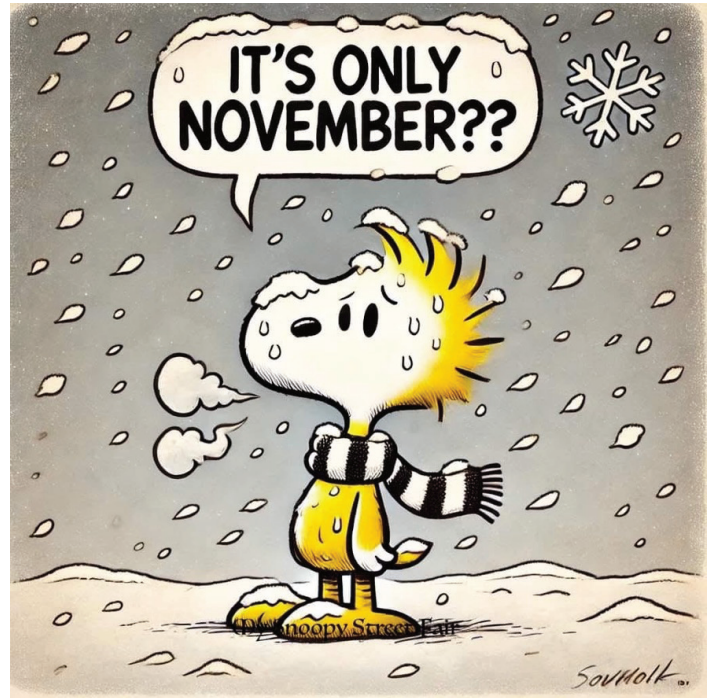


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Saturday, Nov. 30

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

Sunday, Dec. 1

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.; No Sunday School; Choir, 6 p.m.

FFA State LDE, Rapid City

Pancake Sunday: 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., Groton Community Center (proceeds benefit the Historical Society's jail restoration.

Snow Queen Contest, 4:30 p.m., GHS Gym.

Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m. (Daniel and Karla Grenz will be speaking); worship, 10:30 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: Worship with communion: Conde at 8:30 a.m.; Groton at 10:30 a.m.; No Sunday School, Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

Monday, Dec. 2

Senior Menu: Spaghetti with meat sauce, corn, garlic bread, fruit.

School Breakfast: French Toast.

School Lunch: Chicken patty, sweet potato puffs.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

First day of allowable boys' basketball practice

FFA State LDE in Rapid City

JH and JV Boys Wrestling Invitational at Faulkton

JH GBB at Clark (7th at 6 p.m., 8th at 7 p.m.)

Pantry, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Groton Community Center

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

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1440

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

Anchors Down

A Chinese commercial ship accused of sabotaging underwater telecommunications lines in the Baltic Sea has been surrounded by NATO warships for more than a week, according to reports. Investigators are probing whether the captain acted at the behest of Russian intelligence when he released the anchor and dragged it more than 100 miles across the seafloor.

The incident began Nov. 17, when the dragging anchor cut a cable connecting Lithuania and Sweden, followed by the severing of a cable connecting Finland and Germany early the next morning. Reports suggest the ship's transponders—which log its activity into an automated, aggregated database—went dark during the same time frame. Under international maritime law, NATO cannot force the ship into one of its ports, but sources say forces have been negotiating with the ship's captain to board the vessel and talk to the crew.

The two destroyed cables are part of a global underwater telecommunications network that carries more than 95% of the world's international internet traffic and processes \$10T in financial transactions each day.

Vito the pug wins National Dog Show.

The "very compact" canine took the top prize in the toy category as well as best in show, becoming the first of its breed to ever win the competition. Vito was complimented on his sympathetic eyes and a muscly stature.

Stanford professor nominated to lead National Institutes of Health.

Dr. Jay Bhattacharya was tapped by President-elect Donald Trump to oversee the organization that funds medical research with its nearly \$48B budget. Bhattacharya, who holds an MD and PhD and is a professor of economics and health policy, argued against widespread lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic. See his bio here.

Australia passes social media ban for users under 16 years old.

The new law is the first of its kind worldwide and goes into effect in 12 months. Large platforms like X, Facebook, Instagram, Reddit, and others will face fines of up to \$33M for failure to comply.

OpenAI's video generation model Sora leaks.

The AI-powered text-to-video generator has been in a private beta mode and is not open to the public. An unidentified group that had access to the model accused OpenAI of exploiting artists' work and "artwashing." An application granting open access to Sora was posted to the developer community Hugging Face.

British lawmakers vote in favor of assisted dying bill.

The law would allow terminally ill adults in England and Wales to end their lives in certain circumstances. Those eligible must be expected to have six months to live or less and must be capable of taking the life-ending drugs themselves.

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Paris' Notre Dame Cathedral reveals renovated interior.

The iconic church, built in the 12th century, was nearly completely destroyed by a fire five years ago. French President Emmanuel Macron toured the renovated space, with an official reopening slated for next Saturday.

Three Americans freed in US-China prisoner swap.

The trio—Mark Swidan, Kai Li, and John Leung—had been imprisoned separately on different drug and espionage charges, with negotiators working for years to secure their release. Three Chinese detainees being held in the US were returned to China in the deal.

Humankind(ness)

Today, we're sharing a story from reader Peggy L. in New York:

I am an elementary school teacher, single mom of two and caretaker to my wonderful 93 year old dad. Last Christmas ... I rented a little cabin by a large lake 40 miles away. The day school ended we packed the minivan with clothes, presents, ornaments and food for the week. There was really no room for our huge golden retriever but half on my dad's lap in the passenger seat.

Exhausted and stressed, but trying to be upbeat, I ordered dinner for everyone at a McDonald's drive through. When it was time to pay, the cashier said, "the car in front of you paid for your dinner and told me to tell you Merry Christmas!"

My dad and I looked at each other in confusion and from the stacks of boxes, totes and groceries in the back, I heard my daughter telling my son, "some total stranger just bought our dinner because ... because of being NICE".

I will never forget the almost magical kindness of this moment.

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FROSTY CLUE

I/My.....
30. Go Yotes – Charlie



****LAND AUCTION****

Up for auction is 66+/- acres land. 22.91 acres of tillable, 24.10 acres of CRP/CREP, 19.12+/- acres of hunting in Groton, SD on US Hwy 12. No easements on any of the acres. Unlimited possibilities ranging from recreational property of development property. You can bid online at HIBid.com up until we start the live auction Dec. 7th at 1 p.m. From there we will be taking live bids and internet bids. Auction will be held at the American Legion in Groton at 1 p.m.

Terms of the auction, 10% down on sale day (non-refundable). Closing within 20 days of auction at Kolker Law Office in Groton SD.

SAM HANSON, EXIT REALTY CONNECTION
1001 9th Ave SE., Watertown, SD 57201, 605-520-6349
shauctioneer@hotmail.com

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NSU Women's Basketball

Women's Basketball Drops Host Vulcans in Holiday Opener

Hilo, Hawaii – The Northern State University women's basketball team opened the Big Island Holiday Classic on Friday with a 25-point victory over the host University of Hawaii at Hilo. Four Wolves scored in double figures in the win and Northern shot 50.0% as a team.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 72, UHH 47

Records: NSU 4-2, UHH 1-2

Attendance: 217

HOW IT HAPPENED

The Wolves led for the entirety of the contest, scoring 34 points in the first half and 38 in the second. The Vulcans got off to a slow start with just nine points in the first quarter, as the Wolves defense held them to 20.0% from the field in the first and 18.8% from the field in the third.

In total, Hilo shot 29.6% from field goal range and 16.7% from beyond the arc.

Northern shot 50.0% from the floor, 21.1% from beyond the arc, and 62.5% from the foul line in the win.

They tallied 44 rebounds to the Vulcans 28, scoring 17 points off 14 offensive boards.

In addition, NSU led the contest with 44 points in the paint, 19 points off the bench, 15 assists, and three blocks, while adding ten points off turnovers and eight steals.

Madelyn Bragg led the charge with 23 points, knocking down 9-of-16 from the floor, and 14 rebounds for her second straight double-double.

Decontee Smith was second on the team and led NSU off the bench with 14 points and four rebounds, shooting 70.0% from the floor.

Michaela Jewett and Rianna Fillipi dished out a team leading four assists each, and accounted for 11 and ten points respectively; Jewett was second on the team with seven rebounds, followed by Fillipi with five.

All eight Wolves that entered the game recorded points and multiple rebounds, with 6-of-8 adding a steal and 7-of-8 accounting for at least one assist.

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Madelyn Bragg: 23 points, 56.3 field goal%, 14 rebounds, 1 assist, 1 block

Decontee Smith: 14 points, 70.0 field goal%, 4 rebounds, 2 steals, 1 assist

Michaela Jewett: 11 points, 7 rebounds, 4 assists, 1 block, 1 steal

Rianna Fillipi: 10 points, 55.6 field goal%, 5 rebounds, 4 assists, 2 steals, 1 block

UP NEXT

Northern State returns to action today against California State Dominguez Hills in Hilo. Tip-off is set for 5 p.m. (CT) versus the Toros. CS-DH defeated Western Oregon, 95-50 in their first contest from Hilo.

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

Does the U.S. President Have the Authority to Withdraw from NATO?

President-elect Donald Trump is not a fan of NATO—the North Atlantic Treaty Organization—which has been the backbone of the US-European security alliance since its creation in 1949. He has mused publicly about withdrawing the United States from the treaty. Along the campaign trail, Trump has reminded audiences of his threat to refuse military support for a NATO ally that he believes doesn't pay enough to support the alliance, despite the promise in Article V of the treaty that an attack on one member state represents an attack on all.

The only time in its history that Article V has been invoked was when the U.S. was attacked by terrorists on September 11, 2001, and member states came to the defense of our nation. With the incoming Trump Administration just two months from assuming power, the future of NATO and America's role in the organization, if any, is up in the air, which raises a constitutional question of great moment: Does the president possess unilateral authority to withdraw the United States from its treaties?

The question of the constitutional authority to terminate treaties is the subject of long-standing debate. The uncertainty, which stems from the fact that the Constitution is silent on the repository of the power to denounce treaties, has engendered doctrinal confusion and variety in practice. The Supreme Court bypassed an opportunity to resolve the controversy in *Goldwater v. Carter* (1979), when it dismissed as nonjusticiable on grounds of standing Sen. Barry Goldwater's legal challenge to President Jimmy Carter's termination of the 1954 Mutual Defense Treaty with Taiwan. While the decision, technically, did not establish a precedent, it left Carter's act undisturbed, and it was invoked in 1986 as authority for President Ronald Reagan's termination of a treaty of friendship and commerce with Nicaragua, and again in 2020 by then President Trump as justification for his termination of the Open Skies Treaty with Russia. Full disclosure: as a young scholar, in law review articles and correspondence with Goldwater's team, I supported the Senator's argument that treaty termination requires approval of the Senate.

The location of authority to terminate treaties presents serious ramification for constitutional doctrine and the course of American foreign policy, as measured by mutual security treaties, treaty alliances, and nuclear weapons agreements that expressly govern U.S. security matters, and other international arrangements that have an important effect on economic, environmental and commercial interests.

The Constitutional Convention did not address the issue of treaty termination, at least directly. It seems likely, however, that the Framers' fear of unilateral executive power in foreign affairs, their commitment to collective decision making, and the policy concerns that impelled them to create a treaty power shared by the president and the Senate, would have precluded the possibility of a unilateral presidential power to terminate treaties. The shared power regarding the treaty power satisfied the southern states, which feared that their regional, economic and security interests would be ignored by northern states. It was made clear in the Convention that without those accommodations, including Senate approval of a treaty by a two-thirds vote, the treaty power would not have been accepted.

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Obviously, the termination of a treaty could do as much harm to the jealously guarded sectional and state interests as the negotiation of a treaty, and its denunciation by one person could hardly maintain the delicate balance of this carefully crafted system. In fact, writings at the time suggest the Framers assumed that the power to make treaties included the power to terminate them. This principle of symmetrical construction was endorsed by John Jay who wrote in Federalist No. 64 that, "they who make treaties may alter or cancel them," and by James Madison, who stated: "That the contracting parties can annul a treaty cannot, I presume, be questioned, the same authority, precisely, being exercised in annulling as in making a treaty."

The explanations of Jay, who was America's foremost expert on foreign affairs, and Madison, the leading architect of the Constitution, without any opposition arguments on the question, that is, without any assertion of a unilateral executive authority to terminate treaties, strongly suggest the Convention's understanding that the principle of symmetry would govern the important issue of treaty termination. Whether the aims and concerns of the Framers wield influence in the Trump Administration remains to be seen.

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.

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- Heated hand grips
- High-arc steel chute
- Cast aluminum auger gear box w/ 5-year limited warranty**

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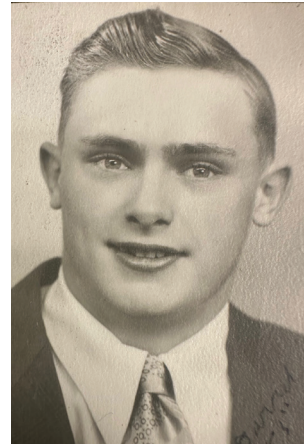




Wedding Reception

A wedding reception will be held for Julianna (Kosel) and Isaac Moll on Saturday, Nov. 30, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., at the Paul and Tina Kosel home, 110 N Washington St. The reception will be held in the garage.

The couple was married on July 30, 2024 at Sarasota, Fla. Julianna and Isaac are coming home for the Thanksgiving break.



90th Birthday Card Shower

A card shower is requested for

Darrell Henderson on his

90th birthday,

December 1, 2024.

Darrell and Deanna

have two children: Jeffrey and Beth,
with Jeff's wife, Joyce, and grandson,
Dustin, and a great granddaughter,
Avianna.

Cards may be sent to:

Darrell Henderson

PO Box 494

Groton, SD 57445



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Restoring faded memories: Volunteers labor to refurbish historical markers across South Dakota

Upkeep for hundreds of signs is the responsibility of local groups

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - NOVEMBER 29, 2024 11:18 AM

SIoux FALLS — Jim A. Carlson steadies his hand as he balances on a ladder in Falls Park, concentrating as he paints the raised lettering on a cast aluminum historical marker.

The marker explains how the region earned its "Siouxland" nickname from 20th century author Frederick Manfred. After the marker was erected in 2000, it became discolored and faded within a decade.

Carlson, who's 84, has volunteered hundreds of hours over the past two summers to refurbish historical markers throughout the Sioux Falls area. So far, he's touched up 65.

It takes about seven hours to repaint both sides of one sign, he estimates. He cleans and preps it, repaints the base, paints the raised lettering with shimmering gold, and sprays a protectant over the work.

Carlson wipes his hands on a handkerchief when he's done, though the green and gold has largely dried on his fingertips and nails by then. He loads his ladder, supplies and \$12 worth of paint into his red 1998 Ford Ranger pickup and drives to the next sign.



Jim Carlson, with the Minnehaha County Historical Society, repaints a historical marker at Falls Park in Sioux Falls on Sept. 23, 2024. (Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

Hundreds of markers statewide

Since 1950, the South Dakota State Historical Society has worked with local sponsors to post over 700 signs memorializing historic events, places and people across the state. Hundreds more have been erected by local organizations. The signs are a draw for tourists curious about South Dakota's past and an access point to educate residents about state history.

But South Dakota's harsh winters and blazing summer sun take a toll on the markers, fading and discoloring the signs to the point of illegibility.

The state does not provide funding for the markers. Local organizations such as the Minnehaha County Historical Society pay for the maintenance, and some rely on volunteers including Carlson to do the work.

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That can be a difficult task for some local groups. It can cost between \$1,300 and \$1,700 to have a sign professionally refurbished.

In Vermillion, a resident noticed a historical marker in poor shape. He called several organizations to find out how to refurbish it. He eventually learned that the local Rotary Club was the original sponsor and is responsible for maintaining it.

But the club said it can't spare the money to refurbish it, so the resident is paying for part of the effort out-of-pocket with a contribution from the club. The Clay County Historic Preservation Commission will consider paying the rest of the money at its December meeting, said Tim Schreiner, commission chair.

State role discussed

The state could play a larger role in communicating with local governments and organizations when a sign is in need of refurbishment, Schreiner said.

Tony Venhuizen, a legislator from Sioux Falls and president of the South Dakota Historical Society Foundation, has helped place several gubernatorial history signs in South Dakota. The foundation is the fundraising arm of the historical society.

Venhuizen said the volunteers who maintain historical markers are doing a great service.

"As a history enthusiast myself, I appreciate the people who value this and put their time and effort into it," he said.

The foundation is fundraising \$4 million to refurbish the state history museum at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre. Once that's completed, Venhuizen said, a fund to help local organizations maintain or refurbish historical signs would be a "great idea to consider at some point."

"You don't know where you're going unless you know where you've been," Venhuizen said. "The neat thing about the markers is you can be in a South Dakota town big or small, you can be driving along a road in the middle of nowhere, and there's history everywhere."

In some areas, awareness of local responsibility for the signs has faded. Richard Rubel, vice chairman of the Gregory County Historical Society, said he didn't know local organizations such as his were responsible for maintaining the markers.

Why it matters

Carlson estimates he's saved the Minnehaha County Historical Society about \$50,000 by refurbishing the signs himself.

He finished his last sign at Falls Park in October. He plans to pick up his work again next spring in downtown Sioux Falls — hopefully with some more volunteers.

Last summer, curious park visitors stopped and watched him as he worked on the signs. Tourists from places as far flung as Asia asked him what he was doing, while others asked about the importance of the history explained on the signs.

"I hope they took more time to read those signs," Carlson said, "and appreciate our history."

Schreiner said the signs are an opportunity to learn South Dakota history that's not always taught in schools or widely known in the state.

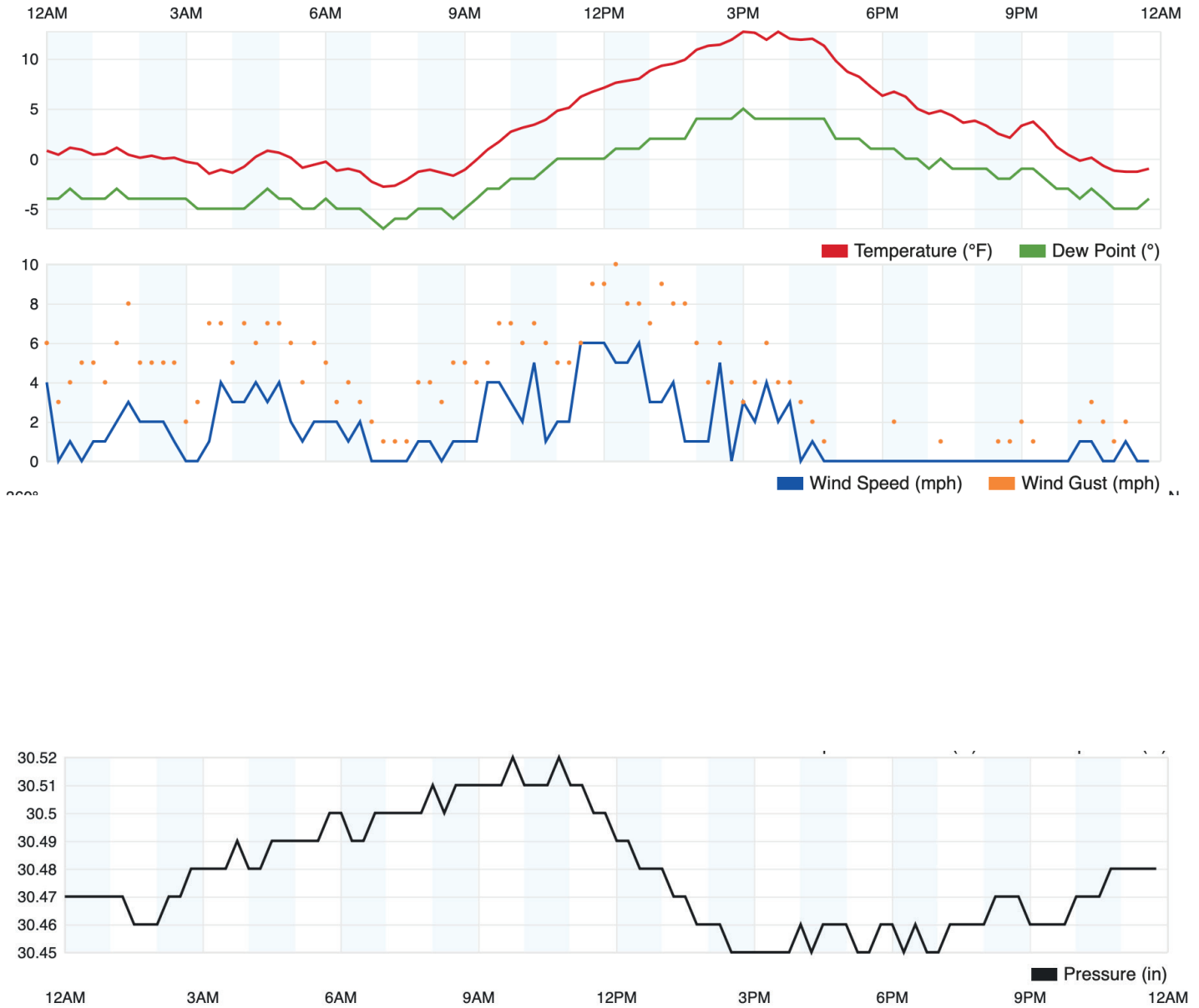
"In terms of inspiring somebody or teaching your kids," Schreiner said, "those quirky little things that inform your sense of where you live are golden."

Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan who regularly reports on the intersection of politics and policy with health, education, social services and Indigenous affairs. Her work with South Dakota Searchlight earned her the title of South Dakota's Outstanding Young Journalist in 2024, and she was a 2024 finalist for the national Livingston Awards.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



High: 14 °F

Chance
Flurries

Tonight



Low: -2 °F

Partly Cloudy

Sunday



High: 14 °F

Chance Snow

Sunday Night



Low: 1 °F

Chance Snow
then Mostly
Cloudy

Monday



High: 14 °F

Partly Sunny

Cold Weekend Milder Temperatures Mid-Week

Sat



Highs:
8 to 23

Sun



Highs:
12 to 27
Lows:
-3 to +9

Mon



Highs:
12 to 21
Lows:
-1 to +7

Tue



Highs:
25 to 45
Lows:
+2 to +11

Wed



Highs:
31 to 44
Lows:
+17 to +25



Temperatures will remain between 5 to 15 degrees below average for late November through the next few days, but milder air will move in for mid-week. Meanwhile, we will see pockets of light snow today, with a broader area of light snow, maybe a half inch to up to 2 inches on Sunday.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 13 °F at 3:05 PM

Low Temp: -3 °F at 7:11 AM

Wind: 10 mph at 11:38 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 9 hours, 2 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 66 in 1995

Record Low: -27 in 1964

Average High: 35

Average Low: 13

Average Precip in Nov.: 0.74

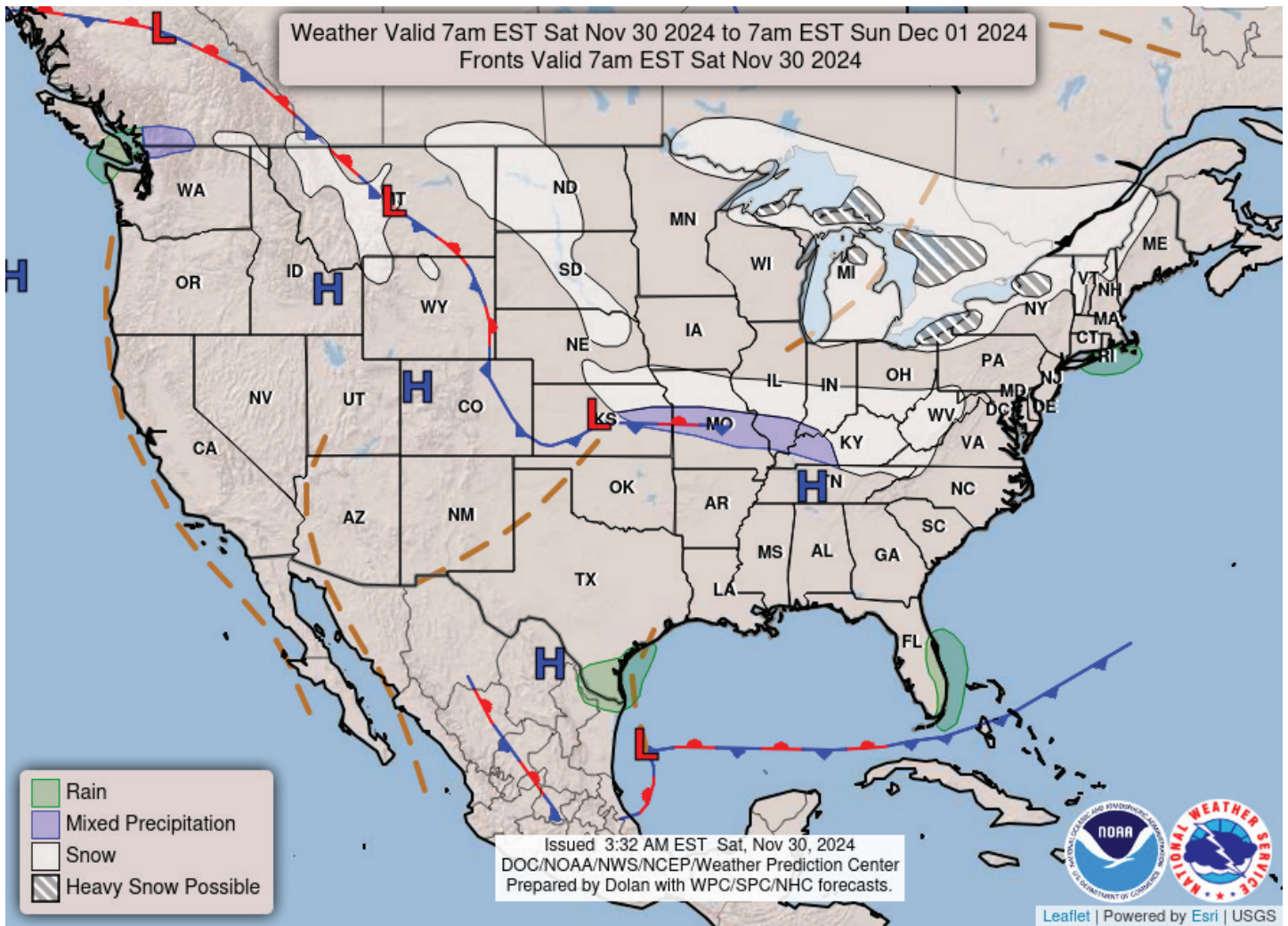
Precip to date in Nov.: 1.83

Average Precip to date: 21.21

Precip Year to Date: 21.71

Sunset Tonight: 4:52:46 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:51:00 am



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Today in Weather History

November 30, 1981: A two-day winter storm, beginning as rain, changing to freezing rain and then to snow, completely paralyzed the eastern half of South Dakota, as well as west central Minnesota Monday, November 30 through Tuesday, December 1, 1981. Snow accumulations of between eight and twelve inches were common in South Dakota. Wind with gusts to near 50 mph whipped the snow into blizzard conditions. The Governor of South Dakota closed east-west Interstate 90 to all traffic. Hundreds of motorists were stranded. One person died during snow removal after the storm. Some storm total snowfall amounts included 8 inches at Kennebec, 7 inches at Pierre and Faulkton, 4 inches at Aberdeen, and 2 inches at Watertown. The winter precipitation was caused by a storm center that moved from Kansas Monday through Iowa Monday night and into Wisconsin Tuesday morning, December 1st. The same storm produced heavy snow and blizzard conditions over a large area of the central Plains. Travel was especially difficult because of the snow. Many roads were impassible and motorists were forced to find shelter.

November 30, 1991: The third major winter storm of the season moved from the central plains to eastern South Dakota. The storm generally dropped between 4 and 8 inches of snow over the eastern third of South Dakota from the 28th to the 30th. New snow accumulations of 2 to 5 inches occurred over most of the rest of the state. Some specific snow reports across the area included Aberdeen with 2 inches and Watertown with 3 inches. Five inches fell at Clear Lake and 3 inches fell near Summit. Strong winds developed after the snow fell, producing widespread blowing and drifting snow, especially across the northeast corner of South Dakota.

November 30, 2000: Heavy snow of 6 to 12 inches fell across a large part of northern South Dakota and into western Big Stone County in Minnesota, causing travel problems and school closings. Several accidents also occurred due to the slippery roads. Some snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Milbank and Ortonville; 8 inches at McLaughlin, Ipswich, Summit, and Mellette; 9 inches northwest of Britton, Clear Lake, and Pollock; 10 inches at Leola and Faulkton; 11 inches at Aberdeen and Webster; and 12 inches at Houghton.

1875 - A severe early season cold wave set November records in the northeastern U.S. The temperature dipped to 5 above zero at New York City, 2 below at Boston MA, and 13 below at Eastport ME. (David Ludlum)

1925: An extremely rare late November hurricane began to affect the west coast of Florida as it strengthened during the day. The storm made landfall very early on December 1st south of Tampa Bay, weakened to a tropical storm as it crossed central Florida, and exited around St. Augustine. The storm regained Hurricane strength off Jacksonville late on the 1st. Heavy rain continued over northeast Florida on the 2nd. Gale force winds were reported from the Keys to Jacksonville and over 50 people lost their lives, mostly on ships at sea. Damage along the coast south of Jacksonville was heavy and excessive rain and wind seriously damaged citrus and truck crops.

1957 - Lee slope winds enhanced by Hurricane Nina gusted to 82 mph at Honolulu, Hawaii, a record wind gust for that location. Wainiha, on the island of Kauai, was deluged with 20.42 inches of rain, and 35 foot waves pounded some Kauai beaches, even though the eye of the hurricane was never within 120 miles of the islands. (30th-1st) (The Weather Channel)

1967 - A record November snowstorm struck the Washington D.C. area. It produced up to a foot of snow in a 12 hour period. (David Ludlum)

1976 - MacLeod Harbor, AK, reported a precipitation total for November of 70.99 inches, which established a state record for any month of the year. (The National Weather Summary)

1987 - Showers produced heavy rain in the northeastern U.S. Up to three inches of rain drenched the Brandywine Creek Basin of Pennsylvania, and rainfall totals in Vermont ranged up to two inches at Dorsett. Snow fell heavily across Upper Michigan as gale force winds prevailed over Lake Superior. A storm moving into the northwestern U.S. produced gale force winds along the northern and central Pacific coast. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Snow in the Upper Great Lakes Region pushed the precipitation total for the month at Marquette, MI, past their previous November record of 7.67 inches. Santa Anna winds in southern California gusted to 75 mph at Laguna Peak. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



WHAT'S NEXT?

Grandmother had just finished reading the story of Creation to her beloved four year old granddaughter, Beth. Sitting quietly in her lap she noticed that Beth seemed to be in deep thought.

"Beth," she asked, "what do you think of that story?"

"I love it, Grandmother!" she replied.

"Love it? Why?" Grandmother wondered.

"Well," she replied carefully, "you just never know what God's going to do next!"

While life is unpredictable, God isn't. Even though we do not know what God is going to do next, He certainly does. And one thing we who are Christians know for certain is this: whatever He brings into our lives is in our best interest to mold us and make us into His likeness.

Whatever we face, we know that God will be with us and never abandon us. As life comes and goes, He does not pick and choose when He will be available to help us. He will not step back from the pain we may be enduring nor the problems we are forced to face and resolve. No, the Eternal One guides us, and guards us and guarantees us His presence and power to accept and overcome every obstacle and challenge.

Whether life is joyous or seemingly unjust, God will never give up on us and never fail us. When times are hard and life is horrible, we need to focus on Him.

Prayer: Lord, help us to trust in You and on You and know that You will never leave us or forsake us. May we ever seek and sense Your will and way in our lives. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5-6

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:
11.29.24

3 29 34 37 38 17

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$541,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
11.27.24

2 20 23 24 29 9

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$16,180,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 32 Mins
46 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
11.29.24

19 21 31 38 39 5

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 47 Mins
47 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
11.27.24

4 5 18 22 27

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$125,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 47 Mins
47 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
11.27.24

19 37 41 42 62 13

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 16 Mins
47 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
11.27.24

1 6 7 13 40 5

Power Play: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$214,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 16 Mins
47 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 with Live & Silent Auctions 6pm-close
12/14/2024 Santa Day at Professional Management Services, downtown Groton
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
07/09/2025 Legion Auxiliary Salad Luncheon
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
09/20/2025 NSU Gypsy Day
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

Israel says it struck Hezbollah weapons smuggling sites in Syria, testing a fragile ceasefire

By TIA GOLDENBERG, BASSEM MROUE and WAFAA SHURAFU Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Israeli aircraft struck Hezbollah weapons smuggling sites along Syria's border with Lebanon, the Israeli military said Saturday, testing a fragile, days-old ceasefire that halted months of fighting between the sides but has seen continued sporadic fire.

The military said it struck sites that had been used to smuggle weapons from Syria to Lebanon after the ceasefire took effect, which the military said was a violation of its terms. There was no immediate comment from Syrian authorities or activists monitoring the conflict in that country. Hezbollah also did not immediately comment. Israeli aircraft have struck Hezbollah targets in Lebanon, citing ceasefire violations, several times since the truce began on Wednesday.

The ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah does not address the war in Gaza, where fighting rages on. On Saturday, an Israeli strike on a car killed five people, according to Muneer Alboursh, a senior Palestinian health official, who said the toll included three employees of the food charity World Central Kitchen. The charity could not immediately be reached for comment and made no mention of the incident on its social media.

The Israeli military said it struck a vehicle carrying a militant involved in Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack. It said it was looking into the reported ties to WCK, but said the car was unmarked and had not coordinated aid delivery with the military as charities have done during the war.

At Nasser Hospital in the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis, a woman held up an employee badge bearing the WCK logo, the word "contractor" and the name of one of the men said to have been killed in the strike. A heap of belongings — burned phones, a watch and stickers with the WCK logo — lay splayed on the hospital floor.

An Israeli strike in April on a WCK convoy killed seven of its workers, most of them foreigners. The Israeli military said it was a mistake.

The Israeli strike in Syria came as insurgents there breached the country's largest city, Aleppo, in a shock offensive that added fresh uncertainty to a region reeling from multiple wars.

The truce between Israel and the Iran-backed Hezbollah, brokered by the United States and France, calls for an initial two-month ceasefire in which the militants are to withdraw north of Lebanon's Litani River and Israeli forces are to return to their side of the border.

The repeated bursts of violence — with no reports of serious casualties — reflected the uneasy nature of the ceasefire that otherwise appeared to hold. While Israel has accused Hezbollah of violating the ceasefire, Lebanon has also accused Israel of the same in the days since it took effect.

Many Lebanese, some of the 1.2 million displaced in the conflict, were streaming south to their homes, despite warnings by the Israeli and Lebanese militaries to stay away from certain areas.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency reported that an Israeli drone attacked a car in the southern village of Majdal Zoun. Lebanon's Health Ministry said three people were wounded, including a 7-year-old child. Majdal Zoun, near the Mediterranean Sea, is close to where Israeli troops still have a presence.

The military said earlier Saturday that its forces, who remain in southern Lebanon until they withdraw gradually over the 60-day period, had been operating to distance "suspects" in the region, without elaborating, and said troops had located and seized weapons found hidden in a mosque.

Israel says it reserves the right under the ceasefire to strike against any perceived violations. Israel has made returning the tens of thousands of displaced Israelis home the goal of the war with Hezbollah but Israelis, concerned Hezbollah was not deterred and could still attack northern communities, have been apprehensive about returning home.

Hezbollah began attacking Israel on Oct. 8, 2023, in solidarity with the Palestinian militant group Hamas

and its assault on southern Israel the day before. Israel and Hezbollah kept up a low-level conflict of cross-border fire for nearly a year, until Israel escalated its fight with a sophisticated attack that detonated hundreds of pagers and walkie-talkies used by Hezbollah fighters. It followed that up with an intense aerial bombardment campaign against Hezbollah assets, killing many of its top leaders including longtime chief Hassan Nasrallah, and it launched a ground invasion in early October.

More than 3,760 people have been killed by Israeli fire in Lebanon during the conflict, many of them civilians, according to Lebanese health officials. The fighting killed more than 70 people in Israel — over half of them civilians — as well as dozens of Israeli soldiers fighting in southern Lebanon.

The war in Gaza was triggered by Hamas' October 2023 attack, when militants killed 1,200 people, mostly civilians and took some 250 hostage. Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed more than 44,000 Palestinians, according to local health officials, who do not distinguish between civilians and combatants in their count but say more than half the dead were women and children.

Syrian insurgents are inside Aleppo in a major setback for Assad as government forces regroup

By SARAH EL DEEB Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Thousands of Syrian insurgents fanned out inside Aleppo in vehicles with improvised armor and pickups, deploying to landmarks such as the old citadel on Saturday, a day after they entered Syria's largest city facing little resistance from government troops, according to residents and fighters.

Witnesses said two airstrikes on the city's edge late Friday targeted insurgent reinforcements and hit near residential areas. A war monitor said 20 fighters were killed.

Syria's armed forces said in a statement Saturday that to absorb the large attack on Aleppo and save lives, it has redeployed and is preparing for a counterattack. The statement acknowledged that insurgents entered large parts of the city but said they have not established bases or checkpoints.

Insurgents were filmed outside police headquarters, in the city center, and outside the Aleppo citadel. They tore down posters of Syrian President Bashar Assad, stepping on some and burning others.

The surprise takeover is a huge embarrassment for Assad, who managed to regain total control of the city in 2016, after expelling insurgents and thousands of civilians from its eastern neighborhoods following a grueling military campaign in which his forces were backed by Russia, Iran and its allied groups.

Aleppo has not been attacked by opposition forces since then. The 2016 battle for Aleppo was a turning point in the war between Syrian government forces and rebel fighters after 2011 protests against Assad's rule turned into an all-out war.

The push into Aleppo followed weeks of simmering low-level violence, including government attacks on opposition-held areas. Turkey, which has backed Syrian opposition groups, failed in its diplomatic efforts to prevent the Syrian government attacks, which were seen as a violation of a 2019 agreement sponsored by Russia, Turkey and Iran to freeze the line of the conflict.

The offensive came as Iran-linked groups, primarily Lebanon's Hezbollah, which has backed Syrian government forces since 2015, have been preoccupied with their own battles at home. A ceasefire in Hezbollah's two-month war with Israel took effect Wednesday, the day the Syrian opposition factions announced their offensive. Israel has also escalated its attacks against Hezbollah and Iran-linked targets in Syria during the last 70 days.

Insurgents raise flag over Aleppo Citadel

A witness in Aleppo said government troops remained in the city's airport and at a military academy but most of the forces have already filed out of the city from the south. Syrian Kurdish forces remained in two neighborhoods.

The redeployment "is a temporary measure and (the military central command and armed forces) will work to guarantee the security and peace of all our people in Aleppo," the military statement said.

Abdulkafi Alhamdo, an teacher who fled Aleppo in 2016 and returned Friday night after hearing the insurgents were inside, described "mixed feelings of pain, sadness and old memories."

"As I entered Aleppo, I kept telling myself this is impossible! How did this happen?" He said he strolled through the city at night, visiting the citadel, where the insurgents raised their flags, a major square and the university of Aleppo, as well as the last spot he was in before he was forced to leave for the countryside.

"I walked in (the empty) streets of Aleppo, shouting, 'People, people of Aleppo. We are your sons,'" Alhamdo told The Associated Press in a series of messages.

The insurgents launched their shock offensive in the Aleppo and Idlib countryside on Wednesday and wrestled control of dozens of villages and towns before entering Aleppo on Friday.

The pro-government Al-Watan newspaper reported airstrikes on the edge of Aleppo city targeting rebel supply lines. It posted a video of a missile landing on a gathering of fighters and vehicles, in a street lined with trees and buildings.

Twenty fighters were killed in the airstrikes, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. Aleppo residents reported clashes and gunfire. Some fled the fighting.

Schools and government offices were closed Saturday as most people stayed indoors, according to Sham FM radio, a pro-government station. Bakeries were open. Witnesses said the insurgents deployed security forces around the city to prevent any acts of violence or looting.

In social media post, the insurgents were pictured outside of Aleppo Citadel, the medieval palace in the old city center, and one of the largest in the world. In cellphone videos, they recorded themselves having conversations with residents they visited at home, seeking to reassure them they will cause no harm.

State media reported that a number of "terrorists," including sleeper cells, infiltrated parts of the city. Government troops chased them and arrested a number who posed for pictures near city landmarks, state media said.

On a state TV morning show Saturday, commentators said army reinforcements and Russia's assistance will repel the "terrorist groups," blaming Turkey for supporting the insurgents' push into Aleppo and Idlib provinces.

Russia's state news agency Tass quoted Oleg Ignasyuk, a Russian Defense Ministry official coordinating in Syria, as saying that Russian warplanes targeted and killed 200 militants who launched the offensive in the northwest on Friday. It provided no further details.

New York state and Michigan brace for lake-effect snow that could snarl travel and disrupt football

By CAROLYN THOMPSON Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — The first big snow of the season threatened to bury towns in New York along lakes Erie and Ontario during a hectic holiday travel and shopping weekend.

In Michigan, heavy lake-effect snow in northern parts of the state was expected to continue into the weekend, according to the National Weather Service in Gaylord. Some areas of the Upper Peninsula could see up to 3 feet (0.9 meters) of snow Sunday night through to Monday, National Weather Service meteorologist Lily Chapman said.

As flakes began flying Friday, New York state forecasters warned 4 to 6 feet (1.2 to 1.8 meters) of blowing and drifting snow could fall in Watertown and other areas east of Lake Ontario through Monday.

After an unusually mild fall, as much as 2 to 3 feet (0.6 to 0.9 meters) of snow were possible along Lake Erie and south of Buffalo from lake-effect bands notorious for pummeling the region with snowfall rates of 2 to 4 inches (5 to 10 centimeters) per hour. Lake-effect snow happens when warm moist air rising from a body of water mixes with cold dry air overhead.

"The lake is 50 degrees (10 degrees Celsius). We're about six degrees above where we should be this time of year, that's why we're seeing these heavy lake-effect events," Erie County Public Works Commissioner William Geary said. "The outlook for the next two weeks into December, we'll probably see some more."

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul declared a disaster emergency for the targeted counties, allowing state agencies to mobilize resources. Rapidly deteriorating conditions Friday caused closures along Interstate 90, and tandem and commercial vehicles were banned from Interstate 86 in western New York and much

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of U.S. Route 219 beginning Friday afternoon.

"There's a considerable number of vehicles going off the road on the 219 currently," Gregory Butcher, Erie County deputy director for preparedness and homeland security, said at an afternoon briefing.

ATVs and snowmobiles were being placed around the county to help first responders if necessary, Butcher said.

The Buffalo Bills called for volunteers to potentially shovel snow at Highmark Stadium, where over 2 feet (0.6 meters) of snow was possible before Sunday night's game against the San Francisco 49ers. Last year, a major lake-effect storm forced the NFL to push back the Bills wild-card playoff home game against Pittsburgh from Sunday to Monday.

"It's going to be slow going, there's no doubt about that," Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz said, adding the heaviest snow is expected to be over by kickoff.

The team, meanwhile, was preparing to play in any conditions.

"We're trying to stay on top of it," coach Sean McDermott said Friday.

The Bills are 9-2, their best start since 1992, and with a win Sunday they would clinch their fifth straight AFC East title.

Lake-effect snow also covered parts of Michigan's Upper Peninsula in a system that is expected to last through the weekend. The area was blanketed in snow by Friday afternoon, with some places already measuring more than a foot (0.3 meters) of snow.

"We've got this westerly, northwesterly flow regime and this chilly air mass over the U.P.," said Chapman of the National Weather Service. "So it's a pretty good setup for this long duration lake-effect snowfall event."

Gusty winds, especially near the Great Lakes, has impacted visibility in Michigan and Chapman urged caution on the roads.

Joe DeLizio, a meteorologist for the National Weather Service in Gaylord, said visibility on roads was low but he hadn't been made aware of any major accidents so far.

"Haven't heard too much as far as problems, but obviously travel is pretty difficult," DeLizio said.

More than 100 arrested as Georgian police clash with protesters over suspension of EU talks

By SOPHIKO MEGRELIDZE Associated Press

TBILISI, Georgia (AP) — More than 100 demonstrators were arrested overnight in Georgia as protesters clashed with police following the government's decision to suspend negotiations to join the European Union, the country's Interior Ministry said Saturday.

It was the second straight night of protests after Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze of the country's ruling Georgian Dream party announced the decision the previous day. Demonstrators faced off against police late Friday in a number of major Georgian cities, including the capital, Tbilisi, and the Black Sea port of Batumi.

The Associated Press saw protesters in Tbilisi being chased and beaten by police as demonstrators rallied in front of the country's parliament building.

Riot police used water cannons to push protesters away from the building and later moved to force them farther back along Rustaveli Avenue, the city's main boulevard.

Police also used heavy force against members of the media and used loudspeakers to shout profanities and insults at the crowds.

Georgian Dream's disputed victory in the country's Oct. 26 parliamentary election, which was widely seen as a referendum on Georgia's aspirations to join the European Union, has sparked massive demonstrations and led to an opposition boycott of the parliament.

The opposition has said that the vote was rigged with the help of Russia, Georgia's former imperial master, with Moscow hoping to keep Tbilisi in its orbit.

Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili joined protesters on Thursday after accusing the government of declaring war on its own people. In an address to the nation Friday, she urged police not to use force

against protesters.

"This is evident in every way — no one is willing to accept a Russified Georgia, a Georgia deprived of its constitution, or a Georgia in the hands of an illegitimate government and parliament," Zourabichvili said.

"That is why so many of you are out here today: I see you. I see you on Rustaveli Avenue and in cities across Georgia: Batumi, Kutaisi, Zugdidi, Akhmeta, Lagodekhi, Telavi. It is unprecedented for citizens of Georgia to rise up simultaneously and spontaneously in this way."

Kobakhidze, the prime minister, characterized the protests Saturday as "violent demonstrations." He said that unspecified "foreign entities" wished to see the "Ukrainization" of Georgia with a "Maidan-style scenario" — a reference to Ukraine's 2014 Maidan revolution.

Kobakhidze also said that Georgia remained committed to European integration.

"Once again, we pledge to the Georgian public, which expressed solid trust in us during the Oct. 26 elections, that no one will shake the peace and stability of Georgia," he said. "Despite artificial barriers, Georgia will persistently continue its progress toward European integration."

The government's announcement that it was suspending negotiations to join the EU came hours after the European Parliament adopted a resolution that condemned last month's vote as neither free nor fair. It said the election represented another manifestation of Georgia's continued democratic backsliding "for which the ruling Georgian Dream party is fully responsible."

European election observers said October's vote took place in a divisive atmosphere marked by instances of bribery, double voting and physical violence.

The EU granted Georgia candidate status in December 2023 on condition that it meet the bloc's recommendations, but put its accession on hold and cut financial support earlier this year after the passage of a "foreign influence" law widely seen as a blow to democratic freedoms.

EU lawmakers urged a rerun of the parliamentary vote within a year under thorough international supervision and by an independent election administration. They also called on the EU to impose sanctions and limit formal contacts with the Georgian government.

The Georgian prime minister fired back, denouncing what he described as a "cascade of insults" from the EU politicians and declaring that "the ill-wishers of our country have turned the European Parliament into a blunt weapon of blackmail against Georgia, which is a great disgrace for the European Union."

Kobakhidze also said Georgia would reject any budgetary grants from the EU until the end of 2028.

Critics have accused Georgian Dream — established by Bidzina Ivanishvili, a shadowy billionaire who made his fortune in Russia — of becoming increasingly authoritarian and tilted toward Moscow. The party recently pushed through laws similar to those used by the Kremlin to crack down on freedom of speech and LGBTQ+ rights.

What to know about the plastic pollution crisis as treaty talks conclude in South Korea

By JENNIFER McDERMOTT Associated Press

BUSAN, South Korea (AP) — The world's nations will wrap up negotiating a treaty this weekend to address the global plastic pollution crisis.

Their meeting concludes Sunday or early Monday in Busan, South Korea, where many environmental organizations have also flocked to push for a treaty to address the volume of production and toxic chemicals used in plastic products.

Greenpeace said it escalated its pressure Saturday by sending four international activists to Daesan, South Korea, who boarded a tanker headed into port to load chemicals used to make plastics.

Graham Forbes, who leads the Greenpeace delegation in Busan, said the action is meant to remind world leaders they have a clear choice: Deliver a treaty that protects people and the planet, or side with industry and sacrifice the health of every living person and future generations.

Here's what to know about plastics:

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Every year, the world produces more than 400 million tons of new plastic

The use of plastics has quadrupled over the past 30 years. Plastic is ubiquitous. And every day, the equivalent of 2,000 garbage trucks full of plastic are dumped into the world's oceans, rivers and lakes, the UN said. Most nations agreed to make the first global, legally binding plastic pollution accord, including in the oceans, by the end of 2024.

Plastic production could climb about 70% by 2040 without policy changes

The production and use of plastics globally is set to reach 736 million tons by 2040, according to the intergovernmental Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Panama is leading an effort to address the exponential growth of plastic production as part of the treaty, supported by more than 100 countries. There's just too much plastic, said Juan Carlos Monterrey, head of Panama's delegation.

"If we don't have production in this treaty, it is not only going to be horribly sad, but the treaty may as well be called the greenwashing recycling treaty, not the plastics treaty," he said in an interview. "Because the problem is not going to be fixed."

China, the United States and Germany are the biggest plastics players

China was by far the biggest exporter of plastic products in 2023, followed by Germany and the U.S., according to the Plastics Industry Association.

Together, the three nations account for 33% of the total global plastics trade, the association said.

The United States supports having an article in the treaty that addresses supply, or plastic production, a senior member of the U.S. delegation told The Associated Press Saturday.

Most plastic ends up as waste

Less than 10% of plastics are recycled. Most of the world's plastic goes to landfills, pollutes the environment, or is burned.

Sarah Dunlop, head of plastics and human health at the Minderoo Foundation, said chemicals are leaching out of plastics and "making us sick."

The International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Plastics held an event about the impact of plastics Saturday on the sidelines of the talks. They want the treaty to fully recognize their rights, and the universal human right to a healthy, clean, safe and sustainable environment. Juan Mancias of the Carrizo/Comecrudo Nation in Texas spoke about feeling a spiritual connection to the land.

"Five hundred years ago, we had clean water, clean air and there was no plastics," he said. "What happened?"

Many plastics are used for packaging

About 40% of all plastics are used in packaging, according to the UN. This includes single-use plastic food and beverage containers — water bottles, takeout containers, coffee lids, straws and shopping bags — that often end up polluting the environment.

U.N. Environment Program Executive Director Inger Andersen told negotiators in Busan the treaty must tackle this problem.

"Are there specific plastic items that we can live without, those that so often leak into the environment? Are there alternatives to these items? This is an issue we must agree on," she said.

North Korea's Kim vows steadfast support for Russia's war in Ukraine

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un vowed his country will "invariably support" Russia's war in Ukraine as he met Russia's defense chief, the North's state media reported Saturday.

A Russia military delegation led by Defense Minister Andrei Belousov arrived in North Korea on Friday, amid growing international concern about the two countries' expanding cooperation after North Korea sent thousands of troops to Russia last month.

The official Korean Central News Agency said that Kim and Belousov reached "a satisfactory consensus"

on boosting strategic partnership and defending each country's sovereignty, security interests and international justice in the face of the rapidly-changing international security environments in a Friday meeting.

Kim said that North Korea "will invariably support the policy of the Russian Federation to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity from the imperialists' moves for hegemony," KCNA said.

North Korea has supported Russia's invasion of Ukraine, calling it a defensive response to what both Moscow and Pyongyang call NATO's "reckless" eastward advance and U.S.-led moves to stamp out Russia's position as a powerful state.

Kim slammed a U.S. decision earlier in November to let Ukraine strike targets inside Russia with U.S.-supplied longer-range missiles as a direct intervention in the conflict. He called recent Russian strikes on Ukraine "a timely and effective measure" demonstrate Russia's resolve, KCNA said.

According to U.S., Ukrainian and South Korean assessments, North Korea has sent more than 10,000 troops to Russia and some of them have already begun engaging in combat on the frontlines. U.S., South Korean and others say North Korea has also shipped artillery systems, missiles and other conventional weapons to replenish Russia's exhausted weapons inventory.

Both North Korea and Russia haven't formally confirmed the North Korean troops' movements, and have steadfastly denied reports of weapons shipments.

South Korea, the U.S. and their partners are concerned that Russia could give North Korea advanced weapons technology in return, including help to build more powerful nuclear missiles.

Last week, South Korean national security adviser Shin Wonsik told a local SBS TV program that that Seoul assessed that Russia has provided air defense missile systems to North Korea. He said Russia also appeared to have given economic assistance to North Korea and various military technologies, including those needed for the North's efforts to build a reliable space-based surveillance system.

Belousov also met North Korean Defense Minister No Kwang Chol on Friday. During a dinner banquet later the same day, Belousov said the the two countries' strategic partnership was crucial to defend their sovereignty from aggression and the arbitrary actions of imperialists, KCNA said.

In June, Kim and Putin signed a treaty requiring both countries to provide immediate military assistance if either is attacked. It's considered the two countries' biggest defense deal since the end of the Cold War.

Fishers at a Lebanese port hope ceasefire with Israel means normal life is returning

By BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

TYRE, Lebanon (AP) — The ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah brought hope for normality back to many in southern Lebanon on Friday, including fishermen who have long launched their single-engine wooden boats into the Mediterranean at dawn.

During the last two months of its year fighting Hezbollah, Israel imposed a siege on southern Lebanon that kept hundreds of fishers at this ancient Phoenician port on shore, upending their lives and the industry.

While less important than destruction and displacement, the port siege cut many people off from the key ingredients for traditional Lebanese dishes like sayadiyeh — fish and rice boiled in fish sauce — or fried and grilled fish eaten with dips such as hummus and tabbouleh or fattoush salads.

The loss of fish damaged a deep association with home, but now the possibility of renewed Lebanese fishing on the country's southern coast is helping fuel hope for a brighter future.

On Friday, a few boats went out close to the shore as fishers in the port worked on the nets of small boats painted white, blue or red.

Hussein Sukmani, 55, said Friday that he was considering going to sea in coming days but was waiting to see how things unfold.

He hasn't dared set sail since the Israel-Hezbollah war dramatically intensified on Sept. 23. "They were days of fear and horror," he said. "They were the most difficult days of our lives."

A week ago, a drone strike killed two young fishers in the city as they prepared their nets on the coast, and some fishermen said Friday that the Lebanese army told them that they if headed out it would be at

their own risk .

Among those who sailed near the coast on Friday was Walid Darwish, who returned to the port with two plastic boxes filled with mullet.

"Today is the first time that we sail," Darwish said, adding that fishers had missed the prime season in October and November.

"We lost it," he said.

The Israeli army barred any boats from an area 50 kilometers (31 miles) from the border in October and has not said whether the warning is still in effect.

Sukmani said that most of the 700 fishers who work on the 270 boats at the port have not sailed out of concern since then.

The area around the port is a predominantly Christian neighborhood that has been spared much of the airstrikes on other parts of Tyre that leveled buildings in this city.

In peaceful times, the port is a major tourist attraction, beloved by Lebanese and foreigners who come for the views, the restaurants and the beaches.

On Friday, Mohammed Hammoud walked along the coast of Tyre carrying his fishing rod.

"It is enough that someone is able to stand in this beautiful area," he said, pointing to the white sands. "Fishing is everything for me," added Hammoud, who went to fish several times in the area north of the city of Sidon that was not part of the siege.

In the old market of Tyre, Gilbert Spiridon watched from inside his shop as people came to buy freshly brought fish. Before the war, it took hours to sell all his fish to people from around Lebanon.

"All I wish is that the war has ended and we are back on track to the old good days," he said.

Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau flies to Florida to meet with Trump after tariffs threat

By ROB GILLIES and FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau flew to Florida on Friday to have dinner with President-elect Donald Trump at his Mar-a-Lago club after Trump threatened to impose sweeping tariffs on Canadian products.

Trump threatened to impose tariffs on products from Canada and Mexico if they don't stop what he called the flow of drugs and migrants across their borders. He said he would impose a 25% tax on all products entering the U.S. from Canada and Mexico as one of his first executive orders.

A person familiar with the details called it a "positive wide-ranging dinner that lasted three hours." The official, who was not authorized to speak publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity, said topics included trade, border security, fentanyl, defense, Ukraine, NATO, China and pipelines, as well as the the Group of Seven meeting in Canada next year.

Although Trump once called Trudeau "weak" and "dishonest" during his first term, ties between the two countries have remained among the closest in the world. Trudeau is the first leader from the G7 countries to visit Trump since the Nov. 4 election.

Joining Trump and Trudeau at dinner were Howard Lutnick, Trump's nominee for commerce secretary, North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum, Trump's pick to lead the Interior Department, Mike Waltz, Trump's choice to be his national security adviser, and the three men's wives.

Also at the dinner were David McCormick, just elected U.S. senator from Pennsylvania, and his wife, Dina Powell, a former deputy national security adviser under Trump, as well as Canadian Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc, whose responsibilities include border security, and Katie Telford, Trudeau's chief of staff.

McCormick posted a photo on X of the group seated at a round table on the patio of Mar-a-Lago. At the table behind the president-elect a boy can be seen mugging for the camera.

Trump's transition did not respond to questions about what they had discussed or whether the conversation alleviated Trump's concerns about the border.

A smiling Trudeau declined comment upon returning to his West Palm Beach hotel late Friday.

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Trudeau said earlier Friday that he would resolve the tariffs issue by talking to Trump. Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said Thursday after speaking with Trump that she is confident a tariff war with the United States will be averted.

"We're going to work together to meet some of the concerns," Trudeau told reporters in Prince Edward Island in Atlantic Canada. "But ultimately it is through lots of real constructive conversations with President Trump that I am going to have, that will keep us moving forward on the right track for all Canadians."

Trudeau said Trump got elected because he promised to bring down the cost of groceries but now he's talking about adding 25% to the cost of all kinds of products including potatoes from Prince Edward Island.

"It is important to understand that Donald Trump, when he makes statements like that, he plans on carrying them out. There's no question about it," Trudeau said.

"Our responsibility is to point out that he would not just be harming Canadians, who work so well with the United States, but he would actually be raising prices for Americans citizens as well and hurting American industry and business," he added.

Those tariffs could essentially blow up the North American trade pact that Trump's team negotiated during his initial term. Trudeau noted they were able to successfully re-negotiate the deal, which he calls a "win win" for both countries.

"We can work together as we did previously," Trudeau said.

Trump made the tariff threat Monday while railing against an influx of illegal migrants, even though the numbers at the Canadian border pale in comparison to the southern border.

The U.S. Border Patrol made 56,530 arrests at the Mexican border in October alone — and 23,721 arrests at the Canadian one between October 2023 and September 2024.

Trump also railed about fentanyl from Mexico and Canada, even though seizures from the Canadian border are few in comparison to the Mexican border. U.S. customs agents seized 43 pounds of fentanyl at the Canadian border last fiscal year, compared with 21,100 pounds at the Mexican border.

Canadian officials say lumping Canada in with Mexico is unfair but say they are ready to make new investments in border security.

Trudeau called Trump after he made his social media posts on the border.

When Trump imposed higher tariffs during his first term in office, other countries responded with retaliatory tariffs of their own. Canada, for instance, announced billions of new duties in 2018 against the U.S. in a tit-for-tat response to new taxes on Canadian steel and aluminum.

Canada is already examining possible retaliatory tariffs on certain items from the U.S. should Trump follow through on his threat to impose sweeping tariffs on Canadian products, a senior official told The Associated Press this week.

A government official said Canada is preparing for every eventuality and has started thinking about what items to target with tariffs in retaliation. The official stressed no decision has been made. The person spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to speak publicly.

Canada is the top export destination for 36 U.S. states. Nearly \$3.6 billion Canadian (US\$2.7 billion) worth of goods and services cross the border each day.

About 60% of U.S. crude oil imports are from Canada, and 85% of U.S. electricity imports are from Canada.

Canada is also the largest foreign supplier of steel, aluminum and uranium to the U.S. and has 34 critical minerals and metals that the Pentagon is eager for and investing in for national security.

Canada is one of the most trade-dependent countries in the world, and 77% of Canada's exports go to the U.S.

"Canada has reason to fear because Trump is impulsive, often influenced by the last thing he sees on Fox News," said Nelson Wiseman, professor emeritus at the University of Toronto. "He can leverage that by catering to what he thinks will sound and look good to the public rather than to what happens or will happen."

Romania's parliamentary vote risks being overshadowed by presidential race chaos

By STEPHEN McGRATH Associated Press

BUCHAREST, Romania (AP) — Hundreds of protesters gathered in Bucharest after a far-right populist unexpectedly won the first round of a presidential race, plunging Romania into turmoil just days before the country holds parliamentary elections. "Better to be dead than a fascist," one placard reads.

Sunday's ballot will determine a new government and prime minister to lead the European Union and NATO member country. However, the vote is sandwiched between the two rounds of the presidential race and is overshadowed by controversies and chaos following the outcome of the first vote.

Despite polling at less than 10% before the first round, a far-right politician who has praised Romanian fascist leaders and Russian President Vladimir Putin won the most votes in the Nov. 24 ballot. Calin Georgescu is due to face reformist Elena Lasconi of the Save Romania Union party in a Dec. 8 runoff.

"He's pro-Russia, pro-Putin, and we, the people — and especially the young people — we are supporting democracy," said Sebastian Marin, an 18-year-old student who attended a protest on Wednesday in the capital. "It's really important for people to mobilize."

Georgescu's success, which many have attributed to his rapid rise in popularity on the social media platform TikTok, has triggered nightly protests throughout Romania by those who oppose his past remarks and view him as a threat to democracy.

According to a report by Expert Forum, a Bucharest-based think tank, Georgescu's TikTok account has had an explosion which it said "appears sudden and artificial, similar to his polling results."

Without naming Georgescu, who declared zero campaign spending, Romania's top defense body said on Thursday that "a presidential candidate benefited from massive exposure due to preferential treatment" granted by TikTok. Romania has become a "priority target for hostile actions" by Russia, it added. The Kremlin denies it is meddling.

The same day, the Constitutional Court requested a recount of all 9.4 million votes after a former presidential candidate who obtained 1%, lodged a complaint alleging the Save Romania Union had violated electoral laws against campaign activities on polling day. The Central Election Bureau approved the request and said scanned reports were due to be sent in by 10.00 p.m. Sunday. On Friday, the court postponed a decision until Monday on whether to annul the vote.

Opposite the government headquarters, people of all ages, but mostly young people, could be heard chanting: "Democracy saves Romania!"

"I find it a bit worrying that these elections are so close together," Andrei Ienculescu-Popovici, a 28-year-old computer programmer, told The Associated Press. "At the moment, almost no one talks about the parliamentary elections ... it has become a non-topic."

He said he is suspicious of the unprecedented decision to recount the vote, which pro-democracy groups and Save Romania Union have complained is not transparent enough. "These are strange and unprecedented times for our young and fragile democracy ... this move will probably only benefit the extreme right-wing parties," he said.

A protest in Bucharest on Friday organized by the "Corruption Kills" community, demanded "that the votes be recounted with independent observers and cameras" and accused the Constitutional Court of "once again attacking democracy" in the interest of a specific party.

It is the first time in Romania's 35-year post-communist history that the leftist Social Democratic Party did not have a candidate in a presidential runoff. Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu resigned as party leader after he lost to Lasconi by a wafer-thin 2,740 votes, and Nicolae Ciuca also resigned as leader of the center-right National Liberal Party after obtaining just 8.7%.

While the presidential role in Romania has significant decision-making powers in areas such as national security and foreign policy, the prime minister is the head of the nation's government. Sunday's vote will determine the formation of the country's 466-seat legislature.

"The most important vote is the parliamentary one, not the presidential one, they decide who really

runs the country," said Ienculescu-Popovici. "We were perceived as being one of the most stable and trustworthy allies, and I fear current events might unravel that."

Since 2021, Romania's two biggest parties — the Social Democrats and the National Liberal Party — formed an unlikely coalition, which has become bitterly strained. A small ethnic Hungarian party exited the cabinet last year following disputes over a power-sharing agreement.

Like many countries throughout Europe or even the U.S., anti-incumbency sentiment is running high in Romania, which has experienced high inflation and cost of living, has a large budget deficit, and a sluggish economy. It has bolstered support for far-right populist parties.

Recent surveys have suggested the top three parties in Sunday's race will be the PSD; the far-right Alliance for the Unity of Romanians, and the PNL. After rising to the political scene eight years ago on an anti-corruption ticket, the Save Romania Union's popularity has waned in recent years but could garner the next most votes.

More minor parties that may not pass the 5% threshold to enter parliament include the pro-EU reformist REPER party and the liberal-conservative Force of the Right. Some have predicted that the far-right nationalist S.O.S Romania party, and the recently formed and little-known Party of Young People, which has backed Georgescu, could pass the threshold.

Romania's Minister of Energy Sebastian Burduja told the AP: "Nobody saw this coming ... and I mean nobody." He added that the far-right Alliance for the Union of Romanians gaining more power in parliament after Sunday's race, and Georgescu winning the final presidential vote, "is a very real concern."

After the unpredictable presidential vote and the confusion surrounding it, many political observers are reluctant to predict the outcome of the parliamentary vote.

Claudiu Tufis, an associate professor of political science at the University of Bucharest, says Sunday's vote could see strong anti-establishment turnout for far-right populism, which could win as much as 30-40% of the ballot and "polarize the population even more."

"People who voted for Georgescu seem to really enjoy the victory in this first round ... they have a lot more courage to say who they are and be proud of their vote," he said. "We've had people who are really angry at the governing party, and they voted for the opposition, only this time, the governing parties were actually the two main parties."

Emboldened 'manosphere' accelerates threats and demeaning language toward women after US election

By CHRISTINE FERNANDO Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — In the days after the presidential election, Sadie Perez began carrying pepper spray with her around campus. Her mom also ordered her and her sister a self-defense kit that included keychain spikes, a hidden knife key and a personal alarm.

It's a response to an emboldened fringe of right-wing "manosphere" influencers who have seized on Republican Donald Trump's presidential win to justify and amplify misogynistic derision and threats online. Many have appropriated a 1960s abortion rights rallying cry, declaring "Your body, my choice" at women online and on college campuses.

For many women, the words represent a worrying harbinger of what might lie ahead as some men perceive the election results as a rebuke of reproductive rights and women's rights.

"The fact that I feel like I have to carry around pepper spray like this is sad," said Perez, a 19-year-old political science student in Wisconsin. "Women want and deserve to feel safe."

Isabelle Frances-Wright, director of technology and society at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, a think tank focusing on polarization and extremism, said she had seen a "very large uptick in a number of types of misogynistic rhetoric immediately after the election," including some "extremely violent misogyny."

"I think many progressive women have been shocked by how quickly and aggressively this rhetoric has gained traction," she said.

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The phrase "Your body, my choice" has been largely attributed to a post on the social platform X from Nick Fuentes, a Holocaust-denying white nationalist and far-right internet personality who dined at Trump's Mar-a-Lago club in Florida two years ago. In statements responding to criticism of that event, Trump said he had "never met and knew nothing about" Fuentes before he arrived.

Mary Ruth Ziegler, a law professor at the University of California, Davis School of Law, said the phrase transforms the iconic abortion rights slogan into an attack on women's right to autonomy and a personal threat.

"The implication is that men should have control over or access to sex with women," said Ziegler, a reproductive rights expert.

Fuentes' post had 35 million views on X within 24 hours, according to a report by Frances-Wright's think tank, and the phrase spread rapidly to other social media platforms.

Women on TikTok have reported seeing it inundate their comment sections. The slogan also has made its way offline with boys chanting it in middle schools or men directing it at women on college campuses, according to the Institute for Strategic Dialogue report and social media reports. One mother said her daughter heard the phrase on her college campus three times, the report said.

School districts in Wisconsin and Minnesota have sent notices about the language to parents. T-shirts emblazoned with the phrase were pulled off Amazon.

Perez said she has seen men respond to shared Snapchat stories for their college class with "Your body, my choice."

"It makes me feel disgusted and infringed upon," she said. "... It feels like going backwards."

Misogynistic attacks have been part of the social media landscape for years. But Frances-Wright and others who track online extremism and disinformation said language glorifying violence against women or celebrating the possibility of their rights being stripped away has spiked since the election.

Online declarations for women to "Get back in the kitchen" or to "Repeal the 19th," a reference to the constitutional amendment that gave women the right to vote, have spread rapidly. In the days surrounding the election, the extremism think tank found that the top 10 posts on X calling for repeal of the 19th Amendment received more than 4 million views collectively.

A man holding a sign with the words "Women Are Property" sparked an outcry at Texas State University. The man was not a student, faculty or staff, and was escorted off campus, according to the university's president. The university is "exploring potential legal responses," he said.

Anonymous rape threats have been left on the TikTok videos of women denouncing the election results. And on the far-flung reaches of the web, 4chan forums have called for "rape squads" and the adoption of policies in "The Handmaid's Tale," a dystopian book and TV series depicting the dehumanization and brutalization of women.

"What was scary here was how quickly this also manifested in offline threats," Frances-Wright said, emphasizing that online discourse can have real-world impacts.

Previous violent rhetoric on 4chan has been connected to racially motivated and antisemitic attacks, including a 2022 shooting by a white supremacist in Buffalo that killed 10 people. Anti-Asian hate incidents also rose as politicians, including Trump, used words such as "Chinese virus" to describe the COVID-19 pandemic. And Trump's language targeting Muslims and immigrants in his first campaign correlated with spikes in hate speech and attacks on these groups, Frances-Wright said.

The Global Project Against Hate and Extremism reported similar rhetoric, with "numerous violent misogynistic trends" gaining traction on right-wing platforms such as 4chan and spreading to more mainstream ones such as X since the election.

Throughout the presidential race, Trump's campaign leaned on conservative podcasts and tailored messaging toward disaffected young men. As Trump took the stage at the Republican National Convention over the summer, the song "It's A Man's Man's Man's World" by James Brown blared from the speakers.

One of several factors to his success this election was modestly boosting his support among men, a shift concentrated among younger voters, according to AP VoteCast, survey of more than 120,000 voters nationwide. But Trump also won support from 44% of women age 18 to 44, according to AP VoteCast.

To some men, Trump's return to the White House is seen as a vindication, gender and politics experts said. For many young women, the election felt like a referendum on women's rights and Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris' loss felt like a rejection of their own rights and autonomy.

"For some of these men, Trump's victory represents a chance to reclaim a place in society that they think they are losing around these traditional gender roles," Frances-Wright said.

None of the current online rhetoric is being amplified by Trump or anyone in his immediate orbit. But Trump has a long history of insulting women, and the spike in such language comes after he ran a campaign that was centered on masculinity and repeatedly attacked Harris over her race and gender. His allies and surrogates also used misogynistic language about Harris throughout the campaign.

"With Trump's victory, many of these men felt like they were heard, they were victorious. They feel that they have potentially a supporter in the White House," said Dana Brown, executive director of the Pennsylvania Center for Women and Politics.

Brown said some young men feel they're victims of discrimination and have expressed mounting resentment for successes of the women's rights movement, including #MeToo. The tension also has been influenced by socioeconomic struggles.

As women become the majority on college campuses and many professional industries see increasing gender diversity, it has "led to young men scapegoating women and girls, falsely claiming it's their fault they're not getting into college anymore as opposed to looking inward," Brown said.

Perez, the political science student, said she and her sister have been leaning on each other, their mother and other women in their lives to feel safer amid the online vitriol. They text each other to make sure they got home safely. They have girls' nights to celebrate wins, including a female majority in student government at their campus in the University of Wisconsin system.

"I want to encourage my friends and the women in my life to use their voices to call out this rhetoric and to not let fear take over," she said.

How Brazilian police say Bolsonaro plotted a coup to stay in office

By MAURICIO SAVARESE and ELÉONORE HUGHES Associated Press

SAO PAULO (AP) — Brazil's Federal Police in late November formally accused far-right former President Jair Bolsonaro and 36 others of planning a coup to keep him in office. The agency described a multi-step scheme, substantiated by evidence and testimony, in an 884-page report.

The plan included systematically sowing distrust of the electoral system among the populace, drafting a decree to give the plot a veneer of legal basis, pressuring top military brass to go along with the plan, and inciting a riot in the capital.

Prosecutor-General Paulo Gonet will now decide whether to formally charge the accused parties, toss the investigation or request more testimony to understand each person's participation in different parts of the alleged plot before deciding who stands trial on which counts. Bolsonaro and his main allies have denied any wrongdoing or involvement and accuse the authorities of political persecution.

Here is a breakdown of the plan's key elements as laid out in the report and how they are supposedly connected.

Sowing doubt about Brazil's voting system

Police allege that efforts to disseminate fake news about Brazil's electronic voting system began in 2019, Bolsonaro's first year in office, but were conducted more strategically and intensively as his 2022 reelection bid drew near.

Police say so-called "digital militias" comprised of thousands of social media accounts linked to pro-Bolsonaro propaganda, as well as other prominent right-wing influencers and politicians, spread propaganda claiming the voting system could be tampered with. Bolsonaro also openly expressed admiration for Brazil's military dictatorship (1964-1985), which he claimed saved the country from communism.

The narrative of an impending illegitimate election defeat helped Bolsonaro rally tens of thousands of supporters to multiple street demonstrations and also muster many to set up camp outside military bar-

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racks and headquarters to pressure leaders.

Three months before the election, Bolsonaro invited dozens of diplomats to the presidential palace for a nationally televised meeting in which he presented supposed vulnerabilities of the voting system, without providing any evidence.

Following Bolsonaro's loss in 2022 to leftist Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Bolsonaro's Liberal Party questioned results at the country's top electoral court, arguing voting devices made in specific years could have permitted fraud. The electoral court swiftly dismissed the claims.

"They spread false studies on the vulnerabilities of the electronic voting machines through the Liberal Party, in an attempt to create a factual basis for a presidential decree" that would set the coup in motion, the report says.

A draft decree to set the coup in motion

In January 2023, Brazilian police found a draft decree in the home of Bolsonaro's former justice minister Anderson Torres. It was one of many versions drafted either at the far-right leader's behest or with his knowledge, police say. The former president presented the document, unsigned, to the commanders of the three divisions of the armed forces on Dec. 7, seeking their support.

Investigators say the draft decree shows Bolsonaro and his allies sought to create a committee to probe alleged fraud and crimes in the October 2022 vote, so they could later suspend the powers of the nation's top electoral court and possibly convene a new election.

The navy's commander was ready to comply with the decree, but army and air force leaders objected to any plan that would prevent Lula's inauguration, the report said. Those refusals are why the plan did not go ahead, according to witnesses who spoke to investigators.

Many legal experts including say evidence that former president presented the draft to military leaders and supported for different versions of the document are very damaging.

"(The goal) was to unduly intervene in elections," said Luiz Henrique Machado, a law professor at the IDP university in the capital Brasilia. "In Brazil, it is the electoral prosecutors' office and the top electoral court that have the final word about electoral legislation."

In an interview with website UOL published Thursday, Bolsonaro said he discussed with military leaders moves including decreeing a state of emergency and other exceptional measures that would have suspended the rule of law for the public good. He said such measures are provided for by the constitution, so there is nothing unseemly about evaluating those options.

"What is being said is absurd. For my part, there has never been any discussion of a coup," Bolsonaro told journalists in Brasilia on Monday.

Plan to assassinate the president-elect

On Nov. 19, Brazil's Federal Police arrested four army special operations officers and a federal police officer accused of plotting in 2022 to assassinate Lula, vice-president-elect Geraldo Alckmin and Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes. The arrested men were all mentioned in a police report that was unsealed later.

The assassination plan sought to leave Bolsonaro's ticket as the only remaining valid one in the 2022 runoff, police say. As for de Moraes, he led a five-year probe into fake news and threats against Supreme Court justices, which has led some far-right allies and supporters being barred from social media and even imprisoned. In early 2023, he presided over the nation's top electoral court when it declared Bolsonaro ineligible for office until 2030 over abuse of power related to a meeting he convened with foreign ambassadors to spread lies about the voting system.

Gen. Walter Braga Netto, Bolsonaro's 2022 running mate and former defense minister, greenlit the assassination plan at a meeting with the plotters inside his home, investigators added. Federal Police portray the retired general as one of the plot's leaders, also involved in pressuring military leaders to sign onto the coup.

Braga Netto said in a statement on Tuesday that he never plotted a coup. He added that several of the documents seized from one of his aides, including "writings, drafts and media reports" were "preparatory

material to answer media requests and to prepare for testimony in congressional hearings.”

The police report contains no indication that any attempt to assassinate Lula or Alckmin was put into motion. However, investigators found messages and documents indicating that the plotters were monitoring and following de Moraes at the time.

Police said they found evidence that retired Brig. Gen. Mário Fernandes, one of the officers arrested who had been serving as interim general secretary of the presidency, also visited the protest camps outside military installations, including at the army headquarters in Brasilia. Investigators said they have evidence that he gave instructions and financial support to the protesters.

Jan. 8 uprising

Federal Police linked Bolsonaro and some of his top ministers to the Jan. 8, 2023 riot in which supporters of the former president, many of whom had been camped outside army headquarters for months, ransacked the Supreme Court, Congress and presidential palace in Brasilia.

The protesters had pleaded for the armed forces to keep the leftist leader out of office and their uprising — which came after Lula was sworn in — was an attempt to force military intervention and oust the new president, police say.

The riot appears in the report as one of several “other actions to pressure the army commander to join the coup d’état.” Police also say that Brig. Gen. Fernandes sent a message in November 2022 to Gen. Marco Antônio Freire Gomes, then the Army’s commander, discussing the need for a “triggering event” for a coup.

Defendants, including Bolsonaro, have argued that the riot was an isolated event, and many legal experts have noted that the report’s evidence of a connection between it and a broader plot is tenuous.

“It is clear that the alleged coup plotters had contacts with people camped outside military barracks, people who were there on Jan. 8. But how much of that contact was transformed into planning, coordination, stimulus for those people to take public buildings that day? That is to be debated, it is going to be discussed in the process and the collection of more evidence,” said João Pedro Pádua, a professor of criminal law proceedings at the Universidade Federal Fluminense in Rio de Janeiro.

Bolsonaro left for the United States days before Lula’s inauguration on Jan. 1, 2023 and stayed there three months, keeping a low profile. The police report alleges he was avoiding possible imprisonment related to the coup plot and awaiting the fallout from the uprising.

China sentences journalist detained at meal with Japanese diplomat to 7 years for espionage

By HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — A court in Beijing on Friday sentenced a prominent Chinese journalist to seven in years in prison for espionage, his family said.

Dong Yuyu, a commentator and editor, was taken away by police while meeting a Japanese diplomat at a restaurant in February 2022. He has been in police custody since then.

The Beijing Number 2 Intermediate People’s Court read the verdict but did not share a copy with Dong’s lawyers or family. No announcement was available on the court’s website or its Weibo account.

The verdict named then-Japanese ambassador Hideo Tarumi and Shanghai-based chief diplomat Masaru Okada as agents belonging to an espionage organization, according the family’s statement.

Dong had served as the deputy head of the editorial department at Guangming Daily, one of the five major state-owned papers in China. The paper was once considered more liberal than other state-backed papers. Dong also contributed to the Chinese edition of the New York Times.

In his published writings, including essays as well as opinion articles, Dong had voiced his support for constitutional democracy and political reform, which later were considered to be against the stance of the Communist Party.

He had contacts with foreign diplomats, scholars and other journalists as part of his decades-long career and counted Tarumi, the ambassador, as a friend.

Still, his family said he knew he was always watched by state security, and therefore sought to be as open as possible while meeting his Japanese or American contacts.

"With Yuyu's conviction, every Chinese citizen, when dealing with the Japanese embassy — or perhaps any other foreign embassy and diplomat — will be expected to know that the Chinese government may consider those embassies to be 'espionage organizations,'" said the family in a statement. "Every sensible Chinese citizen should be appalled by this reasoning."

The U.S. Ambassador to China, Nicholas Burns, condemned Dong's conviction. "Punishing Dong for exercising his freedom of speech and the press, guaranteed by the PRC's constitution for all its citizens, is unjust."

What to know about sudden rebel gains in Syria's 13-year war and why it matters

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The 13-year civil war in Syria has roared back into prominence with a surprise rebel offensive on Aleppo, one of Syria's largest cities and an ancient business hub. The push is among the rebels' strongest in years in a war whose destabilizing effects have rippled far beyond the country's borders.

It was the first opposition attack on Aleppo since 2016, when a brutal air campaign by Russian warplanes helped Syrian President Bashar Assad retake the northwestern city. Intervention by Russia, Iran and Iranian-allied Hezbollah and other groups has allowed Assad to remain in power, within the 70% of Syria under his control.

The surge in fighting has raised the prospect of another violent front reopening in the Middle East, at a time when U.S.-backed Israel is fighting Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon, both Iranian-allied groups.

Robert Ford, the last-serving U.S. ambassador to Syria, pointed to months of Israeli strikes on Syrian and Hezbollah targets in the area, and to Israel's ceasefire with Hezbollah in Lebanon this week, as factors providing Syria's rebels with the opportunity to advance.

Here's a look at some of the key aspects of the new fighting:

Why does the fighting at Aleppo matter?

Assad has been at war with opposition forces seeking his overthrow for 13 years, a conflict that's killed an estimated half-million people. Some 6.8 million Syrians have fled the country, a refugee flow that helped change the political map in Europe by fueling anti-immigrant far-right movements.

The roughly 30% of the country not under Assad is controlled by a range of opposition forces and foreign troops. The U.S. has about 900 troops in northeast Syria, far from Aleppo, to guard against a resurgence by the Islamic State. Both the U.S. and Israel conduct occasional strikes in Syria against government forces and Iran-allied militias. Turkey has forces in Syria as well, and has influence with the broad alliance of opposition forces storming Aleppo.

Coming after years with few sizeable changes in territory between Syria's warring parties, the fighting "has the potential to be really quite, quite consequential and potentially game-changing," if Syrian government forces prove unable to hold their ground, said Charles Lister, a longtime Syria analyst with the U.S.-based Middle East Institute. Risks include if Islamic State fighters see it as an opening, Lister said.

Ford said the fighting in Aleppo would become more broadly destabilizing if it drew Russia and Turkey — each with its own interests to protect in Syria — into direct heavy fighting against each other.

What do we know about the group leading the offensive on Aleppo?

The U.S. and U.N. have long designated the opposition force leading the attack at Aleppo — Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, known by its initials HTS — as a terrorist organization.

Abu Mohammed al-Golani emerged as the leader of al-Qaida's Syria branch in 2011, in the first months of Syria's war. It was an unwelcome intervention to many in Syria's opposition, who hoped to keep the fight against Assad's brutal rule untainted by violent extremism.

Golani and his group early on claimed responsibility for deadly bombings, pledged to attack Western forces, confiscated property from religious minorities and sent religious police to enforce modest dress by women.

Golani and HTS have sought to remake themselves in recent years, focusing on promoting civilian government in their territory as well as military action, researcher Aaron Zelin noted. His group broke ties with al-Qaida in 2016. Golani cracked down on some extremist groups in his territory, and increasingly portrays himself as a protector of other religions. That includes last year allowing the first Christian Mass in the city of Idlib in years.

By 2018, the Trump administration acknowledged it was no longer directly targeting Golani, Zelin said. But HTS has allowed some wanted armed groups to continue to operate on its territory, and shot at U.S. special forces at least as recently as 2022, he said.

What's the history of Aleppo in the war?

At the crossroads of trade routes and empires for thousands of years, Aleppo is one of the centers of commerce and culture in the Middle East.

Aleppo was home to 2.3 million people before the war. Rebels seized the east side of the city in 2012, and it became the proudest symbol of the advance of armed opposition factions.

In 2016, government forces backed by Russian airstrikes laid siege to the city. Russian shells, missiles and crude barrel bombs — fuel canisters or other containers loaded with explosives and metal — methodically leveled neighborhoods. Starving and under siege, rebels surrendered Aleppo that year.

The Russian military's entry was the turning point in the war, allowing Assad to stay on in the territory he held.

This year, Israeli airstrikes in Aleppo have hit Hezbollah weapons depots and Syrian forces, among other targets, according to an independent monitoring group. Israel rarely acknowledges strikes at Aleppo and other government-held areas of Syria.

Georgian protesters clash with police for a second night after EU talks are suspended

By SOPHIKO MEGRELIDZE Associated Press

TBILISI, Georgia (AP) — Thousands of demonstrators protesting the Georgian government's decision to suspend negotiations to join the European Union rallied outside the parliament and clashed with police for a second straight night on Friday.

The night before, police used water cannons, pepper spray and tear gas to disperse protesters who took to the streets of Tbilisi, the Georgian capital, after Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze of the ruling Georgian Dream party announced the suspension. The interior ministry said it detained 43 people during the protests.

On Friday evening, protesters again swarmed the parliament, with some trying to break the metal gates to the building. Riot police used water cannons to push them away from the building and later moved to force them farther back along the Rustaveli Avenue, the city's main boulevard.

Some of the protesters used garbage bins and benches to try to build barricades.

Clashes between police and protesters also erupted late Friday in the Black Sea port of Batumi.

Georgian Dream's disputed victory in the Oct. 26 election, which was widely seen as a referendum on the country's aspirations to join the European Union, has sparked massive demonstrations and led to an opposition boycott of the parliament. The opposition said the vote was rigged under the influence of Russia seeking to keep Georgia in its orbit.

President Salome Zourabichvili joined protesters on Thursday after accusing the government of declaring "war" on its own people. In Friday's address to the nation, Zourabichvili urged police not to use force against protesters.

The Georgian president, who has a largely ceremonial role, has declared that the ruling party rigged the election with the help of Russia, Georgia's former imperial master.

The government's announcement that it was suspending negotiations to join the EU came hours after

the European Parliament adopted a resolution that condemned last month's vote as neither free nor fair, representing yet another manifestation of the continued democratic backsliding "for which the ruling Georgian Dream party is fully responsible."

European election observers said October's vote took place in a divisive atmosphere marked by instances of bribery, double voting and physical violence.

The EU granted Georgia candidate status in December 2023 on condition that it meet the bloc's recommendations, but put its accession on hold and cut financial support earlier this year after the passage of a "foreign influence" law widely seen as a blow to democratic freedoms.

EU lawmakers urged for a rerun of the parliamentary vote within a year under thorough international supervision and by an independent election administration. They also called on the EU to impose sanctions and limit formal contacts with the Georgian government.

The Georgian prime minister fired back, denouncing what he described as a "cascade of insults" from the EU politicians and declaring that "the ill-wishers of our country have turned the European Parliament into a blunt weapon of blackmail against Georgia, which is a great disgrace for the European Union."

"We will continue on our path toward the European Union; however, we will not allow anyone to keep us in a constant state of blackmail and manipulation, which is utterly disrespectful to our country and society," Kobakhidze said. "We must clearly show certain European politicians and bureaucrats, who are completely devoid of European values, that they must speak to Georgia with dignity, not through blackmail and insults."

Kobakhidze also said Georgia would reject any budgetary grants from the EU until the end of 2028.

Critics have accused Georgian Dream — established by Bidzina Ivanishvili, a shadowy billionaire who made his fortune in Russia — of becoming increasingly authoritarian and tilted toward Moscow. The party recently pushed through laws similar to those used by the Kremlin to crack down on freedom of speech and LGBTQ+ rights.

The EU suspended Georgia's membership application process indefinitely in June, after parliament passed a law requiring organizations that receive more than 20% of their funding from abroad to register as "pursuing the interest of a foreign power," similar to a Russian law used to discredit organizations critical of the government.

Retailers coax Black Friday shoppers into stores with big discounts and giveaways

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO, HALELUYA HADERO and ALEXANDRA OLSON AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — Retailers used giveaways and big discounts to reward U.S. shoppers who ventured out for Black Friday even as earlier offers, the prospect of better bargains in the days ahead and the ease of e-commerce drained much of the excitement from the holiday shopping season's much-hyped kickoff.

Frequent deals throughout the month and more awaiting on Cyber Monday gave consumers less of a reason to squabble over store shelves while trying to get their hands on TVs or toys. But shopping malls and merchants big and small used the day after Thanksgiving to entice customers into physical stores at a time when many prefer to browse and buy online.

Some Target shoppers lined up as early as 11:30 p.m. on Thanksgiving Day to get their hands on an exclusive book devoted to Taylor Swift's Eras Tour and a bonus edition of her "The Tortured Poets Department: The Anthology" album. Although both will be available purchase online starting Saturday, many locations sold out their supply of the products, the discount retailer said.

At a Target in Southfield, Michigan, a few miles north of Detroit, Marge Evans, 32, used her cellphone to take and send photos of shirts, sweaters and other apparel with Black Friday markdowns. Her shopping cart was full, but she was shopping for an upcoming cruise with her fiance, not Christmas.

"I'll see what things are looking like the first week in January," the 32-year-old massage therapist said. "Really, after the holidays are over is when the real deals come through. They get rid of everything."

Industry analysts observed Black Friday shoppers displaying the same choosy, deal-driven behavior many U.S. consumers exhibited all year while adjusting prices after the period of inflation that started toward

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the end of the coronavirus pandemic.

At many stores, the huge crowds of Black Fridays past never returned after the pandemic. A Walmart in Germantown, Maryland, had only half of the parking spots filled on Friday morning. Some shoppers were returning items or buying groceries.

Bharatharaj Moruejsan, a 35-year-old software engineer, decided to check out Walmart's offers because he was jet-lagged after returning from a month-long family vacation to India. He scored an iPad for his 1-year-old daughter for \$250, 32% off its original \$370 price tag.

"That's a good deal," Moruejsan said.

After visiting stores and shopping centers on Long Island, Marshal Cohen, chief retail adviser at market research firm Circana, said that apart from people lining up for Target's Taylor Swift merchandise, the number of shoppers appeared typical.

"The spreading out of the holidays has created the lack of need and lack of urgency," said Cohen, who had a 20-person team monitoring crowds nationwide. "This is going to be a long, slow tedious process" of getting shoppers to buy, he said.

Michael Brown, a partner at management consulting firm Kearney, saw no lines at the Westfield Garden State Plaza in Paramus, New Jersey, 10 minutes before the 7 a.m. opening.

"It's not the old Black Friday that we used to know," he said.

Retailers that offered at least 40% off drove shoppers' attention, according to Brown. For example, Forever 21 had 50% to 70% discounts and had lines to the stores, while H&M, which offered 30% discounts, was relatively quiet.

Enough consumers still enjoy holiday shopping in person that Black Friday nonetheless was expected to retain its crown remains the biggest day of the year for retail foot traffic in the U.S., according to retail technology company Sensormatic Solutions.

At Macy's Herald Square in Manhattan, the setting for the 1947 Christmas movie "Miracle on 34th Street," a steady stream of shoppers early Friday found some shoes and handbags priced half-off, special occasion dresses marked down by 30%, and 60% off the store's luxury bedding brand.

Keressa Clark, 50, and her daughter Morghan, 27, who were visiting New York from Wilmington, North Carolina, arrived at 6:15 a.m.

"I am actually shocked to see so many Black Friday deals because so many things are online," Morghan Clark said.

Karessa Clark, who works as a nurse practitioner, said President-elect Donald Trump's pending return to the White House made her feel better about the economy. She plans to spend \$2,000 this holiday season, about \$500 more than a year ago.

Julie Rambo, a retired school teacher, shoved aside her worries about the incoming Trump administration as she shopped with her grandchildren at the Target in Southfield, Michigan.

Rambo, 74, said she was "totally, completely scared of tariffs because I'm still going to need an automobile," but it was a problem to confront later. As she does each year, she was primarily looking for Christmas gifts through a prison ministry for children with parents who are incarcerated.

"As we're shopping, we find things for ourselves too," Rambo said.

Online sales figures from Thanksgiving Day gave retailers a reason to remain hopeful for a lucrative end to the year.

Vivek Pandya, the lead analyst at Adobe Digital Insights, said consumers spent a record \$6.1 billion online Thursday, 8.8% more than on Thanksgiving last year. Bigger-than-expected discounts helped spur spending on electronics, apparel and other categories, Pandya said.

Across the board, Black Friday weekend discounts should peak at 30% on Cyber Monday and then retreat to around 15%, according to Adobe's research.

Analysts forecast a solid holiday shopping season overall in the U.S., though perhaps not as robust as last year. Retailers were even more under the gun to get shoppers in to buy early and in bulk since there are five fewer days between Thanksgiving and Christmas this year.

Shoppers at Lakeside Shopping Center in Metairie, Louisiana, were treated to a glass of champagne and

a \$50 gift receipt.

"This is a nice touch. I was just talking to my best friend and rehashing over Thanksgiving so this was a nice little treat after that conversation. Everyone needs a little drink," said Faren Kennedy, a Houston resident who was in town visiting family and wanted to stop at the mall for the nostalgia of Black Friday shopping.

At Mall of America in Bloomington, Minnesota, some 13,000 people showed up the first hour of its 7 a.m. opening, roughly 1,000 more than a year ago, according to Jill Renslow, the mall's chief business development and marketing officer.

The mall was on target to exceed the 200,000 Black Friday customer visits it received in 2023, Renslow said. Stores with deep discounts and promotions were the most packed, she said, citing Lego's giveaway of a free retro record player with a \$250 purchase.

Stephen Lebovitz, CEO of CBL Properties, which operates 85 shopping properties, and Bill Taubman, president and chief operating officer of upscale mall landlord Taubman Realty Group, also said customer visits were up.

Black Friday no longer is an American-only sales event. Retailers in Australia, Canada, France, Germany and the U.K. also appealed to holiday shoppers looking to save money.

In India, about 200 Amazon warehouse workers and delivery drivers, rallied Friday in New Delhi, some wearing masks of Amazon chief Jeff Bezos, to demand better wages and working conditions. Similar protests were planned in other countries.

Donald Trump's call for 'energy dominance' is likely to run into real-world limits

By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump is set to create a National Energy Council that he says will establish American "energy dominance" around the world as he seeks to boost U.S. oil and gas drilling and move away from President Joe Biden's focus on climate change.

The energy council — to be led by North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum, Trump's choice to head the Interior Department — will be key in Trump's pledge to "drill, drill, drill" and sell more oil and other energy sources to allies in Europe and around the globe.

The new council will be granted sweeping authority over federal agencies involved in energy permitting, production, generation, distribution, regulation and transportation, with a mandate to cut bureaucratic red tape, enhance private sector investments and focus on innovation instead of "totally unnecessary regulation," Trump said.

But Trump's energy wishes are likely to run into real-world limits. For one, U.S. oil production under Biden is already at record levels. The federal government cannot force companies to drill for more oil, and production increases could lower prices and reduce profits.

A call for energy dominance — a term Trump also used in his first term as president — "is an opportunity, not a requirement," for the oil industry to move forward on drilling projects under terms that are likely to be more favorable to industry than those offered by Biden, said energy analyst Kevin Book.

Whether Trump achieves energy dominance — however he defines it — "comes down to decisions by private companies, based on how they see supply-demand balances in the global marketplace," said Book, managing partner at ClearView Energy Partners, a Washington research firm. Don't expect an immediate influx of new oil rigs dotting the national landscape, he said.

Trump's bid to boost oil supplies — and lower U.S. prices — is complicated by his threat this week to impose 25% import tariffs on Canada and Mexico, two of the largest sources of U.S. oil imports. The U.S. oil industry warned the tariffs could raise prices and even harm national security.

"Canada and Mexico are our top energy trading partners, and maintaining the free flow of energy products across our borders is critical for North American energy security and U.S. consumers," said Scott

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Lauermann, speaking for the American Petroleum Institute, the oil industry's top lobbying group.

American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers, which represents U.S. refineries, also opposes potential tariffs, saying in a statement that "American refiners depend on crude oil from Canada and Mexico to produce the affordable, reliable fuels consumers count on every day."

Energy lobbyist Scott Segal said the idea of centering energy decisions at the White House follows an example set by Biden, who named a trio of White House advisers to lead on climate policy. Segal, a partner at the law and policy law firm Bracewell, called Burgum "a steady hand on the tiller" with experience in fossil fuels and renewables.

And unlike Biden's climate advisers — Gina McCarthy, John Podesta and Ali Zaidi — Burgum will probably take his White House post as a Senate-confirmed Cabinet member, Segal said.

Dustin Meyer, senior vice president of policy, economics and regulatory affairs at the American Petroleum Institute, called the new energy council "a good thing" for the U.S. economy and trade. "Conceptually it makes a lot of sense to have as much coordination as possible," he said.

Still, "market dynamics will always be the key" for any potential increase in energy production, Meyer said.

Jonathan Elkind, a senior research scholar at Columbia University's Center on Global Energy Policy, called energy dominance a "deliberately vague concept," but said, "It's hard to see how (Trump) can push more oil into an already saturated market."

Trump has promised to bring gasoline prices below \$2 a gallon, but experts call that highly unlikely, since crude oil prices would need to drop dramatically to achieve that goal. Gas prices averaged \$3.06 nationally as of Friday, down from \$3.25 a year ago, according to AAA.

Elkind and other experts said they hope the new energy council will move beyond oil to focus on renewable energy such as wind, solar and geothermal power, as well as nuclear. None of those energy resources produces greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change.

"Failure to focus on climate change as an existential threat to our planet is a huge concern and translates to a very significant loss of American property and American lives," said Elkind, a former assistant energy secretary in the Obama administration. He cited federal statistics showing two dozen weather disasters this year that caused more than \$1 billion in damage each. A total of 418 people were killed.

Trump has played down risks from climate change and pledged to rescind unspent money in the Inflation Reduction Act, Biden's landmark climate and health care bill. He also said he will stop offshore wind development when he returns to the White House in January.

Even so, his Nov. 15 announcement of the energy council says he will "expand ALL forms of energy production to grow our Economy and create good-paying jobs."

That includes renewables, said Safak Yucel, associate professor at Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business.

"The mandate for the energy council is U.S. dominance globally, but what's more American than American solar and American wind?" he asked. A report from Ernst & Young last year showed that solar was the cheapest source of new-build electricity in many markets.

Trump, in his statement, said he wants to dramatically increase baseload power to lower electricity costs, avoid brownouts and "WIN the battle for AI superiority."

In comments to reporters before he was named to the energy post, Burgum cited a similar goal, noting increased demand for electricity from artificial intelligence, commonly known as AI, and fast-growing data centers. "The AI battle affects everything from defense to health care to education to productivity as a country," Burgum said.

While Trump mocks the climate law as the "green new scam," he is unlikely to repeal it, Yucel and other experts said. One reason: Most of its investments and jobs are in Republican congressional districts. GOP members of Congress have urged House Speaker Mike Johnson to retain the law, which passed with only Democratic votes.

"A lot of Southern states are telling Trump, 'We actually like renewables,'" Yucel said, noting that Republican-led states have added thousands of jobs in recent years in wind, solar and battery power.

If renewables make economic sense, he added, "they'll continue."

In a shock offensive, insurgents breach Syria's largest city for the first time since 2016

By SARAH EL DEEB Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Insurgents breached Syria's largest city Friday and clashed with government forces for the first time since 2016, according to a war monitor and fighters, in a surprise attack that sent residents fleeing and added fresh uncertainty to a region reeling from multiple wars.

The advance on Aleppo followed a shock offensive launched by insurgents Wednesday, as thousands of fighters swept through villages and towns in Syria's northwestern countryside. Residents fled neighborhoods on the city's edge because of missiles and gunfire, according to witnesses in Aleppo. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which monitors the country's unresolved civil war, said dozens of fighters from both sides were killed.

The attack injected new violence into a region experiencing dual wars in Gaza and Lebanon involving Israel, and other conflicts, including the Syrian civil war that began in 2011.

Aleppo has not been attacked by opposition forces since they were ousted from eastern neighborhoods in 2016 following a grueling military campaign in which Syrian government forces were backed by Russia, Iran and its allied groups.

But this time, there was no sign of a significant pushback from government forces or their allies. Instead, reports emerged of government forces melting away in the face of advances, and insurgents posted messages on social media calling on troops to surrender.

Robert Ford, who was the last U.S. ambassador to Syria, said the attack showed that Syrian government forces are "extremely weak." In some cases, he said, they appear to have "almost been routed."

This week's advances were among the largest in recent years by opposition factions, led by the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham group, or HTS, and represent the most intense fighting in northwestern Syria since 2020, when government forces seized areas previously controlled by the opposition.

The offensive came as Iran-linked groups, primarily Lebanon's Hezbollah, which has backed Syrian government forces since 2015, have been preoccupied with their own battles at home.

A ceasefire in Hezbollah's two-month war with Israel took effect Wednesday, the day the Syrian opposition factions announced their offensive. Israel has also escalated its attacks against Hezbollah and Iran-linked targets in Syria during the last 70 days.

Dareen Khalifa, a senior adviser with the International Crisis Group and an expert on Syrian groups, said the insurgents have signaled for a while that they were ready for an offensive. But no one expected the swift advance of the forces toward Aleppo.

"It's not only that the Russians are distracted and bogged down in Ukraine, but also the Iranians are distracted and bogged down elsewhere. Hezbollah's distracted and bogged down elsewhere, and the regime is absolutely cornered," she said. "But the surprise element comes in with how quickly the regime crumbled."

The attack on Aleppo followed weeks of simmering low-level violence, including government attacks on opposition-held areas. Turkey, which has backed Syrian opposition groups, failed in its diplomatic efforts to prevent the government attacks, which were seen as a violation of a 2019 agreement sponsored by Russia, Turkey and Iran to freeze the line of the conflict.

Turkish security officials said Thursday that Syrian opposition groups initially launched a long-planned "limited" offensive toward Aleppo, where attacks targeting civilians originated. However, the offensive expanded as Syrian government forces began retreating from their positions, the officials said.

The aim of the offensive was to reestablish the boundaries of the de-escalation zone, according to Turkish officials.

The 2016 battle for Aleppo was a turning point in the war between Syrian government forces and rebel fighters after 2011 protests against Bashar Assad's rule turned into an all-out war.

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Russia and Iran and its allied groups helped Syrian government forces reclaim control of the city that year after a grueling military campaign and a siege that lasted for weeks.

Besides backing opposition forces, Turkey has also established a military presence in Syria, sending troops into parts of the northwest. Separately and largely in the east of Syria, the United States has supported Syrian Kurdish forces fighting Islamic State militants.

The Syrian government did not comment on insurgents breaching Aleppo city limits.

The Kremlin said Friday that it considered the attack an encroachment on Syria's sovereignty and that it supported the quickest possible establishment of constitutional order in the region.

"Of course, this is a violation of Syria's sovereignty in this region," Russian presidential spokesperson Dmitry Peskov told a press briefing.

Syria's armed forces said in a statement Friday that they clashed with insurgents in the countryside around Aleppo and Idlib, destroying drones and heavy weaponry. They vowed to repel the attack and accused the insurgents of spreading false information about their advances.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the insurgents detonated two car bombs Friday at the western edge of Aleppo. The war monitor said insurgents were also able to seize control of Saraqeb, south of Aleppo, a town at the strategic intersection of the highways linking Aleppo with Damascus and the coast. Syrian government authorities diverted traffic from that highway Thursday.

An insurgent commander posted a recorded message on social media calling on Aleppo residents to cooperate with the advancing forces.

Turkey's state-run Anadolu Agency reported that the insurgents entered the city center Friday and now control about 70 locations in Aleppo and Idlib provinces.

Syria's state media reported that projectiles from insurgents landed in student accommodations at Aleppo's university in the city center, killing four people, including two students.

Syrian armed forces said the insurgents are violating a 2019 agreement that de-escalated fighting in the area, the last remaining opposition stronghold for years.

Hezbollah was "the main force" in the government's control of Aleppo, said Rami Abdurrahman, head of the Observatory.

In a phone call with his Syrian counterpart, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi described the insurgent attacks in Syria "as a plot orchestrated by the U.S. and the Zionist regime following the regime's defeat in Lebanon and Palestine."

Insurgents posted videos online showing they were using drones, a new weapon for them. It was not clear to what extent the drones were used on the battleground.

Insurgents attacked a military airbase southeast of Aleppo with drones early Friday, destroying a helicopter, the Anadolu Agency reported. The opposition groups also seized heavy weapons and military vehicles belonging to the government forces, the agency said.

Middle East latest: 2 children and a woman crushed to death outside Gaza bakery amid food shortage

By The Associated Press undefined

Two children and a woman were crushed to death Friday as a crowd of Palestinians pushed to get bread at a bakery in the Gaza Strip amid a worsening food crisis in the war-ravaged territory, medical officials said.

The bodies of two girls aged 13 and 17 and the 50-year-old woman were taken to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al-Balah in central Gaza, where a doctor confirmed that they died from suffocation due to crowding at the al-Banna bakery. Video from The Associated Press showed their bodies placed next to each other on the floor inside the hospital's morgue.

The flow of food allowed into Gaza by Israel has fallen to nearly its lowest level of almost 14-month-old war for the past two months, according to Israeli official figures. U.N. and aid officials say hunger and desperation are growing among Gaza's population, almost all of which relies on humanitarian aid to survive.

Osama Abu Laban, the father of one of the girls, wailed over the loss of her life outside the hospital.

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"My wife fell when she heard that she (our daughter) was suffocating. She did not yet know that she was dead," he told the AP.

Some bakeries in Gaza were closed for several days last week due to a shortage of flour. AP footage taken last week after they reopened showed large crowds of people cramming together, screaming and pushing, at one bakery in Deir al-Balah.

Palestinians across the Gaza Strip are heavily relying on bakeries and charitable kitchens, with many able to only secure one meal a day for their families.

In Lebanon, thousands of displaced people began returning to their homes this week after a ceasefire was announced between Israel and the Hezbollah militant group.

Many found their homes reduced to rubble after intense Israeli airstrikes over the past two months leveled entire neighborhoods in eastern and southern Lebanon, as well as the southern suburbs of Beirut. Nearly 1.2 million people have been displaced.

The truce was the first major sign of progress in the region since war began more than a year ago, triggered by Hamas' attack on Israel on Oct. 7, 2023. But it does not address the devastating war in Gaza. For Palestinians in Gaza and families of hostages held in the territory, the ceasefire marked another missed opportunity to end fighting that has stretched on for nearly 14 months.

More than 44,000 people have been killed and more than 104,000 wounded, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. Israel has destroyed large parts of Gaza and displaced nearly all of its 2.3 million people.

Here's the Latest:

Hezbollah again starts holding public funerals for its fallen fighters

MAARAKEH, Lebanon — Hezbollah held a public funeral in a southern village on Friday for five of its fighters killed during the fighting with Israel. It was the first time the Lebanese militant group held a public funeral since after the war intensified in late September.

"My son is in heaven," said Zeinab al-Haj holding a bag of roses to toss them on the coffin of her son Ali Hijazi during the ceremony in the village of Maarakeh. Hijazi died of wounds suffered in an airstrike last week.

Hezbollah's last public funeral was held on Sept. 27, the same day the group's leader Hassan Nasrallah was killed in an Israeli airstrike on a southern Beirut's suburb.

"We are people who are proud of their martyrs," said Hezbollah's media chief in south Lebanon Salman Harb. "Our martyrs are the symbol of our victory by all means."

After a ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah went into effect on Wednesday, the group began announcing again its fallen fighters. More funerals are expected in the coming days including the funeral of three more fighters in Maarakeh on Saturday.

Hezbollah had announced the death of nearly 500 fighters before Sept. 23, when the war intensified. Since late September, Hezbollah is believed to have lost hundreds of fighters whose funerals will be held whenever their bodies are recovered.

Hezbollah is also expected to hold a funeral for Nasrallah and other top officials, including his successor Hashem Safieddine who was killed in an airstrike in early October.

Hezbollah chief says the group agreed to the ceasefire deal 'from a position of strength'

BEIRUT — Hezbollah chief Naim Kasseem said on Friday that the militant group will coordinate closely with the Lebanese military to implement the U.S.-brokered ceasefire agreement with Israel that followed nearly 14 months of intense fighting.

He also claimed that with the deal, Hezbollah achieved "a great victory that surpasses the victory of July 2006," the last time the Iran-backed group was at war with Israel.

"The ceasefire agreement aligns with Lebanese sovereignty and we have accepted it from a position of strength," he asserted, speaking in a pre-recorded message from an undisclosed location on the third day of the ceasefire.

Kasseem added there would be no confrontation between Hezbollah fighters and the Lebanese Army. "Don't bet on any disagreement or friction between us and the army," he said. "The army will be deploy-

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ing in its country, which is also ours.”

Kassem also pledged Hezbollah will help “with rebuilding and cooperate with the state and all organizations and countries willing to assist Lebanon, aiming to make Lebanon more beautiful than it was.”

The World Bank estimates that Lebanon’s financial losses from the conflict — which was initially limited to the border but escalated dramatically in mid-September — exceed \$8 billion, further straining a country already reeling from a series of cascading crises since 2019.

Israeli military says it struck a site of a Hezbollah rocket launcher in southern Lebanon

JERUSALEM — Israel’s military said it struck an area in southern Lebanon where it detected movement of a Hezbollah rocket launcher on Friday, the third day of the ceasefire between Hezbollah and Israel.

In the statement on the airstrike, the military said it would “actively enforce violations of the ceasefire agreement.”

The strike followed several Israeli military attacks in southern Lebanon earlier in the day, which were reported by the Lebanese state media, and an Israeli drone strike on a Hezbollah weapons depot on Thursday.

There was no immediate comment from the Lebanese army, which has accused Israel of breaking the ceasefire several times since it came into effect.

Hamas claims attack on Israeli bus in West Bank that wounded 8 people, including 4 soldiers

RAMALLAH, West Bank — Hamas claimed responsibility for a shooting attack on an Israeli bus in the occupied West Bank on Friday that wounded eight people, including four soldiers.

It was the latest violence to scar the territory as tensions run high 14 months into the Israel-Hamas war.

The attacker, who Hamas identified in a statement as Samer Hussein, 46, was killed by Israeli troops shortly after opening fire toward the bus at a junction near the Israeli settlement of Ariel.

The military said four soldiers were lightly wounded. Paramedics said three people were critically wounded.

Attacks by Palestinian militants on Israelis in the volatile territory have grown more common since the start of the Israel-Hamas war, as Palestinian deaths have also spiked. Israeli fire has killed 796 Palestinians since Oct. 7, 2023, mostly in military raids on Palestinian cities and towns. Attacks by settlers on Palestinians and their property have also increased.

Lebanon’s state media says Israel carried out several attacks in the south

BEIRUT — The Israeli army carried out several attacks in southern Lebanon on Friday, the third day of the ceasefire between Hezbollah and Israel, Lebanon’s state media said.

Artillery bombardment struck the villages of Markaba, Talusa and Khiyam while four Israeli tanks moved into the western part of Khiyam, the report said, adding that an Israeli tank fired at a house in Nabatiyah province.

Local media also reported that the Israeli army fired on civilians in the nearby village of Bint Jbeil. No casualties were immediately reported and The Associated Press was not immediately able to verify the claims.

Israel’s and Lebanon’s armies did not comment on the alleged attacks.

Lebanon politician calls on Hezbollah to work with Lebanese army

BEIRUT — The leader of a leading Christian political party in Lebanon has called on Hezbollah to engage with the Lebanese army and devise a plan to dismantle its military infrastructure south and north of the Litani river.

In a press conference Friday, Samir Geagea, head of the Lebanese Forces Party, criticized Hezbollah for opening a front with Israel and accused the Shiite militant group of committing a “major crime” against the Lebanese people.

“We could have done without the martyrdom of more than 4,000 people, the displacement of thousands and the destruction across the country,” Geagea said. “Despite all these tragedies, Hezbollah continues to talk about a victory using a bizarre and disconnected logic that has no basis in reality.”

Geagea’s comments came two days after a U.S.-brokered ceasefire between Hezbollah and Israel went into effect. More than 3,900 people have been killed in Lebanon since Israel’s conflict with Hezbollah

escalated.

Geagea, whose Lebanese Forces Party holds the largest bloc in Lebanon's 128-member parliament, also addressed Lebanon's presidential deadlock. The country has been without a president for more than two years.

Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri has scheduled a session for presidential elections in January. "Consultations with opposition factions and our allies will begin in the coming days to explore the possibility of agreeing on presidential candidates and bringing them to parliament," Geagea said.

2 children and a woman crushed to death outside Gaza bakery

Two children and a 50-year-old woman were crushed to death Friday as a crowd of Palestinians pushed to get bread at a bakery in the central Gaza town of Deir al-Balah, medical officials said.

The flow of food allowed into Gaza by Israel has fallen to nearly its lowest level of the almost 14-month-old war for the past two months, according to Israeli official figures. U.N. and aid officials say hunger and desperation are growing among Gaza's population, almost all of which relies on humanitarian aid to survive.

A doctor at Al-Aqsa Hospital confirmed that the three died from suffocation due to crowding at the al-Banna bakery in Deir al-Balah.

Some bakeries in Gaza were closed for several days last week due to a shortage of flour. AP footage taken last week after they reopened showed large crowds of people cramming together, screaming and pushing, at one bakery in Deir al-Balah. Bags of bread now sell in the black market near bakeries for up to \$17 each.

Palestinians across the Gaza Strip are heavily relying on bakeries and charitable kitchens, with many able to only secure one meal a day for their families.

Osama Abu Laban, the father of one of the girls killed Friday, wailed over the loss of her life outside the hospital.

"My wife fell when she heard that she (our daughter) was suffocating. She did not yet know that she was dead," he told the AP. He added that he had also lost his son, father, uncle, and cousins, all in northern Gaza.

Several women gathered inside the morgue to mourn their dead relatives, with one woman screaming "they went to buy bread, they crushed them."

Nigeria confirms that at least 27 people died and more than 100 are missing after boat capsized

By CHINEDU ASADU Associated Press

ABUJA, Nigeria (AP) — At least 27 people died and more than 100, mostly women, were missing on Friday, after a boat transporting them to a food market capsized along the River Niger in northern Nigeria, authorities said.

About 200 passengers were on the boat that was going from the state of Kogi to neighboring state of Niger when it capsized, the Niger State Emergency Management Agency spokesman Ibrahim Audu told The Associated Press.

Rescues managed to pull 27 bodies from the river by Friday evening while local divers were still searching for others, according to Sandra Musa, spokeswoman for the Kogi state emergency services.

No survivor was found about 12 hours after the incident occurred, she added.

Authorities have not confirmed what caused the sinking but local media suggested the boat may have been overloaded. Overcrowding on boats is common in remote parts of Nigeria where the lack of good roads leaves many with no alternative routes.

According to Justin Uwazuruonye, who is in charge of Nigeria's National Emergency Management Agency operations in the state, rescuers had trouble finding the location of the capsizing for hours after Friday's tragedy struck.

Such deadly incidents are increasingly becoming a source of concern in Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, as authorities struggle to enforce safety measures and regulations for water transportation.

Most of the accidents have been attributed to overcrowding and the lack of maintenance of the boats, often built locally to accommodate as many passengers as possible in defiance of safety measures.

Also, authorities have not been able to enforce the use of life jackets on such trips, often because of lack of availability or cost.

Elevate Thanksgiving leftovers with a Turkey Reuben Sandwich

By KATIE WORKMAN Associated Press

I have a confession. I like the Thanksgiving leftovers better than the holiday feast.

The Thanksgiving meal is a family favorite, and I love all of the foods. But what makes me even happier is opening the fridge the next morning and foraging for a slice of apple pie or some leftover roasted Brussels sprouts, and especially pulling out this, that and the other to make a masterpiece of a turkey sandwich.

A classic Reuben sandwich is made with corned beef, Russian or Thousand Island dressing, Swiss cheese, and sauerkraut on rye bread. But this version made with turkey hits all of the notes and is one of the best uses of post-Thanksgiving leftover turkey that I can think of. It's far above a plain old (possibly dry) turkey sandwich with a bit of mustard and mayo between two slices of cold bread.

A quick version of sauerkraut is what makes this sandwich spectacular (and a Reuben!). I like to sliver my cabbage very thin for slaws and krauts, and I go for Napa or Savoy cabbage, which is a bit lighter in texture than green head cabbage. My recipe calls for apple cider, apple vinegar and a bit of beer (and hey, that open beer shouldn't go to waste – a perfect pairing for this sandwich.)

Then, a dump-and-stir Russian dressing, Swiss cheese or Gruyere, and rye bread are the clinchers. With the turkey, griddle the whole thing up, and remember that you can make this sandwich any time of the year with leftover turkey or even sliced turkey from the deli.

Do you have some good leftover sides, like Brussels sprouts or roasted vegetables, from the Thanksgiving meal? Pile them into bowls, and a sandwich meal becomes a feast.

Double or triple this recipe as needed. Extra sauerkraut and Russian dressing can be kept in tightly sealed containers in the fridge for up to one week. (Make some hot dogs or sausages later in the week to use up the leftover sauerkraut.)

TURKEY REUBEN SANDWICHES

Makes 4 sandwiches

For the Quick Sauerkraut:

1. 1 tablespoon olive or vegetable oil
2. 4 cups thinly slivered Napa or Savoy cabbage
3. 1 yellow onion (halved and very thinly sliced)
4. ½ teaspoon kosher salt (or to taste)
5. 1 teaspoon mustard seeds
6. ½ cup apple cider vinegar
7. ¼ cup apple cider
8. ¼ cup beer

For the Russian Dressing

9. ¼ cup mayonnaise
10. 2 tablespoons ketchup
11. 2 tablespoons minced onion
12. 1 tablespoon relish
13. 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
14. Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper (to taste)

For the Sandwiches

15. 8 slices rye bread
16. 2 tablespoons butter, at room temperature
17. 1 ½ cups grated Swiss or Gruyere cheese

18. 8 fairly thick slices roast turkey (same size as the bread)

Directions

Make the Sauerkraut: Heat the oil in a large, deep skillet over medium heat. Add the cabbage, onions and salt, and sauté for 5 minutes, until slightly wilted. Stir in the mustard seeds, then add the cider vinegar, cider and beer, and bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Adjust the heat to keep at a simmer and cook until the cabbage is fairly tender but not mushy, about 15 to 20 minutes.

Let the mixture cool to room temperature.

Make the Russian Dressing: While the cabbage is cooking, combine the mayonnaise, ketchup, onion, relish, lemon juice, and salt and pepper in a small bowl.

Build the Sandwiches: Spread one side of each slice of bread with the softened butter. Place 4 bread slices on a cutting board, buttered side down. Spread the slices with the Russian Dressing, about 1 tablespoon on each. Spoon about 2 to 3 tablespoons of well-drained sauerkraut onto each piece. Top with two slices of turkey, then 1/4 of the gruyere cheese. Place the remaining bread on top to finish the sandwiches, making sure the buttered side faces up.

Griddle the Sandwiches: Heat a large, heavy skillet over medium heat. Add the sandwiches (you will probably have to cook them two at a time), and cook for about 3 minutes on each side, until the outside is nicely browned, and the cheese has melted.

Serve: Cut in half and serve hot.

Ukrainian energy workers carry out repairs despite Russia's pounding of the country's power grid

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

On a bright winter day, workers at a Ukrainian thermal power plant repair its heavily damaged equipment as drops of water from melted snow leak through gaping holes in its battered roof.

Several weeks earlier, the facility was targeted by a Russian air attack that left scorch marks, shrapnel scars on the walls, and missile fragments scattered across the production floor.

"This is our life now. Workers at a thermal power plant that's supposed to produce electricity are walking on frozen floors and using firewood to keep warm," Oleksandr, 52, head of the Production Management Department, told The Associated Press. He spoke on condition that only his first name be used citing security concerns.

Repeated Russian strikes on infrastructure have seriously impacted Ukraine's energy sector often resulting in rolling blackouts across the country. On Thursday, Moscow launched another large-scale air attack. Ukrainian authorities said nearly 200 drones and missiles targeted infrastructure, disrupting power supply to more than a million people.

The scale of the ongoing work to fix the sector is huge. Since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, the G7 and other allied countries have allocated more than \$4 billion in energy assistance to Ukraine, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in September.

Oleksandr, who works at the power plant operated by Ukraine's largest private energy company, DTEK, says since the station was first attacked in November 2022, it has been unable to return to full capacity due to continuous strikes that have left critical equipment in ruins. The exact location of the plant visited by the AP, details on the damage and even workers' last names cannot be disclosed for fear this information could help Russia coordinate future attacks.

DTEK operated around 20% of Ukraine's electricity production before the full-scale invasion, but this figure dropped to 12% since the war broke out. The company says its facilities have been attacked by Russia almost 200 times since 2022. They also say nearly 90% of the company's infrastructure was destroyed or suffered damage and that was before Russia launched its large-scale attack on Nov 17.

Oleksandr says he expects repairs at the station to continue through the winter into next year, and potentially far beyond. Repair efforts at the plant are further complicated by the fact that some critical equipment was manufactured in the Soviet Union and finding parts is now difficult. To mitigate this, some

former Soviet countries who are now Ukraine's allies have helped supply equipment.

"Potentially, Western countries could also help us with equipment, but their power grids have different characteristics," Oleksandr said.

Only half of DTEK's generating capacities have been restored since the first attacks on its plants in November 2022 until the latest large-scale strike. Earlier this week, the European Commission and the U.S. government announced a donation of \$112 million in equipment and construction materials to help DTEK prepare for the winter.

With the war in its third year, staff at DTEK's plant have adapted to the grim reality of their day-to-day existence. They know the protocols by heart. Not everyone can take shelter during an air alert. A minimal crew must remain in the control room to oversee operations, putting themselves at risk of a direct strike.

"You have to sit and wait while monitoring the trajectories of whatever was fired, but the power units keep working so we cannot just leave, we stay in the control room," said Dmytro, 41, a power unit operator at the plant.

Despite the challenges, Dmytro and his colleagues press on, driven by a mission to keep the lights on in their town and region over the winter months.

"Who'll do it, if not us? I also have family waiting for me at home, but if we all leave and the equipment breaks down, the responsibility will be on our shoulders, the entire city will lose electricity and heating," he said.

"Some are risking (their lives) at the frontline, while we here have our own energy front."

Family returns to Lebanon to find a crater where their 50-year-old home once stood

By LUJAIN JO Associated Press

BAALBEK, Lebanon (AP) — In eastern Lebanon's city of Baalbek, the Jawhari family gathered around a gaping crater where their home once stood, tears streaming as they tried to make sense of the destruction.

"It is heart-breaking. A heartache that there is no way we will ever recover from," said Lina Jawhari, her voice breaking as she hugged relatives who came to support the family. "Our world turned upside down in a second."

The home, which was a gathering place for generations, was reduced to rubble by an Israeli airstrike on Nov. 1, leaving behind shattered memories and twisted fragments of a once-vibrant life.

The family, like thousands of Lebanese, were returning to check on their properties after the U.S.-mediated ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah went into effect early Wednesday.

Intense Israeli airstrikes over the past two months leveled entire neighborhoods in eastern and southern Lebanon, as well as the southern suburbs of Beirut, which are predominantly Shiite areas of Lebanon where Hezbollah has a strong base of support. Nearly 1.2 million people have been displaced.

The airstrikes have left a massive trail of destruction across the country.

A photo of the Jawhari family's home — taken on a phone by Louay Mustafa, Lina's nephew — is a visual reminder of what had been. As the family sifted through the rubble, each fragment recovered called them to gather around it.

A worn letter sparked a collective cheer, while a photo of their late father triggered sobs. Reda Jawhari had built the house for his family and was a craftsman who left behind a legacy of metalwork. The sisters cried and hoped to find a piece of the mosque-church structure built by their father. Minutes later, they lifted a mangled piece of metal from the debris. They clung to it, determined to preserve a piece of his legacy.

"Different generations were raised with love... Our life was music, dance, dabke (traditional dance). This is what the house is made up of. And suddenly, they destroyed our world. Our world turned upside down in a second. It is inconceivable. It is inconceivable," Lina said.

Despite their determination, the pain of losing their home and the memories tied to it remains raw.

Rouba Jawhari, one of four sisters, had one regret.

"We are sad that we did not take my mom and dad's photos with us. If only we took the photos," she said, clutching an ID card and a bag of photos and letters recovered from the rubble. "It didn't cross our mind. We thought it's two weeks and we will be back."

The airstrike that obliterated the Jawhari home came without warning, striking at 1:30 p.m. on what was otherwise an ordinary Friday.

Their neighbor, Ali Wehbe, also lost his home. He had stepped out for food a few minutes before the missile hit and rushed back to find his brother searching for him under the rubble.

"Every brick holds a memory," he said, gesturing to what remained of his library. "Under every book you would find a story."

Notre Dame Cathedral unveils its new interior 5 years after devastating fire

By THOMAS ADAMSON and JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — After more than five years of frenetic, but sometimes interrupted, reconstruction work, Notre Dame Cathedral showed itself anew to the world Friday, with rebuilt soaring ceilings and creamy good-as-new stonework erasing somber memories of its devastating fire in 2019.

Images broadcast live of a site visit by French President Emmanuel Macron showed the inside of the iconic cathedral as worshippers might have experienced it in previous centuries, its wide, open spaces filled with bright light on a crisp and sunny winter's day that lit up the vibrant colors of the stained glass windows.

Outside, the monument is still a construction site, with scaffolding and cranes. But the renovated interior — shown in its full glory Friday for the first time before the public is allowed back in on Dec. 8 — proved to be breathtaking.

Stonemasons fixed the ripped-open ceilings

Gone are the gaping holes that the blaze tore into the vaulted ceilings, leaving charred piles of debris. New stonework has been carefully pieced together to repair and fill the wounds that had left the cathedral's insides exposed to the elements. Delicate golden angels look on from the centerpiece of one of the rebuilt ceilings, seeming to fly again above the transept.

The cathedral's bright, cream-colored limestone walls look brand new, cleaned not only of dust from the fire but also of grime that had accumulated for centuries.

The cathedral attracted millions of worshippers and visitors annually before the April 15, 2019, fire forced its closure and turned the monument in the heart of Paris into a no-go zone except to artisans, architects and others mobilized for the reconstruction.

Macron entered via the cathedral's giant and intricately carved front doors and stared up at the ceilings in wonder. He was accompanied by his wife, Brigitte, the archbishop of Paris and others.

Techniques new and old deployed

Powerful vacuum cleaners were used to first remove toxic dust released when the fire melted the cathedral's lead roofs.

Fine layers of latex were then sprayed onto the surfaces and removed a few days later, taking dirt away with them from the stones' pores, nooks and crevices. In all, 42,000 square meters of stonework were cleaned and decontaminated — an area equivalent to roughly six soccer pitches.

"It feels like it was built yesterday, like it's just been born, even though Notre Dame is very old," said stonemason Adrien Willeme, who worked on the reconstruction. "Because it's been so carefully restored and cleaned, it looks really extraordinary."

Cleaning gels were also used on some walls that had been painted, removing many years of accumulated dirt and revealing their bright colors once again.

Carpenters worked by hand like their medieval counterparts as they hewed giant oak beams to rebuild the roof and spire that collapsed like a flaming spear into the inferno. The beams show the marks of the carpenters' handiwork, with dents made on the woodwork by their hand axes.

Some 2,000 oak trees were felled to rebuild roof frameworks so dense and intricate that they are nick-

named "the forest."

It's a sneak peek ahead of the reopening

Macron's visit kicked off a series of events ushering in the reopening of the 12th-century Gothic masterpiece. At the end of his tour, the president addressed hundreds of workers gathered inside the cathedral and thanked them for their labors on what he called the "building site of the century."

"The shock of the reopening will, I want to believe, be as powerful as the one of the fire. But it will be a shock of hope," he said. "The inferno of Notre Dame was a wound for the nation. And you were its remedy."

Macron will return on Dec. 7 to deliver another address and will attend the consecration of the new altar during a solemn Mass the following day.

UK transport secretary quits over decade-old cellphone fraud case

LONDON (AP) — British Transport Minister Louise Haigh resigned on Friday over a decade-old fraud conviction for claiming her cellphone had been stolen.

In a letter to Prime Minister Keir Starmer, Haigh said, "I remain totally committed to our political project, but I now believe it will be best served by my supporting you from outside government.

"I appreciate that whatever the facts of the matter, this issue will inevitably be a distraction from delivering on the work of this government and the policies to which we are both committed," she wrote.

The resignation came hours after Sky News and The Times of London newspaper reported that Haigh had been charged with fraud after she reported that a work cellphone had been stolen after she was mugged in 2013. She later said she had mistakenly listed it among the stolen items.

After she found the phone and switched it back on, she was called in for questioning by police. Haigh pleaded guilty to fraud by misrepresentation and was given a conditional discharge.

In a statement before her resignation, Haigh said that "under the advice of my solicitor I pleaded guilty — despite the fact this was a genuine mistake from which I did not make any gain. The magistrates accepted all of these arguments and gave me the lowest possible outcome (a discharge) available."

Haigh, 37, has represented a district in Sheffield, northern England, in Parliament since 2015 and was named to the key transport post after Starmer's center-left Labour party was elected in July.

Starmer appointed Heidi Alexander, 49, as Haigh's replacement. Alexander returned to Parliament in July's general election after a 6-year absence, part of which she spent at City Hall in London with a prominent position overseeing the capital's transport system.

Santa's annual train visit delivers hope and magic to one corner of coal country

By TRAVIS LOLLER Associated Press

ON BOARD THE SANTA TRAIN (AP) — Since 1943, the people of Appalachian Kentucky, Virginia, and Tennessee have looked forward to Santa's arrival. Not in a sleigh on their rooftops, but on a train.

The Santa Train marks its 82nd running this year, bringing presents and joy to small towns along a 110-mile portion of the CSX rail line tucked into remote coal-country river valleys. Many of the children who line the tracks and wait for Santa on the Saturday before Thanksgiving are the third, fourth or fifth generation to do so.

"I look for it every year. I count the days down," said Sandra Owens, of Haysi, Virginia, who held a pink pillowcase with a message in black ink, "Thank you CSX and volunteers for the Santa Train. 82."

Owens moved to Kentucky from Delaware 55 years ago when she got married and experienced her first Santa Train a few years later, when her son turned 3. He is 46 now, and these days she brings her grandchildren. In a few more years, she hopes to bring great-grandchildren.

"The faces of the kids, that's what makes me happy," she said. "You can't see anything better."

The train starts out in Shelbiana, Kentucky, where families wait in the pre-dawn. At each stop there are dozens to hundreds of people. Many crowd around the back of the train, where Santa and his helpers toss

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stuffed animals. Meanwhile, groups of volunteer "elves" carrying bags full of gifts fan out, making sure every child goes home with something. Each year they hand out more than 15 tons of gifts that include hats, mittens and fuzzy blankets along with board games, skate boards and teddy bears.

Donna Dougherty from Snowflake, Virginia, remembers coming to see the Santa Train as a child in nearby Fort Blackmore.

"Years back, we didn't get a lot," she said. "So back then this was kind of what we got, and we were proud of it. It meant a lot to us."

Over the years, her kids have at times received handmade gifts from the Santa Train, like crocheted hats, which they still have and cherish.

Even though it is easier for people in these isolated, rural communities to buy Christmas presents these days, Dougherty made the short trek to Fort Blackmore with her niece on Saturday, carrying on the family tradition that she is glad she can still share.

"It's really nice that they do this," she said. "It shows the true Christmas spirit."

CSX employees consider it an honor to be chosen to staff the Santa Train as volunteers. Jesse Hensley had been trying to get a spot for 35 years, ever since he met his wife, Angie, who grew up with the Santa Train in St. Paul, Virginia.

"It was such a thrill when we heard that whistle blow," she remembered. "When I was a little girl, you know, you have dreams. My dream was to ride that train. Never in my life did I ever think that I would get to."

The pair was selected to ride the train this year because they volunteered countless hours after the flooding caused by Hurricane Helene devastated their community of Erwin, Tennessee, where Jesse Hensley works as a machinist mechanic for CSX.

The Santa Train doesn't run to Erwin, but CSX added a special event this year to bring cheer to the community. Residents were invited to a holiday party with food, music, and gifts in the Erwin rail yard. Santa paid a visit on train with cars decked out in lights forming the shapes of ornaments, moving jingle bells, marching toy soldiers, and the words "Holiday Express" in giant red letters.

Two days later, Angie Hensley was all smiles on the Santa Train and nearly as excited as the children she helped distribute toys to, including grandnieces and grandnephews in St. Paul. The joy of helping on the Santa Train was even better than she had imagined, she said.

Her fellow volunteers included CSX President and CEO Joe Hinrichs, who got off at every stop, handing out toys and talking to those who had come to see the train. Hinrichs' best memory so far was at a stop a couple of years ago when a family brought a disabled child but were hanging back from the train to avoid the tussle of the crowd. Helpers cleared a path to bring the boy forward and gave him a giant teddy bear they had saved for a special occasion.

"We brought it out there, and everybody got around it, and we gave it to him. And there wasn't a dry eye anywhere," Hinrichs said. "It was a magical moment."

Today in History: November 30, WTO protesters and police clash in Seattle

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Saturday, Nov. 30, the 335th day of 2024. There are 31 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Nov. 30, 1999, an estimated 40,000 demonstrators clashed with police as they protested against the World Trade Organization as the WTO convened in Seattle.

Also on this date:

In 1782, the United States and Britain signed preliminary peace articles in Paris for ending the Revolutionary War; the Treaty of Paris was signed in September 1783.

In 1936, London's Crystal Palace exhibition hall was destroyed by a massive fire.

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In 1993, President Bill Clinton signed the Brady Bill, which required a five-day waiting period for handgun purchases and background checks of prospective buyers.

In 2004, "Jeopardy!" fans saw Ken Jennings end his 74-game winning streak as he lost to real estate agent Nancy Zerg.

In 2012, Israel approved the construction of 3,000 homes in Jewish settlements on occupied lands, drawing swift condemnation from Palestinians a day after their successful bid for recognition by the United Nations.

In 2013, actor Paul Walker, star of the "Fast & Furious" movie series, was killed in a single-car accident north of Los Angeles; Walker's friend Roger Rodas, who was driving the car, also died. Walker was 40 years old.

In 2018, former President George H.W. Bush, a World War II hero who rose through the political ranks to the nation's highest office, died at his Houston home at the age of 94; his wife of more than 70 years, Barbara Bush, had died in April.

In 2021, Ethan Crumbley, a 15-year-old sophomore, opened fire at a Michigan high school, killing four students and wounding seven other people.

In 2022, House Democrats elected Rep. Hakeem Jeffries to be the first Black American to head a major political party in Congress as long-serving Speaker Nancy Pelosi and her team stepped aside.

Today's Birthdays: Filmmaker Woody Allen is 89. Filmmaker Ridley Scott is 87. Historian and screenwriter Geoffrey C. Ward is 84. Filmmaker Terrence Malick is 81. Playwright David Mamet (MA'-meht) is 77. Actor Mandy Patinkin is 72. Singer Billy Idol is 69. Historian Michael Beschloss is 69. Comedian Colin Mochrie is 67. Actor-filmmaker Ben Stiller is 59. South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem is 53. Singer Clay Aiken is 46. Actor-filmmaker Gael García Bernal is 46. Actor Elisha Cuthbert is 42. Actor Kaley Cuoco (KWOH'-koh) is 39. Model Chrissy Teigen is 39. Chess grandmaster Magnus Carlsen is 34.