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Friday, Aug. 30

Senior Menu: Ham salad on bun, cauliflower/pea/carrot salad, fresh fruit, cookie.
No School (Labor Day break)
Football hosts Mobridge-Pollock, 7 p.m.
Basketball Golf Tourney fundraiser at Olive Grove

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



Saturday, Aug. 31

Volleyball C Team tournament at Matchbox Club in Aberdeen

CLOSED: Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 209 N Main, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

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

Sunday, Sept. 1

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

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

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

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

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

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

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1440

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

Typhoon Strikes Kyushu

Tropical Storm Shanshan made landfall on Japan's southwestern island of Kyushu as a typhoon yesterday with maximum sustained winds hitting roughly 156 mph at landfall, putting millions of people under evacuation orders. Shanshan, which at landfall was the equivalent of a Category 4 hurricane, is believed to be the strongest to ever hit the region and has resulted in at least five deaths.

The storm brought record rainfall—some areas recording over 2 feet in 24 hours—power outages, transportation disruptions, and the threat of landslides and floods. The storm is likely to track northeast this morning before moving east over Honshu later today.

The Northwest Pacific experiences an average of 25 named storms annually, with one landing in Japan last year. Typhoons and hurricanes are both rotating storm systems that differ in name by location: typhoons occur in the Northwest Pacific, while hurricanes form in the North Atlantic and Northeast Pacific.

A Season of Change

The 2024 college football season gets into full swing this weekend, kicking off a year that will see more changes than almost any in the sport's 155-year history.

Most notably, the postseason will shift to a 12-team playoff, with the four highest-ranked conference winners earning byes and four teams hosting on-campus playoff games for the first time. The format replaces the four-team playoff used since 2014.

Separately, conference realignment means traditional West Coast powers UCLA, USC, Washington, and Oregon will play in the Big Ten, while Texas and Oklahoma will join the SEC.

Fresh faces will be featured at a few top-tier programs. Nick Saban retired from Alabama after 17 years and six titles with the Tide. Up north, Jim Harbaugh left defending champion Michigan after winning the team's first title since 1997.

The slate features a number of marquee matchups, beginning with No. 1 Georgia facing No. 14 Clemson (12 pm ET, ABC).

Newspaper Convictions

Former Hong Kong editors of a prodemocracy news outlet were found guilty of sedition yesterday. The conviction is the first application of the British colonial-era law since the territory's 1997 handover to mainland China.

Chung Pui-kuen and Patrick Lam were editors-in-chief of Stand News, an online media outlet whose popularity skyrocketed amid the 2019 prodemocracy protests. Prosecutors said 17 articles during and after this protest period smeared law enforcement; a judge found 11 carried seditious content in particular. Stand News shut down following a December 2021 police raid on its offices, part of a wave of news media closures in Hong Kong amid a crackdown on dissent.

The editors face a prison sentence of up to two years and a fine of about \$640 next month. The law under which the editors were charged is separate from Hong Kong's 2020 national security law; an updated version of that law extends the maximum sentence for sedition to seven years.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

The 2024 Paris Paralympics competitions kick off, including cycling, swimming, table tennis, and Taekwondo.

The Cure to release two new songs on "eco-vinyl" made from sustainable material, the first new music from the iconic English rock band in 16 years.

Steph Curry signs one-year, \$62.6M extension with the Golden State Warriors, on track to make him the third NBA player to pass \$500M in career earnings.

2024-25 UEFA Champions League groupings for "league phase" set; see full schedule for the new 36-team format.

Science & Technology

Brain study finds the prefrontal cortex—the region responsible for decision-making and other executive functions—is also the first to show age-related deterioration.

Shoebox-sized telescope goes online after being launched into orbit via a SpaceX satellite; device was made for under \$1M and was designed and developed in under one year.

Decadelong study shows vultures form fewer social bonds as they age; findings, expected to aid conservation efforts, support theory animals become more ingrained in habits and social circles over time.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 -0.0%, Dow +0.6%, Nasdaq -0.2%); Dow notches record close. US economy grew 3% year-over-year from April through June, faster than preliminary assessment of 2.8%. Dollar General shares close down 32%—its largest single-day drop on record—after retailer reports lower-than-expected Q2 results, slashes full-year guidance.

Affirm shares close up 32% in biggest rally in three years, a day after "buy now, pay later" fintech company beats Wall Street expectations.

US pending home sales index falls 5.5% year-over-year in July to lowest level since records began in 2001. US average 30-year fixed-rate mortgage falls to lowest level since May 2023 at 6.35%.

Politics & World Affairs

Vice President Kamala Harris, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz (D) sit down for first joint interview on CNN; see takeaways.

Staffer of former President Donald Trump, Arlington National Cemetery employee reportedly clash in altercation after employee tries to stop Trump campaign from filming on the grounds.

Israel says its forces killed local commander of Iran-backed Islamic Jihad group, four other militants in second day of West Bank raids.

Israel, Hamas agree to zoned three-day pauses in fighting in Gaza to allow for polio vaccines.

Justice Department watchdog finds FBI mishandled child sexual abuse cases, including failing to comply with mandatory reporting requirements in roughly half of cases examined.

Informational Meeting

Never in 135 years of statehood has a law jeopardized people's Property Rights & Local Control like RL 21

Open Forum

Mon. Sept 9, 2024

6:30 pm Meeting

Ramkota

1400 8TH Ave NW Aberdeen, SD

Speakers:

Curtis Jundt - 40 yr pipeline engineer

Rep Julie Auch: District 18 Rep Jim Eschenbaum: Chair of RL 21

Former Speaker Spencer Gosch District 23

Sen Elect Mark Lapka District 23

Ed Fischbach - Spink County Farmer

Contact for more info:

Jodi Waltman: 605-216-8171

"Pie Auction Fundraiser"



70th Anniversary
Nancy and Charles Boynton 70th
Wedding Anniversary Celebration
will be held at the
Aberdeen Senior Center on
September 7th from 2- 4!

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Northern State Drops Season Opener on the Road at No. 5 South Dakota

Vermillion, S.D. – The Northern State University football team opened their 2024 season Thursday evening falling to No. 5 South Dakota. The match-up was the first against a Division I opponent for the Wolves.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 3, USD 45

Records: NSU 0-1, USD 1-0

Attendance: 7435

HOW IT HAPPENED

Northern tallied a field goal on their opening drive of the contest; a 24-yarder by Jeremy Caruso

South Dakota notched ten points in the first, 21 in the second, seven in the third, and seven in the fourth

The Wolves recorded 11 first downs, 147 yards rushing, and 60 yards passing in the game

They converted on 6-of-15 third downs and held the Coyotes to 3-of-7

Daniel Britt notched all 60 passing yards in the game, completing 8-of-11 attempts

Hank Kraft led the rushers with 68 total yards on 11 carries, while Tanner Branson notched 25 yards receiving

Jake Adams led the defense with eight tackles, including sack for a Coyote loss of eight yards

Elijah Jopp, Lynden Williams, and Logan Grossinger followed with five tackles each

Tom Ellard recorded 212 yards punting, averaging 42.4 yards per punt with a 47-yard long

In the return game, Ty Wiley led the team with 69 total yards and a 20-yard long

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Jeremy Caruso: 24-yard field goal, 108 kickoff yards

Hank Kraft: 68 yards rushing, 6.2 yards per carry, 42-yard long

Jake Adams: 8 tackles, 1.0 sacks

Tom Ellard: 212 yards punting, 42.4 yards per punt, 47-yard long

UP NEXT

Northern State opens their NSIC and home slates next Saturday, September 7 hosting the University of Sioux Falls. Kick-off is set for 6 p.m. from Dacotah Bank Stadium.

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Northern State Drops Season Opener on the Road at No. 5 South Dakota

Groton Area's volleyball team dropped a tough match to Hamlin Thursday night, 3-1. The match was played in Hamlin.

Game scores were 17-25, 22-25, 25-21 and 22-25.

Groton Area had four ace serves while Hamlin had 12. In assists, Hamlin led, 35-28. Hamlin had 44 kills compared to Groton Area's 28 kills. The Tigers had more blocks, 7-4. Digs were fairly even with Hamlin having the edge, 89-84.

Taryn Traphagen had seven kills and two blocks; Chesney Weber had seven kills, one block and one ace serve; Jaedyn Penning had seven kills and one ace serve; Rylee Dunker had five kills and two blocks; Faith Traphagen had four kills; Laila Roberts had one kill and 15 digs; Elizabeth Flihs had 12 digs; Jerica Locke had two ace serves and 26 digs and Emma Kutter had two blocks.

Hamlin was led by Addison Neuendorf with 15 kills and 24 digs while Jo Steffensen had seven kills and one ace serve, Addie Steffensen had four kills, three ace serves and one block; Kayde Nobel had six kills and two blocks; Issie Steffensen had five kills and one ace serve; Jayci Trowbridge had one kills and two ace serves; Addelyn J Jensen had four kills.

In sets, Hamlin had 35 with Izzy Steffensne having 32. Groton Area had 28 sets with Elizabeth Flihs having 16, Chesney Weber nine and Jerica Locke one.

Groton Area won both the junior varsity and C matches.

The Tigers will host Ipswich on Tuesday.

The match was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Agtegra, Avantara Groton, Bierman Farm Service, BK Custom T's & More, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Groton Ag Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Ford, John Sieh Agency, Jungle Lanes & Lounge, R&M Farms/Rix Farms and The Meathouse in Andover.

The match and the post-game interview with Coach Chelsea Hanson are posted in the archives under the 20-24-25 School Year link.

We the People

The South Dakota Humanities Council is making available a weekly column -- "We the People" -- that focuses on the U.S. Constitution. It is written by David Adler, who is president of The Alturas Institute, a non-profit organization created to promote the Constitution, gender equality, and civic education.



By David Adler

When Congress is Reluctant to Use Impeachment Power

The doctrine of checks and balances, central to the success of American Constitutionalism, is designed to curb abuse of power and promote governmental accountability. But the Constitution is not a machine that will run without good men and women at the helm. When those in positions of authority and responsibility are reluctant to turn the wheels of checks and balances to constrain the judiciary, for example, there is little to deter misbehavior. Justice James Iredell, a member of the first Supreme Court, and one of the most penetrating thinkers of the founding period, told the North Carolina Ratifying Convention, "A man in public office who knows there is no tribunal to punish him, may be ready to deviate from his duty."

The Framers of the Constitution, for whom impeachment was designed as a "bridle" on the presidency and the federal judiciary, to ensure adherence to constitutional limitations was, Alexander Hamilton explained in Federalist No., 65, "designed as a method of NATIONAL INQUEST into the conduct of public men." The integrity of the judicial process, the founders understood, is best preserved by judges committed to serving the public interest, which requires wisdom in the selection of those who will sit on the bench, as well as congressional willingness to investigate allegations of misconduct.

After the House impeachment and Senate conviction of Federal Judge Halsted Ritter in 1936, for his acceptance of substantial gifts from residents in his district, even though they had no business before him, on the premise that he brought his court into scandal and disrepute and undermined public confidence in the administration of justice, forthright senators explained the unlikelihood of future impeachment hearings into the acts of "crooked judges." Senator Hatton Summers, Chair of the House Judiciary Committee, said of his colleagues, "We know they will not try district judges, and we can hardly ask them to do so."

Members in both chambers bear many responsibilities. The nature of the impeachment process interrupts important legislative business and places a considerable burden on those already overburdened by their duties. As a result, Members are reluctant to invoke the impeachment power, Senator William McAdoo observed, "even in cases of flagrant misconduct." He concluded, grimly, that "the practical certainty that in a large majority of cases misconduct will never be visited with impeachment is a standing invitation for judges to abuse their authority with impunity and without fear of removal."

A young political scientist, later president of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, anticipated this congressional reluctance in his 1885 classic, *Congressional Government*: "Congress is sometimes willing to suffer a misbehaving judge rather than stop the legislative activities of the United States."

Across the decades, scholars have weighed in with remedies to improve the removal process. The late Philip Kurland, an eminent constitutional law scholar at the University of Chicago got it right, as he often did. The cure, he wrote, is to entrust judicial functions "only to those who are equal to their demands." This was advocacy for perfection, as he well knew. "The basic difficulty is to secure recognition of the necessity for merit appointments. How this sense of responsibility is to be secured is a question that has

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not yet been answered.” Kurland’s emphasis on the need to instill an appreciation for “merit” in those with the power to put well-qualified people on the federal bench, a responsibility that falls on the shoulders of the president, who nominates, and the Senate, who confirms or rejects, nominees, is not endemic to the judiciary, but applies to all governmental departments.

While Professor Kurland pointed to the issue of appointment to judicial office, James Madison, in the First Congress, addressed the full scope of the problem of accountability confronting the nation. “The danger to liberty, the danger of maladministration has not yet been found to lie so much in the facility of introducing improper persons into office as in the difficulty of displacing those who are unworthy of public trust.” In truth, the problem of accountability has a bookend component: appointment and removal. Finding a solution to the problem is as old as government itself.

Historically, our nation has turned to structural remedies to overcome the problem of human fallibility. The Constitution reflects, precisely, such an effort. The concept of term limits for Supreme Court Justices, which we consider next week, represents such an effort.

David Adler is president of The Alturas Institute, a non-profit organization created to promote the Constitution, gender equality and civic education. This column is made possible with the support of the South Dakota Humanities Council, South Dakota NewsMedia Association and this newspaper.

Name Released in Fall River County Fatal Crash

What: Single vehicle fatal crash

Where: U.S. Highway 18, mile marker 20, seven miles east of Edgemont, SD

When: 12:00 p.m., Saturday, August 3, 2024

Vehicle 1: 2011 Yamaha STR

Driver 1: Adan Zavala-Lopez, 44-year-old male from Fort Lupton, CO, fatal injuries

Helmet Use: Yes

Fall River County, S.D.- A 44-year-old man died Friday, August 23, from injuries sustained in an August 3 crash near Edgemont, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates Adan Zavala-Lopez, the driver of a 2011 Yamaha motorcycle, was traveling east on US Highway 18 near mile marker 20. The motorcycle left the roadway to the right and Zavala-Lopez became separated from the motorcycle in the south ditch. Zavala-Lopez sustained serious, life-threatening injuries and was taken to a Rapid City hospital. He passed away from his injuries on August 23.

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.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

State economic adviser says income growth is outpacing inflation, but concerns remain

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - AUGUST 29, 2024 4:03 PM

Personal incomes have outpaced rising prices in recent years despite widespread concerns about inflation, according to data shared Thursday during a Zoom meeting of the South Dakota Governor's Council of Economic Advisors.

However, some council members worry that rising costs related to housing are undermining the income gains, while inflation and rising wages are affecting businesses.

State Economist Derek Johnson shared the latest S&P Global Market Intelligence data with the council, which illustrated the point: While the cost of U.S. goods since 2021 is projected to have risen 19.8% by the end of this year, incomes are projected to have risen 20.8%.

South Dakota State University Professor of Economics Evert Van der Sluis is a member of the council. He said since 2019, U.S. consumer prices have increased by 22.6% while average hourly wages have risen by 25.3% (28% for those in non-supervisory roles). He said that difference is what matters most for workers and consumers.

"We hear a lot, especially in the popular press, about how all prices have gone up," he said. "What often is kind of put to the wayside is how wages have gone up, too."

Some on the council said Van der Sluis' point needed additional context.

Council member Caleb Arceneaux, CEO of Liv Hospitality in Rapid City, said rising wages and inflation both eat into businesses' bottom lines.

Council member John Hemmingstad of Elk Point, a director of Avalon Capital Group, said he's curious how the inflation and income comparison would pan out after factoring in costs like property taxes and homeowners' insurance, which have surged in recent years.

The latest S&P Global Market Intelligence forecasting for 2024 shows 0.4% growth in the total value of goods and services produced (GDP) for South Dakota. It shows a 2.6% projection for the nation. Nonfarm incomes since 2021 in South Dakota are projected to have risen 25.2% by the end of the year, compared to a 19.8% rise in the cost of goods nationally.

Nonfarm incomes in the state are projected to have risen 5% by the end of 2024, and another 4.7% in 2025. Meanwhile, the cost of goods nationally is expected to jump 3% in 2024 and 2.2% in 2025.

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

State committee plans needs assessment for remainder of \$54 million in opioid settlement funds

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - AUGUST 29, 2024 3:30 PM

South Dakota has received over \$18 million in national opioid settlement funds since 2022, spending \$3 million so far on efforts to track, treat and prevent opioid abuse in the state. It's the beginning of over \$54 million the state will receive within the next two decades.

The national opioid settlement was reached in 2021 to resolve opioid litigation against the country's three largest pharmaceutical distributors and one manufacturer. More than \$50 billion in settlement funds is being delivered to state and local governments from the companies accused of flooding communities with opioid painkillers even though they allegedly knew how addictive and deadly the drugs were.

South Dakota is one of 52 states and territories to receive settlement funds.

Forty-two South Dakotans died in the first half of 2024 from drug overdose deaths, based on preliminary data from the state Department of Health. Sixteen were from opioids, including 12 from fentanyl. Compared to the first half of 2023, drug overdose deaths are down 27.6%.

The state has received \$15 million of its settlement funds in 2024 alone, and is expected to receive another \$21.7 million in the next four years, based on a presentation during the Opioid Abuse Advisory Committee's Thursday meeting. The state has plans for about \$16.2 million of that money:

\$8.16 million toward a program sustainability fund, meant to keep cash on hand in case other federal funding programs supporting drug treatment and prevention efforts are cut.

\$4.5 million toward the opioid settlement community grant program, which offers funding to local South Dakota organizations to carry out treatment and prevention programming.

\$1.88 million toward the overdose follow-up program, which distributes funds to nonprofits Emily's Hope and Project Recovery.

\$1 million to fund the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program.

\$350,000 to fund a statewide needs assessment.

\$150,000 to fund Naloxone distribution to South Dakota businesses.

\$248,048 for administrative costs.

The committee approves and makes recommendations to the Department of Social Services cabinet secretary on how to spend the opioid settlement funds. The secretary has authority over the funds.

The estimated unobligated remainder of funds through the end of fiscal year 2029, if the state follows its \$16.2 million spending plan, is \$20.5 million.

Tiffany Wolfgang, director of the state's Division of Behavioral Health, proposed the committee spend \$350,000 of this fiscal year's funding to conduct a statewide needs assessment. The department plans to work with multiple firms to conduct the assessment, with a final report submitted by the end of 2025.

South Dakota last conducted a statewide opioid needs assessment nearly a decade ago. A new assessment will update where existing gaps in service and needs are in the state so South Dakotans can "get the best bang for our buck" with the settlement dollars, Wolfgang said.

Many states are conducting similar assessments. Becky Heisinger, director of the quality integration department at the South Dakota Association of Healthcare Organizations, said the assessment would be a "smart move."

"We want to be a good financial steward of the dollars and understand what we're facing," Heisinger said.

Committee members did not voice any opposition during the meeting, so the department will move forward and get a final approval from Secretary Matt Althoff.

Wolfgang said the state needs to be "thoughtful" and "cautious" with the money.

"There are a lot of great ideas out there, a lot of great ideas," Wolfgang said. "But which ones are going to have a true impact on South Dakota and which ones are going to have the biggest impact?"

South Dakota has the lowest overdose death rate and lowest opioid overdose death rate in the United States, using the most recent data (2022) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The U.S. overdose death rate is 32.6 per 100,000 people, which is three times South Dakota's overdose death rate

of 11.3 per 100,000 people.

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.

Crow Creek Sioux Tribe expands public safety partnership with South Dakota Highway Patrol

Chairman, governor hope agreement serves as model for future tribal, state partnerships

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - AUGUST 29, 2024 1:30 PM

The Crow Creek Sioux Tribe has expanded state law enforcement's ability to assist federal officers on the central South Dakota reservation, agreeing this month to a unique partnership between the state and a tribal nation.

The agreement allows the South Dakota Highway Patrol to respond to calls on the Crow Creek Reservation upon the tribe's request, said Crow Creek Chairman Peter Lengkeek. The original agreement only allowed Highway Patrol to help with law enforcement over one weekend, for the tribe's annual powwow, or "wacipi."

Highway Patrol troopers will not "attempt to enforce or apply state laws" on the reservation while assisting tribal law enforcement, the agreement reads, but officers can assist with the enforcement of Crow Creek Sioux tribal law and federal law.

Officers are not allowed to serve state warrants, Lengkeek said. He envisions troopers performing sobriety checks or saturation patrols when there's a large event drawing people to the reservation.

"They're not able to take that person into custody, because they can't detain a tribal member," Lengkeek said. "They can stand there and make sure the person doesn't run off, but ultimately it's tribal law enforcement that will make arrests."

Although this is the only current law enforcement partnership of its kind between the state and a tribal nation, according to the state Department of Public Safety, there is precedent for cooperation at the county level. In 2022, the Oglala Sioux Tribe signed an agreement with the Pennington County Sheriff's Office allowing the office to provide mutual aid when requested.

Partnership similar to Noem proposals but made without her involvement, tribal leader says

The amended agreement comes seven months after Gov. Kristi Noem gave a speech to lawmakers linking illegal U.S.-Mexico border crossings to alleged drug cartel activity on reservations. Lengkeek and other tribal leaders pushed back on the speech and Noem's later comments suggesting that some tribal leaders are "personally benefiting" from a drug cartel presence on their lands. Representatives of all nine tribes in the state have since voted to ban Noem from their reservations.

Noem sent letters to all tribal leaders in February and March asking them to enter into a law enforcement agreement similar to the one Crow Creek has now signed, so South Dakota Highway Patrol officers could "assist in enforcing tribal law upon request" without encroaching on tribal sovereignty and jurisdiction.

Noem praised the new partnership.

"This mutual aid agreement recognizes the sovereignty of the tribe and ensures cooperation between tribal and state law enforcement officers to work together to uphold tribal law and help make their communities safer," Noem told South Dakota Searchlight in a statement.

The amended agreement Lengkeek signed this month was something he began considering a year ago, he said, when he called a public safety state of emergency on the Crow Creek Reservation after the fatal shooting of a young man in 2023.

Crow Creek is one of the few South Dakota tribes that doesn't operate its own police force with federal funding. Officers with the federal government's Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Office of Justice Services

provide law enforcement services for Crow Creek and the neighboring Lower Brule Reservation. But Crow Creek leaders have argued that BIA officers aren't always able to respond to calls in a timely fashion.

"It's not adequate," Lengkeek said. "We are undermanned, under-resourced, under-funded."

Crow Creek worked to take public safety into its own hands after the shooting last year, including establishing security checkpoints at reservation entrances, creating a public safety task force, and carrying out a gun buyback program. The task force was disbanded earlier this year.

Lengkeek said he worked directly with the Highway Patrol on the new agreement and did not work with the governor.

"We handled this on our own," Lengkeek said. "We don't need the governor to do this."

None of the eight other tribal nations within South Dakota have taken up Noem on her partnership agreement.

Tribal leaders, state hope to see success, more public safety partnerships

Lengkeek hopes the new agreement will continue even if tribal law enforcement becomes fully staffed. Tribal leaders from all nine nations attended a roundtable discussion this month with U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland and Republican U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds, where they discussed inadequate federal funding for tribal law enforcement.

"I don't foresee this relationship ever ending. Hopefully we're able to strengthen it," Lengkeek said. "I want my people not to be afraid anymore. That's what I'm working toward."

He also hopes the agreement can serve as a model of public safety partnership between the state and tribal nations. Noem agreed, saying she looks forward to "more tribes using this agreement as a model."

Yankton Sioux Tribal Chairman Robert Flying Hawk said he is interested in an agreement similar to the Crow Creek-Highway Patrol partnership, whether it's with the Highway Patrol or with other law enforcement agencies near the reservation.

Standing Rock Sioux Tribe Chairwoman Janet Alkire said all tribal leaders have to consult with tribal members before proceeding.

"None of us can make any decisions unless we take it to our people," Alkire said. "It's an ongoing education process for them to understand the exercise of true sovereignty and that we hold the key to that."

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.

Harris, Walz defend past statements, promise 'opportunity economy' in CNN interview

Vice president says 'yes, I would' when asked if she'd appoint a Republican to her cabinet

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - AUGUST 29, 2024 10:53 PM

WASHINGTON — Vice President Kamala Harris on Thursday defended her values and said "yes, I would" appoint a Republican to her cabinet in her first major sit-down interview since her presidential campaign began just over a month ago.

Harris, who rose to the top of the Democratic ticket after President Joe Biden dropped his bid in July, spoke to CNN's Dana Bash in Savannah, Georgia, for roughly 30 minutes with her running mate Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz by her side.

The interview came a week after Harris formally accepted the party's nomination at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Harris had recently become the target of criticism for not yet participating in an unscripted interview with a major news outlet.

Harris and Walz sat down with the network anchor Thursday afternoon in Georgia during a pause in the pair's two-day bus tour through the southeastern region of the battleground state.

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Harris told Bash that she envisions building an "opportunity economy" for the middle class, including expanding the child tax credit to up to \$6,000, providing a \$25,000 tax credit for first-time homebuyers, and combating "price gouging," to which Harris attributed high grocery prices.

The vice president ticked off Democratic accomplishments under Biden, including capping the price of insulin and reducing child poverty under a pandemic-era temporary expansion of the child tax credit that eliminated the work requirement and paid families in monthly installments.

"I'll say that that's good work, there's more to do, but that's good work," Harris said.

The CNN anchor pressed Harris on her changes in policy positions, including immigration and fracking. Republicans have pounced on Harris' past statements and accuse her of changing her tune to appeal to more centrist voters. Former President Donald Trump on Tuesday dubbed her "FLIP-FLOPPING KAMALA" on his Truth Social platform, where the current GOP presidential nominee posts numerous times a day.

"Let's be clear, in this race I'm the only person who has prosecuted transnational criminal organizations who traffic in guns, drugs and human beings," Harris said when asked about her past position on decriminalizing the border. "I'm the only person in this race who actually served a border state as attorney general to enforce our laws, and I would enforce our laws as president going forward, I recognize the problem."

Harris also defended her switch from opposing fracking to supporting it.

"I think the most important and most significant aspect of my policy perspective and decisions is my values have not changed. I have always believed, and I have worked on it, that the climate crisis is real," Harris said.

Despite attacks from Republicans, Bash noted that the Democratic National Convention featured quite a few speakers from the GOP side of the aisle.

Prompted to the idea by Bash, Harris said "it would be to the benefit of the American public" to appoint a Republican to her administration cabinet, if elected — though she didn't name names.

"I have spent my career inviting diversity of opinion. I think it's important to have people at the table when some of the most important decisions are being made that have different views, different experiences," she said.

Harris brushes off Trump's insults

The interview revealed for many that Harris and Trump have never met face-to-face. They will do so for the first time on the debate stage on Sept. 10, an event that will air on ABC News.

As for her thoughts on Trump, Harris told Bash that the former president is "diminishing the character and the strength of who we are as Americans."

When Bash asked Harris to respond to Trump's attacks, including questioning her race, the vice president only briefly addressed them.

"Same old tired playbook, next question please," she said.

Bash then moved to the topic of the Israel-Hamas war to which Harris responded that she is "unequivocal and unwavering in my commitment to Israel's defense and its ability to defend itself," adding that "how it does so matters."

She reiterated her plea for a peace deal that includes rescuing hostages who remain in Hamas captivity.

"A deal is not only the right thing to do to end this war, but will unlock so much of what must happen next. I remain committed, since I've been on October 8, to what we must do to work toward a two-state solution where Israel is secure, and in equal measure, the Palestinians have security and self-determination and dignity."

Walz defense

Bash asked Walz to respond to controversy around how he described his military service that spanned more than two decades in the Army National Guard, but never included combat deployment. Questions arose when Walz said he carried weapons "in war" in a 2018 video where he was speaking about gun violence, according to The Associated Press.

Walz, who also worked as a public school teacher and high school football coach, said he misspoke and that his "grammar is not always correct."

"I wear my emotions on my sleeve, I speak especially passionately about our children being shot in schools and around guns. So I think people know me. They know who I am. They know where my heart is, and again, my record has been out there for over 40 years to speak for itself," Walz said.

Bash also asked Walz about his mix-up when describing he and wife's fertility method; he said it was in vitro fertilization — a topic that has fractured anti-abortion voters — while in reality the couple used artificial insemination.

Walz told Bash, "I certainly own my mistakes when I make them."

"I spoke about our infertility issues because it's hell, and families know this. And I spoke about the treatments that were available to us, that had those beautiful children. That's quite a contrast in folks that are trying to take those rights away from us," he said.

Just as the interview ended, Trump posted to his Truth Social platform the word "BORING!!!"

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

Biden's newest student loan repayment plan temporarily blocked by Supreme Court

BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA - AUGUST 29, 2024 10:36 AM

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Supreme Court on Wednesday slashed the Biden administration's latest efforts to provide student debt relief to millions of borrowers to go forward while the appeals process unfolds.

The Saving on a Valuable Education (SAVE) plan provided lower monthly loan payments for borrowers and lessened the time it takes to pay off their debt. The program came shortly after the Supreme Court struck down an earlier student loan forgiveness plan from the administration in June 2023 that would have canceled more than \$400 billion in debt.

But the SAVE plan was quickly met with a wave of legal challenges from a coalition of GOP-led states in two lawsuits stemming from Missouri and Kansas.

Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, North Dakota, Ohio and Oklahoma filed a federal lawsuit alongside Missouri in April against the administration over the plan.

The Supreme Court on Wednesday allowed an August ruling from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 8th Circuit that temporarily halted the plan to remain in effect. The appellate decision followed a federal judge in Missouri issuing a preliminary injunction blocking the plan in late June.

In its decision, the nation's highest court said it expects the 8th Circuit to "render its decision with appropriate dispatch."

Missouri Attorney General Andrew Bailey praised the Supreme Court's decision in a statement Wednesday, calling it a "huge win for every American who still believes in paying their own way."

On the other hand, a spokesperson for the U.S. Department of Education said "we are disappointed in this decision, particularly because lifting the injunction would have allowed for lower payments and other benefits for borrowers across the country," per a statement shared with States Newsroom.

The spokesperson said the department "will work to minimize further harm and disruption to borrowers as we await a final decision from the Eighth Circuit," adding that "the Biden-Harris Administration remains committed to supporting borrowers and will continue to fight for the most affordable repayment options for millions of people across the country."

In a statement, Mike Pierce, executive director of the Student Borrower Protection Center, said "in rejecting this appeal, the Supreme Court perpetuates the 8th Circuit's bogus legal fiction that pausing affordable payments is 'preserving the status quo.'"

"This is ludicrous. Millions of people were repaying their student loans. Now they are in limbo," Pierce

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added.

Meanwhile, Kansas, Alabama, Alaska, Idaho, Iowa, Louisiana, Montana, Nebraska, South Carolina, Texas and Utah also filed a lawsuit over the plan in March.

A federal judge in Kansas dismissed eight of those states — allowing only Alaska, South Carolina and Texas to move forward with their challenge — and issued a preliminary injunction.

In late June, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 10th Circuit allowed parts of the SAVE plan to go forward — forcing Alaska, South Carolina and Texas to file an emergency request to the Supreme Court to vacate the stay.

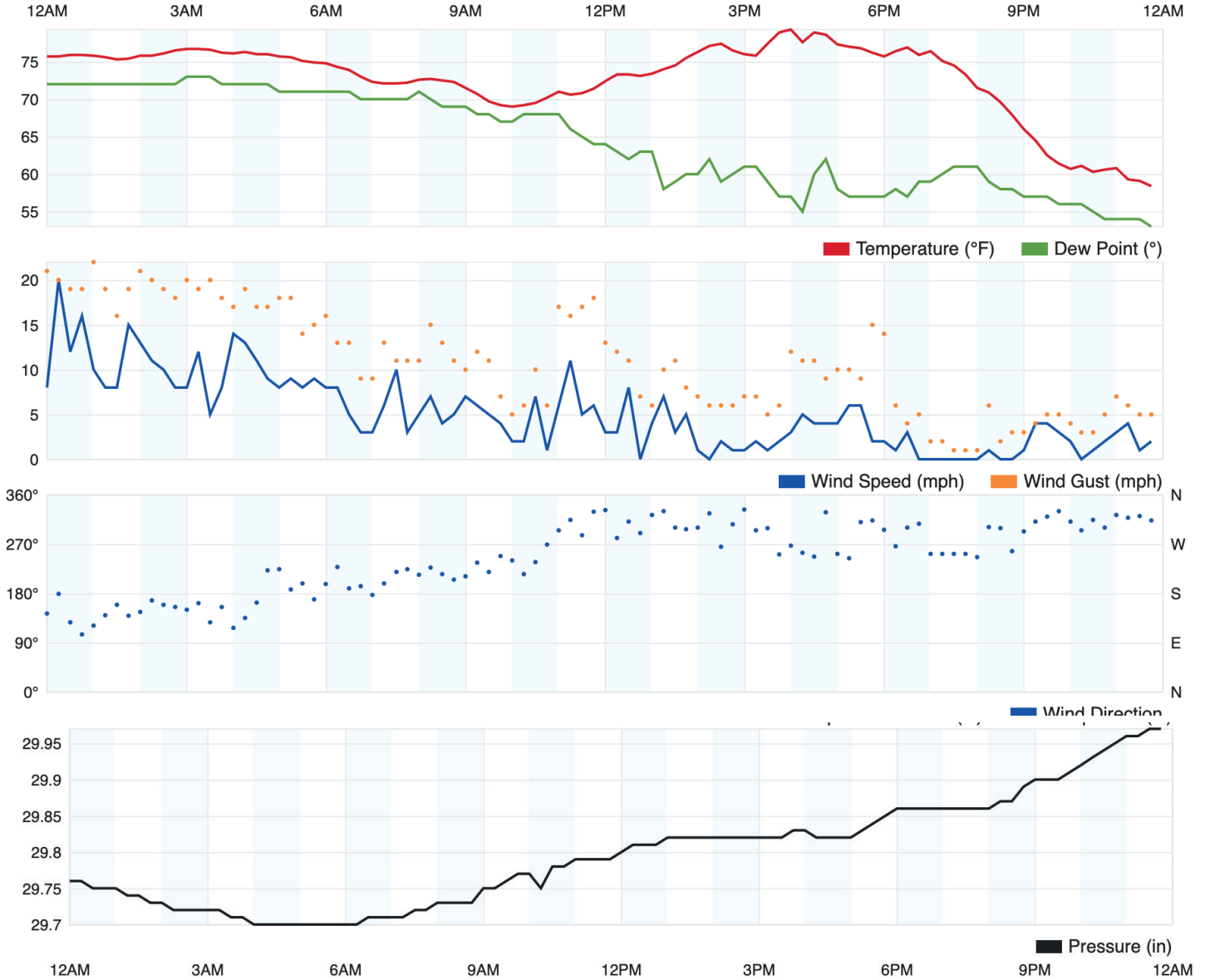
But the Supreme Court rejected this attempt from the states' attorneys general on Wednesday, saying that "applicants represent that they do not require emergency relief from this Court as long as the Eighth Circuit's injunction ... is in place."

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

Tonight

Saturday

Saturday Night

Sunday



High: 82 °F

Low: 56 °F

High: 86 °F

Low: 49 °F

High: 73 °F

Sunny

Clear

Sunny

Clear

Sunny

Labor Day Weekend Forecast

Today



78-85°

Saturday



83-93°

Sunday



70-79°

Labor Day



74-88°



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD

August 30, 2024
3:42 AM

The weather looks to be great for outdoor activities this weekend! Expect a clear sky for much of the weekend, with temperatures warming through Saturday, before a cold front cools temperatures for Sunday.

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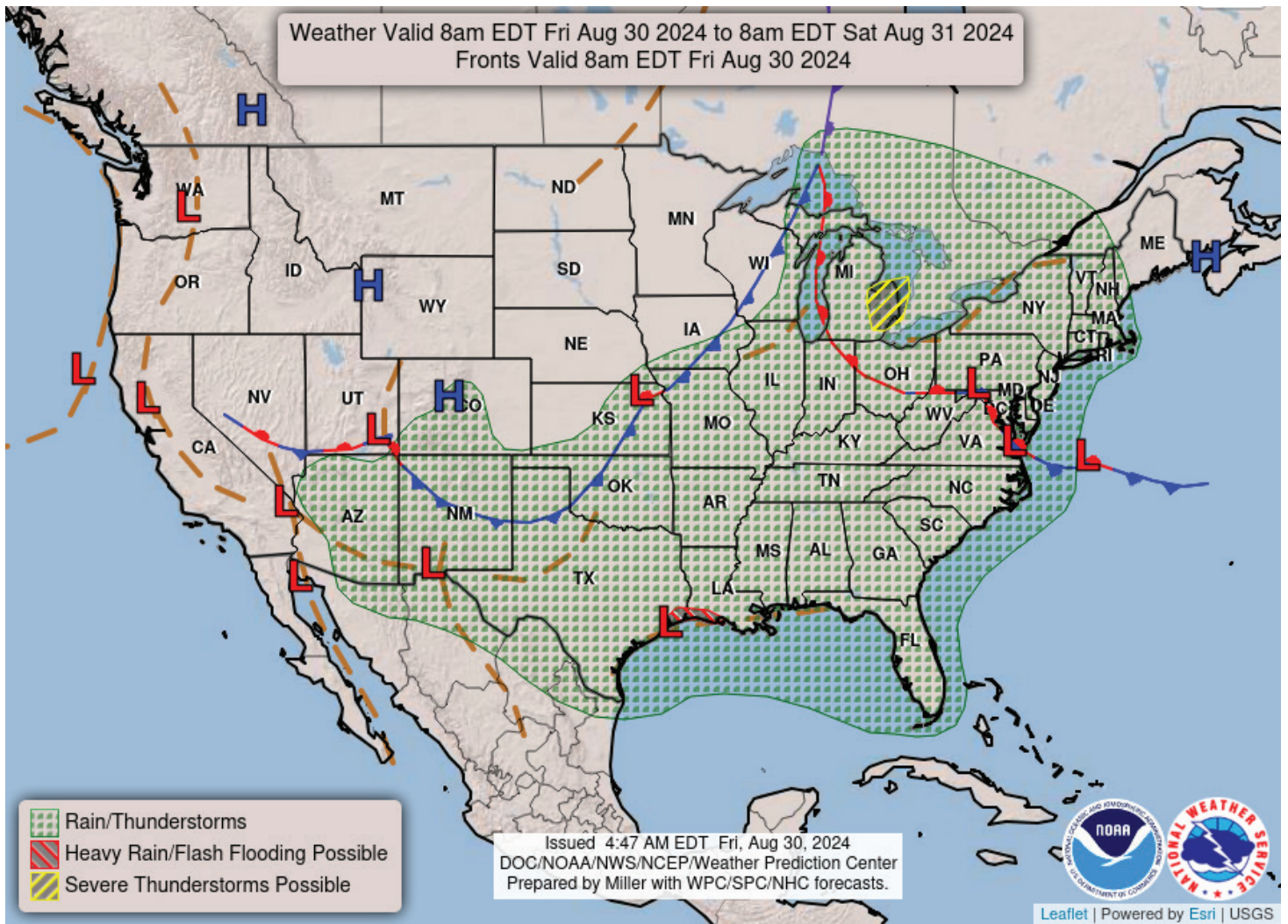
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 80 °F at 3:51 PM
Low Temp: 59 °F at 11:20 PM
Wind: 27 mph at 5:06 AM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 13 hours, 23 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 100 in 1898
Record Low: 37 in 2003
Average High: 80
Average Low: 53
Average Precip in Aug.: 2.17
Precip to date in Aug.: 4.45
Average Precip to date: 16.27
Precip Year to Date: 19.34
Sunset Tonight: 8:14:36 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:52:10 am



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Today in Weather History

August 30, 1979: A thunderstorm rolled over Ellsworth Air Force Base bringing almost 60 mph winds to the area.

1776 - General Washington took advantage of a heavy fog to evacuate Long Island after a defeat. Adverse winds kept the British fleet from intervening. (David Ludlum)

1838 - A major tornado, possibly the worst in Rhode Island history, passed south of Providence. It uprooted and stripped trees of their branches, unroofed or destroyed many houses, and sucked water out of ponds. The tornado barely missed a local railroad depot, where many people were waiting for a train. The tornado injured five people.

1839 - A hurricane moved from Cape Hatteras NC to offshore New England. An unusual feature of the hurricane was the snow it helped produce, which whitened the Catskill Mountains of New York State. Considerable snow was also reported at Salem NY. (The Weather Channel)

1982 - A tropical depression brought torrential rains to portions of southern Texas. Up to twelve inches fell south of Houston, and as much as eighteen inches fell southeast of Austin. The tropical depression spawned fourteen tornadoes in three days. (David Ludlum) Record cold gripped the northeastern U.S. Thirty-one cities in New England reported record lows, and areas of Vermont received up to three inches of snow. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Eight cities in California and Oregon reported record high temperatures for the date, including Redding CA and Sacramento CA where the mercury hit 100 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms drenched Georgia and the Carolinas with heavy rain, soaking Columbia, SC, with 4.10 inches in three hours. Fresno CA was the hot spot in the nation with a record high of 109 degrees. Duluth MN tied their record for the month of August with a morning low of 39 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front produced large hail in Montana and North Dakota during the evening and early nighttime hours. Hail three inches in diameter was reported 20 miles south of Medora ND, and thunderstorms over Dawson County MT produced up to three inches of rain. Thunderstorms produced golf ball size hail at Roundup MT, Dazey ND and Protection KS. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2002: Typhoon Rusa dumps torrential rains across South Korea, causing widespread flooding from the 30th through September 1st. Typhoon Rusa was the most powerful typhoon to hit South Korea since 1959. Nearly 90,000 people were evacuated. The province of Gangwon was hit the hardest, where an estimated 36 inches of rain fell in less than 48 hours. The torrential rains flooded nearly 36,000 homes. The Korean Defense Ministry reported flood waters submerged 16 jet fighters and 622 military buildings and facilities at Kangnung airbase.



UNSEEN POWER

A snowflake is a remarkable object in size and shape. Sometimes they appear as though they are floating through space. Other times they arrive in force and fury. Occasionally they fall on an eyelash and can be seen but not felt. They are weightless wonders until they are massed together. Then, they can provide a beautiful country scene or bring a city to a complete halt. Snowflakes give us a unique picture of the strength and power of numbers. What a lesson for the church!

From the very beginning God has intended for His followers to come together for strength and service, power and productivity. We find throughout Scripture that a community of believers can accomplish much more than an individual acting on his own behalf. God established the church and empowered it with the Holy Spirit to spread the gospel and provide healing and hope, energy and encouragement, to its members.

When a Christian feels lonely or deserted, afraid or abandoned, overwhelmed or overpowered, the church is to be a refuge for healing hearts and holding hands. God wants the church to provide protection and peace to all who seek His love, grace and mercy. Within the church, believers can link their lives together to offer protection from sin and work together as God's witness to the world.

Prayer: Lord, may Your church, even if only two or three are gathered in Your name, be faithful to fulfill Your purpose as they worship, work and witness together. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor. If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

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:
08.27.24

16 18 21 54 65 5

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$627,000,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 58 Mins
DRAW: 46 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.28.24

7 28 41 46 52 4

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$7,990,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 13
DRAW: Mins 46 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.29.24

7 13 18 23 42 12

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 15 Hrs 28 Mins
DRAW: 45 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.28.24

2 16 21 23 24

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 28
DRAW: Mins 46 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.28.24

9 11 31 52 54 25

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 57
DRAW: Mins 46 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.28.24

5 33 47 50 64 20

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$69,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 57
DRAW: Mins 45 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

Division II-member Sioux Falls stymies St. Thomas in 34-13 season-opening win

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — Division II-member Sioux Falls got two rushing touchdowns from Dylan Rudningen and the Cougars shut down the St. Thomas-Minnesota offense in a 34-13 season-opening win on Thursday night.

The Tommies' loss brought their nation-long 31-game home winning streak to an end.

The Cougars, known for their four NAIA national championships before moving to Division II in 2012, outgained St. Thomas 393-172 in total offense. The Tommies had only three first downs through three quarters and were 1 for 13 on third down for the game.

Sioux Falls took an 11-7 lead at halftime, after Camden Dean's 1-yard run plus a two-point conversion and a 30-yard field goal by Nick Hernandez.

The Cougars pushed their lead to 18-7 when Matt Grzybowski ran 3 yards for a touchdown in the third quarter. St. Thomas got within 18-13 on a strip sack and 5-yard fumble return by C.J. Warren to make it 18-13 but the Cougars' Brendan Holt recovered a fumble on the two-point try and returned it 90 yards for a defensive two-point conversion.

Sioux Falls added Rudningen's two short touchdown runs to put the game away in the fourth quarter. He finished with 67 yards on 23 carries.

Dean completed 17 of 29 passes for 189 yards and was intercepted once.

Two St. Thomas quarterbacks combined to go 14 of 35 for 150 yards with a touchdown and in interception.

The Tommies took an early 7-0 lead when an interception by Branden Smith set up a 25-yard touchdown pass from Tak Tateoka to Jacob Wildermuth. ____ Get poll alerts and updates on the AP Top 25 throughout the season. Sign up here. AP college football: <https://apnews.com/hub/ap-top-25-college-football-poll> and <https://apnews.com/hub/college-football>

Thursday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Aberdeen Central High School def. Rapid City Stevens, 29-27, 18-25, 25-19, 25-18

Aberdeen Roncalli def. Redfield, 25-19, 25-18, 25-18

Baltic def. Colman-Egan, 25-23, 25-17, 25-21

Belle Fourche def. Lead-Deadwood, 25-22, 25-19, 25-21

Bennett County def. Valentine, Neb., 25-13, 25-11, 25-11

Bridgewater-Emery def. Corsica/Stickney, 25-15, 25-15, 25-14

Britton-Hecla def. Tiospa Zina, 25-15, 25-19, 21-25, 25-20

Burke def. Colome, 25-5, 25-10, 25-6

Chester def. Ethan, 25-10, 25-13, 25-15

Custer def. Philip, 25-20, 21-25, 23-25, 25-20, 19-17

Dakota Valley def. Yankton, 25-10, 25-20, 20-25, 25-12

Dell Rapids St Mary def. Alcester-Hudson, 25-21, 25-18, 25-19

Dell Rapids def. West Central, 25-12, 25-18, 25-8

Deubrook def. DeSmet, 25-11, 22-25, 25-20, 13-25, 15-13

Douglas def. Rapid City Christian, 25-21, 25-19, 25-9

Elk Point-Jefferson def. Mt. Vernon/Plankinton, 25-21, 25-21, 25-19

Faith def. Lemmon High School, 25-14, 25-15, 25-17

Garretson def. Beresford, 25-15, 25-18, 25-19

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Gayville-Volin High School def. Sioux Falls Lutheran, 23-25, 18-9, 25-18, 25-19

Great Plains Lutheran def. Florence-Henry, 25-18, 25-21, 25-14

Hamlin def. Groton, 25-17, 25-22, 21-25, 25-22

Harding County def. Timber Lake, 25-20, 25-23, 25-16

Harrisburg def. Brandon Valley, 25-13, 25-12, 25-14

Kadoka def. Little Wound, 25-7, 25-8, 25-9

Leola-Frederick High School def. Waubay/Summit, 25-9, 25-19, 25-21

Menno def. Centerville, 20-25, 25-22, 25-17, 11-25, 15-4

Milbank def. Sisseton, 25-22, 25-14, 25-22

Miller def. Winner, 20-25, 25-22, 25-22, 27-25

Northwestern def. Welsey-Wessington, 25-20, 25-21, 27-25

Oldham-Ramona-Rutland def. Howard, 25-17, 25-22, 25-23

Parkston def. Chamberlain, 25-17, 25-8, 25-6

Potter County def. North Central, 25-14, 25-21, 25-22

Sioux Falls Christian def. Tea, 25-13, 25-10, 25-18

Sioux Falls O'Gorman def. Sioux Falls Roosevelt, 25-16, 25-19, 25-21

Sioux Valley def. Clark-Willow Lake, 26-24, 25-18, 24-26, 25-21

Tri-Valley def. Parker, 25-16, 26-24, 25-11

Wagner def. Vermillion, 25-13, 25-17, 23-25, 25-22

Warner def. Aberdeen Christian, 25-21, 25-13, 25-18

Webster def. Deuel, 25-11, 25-23, 25-19

Wilmot def. Waverly-South Shore, 25-17, 25-17, 25-12

Hanson Early Bird Tournament=

Championship=

Hanson def. Andes Central/Dakota Christian, 25-22, 25-23

Consolation Semifinal=

Sanborn Central-Woonsocket def. Freeman, 25-20, 25-23

Third Place=

Platte-Geddes def. Freeman Academy-Marion, 27-25, 25-23

Thursday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP FOOTBALL=

Crazy Horse 58, Crow Creek Tribal School 6

Faulkton 28, Ipswich 14

Hitchcock-Tulare 30, Iroquois-Lake Preston 6

Omaha Nation, Neb. 20, Tiospa Zina 0

Philip 29, Timber Lake 6

Pine Ridge 55, Mahpiya Luta Red Cloud 0

St. Francis Indian 50, McLaughlin 0

Winnebago, Neb. 44, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte/Tiospaye Topa 0

Some high school football scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

Pierre runs for two touchdowns and South Dakota opens season with 45-3 win over Northern State

VERMILLION, S.D. (AP) — Charles Pierre Jr. ran for 136 yards and two touchdowns and South Dakota rolled past Division-II Northern State 45-3 in a season opener Thursday night.

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The Coyotes, coming off their most successful postseason run, got a 97-yard kickoff return from Kevon-dray Jones-Logan and a 52-yard field goal in the first quarter after Northern State scored its only points.

Pierre had short scoring runs that came before and after a 55-yard punt return by Carter Bell in the second quarter for a 31-3 halftime lead.

The Coyotes reached the FCS quarterfinals for the first time last season. They have now beaten the Division-II Wolves in all nine of their meetings.

Travis Theis added 86 of the Coyotes' 266 yards rushing and a 10-yard touchdown. L.J. Phillips Jr. finished the scoring with a 14-yard run in the fourth quarter. South Dakota outgained 351-207 in total offense. The Coyotes made two interceptions and recovered a muffed punt.

___ Get poll alerts and updates on the AP Top 25 throughout the season. Sign up here. AP college football: <https://apnews.com/hub/ap-top-25-college-football-poll> and <https://apnews.com/hub/college-football>

High winds, possibly from a tornado, derail 43 train cars in North Dakota

STEELE, N.D. (AP) — Tornadic winds knocked nearly four dozen train cars off a track in North Dakota, part of a storm system that spurred reports of five tornadoes across the Dakotas.

BNSF Railway spokesperson Kendall Sloan said a train was stopped due to a tornado warning Wednesday night near the town of Steele, North Dakota, when high winds caused 43 empty coal cars to derail.

No one was hurt, and no hazardous materials were in the cars, Sloan said in an email. BNSF cleanup crews were at the site on Thursday.

The National Weather Service in Bismarck, North Dakota, confirmed on Thursday that a tornado touched down near Steele around 8 p.m. Wednesday. The agency said another tornado touched down at 5:40 p.m. Wednesday southwest of Selfridge, North Dakota, on the Standing Rock Tribal Nation.

The weather service said three potential tornadoes also were reported in north-central South Dakota on Wednesday night. No injuries were reported. Survey crews were still working to confirm in damage in South Dakota was from tornadoes.

While bad weather was generally moving out of the Dakotas, severe thunderstorms were possible Thursday in Minnesota and parts of Iowa and Wisconsin, the weather service said.

Israel-Hamas war latest: The Israeli military strikes Jenin on Day 3 of its West Bank raid

By The Associated Press undefined

The Israeli military struck the West Bank city of Jenin, authorities said Friday, the third day of heavy fighting in the Palestinian territory. The Israeli military says it "struck a terrorist cell."

Such airstrikes, while common over the months-long Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip, have been rare in the West Bank in the time since. Israel says the raids across the northern West Bank — which have killed at least 19 people, mostly militants, since late Tuesday — are aimed at preventing attacks. The Palestinians see them as a widening of the war in Gaza and an effort to perpetuate Israel's decades-long military rule over the territory.

The Palestinian Health Ministry says at least 663 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank since the start of the war.

In the Gaza Strip, where the Health Ministry says more than 40,000 Palestinians have been killed since the war began Oct. 7 with Hamas' attack on Israel, an Israeli missile hit a convoy carrying medical supplies and fuel to an Emirati hospital in the Gaza Strip, killing several people from a local transportation company. Israel claimed without evidence that it opened fire after gunmen seized the convoy.

Here's the latest:

Israel's military says it has finished a major operation in Khan Younis and Deir al-Balah

JERUSALEM —The Israeli military said Friday it had finished a major operation in the southern Gaza cities

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of Khan Younis and Deir al-Balah.

The military did not say whether it was withdrawing troops from the areas and said it was "preparing for further missions." The military's Arabic spokesperson, Avichay Adraee, announced that Palestinians evacuated from parts of both cities would be allowed to return.

Over the course of the operation, the military said it killed 250 militants, without providing evidence. Troops also destroyed kilometers of underground tunnels and recovered the bodies of six hostages.

The announcement came as the war nears the 11-month mark. Israel's offensive has killed over 40,000 Palestinians since Oct. 7, injured more than 90,000, and displaced the vast majority of the strip's population.

Israeli forces kill 3 Palestinians in the West Bank

JERUSALEM — Israeli forces killed three Palestinians in the north of the occupied West Bank on Friday, the third day of a large-scale operation in the territory, Palestinian health officials said.

The Israeli military said its troops identified and killed a militant named Waseem Hazem while he was driving. When two others in the car — whom the military also identified as militants — attempted to flee, troops killed both in an airstrike.

The Palestinian Health Ministry said the three were killed in Zababdeh, a town south of Jenin city, but did not immediately confirm their identities.

Israeli forces have killed at least 19 Palestinians since the start of the operation early Wednesday, which they say is geared to root out militancy in the restive territory and prevent attacks on Israeli citizens. Hamas has claimed at least 10 of the dead as their fighters.

Since the start of the Israel-Hamas war, at least 663 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire in the West Bank, Palestinian health officials say, mostly in Israeli raids into Palestinian cities and towns. Attacks on Israelis in the territory have also risen.

Mourners gather at a funeral for two families killed in an Israeli strike in Gaza

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza — Mourners at Al-Aqsa Hospital in the Gaza Strip gathered early Friday to hold a funeral for several members of two different families killed Thursday night after an Israeli airstrike hit their house.

A video filmed by The Associated Press shows a man holding his dead child wrapped in a bloodied white shroud. Another man is seen holding an infant who was born dead that night.

More than 14,000 children have been killed since the Israel-Hamas war began on Oct. 7, according to Gaza health officials.

Several people gathered at the hospital complex and performed a funeral prayer before the bodies were taken for burial.

Israel strikes medical supply convoy that it claims was seized by gunmen

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — An Israeli missile hit a convoy carrying medical supplies and fuel to an Emirati hospital in the Gaza Strip, killing several people from a local transportation company, the American Near East Refugee Aid group said Friday.

Israel claimed without evidence that it opened fire after gunmen seized the convoy.

The strike Thursday hit the first car in the convoy on the Salah al-Din Road in the Gaza Strip, killing several people employed by a transportation company that the aid group was using to bring supplies to the Emirates Red Crescent Hospital in Rafah, said Sandra Rasheed, Anera's director for the Palestinian territories.

The convoy, which was coordinated by Anera and approved by Israeli authorities, included an Anera employee who was unharmed, Rasheed said in a statement. "Our understanding is that the remaining vehicles in the convoy were able to continue and successfully deliver the aid to the hospital."

The Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request for comment Friday from The Associated Press. However, Israeli military spokesperson Lt. Col. Avichay Adraee posted to the social platform X that "gunmen seized a car at the head of the convoy (a jeep) and began driving."

He wrote that the military determined only one vehicle was seized before acting, and added, "The presence of armed men inside a humanitarian convoy in an uncoordinated manner makes it difficult to secure the convoys and their staff and harms the humanitarian effort."

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The United Arab Emirates, which reached a diplomatic recognition deal with Israel in 2020 and has been providing aid to Gaza since the Israel-Hamas war began, did not immediately acknowledge the attack.

Israeli military hits Jenin as its West Bank raid pushes forward

JERUSALEM — The Israeli military conducted an airstrike in the West Bank city of Jenin amid days of heavy fighting in the Palestinian territory, authorities said Friday.

The Israeli military said in a brief statement that a military aircraft “struck a terrorist cell during an encounter with security forces in a counterterrorism operation in the area of Jenin.” It did not immediately elaborate.

Such airstrikes, while common over the months-long Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip, have been rare in the West Bank in the time since.

Israel says the raids across the northern West Bank — which have killed 16 people, nearly all militants, since late Tuesday — are aimed at preventing attacks. The Palestinians see them as a widening of the war in Gaza and an effort to perpetuate Israel’s decades-long military rule over the territory.

The Palestinian Health Ministry says over 650 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank since the start of the war.

Israel captured the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war, and the Palestinians want all three territories for their future state.

US rebukes Israel over attacks on UN vehicles in Gaza

UNITED NATIONS — In a rare rebuke, the United States sharply criticized Israel’s attacks on United Nations vehicles and called for an end to assaults and threatening rhetoric against the U.N. and humanitarian organizations.

At a U.N. Security Council meeting on the humanitarian situation in Gaza, U.S. deputy ambassador Robert Wood singled out the Israeli military’s repeated firing at a clearly marked vehicle of the U.N. food agency, which was hit by at least 10 bullets as it was moving toward an Israeli military checkpoint at the central Wadi Gaza bridge, despite having received multiple clearances from Israeli authorities.

In response, the World Food Program announced Wednesday it is pausing all staff movement in Gaza until further notice. U.N. spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said Thursday that all WFP convoys and staff remain on hold, though the staff was in contact with some humanitarian partners who deliver aid in Gaza.

Wood expressed alarm at the WFP incident and said Israel has told the U.S. their initial review said it was “a result of a communication error” between Israeli military units.

On July 23, UNICEF said two of its vehicles were hit with live ammunition while waiting at a designated holding point near the Wada Gaza checkpoint, waiting to reunite five children including a baby with their father. It was the second shooting involving a UNICEF car in 12 weeks.

Germany deports 28 Afghan nationals to their homeland, the first since the Taliban takeover in 2021

By STEFANIE DAZIO Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Germany deported Afghan nationals to their homeland on Friday for the first time since August 2021, when the Taliban returned to power.

Government spokesperson Steffen Hebestreit described the 28 Afghan nationals as convicted criminals but did not immediately respond to a request for comment to clarify their offenses.

Interior Minister Nancy Faeser called the move a security issue for Germany.

Germany does not have diplomatic relations with the Taliban, requiring the government to work through other channels. It’s unlikely that Friday’s actions will lead to a wider thawing of relations between Germany and the Taliban, especially after last week’s issuing of the first set of laws to prevent vice and promote virtue in Afghanistan. They include a requirement for a woman to conceal her face, body and voice outside the home.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock has slammed the morality laws in posts on X.

While Hebestreit said the deportations have been in the works for months, they occurred a week after a deadly knife attack in the town of Solingen in which the suspect is a Syrian citizen who had applied for asylum in Germany.

The suspect was supposed to be deported to Bulgaria last year but reportedly disappeared for a time and avoided deportation. He was ordered held Sunday on suspicion of murder and membership in a terrorist organization pending further investigation and a possible indictment.

The Islamic State militant group claimed responsibility for last Friday's attack, without providing evidence. The extremist group said on its news site that the attacker targeted Christians and that he carried out the assaults "to avenge Muslims in Palestine and everywhere." The claim couldn't be independently verified.

There has also been debate over immigration ahead of regional elections Sunday in Germany's Saxony and Thuringia regions where anti-immigration parties such as the populist Alternative for Germany are expected to do well. In June, Chancellor Olaf Scholz vowed that the country would start deporting criminals from Afghanistan and Syria again after a knife attack by an Afghan immigrant left one police officer dead and four more people injured.

Faeser on Thursday announced a plan to tighten knife laws, according to German news agency dpa. Along with other officials in the governing coalition, she also pledged during a news conference to make deportations easier.

Julia Duchrow, secretary general of Amnesty International in Germany, blasted the Afghans' deportations in a statement Friday, saying the government bowed to political pressure during an election campaign. She added that Afghanistan is not safe and alleged that the deportations violate international law.

How one Brazilian judge could suspend Elon Musk's X

By GABRIELA SÁ PESSOA, DAVID BILLER and BARBARA ORTUTAY Associated Press

SAO PAULO (AP) — It's a showdown between the world's richest man and a Brazilian Supreme Court justice.

The justice, Alexandre de Moraes, has threatened to suspend social media giant X nationwide if its billionaire owner Elon Musk doesn't swiftly comply with one of his orders. Musk has responded with insults, including calling de Moraes a "tyrant" and "a dictator."

It is the latest chapter in the monthslong feud between the two men over free speech, far-right accounts and misinformation. Many in Brazil are waiting and watching to see if either man will blink.

What is the basis for de Moraes' threat?

Earlier this month, X removed its legal representative from Brazil on the grounds that de Moraes had threatened her with arrest. On Wednesday night at 8:07 p.m. local time (7:07 p.m. Eastern Standard Time), de Moraes gave the platform 24 hours to appoint a new representative, or face a shutdown until his order is met.

De Moraes' order is based on Brazilian law requiring foreign companies to have legal representation to operate in the country, according to the Supreme Court's press office. This ensures someone can be notified of legal decisions and is qualified to take any requisite action.

X's refusal to appoint a legal representative would be particularly problematic ahead of Brazil's October municipal elections, with a churn of fake news expected, said Luca Belli, coordinator of the Technology and Society Center at the Getulio Vargas Foundation, a university in Rio de Janeiro. Takedown orders are common during campaigns, and not having someone to receive legal notices would make timely compliance impossible.

"Until last week, 10 days ago, there was an office here, so this problem didn't exist. Now there's nothing. Look at the example of Telegram: Telegram doesn't have an office here, it has about 50 employees in the whole world. But it has a legal representative," Belli, who is also a professor at the university's law school, told The Associated Press.

Does a single judge really have that much power?

Any Brazilian judge has the authority to enforce compliance with decisions. Such measures can range

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from lenient actions like fines to more severe penalties, such as suspension, said Carlos Affonso Souza, a lawyer and director of the Institute for Technology and Society, a Rio-based think tank.

Lone Brazilian judges shut down Meta's WhatsApp, the nation's most widely used messaging app, several times in 2015 and 2016 due to the company's refusal to comply with police requests for user data. In 2022, de Moraes threatened the messaging app Telegram with a nationwide shutdown, arguing it had repeatedly ignored Brazilian authorities' requests to block profiles and provide information. He ordered Telegram to appoint a local representative; the company ultimately complied and stayed online.

Affonso Souza added that an individual judge's ruling to shut down a platform with so many users would likely be assessed at a later date by the Supreme Court's full bench.

How would de Moraes suspend X?

De Moraes would first notify the nation's telecommunications regulator, Anatel, who would then instruct operators — including Musk's own Starlink internet service provider — to suspend users' access to X. That includes preventing the resolution of X's website — the term for conversion of a domain name to an IP address — and blocking access to the IP address of X's servers from inside Brazilian territory, according to Belli.

Given that operators are aware of the widely publicized standoff and their obligation to comply with an order from de Moraes, plus the fact doing so isn't complicated, X could be offline in Brazil as early as 12 hours after receiving their instructions, Belli said.

Since X is widely accessed via mobile phones, de Moraes is also likely to notify major app stores to stop offering X in Brazil, said Affonso Souza. Another possible — but highly controversial — step would be prohibiting access with virtual private networks (VPNs) and imposing fines on those who use them to access X, he added.

Has X been shut down in other countries?

X and its former incarnation, Twitter, are banned in several countries — mostly authoritarian regimes such as Russia, China, Iran, Myanmar, North Korea, Venezuela and Turkmenistan.

China banned X when it was still called Twitter back in 2009, along with Facebook. In Russia, authorities expanded their crackdown on dissent and free media after Russian President Vladimir Putin sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022. They have blocked multiple independent Russian-language media outlets critical of the Kremlin, and cut access to Twitter, which later became X, as well as Meta's Facebook and Instagram.

In 2009, Twitter became an essential communications tool in Iran after the country's government cracked down on traditional media after a disputed presidential election. Tech-savvy Iranians took to Twitter to organize protests. The government subsequently banned the platform, along with Facebook.

Other countries, such as Pakistan, Turkey and Egypt, have also temporarily suspended X before, usually to quell dissent and unrest. Twitter was banned in Egypt after the Arab Spring uprisings, which some dubbed the "Twitter revolution," but it has since been restored.

Why is Brazil so important to X and Musk?

Brazil is a key market for X and other platforms. Some 40 million Brazilians, roughly one-fifth of the population, access X at least once per month, according to the market research group Emarketer. Musk, a self-described "free speech absolutist," has claimed de Moraes' actions amount to censorship and rallied support from Brazil's political right. He has also said that he wants his platform to be a "global town square" where information flows freely. The loss of the Brazilian market — the world's fourth-biggest democracy — would make achieving this goal more difficult.

Brazil is also a potentially huge growth market for Musk's satellite company, Starlink, given its vast territory and spotty internet service in far-flung areas.

Late Thursday afternoon, Starlink said on X that de Moraes this week froze its finances, preventing it from doing any transactions in the country where it has more than 250,000 customers.

"This order is based on an unfounded determination that Starlink should be responsible for the fines levied — unconstitutionally — against X. It was issued in secret and without affording Starlink any of the

due process of law guaranteed by the Constitution of Brazil. We intend to address the matter legally," Starlink said in its statement.

Musk replied to people sharing the earlier reports of the freeze, adding his own insults directed at de Moraes.

"This guy @Alexandre is an outright criminal of the worst kind, masquerading as a judge," he wrote.

De Moraes' defenders have said his actions have been lawful, supported by most of the court's full bench and have served to protect democracy at a time in which it is imperiled.

In April, de Moraes included Musk as a target in an ongoing investigation over the dissemination of fake news and opened a separate investigation into the executive for alleged obstruction.

Will X appoint a new legal representative in Brazil?

X said Thursday in a statement that it expects its service to be shutdown in Brazil.

"Unlike other social media and technology platforms, we will not comply in secret with illegal orders," it said. "To our users in Brazil and around the world, X remains committed to protecting your freedom of speech."

It also said de Moraes' colleagues on the Supreme Court "are either unwilling or unable to stand up to him."

When the US left Kabul, these Americans tried to help Afghans left behind. It still haunts them

By REBECCA SANTANA and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

The United States' longest war is over. But not for everyone.

Outside of San Francisco, surgeon Doug Chin has helped provide medical assistance to people in Afghanistan via video calls. He has helped Afghan families with their day-to-day living expenses. Yet he remains haunted by the people he could not save.

In Long Beach, California, Special Forces veteran Thomas Kasza has put aside medical school to help Afghans who used to search for land mines escape to America. That can mean testifying to Congress, writing newsletters and asking for donations.

In rural Virginia, Army veteran Mariah Smith housed an Afghan family of four that she'd never met who had fled Kabul and needed a place to stay as they navigated their new life in America.

Smith, Kasza and Chin have counterparts scattered across the country — likeminded people they may never have heard of.

The war in Afghanistan officially ended in August 2021 when the last U.S. plane departed the country's capital city. What remains is a dedicated array of Americans — often working in isolation, or in small grassroots networks — who became committed to helping the Afghan allies the United States left behind. For them, the war didn't end that day.

In the three years since the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, hundreds of people around the country — current and former military members, diplomats, intelligence officers, civilians from all walks of life — have struggled in obscurity to help the Afghans left behind.

They have assisted Afghans struggling through State Department bureaucracy fill out form after form. They have sent food and rent money to families. They have fielded WhatsApp or Signal messages at all hours from Afghans pleading for help. They have welcomed those who have made it out of Afghanistan into their homes as they build new lives.

For Americans involved in this ad hoc effort, the war has reverberated through their lives, weighed on their relationships, caused veterans to question their military service and in many cases left a scar as ragged as any caused by bullet or bomb.

Most are tired. Many are angry. They grapple with what it means for their nation that they, ordinary Americans moved by compassion and gratitude and by shame at what they consider their government's abandonment of countless Afghan allies, were the ones left to get those Afghans to safety.

And they struggle with how much more they have left to give.

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How we got here

The American mission in Afghanistan started with the goal of eradicating al-Qaida and avenging the group's Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. But the mission morphed and grew over two decades. Every president inherited an evolving version of a war that no commander-in-chief wanted to lose — but that none could figure out how to win.

By the time President Joe Biden decided to pull the U.S. military from Afghanistan by Aug. 31, 2021, the American mission there was riddled with failures. But by early August the Taliban had toppled key cities and was closing in on the capital. With the Afghan army largely collapsed, the Taliban rolled into Kabul and assumed control on Aug. 15. The Biden administration scrambled to evacuate staff, American citizens and at-risk Afghans.

One Biden administration official recently described the chaos of those three weeks to The Associated Press, saying that it felt like nobody in the U.S. government was able to steer the ship. With the Taliban in control of the capital, tens of thousands of Afghans crowded the airport trying to get on one of the planes out.

That is when this informal network was born.

Past and current members of the U.S. military, the State Department and U.S. intelligence services were all being besieged with messages begging for help from Afghans they'd worked with. Americans horrified by what they were seeing and reading on the news reached out as well, determined to help.

Veterans who'd served multiple tours in Afghanistan and civilians who'd never set foot there all spent sleepless weeks working their telephones, fighting to get out every Afghan they could and to help those still trapped.

'Only thing I can think of'

One of those civilians was Doug Chin. A plastic surgeon in Oakland California, he was already familiar with Afghanistan, although he'd never been there. A few years before the Taliban takeover, he'd become involved with the then Herat-based Afghan Girls Robotics Team. So impressed was he with their mission that he'd joined their board and sometimes traveled to their international events.

Then, in August 2021, the Taliban entered Herat. Eventually came the scenes out of Kabul airport: mothers hoisting children over barbed wire, men falling to their deaths as they clung to the bottom of departing planes. Chin, working contacts, worked to help the team, their extended families, staff and others get on flight manifests, navigate checkpoints and eventually escape Kabul.

The work was so intense that he shut down his business for three months to focus on helping Afghans. For a time, he was supporting dozens of people in Afghanistan.

Now, three years later, the work is shifting. It's a matter of trying to get visas for Afghans so they can escape — an educational visa to study in Europe, for example.

He advocates for human rights activists in Afghanistan and also helps provide medical services remotely to people in there. Once or twice a week he gets requests via the secure messaging app Signal to help someone in Afghanistan. Chin will either give advice directly or help them get in touch with doctors in Afghanistan that can help.

Some memories still move him to tears. In one case, in August 2021, a busload of people he'd helped evacuate was heading to the Kabul airport. One woman wasn't on the passenger manifest. U.S. officials coordinating the evacuations told him that the Taliban controlling access to the airport might turn the entire bus around because of this one passenger. Chin had to order her off the bus. She later escaped Afghanistan, but it remains painful for him.

"The only thing I can think of," he says, "is the people that I haven't helped."

An imperfect pathway

In those initial months, there was a frantic intensity to the efforts to get Afghans into the Kabul airport and onto the American military planes. Volunteers pushed U.S. contacts in Kabul to let Afghans into the airport, coordinated to get them onto the flight lists, lobbied any member of Congress or government official they could find and helped Afghans in Kabul find safe places to go. Even leaders of the U.S. admin-

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istration and military resorted to the volunteer groups and journalists to get out individual Afghan friends or ex-colleagues.

By the time the last plane lifted off on Aug. 30, 2021, about 76,000 Afghans had been flown out of the country and eventually to the U.S. Another 84,000 have come since the fall of Kabul – each a victory for the Americans helping them over the Taliban and over a tortuous U.S. immigration process.

But more are still waiting. There are about 135,000 applicants to the special immigrant visa program and another 28,000 waiting on other refugee programs for Afghans connected to the U.S. mission. Those numbers don't include family members, meaning potentially hundreds of thousands more Afghans are waiting in limbo and in danger in Afghanistan.

In 2009, Congress passed legislation creating a special immigrant visa program to help Afghans and Iraqis who assisted the U.S. government emigrate to the United States. The idea was that they'd risked their lives to help America's war effort, and in return they deserved a new life and protection in America.

But ever since its inception, the SIV program has been dogged by complaints that it has moved too slowly, burdening applicants with too much paperwork and ultimately putting America's wartime allies in danger as they waited for decisions.

Under the Biden administration, the State Department has taken steps to streamline the process and has boosted the number of special immigrant visas issued each month to Afghans. The department says that in fiscal year 2023, it issued more SIVs for Afghans in a single year than ever before — more than 18,000 — and is on track to surpass that figure this year. State has also used what it's learned to streamline processing of SIV applicants to increase the number of refugees it is admitting to the United States from around the world.

The Biden administration official said most people remember only the chaos of those last two weeks of August and have no idea about the work that has been done in the three years since. But for those still waiting to come, they do so under constant threat and stress.

No One Left Behind, an organization helping Afghans who used to work for the U.S. government get out of Afghanistan, has documented 242 case of reprisal killings with at least 101 who had applied or were clearly SIV-eligible.

An opportunity to pay back

Faraidoon "Fred" Abdullah is one of the volunteers often referred to as caseworkers. He has helped hundreds of Afghans fill out immigration and visa forms or hunt down letters of recommendation from former employers.

"They're eligible. They have the documentation, but (the) Department of State is too slow," Abdullah says.

His journey to this work started a little differently. The 37-year-old Afghanistan native began to work with the U.S. military as a translator during the war. He left his home country in 2016 through the same program he's trying to help people through now. A year later, he enlisted in the U.S. Army.

"I lost many American friends while they served my country, while they were helping Afghan people," Abdullah says. "So it was always like a dream for me to wear the uniform officially as a part of the United States military to pay them back with my service, with my time."

He describes the work he has done over the last several years — as one of the few people who speaks the language and understands Afghan culture — as similar to that of a social worker. The calls come at random and varying hours of the night and day, he says.

"It's like PTSD, and they might just snap at you like for no reason," Abdullah says about the people he's tried to help. "And not everybody has the patience and tolerance and the ability to deal with that."

He was on active duty when the United States decided to withdraw. He had left his mom, siblings and other relatives in Afghanistan, thinking that the democracy that had been slowly built over the years would endure. It didn't.

Over the last few years, Abdullah has been able to relocate a few family members out of Afghanistan. But more than a dozen still remain stuck in a process run by the departments of State and Defense. Now he worries that attention has faded from Afghanistan as other conflicts take precedence. The same urgency to donate, volunteer or sustain Afghans as their status remains in limbo is no longer there.

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"Afghanistan is, right now, not an important issue — not a hot potato anymore," Abdullah says. "That focus has shifted to Ukraine, Gaza, Israel and Haiti. And then we are kind of like, you know, nowhere."

'By, with and through'

To understand what has taken place since the last U.S. flight left Afghanistan, former military members will point you to the Special Forces operational approach titled, "by, with and through."

The term effectively means that nothing the United States does on the ground in a partner state is done without allies. In the case of Afghanistan, that's the Afghans who — at great risk to themselves — turned against the Taliban to work with the Americans.

So when Kabul fell, the obligation to their Afghan allies left behind was equal to the responsibility to their own fellow service members. Just as they would never leave another service member behind, so too with the Afghans they worked with.

It is a commitment Thomas Kasza knows all too well.

He spent 13 years active duty in the U.S. military, 10 as part of U.S. Army Special Forces, with tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. As he prepared to leave active duty in August 2021, Kasza was planning to go to medical school. Then came the evacuation.

Like many U.S. military veterans, Kasza started helping Afghans he knew who were still in Afghanistan. At first, he was determined to limit his involvement.

Today, the notion of medical school has been abandoned. He's the executive director of an organization called the 1208 Foundation. The group helps Afghans who worked with the Special Forces to detect explosives to come to America. Kasza and another Special Forces member and six Afghans do the work.

The foundation does things like pay for housing for the Afghans when they travel to another country for their visa interviews or paying for the required medical exams. They also help Afghans still in Afghanistan where they're hunted by the Taliban. In 2023 they helped 25 Afghan families get out of Afghanistan. Each is a hard-fought victory and a new life. But they still have about another 170 cases in their roster, representing more than 900 people when family members are included.

To focus on the mission — getting those Afghan team members to safety — he limits the conversations he has with them. "You have to maintain a separation for your own sanity," he says.

As the third anniversary of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan arrives, Kasza is preparing to step back from the executive director role at the organization he helped found although he'll still be involved in the organization. Everything that's happened over the last three years still weighs on him.

"I can't do what our government did and look the other way," he says.

Scott Mann, a retired Green Beret who spent several deployments training Afghan special forces, describes the work of the past few years as "being on the world's longest 911 call" and unable to hang up. "It is like one of the most taboo things in the world to leave a partner on the battlefield in any way," he says.

Scott adds that many veterans, like himself, are only alive now "because on at least two occasions Afghan partners prevented" them from getting killed.

"And now those very people are asking me to help their father or their mother who were on the run," he says. "How do you hang up the phone on something like that?"

The notion of 'moral injury'

Some of the volunteers spoke of tapping their own retirement accounts, or their children's college funds, to keep stranded Afghan allies housed and fed, sometimes for years. Marriages reached breaking points over the time that volunteers were putting into the effort. Spouses and children warned their loved ones that they had to cut back.

One veteran who worked at the heart of the logistics network by which volunteers got grocery and rent money to Afghan allies talked of the loneliness of the work, where once he'd had fellow troops with him in tough times. As the effort went on, he upped his antidepressants. Then did it again. And again.

"Moral injury" is a relatively new term that is often referred to in the discussion about how many volunteers, especially military veterans, feel about the aftermath of the U.S. pullout from Afghanistan and the treatment of allies. It refers to the damage done to one's conscience by the things they've had to do or

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witnessed or failed to prevent — things that violate their own values. In this case, they feel betrayed by their country because they feel it has failed to protect Afghan allies.

It is a concept that Kate Kovarovic feels passionate about.

She is not a veteran, nor does she come from a military family. But she became involved in the effort after a friend reached out to her in 2021 to ask for her social media expertise. From there Kate got more and more involved until she became the director of resilience programming for #AfghanEvac, a coalition of organizations dedicated to helping Afghans trying to leave Afghanistan. She held that position for over a year. She describes it as the hardest job of her life.

During the evacuation and its aftermath, volunteers were focused on helping Afghans flee or find safe houses. But a few months later volunteers started realizing that they needed support as well, she says.

The ease of communication meant volunteers were always getting bombarded with pleas for help.

Kovarovic says they tried a little bit of everything to help the volunteers. She held a series of fireside chats where she'd talk to mental health professionals. They created a resource page on #AfghanEvac's website with mental health resources. And she helped create a Resilience Duty Officer support program where volunteers needing someone to talk to could call or text a 24-hour hotline. She describes that program as "catastrophically successful."

The volunteers weren't just calling to vent a little. Kovarovic says the calls were graphic. Desperate.

"I personally fielded over 50 suicide calls from people," she recalls. "You were hearing a lot of the trauma."

She lost weight, wasn't sleeping and developed an eye twitch that made it difficult to see. Loved ones asked her to stop. In 2023, she took a break. Home from a two-week vacation, she landed at the airport and her eye twitch immediately returned. She sat down and texted colleagues that it was time for her to stop.

"I wept. I have never felt such a heavy sense of guilt. I felt like I hadn't done enough and that I had failed people by abandoning them," she says.

She now hosts a podcast called "Shoulder to Shoulder: Untold Stories From a Forgotten War" with a retired Air Force veteran that she met during the evacuation. They talk to guests like a Gold Star mother and an Afghan interpreter who lost his legs in a bomb blast.

She wants people outside the community to know that the work of helping Afghans during the withdrawal and all that has happened since has been its own front line in the war on terror.

"What I hope that people will understand one day is that these are lifelong conditions," she says. "So even people who leave the volunteer work, even if you never speak to another Afghan again, this is going to sit with you for the rest of your life."

What comes next?

Everyone in the movement, spread out across time zones, has varying views of where this effort goes from here. Many want Congress to pass the Afghan Adjustment Act, which would provide a permanent emigration pathway for Afghans. Others would like support for volunteers' mental health concerns. Many just want accountability.

None of the four presidents who oversaw the war in Afghanistan has taken public responsibility for the chaos and destruction that followed America's withdrawal. Biden, in charge when U.S. troops left, has come under the most criticism.

The Biden administration official, who spoke to AP on the condition of anonymity, said that the unwillingness by the U.S. government to admit its mistakes in regards to Afghanistan is perpetuating the moral injury felt by those who stepped up.

In the meantime, the work goes on — getting Afghans to safety and helping them once they're here.

In 2022, at Dulles International Airport, Army veteran Mariah Smith got to experience that moment. Smith spent three tours in Afghanistan and one in Iraq. With retirement from the military nearing in 2020, she joined the board of No One Left Behind. Then came the U.S. withdrawal.

One of the Afghans the group was helping was a woman named Latifa who had worked for the U.S. government. With the Taliban encircling and constant concerns over bombings, Latifa and her family didn't want to risk taking the young children to the airport.

She was eventually able to get a visa to what is likely one of the least used Afghan immigration routes: Iceland. From there, No One Left Behind helped her process her special immigrant visa. That's how Smith and the woman started talking.

They discussed where the woman and her family were going to live. Mariah lives in Stephens City on a farm in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley countryside. She also owns a home in town that she usually rents out but was empty at the time. She offered it to Latifa and her family.

Mariah was amazed at the response by the town of roughly 2,000 people where the Afghan family lived. Latifa, her husband and two kids came with the luggage they could carry, but Mariah said the mayor, police chief, town clerk, town manager and others all pitched in with furniture, toys and household items: "People really, really tried hard. And that was wonderful to see too." The Afghan family stayed for over a year before moving to Dallas.

Why did she make that offer of a place to stay? Smith says it was a way to help a woman, her family, her children who'd had everything taken from them in their home country — helping them find a safe place, showing them that it was possible to start over here. Filling a gap. Helping.

"It felt like being a part of, I guess, the fabric of America."

Trump seeks to activate his base at Moms for Liberty gathering but risks alienating moderate voters

By ALI SWENSON and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump is scheduled to appear Friday at the annual gathering of Moms for Liberty, a national nonprofit that has spearheaded efforts to get mentions of LGBTQ+ identity and structural racism out of K-12 classrooms.

In a "fireside chat" conversation in the nation's capital, the former president will seek to shore up support and enthusiasm among a major part of his base. The bulk of the group's 130,000-plus members are conservatives who agree with him that parents should have more say in public education and that racial equity programs and transgender accommodations don't belong in schools.

Yet Trump also will run the risk of alienating more moderate voters, many of whom see Moms for Liberty's activism as too extreme to be legitimized by a presidential nominee.

A year ago, Moms for Liberty was viewed by many as a rising power player in conservative politics that could be pivotal in supporting the Republican ticket. The group's membership had skyrocketed after its launch in 2021, fueled by parents protesting mandatory masking for students and remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

But in the last several months, a series of embarrassing scandals and underwhelming performances during local elections have called Moms for Liberty's influence into question.

The group also has voiced support for Project 2025, a detailed and controversial playbook for the next conservative presidency from which Trump has repeatedly distanced himself.

Moms for Liberty serves on the advisory board for Project 2025, and the author of the document's education chapter is teaching a "strategy session" at the group's gathering Friday.

The negative perceptions about Moms for Liberty around the country could increase the potential liability for Trump as he sits down with co-founder Tiffany Justice on Friday evening, said University of Central Florida political science professor Aubrey Jewett.

"It certainly helps him rally his base," Jewett said. "But will that be enough to outdo the backlash?"

Trump hasn't shared details of what he'll discuss at the gathering, but his campaign pointed to his education proposals, which include promoting school choice, giving parents more say in education and awarding funding preference to states and school districts that abolish teacher tenure, financially reward good teachers and allow parents to directly elect school principals.

He also has called for terminating the Department of Education, barring transgender athletes from playing in girls' sports, and cutting funding from any schools pushing "inappropriate racial, sexual or political

content.”

“President Trump believes students should be taught reading, writing and math in the classroom — not gender, sex and race like the Biden Administration is pushing on our public school system,” said Karoline Leavitt, the Trump campaign’s national press secretary.

The Democratic nominee, Vice President Kamala Harris, has criticized Trump for his threats to dismantle the Department of Education. She also has spoken out against efforts to restrict classroom content related to race.

Before he heads to Washington on Friday, the Republican nominee will hold a rally in Johnstown, a western Pennsylvania town once dominated by riverfront steel mills. Its economy has suffered in the decades since they were shuttered. Trump held a rally near the Johnstown airport weeks before the 2020 election, boasting, “We brought back steel and we put tariffs on steel.”

His campaign says Trump will use the rally to promise lower energy costs and criticize Harris, noting that, as a Democratic presidential primary candidate in 2019, she supported a ban on hydraulic fracturing. Harris’ campaign now says she doesn’t support a fracking ban.

Both sides have campaigned heavily in Pennsylvania. Harris will be in Pittsburgh on Monday for Labor Day, making her first joint campaign appearance with President Joe Biden since he abandoned his reelection bid and endorsed her. Harris hasn’t said much about her policy plans on tariffs and trade, but Biden has taken a page from the Trump playbook and proposed a tripling of tariffs on Chinese steel.

How Trump and Georgia’s Republican governor made peace, helped by allies anxious about the election

By THOMAS BEAUMONT and JEFF AMY Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — The effort to make the peace between Donald Trump and Georgia’s powerful Republican governor began in a sprawling neo-Victorian mansion in the exclusive Atlanta enclave of Buckhead.

It was at an Aug. 9 fundraiser hosted by former Georgia Sen. Kelly Loeffler that fellow Republican Lindsey Graham approached Gov. Brian Kemp. Graham, the South Carolina senator and longtime confidant of the former president, was already planning to attend the fundraiser.

Now, Graham had a renewed purpose: to try to ease years of tensions between Trump and Kemp that endangered the GOP’s chances in a crucial 2024 battleground.

Graham and Kemp met privately at Loeffler’s house. And over the coming weeks, say Graham and others familiar with the matter, allies of both men arranged the two-part détente that played out publicly last Thursday to the surprise of many political watchers.

First, Kemp did an interview with Fox News host Sean Hannity — another Trump ally — in which he said, “We need to send Donald Trump back to the White House.” Moments later, Trump went on his social media site to praise Kemp for his “help and support.”

A true alignment, if it lasts, could benefit both men: Trump may need the help of Kemp’s renowned political operation to win back Georgia in a tightly contested race with Democratic nominee Kamala Harris, while Kemp wants to be in the good graces of Trump supporters for a future run at the U.S. Senate or the presidency in 2028. Kemp attended a fundraiser for Trump on Thursday and could join more campaign events with less than 70 days before Election Day.

Trump still argues falsely that he won Georgia based on unproven and debunked claims of voter fraud, something he brings up consistently on the campaign trail. And Kemp, who refused to stop the certification of Trump’s loss four years ago, has repeatedly pushed him to move on.

Trump’s campaign did not respond to questions about what happened but pointed back to his post on Truth Social in which he says about Georgia, “A win is so important to the success of our Party and, most importantly, our Country.”

Days before the fundraiser at Loeffler’s house, Trump mocked Kemp and his wife, Marty, at a packed rally in Atlanta. In an interview Thursday with The Associated Press, Graham described what he told

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Trump afterward.

"You're not going to win Georgia this way," Graham said. "And Georgia is yours to lose."

How a meeting in Buckhead launched the détente

Graham was playing the diplomat.

Six days earlier, Trump had railed for 10 minutes against Kemp during the Atlanta campaign rally for not supporting his false theories of election fraud and blamed the governor for not stopping a local district attorney from prosecuting him and others for their efforts to overturn the election results after his loss in the state four years ago.

"He's a bad guy. He's a disloyal guy. And he's a very average governor," Trump said of the second-term Kemp, who won reelection in 2022 after soundly beating Trump's handpicked Republican challenger, David Perdue, in the GOP primary. "Little Brian. Little Brian Kemp. Bad guy."

Trump also criticized Marty Kemp, who had said in April she would write in her husband's name on her ballot in November.

Kemp shot back, posting on X, "My focus is on winning this November and saving our country from Kamala Harris and the Democrats — not engaging in petty personal insults, attacking fellow Republicans, or dwelling on the past."

"You should do the same, Mr. President, and leave my family out of it," Kemp's post concluded.

Graham, in an interview, said he talked to the campaign after that attack and remembers saying, "There's no excuse for this."

At Loeffler's mansion, Graham, Gov. Kemp and Marty Kemp met privately and Graham also spoke to some of the governor's top staff about moving past the tensions that had simmered since the 2020 election. Their discussions were detailed by Graham and another person familiar with the matter who spoke on condition of anonymity to disclose the private conversation.

Adding urgency to the talks was Harris' entry into the race. Georgia has become newly competitive with President Joe Biden's departure from the race and a resulting wave of Democratic enthusiasm. Republicans are worried Harris, who is running to become the first Black woman and first person of South Asian descent to serve as president, has energized people of color and younger voters in ways that Biden couldn't.

Kemp told Graham that he would continue supporting the former president, even if he didn't appreciate Trump's rally comments. Graham tried to focus on shifting the Trump-Kemp relationship into a "more positive direction," one of the people familiar with the conversation said.

That meeting began the process over the next two weeks. Others who spoke to Kemp included Ohio Sen. JD Vance, Trump's running mate.

"The way that I approached my conversation with him was: 'I'm not going to convince you that you should change your mind on the president in the same way that I'm not going to convince the president that he should change his mind on you. But you guys agree on 90% of the things. You can put whatever personal differences aside,'" Vance told NBC News. "And I think there were probably 150 people delivering that message to both the president and Brian Kemp, and I'm glad that (Kemp) got to a good place, but I don't claim any responsibility or credit for it."

Graham does. He said he consulted with Trump about the message praising Kemp. And he and others worked to have Kemp deliver his praise in a strategic venue.

"We worked to get Kemp on Hannity where we know Trump would see it," Graham said.

The path forward

Cody Hall, who leads Kemp's political organization, confirmed the governor attended a fundraiser for Trump on Thursday.

Hall said Kemp's political organization, Hardworking Georgians, is working for Trump and the Republican ticket in a number of competitive state House districts, mostly in the Atlanta suburbs. Hall said the organization hasn't expanded statewide in part because it doesn't have the money needed for such an effort.

"But plans can change," Hall said.

At least one close Kemp backer, Alec Poitevint, said he began hearing that Trump and Kemp were patching things up days before Kemp went on Fox. Poitevint is a rare Republican who has maintained good

relations with both Kemp and the Trumpier parts of the Georgia state party. Despite his support of Kemp, the Trump-dominated Georgia party elected Poitevint as a delegate to the Republican National Convention.

"I had felt earlier that things were in motion," he said this week. "Gov. Kemp and Trump are both very popular in Georgia."

Doctor charged in connection with Matthew Perry's death to appear in court after plea deal

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — One of two doctors charged in connection with Matthew Perry's death is set to appear Friday in a federal court in Los Angeles, where he is expected to plead guilty to conspiring to distribute the surgical anesthetic ketamine.

Dr. Mark Chavez, 54, of San Diego, reached a plea agreement with prosecutors earlier this month and would be the third person to plead guilty in the aftermath of the "Friends" star's fatal overdose last year.

Chavez agreed to cooperate with prosecutors as they pursue others, including the doctor Chavez worked with to sell ketamine to Perry. Also working with the U.S. Attorney's Office are Perry's assistant, who admitted to helping him obtain and inject ketamine, and a Perry acquaintance, who admitted to acting as a drug messenger and middleman.

The three are helping prosecutors as they go after their main targets: Dr. Salvador Plasencia, charged with illegally selling ketamine to Perry in the month before his death, and Jasveen Sangha, a woman who authorities say is a dealer who sold the actor the lethal dose of ketamine. Both have pleaded not guilty and are awaiting trial.

Chavez admitted in his plea agreement that he obtained ketamine from his former clinic and from a wholesale distributor where he submitted a fraudulent prescription.

After a guilty plea, he could get up to 10 years in prison when he is sentenced.

Perry was found dead by his assistant on Oct. 28. The medical examiner ruled ketamine was the primary cause of death. The actor had been using the drug through his regular doctor in a legal but off-label treatment for depression that has become increasingly common.

Seeking more ketamine than his doctor would give him, about a month before his death Perry found Plasencia, who in turn asked Chavez to obtain the drug for him.

"I wonder how much this moron will pay," Plasencia texted Chavez. The two met up the same day in Costa Mesa, halfway between Los Angeles and San Diego, and exchanged at least four vials of ketamine.

After selling the drugs to Perry for \$4,500, Plasencia asked Chavez if he could keep supplying them so they could become Perry's "go-to."

U.S. Attorney Martin Estrada said in announcing the charges on Aug. 15 that "the doctors preyed on Perry's history of addiction in the final months of his life last year to provide him with ketamine in amounts they knew were dangerous."

Plasencia is charged with seven counts of distribution of ketamine and two charges related to allegations he falsified records after Perry's death. He and Sangha are scheduled to return to court next week. They have separate trial dates set for October, but prosecutors are seeking a single trial that likely would be delayed to next year.

Perry struggled with addiction for years, dating back to his time on "Friends," when he became one of the biggest stars of his generation as Chandler Bing. He starred alongside Jennifer Aniston, Courteney Cox, Lisa Kudrow, Matt LeBlanc and David Schwimmer for 10 seasons from 1994 to 2004 on NBC's megahit sitcom.

Challenges of the Gaza humanitarian aid pier offer lessons for the US Army

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It was their most challenging mission.

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U.S. Army soldiers in the 7th Transportation Brigade had previously set up a pier during training and in exercises overseas but never had dealt with the wild combination of turbulent weather, security threats and sweeping personnel restrictions that surrounded the Gaza humanitarian aid project.

Designed as a temporary solution to get badly needed food and supplies to desperate Palestinians, the so-called Joint Logistics Over-the-Shore system, or JLOTS, faced a series of setbacks over the spring and summer. It managed to send more than 20 million tons of aid ashore for people in Gaza facing famine during the Israel-Hamas war.

Service members struggled with what Col. Sam Miller, who was commander during the project, called the biggest "organizational leadership challenge" he had ever experienced.

Speaking to The Associated Press after much of the unit returned home, Miller said the Army learned a number of lessons during the four-month mission. It began when President Joe Biden's announced in his State of the Union speech in March that the pier would be built and lasted through July 17, when the Pentagon formally declared that the mission was over and the pier was being permanently dismantled.

The Army is reviewing the \$230 million pier operation and what it learned from the experience. One of the takeaways, according to a senior Army official, is that the unit needs to train under more challenging conditions to be better prepared for bad weather and other security issues it faced. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because assessments of the pier project have not been publicly released.

In a report released this week, the inspector general for the U.S. Agency for International Development said Biden ordered the pier's construction even as USAID staffers expressed concerns that it would be difficult and undercut a push to persuade Israel to open "more efficient" land crossings to get food into Gaza.

The Defense Department said the pier "achieved its goal of providing an additive means of delivering high volumes of humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza to help address the acute humanitarian crisis." The U.S. military knew from the outset "there would be challenges as part of this in this complex emergency," the statement added.

The Biden administration had set a goal of the U.S. sea route and pier providing food to feed 1.5 million people for 90 days. It fell short, bringing in enough to feed about 450,000 people for a month before shutting down, the USAID inspector general's report said.

The Defense Department's watchdog also is doing an evaluation of the project.

Beefing up training

Army soldiers often must conduct their exercises under difficult conditions designed to replicate war. Learning from the Gaza project — which was the first time the Army set up a pier in actual combat conditions — leaders say they need to find ways to make the training even more challenging.

One of the biggest difficulties of the Gaza pier mission was that no U.S. troops could step ashore — a requirement set by Biden. Instead, U.S. service members were scattered across a floating city of more than 20 ships and platforms miles offshore that had to have food, water, beds, medical care and communications.

Every day, said Miller, there were as many as 1,000 trips that troops and other personnel made from ship to boat to pier to port and back.

"We were moving personnel around the sea and up to the Trident pier on a constant basis," Miller said. "And every day, there was probably about a thousand movements taking place, which is quite challenging, especially when you have sea conditions that you have to manage."

Military leaders, he said, had to plan three or four days ahead to ensure they had everything they needed because the trip from the pier to their "safe haven" at Israel's port of Ashdod was about 30 nautical miles.

The trip over and back could take up to 12 hours, in part because the Army had to sail about 5 miles out to sea between Ashdod and the pier to stay a safe distance from shore as they passed Gaza City, Miller said.

Normally, Miller said, when the Army establishes a pier, the unit sets up a command onshore, making it much easier to store and access supplies and equipment or gather troops to lay out orders for the day.

Communication difficulties

While his command headquarters was on the U.S. military ship Roy P. Benavidez, Miller said he was

constantly moving with his key aides to the various ships and the pier.

"I slept and ate on every platform out there," he said.

The U.S. Army official concurred that a lot of unexpected logistical issues came up that a pier operation may not usually include.

Because the ships had to use the Ashdod port and a number of civilian workers under terms of the mission, contracts had to be negotiated and written. Agreements had to be worked out so vessels could dock, and workers needed to be hired for tasks that troops couldn't do, including moving aid onto the shore.

Communications were a struggle.

"Some of our systems on the watercraft can be somewhat slower with bandwidth, and you're not able to get up to the classified level," Miller said.

He said he used a huge spreadsheet to keep track of all the ships and floating platforms, hundreds of personnel and the movement of millions of tons of aid from Cyprus to the Gaza shore.

When bad weather broke the pier apart, they had to set up ways to get the pieces moved to Ashdod and repaired. Over time, he said, they were able to hire more tugs to help move sections of the pier more quickly.

Some of the pier's biggest problems — including the initial reluctance of aid agencies to distribute supplies throughout Gaza and later safety concerns from the violence — may not apply in other operations where troops may be quickly setting up a pier to get military forces ashore for an assault or disaster response.

"There's tons of training value and experience that every one of the soldiers, sailors and others got out of this," Miller said. "There's going to be other places in the world that may have similar things, but they won't be as tough as the things that we just went through."

When the time comes, he said, "we're going to be much better at doing this type of thing."

One bit of information could have given the military a better heads-up about the heavy seas that would routinely hammer the pier. Turns out, said the Army official, there was a Gaza surf club, and its headquarters was near where they built the pier.

That "may be an indicator that the waves there were big," the official said.

10 years after Ferguson, Black students still are kicked out of school at higher rates

By ANNIE MA, CHEYANNE MUMPHREY, and SHARON LURYE Associated Press

Before he was suspended, Zaire Byrd was thriving. He acted in school plays, played on the football team and trained with other athletes. He had never been suspended before — he'd never even received detention.

But when Byrd got involved in a fight after school one day, none of that seemed to matter to administrators. Byrd said he was defending himself and two friends after three other students threatened to rob them. Administrators at Tri-Cities High School in Georgia called the altercation a "group fight" — an automatic 10-day suspension. After a disciplinary hearing, they sent him to an alternative school.

The experience nearly derailed his education.

"The last four years were a lot for me, from online school to getting suspended," said Byrd, who started high school remotely during the pandemic. "I could have learned more, but between all that and changing schools, it was hard."

In Georgia, Black students like Byrd make up slightly more than one-third of the population. But they account for the majority of students who receive punishments that remove them from the classroom, including suspension, expulsion and being transferred to an alternative school.

Those disparities, in Georgia and across the country, became the target of a newly energized reform movement a decade ago, spurred by the same racial reckoning that gave rise to the Black Lives Matter movement. For many advocates, students and educators, pursuing racial justice meant addressing disparate outcomes for Black youth that begin in the classroom, often through harsh discipline and underinvestment in low-income schools.

The past decade has seen some progress in lowering suspension rates for Black students. But massive

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disparities persist, according to a review of discipline data in key states by The Associated Press.

In Missouri, for example, an AP analysis found Black students served 46% of all days in suspension in the 2013-2014 school year — the year Michael Brown was shot and killed by police in that state, days after he completed high school. Nine years later, the percentage had dropped to 36%, according to state data obtained via a public records request. Both numbers far exceed Black students' share of the student population, about 15%.

And in California, the suspension rate for Black students fell from 13% in 2013 to 9% a decade later — still three times higher than the white suspension rate.

Incremental progress, but advocates say bias remains

The country's racial reckoning elevated the concept of the "school-to-prison pipeline" — the notion that being kicked out of school, or dropping out, increases the chance of arrest and imprisonment years later. School systems made incremental progress in reducing suspensions and expulsions, but advocates say the underlying bias and structures remain in place.

The upshot: More Black kids are still being kicked out of school.

"That obviously fuels the school-to-prison pipeline," said Terry Landry Jr., Louisiana policy director at the Southern Poverty Law Center. "If you're not in school, then what are you doing?"

Students who are suspended, expelled or otherwise kicked out of the classroom are more likely to be suspended again. They become disconnected from their classmates, and they're more likely to become disengaged from school. They also miss out on learning time and are likely to have worse academic outcomes, including in their grades and rates of graduation.

Nevertheless, some schools and policymakers have doubled down on exclusionary discipline since the pandemic. In Missouri, students lost almost 780,000 days of class due to in-school or out-of-school suspensions in 2023, the highest number in the past decade.

In Louisiana, Black students are twice as likely to be suspended as white students and receive longer suspensions for the same infractions, according to a 2017 study from the Education Research Alliance for New Orleans. Yet a new law goes into effect this year that recommends expulsion for any middle- or high-school student who is suspended three times in one school year.

Educators — and parents — seek to keep kids in school

Federal guidelines to address racial disparities in school discipline first came from President Barack Obama's administration in 2014. Federal officials urged schools not to suspend, expel or refer students to law enforcement except as a last resort, and encouraged restorative justice practices that did not push students out of the classroom. Those rules were rolled back by President Donald Trump's administration, but civil rights regulations at federal and state levels still mandate the collection of data on discipline.

In Minnesota, the share of expulsions and out-of-school suspensions going to Black students dropped from 40% in 2018 to 32% four years later — still nearly three times Black students' share of the overall population.

The discipline gulf in that state was so egregious that in 2017 the Minnesota Department of Human Rights ordered dozens of districts and charter schools to submit to legal settlements over their discipline practices, especially for Black and Native American students. In these districts, the department found, almost 80% of disciplinary consequences issued for subjective reasons, like "disruptive behavior," were going to students of color. School buildings were closed for the pandemic during much of the settlement period, so it's hard to assess whether the schools have since made progress.

Khulia Pringle, an education advocate in St. Paul, says her daughter experienced repeated suspensions. The harsh discipline put her on a bad track. For a time, Pringle said, her daughter wanted to drop out of school.

Pringle, then a history and civics teacher herself, quit her job to become an advocate, hoping to offer one-on-one support to families experiencing harsh school discipline.

"That's when I really began to see it wasn't just me. Every Black parent I worked with was calling me about suspensions," she said.

Education reform emerged quickly as a goal for the Black Lives Matter movement. In 2016, when the

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Vision for Black Lives platform was finalized, it included a call for an education system that acknowledged students' cultural identities, supported their mental and physical health and did not subject them to unwarranted search, seizure and arrest inside schools.

"We need to end mass incarceration and mass criminalization, and that begins in the school," said Monifa Bandele, a policy leader with the Movement for Black Lives. "Data shows that with each expulsion or suspension, students are more likely to end up in the criminal justice system."

In addition to being disciplined at higher rates, Black students receive more severe punishments than their white peers for similar or even the same behavior, said Linda Morris, a staff attorney at the American Civil Liberties Union.

"Students of color are often not given the same benefit of the doubt that their white counterparts receive, and might even be perceived as having harmful motives," Morris said.

Attention to these disparities has led to some changes. Many districts adopted restorative justice practices, which aim to address the root cause of behavior and interpersonal conflicts rather than simply suspending students. Schools increased investment in mental health resources.

And, for a time, some districts, including Chicago and Minneapolis, worked toward removing police from schools. Those efforts gained new momentum in 2020, after the murder of George Floyd in Minnesota by a white police officer.

Schools take a harder line on discipline after pandemic

Calls for stricter discipline and more police involvement resurfaced in recent years, as schools struggled with misbehavior after monthslong pandemic closures.

Activists point to a deeper reason for the pro-discipline push.

"That backlash is also somewhat a response to progress being made," said Katherine Dunn, director of the Opportunity to Learn program at the nonprofit Advancement Project. "It's a response to organizing. It's a response to power that Black and brown and other young people have been building in their schools."

After his suspension, Byrd, the Georgia student, was sent to an alternative disciplinary program. A district spokesman said the program is supposed to help students continue their education and receive social and emotional support while they're being disciplined.

Byrd says he waited in line each day for a head-to-toe search before he was allowed into the building. The process, the district said, ensures safety and is administered by the company that runs the alternative school.

"It definitely changed him," said his mother, DeAndrea Byrd. "He wasn't excited about school. He wanted to drop out. It was extremely difficult."

Byrd finished his junior year at the alternative school. He transferred to a different public school for his senior year, where he felt supported by the administration and managed to graduate. He's since found work near home and plans to attend college at an HBCU in Alabama where he hopes to study cybersecurity.

When he reflects on the fight and its fallout, Byrd said he wished the school could have viewed him as a kid who had never gotten in trouble before, rather than pushing him out.

"I wish they would have never expelled me for my first offense, gave me a second chance," he said. "None of us should be punished for one mistake."

No. 1 seeds Sinner, Swiatek move into the third round at the US Open; Alcaraz, Osaka eliminated

By BRIAN MAHONEY AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Iga Swiatek and Jannik Sinner flashed their No. 1 form on Thursday with powerful performances that moved them into the third round of the U.S. Open.

Carlos Alcaraz and Naomi Osaka couldn't quite find the games that once had them on top of the rankings.

Those past U.S. Open champions were both knocked out Thursday night, with the No. 3-seeded Alcaraz's 15-match Grand Slam winning streak halted by a 6-1, 7-5, 6-4 loss to 74th-ranked Botic van de Zandschulp.

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Swiatek raced by Japanese qualifier Ena Shibahara 6-0, 6-1, finishing off the match in 65 minutes. It took the 2022 U.S. Open champion longer than that to play the second set of her first-round match, when she needed a tiebreaker that she eventually closed out in 72 minutes.

"I just felt the rhythm was much better," Swiatek said. "I was a bit tense in my last match, so today I just wanted to focus on the right things."

Earlier, Sinner downed Alex Michelsen 6-4, 6-0, 6-2 in 1 hour, 39 minutes.

But on the same Arthur Ashe Stadium court at night, Osaka's forehand faltered in key moments and the two-time U.S. Open champion was eliminated by Karolina Muchova 6-3, 7-6 (5).

Sinner dropped the first set in his opening match in New York but didn't encounter much trouble while facing his second straight American on Ashe. The Italian earned his 50th victory of the season, including his ATP Tour-leading 30th on hard courts.

His previous one was a little shaky after a slow start against Mackie McDonald, so Sinner got in a practice session after that match and was happy with the results Thursday.

"Trying to keep going, trying to understand what works here best on these courts. Let's see what I can do in the next round," he said.

That will be against Christopher O'Connell of Australia on Saturday.

No. 5 seed Daniil Medvedev, the 2021 U.S. Open champion, moved into the third round along with No. 10 Alex de Minaur, who will next face Dan Evans. Evans' victory in a tidy 2 hours, 37 minutes was three hours quicker than it took him to beat Karen Khachanov in the first round, their match setting a U.S. Open record by lasting 5 hours, 35 minutes.

Sinner beat Michelsen for the second time this month, having also won a second-round match in Cincinnati shortly before it was revealed that he tested positive twice for an anabolic steroid in March.

Another Italian, Jasmine Paolini, played just three points before advancing when Karolina Pliskova appeared to injure her left foot. The No. 5-seeded Paolini, who has reached the finals of the French Open and Wimbledon in her breakout season, advanced past the second round of the U.S. Open for the first time.

"Finally, we made third round!" she said with a laugh during an interview on the court.

Paolini will next play No. 30 seed Yulia Putintseva.

Other women's winners included No. 6 Jessica Pegula, No. 15 Anna Kalinskaya, No. 16 Liudmilla Samsonova and No. 18 Diana Shnaider. Pegula took out fellow American Sofia Kenin.

But No. 4 seed Elena Rybakina, the 2022 Wimbledon champion, withdrew from the tournament before her second-round match with a lower back injury, sending French qualifier Jessika Ponchet to the weekend.

"Unfortunately, I have to withdraw from my match today due to my injuries," Rybakina said in a statement. "I did not want to finish the last Grand Slam of the year this way but I have to listen to my body, and I hope I can close out the remainder of the year strong."

No. 7 seed Hubert Hurkacz was eliminated in straight sets by Jordan Thompson, and No. 16 Sebastian Korda was knocked out by Tomas Machac.

Harris defends shifting from some liberal positions in first interview of presidential campaign

By ZEKE MILLER and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

SAVANNAH, Ga. (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris on Thursday defended shifting away from some of her more liberal positions in her first major television interview of her presidential campaign, but insisted her "values have not changed" even as she is "seeking consensus."

Sitting with her running mate, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, Harris was asked specifically about her reversals on banning fracking and decriminalizing illegal border crossings, positions she took during her last run for president. She confirmed she does not want to ban fracking, an energy extraction process key to the economy of swing-state Pennsylvania, and said there "should be consequence" for people who cross the border without permission.

"I think the most important and most significant aspect of my policy perspective and decisions is my

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values have not changed," Harris said.

She went on to say: "I believe it is important to build consensus. It is important to find a common place of understanding where we can actually solve the problem."

The interview with CNN's Dana Bash came as voters are still trying to learn more about the Democratic ticket in an unusually compressed time frame. President Joe Biden ended his reelection bid just five weeks ago. The interview focused largely on policy, as Harris sought to show that she had adopted more moderate positions on issues that Republicans argue are extreme, while Walz defended past misstatements about his biography.

Harris hadn't done an in-depth interview since she became her party's standard-bearer five weeks ago, though she did sit for several while she was still Biden's running mate.

She said serving with Biden was "one of the greatest honors of my career," and she recounted the moment he called to tell her he was stepping down and would support her.

"He told me what he had decided to do and ... I asked him, 'Are you sure?' and he said, 'Yes,' and that's how I learned about it."

She said she didn't ask Biden to endorse her because "he was very clear that he was going to endorse me."

Harris defended the administration's record on the southern border and immigration, noting that she was tasked with trying to address the "root causes" in other countries that were driving the border crossings.

"We have laws that have to be followed and enforced, that address and deal with people who cross our border illegally, and there should be consequences," Harris said.

Asked about Israel's war in Gaza after Hamas' Oct. 7 attack, Harris said, "I am unequivocal and unwavering in my commitment to Israel's defense and its ability to defend itself." But the vice president also reiterated what she's said for months, that civilian deaths are too high amid the Israeli offensive.

She also brushed off Republican Donald Trump's questioning of her racial identity after he suggested falsely that she changed how she presents herself for political reasons and "happened to turn Black." Harris, who is of Black and South Asian heritage, said Trump's suggestion was the "same old, tired playbook."

"Next question, please," she said.

Trump and Harris are set to debate on Sept. 10. In a post Thursday evening, it appeared Trump was paying close attention to the interview. After the debate was mentioned, he posted, "I look so forward to Debating Comrade Kamala Harris and exposing her for the fraud she is."

Trump went on to say that his Democratic opponent "has changed every one of her long held positions, on everything. America will never allow an Election WEAPONIZING MARXIST TO BE PRESIDENT OF THE U.S."

The debate will be the first-ever meeting for Harris and Trump. The opponents had only been in the same space when Harris, as a senator, attended Trump's joint addresses to Congress.

During the early parts of the interview, Walz watched quietly and nodded when Harris made her main points. He was later asked about misstatements, starting with how he has described his 24 years of service in the National Guard.

In a 2018 video clip that the Harris-Walz campaign once circulated, Walz spoke out against gun violence and said, "We can make sure that those weapons of war, that I carried in war, is the only place where those weapons are at."

Critics said the comment "that I carried in war" suggested that Walz portrayed himself as someone who spent time in a combat zone. He said Thursday night that he misspoke after a school shooting, adding, "My grammar's not always correct."

Asked about statements that appeared to indicate that he and his wife conceived their children with in-vitro fertilization, when they in fact used a different fertility treatment, he said he believes most Americans understood what he meant and pivoted to Republican opposition to abortion rights.

Democrats' enthusiasm about their vote in November has surged over the past few months, according to polling from Gallup. About 8 in 10 Democrats now say they are more enthusiastic than usual about

voting, compared with 55% in March.

This gives them an enthusiasm edge they did not have earlier this year. Republicans' enthusiasm has increased by much less over the same period, and about two-thirds of Republicans now say they are more enthusiastic than usual about voting.

At a packed arena for a rally Thursday in Savannah, Harris cast her nascent campaign as the underdog and encouraged the crowd to work hard to elect her in November.

"We're here to speak truth and one of the things that we know is that this is going to be a tight race to the end," she said.

Harris went through a list of Democratic concerns: that Trump will further restrict women's rights after he appointed three judges to the U.S. Supreme Court who helped overturn Roe, that he'd repeal the Affordable Care Act, and that given new immunity powers granted presidents by the U.S. Supreme Court, "imagine Donald Trump with no guardrails."

The rally was the end of a two-day bus tour in southeastern Georgia. Harris has another campaign blitz on Labor Day with Biden in Detroit and Pittsburgh with the election rapidly approaching. The first mail ballots get sent to voters in just two weeks.

Afghan taekwondo para-athlete makes history with the first medal for the Refugee Paralympic Team

By TOM NOUVIAN Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Zakia Khudadadi made history on Thursday at the Paris Paralympics by becoming the first athlete from the Refugee Paralympic Team to win a medal.

Khudadadi won bronze in the women's 47kg category after defeating Turkey's Ekinci Nurcihan. When the final buzzer sounded at the Grand Palais in central Paris, Khudadadi erupted in joy, throwing her helmet and mouthpiece into the air.

"It was a surreal moment, my heart started racing when I realized I had won the bronze," Khudadadi said, her voice shaking with emotion. "I went through so much to get here. This medal is for all the women of Afghanistan and all the refugees of the world. I hope that one day there will be peace in my country."

Khudadadi, who was born without one forearm, began practicing taekwondo in secret at age 11 in a hidden gym in her hometown of Herat, in western Afghanistan.

Originally blocked from competing following the rise of the Taliban in 2021, she was later evacuated from Afghanistan and was allowed to compete at the Tokyo Olympics for her country following a plea from the international community.

After the competition, she settled in Paris and was later offered the opportunity to compete with the refugee team at the Paris 2024 Paralympics.

"This medal means everything to me, I will never forget that day," Khudadadi said. "I won because of the great support I got from the crowd."

The atmosphere in the Grand Palais was electric as the French crowd cheered her on as if she were one of their own. Since fleeing Afghanistan, Khudadadi has been training at INSEP, France's national institute of sport, in Paris with her French coach Haby Niare, a former taekwondo world champion.

"Zakia has been magical. I don't know how else to put it," Niare said, beaming with pride. "The training process has been challenging. She faced a lot of injuries and she had to learn a lot in a couple of years but she never lost sight of her goal."

Khudadadi received her medal from U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi and Andrew Parsons, the president of the International Paralympic Committee.

"For the Refugee Paralympic Team, it's super special, it's super important," Parsons said. "Zakia just showed to the world how good she is. It's an incredible journey, it's something that we should all learn about."

AP Paralympics: <https://apnews.com/hub/paralympic-games>

Israel kills a top militant in its deadliest West Bank raids since the Gaza war began

By MAJDI MOHAMMED and MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

TULKAREM, West Bank (AP) — The Israeli military said it killed five more West Bank militants, including a local commander, as it pressed ahead Thursday with its deadliest operation in the occupied territory since the start of the war in Gaza.

Israel says the raids across the northern West Bank — which have killed a total of 16 people, nearly all militants, since late Tuesday — are aimed at preventing attacks. The Palestinians see them as a widening of the war in Gaza and an effort to perpetuate Israel's decades-long military rule over the territory.

The raids drew alarm from the United Nations and neighboring Jordan, as well as from British and French leaders, who stressed the urgency of cease-fire in Gaza after nearly 11 months of fighting between Israel and Hamas.

Medics at al-Awda Hospital in central Gaza said Thursday nine Palestinians from the same family — including two women and five young children — were killed in an Israeli strike on an apartment building in the Nuseirat refugee camp. Israel did not immediately offer comment on the intended target of its attack.

Beginning Sunday, Israel will pause some military operations in Gaza to allow health workers to begin administering polio vaccines to some 650,000 Palestinian children, the U.N. World Health Organization said Thursday. A case was discovered earlier this month for the first time in 25 years.

In the West Bank, the Islamic Jihad militant group confirmed that Mohammed Jaber, known as Abu Shujaa, was killed during a raid in the city of Tulkarem. He became a hero for many Palestinians earlier in the year when he was reported killed in an Israeli operation, only to make a surprise appearance at the funeral of other militants, where he was hoisted onto the shoulders of a cheering crowd.

Israel said he was killed Thursday along with four other militants in a shootout after the five had hidden inside a mosque. It said Abu Shujaa was linked to numerous attacks on Israelis, including a deadly shooting in June, and was planning more.

Israel's search-and-arrest raids continued for hours Thursday, including the city of Jenin.

Firefights also erupted in Fara'a, a Palestinian urban refugee camp in the foothills of the Jordan Valley, where the Israeli army said it struck and killed a group of militants traveling in a car. Their militant affiliations were not immediately clear.

The army also said it uncovered caches of weapons, explosive devices and other military equipment inside a mosque in Fara'a and arrested another militant in Tulkarem, where a member of Israel's paramilitary Border Police was lightly wounded.

Israel's latest operation in the West Bank began late Tuesday in several locations, and Hamas confirmed 10 of its fighters were killed. The Palestinian Health Ministry reported an 11th death on Wednesday, without saying whether he was a fighter or a civilian.

The U.N. secretary-general, António Guterres, called for an immediate halt to the raids, asking Israel's government to comply with its obligations under international law and to take measures to protect civilians.

"These dangerous developments are fueling an already explosive situation in the occupied West Bank and further undermining the Palestinian Authority," he said in a statement from his spokesman Stéphane Dujarric.

The overall toll of 16 killed in less than two days makes it the deadliest Israeli operation in the West Bank since Hamas' Oct. 7 attack into Israel that ignited the war.

The Palestinian Health Ministry says over 650 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank since the start of the war. Most appear to have been militants killed in gunbattles during Israeli operations like the one this week, but civilian bystanders and rock-throwing protesters have also been killed, and the territory saw a surge of Jewish settler violence.

Attacks against Israeli citizens have also risen since the start of the war.

Israel captured the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war, and the Palestinians want all three territories for their future state.

The 3 million Palestinians in the West Bank live under seemingly open-ended Israeli military rule, with the Western-backed Palestinian Authority administering towns and cities. Over 500,000 Israelis live in well over 100 settlements across the territory that most of the international community considers illegal.

The raids have focused on refugee camps that date back to the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation, in which around 700,000 Palestinians fled or were driven out of what is now Israel. Many of the camps are militant strongholds.

Hamas repeated its calls for Palestinians in the West Bank to rise up, calling the raids part of a larger plan to expand the war in Gaza. The militant group has urged security forces loyal to the Western-backed Palestinian Authority, which cooperate with Israel, to "join the sacred battle of our people."

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas has also condemned the Israeli raids, but his forces were not expected to get involved.

The war in Gaza erupted when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel and rampaged through army bases and farming communities, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting around 250. The militants are still holding 108 hostages, around a third of whom are believed to be dead, after most of the rest were released during a November cease-fire.

Israel responded with an offensive that has killed over 40,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not say how many were militants. Around 90% of Gaza's population has been displaced, often multiple times, and Israeli bombardment and ground operations have caused vast destruction.

The United States, Qatar and Egypt have spent months trying to mediate a cease-fire that would see the remaining hostages released. But the talks have repeatedly bogged down as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed "total victory" over Hamas and the militant group has demanded a lasting cease-fire and a full withdrawal from the territory.

Serbia makes a \$3 billion deal to buy 12 French warplanes, in a shift away from Russia

By DUSAN STOJANOVIC Associated Press

BELGRADE, Serbia (AP) — Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic on Thursday announced a \$3 billion deal to buy 12 French warplanes, in a move that shifts his country away from its dependence on Russian arms.

The announcement about the Rafale multi-purpose fighter jets was made during a joint news conference in Belgrade with French President Emmanuel Macron during a two-day visit to Serbia as part of what French officials have called a strategy of bringing Serbia closer to the European Union.

Macron called the deal "historic and important," and said it demonstrated Serbia's "strategic courage."

"The European Union needs a strong and democratic Serbia at its side and Serbia needs a strong, sovereign Europe to defend its interests," Macron said. "Serbia's place is in the EU, and it has a role to play to be an example for all the region."

Serbia is formally seeking European Union membership, but under Vucic's increasingly autocratic rule it has made little progress in the fields of rule of law and democratic reforms, which are the main preconditions for membership in the 27-nation bloc.

Selling Rafales to Russian ally Serbia, which has occasionally expressed an aggressive stance toward its Balkan neighbors, has raised some concerns, one of which is how France plans to prevent sophisticated Rafale technology from being shared with Russia.

Asked about whether the warplane deal includes restrictions on Serbia's sharing of Rafale technology to its ally Russia, or the use of the military hardware in the Balkan region, Macron said the deal included "full guarantees like any defense agreement," without elaborating.

Russia has been a traditional supplier of military aircraft to Serbia, which has refused to join international sanctions against Moscow for its invasion of Ukraine.

Vucic described the purchase of the Rafale jets as a "big" development. "It will contribute considerably to improving operational capabilities of our army, a completely different approach and we are happy to

become part of the Rafale club," Vucic said.

Vucic dismissed any concerns among Western nations of the possibility that Serbia would transfer technology to Russia because of the Balkan country's traditional close ties with Moscow.

"For the first time in history Serbia has Western jets," Vucic said. "You wish to have Serbia as a partner and then you voice suspicions?"

The French maker of Rafale, Dassault Aviation, said in a statement that Serbia's decision to buy the warplanes confirms "Rafale's operational superiority and its proven excellence in serving the sovereign interests of a nation."

Serbia had been considering the purchase of the new Rafale jets for more than two years, since neighboring Balkan rival Croatia purchased 12 used fighter jets of the same type for about 1 billion euros (\$1.1 billion).

The acquisition allows Serbia to modernize its air force, which consists mainly of Soviet-made MiG-29 fighters and aging Yugoslav combat aircraft.

Stephen Curry signs \$63 million extension with Warriors for 2026-27 season

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

Stephen Curry has signed a one-year extension with the Golden State Warriors for the 2026-27 season, one in which the NBA's all-time 3-point leader and Olympic gold medalist will earn nearly \$63 million.

The team announced the signing Thursday. ESPN first reported the agreement was in place, and Curry's agent, Jeff Austin of Octagon, later confirmed it to The Associated Press.

Curry is now guaranteed about \$178 million for the next three seasons; about \$55.8 million for this season, about \$59.6 million for 2025-26 and now about \$62.6 million — the most the Warriors could offer by league rule — for 2026-27.

When that season ends, Curry's on-court earnings will have reached about \$532 million, which for now ranks as second-most in NBA history behind only LeBron James' \$580 million in player contracts.

The 36-year-old Curry is entering his 16th NBA season, all of them with the Warriors. He's a 10-time All-Star and 10-time All-NBA selection, has been part of four championships with Golden State and is a two-time MVP. This summer, he also played for the U.S. team that won Olympic gold at the Paris Games, including a dazzling fourth-quarter display to help the Americans beat France in the title game.

He averaged 26.4 points for the Warriors last season, and has averaged 24.8 points in his regular-season career.

Moore says he made an 'honest mistake' failing to correct application claiming Bronze Star

By BRIAN WITTE Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (AP) — Maryland Gov. Wes Moore said Thursday he made "an honest mistake" in failing to correct a White House fellowship application 18 years ago when he wrote he had received a Bronze Star for his military service in Afghanistan though he never ended up receiving it, after the New York Times obtained a copy of the application and reported on it.

The newspaper, which obtained the document as part of a Freedom of Information Act request, reported that Moore made the claim on the application in 2006 when he was 27.

In a statement, the governor wrote that he had been encouraged to fill out the application for the fellowship by his deputy brigade commander serving overseas in the Army. At the time, Moore said the deputy brigade commander had recommended him for the Bronze Star — and told him to include the award on his application "after confirming with two other senior-level officers that they had also signed off on the commendation."

Toward the end of his deployment, however, Moore said he was disappointed to learn he had not received

the Bronze Star. When he returned home, Moore said he was “focused on helping my fellow veterans, a mission I continue to advance as governor.”

“Still, I sincerely wish I had gone back to correct the note on my application,” Moore, a Democrat, said in a statement Thursday. “It was an honest mistake, and I regret not making that correction.”

The Bronze Star is awarded to service members for meritorious service in combat zones.

The governor noted in his statement Thursday that he was listed as a top 1% officer in Operation Enduring Freedom in his officer evaluation report.

“My deputy brigade commander felt comfortable with instructing me to include the award on my application for the Fellowship because he received confirmation with the approval authority that the Bronze Star was signed and approved by his senior leadership,” Moore wrote.

The governor also wrote that in the military, “there is an understanding that if a senior officer tells you that an action is approved, you can trust that as a fact. That is why it was part of the application, plain and simple.”

The award had been mentioned during interviews with media when Moore was running for governor in 2022, but Moore never said in those interviews that he had not received the commendation. In an interview with the New York Times, the governor said for the first time that he regretted failing to correct the interviewers who had described him as a recipient of the award.

The newspaper also spoke to the officer who Moore said had recommended he put the award on his application this week in an interview arranged by Moore’s staff. The officer, Michael Fenzel, who is now a lieutenant general serving as the United States security coordinator for Israel and the Palestinian Authority, told The Times that Moore had first objected to the idea of mentioning the Bronze Star.

Fenzel said he had told Moore that he and others had approved the medal, and that it was appropriate to include it in his application, the newspaper reported, and that it would be processed by the time his fellowship began.

Grand Canyon visitors move to hotels outside the park after unprecedented breaks in water pipeline

By TY ONEIL, MATT YORK and RIO YAMAT Associated Press

GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK, Ariz. (AP) — Sharon Ellison and Fred Jernigan spent four days hiking and camping from one end of the Grand Canyon to the other, with plans to relax at a hotel within the park on Thursday. But when they reemerged from the jagged canyon at the South Rim, they soon learned they were without accommodations for the night.

A series of breaks in the Grand Canyon’s only water pipeline prompted park officials to take unprecedented action with what they call “Stage 4” water restrictions, forcing the sudden shutdown of overnight hotel stays during one of the busiest times of the year.

“It’s a precious resource, and we understand that,” Jernigan said Thursday morning. “It’s not really a shock to us.”

Since July 8, the park has faced challenges with its water supply and has been implementing various levels of water restrictions. Now, officials said, no water is currently being pumped to the canyon’s south or north rims.

The 12.5 mile-long (20 kilometer-long) Transcanyon Waterline, originally built in the 1960s, supplies potable water for facilities on the South Rim and inner canyon. Park officials say it has exceeded its expected lifespan.

Under the current water restrictions, visitors won’t be able to stay overnight starting Thursday, including at the El Tovar Hotel, Bright Angel Lodge, Phantom Ranch and Maswik Lodge, where Jernigan and Ellison had booked a room for the night.

The North Carolina residents haven’t showered since Sunday, and they will have to find a new place to sleep Thursday night. But “after coming up rim to rim, we can roll with the punches,” Ellison said, laughing.

Hotels outside the park in the nearby town of Tusayan, as well as the North Rim’s Grand Canyon Lodge

will remain open. The park will stay open during the day, and visitors still have the option to camp, as did Barbara Badger, who was visiting for two nights from Fontana, California.

Badger said she decided a few weeks ago to spend the first anniversary of her husband's death at the Grand Canyon, a spot they visited together.

"We loved it. He loved it so much," Badger said, tearing as she spoke of her late husband, Douglas.

Even though they didn't hike or camp during their visit together, she said a voice in her head told her to get a sleeping bag and other gear.

"So I did all of that and, when I got here, I was prepared to camp out and with no reason why," she said. "Except that's just the way it worked."

Carved by the Colorado River and known for its vast desert landscapes, the Grand Canyon welcomed nearly 523,000 visitors last August and more than 466,000 visitors last September.

At Yavapai Lodge, about 970 reservations for the weekend were canceled, according to spokesperson Glen White. Guests will be refunded for all deposits and payments, he said.

A spokesperson for Xanterra Travel Collection, which operates other affected hotels and lodging inside the park, didn't respond to a request for comment.

Park officials hope to make repairs and welcome back overnight guests on the South Rim as quickly as possible. But restoration efforts won't be easy for an aluminum pipe that isn't insulated and sits above the ground near hiking trails in some areas.

"Here, to be exposed to the elements, that brings in a whole new level of complexity," said Darren Olson, who chairs the American Society of Civil Engineers' Committee on America's Infrastructure. He pointed to potential rock slides and extreme heat.

Since 2010, more than 85 major breaks have disrupted water delivery, but none have forced Stage 4 water restrictions. That is, until four recent significant breaks.

Park officials say the damage occurred down in the depths of the canyon in a narrow area known as "the box" that is highly susceptible to rock fall and dangerous heat this time of the year. A photo of one of the recent breaks released by officials shows the pipe spitting out a funnel of water across the slim canyon.

"You're having to put in a water main providing services that we all take for granted, but you're providing it in locations where, really, mother nature wasn't meant to have fresh water delivered there," Olson said. "It makes for a challenge."

The pipeline issues continued as park officials on Thursday announced what is believed to be the sixth fatality at the canyon in a month and the 14th this year. They said a 60-year-old man from North Carolina who was backpacking alone was found dead Wednesday morning on a remote trail.

Other fatalities included a 33-year-old woman who was swept away last week in a flash flood while on a hiking trip, and another North Carolina man who fell to his death July 31 at the South Rim.

Idaho judge considers whether to hold quadruple murder trial in small university town or elsewhere

By REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — Attorneys for the man charged in the 2022 stabbing deaths of four University of Idaho students asked a judge to move the trial to a larger city during a hearing Thursday, citing the widespread media coverage of the case and the impact that coverage can have on potential juror bias.

Bryan Kohberger's defense team says strong emotions in the close-knit community and constant news coverage will make it impossible to find an impartial jury in the university town of Moscow, Idaho. They want the trial, set for June 2025, to be moved from Moscow to Boise or another large city. But prosecutors say any problems with potential bias can be resolved by simply calling a larger pool of potential jurors and questioning them carefully.

Kohberger, a former criminal justice student at Washington State University, which is across the state line in Pullman, faces four counts of murder in the deaths of Ethan Chapin, Xana Kernodle, Madison Mogen and Kaylee Goncalves.

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The four University of Idaho students were killed sometime in the early morning hours of Nov. 13, 2022, in a rental house near the campus.

Police arrested Kohberger six weeks later at his parents' home in Pennsylvania, where he was spending winter break.

The killings stunned students at both universities and left the small city of Moscow deeply shaken. The case also spurred a flurry of news coverage, much of which Kohberger's defense team says was inflammatory and left the community strongly biased against their client.

Defense attorney Elisa Massoth's first witness was James "Todd" Murphy, the president of media tracking company Truescope. Murphy testified that news coverage of the case has been more saturated in Latah County, where the university town is located, than it has been in other parts of the state.

Latah County has about 3% of the state's population but the media exposure to the case was measured at about 36%, Murphy said. That compares to Ada County, where Boise is located, which had about 34% exposure and roughly 26% of the state's population.

Amani El-Alayli, a professor at Eastern Washington University who researches social cognition and bias, told the judge that studies have shown that people who are exposed to publicity about a case are more likely to render a guilty verdict at trial because of the way the human brain processes information.

That's partly because people are less likely to think critically about information when they are just casually consuming the news, she said, and partly because of "classic conditioning," a type of unconscious learning where the brain creates associations between certain stimuli and responses. Conditioning can happen when people repeatedly see the defendant's name or photo next to words like "murder" or "students killed," she said, or when they hear a name connected to something they had an emotional response too — like the fear that another crime might happen, or sadness that someone died.

"We've seen the pictures with these ominous headlines — that connection can't help but be created," El-Alayli said. "People aren't trying to be biased. It's just that when we're in a mood, those moods filter the information that we take in."

Seeing authority figures like a police chief or even someone with a commanding presence say that a person is a suspect can also create a bias, she said, particularly in small towns where potential jurors might personally know the authority figure making the claim.

There's no known method to undo that bias once it is created, El-Alayli said, and carefully questioning jurors or giving them instructions to ignore things they have previously heard or read about the case generally isn't very effective.

Defendants have a constitutional right to a fair trial, and that requires finding jurors that can be impartial and haven't already made up their minds about the guilt or innocence of the person accused. But when the defense team hired a company to survey Latah County residents, 98% percent of the respondents said they recognized the case and 70% of that group said they had already formed the opinion that Kohberger is guilty. More than half of the respondents with that opinion also said nothing would change their mind, according to defense court filings.

Bryan Edelman, a trial consultant and the cofounder of Trial Innovations, which conducted the the study, also testified for the defense. He said that since November 2022, there have been roughly 440 articles published about the case in Latah County's local news outlets — including The Moscow-Pullman Daily News, The Lewiston Tribune, and the University of Idaho's student newspaper the Argonaut. The local population is about only 40,000 people, he said.

The defense attorneys provided more details about Edelman's survey in a court document filed earlier this month. Some of the respondents made dire predictions, saying that if Kohberger is acquitted, "There would likely be a riot and he wouldn't last long outside because someone would do the good ole boy justice," "They'd burn the courthouse down," and "Riots, parents would take care of him."

Prosecutors told the judge that the survey didn't provide strong enough evidence to justify moving the trial. Special Assistant Attorney General Ingrid Batey said the survey data showed that at some points, Ada County actually had higher levels of media coverage than Latah County.

"The fact is, your honor, this case has media coverage everywhere," Batey said, suggesting that bias and pressure could be handled by calling larger jury pools and by barring the public from some parts of the jury selection process and other hearings. The court can summon 1,800 potential jurors in Latah County just as easily as it can in Ada County, Batey told the judge.

Moving the trial across the state would be expensive and force court staffers, witnesses, experts, law enforcement officers and victims' family members to make an inconvenient trip to the new location, she said.

But Taylor reminded the judge that Kohberger's constitutional rights are at stake.

"His right to a fair trial is as important to our right to free speech, our right to bear arms, our right to be free from unreasonable searches and seizures," said defense attorney Anne Taylor, "and the right to a fair trial cannot happen in Latah County."

The judge said he would review the law and all of the evidence before making a ruling, saying it would likely be one of the hardest professional decisions he will ever have to make. "I'll do my best," the judge said. "It's a challenge."

"There was some really important things to think about on both sides," he said, "and that's what I'm going to do."

Mexico suggests US made a deal with Mexican drug lord to get his brother transferred from prison

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Prosecutors in Mexico suggested Thursday that U.S. authorities made a deal with a Mexican drug lord who turned in himself and another capo, to get his brother transferred from a U.S. prison.

Mexico's Attorney General's Office also accused U.S. authorities of not responding to information requests on the case. The office also said that the small plane that flew them both to the United States in July had multiple registries and identification numbers, some of them false.

U.S. officials have denied they were involved in the plot or the flight, and said they got word of it only after the craft had taken off from northern Mexico.

It marked the latest chapter in the strange saga of two Mexican drug lords, one of whom allegedly kidnapped the other and flew him to an airport near El Paso, Texas.

The Mexican government has previously said it wants to bring treason charges against Joaquín Guzmán López, but not because he was a leader of the Sinaloa drug cartel founded by his father, Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán.

Instead, Mexican prosecutors are bringing charges against the younger Guzmán for apparently kidnapping Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada — an older drug boss from a rival faction of the cartel — forcing him onto the plane and flying him north.

The office said that two of Zambada's bodyguards — one of them a policeman — who went missing after the kidnapping had apparently been killed.

The younger Guzmán apparently intended to turn himself in to U.S. authorities, but may have brought Zambada along as a prize to get his previously-arrested half brother, Ovidio Guzman, transferred out of a U.S. prison.

Mexican prosecutors suggested this was true, saying "the link between the (custody) status of Ovidio 'G,' the participation of his brother Joaquin in the presumed kidnapping of Ismael (Zambada) ... are the main areas of focus of the investigation."

At the end of July, the U.S. Bureau of Prisons listed Ovidio Guzman's custody status as having changed, but didn't specify what had happened. U.S. and Mexican officials have since claimed Ovidio is still in custody, just not necessarily in the same place.

Earlier this month, U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Ken Salazar said Ovidio Guzman — a high value detainee who purportedly led the Sinaloa cartel's push into manufacturing and smuggling the synthetic opioid fentanyl — "isn't out on the street."

"He is in prison," Salazar said, "and we are going to judge him in the way the Department of Justice

does it.”

Mexican prosecutors also claimed the plane the two allegedly flew on had multiple registries, some falsified, and that the plane’s “approach and landing in that country (the U.S.) was authorized by the appropriate agencies of the U.S. government.”

Mexican prosecutors also claimed they had made a total of five requests to U.S. authorities for information on the flight, and that “as of now, there has been no response.”

The federal prosecutors’ statement also said it would be interviewing prosecutors, police and forensic examiners from the northern state of Sinaloa — home to the cartel of the same name — about their inspections of the walled recreation compound where the abduction and killings occurred.

Previously, federal prosecutors had accused their Sinaloa counterparts of providing information that has since proved to be false.

Zambada has said that Guzmán, who he trusted, had invited him to the meeting to help iron out the fierce political rivalry between two local politicians. Zambada was known for eluding capture for decades because of his incredibly tight, loyal and sophisticated personal security apparatus.

The fact that he would knowingly leave that all behind to meet with the politicians means that Zambada viewed such a meeting as credible and feasible. The same goes for the idea that Zambada, as the leader of the oldest wing of the Sinaloa cartel, could act as an arbiter in the state’s political disputes.

The governor of Sinaloa state has denied he knew of or attended the meeting where Zambada was abducted.

The whole case has been an embarrassment for the Mexican government, which didn’t even know about the detentions of the two drug lords on U.S. soil until after the fact.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has long viewed any U.S. intervention as an affront, and has refused to confront Mexico’s drug cartels. He recently questioned the U.S. policy of detaining drug cartel leaders, asking, “Why don’t they change that policy?”

Fired Florida deputy freed on bond in fatal shooting of Black airman

By KATE PAYNE Associated Press

FORT WALTON BEACH, Fla. (AP) — A judge allowed bond Thursday for a Florida sheriff’s deputy who was fired and charged with manslaughter after shooting a U.S. Air Force senior airman at the Black man’s apartment door.

Former Okaloosa County deputy Eddie Duran, 38, faces up to 30 years in prison if convicted of manslaughter with a firearm, a rare charge against a Florida law enforcement officer. Duran’s body camera recorded him shooting 23-year-old Roger Fortson on May 3 immediately after Fortson opened the door while holding a handgun pointed at the floor.

Judge Terrance R. Ketchel set bond at \$100,000 and said Duran cannot possess a firearm or leave the area, though he will not have to wear a GPS tracker. He was released from jail shortly after Thursday’s hearing, jail records show.

Duran had been ordered held pending Thursday’s pretrial detention hearing despite arguments from his lawyer Rodney Smith, who said there’s no reason to jail him.

“He has spent his entire life ... his entire career and his military career trying to save people, help people,” Smith said at Thursday’s hearing. “He’s not a danger to the community.”

Prosecutor Mark Alderman said “this is a case where we all know what happened.”

“We’ve all seen what happened, he said. “It’s just a question of the interpretation. We’ve all seen that Mr. Duran killed Roger Fortson. Obviously this is a very serious charge.”

Duran has been homeschooling his six children in recent months while he’s been out of work and while his wife has been working full-time, Smith said. Duran sat quietly in the courtroom Thursday, dressed in a pink striped jail jumpsuit and glasses. He conferred with his attorneys and at times the clink of metal restraints could be heard.

The Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office initially said Duran fired in self-defense after encountering a man with a gun, but Sheriff Eric Aden fired Duran on May 31 after an internal investigation concluded his life was not in danger when he opened fire. Outside law enforcement experts have also said that an officer cannot shoot only because a possible suspect is holding a gun if there is no threat.

Duran was responding to a report of a physical fight inside an apartment at the Fort Walton Beach complex. A worker there identified Fortson's apartment as the location, according to sheriff's investigators. At the time, Fortson was alone in his apartment, talking with his girlfriend in a FaceTime video call. Duran's body camera video showed what happened next.

After repeated knocking, Fortson opened the door. Authorities say that Duran shot him multiple times and only then did he tell Fortson to drop the gun.

Duran told investigators that he saw aggression in Fortson's eyes and fired because, "I'm standing there thinking I'm about to get shot, I'm about to die."

In a statement released after Thursday's hearing, Smith said the deputy's actions "were reasonable and appropriate given the information he was provided relating to the nature and urgency of what he feared to be a potentially dangerous domestic situation."

In the statement, he described Fortson as "a person who had armed himself before simply responding to what could have been nothing more than a routine effort by law enforcement to make sure that a domestic violence situation did not escalate."

At Thursday's hearing, Smith said his team has cooperated with authorities, saying that "we've turned him in. He's not going anywhere."

Smith acknowledged the video evidence of the shooting and national interest in the case.

"We know that we have defenses that we're going to assert ... qualified immunity, stand your ground as applies to law enforcement," Smith said.

The fatal shooting of the airman from Georgia was one of a growing list of killings of Black people by law enforcement in their own homes, and it also renewed debate over Florida's "Stand Your Ground" law. Hundreds of Air Force members in dress blues joined Fortson's family, friends and others at his funeral.

Arlington National Cemetery worker was 'pushed aside' in Trump staff dispute but won't seek charges

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON and TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — An Arlington National Cemetery official was "abruptly pushed aside" in an altercation with former President Donald Trump's staff during a wreath-laying ceremony to honor service members killed in the Afghanistan War withdrawal, but she declined to press charges, an Army spokesman said Thursday.

The Army spokesman said the cemetery employee was trying to make sure those participating in Monday's wreath-laying ceremony to mark the third anniversary of the attack were following the rules, which "clearly prohibit political activities on cemetery grounds."

A TikTok video of the visit that was later shared by Trump shows scenes of him at the cemetery and includes a voiceover of the Republican presidential nominee blaming the Biden administration for the "disaster" of the Afghanistan withdrawal.

"This employee acted with professionalism and avoided further disruption," the Army spokesman's statement said. "This incident was unfortunate, and it is also unfortunate that the ANC employee and her professionalism has been unfairly attacked."

The incident was reported to the police, but because the employee decided not to press charges, the Army said it considered the matter closed. In response, Chris LaCivita, a top Trump campaign adviser, re-sent a video of Trump at Arlington that he had first put up on X three days ago, adding the message, "Reposting this hoping to trigger the hacks at @SecArmy."

Campaigning in Michigan on Thursday, Trump said surviving family members had asked to take a photo

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with him at the cemetery. "They ask me to have a picture, and they say I was campaigning," he complained without addressing the TikTok video.

The controversy comes as Trump has been working to tie his Democratic opponent, Vice President Kamala Harris, to the chaos of the Afghanistan War withdrawal with just over two months until Election Day. The suicide bombing at the Kabul airport, which killed 13 American service members and more than 170 Afghans on Aug. 26, 2021, was one of the lowest points of the Biden administration and followed a withdrawal commitment and timeline that the Trump administration had negotiated with the Taliban the previous year.

Families of three of the slain service members had invited Trump to the ceremony, saying the former president knew their children's stories and blaming the Biden administration for their deaths. Some of the families of these service members spoke out in support of Trump at the Republican National Convention in July, in part to blunt criticism that Trump wasn't supportive enough of veterans.

The family members initially struggled to arrange Trump's visit to the cemetery, according to a spokesperson for U.S. Rep. Mike McCaul, a Texas Republican who chairs the House Foreign Affairs Committee. The families had reached out to McCaul because the cemetery had been giving them "a hard time" about coordinating the ceremony with Trump, McCaul's spokesperson Leslie Shedd said Thursday.

The families said the Army would only allow the ceremony at a specific time that did not work for everyone's schedule, among other conditions, Shedd said. McCaul then reached out to House Speaker Mike Johnson for assistance and tracked the matter until it was resolved, Shedd said.

"I was furious to hear their request to have President Trump join them to commemorate the anniversary of Taylor's death was being stymied, along with several of the other family members of U.S. servicemembers killed at Abbey Gate," McCaul said in a statement. "Gold Star families have already suffered enough."

The Trump campaign has been facing blowback since an NPR report said that two Trump campaign staff members on Monday had "verbally abused and pushed" aside a cemetery official who tried to stop them from filming and photographing in Section 60, the burial site for military personnel killed while fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Federal law prohibits campaign or election-related activities within Army national military cemeteries. A defense official, speaking to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive matter, said the Trump campaign was warned about not taking photographs in Section 60 before their arrival and the altercation.

The Trump campaign has claimed the Republican presidential nominee's team was granted access to have a photographer, contested the allegation that a campaign staffer had pushed the cemetery official and pushed back on any notion that the cemetery official had been unfairly targeted.

"This individual was the one who initiated physical contact and verbal harassment that was unwarranted and unnecessary," Trump spokesperson Steven Cheung said Thursday. "As the Army has said, they consider this matter closed. President Trump was there to support the Gold Star families and honor the sacrifices their loved ones made. Where was Kamala Harris?"

The Trump campaign has also posted a message signed by relatives of two of the service members killed in the bombing that said "the president and his team conducted themselves with nothing but the utmost respect and dignity for all of our service members, especially our beloved children."

Photos of the cemetery visit showed Trump standing by the graves and flashing a thumbs-up sign next to relatives of Staff Sgt. Darin Taylor Hoover and Sgt. Nicole Gee. He also laid wreaths for Staff Sgt. Ryan Knauss, whose family was not present.

The family of a decorated Green Beret whose grave appeared in the photos of Trump's visit issued a statement expressing support for the families who lost loved ones in the Kabul airport bombing, but asking for understanding for the concerns from relatives of service members whose graves were near them.

"We hope that those visiting this sacred site understand that these were real people who sacrificed for our freedom and that they are honored and respected accordingly," said the statement, which was sent by the sister of Silver Star recipient Master Sgt. Andrew C. Marckesano, who died in 2020, on behalf of

the family.

The TikTok video shared by Trump shows several clips of his visit to the cemetery. As a guitar strums in the background, there is a voiceover of him saying: "We lost great, great people. What a horrible day it was. We didn't lose one person in 18 months, and then they took over. That disaster, the leaving of Afghanistan."

The 18-month stretch without any combat deaths in Afghanistan included about six months of the Biden administration.

Fred Wellman, a 22-year Army veteran who served in Iraq and who is supporting Harris for president, said it was a mistake for the Army to put all of the weight on the Arlington National Cemetery staffer and let the issue go after the staffer decided not to press charges.

"Everyone who is a veteran who served since 9/11 is one to two degrees of separation from someone buried in Section 60," he said. "The Army is the keeper of that place for us."

A Pentagon investigation into the deadly attack concluded that the suicide bomber acted alone and that those killings were not preventable. But critics have slammed the Biden administration for the catastrophic evacuation, saying it should have started earlier than it did.

Allison Jaslow, a former Army captain who leads the nonpartisan advocacy organization Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, applauded when Trump and Harris picked military veterans as their running mates. But she said aspiring elected officials should not campaign at Arlington National Cemetery.

"There are plenty of places appropriate for politics — Arlington is not one of them."

Ecuador starts dismantling Yasuni National Park oil block two days before court deadline

By STEVEN GRATTAN Associated Press

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — Ecuador's government says it has started dismantling infrastructure on a controversial oil drilling block in Yasuni National Park, just as Friday's court-imposed deadline for completion looms.

The Ministry for Energy and Mines said in a statement Wednesday evening that it shut one of 247 wells in the 43-ITT block — the Ishpingo B-56 well.

It's been a year since the historic referendum to halt oil drilling in the national park in the country's Amazon, but the Waorani Indigenous people who live there and rights groups say nothing has been done.

The government last week asked the constitutional court for an extension of five years and five months for the state-run oil company Petroecuador to cease operations and get out.

"I have come to verify that the decision of last year's referendum, where the citizens voted in favor of the closure of this field, is being complied with," said head of the ministry, Antonio Goncalves, in the statement. "To comply with the closure of the ITT is not an easy job, it requires special and technical planning."

The wells should all go offline by December 2029, the government has previously said.

The announcement of the B-56 well closure came hours after an Associated Press story about the frustrations of the Waorani people and others who complained the government has taken no action over the past year.

The AP has received no response to requests for comment from the ministry and Petroecuador over the past three days.

The Ecuadorian government does not get to set its own timeline and has shown little political will to close operations, said Kevin Koenig, climate and energy director for the nonprofit Amazon Watch, in response to the government statement.

"The government is bound by its obligations to the constitutional court, which gave it a year to close 227 wells. ... The fact that they closed one yesterday does not mean that they are complying with the court order," Koenig said in a call from Yasuni National Park.

"They're not meeting their judicial obligation to the court, they're not fulfilling the mandate of the Ecuadorian people and they're not respecting the rights of the Waorani," he said.

Yasuni National Park is one of most biodiverse regions on the planet. Besides the Waorani, it's home to two of the world's last Indigenous communities living in voluntary isolation, the Taromenane and the Tagaeri people, according to the nonprofit Amazon Frontlines.

Ending oil drilling at the 43-ITT oil block could cost \$1.3 billion, according to government estimates.

Oil accounts for nearly one-third of Ecuador's GDP, and its economy is struggling to meet its domestic debt obligations.

Texas man is exonerated after spending nearly 34 years in prison for wrongful conviction

By KEN MILLER Associated Press

A wrongfully convicted Texas man who spent 34 years in prison for a killing in the 1980s was exonerated Thursday, saying that while he couldn't get those years back, he was happy and moving forward.

"I'm just excited that this day has finally come," said Benjamin Spencer, 59.

A Dallas County judge granted a motion by the district attorney's office to dismiss an aggravated robbery charge against Spencer, who was initially convicted of murder in 1987 in the carjacking and death of Jeffrey Young.

"It is a good day," said defense attorney Cheryl Wattlely, who has worked on Spencer's case for more than 20 years. "I'm trying hard not to cry."

Wattlely praised Dallas County Criminal District Attorney John Creuzot for taking a serious look at the evidence that was discredited in the case.

Creuzot said he was "relieved and humbled to help correct this injustice."

Prosecution witnesses, including a jailhouse informant seeking leniency, gave false testimony, Creuzot said. He added that prosecutors at the time also failed to provide the defense with evidence that would have excluded Spencer from the crime, including fingerprints.

Spencer, who maintained his innocence, saw the 1987 conviction later overturned. But he was then tried again and convicted and sentenced to life in prison for aggravated robbery of Young.

He was released on bond in 2021 after the district attorney's office found his constitutional rights were violated and he did not receive a fair trial due to the false witness testimony and withholding of evidence.

The Texas Court of Criminal Appeals overturned his conviction earlier this year, sending the case back to Dallas County.

Assistant District Attorney Cynthia Garza, who leads the office's Conviction Integrity Unit, said: "There exists no credible or physical evidence that he was in any way involved in this crime."

Spencer is one of the 60 longest-serving people to be declared innocent, according to data kept by The National Registry of Exonerations.

Under Texas law, he is eligible for a lump sum payment of up to \$80,000 for each year he was incarcerated and an annuity, Wattlely said.

Wattlely said Spencer is trying to live his life honorably and "trying to be an example that others can be inspired by."

Woman found dead before police kill husband on I-95 bridge and discover boy's body in vehicle

By RODRIQUE NGOWI, PATRICK WHITTLE and CALEB JONES Associated Press

KITTERY, Maine (AP) — A man being pursued in the killing of his wife in New Hampshire was shot by police and tumbled from the Interstate 95 bridge that connects the state to Maine, officials said Thursday. Their 8-year-old boy was found dead in the back seat of the father's vehicle afterward.

The boy's death was not caused by gunfire from three law enforcement officials who discharged their firearms after the man stepped out of his vehicle and raised a weapon after failed attempts to negotiate with him, Col. William Ross, chief of Maine State Police, told reporters.

After being shot, the man fell more than 100 feet (30 meters) from the bridge into the Piscataqua River, where his body was retrieved by the U.S. Coast Guard.

The Piscataqua River Bridge was closed for seven hours before reopening during the Thursday morning commute, Maine State Police said. Traffic was backed up on both sides as drivers were diverted to two other bridges.

The episode began with the man calling police shortly after 2 a.m. Thursday to report a domestic altercation with his wife in Troy, New Hampshire, where police found his wife's body about 100 miles (160 kilometers) away at a home in the western part of the state, officials said.

Police tracked the man's vehicle to the 4,500-foot-long (1,370-meter-long) span that connects Portsmouth, New Hampshire, to Kittery, Maine. Tens of thousands of vehicles cross the bridge daily.

One Maine state trooper and two New Hampshire troopers fired when the man emerged from the vehicle and raised his weapon, Ross said. Witnesses reported hearing gunfire shortly after 4 a.m.

Police didn't know the boy was in the car and discovered his body in the vehicle's back seat after the shooting, said Ross, who stressed that it was "abundantly clear" that the boy was not hit by any of the bullets fired by the troopers in the confrontation.

A state police spokesperson declined to provide details but said that assessment was based on observations made by law enforcement officials at the scene.

No names were released on Thursday. The family had recently moved to Troy, and police were having difficulty tracking down family members to make notifications, the spokesperson said.

An autopsy was scheduled Friday for the woman who was shot, after which more information on the investigation will be released, New Hampshire Attorney General John Formella and State Police Col. Mark Hall said in a statement.

Between 70,000 and 80,000 vehicles use the Piscataqua bridge each day, according to the Maine Department of Transportation.

The incident occurred at a time of light traffic on I-95 was closed at 2:30 a.m., but lines of cars and trucks began to back up as police blocked traffic in both directions for hours. The man's body was recovered around 8:30 a.m., Ross said, and the bridge reopened to traffic an hour later.

There are multiple cameras in use on the bridge to monitor traffic, but there is no record of the shooting because they are not set to record, according to Paul Merrill, spokesperson for the Maine Department of Transportation.

Boar's Head plant linked to deadly outbreak broke food safety rules dozens of times, records show

By JONEL ALECCIA AP Health Writer

A Boar's Head deli meat plant in Virginia tied to a deadly food poisoning outbreak repeatedly violated federal regulations, including instances of mold, insects, liquid dripping from ceilings, and meat and fat residue on walls, floors and equipment, newly released records show.

Government inspectors logged 69 instances of "noncompliance" with federal rules in the past year, including several in recent weeks, according to documents released through federal Freedom of Information Act requests.

Inspections at the plant have been suspended and it will remain closed "until the establishment is able to demonstrate it can produce safe product," U.S. Agriculture Department officials said in a statement Thursday. Boar's Head officials halted production at the Jarratt, Virginia, plant in late July.

The plant has been linked to the deaths of at least nine people and hospitalizations of about 50 others in 18 states. All were sickened with listeria after eating Boar's Head Provisions Co. Inc. deli meats. The company recalled more than 7 million pounds of products last month after tests confirmed that listeria bacteria in Boar's Head products were making people sick.

Between Aug. 1, 2023, and Aug. 2, 2024, inspectors found "heavy discolored meat buildup" and "meat overspray on walls and large pieces of meat on the floor." They also documented flies "going in and out"

of pickle vats and "black patches of mold" on a ceiling. One inspector detailed blood puddled on the floor and "a rancid smell in the cooler." Plant staff were repeatedly notified that they had failed to meet requirements, the documents showed.

"I think it is disgusting and shameful," said Garshon Morgenstein, whose 88-year-old father, Gunter, died July 18 from a listeria infection traced to Boar's Head liverwurst. "I'm just even more in shock that this was allowed to happen."

The plant was inspected by Virginia officials through a partnership with the U.S. Food Safety and Inspection Service. When problems were found, Boar's Head took "corrective actions in keeping with FSIS regulations," officials said. Federal reports show no enforcement actions against Boar's Head between January and March, the latest records available.

The documents, first reported by CBS News, didn't contain any test results that confirmed listeria in the factory. The bacteria thrive on floors, walls and drains, in cracks and crevices and hard-to-clean parts of food processing equipment. Pests such as flies can easily spread the bacteria through a plant and the germ can survive in biofilms — thin, slimy collections of bacteria that are difficult to eradicate.

Officials with Boar's Head did not respond to a request for comment from The Associated Press, but a spokesperson told CBS that the company regrets the impact of the recall and prioritizes food safety. On its website, the company said all the issues raised by government inspectors were addressed immediately.

Barbara Kowalczyk, director of the Institute for Food Safety and Nutrition Security at George Washington University, said the records raise a lot of red flags.

"It makes me wonder why additional actions weren't taken by management of that company and the regulators," she said.

Donald Schaffner, a Rutgers food science and safety expert who reviewed the inspection documents, said reports of condensation throughout the plant are concerning because that's a known risk factor for listeria.

"The fact that they are having the same problems over and over again weeks apart is an indication that they really struggling to keep up with sanitation," Schaffner said.

Listeria infections cause about 1,600 illnesses each year in the U.S. and about 260 people die, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. People older than 65, those who are pregnant or who have weakened immune systems are most vulnerable.

Bill Marler, a Seattle lawyer who has sued companies over food poisoning outbreaks, said the conditions described in the inspections reports were the worst he's seen in three decades.

Garshon Morgenstein said his father bought Boar's Head products because of the company's reputation.

"For the rest of my life, I have to remember my father's death every time I see or hear the name Boar's Head," he said.

Ukraine says one of its Western-donated F-16 warplanes has crashed

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — One of the handful of F-16 warplanes that Ukraine has received from its Western partners to help fight Russia's invasion has crashed, Ukraine's Army General Staff said Thursday. The pilot died.

The fighter jet went down on Monday, when Russia launched a major missile and drone barrage at Ukraine, a military statement posted on Facebook said. Four of those Russian missiles were shot down by F-16s, the statement said.

The crash was the first reported loss of an F-16 in Ukraine, where they arrived at the end of last month. At least six of the warplanes are believed to have been delivered.

The Defense Ministry has opened an investigation into the crash.

The Ukrainian air force in a Facebook post identified the pilot as Col. Alexei "Moonfish" Mes, who "saved Ukrainians from deadly Russian missiles, unfortunately, at the cost of your own life."

Moonfish and a fellow Ukrainian pilot, Andrii "Juice" Pilshchykov, made an early, public visit to the U.S.

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in June 2022 to press lawmakers and media to send Ukraine F-16 fighter jets and they both continued to serve as public faces for Ukraine's battle to secure its airspace. Juice was killed in an August 2023 accident.

"When I met with Ukraine pilots Juice and Moonfish I had a sick feeling they wouldn't make it through the war," former U.S. congressman Adam Kingzinger posted on "X", formerly known as Twitter. "They fought like hell for Ukraine, and the F16."

Earlier Thursday, Russia conducted a heavy aerial attack on Ukraine for the third time in four days, again launching missiles and scores of drones that mostly were intercepted, Ukraine's air force said.

Russian forces fired five missiles and 74 Shahed drones at Ukrainian targets, an air force statement said. Air defenses stopped two missiles and 60 drones, and 14 other drones presumably fell before reaching their target, it said.

Authorities in the capital, Kyiv, said debris of destroyed drones fell in three districts of the city, causing minor damage to civilian infrastructure but no injuries.

Russia's relentless and unnerving long-range strikes on civilian areas have been a feature of the war since it invaded its neighbor in February 2022.

Belgium, Denmark the Netherlands and Norway — all NATO members — have committed to providing Ukraine with more than 60 of the planes. That number is dwarfed by the Russian jet fighter fleet, which is around 10 times larger.

Ukraine needs at least 130 F-16 fighter jets to neutralize Russian air power, Kyiv officials say.

U.S. officials told The Associated Press at the end of last month that the first of a batch of F-16s promised by European countries had arrived in Ukraine.

Military analysts have said their arrival won't be a game-changer in the war, given Russia's massive air force and sophisticated air defense systems. But Ukrainian officials welcomed them as offering an opportunity to hit back at Russia's air superiority.

Ukraine has until now been using Soviet-era warplanes, and its pilots underwent intense training on the F-16s in the West for months. The usual training period is three years.

U.S. President Joe Biden granted authorization in August 2023 for the U.S.-built warplanes to be sent to Ukraine. That came after months of pressure from Kyiv and internal debate in the U.S. administration where officials feared the move could escalate tensions with the Kremlin.

The F-16s can fly up to twice the speed of sound and have a maximum range of more than 2,000 miles (3,200 kilometers). They can also fire modern weapons used by NATO countries.

Ukrainian officials have recently become more vocal in their long-standing insistence that Western countries supporting their war effort should scrap restrictions on what Ukraine is allowed to target inside Russia with long-range weapons they have provided.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy renewed his pleas for Western allies to untie his hands in deciding what to strike on Russian soil.

"All our partners should be more active — much more active — in countering Russian terror," Zelenskyy said late Wednesday. "We continue to insist that their determination now — lifting the restrictions on long-range strikes for Ukraine now — will help us to end the war as soon as possible in a fair way for Ukraine and the world as a whole."

The European Union's top diplomat on Thursday backed Zelenskyy's push for international backers to end their limits.

Ukraine has deployed domestically produced drones to strike Russia.

The Russian military said Thursday it had thwarted an overnight attack on Crimea. The Russian Defense Ministry said its forces destroyed three Ukrainian sea drones aimed at the Black Sea peninsula that Moscow annexed from Ukraine in 2014.

The Russia-installed governor of Sevastopol Mikhail Razvozhayev added that four Ukrainian aerial drones and three sea drones were destroyed "at a significant distance" from the peninsula's shore.

In the meantime, Ukraine's Army General Staff acknowledged Thursday Ukraine's involvement in strikes this week on oil depots deep inside Russia, where blazes broke out.

The attacks in the Rostov and Kirov regions were part of Ukraine's effort to disrupt logistical infrastruc-

ture supporting Russia's war machine.

Justice Department watchdog finds failures in FBI's handling of child sex abuse cases

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The FBI has failed to report some child sexual abuse allegations to local law enforcement or social service agencies even after changes prompted by its handling of the case against former USA Gymnastics team doctor Larry Nassar, according to a Justice Department watchdog report released Thursday.

In a review brought on by the FBI's failures to promptly investigate Nassar, the inspector general found serious problems persist that run the risk of child sexual abuse allegations falling through the cracks as overworked agents juggle dozens of cases at a time. In one case, a victim was abused for 15 months after the FBI first received a tip about a registered sex offender, the report said.

"This report makes clear that the FBI is simply not doing its job when it comes to protecting our children from the monsters among us who stalk them," said John Manly, a lawyer who represents victims of Nassar. "Despite years of promises and numerous congressional hearings it's now clear that the Larry Nassar scandal could happen again today."

A senior FBI official acknowledged that the bureau has made mistakes in investigating crimes against children but said the "vast majority of work" has been handled appropriately.

"Ensuring the safety and security of children is not just a priority for the FBI; it is a solemn duty that we are committed to fulfilling with the highest standards. The FBI's efforts combating crimes against children are among the most critical and demanding undertakings we do," the FBI said in a statement.

The inquiry follows a scathing 2021 report that found that FBI's failure to take action against Nassar allowed the doctor to continue to prey on victims for months before his 2016 arrest. The FBI put in place many changes, but the inspector general says more are needed to protect children.

In a review of more than 300 cases between 2021 and 2023, the inspector general flagged 42 cases for the FBI that required "immediate attention" because there was no evidence of recent investigative steps taken or because of other concerns, according to the report.

The inspector general found no evidence that the FBI followed rules requiring allegations to be reported to local law enforcement in about 50 percent of the cases. When the FBI did report an allegation to law enforcement or social service agencies, it followed FBI policy to report it within 24 hours in only 43 percent of the cases, according to the report.

The FBI accepted all of the findings and recommendations of the report. Among the changes the FBI is committed to is the development of a training program for investigators and supervisors focused not only on investigative techniques but also on the bureau's own policies and procedures.

Most of the incidents that the inspector general flagged to the bureau "reflected the failure to properly document completed investigative steps or involved investigations where no additional action was necessary," Michael Nordwall, FBI executive assistant director, wrote in a letter included with the report.

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Dick Durbin said the panel will hold a hearing on the FBI's mishandling of child sexual abuse allegations later this year.

"The FBI's failures enabling Larry Nassar's abuse of young victims continue to remain a stain on the Bureau," the Democrat from Illinois said.

Even while acknowledging errors, the FBI cited the "overwhelming" burden on agents tasked with investigating crimes against children given the conduct involved, an influx in tips flooding in to law enforcement, increased use of encrypted technology to conceal the offenses and budget cuts.

Citing one agent who was juggling about 60 investigations, the inspector general said special agents "must constantly triage their caseload." The inspector general said the FBI needs to come up with a plan to tackle the growing number of cases to ensure that agents are able to manage the cases on their plate.

The report released in 2021 faulted the FBI for failing to treat Nassar's case with the "utmost serious-

ness and urgency," and then making numerous errors and violating policies when it did finally swing into action. Nassar pleaded guilty in 2017 to sexually assaulting gymnasts and other athletes with his hands under the guise of medical treatment for hip and leg injuries.

The FBI has described the actions of the officials involved in the Nassar investigation as "inexcusable and a discredit" to the organization. In April, the Justice Department announced a \$138.7 million settlement with more than 100 people who accused the FBI of grossly mishandling the allegations against Nassar.

A baby in Gaza has a strain of polio linked to mistakes in eradication campaign, experts say

By MARIA CHENG AP Medical Writer

LONDON (AP) — The baby in Gaza who was recently paralyzed by polio was infected with a mutated strain of the virus that vaccinated people shed in their waste, according to scientists who say the case is the result of "an unqualified failure" of public health policy.

The infection, which marked the first detection of polio in the war-torn Palestinian territory in more than 25 years, paralyzed the lower part of one leg in the unvaccinated 10-month-old child. The baby boy was one of hundreds of thousands of children who missed vaccinations because of the fighting between Israel and Hamas.

Scientists who have been monitoring polio outbreaks said the baby's illness showed the failures of a global effort by the World Health Organization and its partners to fix serious problems in their otherwise largely successful eradication campaign, which has nearly wiped out the highly infectious disease. Separately, a draft report by experts deemed the WHO effort a failure and "a severe setback."

The polio strain in question evolved from a weakened virus that was originally part of an oral vaccine credited with preventing millions of children worldwide from being paralyzed. But that virus was removed from the vaccine in 2016 in hopes of preventing vaccine-derived outbreaks.

Public health authorities knew that decision would leave people unprotected against that particular strain, but they thought they had a plan to ward off and quickly contain any outbreaks. Instead, the move resulted in a surge of thousands of cases.

"It was a really horrible strategy," said Columbia University virologist Vincent Racaniello, who was not involved with the report or the WHO. "The decision to switch vaccines was based on an incorrect assumption, and the result is now we have more polio and more paralyzed children."

A draft copy of the report commissioned by the WHO and independent experts said the plan underestimated the amount of the strain in the environment and overestimated how well officials would be able to squash outbreaks.

The plan led to vaccine-linked polio outbreaks in 43 countries that paralyzed more than 3,300 children, the report concluded.

Even before the Gaza case was detected, officials reviewing the initiative to tinker with the vaccine concluded that "the worst-case scenario has materialized," the report said.

The report has not yet been published, and some changes will likely be made before the final version is released next month, the WHO said.

The strain that infected the baby in Gaza had lingered in the environment and mutated into a version capable of starting outbreaks. It was traced to polio viruses spreading last year in Egypt, according to genetic sequencing, the WHO said.

In 2022, vaccine-linked polio viruses were found to be spreading in Britain, Israel and the U.S., where an unvaccinated man was paralyzed in upstate New York.

Scientists now worry that the emergence of polio in a war zone with an under-immunized population could fuel further spread.

Racaniello said the failure to track polio carefully and to sufficiently protect children against the strain removed from the vaccine has had devastating consequences.

"Only about 1% of polio cases are symptomatic, so 99% of infections are silently spreading the disease,"

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he said.

The oral polio vaccine, which contains a weakened live virus, was withdrawn in the U.S. in 2000. Doctors continued to vaccinate children and eventually moved to an injected vaccine, which uses a dead virus and does not come with the risk that polio will be present in human waste. Such waste-borne virus could mutate into a form that triggers outbreaks in unvaccinated people.

The report's authors faulted leaders at the WHO and its partners, saying they were unable or unwilling "to recognize the seriousness of the evolving problem and take corrective action."

WHO spokesman Oliver Rosenbauer acknowledged that the vaccine strategy "exacerbated" the risk of epidemics linked to the vaccine.

He said in an email that immunization "was not implemented in such a way to rapidly stop outbreaks or to prevent new strains from emerging." Rosenbauer said not hitting vaccination targets was the biggest risk for allowing vaccine-linked viruses to emerge.

"You need to reach the children with the vaccines ... regardless of which vaccines are used," he said.

The WHO estimates that 95% of the population needs to be immunized against polio to stop outbreaks. The U.N. health agency said only about 90% of Gaza's population was vaccinated earlier this year.

To try to stop polio in Gaza and the wider region, the WHO and its partners plan two rounds of vaccination campaigns later this week and next month, aiming to cover 640,000 children. Authorities will use a newer version of the oral polio vaccine that targets the problematic strain. The weakened live virus in the new vaccine is less likely to cause vaccine-derived outbreaks, but they are still possible.

The WHO said Thursday that it had reached an agreement with Israel for limited pauses in fighting in Gaza to allow for the vaccinations. The agency's representative in the Palestinian territories said the first three-day pause would start Sunday in central Gaza. That will be followed by another three-day pause in southern Gaza and then another in northern Gaza. The pauses were to last eight or nine hours each day.

Racaniello said it was "unethical" that the WHO and its partners were using a vaccine that is unlicensed in rich countries precisely because it can increase the risk of polio in unvaccinated children.

The oral polio vaccine, which has reduced infections globally by more than 99%, is easy to make and distribute. Children require just two drops per dose that can be administered by volunteers. The oral vaccine is better at stopping transmission than the injected version, and it is cheaper and easier to administer.

But as the number of polio cases caused by the wild virus have plummeted in recent years, health officials have been struggling to contain the increasing spread of vaccine-linked cases, which now comprise the majority of polio infections in more than a dozen countries, in addition to Afghanistan and Pakistan, where transmission of the wild virus has never been stopped.

"This is the result of the Faustian bargain we made when we decided to use" the oral polio vaccine, said Dr. Paul Offit, director of the Vaccine Education Center at the University of Philadelphia. "If we really want to eradicate polio, then we need to stop using the vaccine with live (weakened) virus."

The Chiefs' pursuit of a 3-peat is the hot topic among many storylines entering 2024 NFL season

By ROB MAADDI AP Pro Football Writer

Patrick Mahomes and the Chiefs chasing history will be the hottest topic throughout the NFL season.

Kansas City's three-peat quest is only one of many interesting storylines.

Aaron Rodgers is back in New York after his first season with the Jets lasted only four plays. The 40-year-old four-time NFL MVP is returning from a torn Achilles tendon and aiming to help the Jets end the league's longest active playoff drought.

No. 1 overall pick Caleb Williams takes over for the Bears, looking to end Chicago's lengthy search for a franchise quarterback.

Fellow rookie QB Jayden Daniels leads the Commanders, who begin their second season under a new ownership group that saved Washington from Dan Snyder.

Russell Wilson tries to revive his career in Pittsburgh, becoming the third different QB the Steelers turn

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to since Ben Roethlisberger last played three years ago.

Jim Harbaugh returned to the NFL to coach the Los Angeles Chargers after winning a national title at Michigan. With Justin Herbert under center, Harbaugh doesn't have to start from scratch.

His brother, John Harbaugh, and the Baltimore Ravens have unfinished business. Two-time NFL MVP Lamar Jackson led the Ravens to the league's best record, but they couldn't beat Mahomes and the Chiefs in the playoffs.

The pressure is on Josh Allen to deliver in Buffalo after the Bills lost in the divisional round for the third straight season.

The San Francisco 49ers' bid to return to the Super Bowl after falling just short against the Chiefs could be derailed by contract disputes. All-Pro left tackle Trent Williams and standout wide receiver Brandon Aiyuk still haven't resolved their issues.

Nick Sirianni stayed put in Philadelphia despite a late-season collapse that had the Eagles go from 10-1 to blown out by Tampa Bay in a wild-card game. Jalen Hurts is learning a new offensive system again but another playmaker, Saquon Barkley, joined a star-studded cast that surrounds him.

The Cowboys didn't do much in the offseason after another playoff failure. Coach Mike McCarthy enters the final season of his contract and Dak Prescott is planning to play out the last year of his deal unless he gets an extension. Jerry Jones did open up his checkbook for All-Pro wide receiver CeeDee Lamb, ending a long holdout.

Dan Campbell's Lions are a popular pick to make their first trip to the Super Bowl after his fourth-down gambles cost Detroit a shot last season.

Jordan Love got paid in Green Bay and looks to build off his successful first season leading the Packers.

Trevor Lawrence also joined the \$55 million club (average annual salary) in Jacksonville. The Jaguars have to rebound from a disappointing finish after failing to reach the playoffs despite an 8-3 start.

C.J. Stroud took the Houston Texans from worst to first and now they seek to take another step in a packed AFC.

Deshaun Watson watched Joe Flacco lead the Browns to the playoffs and fans in Cleveland are running out of patience waiting for him to live up to expectations.

A healthy and blonde Joe Burrow is back in Cincinnati, giving the Bengals reason for optimism.

Kirk Cousins joined the Falcons along with new coach Raheem Morris, taking aim at dethroning the Buccaneers in the NFC South.

Tampa Bay is running it back after re-signing Baker Mayfield, Mike Evans and several key players from a team that far exceeded expectations last year.

The Dolphins made Tua Tagovailoa a \$53 million a year QB, putting faith in him to lead Miami to its first playoff win in 24 years.

Bill Belichick moved onto a television career with Jerod Mayo starting a new era in New England. The Patriots hope Drake Maye brings a fraction of Tom Brady's success.

The Broncos turn to rookie Bo Nix, who seems like a fit for Sean Payton's offense.

Antonio Pierce gets a full season in charge in Las Vegas to show what he can do with the Raiders.

The Colts are counting on Anthony Richardson to stay healthy and put them in playoff contention.

Brian Callahan takes over in Tennessee as the rebuilding Titans give Will Levis a shot to be their quarterback of the future.

Daniel Jones and Brian Daboll have plenty to prove with the New York Giants.

The Vikings lost J.J. McCarthy for the season, assuring Sam Darnold gets yet another chance to be a No. 1 QB. He's got Justin Jefferson and more talent than he had with the Jets and Panthers.

As for Carolina, new coach Dave Canales is tasked with getting the best out of Bryce Young. He already did it for Mayfield and Geno Smith.

The Saints haven't been to the playoffs since Payton and Drew Brees left. Dennis Allen and Derek Carr may not get anymore chances in New Orleans if they don't get it done this season.

Kyler Murray and Marvin Harrison Jr. team up, making the Cardinals a sneaky team in the NFC.

Matthew Stafford remains with the Rams but Los Angeles must replace defensive superstar Aaron

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Donald. Sean McVay is coming off perhaps his best coaching season and nobody is doubting his ability to keep the team in the playoff mix.

The Seahawks begin a new era without Pete Carroll. Mike Macdonald leads a Seattle team that needed a new defensive approach.

Eighteen weeks and 272 games to determine the teams that'll play in January to figure out which two face off in February for the Vince Lombardi trophy.

All of it kicks off with the Ravens-Chiefs facing off in a rematch of the AFC championship game. Then it's the Eagles-Packers playing on a Friday night in the first NFL game in Brazil.

ABC's rules for the Harris-Trump debate include muted mics when candidates aren't speaking

By MEG KINNARD and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Next month's debate between Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump won't have an audience, live microphones when candidates aren't speaking, or written notes, according to rules that ABC News, the host network, shared this week with both campaigns.

A copy of the rules was provided to the Associated Press on Thursday by a senior Trump campaign official on condition of anonymity ahead of the network's announcement. The Harris campaign on Thursday insisted it was still discussing the muting of mics with ABC.

The parameters now in place for the Sept. 10 debate are essentially the same as they were for the June debate between Trump and President Joe Biden, a disastrous performance for the incumbent Democrat that fueled his exit from the campaign. It is the only debate that's been firmly scheduled and could be the only time voters see Harris and Trump go head to head before the November general election.

The back-and-forth over the debate rules reached a fever pitch this week, particularly on the issue of whether the microphones would be muted between turns speaking.

Harris' campaign had advocated for live microphones for the whole debate, saying in a statement that the practice would "fully allow for substantive exchanges between the candidates."

Biden's campaign had made microphone muting condition of his decision to accept any debates this year, a decision some aides now regret, saying voters were shielded from hearing Trump's outbursts during the debate.

"It's interesting that Trump's handlers keep insisting on muting him, despite the candidate himself saying the opposite," Harris spokesman Ian Sams said. "Why won't they just do what the candidate wants?"

Representatives for Trump — who initially scoffed at the substitution of Harris into a debate arrangement he initially made with Biden in the race — had claimed that Harris sought "a seated debate, with notes, and opening statements," specifications her campaign denied.

According to ABC News, the candidates will stand behind lecterns, will not make opening statements and will not be allowed to bring notes during the 90-minute debate. David Muir and Linsey Davis will moderate the event at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia.

Jacoby Brissett is selected Patriots starting quarterback for Week 1 against Cincinnati

By KYLE HIGHTOWER AP Sports Writer

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. (AP) — Patriots coach Jerod Mayo is putting the keys to his offense in the hands of the veteran quarterback on his roster over the franchise's potential quarterback of the future.

Mayo selected Jacoby Brissett as the starting quarterback for New England's season opener at Cincinnati, one of the biggest decisions of the rookie head coach's tenure.

Brissett gets the nod over rookie first-round draft pick Drake Maye, who he shared snaps with throughout training camp and the preseason.

"It's been a lot of work. A lot of long days and long nights — the journey to get to this point," Brissett

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said. "I'm grateful for this opportunity, but I'm also excited for it."

Mayo said he spoke to Brissett and Mayo separately and later together to inform them of his decision. Mayo told the team Thursday morning during a team meeting.

"There were a lot of factors that led to this choice," Mayo said. "I think the hard part is thinking in the short term and the long term at the same time. As an organization, though, we feel like Jacoby gives us our best chance to win."

But Mayo made it clear that they aren't heading into the season planning to shuffle between quarterbacks.

"As an organization we're 100% behind Jacoby. There is no, 'we've got a guy right here, we've got a guy right there,'" Mayo said. "As long as Jacoby is going out there and performing the way that we all have confidence in him doing, then he'll be our quarterback this season."

Maye said he'll "prepare like the starter" while helping the team in whatever way he can as Brissett's backup. He also brushed off the idea of him feeling disappointed by Mayo's decision.

"Obviously, I want to play, the competitive edge in me," said Mayo, the No. 3 pick out of North Carolina. "At the same time, I understand the situation."

Brissett, who heading into his ninth NFL season, signed a one-year, \$8 million deal with the Patriots in March. It reunited him with the team that drafted him in the third round in 2016.

Brissett spent just one initial season in New England, starting two games while Tom Brady served his four-game "Deflategate" suspension. After being traded to Indianapolis by the Patriots in 2017, Brissett spent four years with the Colts and had one-year stops in Miami, Cleveland and Washington.

He's appeared in 79 games with 48 starts along the way, growing into a respected veteran in the league.

It makes the return to New England as the opening week starter at age 31 meaningful for Brissett.

"Nothing I take for granted, that's for sure," he said.

Brissett's experience was valuable to Mayo and new executive vice president of player personnel Eliot Wolf, who wanted to have a proven veteran on the roster to help mentor Mayo.

While Mayo acknowledged earlier this week that he felt Mayo had outplayed Brissett this preseason, he said other factors shifted the pendulum toward Brissett, most notably his overall experience.

That will be particularly important early this season as the coaching staff continues to work out consistency issues with an offensive line that will begin the season without starting left guard Cole Strange, who will start on the physically unable to perform list with a knee issue.

Maye feels he presented his best case to win the job.

"I felt like I had a good camp. I feel like I'm throwing it well. Played well throughout the preseason," he said. "So, other than that, keep my head down and keep working. ... I don't think anything's changed. I came into this camp working and studying hard to be the starter. Nothing's going to change. I'm still one play away. I have to be ready for all circumstances. I'm here to help Jacoby."

Brissett said he feels like Mayo will only continue to get better.

"He's done a great job. Dating back to when he first got here to where he is now is light years difference," Brissett said. "I'm excited for his future. He's going to be, obviously, a good quarterback in this league. He just kind of came up to me and was like, whatever you need I'm here for it. And it's the same thing for him. Whatever he needs from me, I'll do the same."

At this church in Portugal, parishioners surf before they worship

By LUIS ANDRES HENAO Associated Press

PORTO, Portugal (AP) — Porto takes pride in its beaches, old churches covered in blue-and-white tiles and its famous port wine named after the city in northern Portugal.

It's also home to a different kind of church — located on its beachfront suburbs along the Atlantic coast near a fishing town known for some of the world's largest waves. Parishioners attend in boardshorts, T-shirts, flip flops — even barefoot.

They surf before they worship.

Surf Church was established by a Brazilian-born Portuguese surfer and ordained Baptist pastor to spread

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the Gospel in a once-devoutly Catholic country — and top surfing destination — where about half of young people today say they have no religion.

In less than a decade, it has grown from a few families to dozens of parishioners representing more than a dozen nationalities from across the world. Their motto: “We love waves. We love Jesus.”

“When you’re waiting for the right wave it’s the calm before the swell, and that’s a peaceful moment that sometimes is seconds, sometimes minutes,” said the Rev. Samuel Cianelli, Surf Church’s pastor. “This peaceful moment is, for me, my deepest connection with God.”

On a recent Sunday, he wore a bright orange wetsuit — instead of traditional priestly vestments — and lay belly down on a surfboard on the powdery sand of Matosinhos beach to show young parishioners huddled around him how to paddle, “pop up” and catch a wave.

“I always loved waves, and when I see people learning how to surf, it makes my heart so happy,” said Uliana Yarova, 17, after she walked out of the same waters where — a week later — Cianelli baptized her and her brother in a joyous ceremony. They wore matching white T-shirts that read: “I chose Jesus.”

The Ukrainian teenager fled her war-torn country with her family after Russia’s invasion and found refuge in Porto and the Surf Church.

“When you’re paddling on the surfboard waiting for the wave, and you stand, you might start to doubt and feel like you’ll fall,” she said. “And then, when it goes right, you feel confidence and peace — you feel nature and how God is holding you on that wave.”

The church members — mostly Generation Z and millennials — walked in and out of the waters smiling, carrying red and turquoise surfboards branded with Surf Church stickers. Some sported tattoos of the cross — the only other visible sign that set them apart from other surfers who shared the waves.

In preparation for worship, they rinsed the surfboards and carried them to a white van that a few missionaries in bathing suits drove to nearby Surf Church.

Churches in Porto, Portugal’s second-largest city, include the majestic cathedral with its silver altar, the so-called “Chapel of the Souls” with its façade of thousands of illustrated white and blue tiles, and São Francisco, with its intricate wood carvings covered in gold dust.

Surf Church’s garage is instead painted with a mural of a gold-colored Volkswagen camper van with a blue surfboard strapped to its roof.

After surfing, sandal-wearing members of the church hung wetsuits next to a rack lined with boards. Some rinsed their feet with a garden hose or took a quick shower before they gathered to pray and sing in a cozy living room decorated with roof-hanging surfboards and a mural of surfers riding waves.

Church member Hannah Kruckels said she never felt as welcome attending a much larger traditional church in her native Switzerland. That changed when she arrived as an intern in 2020 to Surf Church, where she feels at home and where she learned how to surf.

“It’s an important part of spirituality to be connected to something bigger. In this case for us, it’s God, but it can be the ocean, too,” she said after a Sunday service that she attended with her Portuguese boyfriend, who is also a surfer. “That’s what makes surfing a spiritual experience.”

Surfing had religious significance in Hawaii, where it was born long before the arrival of Europeans.

“After prayers and offerings, master craftsmen made boards from sacred koa or wililili trees, and some had heiaus (temples) on the beach where devotees could pray for waves,” William Finnegan writes in “Barbarian Days: A Surfing Life.”

Men and women of all ages and from all social levels — from royalty to commoners — surfed. But when 19th century Calvinist missionaries arrived in the islands, they were appalled by what they believed was a barbaric spectacle and banned surfing.

It only reemerged decades later thanks to Hawaiians like Duke Kahanamoku, the Olympic gold medal swimmer who is regarded as the father of modern surfing.

Surfers were still “typecast as truants and vandals,” Finnegan wrote. Even in modern era, some beach towns banned surfing.

For long, surfing continued to be frowned upon as a counterculture movement or a mere pastime — and

for decades it remained little-known outside California and Hawaii.

But the tides have changed. Surfing has spread across the globe as a professional and most recently an Olympic sport, as well a multibillion-dollar industry.

Portugal has emerged as one of the world's top surfing destinations — home to some of the biggest waves for pros in the fishing hamlet of Nazaré and for uncrowded waves for beginners along the beaches near Porto.

"People from all over come to Portugal because they want to experience what the beaches of Portugal have to offer," said Cianelli, wearing a loose shirt covered with designs of palm trees. "We found in this a good strategy to start a church that combines Jesus and surf."

He grew up swimming competitively in the Brazilian port city of Santos, where soccer legend Pele played most of his career. After an injury kept Cianelli from competing at the age of 15, he took up surfing.

At the same time, he grew closer to his Christian faith. He attended seminary, was ordained and served as a youth pastor.

During a conference a 2013 in Brazil, he met Troy Pitney, an American missionary and surfer. They began to dream about planting churches in Portugal.

They wanted to use Portugal's growing surf culture to attract members in the once fiercely Catholic country where religious practice is falling, especially among the young, while a rising wave of migrants from Brazil and other South American countries continues to plant evangelical churches.

After moving with their families to Porto, they launched Surf Church in April 2015. Their strategy was simple: catch waves and invite other surfers and beach lovers to read the Bible, sing and pray.

"We didn't know what we were doing," Cianelli said. "We just had a love for Jesus. We were all surfers."

They began to meet in an apartment, and from 2016-2020 they worshipped at a gym near the beach, "just to break the concept of what church means," Cianelli said.

"The building is about the people. You could be in the ocean, you could be at the beach, you could be inside of a gym or someone's living room. Or now, where we are in the space that belongs to us. It doesn't matter the place, what is important is the people — this is the real meaning of church."

They were also intentional in their words: They still don't use the word "igreja" — Portuguese for church — to avoid connotations of the cavernous spaces with emptying wooden church pews.

There's plenty of "gorgeous, historical" church buildings in Porto, Cianelli said. He respects their historical role, but says that what his congregation seeks is a modern-day "living church made by people."

The pillars of his church remain the same: surfing, community and the Bible. It took them nine years to go over the New Testament, word-by-word, and they've recently started with the Old Testament.

Their dream, he said, is to plant surf churches — or churches linked to mountain biking, soccer or any passion that brings people together in sport and prayer — across the world.

"We're not just surfers anymore," he said.

Ballot measures in 41 states give voters a say on abortion and other tough questions

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

Life, death, crime and taxes will be on ballots for voters to decide this fall.

More than 140 measures are going before voters in 41 states during the general election alongside choices for president and other top offices. The ballot questions will give voters a chance to directly decide some consequential issues, instead of deferring to their elected representatives.

Some ballot measures also could draw more people to the polls, potentially impacting results for the presidency in swing states, control of Congress and the outcomes for closely contested state offices.

Arizona, Colorado and California have the greatest number of ballot measures. More could still get placed on ballots in some states. And some measures could get bumped from ballots if pending lawsuits are successful.

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Here's a look at some of this year's top ballot issues.

Abortion

Initiatives dealing with pregnancy have surged in response to the 2022 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that ended a nationwide right to abortion and shifted the issue to states.

At least nine states will consider constitutional amendments enshrining abortion rights — Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Maryland, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada and South Dakota. Most would guarantee a right to abortion until fetal viability and allow it later for the health of the pregnant woman.

Nebraska is the only state with a competing measure. It would place into the constitution the state's current 12-week abortion ban with exceptions for rape, incest and to save the life of the pregnant woman. If both pass, the one with the most votes will take effect.

A proposed amendment in New York doesn't specifically mention abortion but would prohibit discrimination based on "pregnancy outcomes" and "reproductive healthcare and autonomy."

Assisted suicide

A proposed West Virginia amendment to prohibit medically assisted suicide is the only such measure this year. Physician-assisted suicides are allowed in 10 states and Washington, D.C.

Citizen voting

Republican-led legislatures in eight states proposed amendments declaring that only citizens can vote.

A 1996 U.S. law prohibits noncitizens from voting in federal elections, and many states already have similar laws. Yet specific constitutional bans are being proposed in Idaho, Iowa, Kentucky, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina and Wisconsin. The measures are part of a Republican emphasis on immigration and election integrity.

Though there is no indication of widespread voting by noncitizens, some municipalities in California, Maryland, Vermont and Washington, D.C. do allow it for certain local elections.

Crime

A California proposal would toughen punishments for repeat shoplifters and fentanyl dealers and create a new drug court treatment program for people with multiple drug possession convictions. The measure would reverse portions of a 2014 initiative that reduced penalties for nonviolent drug and property crimes to address prison overcrowding. The latest measure comes after a surge of groups committing smash-and-grab thefts at stores.

An Arizona measure would require life imprisonment for certain child sex trafficking convictions. Two Colorado proposals would deny bail in first-degree murder cases and lengthen mandatory prison terms before parole eligibility for people convicted of certain violent crimes.

Elections

Measures in Idaho, Montana, Nevada and South Dakota would create open primary elections, in which candidates from all parties appear on the same ballot and a certain number advance to the general election. Arizona voters will decide between competing proposals that would require either open primaries or the state's current method of partisan primaries. If both pass, the one with the most votes will take effect.

A Florida measure would expand partisan elections to school boards, reversing a 1998 amendment that made them officially nonpartisan, removing party labels from ballots.

Measures in Idaho, Nevada and Oregon propose ranked choice voting, in which voters rank their preferences for candidates, with votes cast for the lowest-finishing candidates getting reallocated until one person obtains a majority.

Ranked choice voting currently is used in Alaska and Maine. But Alaska voters will consider whether to repeal provisions of a 2020 initiative that instituted open primaries and ranked choice general elections. Missouri's citizens-voting measure also would ban ranked choice voting.

A Connecticut amendment would authorize no-excuse absentee voting. A Nevada proposal would require photo identification to vote in-person or the last four-digits of a driver's license or Social Security number to vote by mail. If approved, the Nevada measure would require a second affirmative vote in 2026 to take effect.

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Taxing weapons

A Colorado proposal would make it the second state after California to impose a sales tax on firearms and ammunition. Revenue would go primarily to crime victims' services. The federal government already taxes sales of guns and ammunition.

Immigration

An Arizona measure would make it a state crime to enter from a foreign country except through official ports of entry, and for someone already in the U.S. illegally to apply for public benefits using false documents. The border crossing measure is similar to a challenged Texas law that the Justice Department says violates federal authority and would create chaos at the border.

Arizona's measure also would make it a felony to sell fentanyl that causes a person's death.

Marijuana

Voters in Florida, North Dakota and South Dakota will decide whether to legalize recreational marijuana for adults. It will be the third vote on the issue in both North Dakota and South Dakota. About half the states currently allow recreational marijuana and about a dozen more allow medical marijuana.

In Massachusetts, an initiative would legalize the possession and supervised use of natural psychedelics, including psilocybin mushrooms.

Marriage

Though the U.S. Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage nationwide in 2015, some states still have unenforceable provisions against it. Measures in California, Colorado and Hawaii would repeal those provisions. The California measure would go further, declaring: "The right to marry is a fundamental right."

Pay and benefits

A California measure would gradually raise the state's minimum wage for all employers to \$18 an hour. Measures in Alaska and Missouri would gradually raise minimum wages to \$15 an hour while also requiring paid sick leave. A Nebraska measure would provide paid sick leave but not change wages.

A Massachusetts measure would gradually raise the minimum wage for tipped employees until it matches the rate for other employees. By contrast, an Arizona measure would let tipped workers be paid 25% less than the minimum wage, so long as tips push their total pay beyond the minimum wage threshold.

Prison labor

Proposals in California and Nevada would repeal constitutional provisions that allow "involuntary servitude" as punishment for crime. Some supporters are seeking to curtail forced prison labor.

Colorado began the trend by revising its constitution in 2018 to ban slavery and involuntary servitude. Utah and Nebraska followed in 2020 and Alabama, Oregon, Tennessee and Vermont in 2022.

Property taxes

North Dakota voters will consider a first-of-its-kind move to eliminate property taxes. If approved, local governments could need more than \$3 billion biennially in replacement revenue from the state, which collects billions in taxes from the fossil fuel industry.

Rising property values also have spurred measures to cap or cut assessed property values or taxes in Colorado, Florida, Georgia and New Mexico.

Arizona has a unique proposal linking property taxes and responses to homelessness. It would let property owners seek property tax refunds if they incur expenses because a local government declined to enforce ordinances against illegal camping, loitering, panhandling, the obstruction of public thoroughfares, public urination or defecation, or the public consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs.

Redistricting

An Ohio initiative would create a citizens commission to handle redistricting for U.S. House and state legislative seats, taking the task away from elected officials. A proposed amendment in Utah would let lawmakers repeal or revise voter-approved initiatives — a response to a state Supreme Court ruling that lawmakers had exceeded their authority by revising a voter-approved redistricting initiative.

Sports betting

Missouri voters will decide whether to legalize sports betting via a measure backed by its professional

sports teams. A total of 38 states and Washington, D.C., already allow sports betting, which has expanded rapidly since the U.S. Supreme Court cleared the way for it in 2018.

Tropical storm Shanshan lashes Japan with torrential rains and strong winds on its crawl northeast

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — A strong storm lashed southern Japan with torrential rain and strong winds Thursday, causing at least three deaths as it started a crawl up the length of the archipelago and raised concerns of flooding, landslides and extensive damage.

Tropical storm Shanshan made landfall Thursday morning as a powerful typhoon on the southern island of Kyushu and then gradually lost strength, though it was still forecast to bring strong winds, high waves and significant rainfall to most of the country, particularly on Kyushu.

About 60 centimeters (nearly 2 feet) of rain fell in parts of Miyazaki prefecture on Kyushu, swelling rivers and threatening floods, the Japan Meteorological Agency said. That 24-hour total was more than the average rainfall for all of August, it said.

By late afternoon Thursday, the storm was moving north at 15 kph (9 mph) and its winds had weakened to 108 kph (67 mph). It is "no longer a powerful typhoon," the agency said.

As disaster risks in the Kyushu region subsided later Thursday, Shanshan started dumping heavy rain on neighboring Shikoku island.

The storm ripped through downtown Miyazaki city on Kyushu, knocking down trees, throwing cars to the side in parking lots and shattering windows of some buildings. The prefectural disaster management task force said about 50 buildings were damaged.

NHK public television showed a swollen river in the popular hot spring town of Yufu in Oita prefecture, just north of Miyazaki, with muddy water splashing against a bridge.

More than 70 people were injured across Kyushu, mostly in Miyazaki and Kagoshima. Some were injured by being thrown to the ground by the storm on their way to shelters, the Fire and Disaster Management Agency said.

About 168,000 households were without power across Kyushu, most of them in Kagoshima prefecture, Kyushu Electric Power Co. said.

About 20,000 people took shelter at municipal community centers, school gymnasiums and other facilities across Kyushu, according to prefectural reports.

Ahead of the storm's arrival, heavy rain triggered a landslide that buried a house in the central city of Gamagori, killing three residents and injuring two others, the city's disaster management department said. On the southern island of Amami, which Shanshan passed, one person was injured by being knocked down by a wind gust while riding a motorcycle, the fire agency said.

Weather and government officials are concerned about extensive damage as the storm slowly sweeps up the Japanese archipelago to the northeast over the next few days, threatening more floods and landslides.

In the Tokyo region, Shinkansen bullet trains connecting Tokyo and Osaka were suspended starting Thursday evening due to heavy rain in the central region. Bullet train service also was to be suspended in parts of the western and central regions on Friday.

Disaster Management Minister Yoshifumi Matsumura said Shanshan could cause "unprecedented" levels of violent winds, high waves, storm surges and heavy rain. At a task force meeting on Wednesday, he urged people, especially older adults, not to hesitate and take shelter whenever there is any safety concern.

Hundreds of domestic flights connecting southwestern cities and islands were canceled Thursday, and bullet trains and some local train services were suspended. As the storm headed northeast, similar steps were taken in parts of the main island of Honshu that were experiencing heavy rain. Postal and delivery services were suspended in the Kyushu region, and supermarkets and other stores planned to close.

Why Russia has struggled to halt Ukraine's incursion in the Kursk region

By The Associated Press undefined

After three weeks of fighting, Russia is still struggling to dislodge Ukrainian forces from the Kursk region, a surprisingly slow and low-key response to the first occupation of its territory since World War II.

It all comes down to Russian manpower and Russian priorities.

With the bulk of its military pressing offensives inside Ukraine, the Kremlin appears to lack enough reserves for now to drive out Kyiv's forces.

President Vladimir Putin doesn't seem to view the attack — or at least, give the impression that he views it — as a grave enough threat to warrant pulling troops from eastern Ukraine's Donbas region, his priority target.

"Putin's focus is on the collapse of the Ukrainian state, which he believes will automatically render any territorial control irrelevant," wrote Tatiana Stanovaya, senior fellow at the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center.

Putin's priorities

Months after launching the full-scale invasion in 2022, Putin illegally annexed the Ukrainian regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson as part of Russian territory, and their full capture has been a top priority. He declared in June that Kyiv must withdraw its forces from parts of those regions it controls as a condition for peace talks, a demand that Ukraine rejects.

"In marshaling forces to meet Ukraine's incursion, Russia is doing all it can to avoid drawing units from its own offensive in the Donbas," said Nigel Gould-Davies of the International Institute of Strategic Studies. "Russia currently judges that it can contain the threat on its own soil without compromising its most important goal in Ukraine."

Even as Ukrainian forces pushed into Kursk on Aug. 6, Russian troops continued their slow advance around the strategic city of Pokrovsk and other parts of the Donetsk area.

"Russia is very keen on continuing the attacks toward Pokrovsk and not taking resources away from Pokrovsk to Kursk," said Nico Lange, senior fellow at the Washington-based Center for European Policy Analysis.

Unlike Pokrovsk, where Ukrainian forces have built extensive fortifications, other parts of Donetsk still under Ukrainian control are less protected and could be significantly more vulnerable to the Russian onslaught if Pokrovsk falls.

Speaking about Kursk in televised meetings with officials, Putin described the incursion as an attempt by Kyiv to slow the Russian campaign in Donetsk, where he said the Russian advance only has accelerated despite events in Kursk.

Russia also has launched a steady barrage of long-range strikes on Ukraine's power grid. An attack Monday on energy facilities was one of the largest of the war, involving over 200 missiles and drones and causing widespread blackouts. It highlighted loopholes in Ukraine's air defenses that are stretched between protecting front-line troops as well as infrastructure.

Playing down the incursion

Focused on capturing Ukraine's four regions, Putin has sought to attach little importance to Kyiv's foray into Kursk.

"Rather than rallying the population against a threat to the motherland, the Kremlin is anxious to downplay the incursion," said Gould-Davies of the London-based IISS.

Faced with the reality of the occupation of Russia's territory, the state propaganda machine has sought to distract attention from the obvious military failure by focusing on government efforts to help over 130,000 residents displaced from their homes.

State-controlled media cast the attack on Kursk as evidence of Kyiv's aggressive intentions and more proof that Russia was justified in invading Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022.

Stanovaya noted that while many Kursk residents could be angry at the Kremlin, the overall nationwide sentiment could actually favor the authorities.

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"While it's certainly a blow to the Kremlin's reputation, it is unlikely to spark a significant rise in social or political discontent among the population," she said. "The Ukrainian attack might actually lead to a rallying around the flag and a rise in anti-Ukrainian and anti-Western sentiments."

A limited Kremlin response

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has said the push into the Kursk region is meant to create a buffer zone to impede Russian attacks. His chief military officer, Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyi, said Kyiv's forces control nearly 1,300 square kilometers (about 500 square miles) and about 100 settlements in the region, a claim that couldn't be independently verified.

With the combat situation in Kursk in flux, unlike the static front lines in Donetsk, Ukrainian units could roam the region without establishing a lasting presence in many of the settlements they claim.

Observers say Russia does not have enough well-coordinated resources to chase the Ukrainian forces in Kursk.

"Moscow's efforts to counter the new Ukrainian offensive appear limited to sending units from all over Russia, including a proportion of militia and irregular forces," said Ben Barry, senior fellow for land warfare at the IISS, in a commentary.

Until the Kursk incursion, Putin has refrained from using conscripts in the war to avoid a public backlash. Young conscripts drafted for a compulsory one-year tour of duty have served away from the front, and those deployed to protect the border in the Kursk region became easy prey for Ukraine's battle-hardened mechanized infantry units. Hundreds were captured, and 115 were exchanged for Ukrainian troops over the weekend.

Commentators observed that Putin also is reluctant to call up more reservists, fearing domestic destabilization like what happened when he ordered a highly unpopular mobilization of 300,000 in response to a Ukrainian counteroffensive in 2022. Hundreds of thousands fled Russia to avoid being sent to combat.

Since then, the Kremlin has bolstered its forces in Ukraine with volunteers attracted by relatively high wages, but that flow has ebbed in recent months.

It would take tens of thousands of troops to fully dislodge the Ukrainian force, estimated at 10,000, that used the region's dense forests as cover.

Clearly lacking resources for such a massive operation, Russia for now has focused on stemming deeper Ukrainian advances by sealing roads and targeting Kyiv's reserves — tactics that have been partially successful.

Ukraine, meanwhile, has confounded the Russian military by destroying bridges across the Seym River, disrupting logistics for some Russian units in the region and creating conditions for establishing a pocket of control.

Lange predicted Ukrainian troops could use the river to carve out a buffer zone.

"I would expect the Ukrainians to find some few more choke points for Russian logistics and infrastructure, not necessarily only bridges, and take them under control," he said.

The risks for Ukraine

By capturing a chunk of Russian territory, Ukraine has embarrassed the Kremlin and reshaped the battlefield. But diverting some of the country's most capable forces from the east is a gamble for Kyiv.

"This all carries considerable risk, particularly if an effort to over-stretch Russian forces results in over-stretching the smaller Ukrainian forces," according to Barry of the IISS.

An attempt to create a foothold in Kursk would further extend the more than 1,000-kilometer (over 600-mile) front line, adding to the challenges faced by the undermanned and outgunned Ukrainian forces. Defending positions inside Russia would raise serious logistical problems, with the extended supply lines becoming easy targets.

"The Russian system is very hierarchical and stiff, so it always takes them a significant amount of time to adapt to a new situation," Lange said, "but we will have to see how Ukraine can sustain there, once Russia has adapted and comes with full force."

Telegram CEO Durov faces preliminary charges in France of allowing crime on messaging app

By BARBARA SURK and ANGELA CHARLTON Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — French authorities handed preliminary charges to Telegram CEO Pavel Durov on Wednesday for allowing alleged criminal activity on his messaging app and barred him from leaving France pending further investigation.

Both free-speech advocates and authoritarian governments have spoken in Durov's defense since his weekend arrest. The case has also called attention to the challenges of policing illegal activity online, and to the Russia-born Durov's own unusual biography and multiple passports.

Durov was detained Saturday at Le Bourget airport outside Paris as part of a sweeping investigation opened earlier this year, and released earlier Wednesday after four days of questioning. Investigative judges filed preliminary charges Wednesday night and ordered him to pay 5 million euros bail and to report to a police station twice a week, according to a statement from the Paris prosecutor's office.

Allegations against Durov, who is also a French citizen, include that his platform is being used for child sexual abuse material and drug trafficking, and that Telegram refused to share information or documents with investigators when required by law.

The first preliminary charge against him was for "complicity in managing an online platform to allow illicit transactions by an organized group," a crime that can lead to sentences of up to 10 years in prison and 500,000 euro fine, the prosecutor's office said.

Preliminary charges under French law mean magistrates have strong reason to believe a crime was committed but allow more time for further investigation.

David-Olivier Kaminski, a lawyer for Durov, was quoted by French media as saying "it's totally absurd to think that the person in charge of a social network could be implicated in criminal acts that don't concern him, directly or indirectly."

Prosecutors said Durov is, "at this stage, the only person implicated in this case." They did not exclude the possibility that other people are being investigated, but declined to comment on other possible arrest warrants. Any other arrest warrant would be revealed only if the target of such a warrant is detained and informed of their rights, prosecutors said in a statement to the AP.

French authorities opened a preliminary investigation in February in response to "the near total absence of a response by Telegram to judicial requests" for data for pursuing suspects, notably those accused of crimes against children, the prosecutor's office said.

Durov's arrest in France has caused outrage in Russia, with some government officials calling it politically motivated and proof of the West's double standard on freedom of speech. The outcry has raised eyebrows among Kremlin critics because in 2018, Russian authorities themselves tried to block the Telegram app but failed, withdrawing the ban in 2020.

In Iran, where Telegram is widely used despite being officially banned after years of protests challenging the country's Shiite theocracy, Durov's arrest in France prompted comments from the Islamic Republic's supreme leader. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei weighed in with veiled praise for France for being "strict" against those who "violate your governance" of the internet.

French President Emmanuel Macron said Monday that Durov's arrest wasn't a political move but part of an independent investigation. Macron posted on X that his country "is deeply committed" to freedom of expression but "freedoms are upheld within a legal framework, both on social media and in real life, to protect citizens and respect their fundamental rights."

In a statement posted on its platform after Durov's arrest, Telegram said it abides by EU laws, and its moderation is "within industry standards and constantly improving."

"Almost a billion users globally use Telegram as means of communication and as a source of vital information. We're awaiting a prompt resolution of this situation," it said.

In addition to Russia and France, Durov is also a citizen of the United Arab Emirates and the Caribbean island nation of St. Kitts and Nevis.

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The UAE Foreign Ministry said Tuesday that it was "closely following the case" and had asked France to provide Durov "with all the necessary consular services in an urgent manner."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said he hoped that Durov "has all the necessary opportunities for his legal defense" and added that Moscow stands "ready to provide all necessary assistance and support" to the Telegram CEO as a Russian citizen.

"But the situation is complicated by the fact that he is also a citizen of France," Peskov said.

Telegram was founded by Durov and his brother after he himself faced pressure from Russian authorities.

In 2013, he sold his stake in VKontakte, a popular Russian social networking site which he launched in 2006.

The company came under pressure during the Russian government's crackdown following mass pro-democracy protests that rocked Moscow at the end of 2011 and 2012.

Durov had said authorities demanded that the site take down online communities of Russian opposition activists, and later that it hand over personal data of users who took part in the 2013-2014 popular uprising in Ukraine, which eventually ousted a pro-Kremlin president.

Durov said in a recent interview that he had turned down these demands and left the country.

The demonstrations prompted Russian authorities to clamp down on the digital space, and Telegram and its pro-privacy stance offered a convenient way for Russians to communicate and share news.

Telegram also continues to be a popular source of news in Ukraine, where both media outlets and officials use it to share information on the war, and deliver missile and air raid alerts.

Western governments have often criticized Telegram for a lack of content moderation.

Today in History: August 30, Shackelton's Endurance crew rescued

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Friday, Aug. 30, the 243rd day of 2024. There are 123 days left in the year.

On Aug. 30, 1916, on his fourth attempt, explorer Ernest Shackelton successfully returned to Elephant Island in Antarctica to rescue 22 of his stranded crew members, who had survived on the barren island for four and a half months after the sinking of their ship, the Endurance.

Also on this date:

In 1941, during World War II, German forces approaching Leningrad cut off the remaining rail line out of the city.

In 1945, U.S. Gen. Douglas MacArthur arrived in Japan to set up Allied occupation headquarters.

In 1963, the "Hot Line" communications link between Washington and Moscow went into operation.

In 1967, the Senate confirmed the appointment of Thurgood Marshall as the first Black justice on the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 2005, a day after Hurricane Katrina hit, floods covered 80 percent of New Orleans, looting continued to spread and rescuers in helicopters and boats picked up hundreds of stranded people.

In 2021, the United States completed its withdrawal from Afghanistan, ending America's longest war with the Taliban back in power, as Air Force transport planes carried a remaining contingent of troops from Kabul airport. After watching the last U.S. planes disappear into the sky over Afghanistan, Taliban fighters fired their guns into the air, celebrating victory after a 20-year insurgency.

In 2022, Mikhail Gorbachev, who was the last leader of the Soviet Union, and waged a losing battle to salvage a crumbling empire but produced extraordinary reforms that led to the end of the Cold War, died at age 91.

Today's Birthdays: Investor and philanthropist Warren Buffet is 94. Actor Elizabeth Ashley is 85. Actor John Kani is 82. Cartoonist Robert Crumb is 81. Olympic gold medal skier Jean-Claude Killy (zhahn-KLOHD' kee-LEE') is 81. Comedian Lewis Black is 76. Basketball Hall of Famer Robert Parish is 71. U.S. Senator Thom Tillis, R-N.C., is 64. Actor Michael Chiklis is 61. Actor Cameron Diaz is 52. TV personality/journalist Lisa Ling is 51. Former MLB pitcher Adam Wainwright is 43. Former professional tennis player Andy Roddick is 42. Singer-songwriter Bebe Rexha is 35.