

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Thursday, Dec. 26

Senior Menu: Tuna noodle hot dish with peas, California blend, peaches, whole wheat bread.

## Friday, Dec. 27

Senior Menu: Ranch chicken breast, rice, Normandy blend, apple crisp, whole wheat bread.

## Saturday, Dec. 28

The Doubleheader with Dakota Valley will now just be a Boys Basketball game at Dakota Valley on Saturday, January 18th

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

## Sunday, Dec. 29

St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's, 9 a.m. and at Zion, 11 a.m.

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

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

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

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



**I don't chase after  
people anymore. If they like  
spending time with me, they  
will do so. If not, I'm content  
in my own company.**

Barry M. Sherbal

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

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

## Monday, Dec. 30

Senior Menu: Chicken alredo, broccoli, pineapple, breadstick.

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

Girls Varsity Wrestling at Sioux Falls Lincoln.

Boys Basketball at Westber: C at 5 p.m. followed by JV and Varsity.

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

## Tuesday, Dec. 31

Senior Menu: Roast pork, mashed potatoes and gravy, three bean salad, fruit, whole wheat bread.

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

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\*\* See owner's manual for warranty details and information. Certain restrictions apply.



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Newsweek

## The Bulletin



### WORLD IN BRIEF

Trump announces Panama ambassador: Donald Trump announced on Wednesday that Kevin Marino Cabrera will serve as the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Panama, a role that could become contentious amid recent tensions between the two countries.

Trump touts ex-hockey star as Canada's new PM: President-elect Donald Trump has floated the idea of ice hockey pro

Wayne Gretzky running to be the leader of Canada in the future.

Journalists killed in Gaza: Five journalists have been killed in an Israeli strike overnight when their parked vehicle was blasted in front of a hospital in Gaza, their Palestinian news outlet said on social media.

Social Security: As 2025 approaches, retirees and other Social Security recipients should be aware of several changes to benefits and services provided by the Social Security Administration.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Poland scrambled fighter jets early Christmas morning in response to Russian missile attacks targeting Ukraine, according to the Operational Command of the Polish Armed Forces.

### Fact Check: Does China Control the Panama Canal, as Trump Suggests?

The rundown: President-elect Donald Trump has sparked controversy by suggesting the United States should reclaim control of the Panama Canal, citing overcharges for its use and alleged Chinese influence over the waterway.

Why it matters: On Christmas Day, Trump took to Truth Social to criticize China's involvement in the Panama Canal, raising concerns over Beijing's influence on the critical waterway. He went on to reference the canal's history, saying that "we lost 38,000 people in its building 110 years ago," yet the United States continues to invest billions in repairs while having "absolutely no say" in its operation. After Trump posted the remarks, Panamanian President Jose Raul Mulino denied allegations of Chinese control over the canal. While Chinese companies manage two of the five ports near the Panama Canal and have invested in related infrastructure, these activities are distinct from the canal's governance and operations.

TL/DR: The Panama Canal is most frequently used by the U.S., China, Japan and South Korea.

What happens now? Trump's remarks prompted a strong response from Mulino, who stated in a video on Sunday, "Every square meter of the canal belongs to Panama and will remain so."

### Aileen Cannon Grants Suspect in Trump Assassination Attempt a Trial Delay

The rundown: Ryan Routh, the man accused of attempting to assassinate President-elect Donald Trump in South Florida, will not be tried until September.

Why it matters: Routh was seen pointing a rifle through the fence of Trump's golf club in West Palm Beach, Florida, on September 15, and did not fire any shots before leaving the scene, police said. U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon granted in an order obtained by Newsweek for Routh's trial to begin September 8 instead of the previously scheduled February 10. Routh has pleaded not guilty. Routh's attorneys had previously asked Cannon in court documents for the trial date to be "no earlier than December 2025," citing an "extraordinary volume of discovery" and "logistical difficulties" associated with Routh's confinement in the Federal Detention Center in Miami. The trial was initially set to begin November 18 of this year. It was continued for 90 days "due to the ongoing nature of the reactive investigation and the voluminous nature of discovery."

TL/DR: Routh was seen pointing a rifle through the fence of Trump's golf club in West Palm Beach, Florida, on September 15, and did not fire any shots before leaving the scene, police said.

What happens now? With Cannon's new ruling, "any notice of an insanity defense" or evidence of Routh having a "mental condition" is due by February 3. If Routh's legal team requests a scene visit, it must occur before February 27. A status conference will be held at 11 a.m. March 7 in the Fort Pierce Division, and exhibit and witness lists are due by July 28. A pretrial conference is now set for 11 a.m. August 8, with the final pretrial conference scheduled for 11 a.m. September 2.

## **The Deadliest Plane Crashes of 2024: Brazil and Russia Top the List**

The rundown: Following the Christmas Eve crash of an Azerbaijan Airlines flight carrying 67 people from Baku to Grozny, near the Kazakh Caspian city of Aktau, which left 25 survivors, global attention has turned to passenger plane accidents worldwide this year. Here are the deadliest plane crashes of this year.

Why it matters: The year 2024 witnessed several tragic aviation accidents worldwide, sparking renewed discussions on aviation safety and crisis management. Among the incidents, two stood out for their scale of devastation: the crash of a Russian military transport plane in January and a commercial flight tragedy in Brazil in August, which claimed 62 lives. The latest tragedy occurred yesterday, when an Azerbaijan Airlines Embraer 190 carrying 67 individuals from Baku to Grozny diverted its route due to adverse weather and attempted to land at Aktau airport in Kazakhstan. The plane crashed upon landing, killing 42 people and leaving 25 survivors.

TL/DR: The Embraer 190 was en route from the Azerbaijani capital of Baku to the Russian city of Grozny in the North Caucasus when it was diverted and attempted an emergency landing, which eventually failed.

What happens now? An investigation to determine the cause of the Flight J28243 crash is under way. Azerbaijan's state news agency, Azertac, said that an official delegation of Azerbaijan's emergency situations minister, the deputy general prosecutor and the vice president of Azerbaijan Airlines were sent to Aktau to conduct an "on-site investigation."

## **Will Israel's Wars in the Middle East End in 2025?**

The rundown: Since Hamas's October 7 attack involving hostages, Israel has intensified conflicts with Iran and its proxies, aiming to neutralize threats and prevent recurrence.

Why it matters: Israel has sought to destroy Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon, and found itself in direct conflict with Iran—the chief funder of these militant Islamist groups—with the two exchanging missiles, though it has not so far broken out into a full war. Experts believe the current hostilities may subside in 2025, but lasting peace is unlikely without addressing deeper issues like occupation and self-determination for Palestinians. Political factors, including the return of Donald Trump, may influence outcomes, as his aversion to prolonged wars could pressure Israel toward ceasefires. However, continued military actions against Iran and its proxies, weakened resistance groups and unresolved territorial disputes suggest Israel's wars in the Middle East are far from over.

TL/DR: After the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria, Israel has struck a number of targets there, such as suspected chemical weapons stores.

What happens now? Avi Shlaim, Emeritus Professor of International Relations, St Antony's College, University of Oxford, said that Israel's wars in the Middle East are unlikely to end in 2025 or for that matter any time in the foreseeable future. The immediate reason for that is that Benjamin Netanyahu needs to prolong the ghastly war in Gaza to avoid standing trial at home on corruption charges which carry a prison sentence.

## **Will House Prices Fall in 2025? Experts Give Their Predictions**

The rundown: It's been another year of rising home prices in the U.S., as the country faces an ongoing supply shortage that has squeezed first-time homebuyers out of the market and homeowners to hold on to their properties as they wait for lower mortgage rates to sell.

Why it matters: As of November, the latest data available on Redfin, the median sale price of a home in the U.S. was \$430,010, up 5.4 percent compared to a year earlier. According to Zillow's data, the typical home value of a home in the nation was \$357,469 in the same month, up 2.5 percent from November 2023. Prices, which surged during the pandemic, briefly dipped in 2022–2023 but have since rebounded. Rising rents may improve affordability for tenants as new rental units enter the market. However, what will happen next year has more to do with what's been put into motion in 2024 than whatever policy president elect Donald Trump might introduce after taking office in January.

TL/DR: Kara Ng, a senior economist at Zillow, told Newsweek she expects home values to grow 2.2 percent in 2025 after rising 3 percent nationally this year so far.

What happens now? Matthew Walsh, an economist at Moody's Analytics, told Newsweek that "for the year ahead, we expect continued slowing in house prices. To put some numbers to it, by the end of 2025, we expect somewhere between 1 to 1.5 percent-year over-year price appreciation."

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## You have to start some time! Why not **now!**

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### COMMENTARY

## Santa, maybe? Why we have different names for who 'hurries down the chimney' on Christmas

by Valerie M. Fridland

Everyone has heard of Santa Claus, that chubby, white-bearded, red-suited guy who delivers Christmas presents via a reindeer-powered sleigh.

But have you ever wondered how he became a man of so many names? From St. Nick to Santa to Kris Kringle, it's a marvel that Rudolph isn't completely confused about whom exactly he is working for.

So, as a linguist who studies the social and historical paths that deliver the words we use, the season's festive lights and boughs of holly inspired a deep dive into Santa's past to uncover what name we should really be using for the man in red.

### Ho, ho, ho

It might feel like he has been around as long as the North Pole, but the Santa Claus name so frequently

mentioned by Americans to refer to old Saint Nicholas come Christmas Eve is a surprisingly recent moniker.

The first written citation for "Santa Claus" does not appear in the U.S. until the late 18th century, where it was alluded to in a mention of a religious event in the New York Gazette: "Last Monday the Anniversary of St. Nicholas, otherwise called St. A Claus, was celebrated at Protestant-Hall."

The fact that the first citation appeared in New York is not unusual, given New York's history until 1664 as a Dutch colony and the ongoing presence of Dutch settlers in that area. This Dutch background is key because Santa Claus is in fact a borrowing into English of the Dutch name Sinter Klaas, which sometimes dialectally appeared as Sante Klaas.

Still, before the 1830s, the substitution of Santa Claus for St. Nick was not in frequent use. In fact, prior to vastly increasing in general popularity toward the latter half of the 1800s, its use earlier that century was often to invoke Dutch heritage and culture, as in the satirical writings of Washington Irving.

For instance, a New York-based satirical magazine of the era had this to say in 1808: "The noted St. Nicholas, vulgarly called Santa claus – of all the saints in the kalendar the most venerated by true hollanders, and their unsophisticated descendants."

But, by the 1820s, a children's book introduced Sante Claus in a sleigh pulled by reindeer, suggesting that his modern reputation was established by then. His iconic attire, though, didn't become his standard uniform until a Coca-Cola advertisement depicted him in red-suited splendor over a century later in 1930.



**Santa Claus waves during the annual Macy's Thanksgiving parade on Nov. 28, 2019, in New York City.** (Kena Betancur/

Getty Images)

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Before then, Santa's outfits had spanned the range from green and yellow to even patriotic stars and stripes.

## Old Saint Nick

The popular term for Santa prior to this period was Saint Nicholas, a name known from the religious observance of the Feast Day of St. Nicholas on Dec. 6. The Dutch name, SinterKlaas, is actually a derivative of the name Saint Nicholas.

Historically speaking, the namesake of Saint Nicholas was the highly charitable bishop of a Roman town called Myra during the fourth century. He had become the patron saint of children and was known as a man of great generosity. His background made him an easy candidate for later becoming associated with Christmas, even though he originally was celebrated on an entirely different day and for a different reason.

Whether going by St. Nick or Santa Claus, the man's enormous celebrity as the grantor of tangible wishes also turned out to be another legacy of the Dutch, for it was their tradition to give small gifts or sweets on St. Nicholas Day. And so, this Dutch tradition inspired the American mythologizing of a man with a sack of presents on his back to be delivered to children throughout the land.

## The Kringle wrinkle

Another name for Santa Claus that grew in popularity in the 1800s was the name Kris Kringle. While Santa Claus was Dutch, Kris Kringle came by way of the Germans who first settled in Pennsylvania and then spread out, particularly in the late 1800s.

The name Kris Kringle, though, was unrelated to Saint Nicholas. Instead, it came from the German word Christkindlein, meaning "Christ child," referring to the baby in the manger. So, unlike St. Nicholas, Kris Kringle is more directly related to the Christian celebration of Christ's birth.

Over time, however, the feast of St. Nicholas, also celebrated by German immigrants, became increasingly merged with the celebration of Christmas in the U.S. Given the German influx into the United States was much greater than the Dutch during the 1800s, it is not surprising that the German name competed with the Dutch term during much of that period before Americans eventually decided to settle mainly on Santa Claus.

## A man of many names

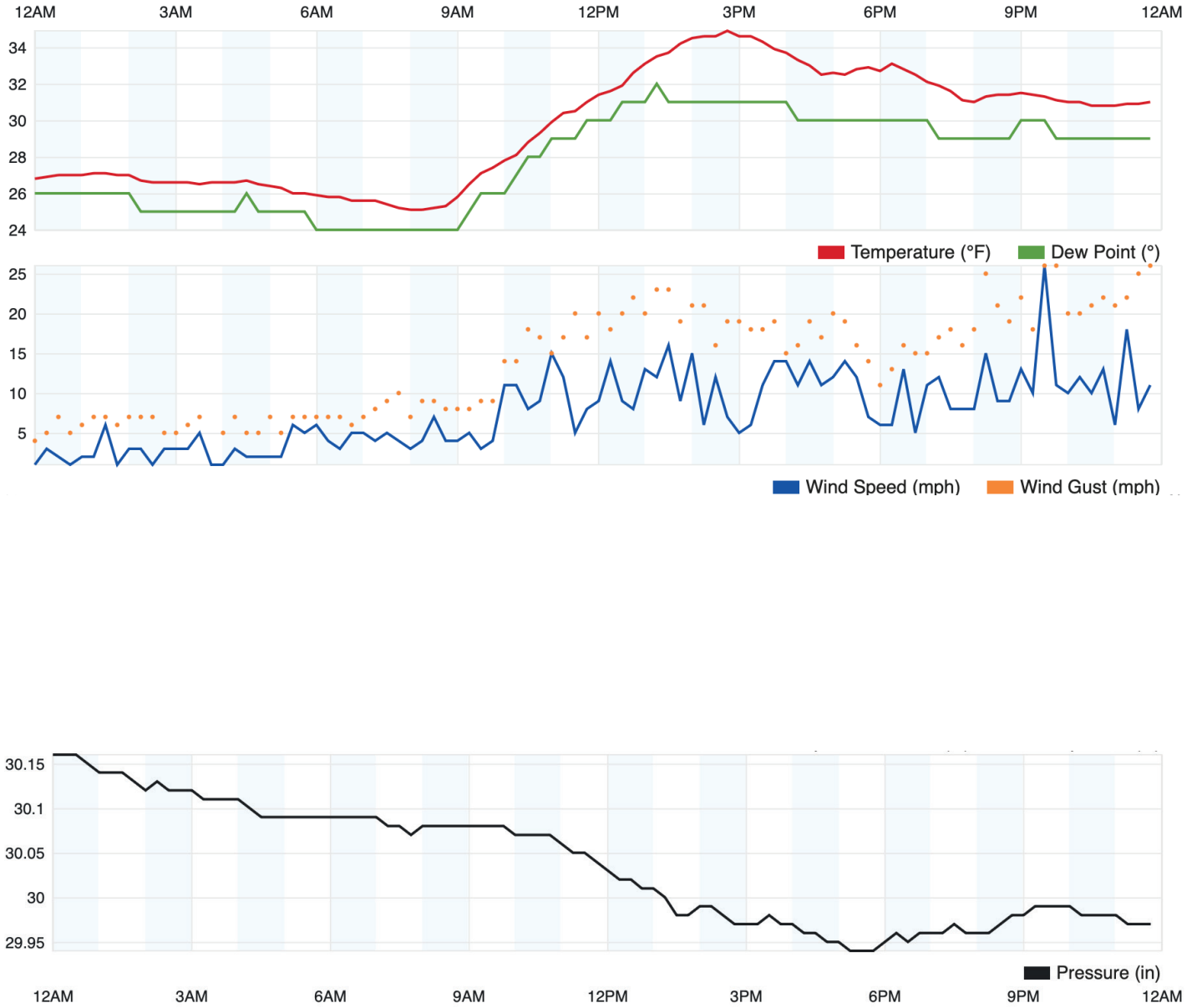
In the end, whether it's St. Nick, Santa or Kris Kringle who rides his sleigh into the holidays, the history of how he got his name is one that illustrates a wonderful melding of languages and cultures – a reminder of how differences can merge into a rich and varied part of a culture, celebrated by many.

*Valerie Fridland is a professor of linguistics at the University of Nevada in Reno and author of the book, "Like Literally, Dude: Arguing for the Good in Bad English." She also writes a monthly blog called "Language in the Wild" for Psychology Today, is a regular guest writer for the popular Grammar Girl podcast and has a lecture series, Language and Society, available with The Great Courses. Her popular facing work has appeared in The Wall Street Journal, Nature, Entrepreneur Magazine, Psychology Today Magazine, LitHub and The Conversation.*

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs





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Today



High: 35 °F

Partly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 31 °F

Mostly Cloudy  
then Patchy  
Fog

Friday



High: 37 °F

Dense  
Freezing Fog  
and Areas Fog  
then Slight  
Chance Rain

Friday Night



Low: 20 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Saturday



High: 37 °F

Mostly Sunny



## Rest of the Year Forecast

December 26, 2024  
2:35 AM

### December 2024

26  Highs: 33-46 Lows: 26-32	27  Highs: 35-47 Lows: 21-27	28  Highs: 36-48 Lows:
29  Highs: 35-48 Lows: 20-28	30  Highs: 25-34 Lows: 14-18	31  Highs: 19-30



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

2024 is winding down, and our forecast period now covers the rest of the year! There is ~15% chance for rain over northeastern South Dakota and western Minnesota Friday, and a ~40% chance for an inch of snow over central South Dakota Monday.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 35 °F at 2:45 PM

Low Temp: 25 °F at 7:58 AM

Wind: 26 mph at 9:32 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 8 hours, 47 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 53 in 2011

Record Low: -29 in 1990

Average High: 25

Average Low: 5

Average Precip in Dec.: 0.50

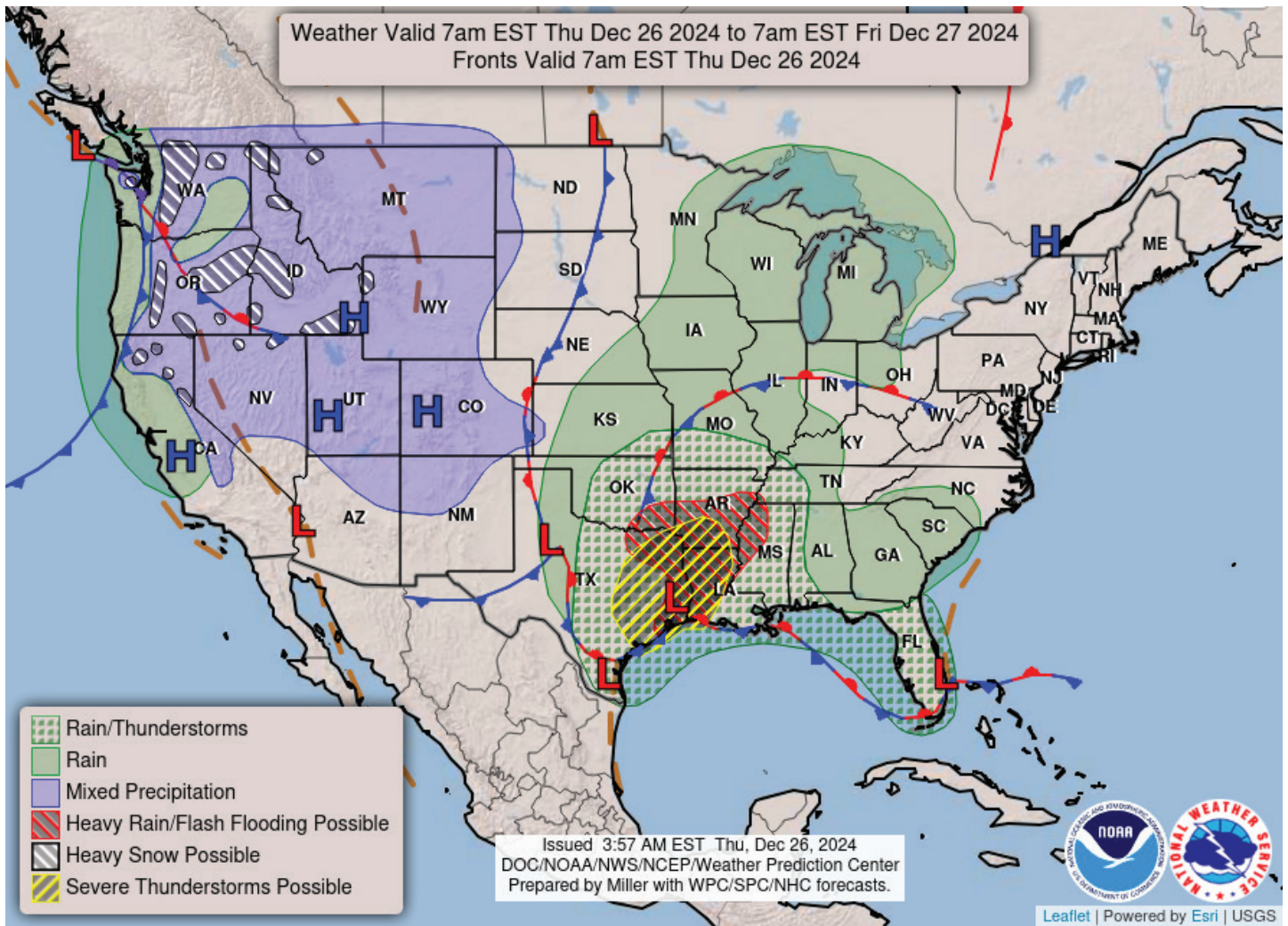
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 21.71

Precip Year to Date: 21.71

Sunset Tonight: 4:57:00 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:09:53 am



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## Today in Weather History

December 26, 1988: Moderate to heavy snow fell across western and northern South Dakota, as well as across most of Minnesota, from the evening of the 25th through the morning of the 27th. Much of the northern one-half to two-thirds of Minnesota and the western and northern sections of South Dakota were blanketed with 6-12 inches of new snow. Numerous accidents and minor injuries were indirectly related to the snowy conditions. Several snowfall amounts in South Dakota included 12 inches at Timber Lake; 10 to 12 inches at Seneca and Hoven; 11 inches at Aberdeen; 8 inches at Pierre, Eureka and Blunt; 7 inches at Chelsea, Redfield, Cottonwood, and Rapid City; and 6 inches at Ferney, Huron, and Eden. In Minnesota, 8 inches fell in Browns Valley, 6 inches fell at Wheaton, and 5 inches accumulated at Artichoke Lake.

1776: George Washington crossed the ice-clogged Delaware River. He marched on Trenton in the midst of snow and sleet thus surprising and captured many of the British garrisons.

1947 - New York City received a record 26.4 inches of snow in 24 hours, with as much as 32 inches reported in the suburbs. The heavy snow brought traffic to a standstill, and snow removal cost eight million dollars. Thirty thousand persons were called upon to remove the 100 million tons of snow. The storm claimed 27 lives. (26th-27th) (David Ludlum)

1983 - Miami, FL, established a December record with a morning low of 33 degrees. Just three days earlier, and again three days later, record warm temperatures were reported in Florida, with daytime highs in the 80s. (The National Weather Summary)

1987 - Freezing rain plagued parts of the south central U.S., from northwest Texas to southwestern Missouri. Southwestern Missouri was turned into a huge skating rink as roads became sheets of ice. Damage to tree limbs and power lines compared to a hundred tornadoes, and half of the city of Springfield was left without electricity for 24 hours. Snow, sleet and ice covered the northwest two thirds of Oklahoma. 75,000 homes were left without electricity as ice accumulated one to two inches in a 40-mile band from Duncan to Norman to Tulsa to Miami. 25,000 of those homes were still without power a week later. The storm claimed the lives of seven persons. (24th-27th) (The Weather Channel) (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Low pressure produced heavy snow from North Dakota to western sections of the Great Lakes Region, with up to fourteen inches reported in the Chicago area. Cold arctic air hovered over the Plateau Region. Temperatures in the Big Smokey Valley of Nevada plunged to 31 degrees below zero. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Strong northerly winds behind an arctic cold front produced snow squalls in the Great Lakes Region and dangerous wind chill temperatures in the northeastern U.S. Wind chill readings as cold as 40 degrees below zero were reported in New York State. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2003 - A major snow storm in Utah caused several fatalities due to avalanches. As much as 2 ft of snow fell in parts of the state, particularly south of Salt Lake City. Three people that were seen snowboarding in the Aspen Grove recreational area have been presumed dead, all others managed to escape or be rescued (Reuters).

2004: A magnitude 9.1 earthquake near Sumatra, Indonesia generated a tsunami that caused tremendous devastation throughout the Indian Ocean. The quake, which is the third largest in the world since 1900, caused severe damage and casualties in northern Sumatra, Indonesia, and in the Nicobar Islands, India. The tsunami that followed killed more people than any other tsunami in recorded history, with 227,898 dead or missing. The total estimated material losses in the Indian Ocean region were \$10 billion, and insured losses were \$2 billion.



## The Birth Of Jesus

“And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. She gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger because there was no lodging available for them.

“That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord’s glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. “Don’t be afraid!” he said. “I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger.”

Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others – the armies of heaven – praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.’

‘When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, “Let’s go to Bethlehem! Let’s see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.

‘They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger.”

Prayer: We lift our hearts in praise this day, Lord of Life, for the birth of Your Son, our Savior. Our minds cannot comprehend, nor our hearts contain, the generosity of Your love, mercy, grace, love, and hope that we have because of the gift of Your one and only Son. Fill our hearts with unending gratitude for Your salvation. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Luke 2:6-16 I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger.”

*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*



## God Pause



### Colossians 3:12-17 (NRSV)

12 As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. 13 Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

#### Devotion

Paul says, "bear with one another." Not all that easy to do, is it? We all have moments, circumstances, or people, who make us say, "I can't bear it anymore!" Maybe especially now, for some the stress of the holiday season is making it all the easier to say we can't bear it. How do we "bear with one another?" Paul advises that we first remember some things. We are God's chosen, holy and beloved. God gifts us with tools—compassion, kindness, meekness, patience. God forgives us. Each of these attributes is a gift, a bequest, that comes with belonging to God. For them we can be thankful, sing, teach—all in the name of Jesus, who was compassionate, kind, meek, patient, forgiving, and grateful. The One who bears with us—each of us—always and forever.

#### Prayer

Thank you, Jesus, for coming to us and choosing to bear with us. Help us bear with each other in your peace, so that we may do everything we do in your name. Amen.

Wade Wacholz '17 M.Div.  
Retired, Eden Prairie, MN

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- 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](https://paypal.me/paperpaul)

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

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
12.24.24

11 14 38 45 46 3

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$1,150,000,000**

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 24  
DRAW: Mins 50 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
12.25.24

4 5 40 42 52 10

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$19,010,000**

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 39  
DRAW: Mins 50 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
12.25.24

4 10 35 42 45 2

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$7,000/week**

NEXT 16 Hrs 54 Mins  
DRAW: 50 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
12.25.24

14 24 26 32 33

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$180,000**

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 54  
DRAW: Mins 50 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
12.25.24

8 29 30 47 57 1

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$10,000,000**

NEXT 2 Days 17 Hrs 23  
DRAW: Mins 50 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
12.25.24

15 26 27 30 35 3

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$145,000,000**

NEXT 2 Days 17 Hrs 23  
DRAW: Mins 50 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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## Upcoming Groton Events

- 01/05/2025 Pancake Sunday, Historical Society Fundraiser, 10am-1pm, Community Center
- 01/26/2025 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed at the Community Center 10am-1pm
- 01/26/2025 87th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm
- 02/02/2025 Pancake Sunday, Historical Society Fundraiser, 10am-1pm, Community Center
- 02/05/2025 FB Live Electronic Hwy 12 Sign Drawing City Hall 12pm
- 03/02/2025 Pancake Sunday, Historical Society Fundraiser, 10am-1pm, Community Center
- 03/22/2025 Spring Vendor Fair at the GHS Gym 10am-2pm
- 04/05/2025 Dueling Duo Baseball/Softball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39, 6-11:30pm
- 04/06/2025 Pancake Sunday, Historical Society Fundraiser, 10am-1pm, Community Center
- 04/12/2025 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt at the City Park 10am Sharp
- 05/03/2025 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 05/26/2025 Memorial Day Services Groton Union Cemetery with lunch at Legion Post #39, 12pm
- 06/07/2025 Day of Play
- 07/04/2025 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/13/2025 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm
- 07/09/2025 Legion Auxiliary #39 Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar at the Groton Legion 11am-1pm
- 08/09/2025 2nd Annual Celebration in the Park/Rib Cook-Off 1-9:30pm
- 09/06/2025 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 10/31/2025 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
- 11/27/2025 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1:30pm



## News from the **AP** Associated Press

### **Azerbaijan observes day of mourning for air crash victims as speculation mount about its cause**

By The Associated Press undefined

Azerbaijan on Thursday observed a nationwide day of mourning for the victims of the air crash that killed 38 people and left all 29 survivors injured as speculation mounted about a possible cause of the crash that remained unknown.

Azerbaijan Airlines' Embraer 190 was en route from Azerbaijan's capital of Baku to the Russian city of Grozny in the North Caucasus on Wednesday when it was diverted for reasons yet unclear and crashed while making an attempt to land in Aktau in Kazakhstan after flying east across the Caspian Sea.

The plane went down about 3 kilometers (around 2 miles) from Aktau. Cellphone footage circulating online appeared to show the aircraft making a steep descent before smashing into the ground in a fireball. Other footage showed part of its fuselage ripped away from the wings and the rest of the aircraft lying upside in the grass.

On Thursday, national flags were lowered across Azerbaijan, traffic across the country stopped at noon, and signals were sounded from ships and trains as the country observed a nationwide moment of silence.

Speaking at a news conference Wednesday, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev said that it was too soon to speculate on the reasons behind the crash, but said that the weather had forced the plane to change from its planned course.

"The information provided to me is that the plane changed its course between Baku and Grozny due to worsening weather conditions and headed to Aktau airport, where it crashed upon landing," he said.

Russia's civil aviation authority, Rosaviatsia, said that preliminary information indicated that the pilots diverted to Aktau after a bird strike led to an emergency on board.

According to Kazakh officials, those aboard the plane included 42 Azerbaijani citizens, 16 Russian nationals, six Kazakhs and three Kyrgyzstan nationals.

As the official crash investigation started, theories abounded about a possible cause, with some commentators alleging that holes seen in the plane's tail section possibly indicate that it could have come under fire from Russian air defense systems fending off a Ukrainian drone attack.

Ukrainian drones had previously attacked Grozny, the provincial capital of the Russian republic of Chechnya, and other regions in the country's North Caucasus. Some Russian media claimed that another drone attack on Chechnya happened on Wednesday, although it wasn't officially confirmed.

Osprey Flight Solutions, an aviation security firm based in the United Kingdom, warned its clients that the "Azerbaijan Airlines flight was likely shot down by a Russian military air-defense system." Osprey provides analysis for carriers still flying into Russia after Western airlines halted their flights during the war.

Osprey CEO Andrew Nicholson said that the company had issued more than 200 alerts regarding drone attacks and air defense systems in Russia during the war.

"This incident is a stark reminder of why we do what we do," Nicholson wrote online. "It is painful to know that despite our efforts, lives were lost in a way that could have been avoided."

Asked about the claims that the plane had been fired upon by air defense assets, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters that "it would be wrong to make hypotheses before investigators make their verdict."

Officials in Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan have similarly avoided comment on a possible cause of the crash, saying it will be up to investigators to determine it.

## **Azerbaijani airliner crashes in Kazakhstan, killing 38 with 29 survivors, officials say**

By KATIE MARIE DAVIES and DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

An Azerbaijani airliner with 67 people onboard crashed Wednesday near the Kazakhstani city of Aktau, killing 38 people and leaving 29 survivors, a Kazakh official said.

Deputy Prime Minister Kanat Bozumbaev disclosed the figures while meeting with Azerbaijani officials, the Russian news agency Interfax reported.

The Embraer 190 was en route from the Azerbaijani capital of Baku to the Russian city of Grozny in the North Caucasus when it was diverted and attempted an emergency landing 3 kilometers (1.8 miles) from Aktau, Azerbaijan Airlines said.

Speaking at a news conference, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev said that it was too soon to speculate on the reasons behind the crash, but said that the weather had forced the plane to change from its planned course.

"The information provided to me is that the plane changed its course between Baku and Grozny due to worsening weather conditions and headed to Aktau airport, where it crashed upon landing," he said.

Russia's civil aviation authority, Rosaviatsia, said that preliminary information showed that the pilots diverted to Aktau after a bird strike led to an emergency on board.

According to Kazakh officials, those aboard the plane included 42 Azerbaijani citizens, 16 Russian nationals, six Kazakhs and three Kyrgyzstan nationals. Azerbaijan's prosecutor general's office previously said that 32 of the 67 people on board had survived the crash, but told journalists that the number wasn't final.

The Associated Press could not immediately reconcile the difference between the numbers of survivors given by Kazakhstan and Azerbaijani officials.

Mobile phone footage circulating online appeared to show the aircraft making a steep descent before smashing into the ground in a fireball. Other footage showed part of its fuselage ripped away from the wings and the rest of the aircraft, lying upside in the grass. The footage corresponded to the plane's colors and its registration number.

Some of the videos posted on social media showed survivors dragging fellow passengers away from the wreckage.

Flight-tracking data from FlightRadar24.com showed the aircraft making what appeared to be a figure eight once nearing the airport in Aktau, its altitude moving up and down substantially over the last minutes of the flight before impacting the ground.

FlightRadar24 separately said in an online post that the aircraft had faced "strong GPS jamming," which "made the aircraft transmit bad ADS-B data," referring to the information that allows flight-tracking websites to follow planes in flight. Russia has been blamed in the past for jamming GPS transmissions in the wider region.

Azerbaijan Airlines said it would keep members of the public updated and changed its social media banners to solid black. It also said that it would suspend flights between Baku and Grozny, as well as between Baku and the city of Makhachkala in Russia's North Caucasus, until its investigation into the crash has been concluded.

Azerbaijan's state news agency, Azertac, said that an official delegation of Azerbaijan's emergency situations minister, the deputy general prosecutor and the vice president of Azerbaijan Airlines were sent to Aktau to conduct an "on-site investigation."

Aliyev, who was traveling to Russia, returned to Azerbaijan on hearing news of the crash, the president's press service said. He was due to attend an informal meeting of leaders of the Commonwealth of Independent States, a bloc of former Soviet countries founded after the collapse of the Soviet Union, in St. Petersburg.

Aliyev expressed his condolences to the families of the victims in a statement on social media. "It is with deep sadness that I express my condolences to the families of the victims and wish a speedy recovery to those injured," he wrote.

He also signed a decree declaring Dec. 26 a day of mourning in Azerbaijan.

Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke to Aliyev on the phone and expressed his condolences, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

Speaking at the CIS meeting in St. Petersburg, Putin also said that Russia's Emergency Ministry sent a plane with equipment and medical workers to Kazakhstan to assist with the aftermath of the crash.

Kazakhstani, Azerbaijani and Russian authorities said they were investigating the crash. Embraer told The Associated Press in a statement that the company is "ready to assist all relevant authorities."

## **A baby froze to death overnight in Gaza as Israel and Hamas trade accusations of ceasefire delays**

By SAM MEDNICK, TIA GOLDENBERG and FATMA KHALED Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — A baby girl froze to death overnight in Gaza, while Israel and Hamas accused each other of complicating ceasefire efforts that could wind down the 14-month war.

The 3-week old baby was the third to die from the cold in Gaza's tent camps in recent days, doctors said, deaths that underscore the squalid conditions, with hundreds of thousands of Palestinians crammed into often ramshackle tents after fleeing Israeli offensives.

Israel's bombardment and ground invasion of Gaza has killed over 45,000 Palestinians, more than half of them women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between fighters and civilians in its count.

The offensive has caused widespread destruction and displaced some 90% of Gaza's 2.3 million people, often multiple times. Hundreds of thousands are packed into tent camps along the coast as the cold, wet winter sets in. Aid groups have struggled to deliver food and supplies and say there are shortages of blankets, warm clothing and firewood.

Israel has increased the amount of aid it allows into the territory, reaching an average of 130 trucks a day so far this month, up from around 70 a day in October and November. Still, the amount remains well below than previous months and the United Nations says it is unable to distribute more than half the aid because Israeli forces deny permission to move within Gaza or because of rampant lawlessness and theft from trucks.

The father of 3-week-old Sila, Mahmoud al-Faseeh, wrapped her in a blanket to try and keep her warm in their tent in the Muwasi area outside the town of Khan Younis, but it wasn't enough, he told The Associated Press.

He said the tent was not sealed from the wind and the ground was cold, as temperatures on Tuesday night dropped to 9 degrees Celsius (48 degrees Fahrenheit.) Muwasi is a desolate area of dunes and farmland on Gaza's Mediterranean coast.

"It was very cold overnight and as adults we couldn't even take it. We couldn't stay warm," he said. Sila woke up crying three times overnight and in the morning they found her unresponsive, her body stiff.

"She was like wood," said al-Faseeh. They rushed her to a field hospital where doctors tried to revive her, but her lungs had already deteriorated. Images of Sila taken by the AP showed the little girl with purple lips, her pale skin blotchy.

Ahmed al-Farra, director of the children's ward at Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, confirmed that the baby died of hypothermia. He said two other babies — one 3 days old, the other a month old — had been brought to the hospital over the past 48 hours after dying of hypothermia.

Ceasefire complications

Meanwhile, hopes for a ceasefire looked complicated Wednesday, with Israel and the militant Hamas group that runs Gaza trading accusations of delaying an agreement. In recent weeks, the two sides appeared to be inching toward a deal that would bring home dozens of hostages held by the militants in Gaza, but differences have emerged.

Although Israel and Hamas have expressed optimism that progress was being made toward a deal, sticking points remain over the exchange of hostages for Palestinian prisoners and the withdrawal of Israeli

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troops from Gaza, people involved in the talks say.

On Wednesday, Hamas accused Israel of introducing new conditions related to the withdrawal from Gaza, the prisoners and the return of displaced people, which it said was delaying the deal.

Israel's government accused Hamas of reneging on understandings that have already been reached." Still, both sides said discussions are ongoing.

Israel's negotiating team, which includes members from its intelligence agencies and the military, returned from Qatar on Tuesday evening for internal consultations, following a week of what it called "significant negotiations."

During its Oct. 7, 2023, attack on southern Israel, Hamas and other groups took about 250 people hostages and brought them to Gaza. A previous truce in November 2023 freed more than 100 hostages, while others have been rescued or their remains have been recovered over the past year.

Israel says about 100 hostages remain in Gaza — at least a third whom it believes were killed during the Oct. 7 attack or died in captivity.

Sporadic talks have taken place for a year, but in recent weeks there's been a renewed push to reach a deal.

President-elect Donald Trump, who takes office next month for his second term, has demanded the immediate release of Israeli hostages, saying on social media that if they're not freed before he is sworn in, there will be "HELL TO PAY."

Families of the hostages are becoming increasingly angry, calling on the Israeli government for a ceasefire before Trump is sworn in.

After Israel's high-level negotiation team returned from Doha this week, hostage families called an emergency press conference in Tel Aviv, Israel, pleading for a ceasefire and a complete end to the war.

Shir Siegel, the daughter of Israeli-American Keith Siegel, whose mother was released after more than 50 days in captivity, said every delay could endanger their lives. "There are moments when every second is fateful, and this is one of those moments," she said.

Families of the hostages marked the first night of Hannukah with a candle lighting ceremony in Tel Aviv as well as by the Western Wall in Jerusalem.

The agreement would take effect in phases and include a halt in fighting, an exchange of Israeli hostages for Palestinian prisoners, and a surge in aid to the besieged Gaza, according to Egyptian, Hamas and American officials. The last phase would include the release of any remaining hostages, an end to the war and talks on reconstruction.

## Houthi attacks

Also Wednesday, a missile launched by Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels triggered air raid sirens across central Israel, sending residents fleeing to shelters. The Houthis said they operations were aimed at Israeli targets in the cities of Jaffa and Ashkelon.

It was the fourth time in a week that fire from the Yemeni rebels set off sirens in Israel.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel will strike anyone threatening lives in Israel and warned the Houthis that they would learn lessons that Hamas, Hezbollah and Syria's ousted President Bashar Assad have learned.

Israel also requested an emergency meeting by the U.N. Security Council to address the recent attacks. The meeting is set for Monday.

Israel's U.N. Ambassador Danny Danon said he expects the council to condemn the Houthi attacks and called on it "to enforce international law and hold Iran, the Houthis' patron, accountable."

## **Blake Lively's claims that movie co-star launched smear campaign gets support in publicist's suit**

NEW YORK (AP) — Blake Lively's claims that "It Ends With Us" director and co-star Justin Baldoni unleashed a smear campaign against her have gained support from a new lawsuit that Baldoni's former publicist filed against him.

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The lawsuit was lodged Tuesday in New York state court in Manhattan by Stephanie Jones, who began representing Baldoni in 2017. It said the actor and his movie production company, Wayfarer, expanded their contract in 2020, agreeing to pay a \$25,000 monthly fee.

The lawsuit alleged that Baldoni, 40, and Wayfarer last August, when the film was released, teamed up with publicists to try to "bury" and "destroy" Lively amid fears that allegations of misogynistic and toxic on-set behavior as the romantic drama was made might harm his reputation and career.

Jones sought unspecified damages from the defendants, including Jennifer Abel, a former employee who she says carried out the campaign to damage Lively and muddy the reputation of Jones.

The lawsuit alleges that Abel was fired after Jones learned on Aug. 21 that Abel had "stolen more than 70 proprietary and sensitive business documents and additional client leads" from Jonesworks as Abel prepared to leave the firm to start her own publicity company, taking along Baldoni and Wayfarer as clients.

The lawsuit also alleges that Abel teamed up with Melissa Nathan, a crisis management expert who in the past has represented actor Johnny Depp, in a quest to influence and control media content damaging to Lively and Jones.

Numerous text messages included in the lawsuit were extracted from the company phone that Abel returned to Jonesworks when she was fired, the lawsuit said.

In response to a request for comment Wednesday, Abel sent an email that included screenshots of text messages between herself and Jones, along with a July 26 email she sent to Jones, two weeks after announcing her plans during a Zoom call to leave the company on Aug. 23.

In the email, she wrote, in part: "I know this path won't be easy, but I hope I can keep you in my life as a mentor, a friend and a close confidant because I truly view you as family and would be lost without your support. I want to assure you however I can, that unlike those who have burned you in the past, that there is not one ounce of ill will here."

She added: "I have left a company before with grace and with my relationships intact, and that's what I fully plan on, and hope for."

Nathan did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Wednesday.

Last week, Lively filed a complaint with the California Civil Rights Department, a step that often precedes the filing of a lawsuit, alleging that Baldoni sought to damage her reputation after Lively, 37, and her husband Ryan Reynolds addressed "repeated sexual harassment" by Baldoni and a producer on the movie.

Bryan Freedman, an attorney representing Baldoni, Wayfarer Studios and its representatives, called the claims in Lively's filing "completely false, outrageous and intentionally salacious."

He pushed back against Lively's allegations of a coordinated campaign, saying the studio "proactively" hired a crisis manager "due to the multiple demands and threats made by Ms. Lively during production."

A message sent to Freedman on Wednesday to get comment on the lawsuit filed by Jones was not immediately returned.

"It Ends With Us," an adaptation of Colleen Hoover's bestselling 2016 novel, was released in August, exceeding box office expectations with a \$50 million debut and sales eventually approaching \$350 million.

Baldoni starred in the telenovela send-up "Jane the Virgin," directed "Five Feet Apart" and wrote "Man Enough," a book pushing back against traditional notions of masculinity.

## King Charles III focuses Christmas message on healthcare workers in year marked by royal illnesses

By PAN PYLAS and DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — King Charles III used his annual Christmas message Wednesday to hail the selflessness of those who have cared for him and the Princess of Wales this year, after both were diagnosed with cancer.

The 76-year-old monarch said he and his family are "continually" impressed by those who dedicate their lives to helping others.

"From a personal point of view, I offer special, heartfelt thanks to the selfless doctors and nurses who

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this year have supported me and other members of my family through the uncertainties and anxieties of illness and have helped provide the strength, care and comfort we have needed," he said in a prerecorded speech.

The broadcast came several hours after the monarch waved to a large crowd of onlookers who traditionally gather to see the royal family attend Christmas Day services at a church on Sandringham, the estate on the windswept North Sea coast that has served as a family retreat for generations.

The king walked with Queen Camilla as his eldest son, Prince William, Kate and their three children followed. The king's daughter-in-law, who has slowly returned to public duties after completing chemotherapy, hugged a cancer patient after the service.

Two of Charles' siblings, Anne, the Princess Royal, and Prince Edward, the Duke of Edinburgh, were also in the procession.

Notably absent at St. Mary Magdalene Church was Prince Andrew. The king's 64-year-old brother has retreated further into the shadows amid news that a Chinese businessman had been barred from the U.K. because of concerns he cultivated links with Andrew on behalf of the Chinese Communist Party.

Andrew, once second in line to the British throne, has become a constant source of tabloid fodder because of his money woes and links to questionable characters, including the late American financier and convicted pedophile Jeffrey Epstein.

Even after stepping back from public duties, Andrew has continued to appear at family events and his absence from Sandringham suggests a further retreat from the public eye. The king has been under pressure to distance Andrew from the royal family to avoid further embarrassment to the monarchy.

While Andrew said he never discussed anything sensitive with the suspected Chinese spy and had ceased contact with the man as soon as concerns were raised, the scandal raises further questions about his judgment and distracts from the work of the royal family, said Ed Owens, author of "After Elizabeth: Can the Monarchy Save Itself?"

"The reason why this is a problem for the king is simply that the king is trying to rebrand the monarchy at the moment, centering its focus around him, but also around William, Catherine, what they are trying to do," Owens said.

"It's been a very difficult year for the monarchy, not least because of the two cancer diagnoses. And all the positive headlines that the king has been trying to generate of late, unfortunately, are overshadowed by the behavior, the reckless behavior, of his younger brother, who once again finds himself in the headlines."

The king's Christmas speech is the third since he ascended the throne after Queen Elizabeth II died in September 2022, but the first since he was diagnosed with an undisclosed form of cancer in February.

The monarch's holiday message is watched by millions of people in the U.K. and across the Commonwealth, with many households timing Christmas lunch around it.

The king's treatment, which is believed to be ongoing, forced him to step away from public appearances for two months. He has slowly returned to public life in recent months and was in good spirits on a tour of Australia and the South Pacific in October.

A few weeks after Charles began treatment, the Princess of Wales announced her own cancer diagnosis, which sidelined her for much of the year.

In a voiceover for her annual Christmas carol service at Westminster Abbey, which was recorded this month but broadcast on Tuesday evening, Kate also reflected on the love and support that she received.

"The Christmas story encourages us to consider the experiences and feelings of others," she said. "It also reflects our own vulnerabilities and reminds us of the importance of giving and receiving empathy, as well as just how much we need each other in spite of our differences."

Charles spoke at the Fitzrovia Chapel in central London, which was part of the now-demolished Middlesex Hospital where his first wife, Diana, opened London's first dedicated ward for those with AIDS.

The king had tasked the team organizing the broadcast with finding a site away from the royal estate, and one with health connections, a strong community presence and a place of solace and reflection for those with or without faith.

It's a rare occasion when the monarch's Christmas message is not recorded at a royal residence, notably

Buckingham Palace or Windsor Castle. The last time his late mother recorded her message outside the royal estate was in 2006.

Charles also paid his respect to World War II troops who perished on the beaches of northern France as well as the few remaining veterans, many of them centenarians, who attended the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings in Normandy in June.

He said it was an "enormous privilege" to meet "the remarkable veterans of that very special generation who gave of themselves so courageously on behalf of us all" but that the specter of war was haunting the world this Christmas.

"During previous commemorations, we were able to console ourselves with the thought that these tragic events seldom happen in the modern era," he said. "But on this Christmas Day, we cannot help but think of those for whom the devastating effects of conflict in the Middle East, in Central Europe, in Africa and elsewhere pose a daily threat to so many people's lives and livelihoods."

On the domestic front, the king expressed his "deep sense of pride" for communities that came together after riots broke out in many towns and cities in the summer following a stabbing rampage at a dance class that left three girls dead and several wounded.

## **Trial of man accused in Trump assassination attempt in Florida pushed back to September**

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — A man accused of attempting to assassinate President-elect Donald Trump in South Florida won't be tried until September 2025, a federal judge ruled this week.

Ryan Routh's trial will begin Sept. 8 instead of the previously scheduled Feb. 10, 2025 start date, U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon said in an order released on Monday.

Routh, 58, a Hawaii resident, has pleaded not guilty.

Routh's attorneys had asked the judge to delay the trial until no earlier than next December, saying they needed more time to review the evidence against him and decide whether to mount an insanity defense.

Routh owned 17 cellphones and numerous other electronic devices, and there are hundreds of hours of police body camera and surveillance videos that have been provided to the defense, Routh's attorneys argued during a hearing two weeks ago in Fort Pierce, Florida.

In her order, Cannon said she wanted to err on the side of providing more time given the seriousness of the allegations, but that starting the trial no earlier than December would be an excessive amount. A September trial date didn't amount to an "unreasonable delay," she said.

The judge said that any insanity defense or any request related to Routh's mental competency must be made by early February. Any visit to the scene of the assassination attempt must be made by the end of February.

Prosecutors say Routh methodically plotted to kill Trump for weeks before aiming a rifle through the shrubbery as Trump played golf on Sept. 15, 2024 at his West Palm Beach country club. Before Trump came into view, Routh was spotted by a Secret Service agent. Routh allegedly aimed his rifle at the agent, who opened fire, causing Routh to drop his weapon and flee without firing a shot. Prosecutors say he left behind a note describing his intentions.

He was arrested a short time later driving on a nearby interstate.

Routh's charge of attempted assassination of a major presidential candidate carries a potential life sentence in the event of a conviction. Other charges include assaulting a federal officer and three firearms counts. He is being held without bail at the federal jail in Miami.

Routh's arrest came two months after Trump was shot and wounded in the ear in an assassination attempt during a campaign rally in Pennsylvania. The Secret Service acknowledged failings leading up to that shooting but has said security worked as it should have to thwart the potential Florida attack.

## Taliban say Pakistani airstrikes killed 46 people in eastern Afghanistan, mostly women and children

By RIAZ KHAN and MUNIR AHMED Associated Press

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (AP) — Pakistan's airstrikes on eastern Afghanistan killed 46 people, mostly women and children, a Taliban government official said Wednesday, raising fears of further straining relations between the two neighbors.

Hamdullah Fitrat, the deputy spokesman for the Afghan government, said those killed in the strikes that targeted four locations in Barmal, a district in the province of Paktika, were refugees, adding that six others were also wounded.

This comes a day after Pakistani security officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity in line with regulations, told The Associated Press that Tuesday's operation was to dismantle a training facility and kill insurgents in Paktika.

Earlier Wednesday, Mohammad Khurasani, the spokesman for the Pakistani Taliban or Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, claimed in a statement that 50 people, including 27 women and children, died in the strikes. He said they were "unarmed refugees" who fled to Afghanistan because of Pakistan's offensive in the northwest.

The TTP — a separate group but also a close ally of the Afghan Taliban — also shared photos, alleging they were of children killed during the Pakistani operation.

The strikes came hours after Mohammad Sadiq, Pakistan's special representative for Afghanistan, traveled to Kabul to discuss a range of issues.

Afghanistan's Foreign Ministry in Kabul summoned the Pakistani envoy and lodged a strong protest over the strikes by Pakistan's military. In a statement, it said while a representative of the civilian government of Pakistan was busy in talks with the Afghan officials, the strikes were carried out by Pakistani forces to "create mistrust in the relations between the two countries."

It said Kabul "will not accept the violation of the country's territory under any circumstances, and the country is ready to defend its independence and territory" and "such irresponsible actions will definitely have consequences."

Pakistan has not commented on the latest strikes. However, the Pakistani military said Wednesday that security forces killed 13 insurgents in an intelligence-based operation in South Waziristan, a district located along eastern Afghanistan's Paktika province.

Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi praised "Pakistan's brave security force" in a statement for thwarting "the nefarious designs" of "terrorists." He didn't mention the Pakistani air strikes inside Afghanistan.

The Taliban Defense Ministry denounced the attacks on Tuesday and promised retaliation.

On Wednesday, the situation along the shared border seemed to be business as usual. However, security analysts say the TTP could launch retaliatory attacks in Pakistan.

Syed Muhammad Ali, an Islamabad-based security analyst, said "heavy casualties suffered" by Pakistan due to TTP attacks prompted the military to target insurgents in Afghanistan. He said Pakistan's "patience has finally run out as its diplomatic efforts aimed at persuading the Afghan Taliban to rein in TTP yielded no result."

Pakistan has seen innumerable militant attacks in the past two decades but there has been an uptick in recent months. The latest was this weekend when at least 16 Pakistani soldiers were killed when the TTP attacked a checkpoint in the country's northwest.

Pakistani officials have accused the Taliban of not doing enough to combat militant activity across the border, a charge the Afghan Taliban government denies, saying it does not allow anyone to carry out attacks against any country.

North and South Waziristan are former strongholds of Pakistani Taliban, who have fled to Afghanistan.

Tensions were at an all-high in March when Pakistan said intelligence-based strikes took place in the border regions inside Afghanistan.



## China and Japan agree to talks on security issues as they seek to mend ties

By KEN MORITSUGU and MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China and Japan agreed Wednesday to set up talks on often contentious security issues as they seek to improve a relationship riven in recent years by a range of issues, from territorial disputes to the discharge of water from Japan's tsunami-wrecked nuclear power plant.

Japanese Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya, on his first trip to China since assuming the post in October, sounded positive after meetings with Chinese Premier Li Qiang and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, saying the talks were "very candid" and wide-ranging.

"I feel we were able to build a personal relationship that would lead to the future," he told reporters in the Chinese capital.

Wang agreed to visit Japan next year for a high-level economic dialogue including cooperation on the environment, energy conservation and health and nursing care. Japan announced an easing of visa requirements for Chinese visitors, following China's recent decision to allow Japanese to enter without a visa.

The two countries also have major differences. Iwaya raised Japan's concerns about China's military activity near a group of uninhabited islands that both countries claim, as well as China's territorial disputes with other countries in the South China Sea.

Efforts to improve ties are in their early stages following a commitment to do so made by Chinese President Xi Jinping and Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba at a meeting last month during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Peru.

"Currently China-Japan relations are at a critical period of improvement and development," Li said at the start of his meeting with Iwaya. "China is willing to work together with Japan to move toward the important direction proposed by the leaders of the two countries."

Iwaya's one-day trip came just before U.S. President-elect Donald Trump takes office in January and the uncertainty his presidency is expected to bring to America's global relations.

Trump has threatened to hike tariffs on Chinese goods, reigniting a trade war he unleashed in his first administration. It's unclear how he will impact the U.S.-Japan alliance, which President Joe Biden has sought to buttress during the last four years as part of his strategy to confront a rising China.

Japan has revamped its approach to defense in response to Chinese actions in recent years, boosting military spending and shifting away from a principle of self-defense. Earlier this year, Japan protested when a Chinese military plane flew into Japan's airspace, while in the summer, a Chinese survey ship sailed into Japanese territorial waters.

Wang agreed to Iwaya's proposal for a Japan-China security dialogue, which would try to improve communication over some of these issues.

Iwaya called for an early lifting of a ban on Japanese seafood imports that China imposed after a Japanese utility began discharging treated but still radioactive water from the former nuclear power plant in Fukushima.

The two sides agreed to keep working on the issue, and also resume talks on Japanese beef and rice exports to China.

Japan's easing of visa requirements included allowing group tours to stay for 30 days, up from 15, and increasing the validity of multiple-entry tourist visas from five to 10 years.

Both sides hope that people-to-people exchanges can help improve relations.

In that context, Iwaya asked China to improve security for his country's citizens, following recent attacks on Japanese school children, and also raised the detention of several Japanese businesspeople on spy charges. Both are making some Japanese hesitant to travel or work in China, he said.

## Fate of Trump's Cabinet picks unclear as Republicans prepare to take power in Senate

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The fate of President-elect Donald Trump's Cabinet is still unclear after Republican senators spent much of December carefully dodging questions about Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s views on vaccines, accusations of sexual misconduct against Pete Hegseth and Tulsi Gabbard's 2017 meeting with then-President Bashar Assad of Syria.

While some GOP senators have indicated they are all-in for Trump's picks, others have withheld support, for now, especially on some of his more controversial nominees. The dynamic is injecting uncertainty into the process as Republicans prepare to take the Senate majority in January with a four-seat margin and as Trump aggressively challenges them to confirm his Cabinet immediately.

It's not unusual for senators to wait until after confirmation hearings to publicly announce a decision. But Republicans are under more pressure than usual as Trump and his allies make clear that they will confront senators who don't fall in line.

"You only have control of the Senate because of Donald Trump," the president-elect's son, Donald Trump Jr., warned during a media appearance this month. "Without that, you'd be relegated to insignificance."

There has been one casualty of the process so far — former Rep. Matt Gaetz of Florida, who withdrew from contention as attorney general after senators relayed private concerns. But Trump has enthusiastically stood by the rest, including Kennedy for secretary of Health and Human Services, Hegseth for secretary of Defense and Gabbard for director of national intelligence.

With hearings starting by mid-January, before Trump is even inaugurated, senators will soon have to decide how closely they will scrutinize the nominees and whether they are willing to vote against any of them. Republicans will have a 53-47 majority, so Trump cannot lose more than three votes on any nomination if Democrats are united in opposition.

The outcome of the confirmation process, and the level of dissent in the Senate, will likely set the tone for Trump's presidency and his relationship with Congress, which was frequently tumultuous during his first term. He often clashed with the Senate, in particular, but has signaled he expects Republican senators to be more compliant this time around.

"It's not about putting yeses on the board, it's about keeping nos off the board," said Oklahoma Sen. Markwayne Mullin, one of Trump's top allies in the Senate, who speaks with him frequently.

While most Senate Republicans have scrambled to display as much loyalty to Trump as possible, a handful have made clear that they are willing to defend the body's "advise and consent" role. Among the senators to watch are moderate Republicans Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, Susan Collins of Maine and incoming freshman Sen. John Curtis of Utah.

"Anybody who wants to give me heat for doing my job, bring it on," Curtis said Sunday on ABC's "This Week" when asked about vetting Trump's nominees. "This is my job. It's my constitutional responsibility."

Still, even moderate senators have shied away from directly criticizing Trump's picks. And not a single Republican has gone on the record against a nominee.

Several of Trump's picks are expected to sail to confirmation, perhaps even with some Democratic votes. Sen. John Fetterman, D-Pa., has indicated he will support Florida Sen. Marco Rubio for secretary of State and Rep. Elise Stefanik for United Nations ambassador, as have a few other Democrats.

For the more controversial nominees, though, party unity will be key.

One of Trump's most embattled picks is Hegseth, a Fox News host and veteran who some see as inexperienced and has publicly questioned whether women should serve in combat. He has also faced allegations of sexual assault and excessive drinking that he has denied. But it's all given some senators pause, despite Trump's enthusiastic support.

Hegseth has faced particular pressure from Iowa Sen. Joni Ernst, herself a combat veteran who has worked to address sexual assault in the military. She has met with Hegseth several times, and has not yet said she will support him. She will have a chance to question him, publicly and face-to-face, in a Senate

Armed Services Committee confirmation hearing that is scheduled for Jan. 14.

Though a hearing for Gabbard has not yet been set, senators will also be able to question her publicly and in a classified setting about her trip to Syria after the U.S. had severed diplomatic relations. Gabbard has defended the trip, saying it's important to open dialogue, but critics hear echoes of Russia-fueled talking points in her commentary. Assad fled to Moscow earlier this month after opposition forces overtook Syria in a surprise attack, ending his family's five decades of rule.

While Republican senators have mostly refrained from publicly expressing concerns about Gabbard's ties abroad, nearly 100 former senior U.S. diplomats and intelligence and national security officials have urged Senate leaders to schedule closed-door hearings to allow a full review of the government's files on her.

Senators have been a bit more openly skeptical of Kennedy, who has long questioned the use of some vaccines.

After a report in the New York Times that one of his advisers filed a petition to revoke approval for the polio vaccine in 2022, Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell issued a statement saying that "efforts to undermine public confidence in proven cures are not just uninformed — they're dangerous," and that "anyone seeking the Senate's consent to serve in the incoming administration would do well to steer clear of even the appearance of association with such efforts."

McConnell, who had polio as a child, is leaving leadership next year but will stay in the Senate. His votes will also be closely watched after years of tension with Trump as he assumes a new role free from the responsibilities of leadership.

Like McConnell, many senators have taken an "advice" approach, telling the nominees what they need to do to be confirmed.

North Carolina Sen. Thom Tillis says he's told all of the nominees he's met with so far, "go out and see what the press is saying about you, find your top 10 and disarm the conversation by having a good solution for why that isn't you."

In addition, Tillis said, "you've got to have a good showing in committee."

## Russia targets Ukrainian energy infrastructure on Christmas Day

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia launched a massive missile and drone barrage targeting Ukraine's energy infrastructure on Wednesday, striking a thermal power plant and prompting Ukrainians to take shelter in metro stations on Christmas morning.

The strikes on Ukrainian fuel and energy sources included 78 air, ground, and sea-launched missiles as well as 106 Shaheds and other types of drones, Ukraine's air force said. It claimed to have intercepted 59 missiles and 54 drones, with 52 more drones being jammed.

"(Russian President Vladimir) Putin deliberately chose Christmas for an attack. What could be more inhumane?" Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on X. "They continue to fight for a blackout in Ukraine."

In Russia, meanwhile, one woman died and three people were wounded after falling debris from a downed drone sparked a fire in a shopping mall in the city of Vladikavkaz. The head of Russia's republic of North Ossetia-Alania, Gov. Sergey Menyaylo, said security footage showed that the explosion took place outside the Alania Mall Wednesday morning.

At least one person was killed in Russia's attack on Ukraine's Dnipro region, Vice Prime Minister Oleksii Kuleba said on Telegram, adding that heating was disrupted for 155 residential buildings. He also said 500,000 people in the Kharkiv region were without heat.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said one Russian missile passed Moldovan and Romanian airspace.

Energy Minister Herman Halushchenko said Russia again "massively attacks energy infrastructure." Ukraine's air force said that multiple missiles had been fired at the Kharkiv, Dnipro and Poltava regions in the east of the country.

Halushchenko said the power distributor took the necessary measures to limit consumption. "As soon

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as the security situation allows, energy workers will establish the damage caused," he said. State energy operator Ukrenergo applied preemptive power outages across the country due to a "massive missile attack," leading to electricity going out in several districts of the capital, Kyiv.

Ukraine's biggest private energy company, DTEK, said Russia struck one of their thermal power plants Wednesday morning, making it the 13th attack on Ukraine's power grid this year.

"Denying light and warmth to millions of peace-loving people as they celebrate Christmas is a depraved and evil act that must be answered," Maxim Timchenko, CEO of DTEK wrote on his X account.

At least seven strikes targeted Kharkiv, sparking fires across the city, regional head Oleh Syniehubov wrote on Telegram. At least three people were injured, local authorities said.

"Kharkiv is under massive missile fire. A series of explosions rang out in the city and there are still ballistic missiles flying in the direction of the city. Stay in safe places," Kharkiv Mayor Ihor Terekhov said.

Russia's Ministry of Defense said in its morning report Wednesday that it had shot down 59 Ukrainian drones overnight, including over the Belgorod, Voronezh, Kursk, Bryansk and Tambov regions, as well as over the Azov Sea. It did not mention the incident in North Ossetia-Alania.

Four people were also killed as a result of Ukrainian shelling in the town of Lgov in the Kursk region, regional head Alexander Khinshtein said. Three people died after several residential blocks and a beauty salon were hit, he said. Another person later died in a hospital.

## Today in History: December 26 Massive earthquake triggers Asian Tsunami

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Thursday, Dec. 26, the 361st day of 2024. There are five days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Dec. 26, 2004, a 9.1-magnitude earthquake beneath the Indian Ocean triggered a tsunami with waves up to 100 feet (30 meters) high, killing an estimated 230,000 people.

Also on this date:

In 1908, Jack Johnson became the first Black boxer to win the world heavyweight championship as he defeated Canadian Tommy Burns in Sydney, Australia.

In 1941, during World War II, Winston Churchill became the first British prime minister to address a joint meeting of the U.S. Congress.

In 1966, Kwanzaa was first celebrated.

In 1990, Nancy Cruzan, a young woman in an irreversible vegetative state whose case led to a U.S. Supreme Court decision on the right to die, died at a Missouri hospital.

In 1991, the USSR was formally dissolved through a declaration by the Supreme Soviet.

In 2006, former President Gerald R. Ford died in Rancho Mirage, California, at age 93.

In 2021, South African Nobel Peace Prize winner Desmond Tutu died at 90; the retired archbishop had been an uncompromising foe of apartheid and a modern-day activist for racial justice and LGBTQ rights.

Today's Birthdays: "America's Most Wanted" host John Walsh is 79. Baseball Hall of Fame catcher Carlton Fisk is 77. Baseball Hall of Famer Ozzie Smith is 70. Humorist David Sedaris is 68. Rock musician Lars Ulrich (Metallica) is 61. Actor-musician Jared Leto is 53. Rock singer Chris Daughtry is 45. Actor Beth Behrs is 39. Actor Kit Harington is 38.