

# THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

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## GARDEN GROVE

# 'All-night mission' will assess risk of catastrophic blast

### Crack in chemical tank may relieve enough pressure to avoid major explosion

**By Brian Rokos, Tony Saavedra, Sean Emery, Sierra van der Brug and Jason Henry**  
STAFF WRITERS

An "all-night mission" to see if the threat of a catastrophic explosion at a malfunctioning chemical tank at a Garden Grove aerospace company has been eliminated was taking place Sunday evening into today, officials announced.

Division Chief Craig Covey of the Orange County Fire Authority said in an interview with freelance news organization OnScene.TV that firefighters had previously been unable to examine the top of the tank at GKN Aerospace on Western Avenue because of the fear of a massive blast. But overnight Saturday, they found a crack that may be relieving enough pressure to prevent a massive explosion that could damage buildings and release a toxic vapor cloud.

"That changes the trajectory of everything and reduces its potential impact on the earth," Covey said. "I'm not saying it can't explode. The difference is, like, a gas explosion in a building versus a bomb hitting it. So, once we remove that, that really decreases the impact footprint that we're managing right now, and we can reevaluate our current evacuation."

Interim Fire Chief TJ McGovern said in a video update on X on Sunday night that crews



Elizabeth Pichardo sits in her car outside the Freedom Hall shelter at Mile Square Park in Fountain Valley on Sunday after evacuating from her residence due to the threat of an explosion from a malfunctioning chemical tank at GKN Aerospace in Garden Grove. The family spent nearly \$600 on a hotel over the past three nights and has now decided to sleep in their car. **JEFF GRITCHEN — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER**

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## Newsom asks for federal emergency declaration to bolster response

**By Kaitlyn Schallhorn**  
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Gov. Gavin Newsom has formally requested a federal emergency declaration to aid with the ongoing response at a chemical storage tank at a Garden Grove aerospace company.

Experts and emergency crews have been working since Thursday to try to prevent a

potentially catastrophic chemical spill or explosion at GKN Aerospace. The tank is filled with 7,000 gallons of a highly flammable chemical called methyl methacrylate. Crews have so far been unable to find a solution to end the threat posed by the tank, from which a blast could damage hundreds of homes and buildings in the area and create a toxic plume

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Police gather at the Los Alamitos command center on Sunday amid the ongoing threat of a chemical tank explosion in Garden Grove. **MINDY SCHAUER**  
STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

## MIDDLE EAST

### Officials: Deal to end Iran war near

#### Trump says not to rush as details emerge of possible accord

**By Samy Magdy and Melanie Lidman**  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CAIRO — The United States is close to reaching a deal with Iran that would end the war, reopen the Strait of Hormuz and see Iran give up its stockpile of highly enriched uranium, regional officials told The Associated Press on Sunday, though President Donald Trump said he told representatives "not to rush into a deal."

Trump said negotiations were "proceed-

ing in an orderly and constructive manner" and the relationship with Iran was becoming "much more professional and productive." He pushed back against criticism by some fellow Republicans seeking a tougher approach.

The agreement would not be signed Sunday, according to a person familiar with the status of negotiations who spoke on condition of anonymity because

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## REAL ESTATE

### Orange County sets new median home price record at \$1.22 million



**Jonathan Lansner**  
COLUMNIST

Orange County has a new peak housing price. My trusty spreadsheet's review of

Attom's March homebuying report showed that the \$1.22 million median was up 2% year over year and topped the old record of \$1.21 million set in June 2025. That month, three of the six Southern California counties had all-time high prices. It was the last time records were broken before this new peak.

Yes, recent home pricing strength is a bit of a head-scratcher in an era of lofty

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## MEMORIAL DAY

# A mom made it her mission to honor Gold Star families' losses

**By Erika I. Ritchie**  
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Cheryl Rex hasn't planned what she'll say during her speech at the unveiling of a Gold Star memorial monument in Rancho Cucamonga today, but said she's confident her son, Lance Cpl. Dylan Merola, will help her.

Merola, 20, was among the 13 service members killed on Aug.

26, 2021, when a suicide bomber attacked the Abbey Gate at the Hamid Karzai International Airport as the last U.S. troops withdrew from Afghanistan. The attack also killed about 170 civilians waiting to pass through the gate.

Nine of the dead, and many of the other injured Americans, were part of the 2nd Battalion/1st Marines at Camp Pendleton. Also from Southern California were Cpl. Hunter

Lopez, 22, of Indio, and Cpl. Kareem M. Nikoui, 20, of Norco. Staff Sgt. Taylor Hoover, 31, who grew up in Daggett County, Utah, lived with his fiancée in Aliso Viejo.

Rex has since spoken publicly, even before Congress, as investigations into the attack have unfolded.

"Dylan does guide my speeches," Rex said. "I'm not a public speaker,

See **MEMORIAL** on Page A5



Cheryl Rex, mother of U.S. Marines Lance Cpl. Dylan Merola, who was killed in 2021, holds his Purple Heart in Rancho Cucamonga on Thursday. **WILL LESTER**  
STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

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## FORECAST

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