



# Miami Herald

## How bad is the sargassum in South Florida today? Here's a way to check

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Massive amounts of seaweed are washing up on South Florida beaches, though how bad it is can vary dramatically depending on the beach and the day.

Researchers eventually want to be able to forecast how much sargassum is coming and which beaches it's going to hit, helping governments make better decisions about where to deploy their expensive clean-up resources, and tourists to decide where they want to go swimming.

For now, the closest thing available to predict where sargassum is going is a new tool from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration that estimates the likelihood of sargassum inundation along coastlines each day.

The tool uses a color-coded system to show risk levels along Florida and Gulf Coast shorelines: red indicates high risk, orange medium, yellow a warning and blue low risk. But it's not yet precise enough to predict exactly which beaches will be affected.

Joaquin Trinanés, a NOAA researcher who helped develop the inundation tool, said scientists are continually refining the models.

The forecasts are still imperfect. If satellites detect sargassum close to shore, the model assumes it is likely to wash ashore. But winds and ocean currents can shift quickly, altering the seaweed's path before it reaches the coast.

"We think that, okay, if the sargassum is close to the shore, there is a probability that the

SEE SARGASSUM, 2A



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Beachgoers navigate crossing a patch of seaweed along South Beach on May 7.



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Cindy Doucet, known as SupaCindy, says the recent stories of Black women killed by their partners has made her reflect on her own story of abuse and how she escaped her abuser.

## 'That could have been my story'

### Black femicides spark hard talks in South Florida

BY RAISA HABERSHAM  
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The recent news reports of Black women being killed by their partners has brought back a flood of memories for Cindy Doucet.

The Miami radio personality, known for years to 99 Jamz listeners as SupaCindy, knows how hard it is to leave an abusive relationship. For eight years, she was with a partner who was both physically and emotionally abusive, she said.

"Many days when I left work I'd be afraid to go home, and I would just sit in a Target parking lot or go walk around Marshalls to kill time," she told the Herald. "Suffering in silence is the worst thing because in front of everybody, you're smiling, and in my position, it was my escape to be at work, to be in a public

SEE BLACK FEMICIDE, 2A



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A memorial to Coral Springs vice mayor Nancy Metayer, a rising political star who was allegedly murdered by her husband in the early hours of April 1, stands in front of City Hall on April 6.

## Criminal syndicates tighten grip on Amazon as rainforest nears collapse

BY ANTONIO MARÍA DELGADO  
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Deep in the Amazon rainforest, where rivers serve as highways and entire communities sit days away from the nearest government outpost, organized crime is reshaping one of the planet's most critical ecosystems.

The men carrying rifles are no longer just drug traffickers.

They are gold smugglers, land grabbers, illegal loggers and extortionists. They move cocaine along jungle waterways, poison rivers with mercury, finance cattle ranches with laundered cash and impose their own systems of order in territories where governments barely exist.

And according to a sweeping new report by the Brussels-based International Crisis Group, an independent non-profit think tank dedicated to preventing deadly conflicts, they are rapidly outpacing the states trying to stop them.

"The Amazon, the world's largest tropical rainforest, is under assault from organized crime," the report warns, describing a basin-wide criminal expansion that now stretches across nearly every corner of the rainforest.

What was once viewed primarily as an environmental crisis has evolved into something far more dangerous: a regional security emergency capable of accelerating ecological collapse.

The report, titled "A Jungle Heist: Shielding the Amazon from Organized Crime," argues that criminal organizations have become one of the greatest obstacles to preserving the rainforest because they increasingly control the illicit economies driving deforestation, violence and state corruption across the basin.

### CRIMINAL SYNDICATES

The consequences extend far beyond South America.

Scientists have long warned that the Amazon is nearing a catastrophic tipping point. Roughly one-fifth of the original forest has already disappeared, placing the ecosystem dangerously close to the estimated 20% to 25% threshold beyond which vast portions of the rainforest could

SEE RAINFOREST, 2A

## Opioid overdose deaths drop in Florida amid changing drug supply and user habits

BY ANA GOÑI-LESSAN  
*News Service of Florida*

### TALLAHASSEE

Florida's drug overdose deaths continued to decline in 2025, according to state data released Wednesday.

Opioid-caused deaths fell by 42% from January 2025 to June 2025, and fentanyl-caused deaths fell 46%, according to the interim 2025 Drugs in Deceased Persons Report released by the Florida

Medical Examiners Commission.

"That is a huge, huge success story, and everybody who's been involved in that should be awfully proud to see those figures," Gov. Ron DeSantis said at an event in Titusville.

DeSantis credited law enforcement, including increased efforts to crack down on illegal immigration, for the drop of opioid-caused deaths in the state. But drug harm reduction advocates and researchers say

shifts in the drug supply and changes in drug use are the major contributors to the decrease in deaths.

The number of fatal drug overdoses has dropped over the past three years across the country, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control.

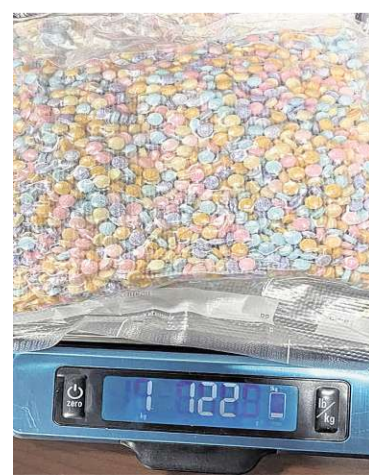
About 70,000 Americans died from an overdose from December 2024 to December 2025, the lowest number since the fall of 2019 and a decline of about 14% from the prior year.

While 43 states saw decreases, the CDC data show seven states saw an uptick in deaths, notably Arizona with an 18% increase and New Mexico with a 22% increase.

Tim Santamour, executive director of the Florida Harm

SEE OPIOIDS, 10A

The rainbow-colored fentanyl pills seized by federal agents in the arrest of Fidel Felix-Ochoa, a leader in the Sinaloa Cartel, according to court records.



YRODRIGUEZ-SCHACK



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