with the maturity of a boxer, I said 'enough,' because I didn't want to, I didn't want to, I couldn't finish the match," Carini said.

Khelif was disqualified from the 2023 world championships after failing an unspecified gender eligibility test, and her presence at the Paris Olympics has become a divisive issue.

Carini, who had a spot of blood on her trunks, said she wasn't making a political statement and was not refusing to fight Khelif. Carini further said she is not qualified to decide whether Khelif should be allowed to compete.

"I just did my job as a boxer," Carini said. "I got into the ring and fought. I did it with my head held high and with a broken heart for not having finished the last kilometer."

Carini later received a visit from Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni, who consoled the boxer in a photo posted on Meloni's Instagram page.

"I know you won't give up, Angela," Meloni wrote, "and I know one day you will win what you deserve with effort and sweat. In a competition that is finally equal."

Khelif is an accomplished amateur who won a silver medal at the International Boxing Association's 2022 world championships. The IBA — which has been banned from the Olympics since 2019 after years of disputes with the IOC — disqualified her from last year's championships shortly before her gold-medal match because of what it claimed were elevated levels of testosterone.

The 25-year-old entered the ring at the North Paris Arena to a chorus of cheers, but the crowd was confused by the bout's sudden end. Italy coach Emanuele Renzini said he discussed the matchup with Carini and offered to allow her to back out earlier, but the boxer had been "very determined" to fight until the opening minute.

"I am heartbroken because I am a fighter," Carini said. "My father taught me to be a warrior. I have always stepped into the ring with honor and I have always (served) my country with loyalty. And this time I couldn't do it because I couldn't fight anymore, and so I ended the match."

Khelif could clinch an Olympic medal with a victory in her quarterfinal bout on Saturday against Anna Luca Hamori, Hungary's first Olympic women's boxer.

Hamori expressed no concern about fighting Khelif.

"I'm not scared," said Hamori, who trounced Marissa Williamson Pohlman of Australia. "I don't care about the press story and social media. If she or he is a man, it will be a bigger victory for me if I win."

Khelif's passport says she is female.

Hamori and Khelif have never sparred, but they have competed in the same tournament before. Hamori repeatedly said she isn't paying attention to the controversy because it's only a hindrance to her quest for gold.

"I'm trying to not use my phone before the fight," Hamori said. "I don't want to care about the comments or the story or the news. I just want to stay focused on myself. I did it before my last two fights, so I think this is the key, and we will see."

And Hamori could only shrug at Carini's decision to quit.

"It was her choice," Hamori said. "I don't understand, because I thought every boxer's mind is the same like mine, to never give up. But it was her choice. We don't know what was the reason. It's her life, but I know I want to do this in my own life."

After years of competition in amateur tournaments around the world, Khelif and Lin Yu-ting of Taiwan suddenly have received massive scrutiny for their presence in Paris. Lin won IBA world championships in 2018 and 2022, but the governing body stripped her of a bronze medal last year because it claimed she failed to meet unspecified eligibility requirements in a biochemical test.

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Lin begins her Paris run Friday. She fights Sitara Turdibekova of Uzbekistan in her opening bout after receiving a first-round bye as the No. 1 seed in the 57-kilogram category, although Olympic seeding is frequently not indicative of the top medal contenders in a division.

The Algerian Olympic Committee issued a statement Wednesday condemning what it termed "lies" and "unethical targeting and maligning of our esteemed athlete, Imane Khelif, with baseless propaganda from certain foreign media outlets."

Meloni, who was visiting Italy athletes in the Olympic Village on Thursday, voiced criticism that Carini had to box Khelif, saying she had since 2021 opposed allowing athletes with "genetically male" characteristics to compete against women.

"We have to pay attention, in an attempt to not discriminate, that we're actually discriminating" against women's rights, Meloni said.

Khelif and Lin are two-time Olympians who fought in the Tokyo Games. Lin has been an elite-level amateur boxer for a decade and Khelif for six years.

The IOC repeatedly defended the boxers' right to compete this week. Olympic boxing reached gender parity for the first time this year, with 124 men and 124 women competing in Paris.

The IOC said it made its eligibility decisions on boxers based on the gender-related rules that applied at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics. Several sports have updated their gender rules over the past three years, including World Aquatics, World Athletics and the International Cycling Union. The track body also last year tightened rules on athletes with differences in sex development.

The IOC is in charge of boxing in Paris because it has revoked the Olympic status of the IBA following years of governance problems, a lack of financial transparency and many perceived instances of corruption in judging and refereeing.

The IBA is controlled by president Umar Kremlev, who is Russian. He brought in Russian state-owned Gazprom as its primary sponsor and moved much of the IBA's operations to Russia.

The IBA has since lost more than three dozen members who have formed a new group called World Boxing, which hopes to be recognized by the IOC as the sport's governing body ahead of the 2028 Los Angeles Games.

The IBA has aggressively seized on the two boxers' presence in Paris to criticize the IOC. After the Court of Arbitration for Sport upheld the IOC's ban earlier this year, the IBA appealed to the Swiss Federal Tribunal in a last-gasp attempt to beat the IOC.

The banned body issued a statement Wednesday in which it claimed both boxers did not have a "testosterone examination" last year but were "subject to a separate and recognized test" for their disqualification. The IBA said the test's "specifics remain confidential," refusing to explain it.

The IBA disregarded IOC recommendations and allowed Russian fighters to compete at the 2023 world championships under the Russian flag. The governing body then disqualified Khelif only after Khelif defeated Russian boxer Azalia Amineva during the tournament.

## **Ledecky wins record 13th medal with a silver. Summer McIntosh and Kate Douglass strike gold**

By PAUL NEWBERRY AP National Writer

NANTERRE, France (AP) — It wasn't the medal Katie Ledecky would've preferred.

Still, it was good enough for the record books.

On a night when Canadian phenom Summer McIntosh romped to another victory and Kate Douglass claimed a gold for the Americans, Ledecky collected the 13th medal of her stellar career to become the most decorated woman in swimming history Thursday.

Ledecky and three American teammates took silver in the 4x200-meter freestyle relay, trailing an Australian squad led by individual gold medalists Mollie O'Callaghan and Ariarne Titmus.

"There's always pressure, but I think we were just going out there to do the best we could and win a medal and whatever records come with that medal will come and that's what happened," said Erin Gem-

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mell, who took the anchor leg after Ledecy went third.

In her next-to-last event of these games, Ledecy broke the mark she shared with fellow Americans Dara Torres, Natalie Coughlin and Jenny Thompson. The 27-year-old now has eight golds, four silvers and one bronze over four Olympics, with every intention of swimming on to Los Angeles in 2028.

McIntosh cruised to victory in the 200 butterfly, dealing American Regan Smith a familiar silver-medal finish.

But Douglass put the U.S. on the top of the podium in the 200 breaststroke, a race that essentially served as a changing of the guard.

Longtime American star Lilly King, competing in her final Olympics, finished last in the final. She made her way over several lane ropes to give a hug to Douglass, one of the world's most versatile swimmers and now a gold medalist.

It was the fourth swimming gold for the world's most dominant swimming nation, to go along with 10 silver medals and six bronzes.

No other American woman has more Olympic medals than Ledecy. Only four athletes rank higher on the overall list, which is led by Michael Phelps with 28.

Relay gold for the Aussies

O'Callaghan, gold medalist in the 200 freestyle, started things off for the Australians, giving them a lead they never relinquished.

Lani Pallister and Briana Throssell kept the team from Down Under out front, even as Ledecy tried in vain to chase down Throssell on the third leg.

When Titmus dove in on the anchor leg with the lead, it was essentially over. The winner of the 400 freestyle and silver medalist in the 200 free finished in an Olympic record of 7:38.08.

Gemmell held off China to give the U.S. the silver in 7:40.86. Claire Weinstein and Paige Madden rounded out the American squad.

Yang Junxuan, Li Bingjie, Ge Chutong and Liu Yaxin earned the bronze in 7:42.34.

Ledecy has one more event, the 800 freestyle. She's the favorite for her fourth straight gold at that distance.

McIntosh chases down China's Zhang Yufei

China's Zhang Yufei, the reigning Olympic champion and of nearly two dozen swimmers from her country who tested positive for a banned substance ahead of the Tokyo Games but were allowed to compete, pushed the pace in the 200 fly over the first half of the race.

No way she was holding off McIntosh, though.

The 17-year-old powered to the lead on the third 50 and left no doubt on the closing lap. She touched in an Olympic-record of 2:03.03.

Smith passed Zhang as well, but had no chance of chasing down the youngster who has established herself as one of the biggest stars at La Defense Arena.

McIntosh opened the games with a silver medal in the 400 freestyle, finishing ahead of Katie Ledecy, and blew away the field in the 400 individual medley.

This was another rout. Smith touched in 2:03.84 for the fourth silver medal of her career, which has yet to produce a gold. Zhang held on for the bronze in 2:05.09.

Red white and blue for gold

Douglass, who won a bronze in the 200 individual medley at Tokyo, now has a complete collection.

She started the Paris Games by helping the Americans win silver in 4x100 freestyle relay.

She grabbed the best color of all Thursday.

Douglass claimed the lead on the second of four laps and held off South Africa's Tatjana Smith to win in 2:19.24.

Smith, who took gold in the 100 breaststroke, settled for a silver in 2:19.60, in what she said afterward was her last race. The bronze went to Tes Schouten (2:21.05) of the Netherlands.

King, the winner of five medals including two golds at the last two Olympics, failed to claim an individual prize in her Olympic farewell. She tied for fourth in the 100 breaststroke and finished more than 6 1/2



seconds behind Douglass in the 200.

Douglass has a chance to pick up another medal in the 200 IM.

Another Bowman swimmer wins gold

Hungary's Hubert Kós claimed gold in the 200 backstroke, another triumph for a swimmer coached by Bob Bowman.

Kós rallied on the final lap to pass Greece's Apostolos Christou. The winner finished in 1:54.26, while Christou held on for the silver in 1:54.82. The bronze went to Roman Mityukov of Switzerland in 1:54.85.

Bowman coached Kós at Arizona State University, where he competed alongside the biggest swimming star of these games, France's Léon Marchand.

Bowman now heads the program at the University of Texas, and Kós has transferred to join him.

Kós praised Bowman, best known as Michael Phelps' coach, for pushing him to new heights.

"It's been an incredible journey with him, and I'm just to happy be part of a team like that," Kós said. "The magic touch is the work. He doesn't let us be second best. He doesn't let us stoop down to a level he doesn't want from us. That brings out the best in us."

More Marchand magic

Marchand set himself up for another gold-medal run, posting the fastest time (1:56.31) in the semifinals of the men's 200 individual medley.

Already the winner of three gold medals, the French star is a big favorite to make it four in a row in the final Friday of his last individual event.

American Carson Foster posted the second-fastest time (1:56.37).

Caeleb Dressel advances to the final of the 50 free

After a close call in the morning preliminaries, American Caeleb Dressel will get a chance to defend his Olympic title in the 50 freestyle Friday night.

Dressel posted the fifth-fastest time in the evening semifinals (21.58) Thursday on the heels of tying for 13th in the heats. Benjamin Proud of Britain and Cameron McEvoy of Australia shared the top spot in swimming's most chaotic race — an all-out dash from one end of the pool to the other — at 21.38.

## **Kamala Harris celebrates the late Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee as a 'force of nature' and a mentor**

By JUAN A. LOZANO and CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris on Thursday eulogized longtime U.S. Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee as a "force of nature" as memorials for the longtime Democratic lawmaker drew to a close.

Harris took time away from her presidential campaign to describe Jackson Lee, who represented Houston in Congress, as a coalition builder and expert in the legislative process. Harris joked about hiding in the hall when Jackson Lee walked by because the lawmaker was so intense.

"She always expected in all of us that we would rise to a point of excellence, knowing that life was too short and there's too much to be done," Harris said. She said she called Jackson Lee, who died July 19 at age 74 after being treated for pancreatic cancer, a few days before then to express her gratitude for their friendship.

"To honor her memory, let us continue to fight," Harris said.

Harris is poised to be the first Black woman to be a major party's presidential candidate, and Jackson Lee was one of Congress' most prominent Black women during her nearly three decades in Washington. Jackson Lee helped lead federal efforts to protect women from domestic violence and recognize Juneteenth as a national holiday.

More than 50 members of the U.S. House attended Thursday's funeral service. New York Rep. Hakeem Jeffries, the House Democratic leader, said Jackson Lee was a "voice for the voiceless."

The crowd of several hundred in the church cheered and often stood during the service and at times people in the audience yelled out, "Thank you Sheila."

Former President Bill Clinton said Jackson Lee was on his "just say yes" list whenever she called him during his time in office. She "really believed that we are all created equal," he said, emphasizing, "We are the longest lasting democracy in human history because we had enough people like Sheila Jackson Lee."

Services for Jackson Lee began on Monday when hundreds of people paid their respects to her as her body lay in state in a flag-draped coffin inside Houston's City Hall. President Joe Biden placed a bouquet of flowers near her casket and visited with Jackson Lee's family.

Arva Howard, 72, who was among the hundreds to pay respects Thursday, said Jackson Lee cared deeply for people. "We always knew if we needed something solved, Sheila was the person to go to," Howard said.

Before the service, Calandrian Simpson Kemp, 53, posed next to a large photo of Jackson Lee in the church's foyer while holding up a photo of her 20-year-old son, George Kemp Jr., who died from gun violence in 2013. Simpson Kemp said Jackson Lee was a mentor in Simpson Kemp's efforts to stop gun violence and enact common sense gun laws after her son's death.

"When I think of Sheila and her legacy, I think about empowerment. I think about the power of one," Simpson Kemp said. "She never let up for people. She left it all on the battlefield, and I think it's up to us now to pick up the torch."

Jackson Lee represented her Houston-based district since 1995. She previously had breast cancer and announced the pancreatic cancer diagnosis on June 2.

Before being elected to Congress, Jackson Lee served on Houston's city council from 1990 to 1994.

In Washington, Jackson Lee established herself as a fierce advocate for women and minorities and a leader for House Democrats on many social justice issues, from policing reform to reparations for descendants of enslaved people. She led the first rewrite of the Violence Against Women Act in nearly a decade, which included protections for Native American, transgender and immigrant women.

Jackson Lee unsuccessfully ran to be Houston's mayor last year.

## Hezbollah leader says war with Israel has entered 'new phase' after killings of top militant figures

By ABBY SEWELL and KAREEM CHEHAYEB Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Hezbollah's leader warned Thursday that the conflict with Israel has entered a "new phase," as he addressed mourners at the funeral of a commander from the group who was killed by an Israeli airstrike this week in Beirut.

Meanwhile in Tehran, Iran's supreme leader prayed over the body of Hamas' political leader, who was killed in a presumed Israeli assassination.

The back-to-back killings have increased fears of an escalation into a wider war, leaving the region waiting to see how Iran and ally Hezbollah will respond. Iran has vowed retaliation against Israel for the strike that killed Hamas' Ismail Haniyeh on Wednesday in the Iranian capital of Tehran.

Israel has not claimed responsibility for Haniyeh's assassination, but comments by Israeli military spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari stopped short of an outright denial.

"There was no additional airstrike, not a missile and not an Israeli drone, in the entire Middle East that night," he said Thursday, fueling speculation that Israel could have used other means to kill Haniyeh.

Israel did confirm it carried out the strike Tuesday in Beirut that killed Hezbollah commander Fouad Shukur, along with an Iranian military adviser and at least five civilians. Israel said Shukur was behind a rocket attack days earlier that hit a soccer field in the Israeli-held Golan Heights, killing 12 children. Hezbollah denied being behind that strike, a denial that Nasrallah reiterated.

In a speech via video link to mourners gathered with Shukur's coffin at an auditorium in a Beirut suburb, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah said, "We ... have entered a new phase that is different from the previous period."

"Do they expect that Hajj Ismail Haniyeh will be killed in Iran and Iran will remain silent?" he said of the Israelis. Addressing Israelis who celebrated the two killings, he said, "Laugh a bit and you will cry a lot."

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But as he often does, Nasrallah kept his comments vague, vowing a “very well-studied retaliation” without saying what form it would take. He said only that Israel “will have to wait for the anger of the region’s honorable people.”

“The enemy and the one who is behind the enemy” — an apparent reference to Israel’s chief ally, the United States — “will have to wait for our coming response,” he said.

International officials have been scrambling to avert a cycle of retaliation before it spirals into a greater war. Since the Gaza war began in October, Hezbollah and Israel have traded fire almost daily across the border in exchanges that have caused deaths and the evacuation of tens of thousands from their homes. But they have also stayed within limits.

Several times, strikes that appeared to cross red lines raised fears of an acceleration into full-fledged war, but outside diplomacy reined in the two sides. Hezbollah faces strong pressure not to draw Lebanon into a repeat of the militant group’s 2006 war with Israel, which wreaked heavy death and destruction in the country.

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.

In Beirut’s southern suburbs, the biggest Shiite district in the capital, hundreds of black-clad mourners packed the auditorium, many of them holding Hezbollah flags or photos of Shukur. An escort of red-capped fighters carried Shukur’s coffin, also draped in a Hezbollah flag, down the aisle to the backing of a military band.

In his speech, Nasrallah praised Shukur as a veteran commander and denied that Hezbollah carried out the deadly strike on the soccer field in the mainly Druze town of Majdal Shams in the Golan.

“We have the courage to take responsibility for where we strike, even if it’s a mistake. If we made a mistake, we would admit and apologize,” he said, adding, “The enemy made itself the judge, jury, and executioner without any evidence.”

An unusual relative calm prevailed Thursday on the Lebanon-Israel border. Hezbollah claimed no rocket launches into Israel during the day. The Lebanese state news agency said a strike hit the house of a Syrian family in a southern Lebanese town, killing at least four people and wounding several others. Afterward, Hezbollah announced it had launched a barrage of rockets into Israel in retaliation.

Nasrallah said Hezbollah’s fighters would return to regular military operations Friday, ending the period of mourning for Shukur, but that the renewed strikes would be unrelated to the retaliation for his killing.

Earlier Thursday in Tehran, Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei prayed over Haniyeh’s coffin in a ceremony at Tehran University, with the new president, Masoud Pezeshkian, next to him. State television later showed the coffin placed in a truck and moved on the street toward Azadi Square in Tehran and people throwing flowers at it.

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 a strike 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. On Thursday, Israel said it had confirmed that the head of Hamas’ military wing, Mohammed Deif, was killed in a July 13 airstrike in Gaza. Hamas, which earlier said Deif survived the blast, did not immediately comment.

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 Thursday in the Mongolian capital of Ulaanbataar, 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.

## Israel says it has confirmed that chief of Hamas' military wing was killed in a July strike in Gaza

By MELANIE LIDMAN and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — The Israeli military said Thursday that it has confirmed that the head of Hamas' military wing, Mohammed Deif, was killed in an airstrike in Gaza in July. The announcement came a day after an apparent Israeli strike in the Iranian capital killed Hamas' top political leader.

The rapid events this week have left U.S., Egyptian and Qatari mediators scrambling to salvage talks for a cease-fire deal in Gaza. At the same time, international diplomats want to avert an escalation into all-out regional war after the assassination in Tehran of Hamas' Ismail Haniyeh, Israel's killing of a top Hezbollah commander in a Beirut strike and now Israel's announcement of Deif's death.

There was no immediate comment on the Israeli claim by Hamas, which had previously said Deif survived the strike in Gaza. A member of Hamas' political bureau, Izzat al-Risheq, said in a statement Thursday that confirming or denying his death is the responsibility of the group's military wing, known as the Qassam Brigades, which so far has been silent.

The apparent elimination of Haniyeh and Deif — two of Hamas' most senior figures — brings a victory for Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu as Israeli forces continue to operate in Gaza.

After meeting with military officials Thursday, Netanyahu declared that Deif's death "enforces a simple principle that we have established, that whoever hurts us, we hurt them."

"We will exact a very heavy price for any act of aggression against us from any arena," Netanyahu said. The White House said Netanyahu was expected to have a phone conversation later Thursday with President Joe Biden.

The assassinations also put Netanyahu at a crossroads.

They present him with a potential political off-ramp to end the war, allowing him to retreat from his lofty promises of "total victory" while showing Israelis that Hamas' military capabilities suffered a debilitating blow.

The killings could also lead him to harden Israel's position in cease-fire talks, with Israeli officials insisting the blows to Hamas will force it to compromise. Hamas could dig in as well in the talks — or quit them entirely.

Israel believes that Deif, the head of Hamas' military, and Yahya Sinwar, the top Hamas leader in Gaza, were the chief architects of the Oct. 7 attack that killed some 1,200 people in southern Israel and triggered the Israel-Hamas war. Sinwar is believed to remain in hiding in Gaza.

Israel targeted Deif in a July 13 strike that hit a compound on the outskirts of the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis. The military said at the time that another Hamas commander, Rafa Salama, was killed. More than 90 other people, including displaced civilians in nearby tents, were also killed, Gaza health officials said.

In a statement, the Israeli military said confirmation of Deif's death was made "following an intelligence assessment."

Elsewhere Thursday, Israeli airstrikes on a school sheltering displaced Palestinians in the Gaza City district of Shujaiya killed at least 15 people and wounded more than 40 others, according to the Palestinian Civil Defense, which sent teams to recover bodies. The army alleged that Hamas fighters used the compound to plot attacks against Israel.

When the bomb hit, "there were people wounded and screaming in front of my eyes," said witness Khaled Sukar, 23, whose cousin was among the dead at the Dalal Mughrabi School.

"Now I'm back to fearing the next time this will happen," he said. "Please, God, just make it stop."

In its 10-month campaign of bombardment and offensives in Gaza, Israel has killed some 39,480 Palestinians and wounded more than 91,100 others, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not differentiate between civilians and combatants. More than 80% of the population of 2.3 million has been driven from their homes.

In other developments, Thursday marked 300 days since the start of the Israel-Hamas war, a grim milestone for Palestinians in Gaza crammed into tent camps with limited food and water.

"Enough destruction. We are exhausted," said Ahmad Othman, who was forced to flee from the southern

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border town of Rafah to nearby Khan Younis. "We want to go back to our destroyed homes."

Meanwhile in Tel Aviv, family members of Israeli hostages still held in Gaza protested outside the Israeli military's headquarters, calling on Netanyahu to strike a deal to bring their loved ones home.

"Three hundred days is a lot of time," said Sharon Kalderon, sister-in-law of Israeli hostage Ofer Kalderon. "We just hope that it will end soon because we are tired."

So far, Netanyahu has said he is determined to continue the war until Hamas is destroyed. Far-right nationalist coalition partners, on whom he relies to stay in power, have threatened to leave the government if he halts the war.

After the announcement about Deif, far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said the "defeat of Hamas is closer than ever." He said the military would continue to "eliminate thousands of other terrorists until our security is restored and we bring the hostages home."

Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said the strike that killed Deif was a "significant milestone" toward achieving the goals of the war. "The results of this operation reflect that Hamas is an organization in disintegration," he wrote on X.

Deif was one of the founders of Hamas' military wing in the 1990s. He led the Qassam Brigades for decades through campaigns of suicide bombings against Israeli civilians, volleys of rocket fire into Israel and repeated Israeli assaults on Gaza since Hamas took power there in 2007.

He remained a mysterious, underground figure in Gaza. He never appeared in public, was hardly ever photographed and only rarely was his voice heard in audio statements. He survived a string of Israeli assassination attempts.

Haniyeh's killing in particular threw into disarray months of efforts at reaching a deal for a cease-fire in Gaza and a hostage release. Haniyeh had been a main negotiator in those talks.

Qatari and Egyptian officials had tense exchanges with U.S counterparts over the assassination, said an Egyptian official with direct knowledge of the talks, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the internal discussions.

While the U.S. has been pressing Egyptian and Qatari mediators to get Hamas to compromise, the Americans can't "pressure the other party, Israel to ... refrain from provocative acts," the Egyptian official said, calling the assassination "reckless."

Qatar's prime minister, Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani, expressed frustration in a post on social media: "Can mediation succeed when one party assassinates the negotiator on the other side?"

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Wednesday that the U.S. had no prior knowledge of the strike in Tehran that killed Haniyeh.

The Egyptian official said no deal was likely in the near future since Hamas must now name Haniyeh's replacement. Mediators had been waiting for Hamas' response on the latest version of the deal. Instead, after Haniyeh's funeral, expected Friday, he said they will reach out to Hamas officials to explore the next steps.

After Haniyeh's assassination, Iran vowed revenge against Israel, and the killing of Hezbollah commander Fouad Shukur in Beirut could also bring reprisals and fuel fears of a wider spiral of escalation.

The Egyptian official said the priority now was preventing full-scale war.

In Beirut's southern suburbs, hundreds of black-clad mourners packed an auditorium Thursday for Shukur's funeral procession. Many of them held Hezbollah flags or photos of Shukur. An escort of red-capped fighters carried Shukur's coffin, also draped in a Hezbollah flag, down the aisle to the backing of a military band.

"We've entered a new phase that is different from the previous period," Hezbollah's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, told mourners, vowing a "well-studied retaliation" against Israel.

## US arrests at Mexico border are expected to drop 30% in July to a new low for Biden's presidency

By ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Arrests of migrants for illegally crossing the border to the United States from Mexico plummeted about 30% in July to a new low for Joe Biden's presidency, U.S. authorities said, raising prospects that a temporary ban on asylum may be lifted soon.

The U.S. Border Patrol continued making arrests Wednesday, the last day of July. But the monthly tally was expected to be around 57,000 when all are tallied, down from 83,536 arrests in June, the previous low mark of Biden's presidency, according to two U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because figures had not been released publicly. It would be the lowest monthly tally since 54,771 arrests in September 2020, when the coronavirus pandemic slowed movement across borders in many countries, including to the United States.

Even before Biden's Democratic administration invoked powers to suspend asylum on June 5, border arrests had fallen by about half from a record-high of 250,000 in December amid increased Mexican enforcement. Since June 5, arrests have fallen by half again, helping the White House fend off attacks by former President Donald Trump and other Republicans that Democrats, including Vice President Kamala Harris, have allowed the border to spiral out of control.

A volley of ads launched Tuesday underscores the prominence of immigration as a campaign issue in November's election.

The Trump campaign launched its first television ad of the general election cycle, dubbing Harris the "border czar" for an early assignment as vice president to address root causes of immigration in Central America and blaming her for a surge in illegal crossings under Biden's watch. After displaying headlines about crime and drugs, the video brands Harris as "Failed. Weak. Dangerously liberal."

A Harris ad, posted online, highlights Trump's opposition to a failed border bill earlier this year that would have, among many other provisions, increased funding for Border Patrol agents and fentanyl detection. "There's two choices in this election: the one who will fix our broken immigration system and the one who is trying to stop her," the narrator says.

Neither ad mentions the drop in border arrests this year, but the latest declines may play in Harris' favor as many Republicans attack the Biden administration's new asylum restrictions as too little, too late.

The asylum halt would end if daily arrests drop below 1,500 over a seven-day average, a scenario that Customs and Border Protection officials are preparing for with arrests now hovering around 1,600 to 1,700 a day. The halt would be reinstated if arrests reach a seven-day daily average of 2,500, a threshold of "emergency border circumstances" that was immediately met when the restrictions took effect in June. Immigrant advocacy groups are challenging the asylum measures in court.

Under the halt, U.S. authorities deny a chance at asylum to anyone who crosses the border illegally. Unaccompanied children are exempt, and others may seek asylum-like forms of protection that allow them to stay in the United States with a higher bar and fewer benefits, like the United Nations Convention Against Torture.

Asked to comment on July numbers, the Department of Homeland Security on Wednesday referred to a statement last week that arrests had dropped 55% since asylum restrictions took effect.

San Diego was again the busiest corridor for illegal crossings in July, followed by Tucson, Arizona, an official said.

The biggest declines have been nationalities that are easiest to deport, including Mexicans, but people from other countries are also showing up less as other travel restrictions take hold, officials said. Chinese migration appears to have been slowed by Ecuador's new visa requirements and more U.S. deportations to China.

## Salvadorans honoring Saint Óscar Romero: During these difficult times, he is like a ray of hope

By SALVADOR MELÉNDEZ and MARÍA TERESA HERNÁNDEZ Associated Press

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador (AP) — It's as if Joyce Valencia could still hear Saint Oscar Romero's voice. "I met him when I was a little girl," the 61-year-old Salvadoran said. "We used to gather around our radio with our grandma to listen to him. And, even now, listening to him encourages us to move forward."

For a few years now, Valencia has joined the yearly pilgrimage that kicks off in El Salvador each Aug. 1 to honor Romero, who was named a saint by Pope Francis in 2018.

According to the committee that organizes the event, up to 3,000 pilgrims will cover 160 kilometers (100 miles) in three days, traveling from San Salvador, the capital, to Ciudad Barrios, where Romero was born in 1917.

Already known to many as "Saint Romero of the Americas," San Salvador's archbishop was beloved among the working class and poor for defending them against repression by the army. But he was loathed by conservative sectors who saw him as aligned with leftist causes as the country descended into a 1980-1992 civil war.

Romero was murdered as he celebrated Mass on March 24, 1980, in a hospital chapel. The day before his assassination, he sent a blunt message to the country's military in his Sunday homily: "In the name of God and this suffering people, I implore you, I order you, in the name of God, to cease the repression."

Romero's influence continues to resonate in this Central American country where thousands of lives have been destroyed through decades of extortion and murder committed by the gangs.

Since March 2022, President Nayib Bukele's security forces have cracked down harshly on gangs, arresting more than 81,000 people suspected of criminal involvement without due process. Human rights groups say innocent people are also being detained.

"Monsignor Romero is of great importance during these times, under the regime, as many human rights are being violated and very few institutions advocate for them," said Wilbert Sánchez, 21, a university student whose aunt was detained during Bukele's crackdown and freed after one year, due to lack of evidence against her.

"I think if he (Romero) were here, things would be different," Sánchez said. "He would make a change, as he did in the past, when he tried to intercede for the peasants and others affected by the government."

Soon after a 5 a.m. Mass, Sánchez joined dozens in the pilgrimage, his third since friends invited him to tag along in 2022.

"You can feel a very special connection during the journey," Sánchez said. "What encourages me the most is faith. And learning more about our country's only saint."

Romero's pilgrimage was first organized by Catholic leaders in 2017, when the archbishop would have turned 100.

The route, said Cardinal Gregorio Rosa Chávez, who was Romero's disciple and friend, is meant to unite the Saint's "tomb", San Salvador, with his "crib", Ciudad Barrios.

"He was the most beloved and hated man of his time," Rosa Chávez said. "It was exceptional to watch him in his struggles, his anguish, his doubts and his tribulations until he gave his life on the altar."

According to the cardinal, Salvadorans participate in the pilgrimage for three main reasons: being at peace with Romero after discovering that government criticisms of him back in the 1980s were "slanders", to thank him for miracles or favors, and to simply enjoy the spiritual experience of the journey.

Each pilgrimage has a theme.

"This year's mark the 500th anniversary of our encounter with Christ," said the Rev. Santos Belisario during a recent news conference. "The first Mass that took place in El Salvador calls us to remember the first priests and bishops who arrived in Salvadoran territory, many of whom valiantly fight for the dignity and rights of the Indigenous people."

During the journey to Ciudad Barrios, pilgrims not only pray, but also participate in dances and cultural activities in the towns where locals offer shelter and food. Religious leaders from across the country join

the celebrations as well.

Abraham Hernández, 87, has completed the procession times. "I hope that my age and body won't fail me this time," he said.

The Salvadoran man never met Romero personally but is grateful for his political stances. "He even gave his life for us, so that we would have a better government," Hernández said.

Joyce Valencia, too, feels nothing but gratitude. "I thank God for our saint," she said. "He is our pastor and friend".

She has asked many favors of Romero and he has granted them all, including a return to good health for a girl who had seemed destined for heart surgery.

"It's a joy to attend this pilgrimage. To pray for our country," Valencia said. "During these difficult times, he is like a ray of hope."

## Who's in the massive prisoner swap between Russia and the West?

By DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

TALLINN, Estonia (AP) — One spent over 5½ years behind bars in Russia while other, higher-profile detainees were released ahead of him. Another was jailed for only a few months. They include journalists, veteran political activists and those simply opposed to the war in Ukraine. The youngest is 19, the oldest 71.

Among the Russians jailed in the West were alleged sleeper agents who lived double lives. Others were convicted of hacking computers. One was imprisoned for the brazen, daytime shooting death of a man in a Berlin park.

On Thursday, they walked free — part of the largest East-West civilian prisoner swap since the Cold War: Released by Russia and Belarus

EVAN GERSHKOVICH, a Wall Street Journal reporter, was detained in the Russian city of Yekaterinburg in March 2023. Without providing evidence, authorities accused him of "gathering secret information" at the CIA's behest about a military equipment factory — an allegation that Gershkovich, his employer and the U.S. government vehemently denied. Jailed since then, a court convicted Gershkovich, 32, of espionage in July after a closed trial and sentenced him to 16 years in prison.

PAUL WHELAN, a corporate security executive from Michigan, was arrested in 2018 in Moscow, where he was attending a friend's wedding. He was accused of espionage, convicted in 2020 and sentenced to 16 years in prison. Whelan, 54, has rejected the charges as fabricated.

ALSU KURMASHEVA, a dual U.S.-Russian national, was arrested in 2023 in her hometown of Kazan, where she was visiting her ailing mother. The Prague-based editor for the U.S. government-funded Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Tatar-Bashkir service was accused of not self-reporting as a "foreign agent" and was convicted in July of spreading false information about the Russian military — charges rejected by her family and employer. Kurmasheva, 47, was sentenced to 6½ years in prison.

VLADIMIR KARA-MURZA, a dual Russian-U.K. citizen and prominent opposition politician, was arrested in 2022 after criticizing the war in Ukraine that had begun weeks earlier. He was convicted in 2023 of treason and other charges, and sentenced to 25 years in prison in a case he called politically motivated. A columnist for The Washington Post, Kara-Murza, 42, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize this year. He fell ill in 2015 and 2017 from near-fatal poisonings he blamed on the Kremlin. His wife said his health deteriorated in prison as a result of the poisonings.

ILYA YASHIN is a prominent Kremlin critic who was serving an 8 1/2-year sentence for criticizing Russia's war in Ukraine. Yashin, a former member of a Moscow municipal council, was one of the few well-known opposition activists to stay in Russia since the war.

ANDREI PIVOVAROV, 42, headed the opposition group Open Russia, outlawed in 2021. He was pulled off a flight and arrested that same year. In 2022, he was convicted of carrying out activities of an "undesirable" organization and sentenced to four years in prison.

OLEG ORLOV, a veteran human rights campaigner, was convicted of discrediting the Russian military



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and sentenced to 2 1/2 years in prison in February for his protests of the war in Ukraine. Orlov, 71, is co-chairman of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning human rights group Memorial.

SASHA SKOCHILENKO, 33, was convicted and sentenced to seven years in prison in November 2023 for replacing several price tags in a supermarket with anti-war slogans.

KSENIA FADEYEVA, LILIA CHANYSHEVA and VADIM OSTANIN are former coordinators of regional offices of the late opposition figure Alexei Navalny. They were arrested after Navalny's political network was outlawed in 2021 and later convicted of extremism. Fadeyeva, 32, and Ostanin, 47, each were sentenced to 9 years in prison, and Chanyшева, 42, got a 9 1/2-year term.

KEVIN LIK, 19, a dual Russian-German national, was arrested in southern Russia in 2023 and accused of taking photos of a military unit and sending them to a "representative of a foreign state." Court officials said he opposed to the war in Ukraine. He was convicted of treason and sentenced to four years in prison, with rights advocates saying Lik, who was 17 at the time of his arrest, was the youngest person convicted of that crime.

RICO KRIEGER, a German medical worker, was convicted in Belarus of terrorism charges in June, and sentenced to death. He was pardoned Tuesday by authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko.

DEMURI VORONIN, a dual Russian-German national, is a political scientist who ran a consultancy that reportedly collaborated with journalists. He was arrested in 2021, convicted of treason in 2023 and sentenced to 13 years and three months in prison. He was implicated in the treason trial of Ivan Safronov, who allegedly passed him information on Russian military activities, which Voronin allegedly then gave to German intelligence.

PATRICK SCHOEBEL, a German national, was arrested in February 2024 at Pulkovo Airport in St. Petersburg when gummies containing a psychoactive component of cannabis were allegedly found in his possession. He has been detained since then, facing drug-smuggling charges.

GERMAN MOYZHES, a dual Russian-German national, is a migration lawyer who helped Russians apply for European Union residence permits. He was arrested in May in St. Petersburg and reportedly accused of treason, but little else is known about his case.

Released by the West

VADIM KRASIKOV was convicted in 2021 of shooting to death Zelimkhan "Tornike" Khangoshvili, a 40-year-old Georgian citizen of Chechen ethnicity, in a Berlin park. The German judges concluded it was an assassination ordered by the Russian security services. Krasikov, 58, was sentenced to life imprisonment. President Vladimir Putin this year hinted at a possible swap for Krasikov.

PAVEL RUBTSOV, also known as Pablo Gonzalez, a journalist working for Spanish media, was arrested on espionage charges in eastern Poland, near the Ukrainian border, in the first days after Russia's full-scale-invasion in 2022. Poland's Internal Security Agency identified him as a Russian intelligence agent, although some rights groups criticized Warsaw for holding him for more than two years without charge, and Reporters Without Borders called for his release.

ROMAN SELEZNEV, the son of a Russian lawmaker, was convicted in the U.S. in 2017 of hacking into more than 500 businesses and stealing millions of credit card numbers, which he then sold on websites. Seleznev, a Russian citizen, was sentenced to 27 years in prison and ordered to pay nearly \$170 million in restitution to his victims.

VLADISLAV KLYUSHIN, a wealthy businessman with ties to the Kremlin, was convicted in Boston in 2023 of charges including wire fraud and securities fraud in a nearly \$100 million scheme that relied on secret earnings information stolen via hacking U.S. computer networks. Klyushin, 43, who was said to have personally pocketed \$33 million in the scheme, was sentenced to nine years in prison. He was arrested in Switzerland and extradited to the U.S. in 2021.

VADIM KONOSHCHENOK, a suspected officer in Russia's Federal Security Service, was extradited to the United States from Estonia last year to face charges he smuggled ammunition and dual-use technology to help Moscow's war in Ukraine. U.S. prosecutors say he was detained in 2022 while trying to return to Russia from Estonia with about three dozen types of semiconductors and electronic components.

ARTEM DULTSEV and ANNA DULTSEVA, a Russian couple arrested on espionage charges in Ljubljana, Slovenia, in 2022, pleaded guilty Wednesday and were sentenced to 19 months in prison, and released on time served. Posing as Argentine citizens, they reportedly had used Slovenia as a base since 2017 to travel to neighboring countries and relay Moscow's orders to other Russian sleeper agents. They have two children.

MIKHAIL MIKUSHIN was arrested in Norway in 2022 on espionage charges. Norway's domestic security agency PST said Mikushin entered the country saying he was a Brazilian citizen. He was in Norway under a false identity while working for a Russia's intelligence service, Norwegian investigators said.

## British prime minister announces policing plan to deal with violence after fatal stabbing of girls

By JILL LAWLESS and BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British Prime Minister Keir Starmer condemned the “tiny mindless minority” behind unrest that has plagued several cities after a horrific stabbing at a children's dance class and vowed to put a stop to it as the 17-year-old suspect was named Thursday in part to counter misinformation blamed as one cause of the fiery clashes.

Starmer said the recent violence was “clearly driven by far-right hatred” as he announced a program enabling police to better share intelligence across agencies and move quickly to make arrests to prevent the kind of outbursts that have sent scores of police to the hospital the past two nights.

“This is coordinated; this is deliberate,” he said. “This is not a protest that has got out of hand. It is a group of individuals who are absolutely bent on violence.”

The announcement came as the teen charged with murdering three girls and stabbing 10 other people made his first appearance and was named in court partly to refute false information that has circulated on social media about his name and immigration status.

Judge Andrew Menary said his decision to allow Axel Rudakubana to be named was exceptional given the boy's age. But he said the teen will lose his right to anonymity when he turns 18 next week and continuing to shield his identity could allow rumors to metastasize.

“Continuing to prevent the full reporting has the disadvantage of allowing others to spread misinformation, in a vacuum,” Menary said in Liverpool Crown Court.

The attack Monday on children at a Taylor Swift-themed summer holiday dance class shocked a country where knife crime is a long-standing and vexing problem, though mass stabbings are rare.

The deaths have been used by far-right activists to stoke anger at immigrants and Muslims. Police said a name circulating on social media purported to be the suspect's, though the suspect is not an immigrant, and his religion has not been disclosed.

Rudakubana, who police said was born in Wales, has not been charged with terrorism offenses but faces three counts of murder over the deaths of Alice Dasilva Aguiar, 9, Elsie Dot Stancombe, 7, and Bebe King, 6, in the seaside town of Southport in northwest England.

He also has been charged with 10 counts of attempted murder for the eight children and two adults who were injured.

Rudakubana did not enter a plea and was ordered held without bail and returned to youth detention, though Menary said that might change after his birthday. His next court date is Oct. 25.

The adults, who were listed in critical condition, were named for the first time as Leanne Lucas, who led the dance and yoga class, and John Hayes, who worked nearby and intervened in the attack to protect children. The injured children cannot be named because of their ages.

Two of the children were discharged Thursday, Alder Hey Children's hospital said. Five others were in stable condition at the hospital.

Prosecutors did not disclose a motive for the crime, but they revealed that the weapon used was a kitchen knife with a curved blade, according to an additional charge he faces.

The suspect, wearing a gray tracksuit, smiled briefly at reporters during an initial appearance in Liverpool

Magistrates' Court. At his subsequent appearance in the Crown Court, he pulled his sweatshirt up to his hair to cover his face. He did not speak.

Neither the teen's parents nor family members of victims were in court.

Far-right demonstrators — fueled, in part, by online misinformation — have held several violent protests, ostensibly in response to the attack, clashing with police outside a mosque in Southport on Tuesday and causing a melee near the prime minister's office in London the next day.

Starmer put some of the blame on social media companies, though he didn't announce any measures to address that and said there was a balance to be struck between the value they offer and the threat they can pose.

"Violent disorder, clearly whipped up online, that is also a crime. It's happening on your premises," he said.

Hundreds of protesters chanting "we want our country back" hurled beer cans and bottles near the prime minister's Downing Street residence in London on Wednesday evening, and launched flares at a nearby statue of wartime leader Winston Churchill. More than 100 people were arrested for offenses including violent disorder and assault on an emergency worker, London's Metropolitan Police force said.

Police officers were pelted with bottles and eggs in the town of Hartlepool in northeast England, where a police car was set ablaze. A smaller disturbance was reported in Manchester.

On Tuesday night, a crowd of several hundred people hurled bricks and bottles at riot police in Southport, set trash cans and vehicles on fire and looted a store, hours after a peaceful vigil for the stabbing victims. More than 50 officers were injured.

"A gang of thugs got on trains and buses, went to a community that is not their own, a community grieving the most horrific tragedy, and then proceeded to throw bricks at police officers — police officers who just 24 hours earlier had been having to deal with an attack on children in their community," Starmer said.

Starmer said his so-called National Violent Disorder Program would enable police to move between communities — just as the "marauding mobs" do. Officers will harness facial recognition technology to identify culprits and use criminal behavior orders often imposed on soccer hooligans that prevent them from going certain places or associating with one another.

Starmer did not announce additional funding for the program but said he announced when he took office last month that he would increase community policing.

A civil liberties group criticized Starmer for failing to address the causes behind knife crime and "violent, racist thuggery" and condemned plans to use facial recognition, which is banned in Europe.

"The prime minister's alarming pledge today to roll out facial recognition in an apparent response to recent disorder is a pledge to plunder more vital police resources on mass surveillance that threatens rather than protects democracy," said Silkie Carlo, director of Big Brother Watch. "This AI surveillance turns members of the public into walking ID cards, is dangerously inaccurate and has no explicit legal basis in the U.K."

## **Inmate sentenced to more than 4 years in prison killing of Boston gangster James 'Whitey' Bulger**

By JOHN RABY Associated Press

CLARKSBURG, W.Va. (AP) — An inmate was sentenced to more than four years Thursday for his role in the 2018 fatal bludgeoning of notorious Boston gangster James "Whitey" Bulger in a troubled West Virginia federal prison.

Massachusetts gangster Paul J. DeCologero was sentenced in federal court after pleading guilty to an assault charge. He could have faced up to 10 years in prison. DeCologero was already serving a 25-year sentence handed down in 2006 after he was convicted of buying heroin used to try to kill a teenage girl.

Prosecutors initially had said DeCologero and inmate Fotios "Freddy" Geas used a lock attached to a belt to repeatedly hit the 89-year-old Bulger in the head hours after he arrived at USP Hazelton from another lockup in Florida. But on Thursday, both prosecutors and the defense said DeCologero only served as a lookout and had not physically assaulted Bulger.

U.S. District Judge Thomas Kleeh said the sentence was "fair, just and appropriate" and "strikes the

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balance the court is trying to seek.”

DeCologero, 50, declined to speak when given the opportunity to address the court. Defense attorney Patrick Nash began by conveying an apology from DeCologero to Bulger’s family as well as the inmate’s own relatives.

Nash described DeCologero as the victim of an “abusive and neglectful” upbringing.

“Paul has had an incredibly difficult life,” Nash said. “As a result of that, Paul is a person who is easily led. Anyone who shows him attention, he’s easily led.”

An uncle eventually took in DeCologero and made him part of a criminal organization, Nash said.

In Bulger’s killing, “Paul was involved,” Nash said. “He is guilty. But his role was limited.”

Assistant U.S. Attorney Brandon Flower declined to comment after the sentencing.

According to court records, inmates found out ahead of time that Bulger would be arriving at Hazelton. An inmate previously told a grand jury that DeCologero said to him that Bulger was a snitch and they planned to kill him as soon as he came into their unit.

Prosecutors have said DeCologero and Geas spent about seven minutes in Bulger’s cell. Geas hit Bulger, while DeCologero served as a lookout and helped cover Bulger’s body, Flower said Thursday. DeCologero’s DNA was found on two blankets, the prosecutor said.

Geas has been charged with murder and conspiracy to commit first-degree murder, which carries up to a life sentence. His hearing is scheduled for Sept. 6. Last year, the Justice Department said it would not seek the death penalty.

Another inmate, Sean McKinnon, pleaded guilty in June to lying to FBI special agents. McKinnon got credit for spending 22 months in custody after his 2022 indictment, was given no additional prison time and was returned to Florida to finish his supervised release. McKinnon had served out a sentence for stealing guns from a firearms dealer.

Plea deals for the three men were disclosed May 13. Geas and DeCologero were identified as suspects shortly after Bulger’s death, but they remained uncharged for years as the investigation dragged on.

Prior to Bulger’s death, employees at Hazelton had been sounding the alarm about violence and understaffing. After Bulger was killed, prison officials were criticized for placing him in the general population instead of more protective housing.

A Justice Department inspector general investigation found in 2022 that the killing was the result of multiple layers of management failures, widespread incompetence and flawed policies at the federal Bureau of Prisons. The inspector general found no evidence of “malicious intent” by any bureau employees but said a series of bureaucratic blunders left Bulger at the mercy of rival gangsters.

In July, the U.S. Senate passed legislation to overhaul oversight and bring greater transparency to the Bureau of Prisons following reporting from The Associated Press that exposed systemic corruption in the federal prison system and increased congressional scrutiny.

Bulger, who ran the largely Irish mob in Boston in the 1970s and ’80s, was also an FBI informant who provided the agency with information on the main rival to his gang.

He became one of the nation’s most wanted fugitives after fleeing Boston in 1994, thanks to a tip from his FBI handler that he was about to be indicted. He was captured at age 81 after more than 16 years on the run.

Bulger was convicted in 2013 in a string of 11 killings and dozens of other gangland crimes, many of them committed while he was said to be an FBI informant.

DeCologero, who was in a gang led by his uncle, was convicted of buying heroin that was used to try to kill a teenage girl because his uncle feared she would betray the crew to police. After the heroin did not kill her, another man broke her neck, dismembered her body and buried her remains in the woods, court records say.

Geas was a close associate of the Mafia and acted as an enforcer but was not an official “made” member because he is Greek, not Italian. He and his brother were sentenced to life in 2011 for their roles in several violent crimes, including the 2003 killing of Adolfo “Big Al” Bruno, a Genovese crime family boss in Springfield, Massachusetts. Another mobster ordered Bruno’s killing because he was upset that he had talked to the FBI, prosecutors said.

## Paris Olympics sweetheart: Rugby player Ilona Maher promotes body positivity through social media

By JENNA FRYER AP National Writer

PARIS (AP) — Ilona Maher, America's rugby-playing social media sweetheart, walked onto the terrace of Team USA House carrying a sandwich, the United States' first ever rugby sevens Olympic medal hanging around her neck.

In between a rapid-fire media rotation, she squeezed in bites of her snack and reapplied her trademark red lipstick. It was authentic Maher, who uses the platform she has built to promote body positivity and the sport she loves, all while insisting women who run, tackle and throw stiff arms can still be feminine.

Maher, who first shot to stardom three years ago by using her wicked sense of humor to document behind-the-scenes life at the Tokyo Olympics, helped lead the U.S. to the bronze medal at the Paris Games with a heart-stopping finish in a 14-12 victory over Australia. The bronze medal match ended with Alex "Spiff" Sedrick scoring on a length-of-the-field try as time expired, then putting a kick through the uprights.

Maher's tear-filled interview after the match was enough to make any American want to run through a wall for the 27-year-old Vermont native who has both a nursing degree and a masters in business but really just wants to play rugby and promote the sport to girls across the world.

"I think the stereotype around a rugby player is this idea that you need to drop your femininity and play a very masculine, brutal sport," Maher said Wednesday, a day after the medal match. "Myself and my team and some others on the circuit like Australia and Ireland, are showing that femininity. We are doing our makeup before games, wearing makeup, wanting to feel pretty out there.

"But that doesn't take away from how amazing we tackle and hit and run. You can be those things, and the stereotypes around women's sports just should be thrown out the window now."

Maher, who uses the the hashtag #beastbeautybrains on social media, became the most-followed rugby player on Instagram during these Games with 2 million followers. She has 1.9 million followers on TikTok.

She has continued to document life at the Olympics and called the Athlete's Village "The Villa" in a nod to "Love Island" (she watches the British version, and thinks she could be on the show but "wouldn't be a bombshell"). But her biggest impact has been her messages of body positivity and a 2-month-old post resurfaced this week in which she clapped-back at a commenter who mocked her for having a body mass index (BMI) of 30.

"I think you were trying to roast me, but this actually is a fact. I do have a BMI of 30 — well, 29.3 to be more exact," Maher said on TikTok. "I've been considered overweight my whole life."

She revealed she weighs 200 pounds (90 kilograms) and is 5-foot-10 (178 centimeters): the two measurements used to calculate BMI. A BMI between 25 and 29.9 is considered in the overweight range, and a BMI of 30 and above is considered obese.

Maher said she was humiliated by the label, particularly when she turned in paperwork from a high school physical that labeled her overweight.

"I was so embarrassed to turn that in and have that written there," Maher said in the TikTok. "My whole life, I've been this way."

She said she was surprised that "body-positive posts posted months, a couple of years ago, weeks ago" have resurfaced, but that its an important message for her to deliver.

"It's just like I always preach, and it is really important for me to constantly preach because the message never stops and young girls have to be like, 'Oh, man, OK, I feel great about my body,'" she said. "I love it. It has to be a constant stream. I think there's this idea about what female athletes are and this need to be lean and fit. But, no, there's athletes of all shapes and sizes competing at the Olympics."

Sally Horrox, World Rugby's director of women's rugby, said Maher is an "unprecedented" athlete who will help rugby grow.

"She's not following anyone. She is leading the way," Horrox told The Associated Press. "That profile in the States and her global profile growing, that will do wonders for rugby and for women's sport. She speaks so powerfully about what rugby has done for her in terms of body self-confidence, body image,

opportunity and she wants that for girls, in particular, and if it happens to be rugby, great.

"But she'll talk about that purpose and the value of sport and health and lifestyle, and she'll do that outside of the rugby arena. I'm really impressed, and she should be very proud of what she's doing."

Her teammates all share the same passion for Maher's messaging. Sammy Sullivan, who took up rugby at West Point, where she graduated in 2020 and is an active Army captain, said the biggest stereotype women rugby players have to fight is that they can't be girly girls.

"People see us as having a lack of femininity, and I think it's the complete opposite," Sullivan said. "I think strength and power and aggression can be feminine and can be beautiful if you want it to be. Our team is the epitome of that. All of us show our femininity in different ways and that's something beautiful behind the women of U.S. rugby."

It's worked for Maher, who said Wednesday she hopes to play in Los Angeles in 2028. She now has a bronze medal and will be seeking gold — and to continue shutting down the critics of her body, like she ended her video message.

"I'm going to the Olympics," she said. "And you're not."

## 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 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.

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

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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.

## 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.

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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 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



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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.

## As conflicts far and wide shake the planet, can the Olympics unite the world?

By MALLIKA SEN and HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — More than 100 conflicts fester around the world. The Middle East teeters on the brink of a regional war. In Ukraine, Russia advances slowly but steadily in the east, reducing towns to rubble.

The "Olympic Truce," clearly, is not being heeded.

In the run-up to every Olympics over the past 30 years, the United Nations passes a resolution upholding the Olympic Truce, which in theory halts hostilities in the name of granting athletes safe passage and promoting world peace. It's supposed to last from seven days before the Olympic Games begin until seven days after the Paralympic Games end. Not even two weeks into it, the news of missile strikes, annexations and heightened tensions is omnipresent.

"Stepping into the Olympic Village, you realize like generations of Olympians before: 'Now I am part of something bigger than myself. Now we are part of an event that unites the world in peace,'" International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach said to athletes at the opening ceremony. He did temper his usual robust optimism with an acknowledgment that they lived in "a world torn apart by wars and conflicts."

It's a pitch the IOC has made often enough that it has become part of the brand that the Games project: the Olympics as the great uniter, one that has the potential to transcend all divides.

Reality, though, can interrupt even the tightest messaging.

Good intentions, interrupted by events

By Wednesday, in the wake of the assassination in Iran of Hamas' top leader, the international body had scaled down and adopted a more dejected tone.

"A culture of peace is what we try to create in a very modest way," IOC spokesperson Mark Adams said at a news conference. "We're unable to bring peace. We can call for peace, but we probably won't achieve it."

For an organization that has often waded into geopolitics — the normally stoic Bach choked up last week while remembering his late friend Henry Kissinger's "invaluable advice" — Adams' remarks seemed

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to signal a retreat in the IOC's ambitions, at least in the moment.

"We can only do what we can do. We're a sports organization," he said. "Our job is to let the politicians, unfortunately, get on with what they want to get on with."

The Olympic Truce was revived in the immediate post-Cold War era, with roots in ancient Greece.

"We live in a divided world where conflicts are proliferating in a dramatic way. The horrendous suffering in Gaza, the seemingly endless war in Ukraine, terrible suffering from Sudan to the DRC, from the Sahel to Myanmar," U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres said after meeting with Bach before the opening ceremony. "In a moment like this, it is important to say that the first recording in history (of a) real peace initiative was the Olympic Truce."

Then and now, it's never quite worked. Russia alone has broken the Truce three times, most recently in 2022 with the invasion of Ukraine — a handful of months after the country voted for the U.N. resolution. (This time, it abstained.)

In November, 118 countries voted to adopt the resolution. No country voted against it, although Syria joined Russia in abstaining. In past years, the resolution received more full-throated support — the U.N. has 193 member-states, after all — but among those who voted for "building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal" were Iran, Israel and Lebanon, all embroiled in the latest flare-up.

"When we talk about sports, uniting people and bringing people together, yes, that is an aspirational ideal," said Lindsay Sarah Krasnoff, a sports diplomacy expert who lectures at New York University's Tisch Institute for Global Sport. "And a lot of that is reality. When you look at, typically speaking, sport does have that power."

The Olympics, she says, are an implement in the toolbox of striving for peace. "I don't think the Games themselves can transcend the worlds wars, conflicts, and complex, complicated problems," she said. "But I think what they can do is provide pockets of space for people to have these conversations."

Can idealism help along a messy world?

Ultimately, the Truce is well-intentioned but toothless. There are no consequences to breaking it, aside from possible condemnation in the court of global public opinion.

For example: Ahead of the Games, French President Emmanuel Macron publicly suggested a cease-fire between Russia and Ukraine during the days of competition. Not unexpectedly, both sides refused, and the war goes on with the same intensity.

Russia and Belarus have been barred from the Paris Games after a lengthy campaign from Ukraine's Olympic committee, which argued that Russian athletes should not compete even under a neutral flag, while Moscow's troops persist with their deadly invasion. (Some Russian and Belarusian athletes are still competing as neutrals, approval contingent on not supporting the war. That allowance has not endeared the Games to its erstwhile host country. )

Ukrainian athletes are under no illusion about Olympic idealism. For them, the Olympics are no longer about their achievements but rather proof that their country is still alive despite the war that began while the last Olympic flame was still lit. They do not see the Games as respite from the war; it's a way to shout loudly about it so the world doesn't forget.

Zoriana Nevmerzhytska, 31, attended a flash mob in view of the Eiffel Tower to highlight the hundreds of Ukrainian athletes and coaches, both amateur and professional, who have been killed. Participants bore posters that read "world champions in raping," depicting Russian soldiers, and "unmarked troops," referring to the neutral athletes.

"For me, it's not about something that promotes peace," she said of the Olympics. "It can be about unity, but not this time."

There will be a next time, though. When asked why the world keeps returning to the Truce for Olympics after Olympics, despite incessant conflict, Krasnoff noted that "we all like the idea that sport in and of itself can be omnipotent, even though we know in reality it is not."

"I mean, that's kind of the whole thing about sports," she said, drawing an analogy. "You don't dwell on what you haven't been able to achieve in a given performance. You say, 'OK, well, that was that game. On to the next.'"

## Water dilemmas in Olympic triathlon are nothing new, from stray boats to shark watches to bacteria

By PAT GRAHAM AP Sports Writer

PARIS (AP) — Contrary to a recent action/horror movie, there are no sharks in the Seine. There was a shark watch, though, at the very first Olympic triathlon in 2000 during the Sydney Games.

At the Olympics, water dilemmas are nothing for triathlon swimming.

A boat once got in the way of an Olympic triathlon, too. And now, two of the last three Summer Games triathlons have dealt water quality concerns swirling around the swim portion.

There always seems to be something with a sport that combines swimming, cycling and running. The trials and tribulations of staging the men's and women's triathlon competitions in Paris' famed waterway are just the latest chapter.

Organizers have been adamant in their insistence the swimming portion of the triathlon and the marathon swimming events next week could safely be held in the river. There have been health questions leading into the event, similar to Rio in 2016 at the Copacabana beach.

"I understand they're great waterways and they're sources of pride and all that, but I don't think it's worth it just to do this," Dr. Nicole Iovine, an infectious diseases specialist at the University of Florida, said. "Why put anybody at any level of risk? It just doesn't make sense. It's something that cannot be completely controlled from a health and safety perspective. And since there are alternatives, why take the risk?"

Paris Olympics: Seine Water Quality

The scenery around the Seine was certainly picturesque, especially with the Eiffel Tower in the backdrop as the triathletes finished on the bridge that spans the waterway.

However, the competition was plagued by concern over the water quality. Elevated levels of bacteria delayed the men's race. But the competition was held and the views played well on television as athletes cycled and ran by Paris' finest attractions.

"We're lucky enough to have probably the most beautiful venue of any race in the Olympics," gold medalist Alex Yee of Britain said.

It was all part of an ambitious plan to clean up the long-polluted Seine, spending 1.4 billion euros (\$1.5 billion) in infrastructure improvements. A few swim practice sessions needed to be scratched and the men's race pushed back a day due to water quality and held after the women's race.

"I didn't think the Seine was that dirty (Wednesday)," said French triathlete Léo Bergere, who won the bronze medal. "Big cities always have to deal with the pollution. Today they managed to deliver."

Rio Games: Contaminated Copacabana Beach

Leading into the Rio de Janeiro Olympics, the waterways around the city remained contaminated with raw human sewage teeming with dangerous viruses and bacteria, according to a 16-month-long study commissioned by The Associated Press at the time.

The AP conducted tests revealed Copacabana Beach, where the marathon and triathlon swimming were to be held and thousands of tourists were likely to swim, exceeded California's limit five times over 13 months of testing.

Eight years later, a private concessionaire is working to recover the aquatic ecosystem in Rio's western zone. The project's goal is to remove enough silt and filth from the Barra and Jacarepagua lagoons to fill 920 Olympic-size swimming pools.

Sydney Games: Shark Watch

Divers remained on the lookout for sharks in the waters of Sydney Harbour during a rehearsal swim in 2000, when triathlon made its Olympic debut.

None were spotted. It was just a precaution to calm nervous competitors. The divers used an electrical device to release low frequency signals.

Fast forward to 2024: There's a Netflix film that was recently released called "Under Paris" that stars a shark and involves a triathlon in the Seine.

Tokyo Games: False start

Move that boat!

The Olympic men's triathlon needed a restart after dozens of competitors jumped into the water at the Tokyo Games in 2021 while others were stuck on the dock. Because their path was blocked by a boat containing cameras that had moved in the way.

The buzzer was sounded to signal a false start and bring the racers back to the dock. It wasn't heard by everyone and some of the initial leaders were about 200 meters out before they eventually stopped swimming and were ushered back to try again.

LA Games: On deck

The Los Angeles Games are about to be on the clock. The marathon swimming and triathlon competitions are expected to take place at the waterfront in Long Beach. Stay tuned.

## 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 PM Manoj, a spokesperson for Kerala state's top elected official. Nearly 40 bodies were found some 30 kilometers (20 miles) from the area in Wayanad district where the main landslides occurred, after being swept along the Chaliyar River.

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. 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 flood-water while a land excavator cleared debris.

The Mundakkai and Chooralmala areas are destroyed, Vijayan said.

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

Local volunteers trekked for kilometers (miles) through the devastation to join the rescuers searching for the missing. They said they also recovered body parts of some of people who were killed in the disaster.

"We are finding bodies that have lost limbs. Sometimes we find only limbs," said Shakir Husain, a local shopkeeper.

The area is known for its picturesque tea and cardamom estates, with hundreds of plantation workers living in nearby temporary shelters. Of the nearly 400 houses, only 30 were left intact. The rest were swept away by the landslides, said Husain.

"This was a very beautiful place. I used to visit here many times. My friend had three houses here. Now there is nothing left," he said.

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.

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 rain-fed crops planted during the season, but often cause extensive damage. Scientists say monsoons are becoming more erratic because of climate change and global warming.

Heavy rains also wreaked havoc in other parts of India in recent days.

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 in the coming days.

In the mountainous state of Himachal Pradesh, 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.

## **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 and Ukraine 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 that are laboring to counter Russia's 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.

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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.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said Thursday the F-16s will not be a "magic pill" that changes the course of the conflict. He added that Russian authorities have already offered rewards to servicemen who destroy F-16s.

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.

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

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hurting Ukraine. These include: Russia's massive missile attacks, its use of guided aerial bombs, and the deployment of S-300 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."

## Today in History: August 2, verdict in "Black Sox" trial

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Friday, Aug. 2, the 215th day of 2024. There are 151 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On August 2, 1921, a jury in Chicago acquitted several former members of the Chicago White Sox baseball team and two others of conspiring to defraud the public in the notorious "Black Sox" scandal (though they would be banned from Major League Baseball for life by Commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis).

Also on this date:

In 1776, members of the Second Continental Congress began attaching their signatures to the Declaration of Independence.

In 1790, the first United States Census was conducted under the supervision of Thomas Jefferson; a total of 3,929,214 U.S. residents were counted.

In 1873, inventor Andrew S. Hallidie (HAH'-lih-day) successfully tested a cable car he had designed for the city of San Francisco.

In 1876, frontiersman "Wild Bill" Hickok was shot and killed while playing poker at a saloon in Deadwood, Dakota Territory, by Jack McCall, who was later hanged.

On Aug. 2, 1923, the 29th president of the United States, Warren G. Harding, died in San Francisco; Vice President Calvin Coolidge became president.

In 1934, German President Paul von Hindenburg died, paving the way for Adolf Hitler's complete takeover.

In 1939, Albert Einstein signed a letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt urging creation of an atomic weapons research program.

In 1945, President Harry S. Truman, Soviet leader Josef Stalin and Britain's new prime minister, Clement Attlee, concluded the Potsdam conference.

In 1974, former White House counsel John W. Dean III was sentenced to one to four years in prison for obstruction of justice in the Watergate cover-up. (Dean ended up serving four months.)

In 1985, 137 people were killed when Delta Air Lines Flight 191, a Lockheed L-1011 Tristar, crashed while attempting to land at Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport.

In 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait, seizing control of the oil-rich emirate. (The Iraqis were later driven out by the U.S. in Operation Desert Storm.)

In 2018, Pope Francis decreed that the death penalty is "inadmissible" under all circumstances and the Catholic Church should campaign to abolish it.

Today's Birthdays: Rock musician Garth Hudson (The Band) is 87. Author Isabel Allende is 82. Singer Kathy Lennon (The Lennon Sisters) is 81. Actor Butch Patrick (TV: "The Munsters") is 71. Rock music producer/drummer Butch Vig is 69. Actor Mary-Louise Parker is 60. Writer-actor-director Kevin Smith is 54. Actor Sam Worthington is 48. Actor Edward Furlong is 47. TV meteorologist Dylan Dreyer (TV: "Today") is 43. Actor Lily Gladstone is 38. WNBA point guard Skylar Diggins-Smith is 34. Singer Charli XCX is 32. Olympic swimming gold medalist Simone Manuel is 28.