

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 02, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 160 ~ 1 of 58

[1- Upcoming Events](#)

[2- 1440 News Headlines](#)

[4- Harry Implement Ad](#)

[5- Kosel has been doing Groton's Angel Tree since](#)

[2007](#)

[6- JVT Holiday Open House Ad](#)

[6- Land Auction Ad](#)

[7- Snow Queen Festival Photos](#)

[9- Weekly Vikings Roundup](#)

[10- EarthTalk - Homes resilient to climate change](#)

[11- SD SearchLight: Diversion programs for youth increase after boost to county funding](#)

[13- Weather Pages](#)

[17- Daily Devotional](#)

[18- Subscription Form](#)

[19- Lottery Numbers](#)

[20- Upcoming Groton Events](#)

[21- News from the Associated Press](#)

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

Tuesday, Dec. 3

Senior Menu: Swiss steak, mashed potato with gravy, winter blend, pears, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Scones

School Lunch: Pasta with meat sauce, bread stick.

St. John's Lutheran: Ladies Aid/LWML Christmas Party, noon.

JH GBB hosts Redfield (7th at 6:15 p.m.; 8th at 7:15 p.m.)

City Council meeting, 7 p.m.

Common Cents Thrift Store, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., 209 N Main.

Pantry, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Groton Community Center

Groton United Methodist: Bible Study with Pastor Rob, 10 a.m.

Groton Daily Independent

PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460



Wednesday, Dec. 4

Senior Menu: Tater tot hot dish, mixed vegetables, pineapple, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Oatmeal.

School Lunch: Cheese stuffed breadstick, Marinara Sauce.

St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.; DFC Youth supper, 6 p.m.; Advent Service, 7 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.; Sarah Circle, 5 p.m.; League, 6:30 p.m.

Groton Chamber Board Meeting, 6 p.m., at the Jungle

Groton United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

Thursday, Dec. 5

Senior Menu: Chicken cordon bleu hot dish, catalina blend, oranges, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Biscuits.

School Lunch: Italian Rice Bake, corn.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.

MS/HS Christmas Program, 7 p.m., GHS Gym

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 02, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 160 ~ 2 of 58

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.

Biden Pardons Hunter

President Joe Biden pardoned his son, Hunter Biden, last night, weeks before the younger Biden was due to be sentenced for federal gun and tax evasion charges. The announcement marked a reversal for the president, who had previously vowed not to interfere on his son's behalf.

Hunter faced up to 25 years in prison after being convicted this year of lying on a 2018 gun application when he falsely asserted he was not addicted to illicit drugs. Hunter separately faced up to 17 years in prison and fines of up to \$1.4M after pleading guilty to tax fraud charges related to counting strip club visits, rent, and children's tuition as business expenses, among other items. He was due to be sentenced Dec. 12 and Dec. 16, respectively.

The president reportedly decided to pardon his son over the weekend, two months before President-elect Donald Trump is scheduled to take office.

Rebels Hold Aleppo

Syrian rebels maintained control over the country's largest city, Aleppo, over the weekend while also advancing in the neighboring Hama province. The offensive marks the rebels' most significant gains against the Assad regime in years.

The rebels are led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, a jihadi group formed as an al-Qaida affiliate in 2011 before splintering off and forging other alliances. Based in Idlib province, the group has largely failed to capture territory amid rebel group infighting and a 2020 ceasefire brokered by Russia and Turkey. The latest offensive in Aleppo, which began Wednesday, came as Israel is seen to have significantly degraded the capabilities of Hezbollah, long considered a dominant force in the region and a key Assad ally.

The Syrian army, supported by Russian jet strikes, launched a series of airstrikes yesterday in an effort to retake the city while also setting up a defensive line in Hama province.

New Human Species

Researchers say they've identified a new ancient human relative. The species, which researchers call "Homo juluensis," made stone tools and hunted animals in eastern Asia between 300,000 and 50,000 years ago, according to the study. The findings shed light on human evolution in the region, with researchers claiming a mysterious group known as the Denisovans may have been a subset.

Denisovans have long intrigued scientists. Despite some modern humans sharing as much as 6% of their DNA, limited remains have been found to date. The most complete specimen is a partial jawbone with a number of teeth found on China's Tibetan Plateau, and the group does not have a formal species classification due to a lack of physical remains.

Researchers argue Homo juluensis' large skull and broad teeth are different enough to justify a new species, while the teeth are similar enough to Denisovans that the group should be assigned to the new species.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 02, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 160 ~ 3 of 58

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

MLS Cup Final (Dec. 7) set after Los Angeles Galaxy top the Seattle Sounders 1-0 and the New York Red Bulls defeat Orlando City SC 1-0.

Michigan upsets No. 2 Ohio State; postgame scuffle broken up with pepper spray.

Skiing legend Mikaela Shiffrin injured in crash during bid for 100th World Cup win.

Marshall Brickman, Oscar-winning screenwriter, dies at age 85.

Lou Carnesecca, Basketball Hall of Fame coach who won more than 500 career games, dies at age 99.

Bob Bryar, former My Chemical Romance drummer, dies at age 44.

US domestic box office hauls in a record \$420M during five-day Thanksgiving weekend, including \$221M for "Moana 2's" opening.

Science & Technology

Lockheed-Martin unveils solar array to power NASA's upcoming Artemis II mission; slated for as early as 2025, flight is the next step in returning humans to the moon.

Fossilized dinosaur droppings suggest the animals' flexible diet amid changing climates helped them become Earth's dominant species in the late Triassic period.

Researchers observe killer whales hunting whale sharks in the Gulf of California, the first time the behavior has been seen; orca pod used a coordinated attack method targeting the liver.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher Friday (S&P 500 +0.6%, Dow +0.4%, Nasdaq +0.8%), with Dow reaching record high, S&P 500 closing out best month of 2024.

Meta plans to build \$10B fiber-optic subsea cable extending around the world (over 40,000 kilometers); Meta's subsidiaries—Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp—together account for 22% of mobile internet traffic.

Elon Musk files injunction to stop OpenAI from converting to a for-profit company.

Black Friday sales grew 3.4% year-over-year, per preliminary data from Mastercard; jump in sales powered by e-commerce, with online purchases up 14.6%, in-store up 0.7%.

Top e-commerce items included makeup, skincare, speakers, and headsets, per Adobe Analytics.

Politics & World Affairs

President-elect Donald Trump threatens tariffs on Russia, eight other countries if they work to replace the US dollar in international transactions.

Trump names Kash Patel—lead author of the "Nunes memo"—as his pick for FBI director.

Trump taps in-laws Charles Kushner and Massad Boulos—to diplomatic positions; see running list of appointments.

Dozens injured in protests in Tbilisi, Georgia, following pro-Russian ruling party's decision to suspend EU accession talks; opposition party boycotts parliament, calls for new election while reasserting allegations of fraud in October vote.

Ireland vote counting continues as of this writing, with long-ruling right-wing parties Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael expected to form coalition with smaller parties.

Iceland's left-wing Social Democratic Alliance wins snap election.

X SERIES | Cub Cadet

PUT WINTER IN ITS PLACE.



2X TWO-STAGE POWER

INTELLIPOWER[®] TRAC MAX EFI

When the winters get tough, the Cub Cadet[®] 2X gets tougher. This two-stage snow blower is engineered for clearing between 12-18 inches of powder and slush. If you measure snow in feet instead of inches, step up to the commercial-grade 2X MAX[™] trim package to help tackle the deep stuff. Featuring trigger-controlled power steering, push-button electric start, dual LED headlights, 16-inch X-Trac[™] tires and a 3-year limited warranty.**

ENGINEERED FOR

SNOWFALL DRIVEWAY SURFACES



Up to 18"-23"
(18"-23" for EFI
and MAX[™] units)



Up to
8-15+ cars



Smooth
6 gravel



2X 24" WITH INTELLIPOWER[®]

Clear paths with the 2X 24" snow blower featuring a 243cc Cub Cadet[®] engine with IntelliPOWER[®].

- ▶ IntelliPOWER[®] engine technology delivers consistent power in heavy and wet snow conditions
- ▶ Trigger-control power steering
- ▶ Single-hand remote chute and pitch control
- ▶ 3-year limited residential / 1-year commercial limited warranty**

\$1,199*

Additional models available with 26", 28" clearing width



2X 26" TRAC WITH INTELLIPOWER[®]

Designed to provide steady traction in extreme weather conditions—try the 2X 26" TRAC with IntelliPOWER[®].

- ✦ TRAC drive designed for traction on slopes, inclines and gravel
- ✦ Heavy-duty 14-gauge steel side plates and auger housing
- ✦ 23" intake height
- ✦ Heated hand grips
- ✦ High-arc steel chute
- ✦ Cast aluminum auger gear box w/ 5-year limited warranty**

\$1,999*



2X 30" MAX INTELLIPOWER[®]

Take on winter with the 357cc Cub Cadet[®] engine with IntelliPOWER[®].

- ✦ 14" augers and impeller
- ✦ Sealed ball bearings on auger and wheel shafts
- ✦ LED light bar on auger housing
- ▶ Heavy-duty 14-gauge steel side plates and auger housing
- ▶ 23" intake height
- ▶ Heated hand grips
- ▶ High-arc steel chute
- ▶ Cast aluminum auger gear box w/ 5-year limited warranty**

\$2,399*

✦ Indicates step-up feature

INDEPENDENT DEALER
Cub Cadet

YOUR INDEPENDENT DEALER – EXPERT SERVICE. LOCALLY OWNED.

The advice, service, selection and support you need to find the right fit for you.

HARRY IMPLEMENT INC.

109 CENTER ST
FERNEY, SD 57439
www.harrysinc.com
605-395-6421

¹ Restrictions apply. See dealer or cubcadet.com/en_US/financing for details.

* Actual retail prices are set by dealer and may vary. Taxes are additional and vary by location. Freight and PDI charges may be additional and vary by dealer. Models subject to limited availability. Images may not reflect dealer inventory and/or unit specifications.

** See owner's manual for warranty details and information.

Certain restrictions apply.

© 2024 Cub Cadet SNOW_2X_QUARTER

EXCEPTIONAL FINANCING
OFFERS AVAILABLE!



Kosel has been doing Groton's Angel Tree since 2007

by Dorene Nelson

Tina Kosel, Groton's own local "angel," has been busily working on organizing and setting up Angel Trees around town. One angel tree is located at Lori's Pharmacy, and the other one is in City Hall.

"I usually start around the middle of October, mailing out forms to families whose names are provided by various sources," Kosel said. "These forms ask for the child's age, clothing sizes, what they like to do for fun, favorite treats, activities, and whether they are a girl or a boy."

"I use this information when filling out the paper angels that will be hung on the two Angel Trees," she said. "I like to make sure these kids get more than one item as well as getting something fun to do and a treat to eat."

"In addition to the angel tree tags that I put on the trees, I also hang a crocheted angel which represents children who have been recipients of angel tree gifts in the past," Kosel said. "I call them 'your personal angel from Santa.'"

"Many of the gifts come wrapped and I take care of the rest. The gifts are organized by number which represents a family unit," Kosel said. "I usually deliver them the week before Christmas."

"I've been doing this since 2007," she said. "It's my way of giving back as me and my siblings grew up with the Salvation Army Tree."

"I usually have around 50 kids sign up each year for Christmas tree items," Kosel said. "Around the end of October, I start sorting the gift requests and the gift donations."

"Many individuals give donations for the angel tree, so that all of the items the kids would like don't have to be purchased," she said. "That helps with the cost of the gifts and with the postage for mailing the forms to the families."

"It takes me about a week to print and mail these forms to the various families," Kosel said. "Then I send text reminders to get their forms back to me. The deadline for this is November 1st."

"When the gifts are dropped off at Lori's or City Hall, most of them are wrapped, but they leave unwrapped ones there too," she said. "The next job that I do is to make sure the gifts are given equally to all children. A lot of the time, this requires me to do some extra buying."

The costs involved in this project include paper for the forms mailed out to the families plus the postage, the wrapping paper and tape for each gift, the time to organize and actually get this huge project done in a timely manner, and even some supplemental purchases to equalize the gifts given to the children.

"Some financial help for this project comes from the walking tacos that I make and sell," Tina said. "There is also an Angel Tree donation jar in

the Groton Independent office. I'm here a lot so you can stop in most any time and drop off your coins and dollars!"

When Tina was asked for an approximate amount of time she spends just on this project alone, her answer was "A lot! More than you'd ever guess!" It's passtime for Tina to be given a special Angel Tree Gift of her own, but she'd probably be very pleased with a roll of postage stamps or a ream or two of computer paper!



Tina Kosel stands by the Angel Tree at City Hall. (Photo by Dorene Nelson)

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 02, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 160 ~ 6 of 58



NVC/JVT HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSES

Groton - Tuesday, Dec. 3rd 10am-4pm
Redfield - Wednesday, Dec. 4th 11am-2pm
Aberdeen - Thursday, Dec. 5th 10am-4pm

DOOR PRIZES - CHRISTMAS TREATS

Plus register in stores or at nvc.net for the
12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS!

****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



Dinger, Thompson are Snow Queens

Senior Snow Queen Gretchen Dinger is pictured with her parents, left to right, are Elizabeth Bahr and Emily and Weston Dinger; pictured with Junior Snow Queen Taryn Thompson are Mark and June Thompson. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 02, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 160 ~ 8 of 58



Pictured are Natalia Warrington (teamed with Abby Yeadon) senior talent winner, Addison Hoeft, Elizabeth (Libby) Cole, Rebecca Poor, Abby Yeadon, Chesney Weber, Sydney Locke, Kyleigh Kroll, Gracie Pearson, and junior talent winner Annie Harry; in front are Snow Princess Veda Stiegelmeier, Senior Snow Queen Gretchen Dinger, Junior Snow Queen Taryn Thompson and Snow Prince Joey Bosmoe. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Randy Stanley was the Mystery Snowman. Only two people guessed the correct answer and each won \$50 (Lori Giedt and Pam Hanson). (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM video)



Talli Wright was the master of ceremonies at the Snow Queen Festival. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM video)

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 02, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 160 ~ 9 of 58

Weekly Vikings Roundup

By Jordan Wright

The Minnesota Vikings started slow but rallied late to beat the Arizona Cardinals 23-22 on Sunday. The Vikings are 10-2 this season, a game behind the Kansas City Chiefs and Detroit Lions for the best record in the NFL. From 1961 when the Vikings first became a team, through 2021, the team had been 10-2 (or better) 12 times. In the three seasons since Kevin O'Connell became the head coach (2022), the team has achieved that feat twice. This win also marks the Vikings' second five-game winning streak this season.

The Cardinals received the first-half kickoff, then proceeded to march down the field before ultimately stalling in the red zone and settling for a field goal. This would become a theme for the Cardinals in this game, who made five of six field goals. The Vikings avoided disaster on their first offensive play of the game, when Brian O'Neill recovered an Aaron Jones fumble. The Vikings ended up kicking a field goal to tie the game 3-3. Arizona punted the ball on their next drive, giving Minnesota the ball back with a chance to take the lead. Unfortunately, Aaron Jones again fumbled on the first play of the drive. Arizona recovered and were instantly in the red zone, but the Vikings' defense held strong and forced a Cardinal punt (which was missed).

The Vikings punted after a three-and-out on their next drive, and the Cardinals marched down the field before stalling in the red zone and settling for a field goal. The Vikings responded with a field goal of their own, tying the game 6-6 with a little over a minute left in the half. The Cardinals finished the half with an amazing drive, beautifully orchestrated by QB Kyler Murray who got to the Vikings' six-yard line before time was almost up and they were forced to kick a field goal. The score was 9-6 Arizona heading into halftime.

The Vikings got the ball to begin the second half, but 45 yards later John Parker Romo missed a 43-yard field goal. The Cardinals fared better in their first second-half drive, making a 40-yard field goal to put Arizona up by six points. The Vikings went three-and-out on their next drive, then the Cardinals drove down the field and scored the first touchdown of the game, giving Arizona a 19-6 lead. Luckily the Vikings' offense finally woke up and they found the endzone themselves on a four-yard TD pass from Sam Darnold to Johnny Mundt.

Entering the fourth quarter, Arizona was facing a 2nd & 7 at their 45-yard line. An incomplete pass led to third down, then Byron Murphy got the ball back for the Vikings on a toe-tap sideline interception. The Vikings only managed a field goal after the turnover, making the score 19-16. Up by three points, the Cardinals got the ball back with a little over 11 minutes left in the game. Their goal was to take as much time off the clock as possible, and they succeeded, burning nearly eight minutes but having to settle for a field goal. Down six, with 3:20 left on the clock, the Vikings NEEDED to put a drive together. Sam Darnold rose to the occasion, leading an eight-play, 70-yard drive that culminated in a five-yard TD catch by Aaron Jones. The extra point was successful, and the Vikings had their first lead of the game with 1:13 left in the game. The offense did their job, then the defense kept the momentum going by picking off Murray (Shaq Griffin). All that was left was to take a knee and head to the locker room with a one-point win.

Sam Darnold completed 21 of 31 passes for 235 yards and two touchdowns. This was the tenth game of the season where Darnold had a passer rating of 100 or better, tied with Brett Favre (2009) and Daunte Culpepper (2000) for most in a single season in Vikings' history.

The Vikings only managed 68 yards on 15 carries on the ground, and three players were tied for the team lead with 22 rushing yards (Darnold, Jones, Akers). Justin Jefferson led the team with seven catches for 99 yards, while Jordan Addison, T.J. Hockenson, Johnny Mundt, and Jalen Nailor combined for an additional 10 catches for 122 yards. Jefferson has passed the 1,000-yard mark this season, joining Randy Moss, Mike Evans, and A.J. Green as the only four players in NFL history with 1,000 yards in each of their first five seasons.

Blake Cashman led the team with 11 tackles, Jonathan Greenard had the team's only sack, while Shaq Griffin and Byron Murphy each had an interception.

Looking ahead, a familiar face comes to town when the Vikings host the Atlanta Falcons. Kirk Cousins has led the Falcons to a 6-6 record, but after a four-interception game against the Chargers, it's possible Cousins is benched for first-round QB Michael Penix.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 02, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 160 ~ 10 of 58

EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: How can we design houses and buildings that are resilient to climate change, that can survive the extreme weather events increasing in a warming world?
– P. Smith, Wayne, PA

Since the frequency and intensity of floods, wildfires and heat waves has increased due to climate change, the U.S. housing market has become steadily more volatile. Billions of dollars' worth of damages have already piled up from these disasters, and they will only increase unless we drastically shift how we build. To make matters worse, climate disasters disproportionately affect vulnerable populations due to their proximity to areas most susceptible to hazardous climate conditions and the poorly constructed buildings.

Despite the scope and precarity of housing issues in the era of climate change, the Climate-Resilient Housing Initiative has put forth plans to build affordable, sustainable and resilient homes for 10 million people by 2030. Many types of model homes have been developed and built to demonstrate how housing could be adapted to handle natural disasters. For example, homes that will be built in areas prone to flooding could either be elevated on stilts or designed to be buoyant in anticipation of rising water levels.

Other examples of climate-resilient housing include homes designed for rising temperatures and drought conditions, including features like reflective surfaces, green spaces, solar panels and good insulation. Architects have found plenty of affordable ways to produce climate resilient housing as well by building well-insulated, wind-resistant houses with locally sourced clay, or designing wooden buildings that can easily be taken apart and moved to higher ground in the event of a flood. Other housing allows for an easy exit in the event of a fire, or the ability to safely adjust airflows to provide ventilation during windstorms.

In light of the impending dangers to our housing, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has released a report outlining recommended resiliency strategies for buildings. Also, companies like Green Builder Media are putting resources into learning how to make climate-resilient housing. And since natural disasters are bringing down the value of houses so rapidly, realtors are being encouraged to implement proper climate-resiliency standards into their homes in order to keep them marketable.

The vast majority of U.S. housing was built decades ago, long before climate change was a threat. As such, millions of homes are completely unprepared for the natural disasters that are coming their way. We still have a long way to go before we're fully prepared, but the technology, scientific knowledge and financial incentives are all there for us to begin building more resilient communities.



With the frequency & intensity of floods, wildfires & heat waves increasing due to climate change, housing prices have become more volatile. Credit: Pexels.com.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Diversion programs for youth increase after boost to county funding

Recent change tripled reimbursement for keeping kids out of courtrooms

BY: JOHN HULT - DECEMBER 1, 2024 7:00 AM

A 2023 bill that paved the way for higher payments to counties that keep kids out of the justice system has increased the number of diversion offers from prosecutors across South Dakota.

That was among the takeaways from an annual juvenile justice report presented recently to the state's Juvenile Justice Oversight Council.

Senate Bill 5, passed in 2023, extended the lifespan of the council, a group created in 2015 alongside a sweeping juvenile justice reform package that aimed to reduce the number of youth in secure detention. The reforms were meant to avoid the harms associated with incarceration for children and offer more fiscally responsible alternatives. Locking up children costs considerably more than probation supervision or in-community programming.

The bill also empowered the council to make adjustments to things like the amount of money paid per kid for diversion programs. The council recommended offering \$750 to counties for each successful diversion, a \$500 increase. The Department of Corrections (DOC) sponsored a successful bill to boost that funding during the 2024 session.

In the past nine years, counties have collected \$4.2 million in incentives from the state.



An equal justice statue sits outside the doors of the Minnehaha County Courthouse in Sioux Falls.

(Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

Avoiding a judge

Children are not charged with crimes in the juvenile justice system, but rather "adjudicated" for the alleged commission of a criminal act. With diversion programs, prosecutors use a report from law enforcement for criminal behavior as the starting point for a set of actions an accused child must take to avoid seeing the incident move through a formal adjudication.

A child charged with alcohol consumption, for example, might be asked to complete a substance abuse evaluation and to check in with the prosecutor's office monthly while maintaining good behavior for a few months. If the child satisfies the diversion requirements, their case will be closed without them ever seeing a judge.

According to the annual report presented to the oversight council on Tuesday, diversion programming increased for the most common juvenile infractions in 2024.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 02, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 160 ~ 12 of 58

The last fiscal year “saw two times as many kids getting diversion opportunities from where we started” with the reforms nearly 10 years ago, according to Kristi Bunkers, an oversight council member who leads the DOC’s juvenile justice programming.

Those opportunities translate into better long-term outcomes for troubled youth, Bunkers told the oversight group.

“The research continues to come out in support of diversion,” she said. “It’s a really promising window of opportunity for the system to get it right.”

About 82% of the 2,439 kids offered diversion programming last year were successful, the annual report says. The year before that, there were 2,180 diversions, and just over 83% were successful.

Diversions for alcohol and drugs, crimes against property and persons, sex offenses and tobacco use increased in 2024, according to the report.

Truancy, however, saw fewer diversions than in 2023, down to 270 from 313 in 2023. There were 694 and 565 in 2021 and 2022, respectively.

Homeschooling concerns with truancy

David Knoff, a First Circuit judge and oversight council member, said the council’s truancy subgroup met three or four times this year to discuss the issue. Truancy is when a kid is chronically absent from school. Knoff was among the council members to note that truancy cases often suggest deeper issues in a child’s home life.

A child has often missed weeks or months of school by the time a case lands in court, Knoff said, so the subgroup was focused on finding out ways to intervene sooner. The Department of Social Services’ Division of Behavioral Health offers programming to kids and families, serving 4,775 youth in individual or family sessions in 2024.

“How do we make the family aware of how they can tap into those resources, or school districts, how they can get those to the families and get them tapped in to see that they can qualify and get the counseling they need to find out what kind of issues are going on within the homes,” Knoff said.

Knoff also talked about the possibility that truancy cases have been affected by a 2021 law making it easier for parents to pull their children from school and place them in “alternative instruction” such as online schooling or homeschooling.

The law change struck down things like testing requirements and instruction time requirements, and removed a clause that allowed the state’s Department of Education to investigate situations where there’s concern a child might not be getting the instruction they’re required to under state law.

If a child is pulled from school for in-home instruction, Knoff said, “then there is no truancy.”

Knoff said he and others on the council are concerned that some students’ attendance and participation have suffered in certain homeschooling situations.

“It’s not that homeschooling itself is the problem,” Knoff said. “It’s certain parents who maybe don’t have the ability or resources to be able to effectively homeschool, and they can just pull their kid out of school, which has a lot of long-term effects.”

Council member Tiffany Wolfgang of the DSS will leave state government, and the council, at the end of the year after nearly three decades in various social service roles. Wolfgang told the council that as valuable as state-level reports and oversight can be, local school districts and community leaders are critical to crafting the approach to things like truancy.

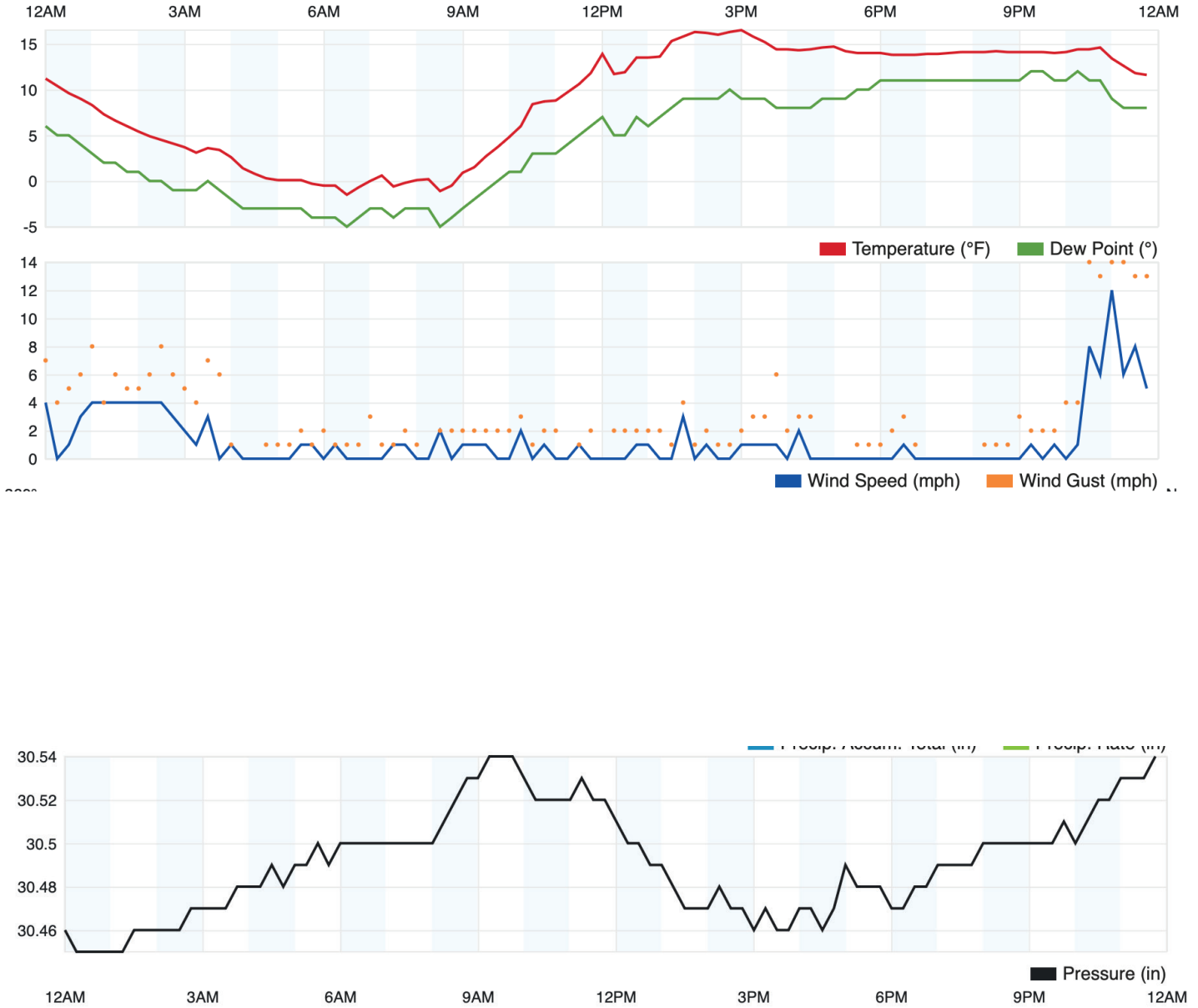
“Truancy really is a local, local issue in really, truly needing to get the players at the local level in a room together, communicating and talking about what resources we have,” Wolfgang said. “How do we want to address truancy in this community and who needs to talk to whom?”

John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 02, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 160 ~ 13 of 58

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 02, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 160 ~ 14 of 58

Today



High: 15 °F

Partly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 2 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Tuesday



High: 30 °F

Mostly Sunny

Tuesday Night



Low: 18 °F

Partly Cloudy

Wednesday



High: 33 °F

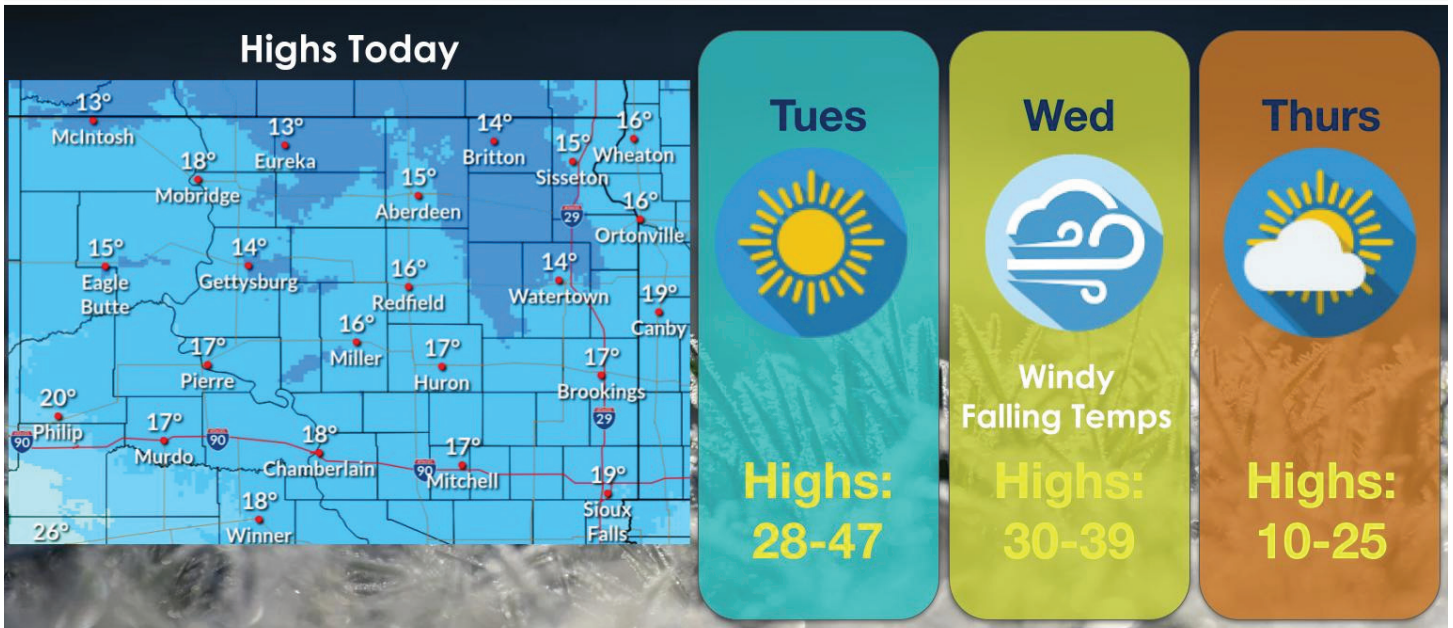
Chance
Flurries and
Breezy



Ups & Downs For The Next Few Days

December 2, 2024
3:21 AM

Milder Temperatures Tuesday But Cold Air Moves Back In Wednesday



NOAA National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Clouds and cold will persist across the area today, but milder air moves in for Tuesday. Its short lived as a cold front early Wednesday will cause temperatures to tumble.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 02, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 160 ~ 15 of 58

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 17 °F at 2:05 PM

Low Temp: -2 °F at 6:28 AM

Wind: 15 mph at 10:32 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 8 hours, 59 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 56 in 2012

Record Low: -20 in 1896

Average High: 34

Average Low: 13

Average Precip in Dec.: 0.04

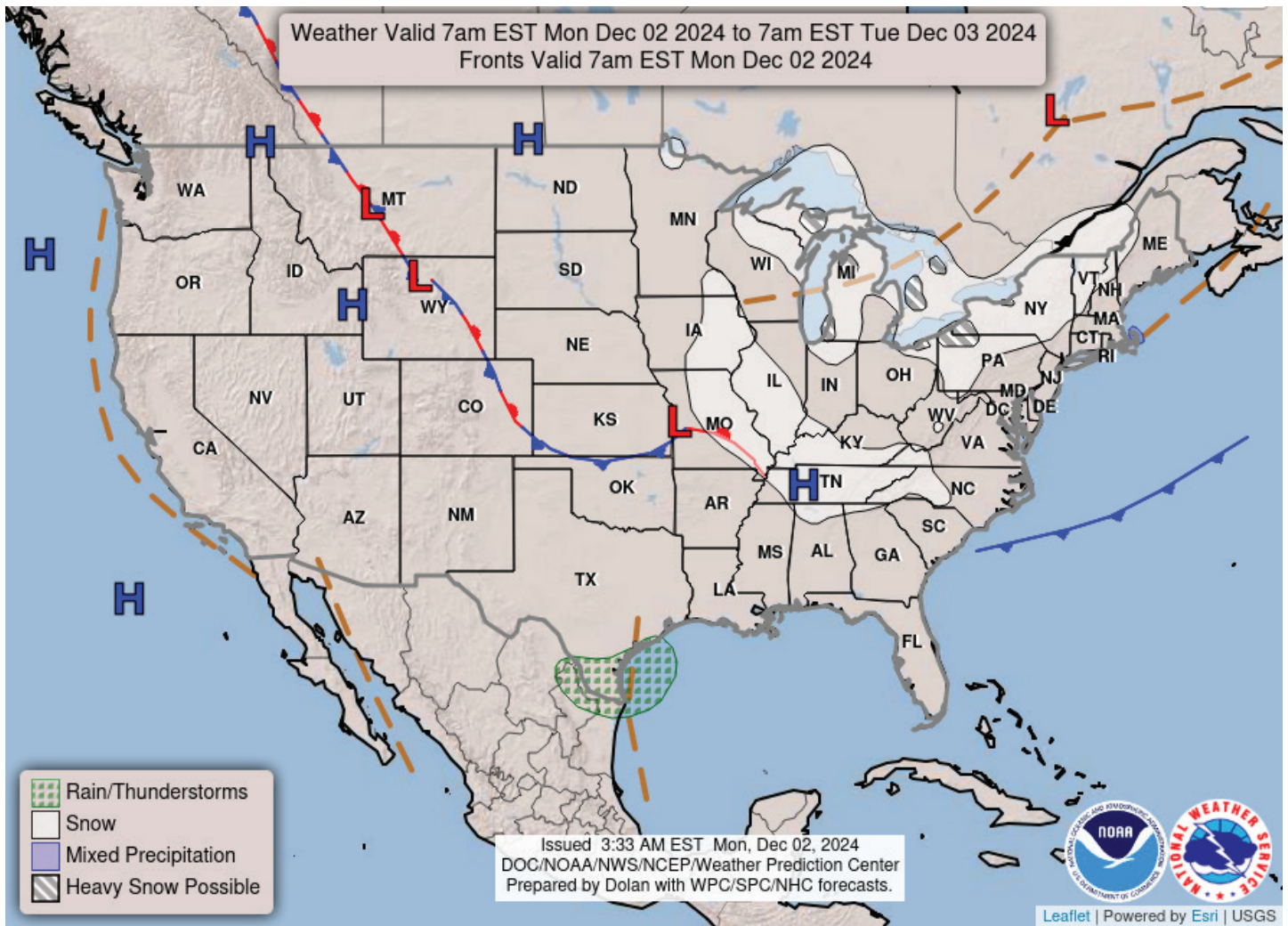
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 21.25

Precip Year to Date: 21.71

Sunset Tonight: 4:52:03 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:53:13 am



Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 02, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 160 ~ 16 of 58

Today in Weather History

December 2, 1978: A low-pressure system moved northeast from Kansas, causing snow to fall over southern Minnesota south of a line from Alexandria to Duluth on the 2nd and 3rd, with the heaviest snow falling from west-central and southwest Minnesota to west-central Wisconsin. Snow depths of six inches or more fell in southwestern Minnesota, with 10 inches or more at Marshall, MN. Winds averaged near 20 mph, and temperatures ranged from 5 to 15 degrees above zero while the snow fell, but the snow did not cause extensive problems for the area. Wheaton had 2 inches, Artichoke Lake and Browns Valley had 3 inches.

December 2, 1984: Snow fell in the central and northeast parts of South Dakota from the late afternoon of the 1st to the morning of the 2nd, with amounts ranging from 3 to 10 inches. The most substantial amounts were in the northeast part of the state, with Day County reporting 8 to 10 inches. Five inches of snow fell at Clear Lake; six inches fell at Waubay, Clark, Miller, and 12 miles southwest of Harrold with 7 inches at Redfield.

1896: Early season snow and ice storm struck the southeastern U.S. Eleven inches of snow fell at Charlotte, NC, and 6 inches at Atlanta, GA.

1925 - A late season hurricane caused extensive damage across the Florida peninsula, then moved off the Georgia coast crossing Cape Hatteras as a tropical storm. The storm produced whole gales along the Middle Atlantic and Southern New England coast. Winds gusted to 60 mph at Block Island RI, and reached 64 mph at Atlantic City NJ. (David Ludlum)

1950 - A late season tornado killed four persons in Madison County and Bond County, east of St Louis MO. Three tornadoes touched down in Illinois that afternoon, compared to just half a dozen tornadoes in the month of December in 115 years of records up until that time. Thunderstorms also produced hail which caused more than four million dollars damage in the St Louis area, it was the most damaging hailstorm of record for Missouri. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1959: Between November 19 and December 2, an estimated 20 inches of rain fell near Frejus on the French Riviera. The rain caused the Malpasset Dam to collapse, which sent a 130-foot high wall of water into the towns of Malpasset and Bozon. The wall of water 10 feet tall reached Frejus, flooding the western half of the city. The dam breach killed 423 people and caused \$68 million in damages.

1968: The "Sacramento," a 250-foot fishing barge and former ferry between San Francisco and Oakland, succumb to a winter storm off Redondo Beach.

1970 - A tornado, 400 yards in width, touched down about one mile below the summit of Timpanogos Divide. Trees up to 18 inches in diameter were snapped, and some of the 38 inch snow cover was carried 1000 feet above the ground as the tornado traveled one mile. (The Weather Channel)

1982 - A tornado destroyed a home four miles south of Eastwood MO. The owners were not injured in that tornado, but ironically one was killed Christmas Eve when another tornado hit the replacement mobile home on the same site. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A powerful storm over the Gulf of Alaska continued to produced high winds and heavy rain along the northern and central Pacific coast. Winds gusted to 80 mph south of Port Orford OR, Stevens Pass WA was blanketed with sixteen inches of snow, and Blue Canyon CA was soaked with 1.63 inches of rain. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Squalls in the Great Lakes Region produced ten inches of snow at Union City, PA. Gale force winds gusted to 55 mph at Buffalo NY. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Squalls produced heavy snow in the Great Lakes Region. Totals in Upper Michigan ranged up to 20 inches at Ironwood. Heavy snow and high winds caused 150 auto accidents in Michigan, resulting in sixteen deaths and 22 injuries. Strong northwesterly winds gusted to 73 mph at Johnstown PA, and Lowville PA received 20 inches of snow in 36 hours. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



WHERE IS GOD?

Sir John Franklin is remembered for being a great Englishman and explorer of the Arctic region of the planet. As he was planning one of his expeditions, he decided that, based on his journeys, he would revise the map of the world.

Previous to Franklin, others had been marking unknown territories with phrases such as "Here be Dragons," and "Here be Demons."

But on his revised map he wrote, "Here be God." Sir Franklin, as a result of his journeys, knew that wherever he was God would be. Even in the most distant, most lonely, and most inaccessible places he believed that he would find God.

In Psalm 121 we discover the assurance and hope that wherever we are God is with us protecting and providing for our every need – day or night. He not only made the mountains and seas, the valleys and deserts, but all that they contain.

We must never forget that the Creator of the universe is the sustainer of the universe. Trusting the One Who "put it all together" enables us to believe that He will not allow "dragons" and "demons" to overcome the one who trusts in His goodness and grace.

Nothing will ever divert or distract God from watching over His children. We can have the utmost confidence that in Him we are safe and that we will never escape His untiring watch over us.

Prayer: May we join our voices with the Psalmist, Father, and shout, "Keep watch over me, Lord, as You come and go, both now and forever!" In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: The LORD will keep you from all harm – he will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore. Psalm 121

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

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 02, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 160 ~ 18 of 58

The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

- Black & White \$48.99/year
- Colored \$79.88/year
- Colored \$42.60/6 months
- E-Weekly* \$31.95/year

* The E-Weekly is a PDF file emailed to you each week. It does not grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

E-mail _____

Phone Number _____

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

or scan and email to paperpaul@grotonsd.net

Groton Daily Independent www.397news.com Subscription Form

This option will grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

- 1 Month \$15.98
- 3 Months \$26.63
- 6 Months \$31.95
- 9 Months \$42.60
- 12 Months \$53.25

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____

The following will be used for your log-in information.

E-mail _____

Password _____

Pay with Paypal. Type the following into your browser window:

paypal.me/paperpaul

Pay with Venmo: [@paperpaul](https://venmo.com/paperpaul) Phone Number to Confirm: 7460



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
11.29.24

3 29 34 37 38 17

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$541,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 48
DRAW: Mins 54 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
11.30.24

4 5 10 15 44 5

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$16,230,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 3 Mins
DRAW: 54 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.01.24

1 7 25 33 46 7

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT 15 Hrs 18 Mins
DRAW: 54 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
11.30.24

9 19 28 31 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$129,000

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 18
DRAW: Mins 54 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
11.30.24

9 21 37 43 61 23

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 47 Mins
DRAW: 54 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
11.30.24

4 24 29 39 63 25

Power Play: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$224,000,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 47 Mins
DRAW: 53 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 02, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 160 ~ 20 of 58

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
04/05/2025 Dueling Duo at the Legion (Baseball/softball foundation fundraiser)
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
06/07/2025 Second Annual Day of Play at Groton Baseball Complex
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

Biden has pardoned his son Hunter. What does that mean?

By COLLEEN LONG and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden had long pledged that he would not pardon his son, Hunter, who was set to be sentenced this month for gun and tax convictions. But on Sunday, the president did it anyway.

The sweeping pardon covers not only Hunter Biden's convictions in two cases in Delaware and California, but also any other "offenses against the United States which he has committed or may have committed or taken part in during the period from January 1, 2014 through December 1, 2024."

Biden is hardly the first president to deploy his pardon powers to benefit those close to him. But it was still a surprising reversal for a man who pledged to restore norms and respect for the rule of law.

What's a pardon, anyway?

The U.S. Constitution says that a president has the power to grant clemency, which includes both pardons and commutations. A pardon forgives federal criminal offenses; a commutation reduces penalties but isn't as sweeping. The power has its roots in English law — the king could grant mercy to anyone — and it made it over the ocean to the American colonies and stuck around. The U.S. Supreme Court has found the presidential pardon authority to be very broad. And presidents use the power a lot: Donald Trump granted 237 acts of clemency during his four years in office and Barack Obama granted clemency 1,927 times in his eight years. Presidents have forgiven drug offenses, fraud convictions and Vietnam-era draft dodgers, among many other things.

But a president can only grant pardons for federal offenses, not state ones. Impeachment convictions also aren't pardonable.

What are the crimes Hunter Biden was accused of committing?

Hunter Biden was convicted in June of lying on a federal form when he purchased a gun in 2018 and swore that he wasn't a drug user. Just months later, he pleaded guilty to charges accusing him of a scheme to avoid paying at least \$1.4 million in taxes. Prosecutors alleged he lived lavishly while flouting the tax law, spending his cash on things like strippers and luxury hotels — "in short, everything but his taxes."

Both cases stemmed from a period in Hunter Biden's life in which he struggled with drug and alcohol abuse before becoming sober in 2019.

After the gun trial aired salacious and unflattering details about Hunter Biden's life, the president's son said he agreed to plead guilty to the tax charges to spare his family another embarrassing criminal trial.

The tax trial was also expected to showcase details about Hunter Biden's foreign business dealings, which Republicans have seized on to try to paint the Biden family as corrupt.

Hunter Biden was supposed to be sentenced this month in the two cases by judges in California and Delaware who were nominated to the bench by Trump.

Special counsel David Weiss' office had not said whether prosecutors had planned to seek prison time. The tax charges carried up to 17 years behind bars and the gun charges were punishable by up to 25 years in prison, though federal sentencing guidelines were expected to call for far less time and it was possible the younger Biden would have avoided prison time entirely.

Didn't Biden say he wouldn't pardon his son?

Yes. Hunter Biden has been under federal investigation since 2020. He reached a deal with federal prosecutors and was supposed to plead guilty last year to misdemeanor tax offenses and would have avoided prosecution in the gun case as long he stayed out of trouble for two years.

But the plea hearing quickly unraveled when the judge raised concerns about unusual aspects of the deal. He was subsequently indicted in the two cases, and he's claimed that he was singled out because he is the president's son.

The president told reporters earlier this summer that he would not pardon his son.

"I'm extremely proud of my son Hunter. He has overcome an addiction. He is one of the brightest, most decent men I know," he said. "I abide by the jury decision. I will do that and I will not pardon him."

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said as recently as Nov. 8 that Biden would not pardon his son.

Why did Biden break his promise?

In his statement Sunday, Biden said that his son had been "selectively, and unfairly, prosecuted." Biden has been concerned — as Hunter Biden was — about his political adversaries.

Also, the president is no longer running for office. He made his no-pardon pledge before he dropped out of the presidential race in June.

In his statement, the president said it was clear that his son was treated differently from other defendants in similar predicaments. The plea deal unraveled and Biden's political opponents took credit for pressuring the process, he said.

"No reasonable person who looks at the facts of Hunter's cases can reach any other conclusion than Hunter was singled out only because he is my son — and that is wrong. There has been an effort to break Hunter — who has been five and a half years sober, even in the face of unrelenting attacks and selective prosecution. In trying to break Hunter, they've tried to break me — and there's no reason to believe it will stop here. Enough is enough."

Have other presidents pardoned their family members or friends?

Yes. In his final weeks in office, Trump pardoned Charles Kushner, the father of his son-in law, Jared Kushner. He also pardoned multiple allies convicted in special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation. Trump over the weekend announced plans to nominate the elder Kushner to be the U.S. envoy to France in his next administration.

President Bill Clinton pardoned his half-brother Roger Clinton in 2001, after he had completed a prison term for drug charges. Clinton also pardoned his former business partner Susan McDougal, who had been sentenced to two years in prison for her role in the Whitewater real estate deal.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz is in Ukraine for his first visit in 2 1/2 years

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — German Chancellor Olaf Scholz visited Ukraine for the first time in more than 2 1/2 years Monday, just weeks after he was criticized by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for having a phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

That call came at a time of widespread speculation about what the new administration of President-elect Donald Trump will mean for Ukraine as the incoming president has promised to end the conflict. In a major shift, Zelenskyy signalled Friday that an offer of NATO membership to territory under Kyiv's control could end "the hot stage of the war" in Ukraine.

Scholz's visit comes ahead of an early German election expected in February. As the campaign gets under way, Scholz has pointed to Germany's status as Ukraine's second-biggest weapons supplier while also highlighting his "prudence" in working to prevent the war escalating and refusing to deliver Taurus long-range cruise missiles.

Scholz has been cautious about talk of fast-tracking NATO membership for Ukraine. In recent months, he has emphasized the importance of finding a path to peace, while stressing that it must not be chosen over Ukraine's head.

Scholz said that in his meeting with Zelenskyy he will announce further military deliveries this month totaling 650 million euros.

"I would like to make clear here on the ground that Germany will remain Ukraine's strongest supporter in Europe," he said.

Despite that, Scholz was criticized by Zelenskyy in November for speaking to Putin in what appeared to be the first conversation with the sitting leader of a major Western power in nearly two years. In that call, Scholz urged Putin to be open to negotiations with Ukraine but the Russian leader said any peace deal

should acknowledge Russia's territorial gains and security demands, including that Kyiv renounce joining NATO.

Zelenskyy suggested the call to Putin risked opening "a Pandora's box" and would only serve to make Russia less isolated. He traveled to Berlin in October to meet Scholz to drum up support for his "victory plan" to end the war in Ukraine on a tour of European capitals.

The plan included a suggestion that Ukraine receive a formal invitation to join NATO and a request that Kyiv be given permission to use long-range Western missiles to strike at military targets inside Russia.

Some Western nations granted permission for Kyiv to carry out long-range strikes with their weapons in November. Following the decision, Putin said Russia launched a strike on Ukraine with an unstoppable intermediate range ballistic missile dubbed the Oreshnik. It marked the first time that such a missile was used in the war or in any other conflict.

Landmark climate change case opens at the top UN court as island nations fear rising seas

By MOLLY QUELL Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — The top United Nations court took up the largest case in its history on Monday, hearing the plight of several small island nations helpless in combating the devastating impact of climate change that they feel endangers their very survival. They demand that major polluting nations be held to account.

After years of lobbying by island nations who fear they could simply disappear under rising sea waters, the U.N. General Assembly asked the International Court of Justice last year for an opinion on "the obligations of States in respect of climate change."

"The stakes could not be higher. The survival of my people and so many others is on the line," said Arnold Kiel Loughman, attorney-general of the Vanuatu archipelago nation.

"As the principal legal officer of my country, I have come before this court because domestic legal remedies are unable to address a crisis of the scope and magnitude," he said during the opening session of two weeks of hearings.

"States have obligations ... to act with due diligence, to prevent significant harm to the environment, to prevent, to reduce the emissions and provide support to countries like mine to protect the human rights of present and future generations," he said.

Any decision by the court would be non-binding advice and couldn't directly force wealthy nations into action to help struggling countries. Yet it would be more than just a powerful symbol since it could be the basis for other legal actions, including domestic lawsuits.

In the decade up to 2023, sea levels have risen by a global average of around 4.3 centimeters (1.7 inches), with parts of the Pacific rising higher still. The world has also warmed 1.3 degrees Celsius (2.3 Fahrenheit) since preindustrial times because of the burning of fossil fuels.

Vanuatu is one of a group of small states pushing for international legal intervention in the climate crisis but it affects many more island nations in the South Pacific.

Cynthia Houniuihi, the head of the Pacific Island Students Fighting Climate Change that initiated the case, said climate change was undermining "the sacred contract" between generations.

"Without our land, our bodies and memories are severed from the fundamental relationship that define who we are. Those who stand to lose are the future generations. Their future is uncertain, reliant upon the decision making of a handful of large emitting states., she told the court, referring to China, India and the United States.

Joie Chowdhury, senior attorney at the Center for International Environmental Law, said that the conduct of major polluters responsible for the climate crisis and its catastrophic consequences is unlawful under multiple sources of international law.

Vanuatu's climate change envoy Ralph Regenvanu told the court that since 1990, emissions have increased by over 50%, reaching an all time high in 2023. He added that "a handful of readily identifiable states

have produced the vast majority of historic and current greenhouse gas emissions. Yet other countries, including my own, are suffering the brunt of the consequences.”

The Hague-based court will hear from 99 countries and more than a dozen intergovernmental organizations over two weeks. It's the largest lineup in the institution's nearly 80-year history.

Last month at the United Nations' annual climate meeting, countries cobbled together an agreement on how rich countries can support poor countries in the face of climate disasters. Wealthy countries have agreed to pool together at least \$300 billion a year by 2035 but the total is short of the \$1.3 trillion that experts, and threatened nations, said is needed.

“For our generation and for the Pacific Islands, the climate crisis is an existential threat. It is a matter of survival, and the world's biggest economies are not taking this crisis seriously. We need the ICJ to protect the rights of people at the front lines,” said Vishal Prasad, of Pacific Islands Students Fighting Climate Change.

Fifteen judges from around the world will seek to answer two questions: What are countries obliged to do under international law to protect the climate and environment from human-caused greenhouse gas emissions? And what are the legal consequences for governments where their acts, or lack of action, have significantly harmed the climate and environment?

The second question makes particular reference to “small island developing States” likely to be hardest hit by climate change and to “members of “the present and future generations affected by the adverse effects of climate change.”

The judges were even briefed on the science behind rising global temperatures by the U.N.'s climate change body, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, ahead of the hearings.

Biden pardons his son Hunter despite previous pledges not to

By ZEKE MILLER, ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden pardoned his son, Hunter, sparing the younger Biden a possible prison sentence for federal felony gun and tax convictions and reversing his past promises not to use the extraordinary powers of the presidency for the benefit of his family.

The Democratic president had previously said he would not pardon his son or commute his sentence after convictions in the two cases in Delaware and California. The move on Sunday night comes weeks before Hunter Biden was set to receive his punishment after his trial conviction in the gun case and guilty plea on tax charges, and less than two months before President-elect Donald Trump is set to return to the White House.

It caps a long-running legal saga for the younger Biden, who publicly disclosed he was under federal investigation in December 2020 — a month after his father's 2020 victory — and casts a pall over the elder Biden's legacy.

Biden, who time and again pledged to Americans that he would restore norms and respect for the rule of law after Trump's first term in office, ultimately used his position to help his son, breaking his public pledge to Americans that he would do no such thing.

In a statement released Sunday evening, Biden said, “I believe in the justice system, but as I have wrestled with this, I also believe raw politics has infected this process and it led to a miscarriage of justice.”

The president's sweeping pardon covers not just the gun and tax offenses against the younger Biden, but also any other “offenses against the United States which he has committed or may have committed or taken part in during the period from January 1, 2014 through December 1, 2024.”

In June, Biden categorically ruled out a pardon or commutation for his son, telling reporters as his son faced trial in the Delaware gun case, “I abide by the jury decision. I will do that and I will not pardon him.”

As recently as Nov. 8, days after Trump's victory, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre ruled out a pardon or clemency for the younger Biden, saying, “We've been asked that question multiple times. Our answer stands, which is no.”

The elder Biden has publicly stood by his only living son as Hunter descended into serious drug addic-

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 02, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 160 ~ 25 of 58

tion and threw his family life into turmoil before getting back on track in recent years. The president's political rivals have long used Hunter Biden's myriad mistakes as a political cudgel against his father: In one hearing, lawmakers displayed photos of the drug-addled president's son half-naked in a seedy hotel.

House Republicans also sought to use the younger Biden's years of questionable overseas business ventures in a since-abandoned attempt to impeach his father, who has long denied involvement in his son's dealings or benefiting from them in any way.

"The charges in his cases came about only after several of my political opponents in Congress instigated them to attack me and oppose my election," Biden said in his statement. "No reasonable person who looks at the facts of Hunter's cases can reach any other conclusion than Hunter was singled out only because he is my son."

"I hope Americans will understand why a father and a President would come to this decision," Biden added, claiming he made the decision this weekend.

The president had spent the Thanksgiving holiday in Nantucket, Massachusetts, with Hunter and his family, and departed for Angola later Sunday on what may be his last foreign trip as president before leaving office on Jan. 20, 2025.

Hunter Biden was convicted in June in Delaware federal court of three felonies for purchasing a gun in 2018 when, prosecutors said, he lied on a federal form by claiming he was not illegally using or addicted to drugs.

He had been set to stand trial in September in the California case accusing him of failing to pay at least \$1.4 million in taxes. But he agreed to plead guilty to misdemeanor and felony charges in a surprise move hours after jury selection was set to begin.

David Weiss, the Trump-appointed U.S. attorney in Delaware who negotiated the plea deal, was subsequently named a special counsel by Attorney General Merrick Garland to have more autonomy over the prosecution of the president's son.

Hunter Biden said he was pleading guilty in that case to spare his family more pain and embarrassment after the gun trial aired salacious details about his struggles with a crack cocaine addiction.

The tax charges carry up to 17 years behind bars and the gun charges are punishable by up to 25 years in prison, though federal sentencing guidelines were expected to call for far less time and it was possible he would have avoided prison time entirely.

Hunter Biden was supposed to be sentenced this month in the two federal cases, which the special counsel brought after a plea deal with prosecutors that likely would have spared him prison time fell apart under scrutiny by a judge. Under the original deal, Hunter was supposed to plead guilty to misdemeanor tax offenses and would have avoided prosecution in the gun case as long as he stayed out of trouble for two years.

But the plea hearing quickly unraveled last year when the judge raised concerns about unusual aspects of the deal. The younger Biden was subsequently indicted in the two cases.

Hunter Biden's legal team this weekend released a 52-page white paper titled "The political prosecutions of Hunter Biden," describing the president's son as a "surrogate to attack and injure his father, both as a candidate in 2020 and later as president."

The younger Biden's lawyers have long argued that prosecutors bowed to political pressure to indict the president's son amid heavy criticism by Trump and other Republicans of what they called the "sweetheart" plea deal.

Rep. James Comer, one of the Republican chairmen leading congressional investigations into Biden's family, blasted the president's pardon, saying that the evidence against Hunter was "just the tip of the iceberg."

"It's unfortunate that, rather than come clean about their decades of wrongdoing, President Biden and his family continue to do everything they can to avoid accountability," Comer said on X, the website formerly known as Twitter.

Biden is hardly the first president to deploy his pardon powers to benefit those close to him.

In his final weeks in office, Trump pardoned Charles Kushner, the father of his son-in law, Jared Kushner,

as well as multiple allies convicted in special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation. Trump over the weekend announced plans to nominate the elder Kushner to be the U.S. envoy to France in his next administration.

Trump, who has pledged to dramatically overhaul and install loyalists across the Justice Department after he was prosecuted for his role in trying to subvert the 2020 presidential election, said in a social media post on Sunday that Hunter Biden's pardon was "such an abuse and miscarriage of Justice."

"Does the Pardon given by Joe to Hunter include the J-6 Hostages, who have now been imprisoned for years?" Trump asked, referring to those convicted in the violent Jan. 6, 2021 riot at the U.S. Capitol by his supporters.

Hunter Biden said in an emailed statement that he will never take for granted the relief granted to him and vowed to devote the life he has rebuilt "to helping those who are still sick and suffering."

"I have admitted and taken responsibility for my mistakes during the darkest days of my addiction – mistakes that have been exploited to publicly humiliate and shame me and my family for political sport," the younger Biden said.

Hunter Biden's legal team filed Sunday night in both Los Angeles and Delaware asking the judges handling his gun and tax cases to immediately dismiss them, citing the pardon.

A spokesperson for Weiss did not respond to messages seeking comment Sunday night.

NBC News was first to report Biden was expected to pardon his son Sunday.

Iraqi militias deploy in Syria to back government's counteroffensive against insurgents

By KAREEM CHEHAYEB Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Iranian-backed Iraqi militias have deployed in Syria to back the government's counteroffensive against a surprise advance by insurgents who seized the largest city of Aleppo last week, a militia official and a war monitor said Monday.

Insurgents led by jihadi group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham launched a two-pronged attack on Aleppo and moved into the countryside around Idlib and neighboring Hama province. The push is among the rebels' strongest in years and 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.

It also risks drawing Russia and Turkey — each with its own interests to protect in Syria — into direct confrontation.

Government troops built a fortified defensive line in northern Hama in an attempt to stall the insurgents' momentum while jets on Sunday pounded rebel-held lines. On Monday, Syria's military said that their airstrikes alongside Russia's killed 400 insurgents over the past 24 hours. It said that government forces were mobilizing to encircle the rebels in the Aleppo, Hama, and Idlib countryside.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian in a phone call with Assad Monday said Tehran was willing to provide all the support needed to push back the insurgency. He echoed comments from Iran's top diplomat Abbas Araghchi, who visited Assad Sunday before traveling to Ankara, Turkey, one of the rebels' main backers.

Neither official further elaborated but Iran has been of Assad's principal political and military supporters and has deployed military advisers and forces after 2011 protests against Assad's rule turned into an all-out war.

Tehran-backed Iraqi militias already in Syria mobilized and additional forces crossed the border to support Assad's government and army, said the Iraqi militia official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media.

According to Britain-based opposition war monitor the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, some 200 Iraqi militiamen on pickups crossed into Syria overnight through the strategic Bou Kamal crossing. They were expected to deploy in Aleppo to support the Syrian army's pushback against the insurgents, the monitor said.

The rebel offensive in Syria has caused concern among neighboring countries that the conflict could spill

over. In Iraq, Interior Ministry spokesperson Brig. Gen. Miqdad Miri said that security forces have deployed in greater numbers to protect their large border with Syria.

The advance by the insurgents is a huge embarrassment for Assad, and it comes at a time when his allies — Iran and groups it backs and Russia — are preoccupied with their own conflicts.

Russia, whose intervention in Syria's civil war on behalf of Assad was crucial in turning the conflict in his favor, has said it will continue to support him.

"We, of course, continue to support Bashar Assad, we continue our contacts at the appropriate level and analyze the situation," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters Monday. "A position will be formed regarding what is needed to stabilize the situation."

Syrian and Russian airstrikes on rebel positions continued mostly in Hama and Idlib provinces. At least 10 civilians were killed in Idlib city and province, according to the Syrian Civil Defense in opposition-held areas.

Syrian Kurds were fleeing the fighting in large numbers after Turkish-backed rebels seized Tel Rifaat from rival U.S.-backed Kurdish authorities. The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces largely withdrew and called for a humanitarian corridor to allow people to leave safely in convoys toward Aleppo and later to Kurdish-led northeast regions.

56 people killed in stampede following clashes at a Guinea soccer match, authorities say

CONAKRY, Guinea (AP) — Fifty-six people were killed and several injured in a stampede at a soccer stadium in southern Guinea, following clashes between fans, Guinea's government said Monday.

Authorities are conducting an investigation to establish those responsible for the stampede on Sunday, Communications Minister Fana Soumah said in a statement read on national television.

Among the victims are several children according to local media and a coalition of political parties.

The stampede broke out on Sunday afternoon at the stadium in the city of Nzerekore during the final of a local tournament between the Labe and Nzerekore teams in honor of Guinea's military leader, Mamadi Doumbouya, Guinea's Prime Minister Amadou Oury Bah said on the X platform.

"During the stampede, victims were recorded," Bah said, without giving details. The regional authorities are working to restore calm in the area, he added.

Local media reported that security forces tried to use tear gas to restore calm after the chaos that followed a disputed penalty.

"This (the disputed penalty) angered supporters who threw stones. This is how the security services used tear gas," Media Guinea, a local news website, reported. It said several of those killed were children while some of the injured being treated at a regional hospital are in critical condition.

Videos that appeared to be from the scene showed fans in a section of the stadium shouting and protesting the refereeing before clashes broke out as people poured onto the field.

People were running as they tried to escape from the stadium, many of them jumping the high fence.

Videos also showed many people lying on the floor in what looked like a hospital as a crowd gathered nearby, some assisting the wounded.

The National Alliance for Alternation and Democracy opposition coalition called for an investigation. It said the tournament was organized to drum up support for the "illegal and inappropriate" political ambitions of the military leader.

Guinea has been led by the military since soldiers ousted President Alpha Conde in 2021. It is one of a growing number of West African countries, including Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, where the military has taken power and delayed a return to civilian rule.

Doumbouya, who ousted the president three years ago, said he was preventing the country from slipping into chaos and chastised the previous government for broken promises. He has, however, been criticized for not meeting the expectations that he raised.

Before exiting, Biden heads to Africa to highlight his own counter to China. Will Trump take it up?

By GERALD IMRAY Associated Press

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP) — President Joe Biden is finally making his long-promised visit to Africa to showcase a U.S.-backed railway project in three countries that he has pushed as a new approach in countering some of China's global influence.

Biden's first visit to the continent as president — which he left to the very end — will highlight the Lobito Corridor railway redevelopment in Zambia, Congo and Angola.

Biden starts a three-day trip to Angola on Monday. En route to Angola, he stopped off in the Atlantic Ocean island of Cape Verde off the west coast of Africa for a meeting with Prime Minister Ulisses Correia e Silva.

A new strategy

The Lobito railway project aims to advance U.S. presence in a region rich in the critical minerals used in batteries for electric vehicles, electronic devices and clean energy technologies.

That's a key field for U.S.-China competition and China has a stranglehold on Africa's critical minerals.

The U.S. has for years built relations in Africa through trade, security and humanitarian aid. The 800-mile (1,300-kilometer), \$2.5 billion railway upgrade is a different move and has shades of China's Belt and Road foreign infrastructure strategy that has surged ahead.

The Biden administration has called the corridor one of the president's signature initiatives, yet Lobito's future and any change in the way the United States engages with a continent of 1.4 billion that's leaning heavily toward China depends on the incoming administration of Donald Trump.

"President Biden is no longer the story," said Mvemba Dizolele, the director of the Africa Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington-based think tank. "Even African leaders are focused on Donald Trump."

A fit for Trump's vision?

The U.S. has committed hundreds of millions of dollars to the Lobito Corridor alongside financing from the European Union, the Group of Seven leading industrialized nations, a Western-led private consortium and African banks.

"A lot is riding on this in terms of its success and its replicability," said Tom Sheehy, a fellow at the United States Institute of Peace, a nonpartisan federal research institution.

He called it one of the flagships for the G7's new Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment, which was driven by Biden and aims to reach other developing nations as a response to China's Belt and Road.

Biden promised to visit Africa last year after reviving the U.S.-Africa Summit for the first time in nearly a decade in December 2022. The trip was kicked back to 2024 and delayed again this October because of Hurricane Milton, reinforcing a sentiment among Africans that their continent is still low priority. The last U.S. president to visit was Barack Obama in 2015.

But many are optimistic that the Lobito project, which isn't due for completion until well after Biden has left office, will survive a change of administration and be given a chance. It goes some way to blunting China, which has bipartisan backing and is high on Trump's to-do list.

"As long as they keep labeling Lobito one of the main anti-China tools in Africa, there is a certain likelihood that it's going to keep being funded," said Christian-Géraud Neema, who analyzes China-Africa relations.

Some success in Africa

The Lobito Corridor will be an upgrade and extension of a railway line from the copper and cobalt mines of northern Zambia and southern Congo to Angola's Atlantic Ocean port of Lobito, a route west for Africa's critical minerals.

It's little more than a starting point for the U.S. and its partners, because China is dominant in the mining in Zambia and Congo. Congo has more than 70% of the world's cobalt, most of which is heading to China to reinforce its critical mineral supply chain that the U.S. and Europe have to rely on.

Lobito was made possible by some American diplomatic success in Angola that led to a Western consortium winning the bid for the project in 2022 ahead of Chinese competition, a surprise given Angola's long and strong ties with Beijing. China financed a previous redevelopment of the railway.

The Biden administration accelerated American outreach to Angola, turning around what was an antagonistic relationship three decades ago when the U.S. armed anti-government rebels in Angola's civil war. U.S.-Angola trade was \$1.77 billion last year, while the U.S. has a stronger stake in regional security through a strategic presence on the Atlantic Ocean, and Angolan President João Lourenço's role mediating in a conflict in eastern Congo.

In Angola, Biden will announce new developments on health, agribusiness, security cooperation as well as the Lobito Corridor, White House officials said on a preview call with reporters.

The visit, the first by a sitting U.S. president to Angola, will "highlight that remarkable evolution of the U.S.-Angola relationship," Frances Brown, a special assistant to the president and senior director for African affairs at the National Security Council, said on a separate call.

It will also draw attention to a perennial challenge for America's value-based diplomacy in Africa. International rights groups have used Biden's trip to criticize the Lourenço government's authoritarian shift. Political opponents have been imprisoned and allegedly tortured, while security and other laws have been passed in Angola that severely restrict freedoms, throwing some scrutiny on Washington's new African partnership.

Will the U.S. really show up?

Those calling for more U.S. presence in Africa say Angola and the Lobito spinoff show what might be achieved, even with China-facing countries, if the U.S. is willing to consistently engage. But they see signs for Africa when China has held a summit with African leaders every three years since 2000, while the US has had just two summits, in 2014 and 2022, and there are no plans for the next one.

Michelle Gavin, a former U.S. ambassador to Botswana and adviser on Africa to Obama, said that the U.S. had failed to take Africa seriously over multiple administrations, a bipartisan trend. She doesn't see Biden's visit and Lobito being a major "inflection point" that will drive a new U.S. focus across Africa.

"It is not just about trying to blunt China, but trying to imagine, OK, what does it look like if we actually were to show up in a more serious way?" she said. "It's one project. It's one good idea. And I'm very glad we're doing it. It's not enough."

Great Lakes region faces more snow after weekend of harsh holiday weather

By CARA ANNA, CAROLYN THOMPSON and JONAH BRONSTEIN Associated Press

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. (AP) — After U.S. travelers battled through harsh weekend weather to reach home following the Thanksgiving holiday, residents of the Great Lakes region face the prospect of more snow through the week, forecasters said.

Snow was expected to fall in the region overnight into Monday morning and again Wednesday and Thursday, along with gusty winds and freezing temperatures, the National Weather Service said Sunday.

Several inches of lake-effect snow fell over the weekend on upstate New York, including nearly 4 feet (1.2 meters) off Lake Ontario, and parts of Pennsylvania and Michigan.

Lake-effect snow is caused by warm, moist air blowing across a body of water and mixing with colder, drier air, creating narrow bands of often heavy snow on land.

Bills game played in wintry conditions

Flinty fans scoffed at the flurries and numbing temperatures during Sunday's nighttime NFL game in Buffalo, New York, against the San Francisco 49ers.

The NFL's Bills said the organization would pay \$20 per hour and provide food and hot drinks to snow shovelers.

The lake-effect storm began hitting the area Saturday near the Bills' stadium in Orchard Park, New York.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 02, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 160 ~ 30 of 58

Though the storm shifted south of the stadium by noon Sunday, snow continued to fall off and on through the day. Flurries began to fall more heavily just before kickoff. The game was played in chilly conditions with the game-time temperature at 27 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 3 Celsius), with the wind chill making it feel like 17 F (minus 8 Celsius). The Bills often play in such conditions at home late in the season.

Tim LoTemple, a Bills season-ticket holder from Rochester, New York, and part of the team's rabid fan base known as "Bills Mafia," said the freezing temperatures and snow energize the players and fans. Still, the 49ers game was practically temperate compared to previous matchups at Highmark Stadium.

"We love snow over here. You know how Bills Mafia is, we love the cold," he said from a parking lot tailgate party. "This is nothing compared to what we've seen before."

But for Jake Dyer, an Indianapolis Colts fan visiting from Southern California, a cold-weather game is a rarity.

"Only thing I didn't prepare for was shoes. I double up on everything else, but my feet are cold," he said. "Mad respect for anybody who comes out. Anybody can sit at home, comfy in their chair to watch this game."

Another 1 to 2 feet (about 30 to 60 centimeters) of snow was possible in western New York, and an additional 2 to 3 feet in northern New York, Gov. Kathy Hochul's office said Sunday.

New York and Pennsylvania declare emergencies

A blast of Arctic air last week brought bitter temperatures of 10 to 20 degrees Fahrenheit below average to the Northern Plains, the National Weather Service said. Frigid air was expected to move over the eastern third of the U.S. by Monday, with temperatures about 10 degrees below average.

Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro signed a disaster emergency proclamation Saturday and said parts of Erie County in the northwest received nearly 2 feet (61 centimeters) of snow, with more expected through Monday night. Due to the snow emergency in the City of Erie, City Hall will be closed to the public on Monday and Tuesday.

Michigan is battered

Parts of Michigan were battered by lake-effect snow as bands rolling off Lake Superior buried parts of the Upper Peninsula under 2 feet (61 centimeters) or more, said Lily Chapman, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service.

There were 27 inches (69 centimeters) of snow northeast of Ironwood, in the Upper Peninsula's western reaches. More than a foot (30.5 centimeters) could fall over the eastern Upper Peninsula through Monday morning, Chapman said Saturday.

A light dusting of snow fell across eastern Kentucky and West Virginia, making a beautiful backdrop for Christmas decorations and good practice for road crews.

Over the next few days, lows in the Appalachians are expected to dip between 10 to 20 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 12 to minus 7 degrees Celsius).

Middle East latest: Israel says soldier thought to have been taken hostage is now presumed dead

By The Associated Press undefined

The Israeli military said Monday an Israeli American soldier who was believed to have been captured alive by Hamas in its Oct. 7, 2023, attack was killed that day and his body taken into the Gaza Strip.

Hamas is still holding around 100 hostages inside Gaza, at least a third of whom are believed to be dead. The Biden administration says it is making another push for a ceasefire and the release of the remaining hostages, after nearly a year of indirect negotiations between Israel and Hamas repeatedly stalled.

Diplomats see a potential opening after last week's ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group, an ally of Hamas that began launching rocket attacks and trading fire with Israel the day after the October 2023 attack.

The fragile ceasefire has held despite repeated Israeli strikes that have angered Lebanese officials but not yet triggered a response from Hezbollah. Israel says it has acted to thwart potential attacks.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 02, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 160 ~ 31 of 58

The war in Gaza began when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking around 250 people hostage. More than 100 hostages were released during a weeklong ceasefire in November 2023.

Israel's ongoing retaliatory offensive has killed at least 44,429 Palestinians, more than half of them women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not say how many of the dead were combatants. Israel says it has killed over 17,000 militants, without providing evidence.

The war has destroyed vast areas of the coastal enclave and displaced 90% of the population of 2.3 million, often multiple times.

Here's the Latest:

Israeli drone strikes reported in Lebanon days after fragile ceasefire

BEIRUT —Lebanon's state-run National News Agency said Monday one person was killed in an Israeli drone strike that hit a motorcycle, while the Lebanese army said that a soldier was wounded in an Israeli strike on a military bulldozer at an army base.

The Israeli military had no immediate comment on the strikes, which came days after Israel and Hezbollah agreed to a ceasefire to end nearly 14 months of cross-border fighting.

Since the ceasefire went into effect on Wednesday, Israel has struck several times in response to what it says have been ceasefire violations by Hezbollah. Lebanon has accused Israel of violating the deal but so far Hezbollah has not resumed its rocket fire.

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar on Monday rejected accusations that Israel is violating the tenuous ceasefire agreement, saying it was responding to Hezbollah violations.

In a post on X, Saar said that he made that point in a call with his French counterpart, Jean-Noël Barrot. France, along with the U.S., helped broker the deal and is part of an international monitoring committee meant to ensure the sides uphold their commitments.

Israel says that it reserves the right under the deal to respond to perceived ceasefire violations.

Israeli American soldier thought to have been taken hostage is now presumed dead

TEL AVIV, Israel — The Israeli military said Monday an Israeli American soldier who was believed to have been taken hostage alive on Oct. 7, 2023, is now presumed to have been killed during Hamas' attack and his body taken into Gaza.

Neutra, 21, was a New York native who enlisted in the Israeli military and was captured when Hamas attacked southern Israel. Neutra's parents, Ronen and Orna, led a public campaign while he was thought to be alive for their son's freedom. They spoke at protests in the U.S. and Israel, addressed the Republican National Convention this year and kept up ties with the Biden administration in their crusade to secure their son's release.

In a statement announcing the death, the military did not say how it came to the conclusion over Neutra's fate. He was one of seven American Israelis still held in Gaza, four of whom are now said to be dead. Hamas released a video of one, Edan Alexander, over the weekend, indicating he was still alive.

In late summer, Hamas killed Hersh Goldberg-Polin, another prominent Israeli American hostage, along with five other captives, whose bodies the Israeli military recovered.

The war in Gaza began when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking around 250 hostage. Some 100 captives are still held inside Gaza, around two-thirds believed to be alive.

Iranian-supported Iraqi militias back Syrian government's counteroffensive against insurgents

Iraqi militias supported by Iran deployed in Syria on Monday to back the government's counteroffensive against a surprise advance by insurgents who seized the largest city of Aleppo, a militia official and a war monitor said.

Insurgents led by jihadi group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham launched a two-pronged attack on Aleppo last week and the countryside around Idlib before moving toward neighboring Hama province. Government troops built a fortified defensive line in northern Hama in an attempt to stall the insurgents' momentum while jets on Sunday pounded rebel-held lines.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 02, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 160 ~ 32 of 58

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi met with Syrian President Bashar Assad in Damascus Sunday and announced Tehran's full support for his government. He later arrived for talks in Ankara, Turkey, one of the rebels' main backers.

Iran has been of Assad's principal political and military supporters and deployed military advisers and forces after 2011 protests against Assad's rule turned into an all-out war.

Tehran-backed Iraqi militias already in Syria mobilized and additional forces crossed the border to support them, said the Iraqi militia official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media.

According to Britain-based opposition war monitor the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, some 200 Iraqi militiamen on pickups crossed into Syria overnight through the strategic Bou Kamal. They were expected to deploy in Aleppo to support the Syrian army's pushback against the insurgents, the monitor said.

US Navy destroys Houthi missiles and drones targeting American ships in Gulf of Aden

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — U.S. Navy destroyers shot down seven missiles and drones fired by Yemen's Houthi rebels at the warships and three American merchant vessels they were escorting through the Gulf of Aden. No damage or injuries were reported.

U.S. Central Command said late Sunday that the destroyers USS Stockdale and USS O'Kane shot down and destroyed three anti-ship ballistic missiles, three drones and one anti-ship cruise missile. The merchant ships were not identified.

The Houthis claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement and said they had targeted the U.S. destroyers and "three supply ships belonging to the American army in the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Aden."

Houthi attacks for months have targeted shipping through a waterway where \$1 trillion in goods pass annually over the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza and Israel's ground offensive in Lebanon. A ceasefire was announced in Lebanon last week.

The USS Stockdale was involved in a similar attack on Nov. 12.

Chief of International Criminal Court lashes out at US and Russia over threats and accusations

By MOLLY QUELL Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — The president of the International Criminal Court lashed out at the United States and Russia for interfering with its investigations, calling threats and attacks on the court "appalling."

"The court is being threatened with draconian economic sanctions by another permanent member of the Security Council as if it was a terrorist organization," Judge Tomoko Akane, in her address to the institution's annual meeting, which opened on Monday.

Akane was referring to remarks made by U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham, whose Republican party will control both branches of Congress in January, and who called the court a "dangerous joke" and urged Congress to sanction its prosecutor. "To any ally, Canada, Britain, Germany, France, if you try to help the ICC, we're going to sanction you," Graham said on Fox News.

This marks the first time the global court of justice calls out a sitting leader of a major Western all.

Graham was angered by an announcement last month that judges had granted a request from the court's chief prosecutor Karim Khan to issue arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, his former defense minister and Hamas' military chief for crimes against humanity in connection with the nearly 14-month war in Gaza.

The decision has been denounced by critics of the court and given only milquetoast approval by many of its supporters, a stark contrast to the robust backing of an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin last year over war crimes in Ukraine.

Graham's threat isn't seen as just empty words. President-elect Donald Trump sanctioned the court's previous prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, with a travel ban and asset freeze for investigating American troops and intelligence officials in Afghanistan.

Akane on Monday also had harsh words for Russia. "Several elected officials are being subjected to ar-

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 02, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 160 ~ 33 of 58

rest warrants from a permanent member of the Security Council," she said. Moscow issued warrants for Khan and others in response to the investigation into Putin.

The Assembly of States Parties, which represents the ICC's 124 member countries, will convene its 23rd conference to elect committee members and approve the court's budget against a backdrop of unfavorable headlines.

The ICC was established in 2002 as the world's permanent court of last resort to prosecute individuals responsible for the most heinous atrocities — war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and the crime of aggression. The court only becomes involved when nations are unable or unwilling to prosecute those crimes on their territory. To date, 124 countries have signed on to the Rome Statute, which created the institution. Those who have not include Israel, Russia and China.

The ICC has no police force and relies on member states to execute arrest warrants.

U.S. President Joe Biden called the warrants for Netanyahu and the former defense minister "outrageous" and vowed to stand with Israel. A year ago, Biden called the warrant for Putin "justified" and said the Russian president had committed war crimes. The U.S. is not an ICC member country.

France said it would "respect its obligations" but would need to consider Netanyahu's possible immunities. When the warrant for Putin was announced, France said it would "lend its support to the essential work" of the court. Another member country, Austria, begrudgingly acknowledged it would arrest Netanyahu but called the warrants "utterly incomprehensible." Italy called them "wrong" but said it would be obliged to arrest him. Germany said it would study the decision. Member Hungary has said it would stand with Israel instead of the court.

Global security expert Janina Dill worried that such responses could undermine global justice efforts. "It really has the potential to damage not just the court, but international law," she told The Associated Press.

Milena Sterio, an expert in international law at Cleveland State University, told the AP that sanctions against the court could affect a number of people who contribute to the court's work, such as international human rights lawyer Amal Clooney. Clooney advised the current prosecutor on his request for the warrants for Netanyahu and others.

"Sanctions are a huge burden," Sterio said.

Also hanging heavy over the meeting in the Hague, are the internal pressures that Khan faces. In October, the AP reported the 54-year-old British lawyer is facing allegations he tried to coerce a female aide into a sexual relationship and groped her.

Two co-workers in whom the woman confided reported the alleged misconduct in May to the court's independent watchdog, which says it interviewed the woman and ended its inquiry after five days when she opted against filing a formal complaint. Khan was never questioned. He has denied the claims.

The Assembly of States Parties has announced it will launch an external probe into the allegations. It's not clear if the investigation will be addressed during the meeting.

The court, which has long faced accusations of ineffectiveness, will have no trials pending after two conclude in December. While it has issued a number of arrest warrants in recent months, many high-profile suspects remain at large.

Member states don't always act. Mongolia refused to arrest Putin when he visited in September. Sudan's former President Omar al-Bashir is wanted by the ICC over accusations related to the conflict in Darfur, but his country has refused to hand him over. Last week, Khan requested a warrant for the head of Myanmar's military regime, Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, for attacks against the country's Rohingya Muslim minority. Judges have yet to decide on that request.

"It becomes very difficult to justify the court's existence," Sterio said.

Climate solution: Sails make a comeback in shipping, to dent its huge carbon footprint

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

SAINT-MALO, France (AP) — Had he continued working aboard fuel-powered cargo ships, Yann Jourdan reckons he'd be earning perhaps four times what he now gets as captain of a sailboat that instead uses the wind's clean energy to transport goods across the Atlantic.

But the hit to Jourdan's pay is buying him peace of mind. When his 3-year-old son, Marcel, grows up, the burly French mariner wants to be able to explain what he did to make a dent in the the shipping industry's huge carbon footprint.

The international merchant fleet of more than 100,000 ships transports more than 80% of global trade. But it's also responsible for about 3% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Without a quick switch from dirty fuels to cleaner energies, its pollution is forecast to soar.

Mariners pushing for wind power say investors used to view them as something of a joke. But as they pioneer a comeback for sail-powered cargo ships, they're having the last laugh.

"It's our job to prove that it's possible," Jourdan said aboard the new Grain de Sail II cargo carrier as it sailed off the French port of Saint-Malo one recent autumn day.

"For me, it's just logical, you know?" he said. "Like the petrol is limited quantity and the wind is not."

Modern tech is supercharging sailboats

The cleanest of the new vessels spearheading wind's embryonic revival are almost pure-sail vessels like Grain de Sail II. Half the length of a soccer field and able to carry 350 tons of goods in its holds, it uses its diesel engine only to maneuver in and out of port.

"We want to not only reduce the carbon footprint, we want to kill it," said Jacques Barreau, co-founder of the Grain de Sail firm with his twin brother, Olivier. They used profits from their chocolate-making and coffee-roasting business in western France to finance their first sail-powered cargo ship, Grain de Sail I.

With its aluminum hull, two giant carbon-fibre masts, mechanized systems for hauling and adjusting the billowing sails, and its bridge bristling with high-tech navigation gear, Grain de Sail II is a supercharged modern successor to sailing clippers of yore.

The speediest of its four crossings so far to New York took 17 days, and just 15 days on the return trip to Saint-Malo.

"It's a totally different way of sailing," Barreau said. He foresees a future with "thousands of sailing cargo (vessels) like this one and even bigger versions."

Wind power even for giant carriers

Wind-assisted systems to save fuel are also being fitted to engine-powered cargo ships, all the way up to the massive 340-meter (1,115-foot) Sea Zhoushan.

It transports iron ore and was built in China with five large spinning rotors on its deck that harness wind energy. When the ship entered service in 2021, Brazilian mining giant Vale said it expects fuel savings of up to 8% on its 40-day voyages between Brazil and China.

Finland's Norsepower, the rotor manufacturer, says it has installed them on 16 ships since fitting its first in 2014 and has installations for 13 more vessels on order.

Although wind-assisted vessels are just a tiny fraction of the global fleet, their numbers are growing at unprecedented rates, says Clarksons Research, which tracks shipping data. By its count, 165 cargo ships are already using wind to some degree or are due to have wind-assisted systems installed.

In the European Union, larger cargo ships have to start paying for some of their emissions from 2025 and adhere to new EU regulations that aim to promote low-carbon fuels.

Such pressure could strengthen wind's appeal.

"Ultimately, wind-assisted propulsion is going to help with the global transition for even the largest segments of the cargo shipping sector," said Bryan Comer, who heads up efforts to decarbonize shipping at the non-profit International Council on Clean Transportation.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 02, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 160 ~ 35 of 58

"We know that it works, right? Shipping originally was completely wind-powered."

What happens when the wind doesn't blow?

But wind — unlike engines — can't be switched on at the touch of a button.

French shipper Neoline is open about the fact that when its new 136-meter (446-foot) carrier begins sailing in 2025, it will use its diesel engine when winds alone can't meet its target of 13-day crossings between the French port of Saint-Nazaire and Baltimore on the U.S. eastern seaboard.

"We're aiming for punctuality," says Neoline's president, Jean Zanuttini. "It wasn't speed that killed working sailing at the start of the 20th century, it was lack of punctuality."

"We accept and recognize the fact that about 30% of our energy will come from a diesel system," he said.

Still, the other 70% from the Neoliner's new type of giant sails — made with fiberglass panels, not canvas — is expected to slash its fuel-use and be another step forward for wind.

"We are going to learn and we are going to improve," Zanuttini said. "And tomorrow we'll build ships that are bigger, that are more specialized for certain goods, and more efficient at every level."

Grain de Sail III already on the drawing board

After the commercial launch of Grain de Sail I in 2020 and of Grain de Sail II this March, the Barreau twins are working to finance a third boat, Grain de Sail III. It will double the length of its predecessor and carry eight times more cargo, driving down costs. Grain de Sail hopes to have it in service by 2027.

But it says its core philosophy will remain unchanged: The bigger ship will also use only wind power, except to maneuver in ports. That rigor shrinks its vessels' carbon footprint to just a small fraction of the emissions from fuel-powered vessels, the firm says.

With a large golden ring in his left ear and bushy beard, Jourdan has the look of a pirate as he scrutinizes Grain de Sail II's rigging and tugs on its ropes to check their tautness in the wind.

He swears there'll be no going back to fuel-powered carriers for him.

"For me now, it's a dirty business," he said. "I just want to do something that I'm proud of."

Josh Allen has TDs passing, rushing and receiving as Bills rout 49ers 35-10 in snow, clinch AFC East

By JOHN WAWROW AP Sports Writer

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. (AP) — Josh Allen's memorable week began with singer and actress Hailey Steinfeld accepting his proposal for marriage and ended with the Buffalo Bills quarterback celebrating his three-TD outing in an AFC East-clinching 35-10 win over San Francisco by making snow angels alongside coach Sean McDermott on Sunday night.

"He's the one that got me to do it," Allen said of interrupting McDermott's television interview to lay backwards into a snow pile. "I'm not the biggest snow angel fan, because you get cold down there, my toes are freezing right now ... but it was fun."

As for Steinfeld saying "Yes," during his bye week proposal, Allen said: "Felt good. Felt free."

He could just as well have been referring to his performance by braving bone-chilling temperatures and a persistent snowfall in becoming the NFL's first quarterback and seventh player in the Super Bowl era to score a touchdown passing, rushing and receiving. Sandwiched between his 7-yard touchdown pass to Mack Hollins and an 8-yard scoring run, Allen scored a receiving touchdown on a pass he threw in his latest do-everything performance.

With Amari Cooper corralling a short pass with a one-handed catch, the receiver was in the midst of being wrapped up by two Niners defenders when he pitched the ball back to Allen. The QB sprinted to the left corner of the end zone and dived past for the pylon for the score.

"It's got to be up there. I wish he got credited for something there, an assist or a passing touchdown," Allen said of Cooper. "I just kind of chased the ball to be there and we made eye contact. ... It was dope."

Cooper said he acted on instinct in a play that could well have been drawn up in the snow on the sideline.

"I was wondering what he was doing over there," Cooper said. "I figured he was over there because he wanted the ball, so I gave it to him."

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 02, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 160 ~ 36 of 58

Snow flew like confetti in celebration from the packed stands as the Bills (10-2) scored on four of five possessions spanning halftime to build a 28-3 lead, starting with Ray Davis' 5-yard run. James Cook scored on a career-high 65-yard run and finished with 107 yards rushing.

The defending NFC champion 49ers (5-7) unraveled as they dropped their third straight and lost running back Christian McCaffrey to what coach Kyle Shanahan said was a potential season-ending injury to the posterior cruciate ligament in his knee.

Shanahan believes McCaffrey was hurt on an 18-yard run up the middle. The All-Pro running back stayed in the game and on the next play appeared to step awkwardly with his left foot on the snow-slicked field and went down immediately. After being examined on the sideline, he limped to the locker room and was ruled out at the start of the second half.

McCaffrey had 53 yards on seven carries when he exited the game, his fourth after missing the first eight of the season with Achilles tendinitis.

"It feels dark and gloomy and absolutely depressing, honestly I'll feel that probably in a couple hours," tight end George Kittle said. "The only way to make this feel better is to go take advantage of next week and try to get a win."

Very little went right for the 49ers in an outing they lost three fumbles and Jake Moody missed two of three field-goal attempts. San Francisco was also missing five starters due to injury and is now in jeopardy of missing the playoffs a season after losing the Super Bowl to Kansas City.

Moody opened the scoring with a 33-yard field goal and Isaac Guerendo scored on a 15-yard run. Brock Purdy, coming back after missing one game with a sore throwing shoulder, finished 11 of 18 for 94 yards.

Allen finished 13 of 17 passing for 148 yards and two touchdowns, three rushes for 18 yards and a score, and zero catches for 7 yards and a TD. He was serenaded by fans with chants of "MVP!" and sat out most of the fourth quarter.

"It's a good feeling. This one feels a little bit different this early in the season," Allen said of clinching the division while also staying in the hunt to catch Kansas City (11-1) for the AFC's top seed. "It's going to be fun, I mean, to go out there and play free and play relaxed and play loose. I think that could be a dangerous team."

Allen now has scored 247 career TDs (186 passing, 59 rushing and two receiving) to break Hall of Famer Jim Kelly's franchise record of 244.

Buffalo has won seven straight since back-to-back losses to Baltimore and Houston, and is 10-2 or better for the fifth time in team history and first since 1991. The Bills became the NFL's eighth team, and first since Indianapolis in 2009, to clinch a division title with five games remaining.

Buffalo extended its run of scoring 30 or more points to six straight games, while the Niners dropped to 0-5 when scoring 20 or fewer.

Up next

49ers: Host Chicago next Sunday.

Bills: At the Los Angeles Rams next Sunday.

Democrats still don't agree on the seriousness of their political problem after election defeat

By STEVE PEOPLES and JOEY CAPPELLETTI Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Nearly a month after a devastating election loss that exposed cracks in the very foundation of their party, Democrats remain deeply divided over the extent of their political problem — or even if they have one.

A number of Democratic leaders are downplaying the strength of Donald Trump's victory over Vice President Kamala Harris as the inevitable result of an inflation-fueled anti-incumbent backlash that shaped elections worldwide. But others are convinced that the Democratic Party is facing an acute crisis that requires an urgent overhaul of its brand, message and economic policies.

Trump swept every battleground state on Nov. 5, becoming the first Republican candidate to win the

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 02, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 160 ~ 37 of 58

national popular vote since George W. Bush in 2004. Yet nearly half the country voted against him. With the final votes still being counted in some places, Trump won the popular vote by just 1.6 percentage points. He carried the seven top swing states by about 760,000 votes combined out of more than 151 million cast nationwide.

"The glass is half full. It was close. If we get another 2% or 3% of American voters, it would have successfully led to victories from the presidency on down," says Colorado Gov. Jared Polis, who is leading a group called Governors Safeguarding Democracy.

But for Ken Martin, chair of the Minnesota Democratic-Labor-Farmer Party and a candidate to lead the Democratic National Committee next year, the election represented "a damning indictment" for the Democratic Party.

"People do not believe that the Democratic Party is fighting for them or for their families or gives a damn about their lives," Martin told The Associated Press. "We lost ground with almost every group except wealthy households and college-educated voters."

The internal debate over the health of the party comes at a critical moment.

Trump will return to the White House on Jan. 20, claiming a mandate to enact a dramatic "Make America Great Again" agenda led by the mass deportation of millions of immigrants in the country illegally; an overhaul of the federal departments of health, education and justice, and major import tariffs that threaten to strain the U.S. economy and international alliances alike.

Democrats, even diminished and divided, stand as the only organized resistance to Trump and his emboldened MAGA allies. But for now, at least, the Democratic Party has no leader and no agreement on the political problems that need to be fixed or how to fix them.

Many Democratic groups and leaders are working through post-election analyses to better understand what went wrong on Nov. 5, but few are working together. And already, some fear that the disparate post mortems will produce competing recommendations likely to be lost in a rush to leave the pain of 2024 behind.

Priorities USA, one of the Democratic Party's leading super PACs, is set to unveil its post-election findings this week. The group will recommend, among other things, that Democrats do a better job listening to voters instead of pollsters, while offering a more forward-looking positive alternative to Trump's MAGA movement.

If they do not make significant changes, according to a preview of that briefing, Priorities believes there is no guarantee that key elements of the Democratic base — especially young people and voters of color — will return to the party in future elections.

Some of the loudest voices calling for dramatic changes represent the party's far-left wing, which is often ignored by establishment Democrats who control the party's messaging, strategy and policy platform. Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders irked some party leaders the day after the election with a scathing critique: "It should come as no great surprise that a Democratic Party which has abandoned working class people would find that the working class has abandoned them."

"While the Democratic leadership defends the status quo, the American people are angry and want change," Sanders continued. "And they're right."

In the weeks since, California Rep. Ro Khanna, a Sanders ally and a potential future presidential contender, has been urging his party to overhaul its economic message. Specifically, he's advocating for a "New Economic Deal" focused on creating high-paying jobs for the middle class.

Khanna's chief of staff, Marie Baldassarre, said that some Democrats may be coming around to Khanna's message and his willingness to share it on podcasts and right-leaning outlets such as Fox News.

"I don't know how you look at this election and don't take a beat. This is the time to change," Baldassarre said. "Why wouldn't we do some work right now? We didn't resonate."

Democratic strategist Waleed Shahid, a former spokesperson for Justice Democrats and the "Uncommitted" group that was critical of Joe Biden's primary nomination, said Harris' loss revealed that the party "has a major problem with bleeding working-class, low-information, non-college voters."

He notes that some Democratic leaders have responded with a collective shrug.

"Many of the people at the highest levels of the party feel pretty lost," Shahid said. "I'm skeptical that they'll be able to create the kind of coalition they need for transformative change over our lifetimes."

The national committee's upcoming election to select a new leader serves as a litmus test for the party's direction.

The DNC is expected to elect a new chair in February after a series of four candidate forums in January, according to an internal memo released last week. It remains unclear if delegates will embrace a high-profile outsider or an insider more familiar with the intricate workings of the party's political apparatus.

Few are calling for wholesale changes.

Wisconsin Democratic Party Chair Ben Wikler, who announced his candidacy for DNC chair on Sunday, said Democrats must embrace a new communication strategy to connect with voters who don't pay close attention to politics. He complimented Trump's command of the media landscape and suggested that his own party pay more attention to non-political and right-leaning podcasts and news networks.

Wikler was skeptical, however, that the 2024 election results signal a political crisis for his party.

"What we saw was a narrow shift to the right driven the most by the people most affected by inflation, who were paying the least attention to the news," he said. "That does not suggest a permanent shift towards Trump. I think that there's a very real opportunity for Democrats to win back ground."

He added: "I also think that Trump is very likely to more than repeat history and be a disaster."

UN halts aid shipments through Gaza's main crossing after looting. It blames the crisis on Israel

By WAFAA SHURAF, SAMY MAGDY and TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — The U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees said Sunday it is halting aid deliveries through the main cargo crossing into the war-ravaged Gaza Strip because of the threat of armed gangs who have looted convoys. It blamed the breakdown of law and order in large part on Israeli policies.

In Israel, a former defense minister and fierce critic of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu — and a hard-liner on the Palestinians — accused the government of ethnic cleansing in northern Gaza, where a military offensive continues.

The U.N. agency's decision could worsen Gaza's humanitarian crisis as a second cold, rainy winter sets in, with hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in squalid tent camps and reliant on international aid. Experts already warned of famine in the north, which Israeli forces have almost completely isolated since early October.

Philippe Lazzarini, the head of UNRWA, the main aid provider in Gaza, said the route leading to the Kerem Shalom crossing is too dangerous on the Gaza side. Armed men looted nearly 100 trucks on the route in mid-November.

Kerem Shalom is the only crossing between Israel and Gaza that is designed for cargo shipments and has been the main artery for aid since the Rafah crossing with Egypt was shut in May. Last month, nearly two-thirds of aid entering Gaza came through Kerem Shalom, and in previous months it accounted for even more, according to Israeli figures.

In an X post, Lazzarini largely blamed Israel for the breakdown of humanitarian operations in Gaza, citing "political decisions to restrict the amounts of aid," lack of safety on routes and Israel's targeting of the Hamas-run police force, which previously provided public security.

"Yesterday we had assurances aid would be fine. We tried to move five trucks and they were all taken," Scott Anderson, director of UNRWA affairs in Gaza, told The Associated Press. "So we've kind of reached a point where it makes no sense to continue to try to move aid if it's just gonna be looted." When asked whether UNRWA has seen evidence supporting Israeli claims that Hamas has been behind aid looting, he emphasized that there's no systemic diversion of aid in Gaza.

A spokesman for UNICEF, Ammar Ammar, confirmed the security situation was "unacceptable" and said it was evaluating its operations at the crossing.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 02, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 160 ~ 39 of 58

The Israeli military body in charge of humanitarian aid to Gaza said on X that it will continue to work with the international community to increase aid into Gaza through Kerem Shalom and other crossings, and said UNRWA coordinated less than 10% of the aid that entered Gaza in November.

The Israeli military accuses UNRWA of having allowed Hamas to infiltrate its ranks — allegations the agency denies — and passed legislation to sever ties with it last month.

Israeli strikes kill at least six people, including children

Israeli strikes in Gaza killed at least six people overnight, including two children, ages 6 and 8, in their family's tent, medical officials said Sunday.

The strike in the Muwasi area, a sprawling coastal camp housing hundreds of thousands of displaced people, also wounded their mother and 8-month-old sister, according to nearby Nasser Hospital. An Associated Press reporter saw the bodies, which were buried in the sand.

A separate strike in the southern city of Rafah, on the border with Egypt, killed four men, according to hospital records.

The Israeli military said it was not aware of strikes in either location. Israel says it only targets militants and tries to avoid harming civilians, but its daily strikes across Gaza often kill women and children.

Former defense minister accuses Israel of war crimes

A former top Israeli general and defense minister accused the government of ethnic cleansing in northern Gaza, where the army has sealed off the towns of Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahiya and the Jabaliya refugee camp and allowed almost no humanitarian aid to enter.

Moshe Yaalon, who served as defense minister under Netanyahu before quitting in 2016, said the current far-right government is determined to "occupy, to annex, to ethnically cleanse."

Pressed by a local news outlet on Saturday, Yaalon said: "(They) are actually cleaning the territory of Arabs."

He added Sunday in an interview with Israeli radio: "My issue is not with the soldiers of the Israeli army. On the contrary: I'm speaking on behalf of commanders who are active in northern Gaza and turned to me because they are troubled by what is happening there. They are being placed in life-threatening situations; they are being thrust into moral dilemmas."

Netanyahu's Likud party criticized his earlier remarks, accusing him of making "false statements" that are "a prize for the International Criminal Court and the camp of Israel haters."

The ICC has issued arrest warrants against Netanyahu, another former defense minister, Yoav Gallant, and a Hamas commander, accusing them of crimes against humanity. The International Court of Justice is investigating allegations of genocide against Israel.

Israel rejects the allegations and says both courts are biased against it.

Israel says Gaza ceasefire talks resume 'behind the scenes'

The war in Gaza began when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking around 250 hostage. Some 100 captives are still held inside Gaza, around two-thirds believed to be alive.

Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed at least 44,429 Palestinians, more than half of them women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not say how many of the dead were combatants. Israel says it has killed over 17,000 militants, without providing evidence.

The war has destroyed vast areas of the coastal enclave and displaced 90% of the population of 2.3 million, often multiple times.

Israel reached a ceasefire with Lebanon's Hezbollah militants last week that has largely held, but that agreement did not address the war in Gaza.

Gaza ceasefire efforts have stalled as Israel rejected Hamas' demand for a complete withdrawal from the territory. The Biden administration has said it will make another push for a deal.

"There are negotiations taking place behind the scenes, and it can be done," Israel's mostly ceremonial president, Isaac Herzog, said Sunday after meeting with the mother of Israeli-American hostage Edan Alexander, who appeared in a video released Saturday by Hamas.

Syria launches counterattacks in an attempt to halt insurgency, as Iran's top diplomat meets Assad

By KAREEM CHEHAYEB Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — The Syrian military rushed reinforcements to the northwest and launched airstrikes Sunday in an attempt to push back insurgents who seized the country's largest city of Aleppo, as Iran pledged to help the government counter the surprise offensive.

Iran has been a key political and military ally of Syrian President Bashar Assad in his country's civil war, but it was unclear how Tehran would support Damascus in the latest flareup. Insurgents led by jihadi group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham launched a two-pronged attack on Aleppo and the countryside around Idlib on Wednesday, before moving toward neighboring Hama province.

On Sunday, government troops created a "strong defensive line" in northern Hama, as they attempted to stall the insurgents' momentum, according to Britain-based opposition war monitor the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. Meanwhile, jets pounded the cities of Idlib and Aleppo, killing at least 25 people, according to the Syrian civil defense group that operates in opposition-held areas.

The surge in fighting has raised the prospect of another violent, destabilizing front reopening in the Middle East at a time when Israel is fighting Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon, conflicts that have repeatedly threatened to ignite an even wider regional war. It also risks drawing Russia and Turkey — each with its own interests to protect in Syria — into direct heavy fighting against each other.

The insurgents announced their offensive Wednesday, just as a ceasefire started between Hezbollah and Israel that raised some hope tensions in the region might be calming.

The surprise offensive is a huge embarrassment for Assad, and it comes at a time when his allies — Iran and groups it backs and Russia — are preoccupied with their own conflicts.

According to a statement from Assad's office, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi reassured the Syrian leader during a visit to Damascus that Tehran was ready to support the government in their counteroffensive.

Arab leaders, including Jordan's King Abdullah II and United Arab Emirates President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, have also called Assad to express their solidarity.

Late Sunday, multiple Western governments jointly urged a de-escalation by all parties and protection of civilians and infrastructure "to prevent further displacement and disruption of humanitarian access." The statement by the U.S., U.K., French and German governments said they were watching the situation closely and that the escalation underscored the urgent need for a political solution.

Opposition troops advance

The insurgents took over most of Aleppo on Saturday and made gains in the surrounding province. They also seized the main water pumping station for city and it is no longer working, Syrian Minister of Water Resources Moataz Qattan told the pro-government radio station Sham FM.

Elsewhere, rebel commander Col. Hassan Abdulghani said the insurgents advanced in the countryside around Idlib, putting all of the province of the same name under their control.

They also claimed to have entered the city of Hama, but there was no independent confirmation of that.

In Khan Sheikhoun in Idlib province, military vehicles abandoned by Syrian troops dotted the roads. People posed and took pictures of themselves atop one abandoned tank on a highway, while the insurgents grabbed munitions and shells from them before continuing their push deeper into Syria.

The insurgents vowed to push all the way into Damascus, but life in the Syrian capital remained normal with no signs of panic. In southeastern Aleppo, however, the main road out of the city was gridlocked as people fled the fighting, and gas stations in the area were short on fuel.

The rebels also made it into Tel Rifaat, a town near Aleppo held by U.S.-backed Syrian Kurdish forces, according to pro-government pan-Arab Al Mayadeen TV.

Tel Rifaat is far from the large swaths of northeastern Syria that are controlled by the Kurdish troops, known as the Syrian Democratic Forces. A statement from the insurgency called on the SDF to leave the areas near Aleppo that they hold and retreat to their bastions in the northeast.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 02, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 160 ~ 41 of 58

Despite being at odds politically with the Syrian government, the Kurdish-led administration has opposed the insurgency and accused Turkey, the main backer of Syrian opposition groups, of trying to displace the Kurdish population.

Turkish officials have said a limited offensive by the rebels was planned to stop government attacks on opposition-held areas in recent weeks, but it expanded as government forces began to retreat.

The United Nations special envoy for Syria, Geir Pedersen, said the push by the rebels poses a risk to regional security and called on resuming diplomatic efforts to end the conflict.

U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan told CNN's "State of the Union" that the U.S. is watching the situation carefully. There are about 900 American troops in Syria's northeast — far from where the insurgency is happening — who are meant to guard against a resurgence by the extremist Islamic State group.

The group leading the rebel advance is designated a terrorist organization by the U.S., and Sullivan said Washington has "real concerns about the designs and objectives of that organization."

"At the same time, of course, we don't cry over the fact that the Assad government, backed by Russia, Iran and Hezbollah, are facing certain kinds of pressure," he added.

Syrian troops fortify northern Hama as jets pound Idlib and Aleppo

According to Syrian state news agency SANA and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, the army overnight pushed back insurgents in the northern countryside of Hama province.

Syrian state media said government resupply included heavy equipment and rocket launchers while Syrian and Russian airstrikes targeted weapon depots and insurgent strongholds. Sham FM said the Syrian army shot down drones belonging to Hayat Tahrir al-Sham in northern Hama.

Syrian state television claimed government forces had killed nearly 1,000 insurgents over the past three days, without providing evidence or details.

Government airstrikes in Idlib and Aleppo killed at least 25 people, of which 14 are women and children, according to the Syrian Civil Defense, also known as the White Helmets, that operates in opposition-held areas.

Residents could be seen fleeing through ash-covered streets. Men lowered a child from the high floor of a building whose facade was blown off.

Airstrikes also struck in and around Aleppo, including near a hospital in the city center, killing 12 people, including at least eight civilians, according to the White Helmets and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

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. After appearing to be losing control of the country to the rebels, the Aleppo battle secured Assad's hold on strategic areas of Syria, with opposition factions and their foreign backers controlling areas on the periphery.

Canada's ambassador says Trudeau told Trump the Canadian border can't be compared to Mexico's

By ROB GILLIES Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — Canada's ambassador to the United States said Sunday that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was successful in getting President-elect Donald Trump and key Cabinet nominees to understand that lumping Canada in with Mexico over the flow of drugs and migrants into the U.S. is unfair.

Kirsten Hillman, Canada's ambassador in Washington, told The Associated Press in an interview that Trudeau's dinner with Trump on Friday was a very important step in trying to get Trump to back away from threatened tariffs on all products from the major American trading partner.

Hillman was at Trump's Mar-a-Lago club in Florida and sat at an adjacent table to Trudeau and Trump.

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 in a social media post last Monday he would impose a 25% tax on all products entering the U.S. from Canada and Mexico as one of his first executive orders.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 02, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 160 ~ 42 of 58

Hillman said Trudeau asked to see Trump in person in a phone call Monday and Trump invited him to dinner on Friday.

At the dinner, Hillman said the case was made to Trump that there is no comparison between the Canada-U.S. border and Mexico-U.S. border.

"The message that our border is so vastly different than the Mexican border was really understood," Hillman said.

Hillman said the bulk of Friday night's dinner centered around Trump's border concerns. The ambassador said a priority of Trudeau's was to point out the degree of difference.

Hillman said there really is no comparison, noting there is essentially zero trafficking of fentanyl from Canada to the United States. She said there are seizures but authorities say those are personal use seizures and not criminal trafficking. She said that 99.8% of the fentanyl seized by U.S. authorities in the U.S. comes from Mexico.

"Also with respect to individuals, illegal individuals crossing illegally, Canada last year was less than one percent, 0.6 percent were of total interceptions from Canada," Hillman said.

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. On immigration, the U.S. Border Patrol made 56,530 arrests at the Mexican border in October alone and 23,721 arrests at the Canadian border between October 2023 and September 2024 — and Hillman said the migrant numbers are coming down since the summer.

"The facts are hard to deny," Hillman said.

But Hillman said Canada is ready to make new investments in border security and there are plans for more helicopters, drones and law enforcement officers.

She also noted an agreement between Canada and the United States that allows for migrants caught crossing illegally into the United States to be sent back to Canada. She said that was talked about. She said Mexico and the U.S. do not have a similar agreement.

At the dinner that lasted three hours, Hillman said America's trade deficit with Canada was also raised. Hillman said the U.S. had a \$75 billion trade deficit with Canada last year but noted a third of what Canada sells into the U.S. are energy exports and prices have been high.

"Trade balances are something that he focuses so it's important to engage in that conversation but to put it into context," Hillman said.

"We are one tenth the size of the United States so a balanced trade deal would mean per capita we are buying 10 times more from the U.S. than they are buying from us. If that's his metric we will certainly engage on that."

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.

Hillman said Canadian and incoming Trump administration officials will work on Trump's concerns in the coming weeks. Trump called the talks "productive" on Sunday in a social media post but signaled no retreat from his tariff pledge.

Hillman said Trump and Trudeau "get along well" and the dinner was also a chance to socialize. She said Trump used his iPad to play music and she said Trump told Trudeau he's a big fan of Canadian singer Celine Dion.

"I don't think it could have been better to be frank. Okay, I'll take that back, I'll change that. If he obviously said there would be no tariffs that would have been better but there was no realistic expectation of that," Hillman said.

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.

A landmark climate change case will open at the top UN court as island nations fear rising seas

By MOLLY QUELL Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — The top United Nations court will take up the largest case in its history on Monday, when it opens two weeks of hearings into what countries worldwide are legally required to do to combat climate change and help vulnerable nations fight its devastating impact.

After years of lobbying by island nations who fear they could simply disappear under rising sea waters, the U.N. General Assembly asked the International Court of Justice last year for an opinion on "the obligations of States in respect of climate change."

"We want the court to confirm that the conduct that has wrecked the climate is unlawful," Margaretha Wewerinke-Singh, who is leading the legal team for the Pacific island nation of Vanuatu, told The Associated Press.

In the decade up to 2023, sea levels have risen by a global average of around 4.3 centimeters (1.7 inches), with parts of the Pacific rising higher still. The world has also warmed 1.3 degrees Celsius (2.3 Fahrenheit) since pre-industrial times because of the burning of fossil fuels.

Vanuatu is one of a group of small states pushing for international legal intervention in the climate crisis.

"We live on the front lines of climate change impact. We are witnesses to the destruction of our lands, our livelihoods, our culture and our human rights," Vanuatu's climate change envoy Ralph Regenvanu told reporters ahead of the hearing.

Any decision by the court would be non-binding advice and unable to directly force wealthy nations into action to help struggling countries. Yet it would be more than just a powerful symbol since it could serve as the basis for other legal actions, including domestic lawsuits.

On Sunday, ahead of the hearing, advocacy groups will bring together environmental organizations from around the world. Pacific Islands Students Fighting Climate Change — who first developed the idea of requesting an advisory opinion — together with World Youth for Climate Justice plan an afternoon of speeches, music and discussions.

From Monday, the Hague-based court will hear from 99 countries and more than a dozen intergovernmental organizations over two weeks. It's the largest lineup in the institution's nearly 80-year history.

Last month at the United Nations' annual climate meeting, countries cobbled together an agreement on how rich countries can support poor countries in the face of climate disasters. Wealthy countries have agreed to pool together at least \$300 billion a year by 2035 but the total is short of the \$1.3 trillion that experts, and threatened nations, said is needed.

"For our generation and for the Pacific Islands, the climate crisis is an existential threat. It is a matter of survival, and the world's biggest economies are not taking this crisis seriously. We need the ICJ to protect the rights of people at the front lines," Vishal Prasad, of Pacific Islands Students Fighting Climate Change, told reporters in a briefing.

Fifteen judges from around the world will seek to answer two questions: What are countries obliged to do under international law to protect the climate and environment from human-caused greenhouse gas emissions? And what are the legal consequences for governments where their acts, or lack of action, have significantly harmed the climate and environment?

The second question makes particular reference to "small island developing States" likely to be hardest hit by climate change and to "members of "the present and future generations affected by the adverse

effects of climate change.”

The judges were even briefed on the science behind rising global temperatures by the U.N.’s climate change body, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, ahead of the hearings.

The case at the ICJ follows a number of rulings around the world ordering governments to do more to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

In May, a U.N. tribunal on maritime law said that carbon emissions qualify as marine pollution and countries must take steps to adapt to and mitigate their adverse effects.

That ruling came a month after Europe’s highest human rights court said that countries must better protect their people from the consequences of climate change, in a landmark judgment that could have implications across the continent.

The ICJ’s host country of The Netherlands made history when a court ruled in 2015 that protection from the potentially devastating effects of climate change is a human right and that the government has a duty to protect its citizens. The judgment was upheld in 2019 by the Dutch Supreme Court.

Stellantis CEO Carlos Tavares steps down as carmaker continues struggle with slumping sales

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Stellantis CEO Carlos Tavares is stepping down after nearly four years in the top spot of the automaker, which owns car brands like Jeep, Citroën and Ram, amid an ongoing struggle with slumping sales.

The world’s fourth-largest carmaker announced that its board accepted Tavares’ resignation Sunday, effective immediately.

Stellantis noted Sunday that the process of finding a new, permanent CEO is “well under way.” In the meantime, the company says a new interim executive committee, led by chairman John Elkann, will be established.

As head of PSA Peugeot, Tavares took control of the Netherlands-based company in January 2021 — when it merged with Fiat Chrysler Automobiles, creating an automotive giant that is the parent to several well-known brands today. Beyond Jeep, Citroën and Ram, the company portfolio includes Dodge, Chrysler, Fiat, Peugeot, Maserati and Opel.

Stellantis’ North American operations had been the company’s main source of profits for some time, but struggles piled up this year, with the company citing rising competition and larger market changes. As a result of lofty sticker prices and fewer affordable options, many high-priced vehicles have been left unsold on dealers’ lots.

For its third quarter, Stellantis posted 27% plunge in net revenues, as gaps in launching new products and action to reduce inventories also slashed global shipments of new vehicles by 20%.

The carmaker reported net revenues of 33 billion euros (nearly \$36 billion) in the three-month period ending Sept. 30, down from 45 billion euros in the same period last year. All regions except South America reported double-digit dips in revenues — led by North America, which plunged 42% to 12.4 billion euros (\$13.1 billion).

In recent months, Tavares had come under fire from U.S. dealers and the United Auto Workers union after the release of dismal financial performance reports. He also oversaw cost-cutting efforts that included delaying factory openings and laying off union workers — further straining the company’s relations with the UAW, which filed several grievances against Stellantis and threatened to strike in recent months.

The UAW welcomed Tavares’ resignation with president Shawn Fain calling the move “a major step in the right direction for a company that has been mismanaged and a workforce that has been mistreated for too long.” He noted that thousands of UAW members had been calling for Tavares’ firing for weeks for what Fain called the CEO’s “reckless mismanagement of the company.”

“Tavares is leaving behind a mess of painful layoffs and overpriced vehicles sitting on dealership lots,” Fain said in a statement. He added that the union looks forward to sitting down with Stellantis’ new chief

executive and “will keep using all means available” to hold the company accountable.

Beyond the U.S., Stellantis has faced pressure in Italy — where lawmakers questioned the former chief executive over the company’s production plans in October, with the far-right government accusing the company of relocating assembly plants to low-cost countries. Tens of thousands of autoworkers in the country also held a one-day walkout, calling for more employment certainty and protections.

In efforts to revive sales, Stellantis previously made a number of leadership changes in October, which included naming new heads of operations in North America and Europe. At the time, the company expected Tavares to step down in early 2026, closer to the end of his five-year contract.

The company confirmed in September that it was searching for a CEO to eventually succeed Tavares, but it maintained those efforts were part of standard leadership transition plans.

In a statement Sunday, Stellantis’ senior independent director Henri de Castries said that Stellantis’ success is “rooted in a perfect alignment” between shareholders, the company’s board and the CEO — but noted “different views” had emerged in recent weeks, resulting in the decision to approve Tavares’ resignation.

Elkann, the chairperson of Stellantis’ board, thanked Tavares for “his years of dedicated service and the role he has played in the creation of Stellantis” in an additional statement. He added that he looks forward to appointing a new CEO.

Stellantis did not comment further beyond Sunday’s release. The announcement arrived shortly after Bloomberg reported Tavares’ plans to step down, citing unnamed sources familiar with the matter.

Marshall Brickman, who co-wrote ‘Annie Hall’ with Woody Allen, dies at 85

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The Oscar-winning screenwriter Marshall Brickman, whose wide-ranging career spanned some of Woody Allen’s best films, the Broadway musical “Jersey Boys” and a number of Johnny Carson’s most beloved sketches, has died. He was 85.

Brickman died Friday in Manhattan, his daughter Sophie Brickman told The New York Times. No cause of death was cited.

Brickman was best known for his extensive collaboration with Allen, beginning with the 1973 film “Sleeper.” Together, they co-wrote “Annie Hall” (1977), “Manhattan” (1979) and “Manhattan Murder Mystery” (1993). The loosely structured script for “Annie Hall,” in particular, has been hailed as one of the wittiest comedies. It won Brickman and Allen an Oscar for best original screenplay.

In his acceptance speech (Allen skipped the ceremony), Brickman referenced one of the film’s many oft-quoted lines, saying: “I’ve been out here a week, and I still have guilt when I make a right turn on a red light.”

“If the film is worth anything,” Brickman told Vanity Fair in 2017, “it gives a very particular specific image of what it was like to be alive in New York at that time in that particular social-economic stratum.”

Brickman and Allen had met in the early 1960s, when Allen was breaking through as a stand-up comedian. Brickman was brought on to write jokes for him. At the time, he had been playing banjo for the folk group the Tarriers. In one of the many twists of Brickman’s career, it was an album he and his college roommate Eric Weissberg recorded that later made the soundtrack to 1972’s “Deliverance,” including “Dueling Banjos.”

Brickman, born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, was the son of Jewish socialists Abram (who fled Poland during WWII) and Pauline (Wolin) Brickman, who was from New York. They later moved to the Flatbush section of Brooklyn, where Brickman grew up. His start in show business, after graduating from the University of Wisconsin with degrees in science and music, came with the Tarriers. He replaced Alan Arkin in the group.

“One of the reasons I was asked to join was because they needed somebody to front the group and talk while everybody was tuning up,” Brickman told the Writers Guild in 2011. “And so I started to develop little jokes and routines and stuff like that.”

By the late ‘60s, Brickman was head writer for Carson’s “The Tonight Show.” There, one of his most enduring contributions were the Carnac the Magnificent sketches, during which Carson played a “mystic

from the East" who could divine answers to unseen questions. Brickman's other TV stints included "Candid Camera," "The Dick Cavett Show" and "The Muppet Show."

When Brickman and Allen began writing together, they found a natural chemistry, with Brickman playing a supporting role to Allen's semi-autobiographical material.

"We didn't write scenes together. I think that's the death for any collaboration," Brickman told the Writers Guild. "I don't think there's any such thing really as an equal collaboration. I think that in any collaboration, one person, one personality, one point of view has to dominate."

Brickman wrote and directed the 1980 film "Simon," starring Arkin as a psychology professor brainwashed into believing he's from outer space. He also directed 1983's "Lovesick," with Alec Guinness as the ghost of Sigmund Freud, and 1986's "The Manhattan Project," about a high schooler who builds a nuclear weapon for a school project.

With Rick Elice penning the music, Brickman wrote the Broadway musical "Jersey Boys," about the 1960s rock group The Four Seasons. It ran on Broadway for 12 years beginning in 2005. He and Elice also wrote the 2010 musical "The Addams Family."

Brickman is survived by his wife, Nina, daughters Sophie and Jessica, and five grandchildren.

Trump says he'll nominate Kash Patel as FBI director to remake the agency. Here's what happens next

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump's stunning announcement that he will nominate Kash Patel as FBI director sets the stage for a fresh round of turbulence at a law enforcement agency tasked with protecting the homeland and investigating federal crimes.

Patel, a steadfast Trump ally with plans to shake up the bureau, is a study in contrasts from the current tight-lipped director, Christopher Wray, who preaches a "keep calm and tackle hard" mantra.

In selecting Patel late Saturday over more conventional contenders, the incoming Republican president is again testing the loyalty of Senate Republicans and their willingness to defy him.

Here's a look at what happens next:

What happens to the current FBI director?

Wray was appointed director by Trump in 2017 and technically has three years left on his 10-year tenure.

That length of time is meant to ensure that directors of the nation's most prominent federal law enforcement agency can operate free from political influence or pressure. Presidents have typically but not always retained the director who was in place at the time they took office, as Democratic President Joe Biden has done with Wray.

But it's also the case that all FBI directors serve at the pleasure of the president; indeed, Wray was nominated after Trump fired James Comey, the FBI chief he inherited in his first term.

Biden's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, said Sunday that the Biden administration "adhered to the long-standing norm that FBI directors serve out their full terms because the FBI director is a unique player in the American government system."

Noting that Trump had named Wray to the job, Sullivan told NBC's "Meet the Press" that "Joe Biden didn't fire him. He relied upon him to execute his responsibilities as the director of the FBI and allowed him to serve out the fullness of his term. ... So that's how we approached things and we would like to ensure that the FBI remains an independent institution insulated from politics."

Trump's announcement means that Wray can either resign from the job, consistent with Trump's apparent wishes, or wait to be fired once Trump takes office in January. Either way, the selection of a successor is a clear indication that Wray's days are numbered.

The bureau, in a statement Saturday night, said, "Every day, the men and women of the FBI continue to work to protect Americans from a growing array of threats. Director Wray's focus remains on the men and women of the FBI, the people we do the work with, and the people we do the work for."

Can Patel be confirmed by the Senate?

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 02, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 160 ~ 47 of 58

Republicans may have won control of the Senate, but his confirmation is not assured.

There are no doubt lawmakers who support Trump's desire for a radically overhauled FBI, particularly following federal investigations that resulted in two separate indictments against the president-elect, and who share his sentiment that federal law enforcement has been "weaponized" against conservatives.

Sen. Chuck Grassley of Iowa, in line to be the Senate Judiciary Committee chairman when Republicans take control in January, said in a post on X that Wray "has failed at fundamental duties" and that it was time to "chart a new course 4 TRANSPARENCY +ACCOUNTABILITY at FBI."

But, he added, Patel "must prove to Congress he will reform & restore public trust in FBI."

Patel is likely to face deep skepticism during his confirmation hearings over his stated plans to rid the government of "conspirators" against Trump, and his claims that he would shut down the FBI's Pennsylvania Avenue headquarters in the nation's capital and send the thousands of employees who work there to "chase down criminals" across the country.

And while Trump may have wanted a loyalist willing to pursue retribution against his perceived adversaries, that perspective is likely to give pause to senators who believe that the FBI and Justice Department should operate free of political influence and not be tasked with carrying out a president's personal agenda.

Foreshadowing the potentially bruising confirmation fight ahead, Illinois Sen. Dick Durbin, who is expected to be the ranking Democrat next year on the Judiciary Committee, called Patel "an unqualified loyalist" and said in a statement that "the Senate should reject this unprecedented effort to weaponize the FBI for the campaign of retribution that Donald Trump has promised."

Trump has also raised the prospect of using recess appointments to push his nominees through the Senate.

If Patel is confirmed, can he actually do what he's said he'll do?

Patel has made a series of brash claims about his plans for the federal government, but most of those proposals would require backing and buy-in from other officials and would almost certainly encounter significant resistance.

His desire, for instance, to reduce the FBI's footprint and scale back its authority stands in contrast to the tack traditionally taken by leaders of the bureau, who invariably say they want more resources — not less.

He's mused about trying to rid the government of "conspirators" against Trump and of going "after the people in the media who lied about American citizens who helped Joe Biden rig presidential elections," whether criminally or civilly.

Under the FBI's own guidelines, criminal investigations can't be rooted in arbitrary or groundless speculation but instead must have an authorized purpose to detect or interrupt criminal activity. And while the FBI conducts investigations, the responsibility of filing federal charges, or bringing a lawsuit on behalf of the federal government, falls to the Justice Department. Trump said earlier this month that he intended to nominate former Florida attorney general Pam Bondi to serve as attorney general.

Patel proposed crackdown on leaks of information by government officials to the media is an indication that he would want the Justice Department to reverse its current policy generally prohibiting the seizure of reporters' phone records in leak investigations. That policy was implemented by Attorney General Merrick Garland following an uproar over the revelation that federal prosecutors had secretly obtained subpoenas for journalists' phone records.

Patel has also talked about disentangling the FBI's intelligence-gathering activities — now a core function of the bureau's mandate — from the rest of its law enforcement operations. It's unclear whether he intends to carry through on that pledge or how it would be greeted at a time when the U.S. is facing what officials say is a heightened threat of terrorism.

And he's said he thinks the FBI's storied Pennsylvania Avenue headquarters should be shut down, with the employees who work there dispatched around the country to fight crime. It's not clear if that's a hyperbolic claim simply reflecting disdain for the "deep state" or something he'd actually try to implement.

Trump pick Kash Patel must prove he'll restore public faith in the FBI, a leading GOP senator says

KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump's drive to upend the FBI was welcomed by Republican senators although it was not clear on Sunday how strongly members of the incoming majority party would embrace his move to install ally Kash Patel as the next director of the Justice Department's top investigative arm.

Patel, a onetime national security prosecutor who is aligned with the president-elect's rhetoric about a "deep state," "must prove to Congress he will reform & restore public trust in FBI," said Sen. Chuck Grassley of Iowa, in line to be the Senate Judiciary Committee chairman when Republicans take control in January, in a post on X.

Patel lacks the high-level legal and management experience that FBI directors, including Robert Mueller, James Comey and Christopher Wray, who now holds that job, had before their nominations. It's a 10-year term, and Trump named Wray in 2017 after firing Comey. So Trump's announcement late Saturday means Wray must either resign or be fired after Trump takes office on Jan. 20, 2025.

"Every president wants people that are loyal to themselves," said Sen. Mike Rounds, R-S.D., on ABC's "This Week." But he called Wray "a very good man" picked by Trump himself, and "I don't have any complaints about the way that he's done his job right now."

A president has "the right to make nominations," Rounds said, before noting the job is normally for 10 years, a length meant to insulate the FBI from the political influence of changing administrations.

"We'll see what his process is, and whether he actually makes that nomination. And then, if he does, just as with anybody who is nominated for one of these positions, once they've been nominated by the president, then the president gets, you know, the benefit of the doubt on the nomination, but we still go through a process" of providing advice and consent under the Constitution, Rounds said.

He added: "That can be sometimes advice, sometimes it is consent."

Other Republicans who appeared on the Sunday news shows at the end of the Thanksgiving holiday and before returning to work this week were in Patel's corner.

Sen. Bill Hagerty, R-Tenn., said Patel "represents the type of change that we need to see in the FBI. ... The entire agency needs to be cleaned out." He told NBC's "Meet the Press" that "there are serious problems at the FBI. The American public knows it. They expect to see sweeping change, and Kash Patel's just the type of person to do it."

He said Patel has "relevant experience" to head the FBI and "he's the one that can see through the fix here."

During Trump's first term, Patel was an aide to the then-Republican chairman of the House Intelligence Committee before taking roles at the White House National Security Council and later at the Defense Department.

Patel "played a pivotal role in uncovering the Russia, Russia, Russia Hoax, standing as an advocate for truth, accountability, and the Constitution," Trump wrote Saturday night in a social media post.

Patel has called for a "comprehensive housecleaning" of government workers who are disloyal to Trump and has referred to journalists as traitors, promising to try to prosecute some reporters.

The selection is in keeping with Trump's view that the government's law enforcement and intelligence agencies require a radical transformation and his stated desire for retribution against supposed adversaries. It also shows how Trump, still fuming over years of federal investigations that shadowed his first administration and later led to his indictment, is moving to place atop the FBI and Justice Department close allies he believes will protect rather than scrutinize him.

Grassley said in his post that Wray "has failed at fundamental duties" and that it was time to "chart a new course 4 TRANSPARENCY +ACCOUNTABILITY at FBI."

Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, said Patel was a "very strong nominee" and he thought Patel would be confirmed.

"All of the weeping and gnashing of teeth, all the people pulling their hair out, are exactly the people who are dismayed about having a real reformer come into the FBI," Cruz told CBS' "Face the Nation."

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 02, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 160 ~ 49 of 58

To Sen. Marsha Blackburn, a Judiciary Committee member like Cruz, Patel "has more experience than just about anybody coming into this position," she said on Fox News' "Sunday Morning Futures."

Democrats said they would oppose him.

Trump "wants to replace his own appointee with an unqualified loyalist," said Illinois Sen. Dick Durbin, who is expected to be the ranking Democrat next year on the Judiciary Committee, in a statement. "The Senate should reject this unprecedented effort to weaponize the FBI for the campaign of retribution that Donald Trump has promised."

That sentiment was shared by Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., who said on NBC: "Patel's only qualification is that he agrees with Donald Trump that the Department of Justice should punish, lockup and intimidate Donald Trump's political opponents."

AP Top 25: Ohio St, Miami, Clemson drop; Texas, Penn St, Notre Dame, Georgia in line behind Oregon

By ERIC OLSON AP College Football Writer

Ohio State, Miami and Clemson plunged in The Associated Press Top 25 college football poll Sunday following their losses during a wild weekend, eight of the top 10 teams moved up one spot and Oregon was No. 1 for the seventh straight week.

The shakeup creates two top-five matchups in conference championship games coming up on Saturday, a day before the College Football Playoff bracket is announced. Oregon, the nation's only unbeaten team, will face No. 3 Penn State in the Big Ten game in Indianapolis. No. 2 Texas will play No. 5 Georgia in the Southeastern Conference game in Atlanta, a rematch of their top-five meeting in October won by the Bulldogs.

No. 4 Notre Dame, 11-1 and a winner of 10 straight, won't play again until the College Football Playoff.

Ohio State, which lost for the fourth straight time to Michigan and was knocked out of the Big Ten title game, dropped five spots to No. 7, behind Tennessee.

SMU is No. 8 and followed by Indiana and Boise State. The Broncos are in the top 10 for the first time since 2011 and the highest-ranked Group of Five team, two spots ahead of No. 12 Arizona State, the highest-ranked Big 12 team.

If the Broncos win the Mountain West title and are one of the top four-seeded conference champions in the final CFP rankings, they would receive a bye to the quarterfinals.

Miami's loss at Syracuse cost the Hurricanes a spot in the Atlantic Coast Conference championship game, and possibly the CFP, and dropped them six spots to No. 14. Clemson, which plays SMU in the ACC game, lost at South Carolina and fell six places to No. 18.

South Carolina has won six straight — four against ranked opponents — and earned a three-rung promotion to No. 13. Mississippi remained No. 15 and was followed by Iowa State and BYU.

Poll points

Ohio State's 13-10 loss to Michigan marked the fifth time this season a top-five team lost to an unranked opponent, the most since it happened five times in 2017.

Miami's 42-38 loss to Syracuse was the 12th by a top-10 team against an unranked opponent, the most since there were 12 such losses in 2021.

It's been 10 years since South Carolina was ranked higher than in-state rival Clemson. In 2014, the Gamecocks were No. 13 following a 3-1 start and finished 7-6 and unranked in Steve Spurrier's last full season as coach.

Notre Dame has its highest ranking since it was No. 4 on Dec. 22, 2020.

In and out

No. 23 Syracuse enters the Top 25 for the first time since Oct. 30, 2022, after winning nine games for the first time since 2018 under first-year coach Fran Brown. The win over Miami was its first over a top-10 opponent since 2017.

No. 25 Memphis, which was last ranked in October 2020, knocked off Tulane as a double-digit road

underdog and has 10 wins for the second straight year.

Tulane, which plays at No. 24 Army in the American Athletic Conference title game, went from No. 18 to out of the rankings.

Texas A&M, No. 20 last week, was bounced after losing at home to Texas and dropping its last three SEC games.

Conference call

SEC — 7 (Nos. 2, 5, 6, 11, 13, 15, 22).

Big Ten — 5 (Nos. 1, 3, 7, 8, 21).

ACC — 4 (Nos. 8, 14, 18, 23).

Big 12 — 4 (Nos. 12, 16, 17, 20).

AAC — 2 (Nos. 24, 25).

Mountain West — 2 (Nos. 10, 19).

Independent — 1 (No. 4).

Ranked vs. ranked

— No. 1 Oregon vs. No. 3 Penn State in Indianapolis, Big Ten championship.

— No. 2 Texas vs. No. 5 Georgia in Atlanta, Southeastern Conference championship.

— No. 8 SMU vs. No. 18 Clemson in Charlotte, North Carolina, Atlantic Coast Conference championship.

— No. 10 Boise State vs. No. 19 UNLV in Boise, Idaho, Mountain West championship.

— No. 12 Arizona State vs. No. 16 Iowa State in Arlington, Texas, Big 12 championship.

Senegal demands answers as the West African country commemorates a French colonial massacre

By MARK BANCHEREAU Associated Press

THIAROYE-SUR-MER, Senegal (AP) — Biram Senghor regularly pays his respects at a military cemetery in Thiaroye, a fishing village near Senegal's capital Dakar, bowing in front of a different grave each time.

The 86-year-old has no way of knowing which grave belongs to his father, M'Bap Senghor, one of the hundreds of West African riflemen who fought for France during World War II but were likely killed on Dec. 1, 1944, by the French army after demanding unpaid wages.

In this cemetery, where they are supposedly buried, all the graves are anonymous and the exact location of the remains is unknown, as is the number of victims. The true scale and circumstances of the killings remain unclear as Senegal commemorates the 80th anniversary of the massacre on Sunday, threatening to reignite smoldering tensions between France and the former colony.

"I have been fighting to get answers for over 80 years," says Biram Senghor. "(French President Emmanuel) Macron cannot do what the other French presidents before him did; France has to repent."

The West Africans were members of the unit called "Tirailleurs Sénégalais," a corps of colonial infantry in the French Army that fought in both World Wars. According to historians, there were disputes over unpaid wages in the days before the massacre and on Dec. 1, French troops turned on the unarmed African soldiers and shot them dead.

For decades, French authorities tried to minimize what had happened in Thiaroye. Reports by the French military shortly after the massacre determined that 35 West African soldiers were killed in response to a "mutiny." Other reports by the French army mention 70 deaths.

But today, many French and Senegalese historians agree the true death toll is likely in the hundreds, with some speaking of almost 400 African soldiers killed, based on estimates of the number of riflemen present at the camp on the day of the massacre.

On Thursday, Macron officially recognized the events of Thiaroye as a massacre for the first time in a letter to Senegal's President Diomaye Faye, which was seen by The Associated Press.

"France must recognize that on that day, the confrontation between soldiers and riflemen who demanded their full legitimate wages be paid, triggered a chain of events that resulted in a massacre," read Macron's letter.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 02, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 160 ~ 51 of 58

But many historians dispute the idea of a confrontation between the French soldiers and the West African riflemen.

"What happened on December 1st was the execution of unarmed soldiers," says Martin Mourre, a French historian and author of *Thiaroye 1944, History and Memory of a Colonial Massacre*.

He points to the fact that no weapons were mentioned during the trial of the African riflemen accused of mutiny and the absence of any injuries among the French soldiers as evidence that no confrontation took place.

In his letter to the Senegalese president, Macron did not mention the number of soldiers killed.

The controversies and unknowns about the massacre are in part due to a lack of transparency by French authorities regarding the military reports and testimonies.

In 2014, French President Francois Hollande handed over the European nation's archives on Thiaroye to Macky Sall, then-president of Senegal.

But historians say that key documents, including ones indicating the site of the mass graves and the number of West African soldiers present at the camp on the day of the massacre, are still missing. It is unclear if France holds such archives or if they even exist.

Macron's office and the French foreign ministry did not respond to requests for comment.

Additionally, very little was done by the Senegalese authorities under former president Sall to allow historians to delve into the historical documents.

"The archives remained inaccessible until this year, for obscure reasons," says Mourre.

Mamadou Diouf, a Senegalese historian who heads the commemoration committee for the Thiaroye massacre this year, says Sall did not show much interest in the subject to avoid diplomatic tensions with France.

But Senegal's President Bassirou Diomaye Faye, who was elected in March in part on a promise of redefining Senegal's relationship with the former colonizer, has vowed to regain control of the historical narrative on Thiaroye.

His administration has organized major commemorations of the massacre from Dec. 1 to April 2025 across the country.

"The authorities' goal behind the major commemorations is to make Thiaroye part of Senegal's national story," says Babacar Ndiaye, political analyst at the Wathi think tank, which focuses on political and economic issues in West Africa.

"It will be talked about a lot on television, in the press and most importantly on social media," he adds. "This will reach a younger audience who might know little about the events of Thiaroye."

The 80th anniversary of the massacre comes as France's influence is declining in the region, with Paris losing its sway in its former West African colonies.

French troops have been ousted in recent years from Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso after years of fighting Islamic extremists alongside regional troops. Earlier this week, Chad, one of the last countries in the region where France had maintained a large military presence, ended a military cooperation agreement with Paris.

France still has around 350 troops in Senegal, mainly in a supportive role. Asked about their continued presence, Faye suggested it is not something the Senegalese would want.

"Historically, France enslaved, colonized and stayed here," he said. "Obviously, I think that when you reverse the roles a little, you will have a hard time conceiving that another army — of China, Russia, Senegal, or any other country — could have a military base in France."

At the ceremony held at the military cemetery in Thiaroye on Sunday, Faye announced the construction of a memorial in honor of the riflemen, the creation of a research center where archives on the massacre will be kept, and streets named after the event. History lessons on the massacre will also be added to the school curriculum and Dec. 1 will officially become "national day of the tirailleur."

"What we are doing here is part of our duty of remembrance and to reveal the truth of the facts, to discharge a moral debt towards the riflemen and their families," said during his speech in front of an audience that included France's Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot, as well as Gambia, Mauritania, Guinea-Bissau,

Gabon and the Comoros heads of state. Macron was not present at the ceremony.

"We are not opening a door to arouse resentment, maintain anger or hatred," Faye said.

But once more, Senegal and the former colonizer's account of the massacre differed.

While the French foreign minister described the events of Thiaroye as a "cry of anger" from the riflemen that France "repressed in a bloodshed," the Senegalese president said they were "a premeditated act."

'Moana 2' sails to a record \$221 million opening as Hollywood celebrates a moviegoing feast

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Christmas came early at the box office this year.

"Moana 2" brought in a tidal wave of moviegoers over the Thanksgiving Day weekend, setting records with \$221 million in ticket sales, according to studio estimates Sunday. That, combined with "Wicked" and "Gladiator II," made for an unprecedented weekend in cinemas and a confluence of blockbusters more like what's often found in late December.

Expectations were high for Walt Disney Co.'s "Moana 2," but the film — originally planned as a series for Disney+ before it was redirected to the big screen — blew predictions out of the water. Its five-day opening set a new record for Thanksgiving moviegoing. (The previous best was \$125 million for "Frozen 2" in its second week of release in 2019.) "Moana 2" added \$165.3 million internationally; with \$386 million worldwide, it's the second-best global launch of the year.

At the same time, the sensation of "Wicked" showed no signs of slowing down. The Universal Pictures musical brought in \$117.5 million over the five-day weekend, pushing its two-week global total to \$359.2 million. Not accounting for inflation, "Wicked" is now the highest grossing Broadway adaptation over "Grease." (That 1978 film grossed \$190 million, but factoring in inflation would put it past \$900 million.)

"Gladiator II," meanwhile, also held well, dipping 44% from its opening weekend. Ridley Scott's sequel to his Oscar-winning best picture original collected \$44 million in its second weekend. While its steep price tag of \$250 million will make profitability challenging, "Gladiator II" has swiftly gathered \$320 million worldwide.

Those three films drove the overall box office to a record \$420 million in overall Thanksgiving weekend ticket sales, according to Comscore — more than \$100 million more than ever before. For an industry that has been battered in recent years by the pandemic, work stoppages and the upheaval caused by streaming, it was a triumphant weekend that showed the still-potent power of Hollywood's blockbuster machine. Before "Wicked," "Moana 2" and "Gladiator II" arrived in theaters, ticket sales were running about 25% behind pre-pandemic levels.

Michael O'Leary, president and chief executive of the National Association of Theatre Owners, said the weekend showed what's possible when "all the pieces of the puzzle come together" in compelling big-budget movies with marketing muscle.

"We're very optimistic that this weekend is the start of what we believe is a full-on charge into the future," he said. "The remaining quarter of this year looks very promising and then on into 2025 and 2026. We're hoping next year is the first kind of normal year this industry has had in a long time."

Like the last time such anticipated movies collided on the release calendar — 2023's much-ballyhooed "Barbenheimer" — the movie industry again could see evidence of a rising moviegoing tide lifting all blockbusters. In recent years, studios have typically tried to space out most of their biggest releases. Earlier this fall, "Venom: The Last Dance," for example, was the No. 1 film for three straight weeks, despite not being particularly successful.

"For a long, long time in Hollywood, there's been a belief that you don't put big blockbuster movies up against each other," said O'Leary. "But the truth of the matter is that competition is good. It's good for the movies. It's good for the studios. It's good for the theater owners. But it's particularly good for the moviegoing public."

"Moana 2" was the nexus of a strategy shift for Disney. When it first began development, it was fash-

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 02, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 160 ~ 53 of 58

ioned as a series for streaming. But when Bob Iger returned as chief executive, he reconsidered the balance between theatrical and streaming. The original "Moana," after all, was the most streamed movie on Disney+ in 2023, with the added benefit of \$680 million in box office in 2016. Only in February this year did Iger announce the release of "Moana 2," with Auli'i Cravalho and Dwayne Johnson returning as the voices of Moana and Maui.

"It just shows you that the big screen and small screen are not adversarial. They can be complementary and additive," says Paul Dergarabedian, senior media analyst for Comscore. "Whoever made that decision to go big screen globally with 'Moana 2,' that was one of the greatest decisions ever."

And it helped lead a resurgence for Walt Disney Co., whose last two animated November releases — "Strange World" and "Wish" — fizzled in theaters. "Moana 2" may become the third \$1 billion-grossing movie for the studio in 2024, along with "Inside Out 2" and "Deadpool & Wolverine." Though reviews for "Moana 2" have only been 65% "fresh" on Rotten Tomatoes, audiences gave it an "A-" CinemaScore.

"Moana 2" is also part of a major rebound for family moviegoing. According to David A. Gross, a film consultant who publishes a newsletter for Franchise Entertainment, family moviegoing in 2024 is going to account for approximately \$6.8 billion in ticket sales, roughly the sums of 2022 and 2023, combined.

After such large debuts, "Moana 2" and "Wicked" are likely to continue to drive moviegoing through December. The only question will be if this year's Christmas movies — historically a much bigger holiday period for theaters — can come anywhere near the Thanksgiving lineup. Among the movies aiming for that holiday corridor are Disney's "Mufasa: The Lion King," Paramount's "Sonic the Hedgehog 3" and Searchlight's "A Complete Unknown," with Timothée Chalamet as a young Bob Dylan.

Final domestic figures will be released Monday. Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Comscore:

1. "Moana 2," \$135 million.
2. "Wicked," \$80 million.
3. "Gladiator II" \$30.7 million.
4. "Red One," \$12.9 million.
5. "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever," \$3.3 million.
6. "Bonhoeffer: Pastor. Spy. Assassin," \$2.4 million.
7. "Venom: The Last Dance," \$2.2 million.
8. "Heretic," \$956,797.
9. "The Wild Robot," \$670,000.
10. "A Real Pain," \$665,000.

Israeli strikes hit southern Lebanon, but tense ceasefire holds

By KAREEM CHEHAYEB and FADI TAWIL Associated Press

TYRE, Lebanon (AP) — Israeli jets Sunday launched an airstrike over a southern Lebanese border village, while troops shelled other border towns and villages still under Israeli control, Lebanon's state-run National News Agency reported.

The attacks come days after a US-brokered ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hezbollah went into effect. There were no immediate reports of casualties.

The Israeli military did not immediately comment on the strike in the village of Yaroun, nor did the Hezbollah militant group. Israel continues to call on displaced Lebanese not to return to dozens of southern villages in this current stage of the ceasefire. It also continues to impose a daily curfew for people moving across the Litani River between 5 pm and 7 am.

Caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati and the Lebanese military have been critical of Israeli strikes and overflights since the ceasefire went into effect, accusing Israel of violating the agreement. The military said it had filed complaints, but no clear military action has been taken by Hezbollah in response, meaning that the tense cessation of hostilities has not yet broken down.

When Israel has issued statements about these strikes, it says they were done to thwart possible He-

zbollah attacks.

The United States military announced Friday that Major General Jasper Jeffers alongside senior U.S. envoy Amos Hochstein will co-chair a new U.S.-led monitoring committee that includes France, the UN peacekeeping mission in southern Lebanon known as UNIFIL, Lebanon, and Israel. Hochstein led over a year of shuttle diplomacy to broker the ceasefire deal, and his role will be temporary until a permanent civilian co-chair is appointed.

Lebanon meanwhile is trying to pick up the pieces and return to some level of normal life after the war that decimated large swaths of its south and east, displacing an estimated 1.2 million people. The Lebanese military said it detonated unexploded munitions left over from Israeli strikes in southern and eastern Lebanon. Elsewhere, the Lebanese Civil Defense said it removed five bodies from under the rubble in two southern Lebanese towns over the past 24 hours.

The first phase of the ceasefire is a 60-day cessation of hostilities where Hezbollah militants are supposed to withdraw from southern Lebanon north of the Litani River and Israeli troops withdraw from southern Lebanon into northern Israel. Lebanese troops are to deploy in large numbers in the south, effectively being the only armed force in control of the south alongside UNIFIL peacekeepers.

But challenges still remain at this current stage. Many families who want to bury their dead deep in southern Lebanon are unable to do so at this point.

The Lebanese Health Ministry and military allocated a plot of land in the coastal city of Tyre for those people to be temporarily laid to rest. Dr. Wissam Ghazal of the Health Ministry in Tyre said almost 200 bodies have been temporarily buried in that plot of land, until the situation near the border calms down.

"Until now, we haven't been able to go to our village, and our hearts are burning because our martyrs are buried in this manner," said Om Ali, who asked to be called by a nickname that means "Ali's mother" in Arabic. Her husband was a combatant killed in the war from the border town of Aita el-Shaab, just a stone's throw from the tense border.

"We hope the crisis ends soon so we can go and bury them properly as soon as possible, because truly, leaving the entrusted ones buried in a non-permanent place like this is very difficult," she said.

In the meantime, cash-strapped Lebanon is trying to fundraise as much money as it can to help rebuild the country the war cost some \$8.5 billion in damages and losses according to the World Bank, and to help recruit and train troops to deploy 10,000 personnel into southern Lebanon. Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri also called for parliament to convene to elect a president next month to break a gridlock of over two years and reactivate the country's crippled state institutions.

Recess appointments could put Trump at odds with conservatives on the Supreme Court

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans will control the White House and both houses of Congress come January. But President-elect Donald Trump's intent to nominate loyalists to fill key Cabinet posts has set up a possible confrontation with the Senate, which has the constitutional responsibility for "advice and consent" on presidential nominees.

Trump and his Republican allies are talking about going around the Senate and using temporary recess appointments, which last no more than two years.

Invoking that authority could result in a fight that lands at the Supreme Court. Trump might also have to claim another, never-before-used power to force the Senate into a recess, if it won't agree to one.

Supreme Court has decided only one recess appointment case

In its 234 years, the Supreme Court has decided only one case involving recess appointments. In 2014, the justices unanimously ruled that Democratic President Barack Obama's recess appointments to the National Labor Relations Board were illegal.

But they disagreed sharply over the reach of the decision. Five justices backed a limited ruling that held the Senate wasn't actually in recess when Obama acted and, in any event, a break had to be at least 10

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 02, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 160 ~ 55 of 58

days before the president could act on his own.

Justice Antonin Scalia, writing for the other four justices, would have held that the only recess recognized by the Constitution occurs between the annual sessions of Congress, not breaks taken during a session. That would have ruled out the appointments Trump may be considering after the new Congress begins in January and he is sworn into office.

Conservatives' previous rulings may offer clues

Just two justices, Elena Kagan and Sonia Sotomayor, remain from the five-justice bloc that took the view that preserved the president's power to make recess appointments during a session of Congress. Three others, John Roberts, Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito, joined the Scalia opinion that would have made it virtually impossible for any future president to make recess appointments.

The rest of the court has become more conservative since then, a result of Trump's three high court appointments in his first term. Justices Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett have no record on this issue, which rarely arises in the courts. Nor does Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, a 2022 appointee of Democratic President Joe Biden.

There is tension between respect for precedent and original meaning

A more conservative Supreme Court might come out differently today, though it's by no means certain. Once the court decides a case, the ruling is regarded as precedent that is not lightly discarded. So even some justices who initially dissent from a ruling will go along in later cases on a similar topic.

Scalia, an icon of the right, applied his originalist approach to the Constitution to conclude that there was little doubt what the framers were trying to do.

The whole point of the constitutional provision on recess appointments, adopted in 1787 in the era of horse and buggy, was that the Senate could not quickly be summoned to fill critical vacancies, he wrote.

Reading a summary of his opinion aloud in the courtroom on June 26, 2014, Scalia said the power to make recess appointments "is an anachronism."

The Senate always can be convened on short notice to consider a president's nominations, he said.

"The only remaining practical use for the recess appointment power is the ignoble one of enabling presidents to circumvent the Senate's role in the appointment process, which is precisely what happened here," Scalia said.

How could the issue return to the high court?

It's not likely to happen quickly. Only someone who has been affected by an action taken by an official who was given a recess appointment would have the legal right, or standing, to sue. In the NLRB case, Obama made his recess appointments in January 2012.

The board then ruled against Noel Canning, a soft drink bottling company in Yakima, Washington, in a dispute over contract negotiations with a local Teamsters union. The company sued, claiming that the NLRB decision against it was not valid because the board members were not properly appointed and that the board did not have enough members to do business without the improperly appointed officials.

The Supreme Court's ultimate decision came nearly 2 1/2 years later.

Who's who among recess appointments

Among the most prominent people who were first given recess appointments and later confirmed by the Senate are Chief Justice Earl Warren, Justice William Brennan and Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan. Among those who left office after failing to win a Senate vote is John Bolton, who was given a recess appointment as U.N. ambassador under Republican President George W. Bush.

Trump could try to force a congressional recess

A separate novel legal issue could arise if Trump were to invoke a constitutional provision that his allies suggested would allow him to force the Senate to adjourn, even if doesn't want to, and enable him to make recess appointments.

Article II, Section 3 of the Constitution includes a clause about congressional adjournments that has never been invoked. Trump's allies read it as giving the chief executive the power step in when the House and Senate can't agree on when to adjourn. The provision reads that "in case of disagreement between

them, with respect to the time of adjournment, he may adjourn them to such time as he shall think proper.”

But some scholars, including conservative ones, argue that the House has no power to force the Senate to adjourn, and vice versa. Congressional adjournments are spelled out in Article I, which requires one chamber to consent when the other wants to take a break of more than three days. Under this view, the president could intervene only when one house objects to the other’s adjournment plan.

Shopping on Shein and Temu for holiday gifts? You’re not the only one.

By HALELUYA HADERO Associated Press

Shopping on Temu can feel like playing an arcade game. Instead of using a joystick-controlled claw to grab a toy, visitors to the online marketplace maneuver their computer mouses or cellphone screens to browse colorful gadgets, accessories and trinkets with prices that look too good to refuse.

A pop-up spinning wheel offers the chance to win a coupon. Rotating captions warn that a less than \$2 camouflage print balaclava and a \$1.23 skeleton hand back scratcher are “Almost sold out.” A flame symbol indicates a \$9.69 plush cat print hoodie is selling fast. A timed-down selection of discounted items adds to the sense of urgency.

Welcome to the new online world of impulse buying, a place of guilty pleasures where the selection is vast, every day is Cyber Monday, and an instant dopamine hit that will have faded by the time your package arrives is always just a click away.

By all accounts, we’re living in an accelerating age for consumerism, one that Temu, which is owned by the Chinese e-commerce company PDD Holdings, and Shein, its fierce rival, supercharged with social media savvy and an interminable assortment of cheap goods, most shipped directly from merchants in China based on real-time demand.

The business models of the two platforms, coupled with avalanches of digital or influencer advertising, have enabled them to give Western retailers a run for their money this holiday shopping season.

Software company Salesforce said it expects roughly one in five online purchases in the U.S., the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada to be made through four online marketplaces based or founded in Asia: Shein, Temu, TikTok Shop - the e-commerce arm of video-sharing platform TikTok - and AliExpress.

Analysts with Salesforce said they are expected to pull in roughly \$160 billion in global sales outside of China. Most of the sales will go to Temu and Shein, a privately held company which is thought to lead the worldwide fast fashion market in revenue.

Lisa Xiaoli Neville, a nonprofit manager who lives in Los Angeles, is sold on Shein. The bedroom of her home is stocked with jeans, shoes, press-on nails and other items from the ultra-fast fashion retailer, all of which she amassed after getting on the platform to purchase a \$2 pair of earrings she saw in a Facebook ad.

Neville, 46, estimates she spends at least \$75 a month on products from Shein. A \$2 eggshell opener, a portable apple peeler and an apple corer - both costing less than \$5 - are among the quirky, single-use kitchen tools taking up drawer space. She acknowledges she doesn’t need them because she “doesn’t even cook like that.” Plus, she’s allergic to apples.

“I won’t eat apples. It will kill me,” Neville said, laughing. “But I still want the coring thing.”

Shein, now based in Singapore, uses some of the same web design features as Temu’s, such as pop-up coupons and ads, to persuade shoppers to keep clicking, but it appears a bit more restrained in its approach.

Shein primarily targets young women through partnerships with social media influencers. Searching the company’s name on video platforms turns up creators promoting Shein’s Black Friday sales event and displaying the dozens of trendy clothes and accessories they got for comparatively little money.

But the Shein-focused content also includes videos of TikTokers saying they’re embarrassed to admit they shopped there and critics lashing out at fans for not taking into account the environmental harms or potential labor abuses associated with products that are churned out and shipped worldwide at a speedy pace.

Neville has already picked out holiday gifts for family and friends from the site. Most of the products in

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 02, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 160 ~ 57 of 58

her online cart cost under \$10, including graphic T-shirts she intends to buy for her son and jeans and loafers for her daughter. All told, she plans to spend about \$200 on gifts, significantly less than \$500 she used to shell out at other stores in prior years.

"The visuals just make you want to spend more money," she said, referring to the clothes on Shein's site. "They're very cheap and everything is just so cute."

Unlike Shein, Temu's appeal cuts across age groups and gender. The platform is the world's second most-visited online shopping site, software company Similarweb reported in September. Customers go there looking for practical items like doormats and silly products like a whiskey flask shaped like a vintage cellphone from the 1990s.

Temu advertised Black Friday bargains for some items at upwards of 70% off the recommended retail price. Making a purchase can quickly result in receiving dozens of emails offering free giveaways. The caveat: customers have to buy more products.

Ellen Flowers, 36, a lifestyle blogger who lives in Dallas, recently decided to pair a \$3,500 dining table with \$25 dining chairs from Temu to save money. She's also purchased clothes from Temu. The quality or fit wasn't always great, so Flowers donated some unwanted pieces to thrift stores to avoid paying return shipping fees that would cost almost as much as the clothes.

Flowers planned to buy stocking stuffers on Temu as well as baubles for an ornament-swapping party in early December. She also wanted to buy necklaces and bracelets for an activity at her 5-year-old niece's upcoming birthday party.

"I love buying my nieces presents," Flowers says. "Since they're young, they don't need the Louis Vuitton handbag. I can give them a cute handbag from Temu. Then they'll lose interest in a month and I'll buy them another one."

Despite their rise, Temu and Shein have proven particularly ripe for pushback. Last year, a coalition of unnamed brands and organizations launched a campaign to oppose Shein in Washington. U.S. lawmakers also have raised the possibility that Temu is allowing goods made with forced labor to enter the country.

More recently, the Biden administration put forward rules that would crack down on a trade rule known as the de minimis exception, which has allowed a lot of cheap products to come into the U.S. duty-free. President-elect Donald Trump is expected to slap high tariffs on goods from China, a move that would likely raise prices and across the retail world.

Both Shein and Temu have set up warehouses in the U.S. to speed up delivery times and help them better compete with Amazon, which is trying to erode their price advantage through a new storefront that also ships products directly from China.

Meanwhile, Temu is onboarding Chinese merchants to store inventory in the U.S., a move that would allow the company to not be as exposed to changes around the de minimis trade rule, said Juozas Kaziukenas, founder of e-commerce intelligence firm Marketplace Pulse.

The change comes as both Shein and Temu are attempting to expand beyond the bargain-hungry shoppers who popularized their platforms. Temu is allowing sellers to ship products to customers from local U.S. warehouses and says the move will allow it to sell larger items like furniture as it expands its selection of big-ticket items.

Meanwhile, American children's clothing retailer The Children's Place signed a deal last month to distribute its products through Shein's platform. Last year, Shein went into business with women's fashion retailer Forever 21. It has been working to recruit other brands and reportedly has hopes of getting listed on the London Stock Exchange.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 02, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 160 ~ 58 of 58

Today in History: December 2 First permanent artificial heart implanted

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Monday, Dec. 2, the 337th day of 2024. There are 29 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Dec. 2, 1982, in the first operation of its kind, doctors at the University of Utah Medical Center implanted a permanent artificial heart in the chest of retired dentist Dr. Barney Clark, who lived 112 days with the device.

Also on this date:

In 1804, Napoleon crowned himself emperor of France in a coronation ceremony at Notre Dame de Paris cathedral.

In 1823, President James Monroe outlined his doctrine opposing European expansion in the Western Hemisphere.

In 1859, militant abolitionist John Brown was hanged for his raid on Harpers Ferry the previous October.

In 1942, an artificially created, self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction was demonstrated for the first time at the University of Chicago.

In 1954, the U.S. Senate passed, 67-22, a resolution condemning Republican Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy of Wisconsin, saying he had "acted contrary to senatorial ethics and tended to bring the Senate into dishonor and disrepute."

In 1993, Colombian drug lord Pablo Escobar was shot to death by security forces in Medellin (meh-deh-YEEN').

In 2015, a couple loyal to the Islamic State group opened fire at a holiday banquet for public employees in San Bernardino, California, killing 14 people and wounding 21 others before dying in a shootout with police.

In 2016, a fire that raced through an illegally converted warehouse in Oakland, California, during a dance party killed 36 people.

In 2018, Israeli police recommended indicting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on bribery charges, adding to a growing collection of legal troubles for the longtime leader.

Today's Birthdays: Film director Penelope Spheeris is 79. Author T. Coraghessan Boyle is 76. Actor Dan Butler is 70. Actor Steven Bauer is 68. U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland is 64. Actor Lucy Liu is 56. Rapper Treach (Naughty By Nature) is 54. Tennis Hall of Famer Monica Seles is 51. Singer Nelly Furtado is 46. Pop singer Britney Spears is 43. Actor-singer Jana Kramer is 41. Actor Yvonne Orji is 41. Actor Daniela Ruah is 41. NFL quarterback Aaron Rodgers is 41. Actor Alfred Enoch is 36. Pop singer-songwriter Charlie Puth is 33.