

Groton Daily Independent

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Friday, Jan. 3

Senior Menu: Chili, corn bread, winter blend, oranges.

School. Breakfast: Egg wraps.

School Lunch: Popcorn chicken, tri taters.

Girls Wrestling at McCook Central/Montrose (Salem), 2 p.m.

Saturday, Jan. 4

Boys Wrestling Tournament at Webster, 10 a.m.

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

Basketball Double Header hosts Redfield ((Boys Girls JV at 1 p.m.; Boys JV/ at 2 p.m.; Girls Varsity and Boys Varsity to follow)

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



Sunday, Jan. 5

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 6 p.m.

United Methodist: Communion Sunday: Conde worship, 8:15 a.m.; Groton worship, 9:30 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.; Coffee Time, 10:30 a.m.; Britton worship, 11:15 a.m.

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

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

St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion at St. John's, 9:45 a.m.; at Zion, 11 a.m.; No Sunday School

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1440

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

New Orleans Probe Continues

Bourbon Street in New Orleans opened to the public yesterday amid a heavy police presence, as details continued to emerge about the terrorist attack there early Wednesday. Several of the 14 victims have been informally identified by friends and families, with official identification expected within days.

The FBI clarified earlier reports the US Army veteran potentially had help, instead claiming he acted alone. The 42-year-old rented the Ford F-150 in Houston Monday before traveling to New Orleans late Tuesday. Between 1 and 3 am Wednesday, he posted five videos on Facebook proclaiming support for ISIS and claiming he had originally planned to kill his family but opted for a more public attack. Surveillance footage shows him placing two coolers containing explosives in the area of Bourbon Street—both were later disarmed.

Investigators denied any clear link between the New Orleans rampage and the Cybertruck explosion in Las Vegas later that day, though both men served portions of their US Army careers at North Carolina's Fort Liberty (formerly Fort Bragg); they also both used peer-to-peer car rental app Turo.

'Dinosaur Highway' Discovered

Workers in a limestone quarry in southern England have uncovered almost 200 dinosaur footprints dating to roughly 166 million years ago, researchers revealed yesterday. The tracks are in the vicinity of a similar, previously discovered—but now inaccessible—site found in 1997, leading paleontologists to describe the area as a "Dinosaur Highway."

The recent find includes imprints from at least five different animals, believed to be four large sauropods and one Megalosaurus. The latter, a nearly 30-foot-long carnivore, was the first dinosaur fossil ever to be formally described in 1824. The new discovery sheds light on the behavior of dinosaurs in the region dating to the Middle Jurassic period—at a time when what is now England had a tropical climate and was covered in warm, shallow seas in many areas.

Unlike the previous 1997 discovery, researchers were able to extensively image and create 3D reconstructions of the prints, potentially providing insight into how the animals walked and interacted.

'It Ends With Us' Lawsuits

Actors Blake Lively and Justin Baldoni filed competing federal lawsuits this week over allegations surrounding their film "It Ends With Us." Lively accuses Baldoni and his publicity team of sexual harassment on set and orchestrating a retaliation campaign to damage her reputation. Conversely, Baldoni has sued The New York Times for \$250M for libel, claiming the newspaper published inaccurate information based on Lively's allegations.

Lively's initial complaint to the California Civil Rights Department Dec. 20 alleged a toxic work environment and inappropriate behavior by Baldoni. Lively also claimed that Wayfarer Studios, the production company, failed to provide proper channels for reporting harassment. The New York Times published an article about the allegations Dec. 21. Following the article, Baldoni was dropped by his agency, which also represents Lively and her husband, Ryan Reynolds.

Baldoni has denied the allegations. The New York Times has defended its reporting, stating it was based on an extensive document review.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

NFL regular season wraps up this weekend with Week 18.
Rosters announced for 2025 NFL Pro Bowl Games (Feb. 2).
Notre Dame tops Georgia 23-10 to advance to College Football Playoff semifinals.
Agnes Keleti, oldest living Olympic gold medalist and Holocaust survivor, dies at age 103.
Wayne Osmond, original member of the Osmond Brothers and sibling to Donny and Marie Osmond, dies at age 73.
The 82nd Golden Globe Awards to be presented Sunday (8 pm ET, CBS); see predictions for each category.
Billie Eilish's "Birds of a Feather" is Spotify's most-streamed song of 2024.

Science & Technology

Meta to introduce AI-generated characters with their own profiles that will share content, interact with users across Facebook and Instagram; release date to be determined.
Volcanic activity under the Yellowstone caldera is shifting toward the northeast, according to new geological survey; one of the world's biggest supervolcanoes, Yellowstone has experienced three massive eruptions over the past 2 million years.
Federal appeals court strikes down Biden administration net neutrality rules, finding regulators lack authority to restore requirements internet service providers treat all data on their networks equally

Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -0.2%, Dow -0.4%, Nasdaq -0.2%) in choppy first trading session of 2025.
Tesla shares drop 6% after quarterly results show first-ever annual drop in delivery numbers amid EV competition in China, Europe, and the US; Tesla delivered more than 1.7 million electric vehicles in 2024, down from more than 1.8 million in 2023.
US weekly jobless claims drop to 211,000 for week ending Dec. 28; figure is the lowest level since March 2024.
US average 30-year fixed-rate mortgage rises to 6.9%, the highest since July 2024

Politics & World Affairs

The 119th Congress convenes today, with US House to vote on a speaker; current speaker Rep. Mike Johnson (R, LA-4) needs 218 votes to win—at least 14 of 219 Republicans remain undecided while one GOP lawmaker plans to vote "no".
Twenty people honored with the Presidential Citizens Medal, including former Rep. Liz Cheney (R, WY-At large) and Rep. Bennie Thompson (D, MS-2), who led House probe into Jan. 6, 2021, US Capitol storming.
Winter storm to bring snowfall and ice from Central Plains to mid-Atlantic regions this weekend; between 6 and 12 inches of snow expected in some areas.

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Bird Flu by Marie Miller

Editor's Note: *After Marie wrote the final Covid-19 column, I messaged her and asked her about the Bird Flu. Here was her response!*

Lord, I hope this doesn't go where Covid-19 took us; I don't know whether I'm up to that. Here's what I know:

There have been some concerning mutations in HPAI (highly pathogenic avian influenza) A (H5N1) virus, ones that look like they'll make the virus more transmissible to humans. I want to note here that "transmissible to humans" is not the same as transmissible between humans. One is a worry; the other is a threat.

We have two variants we're watching, D1.1 and B3.13. We know D1.1 has caused the two severe infections we've seen in humans, one in Louisiana just this month and one in Canada (which was life-threatening in an otherwise healthy teenaged boy). The more common variant has not caused severe disease in humans at all--so far.

The real issue would be when a person is simultaneously infected with both of these variants (a so-called co-infection), which enables what's called an assortment event where the two viruses exchange genetic material in a co-infected cell, generating a sort of Frankenstein virus that combines the worst features of each. While this is not a given, it is not unlikely either; a number of earlier flu pandemics occurred in just this way.

Regular flu vaccination reduces the chance of a reassortment event because the plain old seasonal flu virus is also a potential participant in such an event. I know the government tried to ramp up flu shots for farm workers who are in contact with birds. They also made PPE available widely and pushed for testing of workers. What they didn't do is target dairy herds even though dairy cattle are as big a risk as birds. Of course, all of this costs money, and there's been a real reluctance to spend anything these days, so that's an issue too.

That's what I have for you today. We'll see where this takes us.

By the way, we should be getting started on vaccines. We have the genome, so mRNA vaccines should be relatively fast to develop now that we have the platform down from the Covid-19 vaccine research and implementation.

The latest surge in birds is the largest one yet, and I think we're going to see further spread before it gets better. That's a concern all by itself.

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GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT 06-6

MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL

P.O. Box 410
502 North 2nd Street
Groton, SD 57445
Fax: (605) 397-8453

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

P.O. Box 410
810 North 1st Street
Groton, SD 57445
Fax: (605) 397-2344

Groton Area School

Board

Grant Rix, President
Nick Strom, VP
Debra Gengerke
Martin Weismantel
Tigh Fliehs
Travis Harder
Dr. Heather Lerseth-Fliehs,
DVM

Superintendent

Joseph J. Schwan
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K-12 School Counselor

Emily Neely
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Technology Coordinator

Aaron Helvig
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Aaron.Helvig@k12.sd.us

Doubleheader Basketball Game

Redfield @ Groton Area
Saturday, January 4th, 2025

Game Times/Locations:

Main Court in Arena

- 1:00PM → Girls JV
- 2:00PM → Boys JV
- 3:15PM → Girls Varsity
- 4:45PM → Boys Varsity
- *Halftime Entertainment:* High School Dance Team

Prior to the Girls Varsity game, the National Anthem will be first, with Varsity Introductions/Lineups to follow.

ADMISSION & SPECTATORS: Adults: \$6.00 Students: \$4.00.

CONCESSIONS: Will be available

LOCKER ROOM: Redfield will use the two locker rooms down the JH hallway (two doors on the left). Boys Team will be in the first. The Girls' Team will be in the second.

Team Benches – Groton: South Bench
Redfield: North Bench

ATHLETIC TRAINER: There will be an athletic trainer on site. AED is located near the ticket booth.

Livestream: www.GDlive.com or Groton High School | High School Sports | Home | Hudl

Varsity Officials: Austin Sumption, Troy Goehring, Derek Barondeau

JV Game Officials: Jordan Kjellsen, Quinton Biermann, Rachel Guthmiller

JV/V Shot Clock Operator: Joe Schwan

JV/V/C Scoreboard: Kristen Dolan

JV/V Official Book: Kristi Zoellner

Announcer: Joe Schwan

National Anthem: TBD

Thank you,
Alexa Schuring, Athletic Director

Proposed Amendment Seeks to Protect South Dakota Taxpayers Amid Federal Funding Uncertainties

By Senator Casey Crabtree (R-District 8)

In 2022, South Dakota voters expanded Medicaid eligibility to adults with incomes up to 138% of the poverty level. The amendment was placed in the state's Constitution and can only be changed by South Dakota voters. Since then, the legislature has dutifully implemented Medicaid expansion and more than 28,000 individuals are currently enrolled.

One of the key points by proponents of Medicaid expansion was that federal government pay 90% and South Dakota taxpayers pay the remaining 10%. Right now, that 10% is projected to cost South Dakota taxpayers about \$20 million a year for the upcoming fiscal year.

Voters have concluded that improvements should be made to the language that was implemented in 2022. During the 2024 legislative session, Rep. Tony Venhuizen and I proposed a constitutional amendment that allowed the State of South Dakota to consider a work requirement for able-bodied adults aged 18-65 that enrolled in Medicaid expansion. The proposal gained the support of every Republican in the legislature, and the amendment went on to be the only ballot measure out of seven to pass on the November ballot.

The incoming Trump administration, the new Republican Congress, and the Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy led "DOGE" are all working to find ways to control federal spending. Regardless of your political affiliation, we can all see wasteful government spending at the federal level and should be glad to see real attention being paid to this issue. News out of Washington says one way the feds could reduce spending is by lowering the federal share of Medicaid expansion from 90% to between 70 and 80%. Each percentage in reduction would cost South Dakota taxpayers about \$2 million.

In the upcoming session, Rep. Venhuizen and I will introduce another Joint Resolution proposing a constitutional amendment binding Medicaid expansion to the level of federal medical assistance. The new constitutional amendment would clarify that, if the Feds ever drop their match below 90%, the South Dakota Constitution would no longer require us to continue Medicaid expansion.

To be clear, the proposed amendment does not eliminate Medicaid expansion. If passed, South Dakota could keep Medicaid expansion in place, but it would allow the legislature to debate if South Dakota taxpayers can afford it if the federal match changes from the 90% those voters previously agreed to. For example, if the Feds cut their share to 70%, the state would have to allocate an extra \$40 million a year, and South Dakotans would have to consider cuts to other programs to pay for that increase.

Several other states enacted Medicaid expansion with language like this, including Montana, Utah, Arizona, Illinois, Indiana, Arkansas, New Hampshire, Virginia, and North Carolina. In some cases, these states will automatically withdraw from Medicaid Expansion if the Feds drop their contribution below 90%. Our proposal would not do that. It is more like Iowa, Idaho, and New Mexico, which simply allow the legislature to consider other options if the Feds cut funding.

We want to emphasize that this proposed amendment honors the will of the voters. The voters passed Medicaid expansion with the clear understanding that the federal government would pay 90% of the costs. In 2024, the voters supported us by improving the constitutional language to allow for a work requirement for able-bodied adults. With this proposal, we are once again asking the voters to clarify their intent: If the federal match rate for Medicaid drops below 90%, do they want the legislature to be able to consider the budgetary implications?

Sanford Health and Marshfield Clinic Health System complete merger **Combined nonprofit integrated health system will transform care delivery in rural Midwest**

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. and MARSHFIELD, WIS. — Sanford Health, the largest rural health system in the U.S., headquartered in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and Marshfield Clinic Health System, have completed their merger and are now one nonprofit integrated health system operating as Sanford Health, marking the beginning of a new chapter for the future of rural health care.

"Today's historic milestone paves the way for us to advance world-class care across the rural Midwest and accelerate vital investments in the communities we have the privilege of serving," said Bill Gassen, president and CEO of Sanford Health. "Together, we will reimagine the future of local, patient-centered nonprofit health care by expanding services, enhancing access and harnessing innovative technologies to improve the health of our communities. We are thrilled to welcome 13,000 new employees from Marshfield Clinic Health System to our Sanford family and look forward to embracing all of the new possibilities that lie ahead."

The Marshfield Clinic region is a new health services delivery region of Sanford Health that will continue to serve communities in Wisconsin and Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Additionally, each organization's respective health plans, Sanford Health Plan and Security Health Plan, will continue current operations under a common management reporting and governance structure.

"Our partnership brings together two organizations deeply committed to advancing health care for the people and communities we serve in rural America," said Brian Hoerneman, M.D., who previously served as interim CEO of Marshfield Clinic Health System and has now transitioned to the role of President and CEO of the Marshfield Clinic region of Sanford Health. "I am excited about the opportunities ahead as our teams learn from each other and combine our complementary strengths, cultures and missions. Together, we will build on our shared legacy, creating a future where every person, regardless of zip code, has access to the best possible care."

The combined system will serve patients and communities across the upper Midwest, including South Dakota, North Dakota, Minnesota, Wyoming, Iowa, Wisconsin and the upper peninsula of Michigan. The organization includes nearly 56,000 employees, 56 hospitals, 4,500 providers, two fully integrated health plans, specialty pharmacies and nationally recognized research institutions. Sanford Health Plan and Security Health Plan will serve more than 425,000 members.

Additionally:

Dr. Brian Hoerneman will continue to lead the newly established region in his new role as regional president and CEO. He is a native of Marshfield, Wisconsin, and a practicing emergency medicine physician.

Sanford Health Plan and Security Health Plan will continue current operations under common management reporting and governance structures. The health plans will be led by Dr. Tommy Ibrahim, executive vice president and president and CEO of Sanford Health Plan. Krista Hoglund serves as regional president and CEO of Security Health Plan and reports to Dr. Ibrahim.

Physicians will continue to have a critical voice in the direction of the combined organization through Sanford Health's robust physician governance structure. Like all of Sanford Health's regions, the new Marshfield Clinic region has a Physician Executive Council, which will feature Marshfield Clinic physician leaders. Three members of the Physician Executive Council will serve on the system's Council of Governors (COG). These physicians are Jay Vedre, M.D., MPH, Kent Ray, DO, MSc, and Matt Thomas, M.D.

Marshfield Clinic Health System (MCHS) will become a region of Sanford Health. The Marshfield brand will continue to be predominant within the Marshfield Clinic region.

Three Marshfield Clinic Health System Board members have now joined the Sanford Health Board of Trustees. These new Trustees are Dr. George Brown, Thomas Wenzel and Dr. Maureen McCausland.

A regional board of community leaders is being established to govern the operations and strategy of the Marshfield Clinic region.

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An integration process is underway to create a unified organization. Patients will continue to receive care from the same trusted providers at the same locations, with no immediate changes. Moving forward together under the Sanford Health parent organization will bring more resources, expertise and innovation to patient care in communities across the rural Midwest.

Marshfield Clinic Health System, now Marshfield Clinic region of Sanford Health, is an integrated health system whose mission is to enrich lives through accessible, affordable compassionate health care. The health system serves Wisconsin and Michigan's Upper Peninsula with more than 1,400 providers comprising 170 specialties, health plan, and research and education programs. Primary operations include more than 60 Marshfield Clinic locations, 11 hospitals, Marshfield Children's Hospital, Marshfield Clinic Research Institute, Security Health Plan and Marshfield Clinic Health System Foundation.

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**Any interest in any of
these basketball games on
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Boys Redfield JV
Girls Redfield JV
Boys Warner JV
Girls Warner JV
Girls Clark/Willow Lake JV
Boys Clark/Willow Lake C
Boys Clark/Willow Lake JV
Boys Lennox C
Boys Lennox JV
Girls Lennox JV
Girls Lennox C
Boys Tiospa Zina JV
Girls Tiospa Zina JV
Boys Dakota Valley C
Boys Dakota Valley JV



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Lawmakers try again to make department officials talk about alleged employee crimes

With prior subpoenas being challenged in court, committee approves new ones

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - JANUARY 2, 2025 2:42 PM

After a state department resisted an order requiring its leaders to speak with lawmakers about alleged crimes by former state employees, the lawmakers decided Thursday in Pierre to issue more specific subpoenas.

The Legislature's Government Operations and Audit Committee approved the new subpoenas on a 9-1 vote. The committee's subpoena motion calls for Department of Revenue Secretary Michael Houdyshell and Division of Motor Vehicles Director Rosa Yaeger to appear before the committee in a closed-door meeting April 1, after the upcoming legislative session. The lone no vote came from Sen. Dean Wink, R-Howes, who did not explain his vote during the meeting.

The Department of Revenue did not immediately respond to a message Thursday from South Dakota Searchlight.

Under the new subpoena language, Houdyshell and Yaeger would be required to answer questions about past and present policies governing employee conduct, document handling, and oversight procedures. Lawmakers also want details on changes made to the DMV's management structure and internal controls since the departure of Sandra O'Day, a deceased former employee who allegedly created 13 fake vehicle titles to secure \$400,000 in loans.

Sen. David Wheeler, R-Huron, introduced the new subpoena motion. He said the revised language would better withstand judicial scrutiny.

"Basically, the purpose of this is to provide more detail, more specificity in the subpoena," he said.

None of the new details appeared in the prior subpoenas, which were brief documents that did little more than command Houdyshell and Yaeger to appear.

The Department of Revenue is challenging the previous subpoenas in court.

DMV trouble

The subpoena motion focused on the operations of the DMV, including its "organizational structure, electronic systems, and internal processes." It also calls for details regarding the investigation into O'Day.

O'Day worked for the division for decades. After her death, her family found suspicious financial records that ultimately led the state Division of Criminal Investigation to discover O'Day's allegedly illegal behavior.

Lawmakers want to know how the investigation was conducted, any internal controls that O'Day violated, any changes made specifically as a result of the investigation, and what documents were in her possession.

The subpoenas do not mention Lynne Hunsley, 64, of Pierre. She used her former position with the department to create a fake vehicle title that helped her avoid some excise taxes. She took a plea deal-



A December 2024 view of the South Dakota State Capitol in Pierre.

(Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

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Monday and was sentenced to three years of probation and was ordered to pay a \$1,000 fine and \$1,200 in restitution to the state.

Nor does the order mention Danielle Degenstein, 51, of Pierre. She is charged with a misdemeanor for allegedly concealing her knowledge of a crime committed by a person identified in court documents only as "S.O." — a set of initials that matches O'Day's. Degenstein has pleaded not guilty.

Effectiveness questioned

At Thursday's meeting, Sen. Jean Hunhoff, R-Yankton, questioned whether scheduling a hearing for April signals a lack of urgency.

Wheeler said current and future court proceedings — including any possible future appeals and lawsuits — could take a significant amount of time.

"I also think there's a decent likelihood that the April 1 date probably won't actually be the day that any meeting occurs," Wheeler said. "That's more or less a placeholder to ensure that we can issue a subpoena, that there is a meeting currently set."

"This is the process we have to go through to make sure we are continuing to move forward on the investigation and we as a legislature are doing our proper oversight duties," he added.

The subpoena will be sent to the Legislative Research Council for review, and to the Legislature's Executive Board for final approval Friday. Given the board's unanimous vote on the prior subpoena, Sen. Lee Schoenbeck, R-Watertown, said he anticipates it will be quickly approved.

Other cases pending

Recently alleged criminal activity by state employees extends beyond the DMV.

In July, former Department of Social Services employee Lonna Carroll, 68, of Algona, Iowa, was accused of embezzling \$1.8 million from the state by creating and approving fraudulent financial support orders for children over the course of 13 years. Her case is scheduled for a trial in April.

Earlier this month, Attorney General Marty Jackley announced charges against former Department of Public Safety employee Renee Strong, 55, of Springfield, for allegedly forging and falsifying food-service health inspection records for inspections she never conducted. There have been no further proceedings so far in Strong's case.

Jackley plans to propose legislation this winter to strengthen protections against state employee fraud. Gov. Kristi Noem recently responded to the string of charges by adding an extra internal control officer position to the executive branch and by ordering state employees to undergo annual training aimed at preventing criminal activity.

Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked for five years as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

SD Supreme Court selects Jensen for second term as chief justice

BY: SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - JANUARY 2, 2025 10:58 AM

South Dakota's Supreme Court justices have selected Steven R. Jensen to serve a second term as chief justice of the state's highest court.

Jensen was appointed to the Supreme Court in 2017 and was initially selected as chief justice by the members of the court in 2021. He will begin his second, four-year term as chief justice on Monday.

In a press release, Jensen said he is "deeply honored."

"Over the past four years, we have worked to ensure that our courts remain fair, accessible and responsive to the needs of all South Dakotans," he said. "I look forward to continuing this important work as we strive to uphold the rule of law and strengthen public trust in our judiciary."

The chief justice is the administrative head of the South Dakota court system, which has 605 employees and an annual operating budget of \$78 million. The chief justice also works closely with the governor and the Legislature on matters related to the court system in South Dakota.

In Thursday's press release, Jensen highlighted initiatives he helped to spearhead, including the creation of a statewide indigent defense office to provide more effective and efficient court-appointed representation in criminal cases, the founding of an access to courts commission to address the challenge of more self-represented people in civil cases, security enhancements at county courthouses, and the development of more focused and effective probation services for young adult offenders.

The South Dakota Supreme Court is comprised of five justices selected by the governor from five geographic appointment districts. In addition to the chief justice, the members of the court include Justices Janine M. Kern, Mark E. Salter, Patricia J. DeVaney and Scott P. Myren. The justices face a nonpolitical retention election three years after appointment and every eight years after that.



South Dakota Chief Justice Steven Jensen gestures as he participates in oral arguments with other state Supreme Court justices on March 23, 2023, in Brookings. Also pictured, from left, are Justices Scott Myren, Patricia DeVaney, Janine Kern and former Justice David Gilbertson. (David Bordewyk/South Dakota Newspaper Association)

COMMENTARY

Noem's public broadcasting cut proves she's nothing like Mr. Rogers and a lot like Trump

Governor proposes sudden funding reduction after approving previous increases
by Seth Tupper

Gov. Kristi Noem seems surprised about the amount of state money flowing to public broadcasting. "South Dakota has the third highest per capita funding of public broadcasting of any state in the nation," she said during her Dec. 3 budget address.

If she found that shocking, imagine how stunned she'll be when she finds out it's her fault.

She approved the last six state budgets, each of which included an increase for South Dakota Public Broadcasting. The organization's annual state funding went up 27% during that period, from \$4.4 million to \$5.6 million.

With such a strong record of support, Noem probably should've been nominated for a Friend of Public Media award. That's unlikely to happen now that she's proposed a 65% reduction, which will slash public broadcasting's state funding to just under \$2 million if legislators go along with the plan.

The organization gets millions in additional support from private fundraising and the federally funded Corporation for Public Broadcasting, but the national funding is tied to state matching dollars. So the national funding would decline along with the state funding, and the resulting staff and programming cuts could leave almost nothing left for donors to support, potentially sending the organization into a death spiral.

Noem also wants to cut other parts of state government. Sales tax revenue is the primary funder of the state budget, and it's declining, in contradiction to Noem's claim that South Dakota's economy is the best in the nation.

Why is Noem targeting public broadcasting for one of the harshest cuts? She devoted only a few sen-

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tences to it in her budget speech, including her characterization of per capita funding, which is dubious. According to SDPB, South Dakota is one of eight states where a single, statewide public radio and television operation is housed under one umbrella, rendering comparisons to many other states moot. And SDPB says it has the second-lowest funding in that group of eight.

Setting that aside, it's clear from Noem's past statements that she has more than fiscal matters in mind. She was miffed several years ago when SDPB dared to interview scholar and author Ibram X. Kendi after she singled him out for criticism in her campaign against critical race theory.

Noem also declined to participate in a debate on SDPB in 2022. She said it was because of a decision by National Public Radio's "Morning Edition" to end its traditional Fourth of July reading of the Declaration of Independence. The show replaced it with a segment on historical and modern interpretations of the document's references to equality.

At the time, Noem described that as evidence that NPR and SDPB, which airs "Morning Edition," were "drifting further and further to the left" and engaging in a "radical effort to rewrite American history and cancel our Founding Fathers." SDPB's Lori Walsh — who conducted the earlier Kendi interview and is a Marine veteran — responded by reading the Declaration of Independence on her "In the Moment" radio show, which apparently didn't appease Noem.

So it sure looks like the governor has an ideological vendetta against public broadcasting, and she's taking a last swipe at the organization on her way out the door (she's President-elect Donald Trump's nominee to run the Department of Homeland Security).

Ironically, most people who watched or listened to Noem's criticism of SDPB during her budget address probably saw or heard the speech on SDPB's radio, television or online platforms. SDPB broadcasts the governor's budget address and State of the State address every year, along with every committee meeting and floor session of the Legislature. That invaluable work opens up state government to South Dakotans no matter where they live, and it provides a way for media outlets all over the state (including South Dakota Searchlight) to cover state government even on days when they can't be in Pierre.

It's worth noting here that I'm a former employee of SDPB, where I was given the opportunity to work on projects including a documentary and podcast about the 1972 Black Hills Flood — the kind of historically minded project that SDPB is uniquely positioned to support. I also grew up with SDPB, watching "Sesame Street" and "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" on an analog television in rural South Dakota where public broadcasting was one of two or three signals our antenna picked up.

Like thousands of other South Dakotans, I value the thoughtful discussion of state issues on SDPB's "In the Moment" and "South Dakota Focus." I appreciate the attention and storytelling that SDPB brings to rural communities with "Dakota Life," and the extensive coverage of the arts and state high school activities that SDPB makes available to everyone free of charge.

Of course, SDPB is in a period of self-reflection like all media. It distributes content on the internet, through a streaming app and on podcast platforms, in addition to broadcasting over the radio and televi-



Gov. Kristi Noem presents her annual budget address to lawmakers in the South Dakota State Capitol on Dec. 3, 2024. Behind her, from left, are House Speaker nominee Jon Hansen and Lt. Gov. Larry Rhoden. (Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

sion airwaves. There may come a day when it's no longer necessary to maintain such a robust network of statewide broadcast towers, and that may come with budgetary adjustments.

But that's a long-term, strategic discussion requiring leaders with maturity, foresight and thoughtfulness — qualities Noem might have in greater supply if she'd spent more time listening to Fred Rogers and less to Donald Trump.

Seth is editor-in-chief of South Dakota Searchlight. He was previously a supervising senior producer for South Dakota Public Broadcasting and a newspaper journalist in Rapid City and Mitchell.

Democrats object to Trump's expected pardons of Jan. 6 defendants

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - JANUARY 2, 2025 5:30 PM

WASHINGTON — Democratic Rep. Jamie Raskin on Thursday urged Americans to demand President-elect Donald Trump justify each Jan. 6 defendant pardon if he issues them on his "first day" in office, as promised.

The Maryland congressman, who sat on the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the U.S. Capitol, said it would be an "extraordinary event in the history of the republic to have a president pardon more than 1,000 criminal convicts who were in jail for having engaged in a violent insurrection incited by that very president."

"And if it is actually going to happen, people should demand a very specific accounting of how there is contrition and repentance on part of each of the people being pardoned," said Raskin, who will be the top Democrat this Congress on the House Committee on Oversight and Accountability.

Raskin spoke alongside other panelists for a virtual event hosted by the State Democracy Defenders Action, a nonpartisan advocacy group that describes its mission as fighting against "election sabotage and autocracy."

Trump promised on the campaign trail to pardon those who attacked the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, in a violent effort to stop Congress from certifying Joe Biden's 2020 presidential election victory. Trump has repeatedly characterized the rioters as "patriots," "warriors" and "hostages."

The president-elect, who will be sworn into office on Jan. 20, said during a December interview on NBC News' "Meet the Press with Kristen Welker" that he will act "very quickly" to pardon the defendants on day one — though he indicated he might make exceptions "if somebody was radical, crazy."

More than 140 police officers were assaulted during the attack, and the rioters caused roughly \$2.8 million in damage to the Capitol.

The U.S. Department of Justice has charged approximately 1,572 people in connection with the attack, including charging 171 defendants for using a deadly or dangerous weapon to inflict serious bodily harm on a law enforcement officer.

Raskin highlighted the case of a 56-year-old New York man who was sentenced to 10 years in prison for assaulting an officer during the riot. Thomas Webster, a former Marine and police officer, tackled and choked a Washington Metropolitan Police Department officer while other rioters kicked him.

"That's just one example," Raskin said. "The press has gotten to know several police officers who've been outspoken about the outrageous, medieval-style violence that was trained on them."

According to the latest Justice Department figures, approximately 996 defendants have pleaded guilty



Rioters are shown inside the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, in Washington, D.C. (Photo by Brent Stirton/Getty Images)

— 321 to felony charges and 675 to misdemeanors.

About 215 defendants have been found guilty at contested trials in federal court, including 10 who were convicted of seditious conspiracy.

Ashley Murray covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include domestic policy and appropriations.

FBI believes Bourbon Street terrorist acted alone, posted videos before New Orleans attack

BY: GREG LAROSE - JANUARY 2, 2025 2:29 PM

NEW ORLEANS — The man who sped down Bourbon Street early New Year's Day in a pickup truck, killing at least 14 people and injuring 37 more, is believed to have acted alone in the terror attack, an FBI official said.

Shamsud-Din Jabbar, a 42-year-old military veteran from Texas, was killed in a shootout with police after barreling down nearly three blocks of the French Quarter's main thoroughfare. Two New Orleans police officers were wounded in the exchange.

Christopher Raia, the FBI's deputy director of counterterrorism, said Jabbar did not have any accomplices, stressing that it is still "early in the investigation." He also said there is "no definite link" between the New Orleans attack and Wednesday's explosion of a Tesla Cybertruck in Las Vegas.

An active member of the U.S. Army was killed inside the truck in that incident outside the Trump International Hotel.

Raia joined Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry, New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell and other officials for a news conference Thursday morning at Benson Tower.

"This was an act of terrorism," Raia said. "It was premeditated and an evil act."

The FBI has received more than 400 tips from New Orleans and outside the state in regards to the Bourbon Street incident, and hundreds of hours of surveillance video has been recovered from the French Quarter and other locations, Raia said.

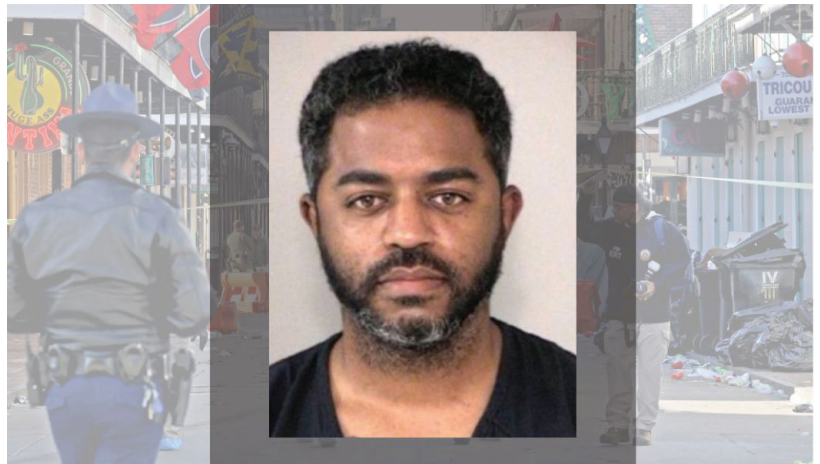
Video footage shows Jabbar placing a homemade bomb at the intersection of Bourbon and Orleans streets and another two blocks away. The improvised explosive devices (IEDs) were placed inside small coolers, and investigators want to speak to anyone who saw them in the French Quarter.

Raia said the video also shows other people noticing the coolers, but they are not suspected of being involved in the terror attack.

The FBI would like to speak to these people and any other witnesses, and investigators plan to explore Jabbar's life history, Raia said.

"We are looking at everything in his life," he said.

Two other suspicious items in the French Quarter were determined not to be explosive devices. Raia confirmed bomb-making materials were found at a short-term rental home roughly two miles from where the terror attack occurred. It is believed this was where Raia assembled the devices. The FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms continue to investigate the house.



Authorities say Shamsud-Din Jabbar was behind the wheel of a pickup truck that plowed through a crowd on Bourbon Street early Jan. 1, 2025. (Getty Images/FBI photo)

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ATF Special Agent in Charge Josh Jackson confirmed that a small fire at the rental home in the St. Roch neighborhood ignited after the terror attack and said investigators are still on the scene to gather more evidence.

The Bourbon Street crime scene has been cleared, according to Raia. The New Orleans Police Department will determine when closed portions of the French Quarter will be reopened to the public. The city is hosting thousands of college football fans in town for the Sugar Bowl, which was rescheduled from Wednesday night to 3 p.m. Thursday.

Cleaning crews have swept up the crime scene and trash from other areas of the French Quarter that have been closed off since Wednesday morning. Vehicle access will first be provided to delivery trucks.

Videos detail timeline, background

Jabbar rented the Ford F-150 pickup truck he used in the attack Monday in Houston and drove to New Orleans on New Year's Eve. From just after 1 a.m. Jan. 1 until just minutes before he turned onto Bourbon Street, Jabbar posted five videos on his Facebook page in which he claimed his support for Islamic State, Raia said.

Police recovered an ISIS flag that was hung from a plastic flagpole on the trailer hitch of Jabbar's truck. In one of the videos, Jabbar said he "joined" Islamic State before the summer, according to Raia.

"Jabbar explains he originally planned to harm his family and friends but was concerned the news headlines would not focus on the 'war between the believers and the disbelievers,'" Raia said.

Investigators have also recovered three cellphones and two laptop computers linked to Jabbar.

Raia encouraged anyone with information about Jabbar or the terror attack to use the 1-800-CALL-FBI tip line or share information online at fbi.gov/BourbonStreetattack.

French Quarter reopening

Local officials held a private memorial midday Thursday near the intersection where Jabbar started his attack. Fourteen yellow roses were placed at the site in honor of the victims, New Orleans Police Superintendent Anne Kirkpatrick told reporters gathered along Canal Street across from the ceremony.

A small brass band, a fixture at New Orleans funeral second lines, played "I'll Fly Away," a song traditionally performed during the walking processions. Sanitation crews had swept the crime scene clean just hours earlier, and the heart of the French Quarter was expected to be reopened to the public Thursday afternoon.

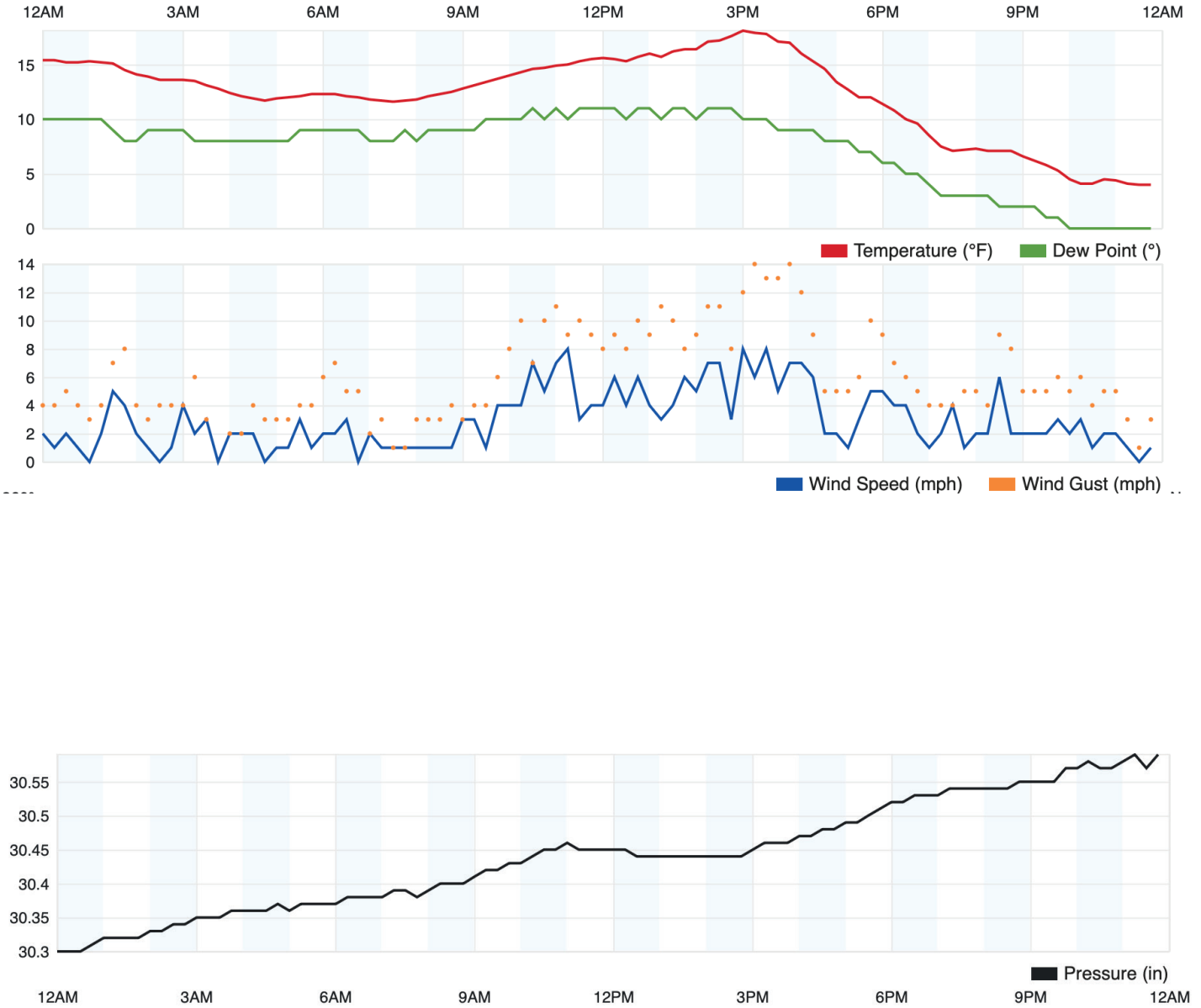
Thousands of college football fans remain in town for the Sugar Bowl, a quarterfinal playoff game featuring the University of Georgia and Notre Dame. The event was postponed from Wednesday night after the terror attack. Extra security precautions have been implemented at the Superdome.

Greg LaRose has covered news for more than 30 years in Louisiana. Before becoming editor of the Louisiana Illuminator, he was the chief investigative reporter for WDSU-TV in New Orleans. He previously led the government and politics team for The Times-Picayune | NOLA.com, and was editor in chief at New Orleans CityBusiness. Greg's other career stops include Tiger Rag, South Baton Rouge Journal, the Covington News Banner, Louisiana Radio Network and multiple radio stations.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Friday

Friday Night

Saturday

Saturday Night

Sunday



High: 13 °F

Low: -2 °F

High: 7 °F

Low: -6 °F

High: 7 °F

Decreasing
Clouds

Partly Cloudy

Mostly Cloudy
then Slight
Chance Snow

Slight Chance
Snow then
Cloudy

Cold



Snow Coming this Weekend

January 2, 2025
2:39 PM

Snow expected Friday-Sunday over Central South Dakota.

Key Messages

- **A few inches of snow are possible from Friday night through Sunday morning over Central South Dakota.**
- Probability of over 2 inches of snow is highest along and west of the Missouri River Valley, up to 70-90%.
- **Areas within the red oval have a greater uncertainty associated with the forecast.**

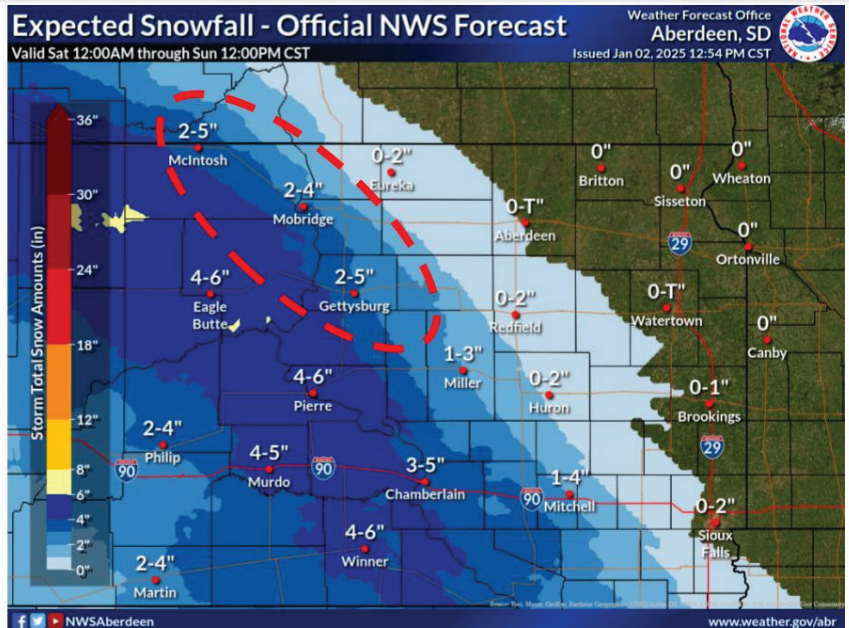
NEW

What Has Changed?

- This is the first update.

Next Scheduled Update

- Early tomorrow morning.



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

A few inches of snow are possible Friday night through Sunday morning over central South Dakota. Probability of over 2 inches of snow is highest along and west of the Missouri River Valley (70-90%).

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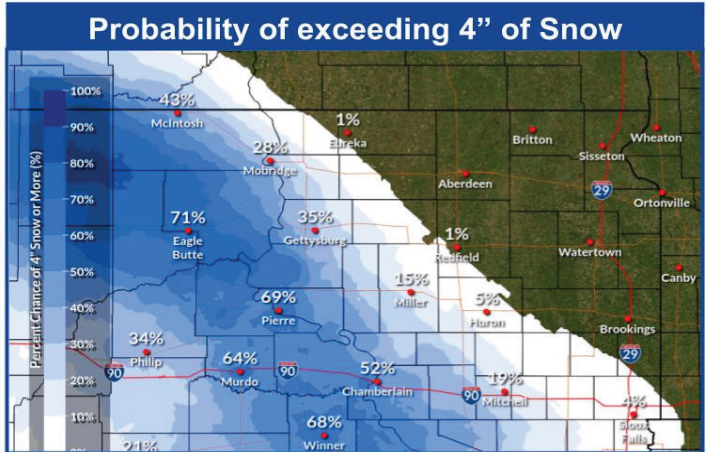
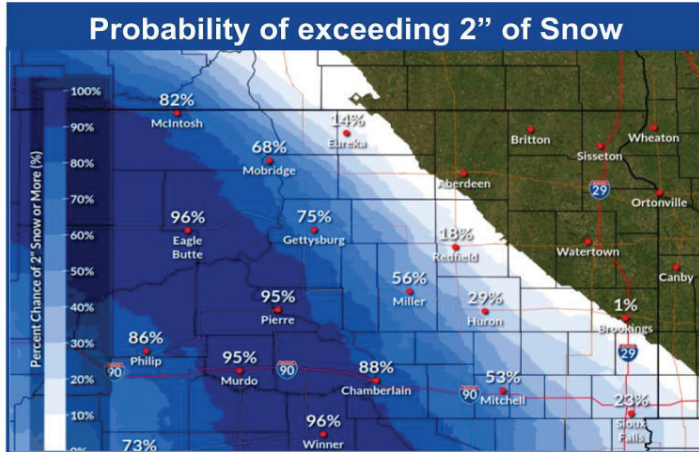


Snowfall Probabilities

January 2, 2025
2:44 PM

Accumulation probabilities from 12AM Saturday to 12PM Sunday

- The probability of receiving 2" of snow or more are highest along and west of the Missouri River Valley.
- Along the southern Missouri River and areas west of Mobridge have the best chances of reaching 4" of snow, reaching a 60% chance or greater.



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

The probability of receiving 2" of snow or more are highest along and west of the Missouri River Valley. Along the southern Missouri River and areas west of Mobridge have the best chances of reaching 4" of snow, reaching a 60% chance or greater. Our confidence decreases on the northeastern edge of the system, as we expect there to be a sharp cutoff to the snow.



Colder Temperatures

January 2, 2025
2:50 PM

Below normal temperatures expected through Tuesday, wind chill as low as -25°

- Wind chills will be below 0° across central and NE South Dakota, as well as western Minnesota through Tues.
- Overnight low wind chills could reach as low as -25°.
- Under these conditions, frostbite and hypothermia can occur in as little as 30 minutes. Limit outdoor activity when possible and bundle up if you have to go outside.

	Minimum Wind Chill Forecast (°F)																					Minimum					
	1/3 Fri		1/4 Sat		1/5 Sun		1/6 Mon		1/7 Tue		1/8 Wed		1/9 Thu														
	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am		12pm	6pm										
Aberdeen	-10	-12	-5	-13	-17	-17	-12	-14	-21	-22	-11	-11	-12	-13	-2	-6	-13	-14	-8	-13	-16	-16	-6	-7	-9	-8	-22
Miller	-4	-7	-2	-9	-14	-15	-10	-8	-17	-18	-11	-12	-15	-16	-5	-8	-14	-15	-11	-16	-20	-18	-5	-7	-7	-5	-20
Mobridge	-7	-9	-4	-9	-14	-14	-8	-9	-12	-13	-3	-2	-8	-8	0	-5	-12	-13	-8	-8	-12	-9	4	2	1	3	-14
Murdo	2	-1	-2	-5	-12	-13	-11	-9	-12	-14	-7	-9	-13	-13	-5	-8	-15	-17	-14	-14	-18	-15	-1	0	0	0	-18
Ortonville	-9	-11	-8	-9	-13	-14	-8	-10	-19	-20	-14	-13	-13	-13	-3	-4	-10	-11	-9	-12	-14	-12	-6	-5	-6	-7	-20
Pierre	2	1	3	0	-8	-11	-8	-6	-8	-8	-4	-3	-1	-5	-2	-3	-11	-13	-9	-10	-14	-11	1	2	1	0	-14
Sisseton	-13	-15	-9	-13	-17	-16	-10	-16	-23	-24	-14	-13	-16	-16	-5	-7	-13	-15	-12	-16	-18	-16	-6	-9	-10	-10	-24
Watertown	-10	-13	-8	-9	-12	-14	-8	-12	-19	-20	-10	-12	-13	-13	-1	-5	-12	-13	-9	-14	-17	-16	-5	-7	-8	-9	-20

Created: 1 pm CST Thu 1/2/2025 | Values are minimums over the period beginning at the time shown.



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 18 °F at 2:59 PM

Low Temp: 4 °F at 10:18 PM

Wind: 14 mph at 3:06 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 8 hours, 53 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 51 in 1962

Record Low: --34 in 1912

Average High: 24

Average Low: 3

Average Precip in Jan.: 0.06

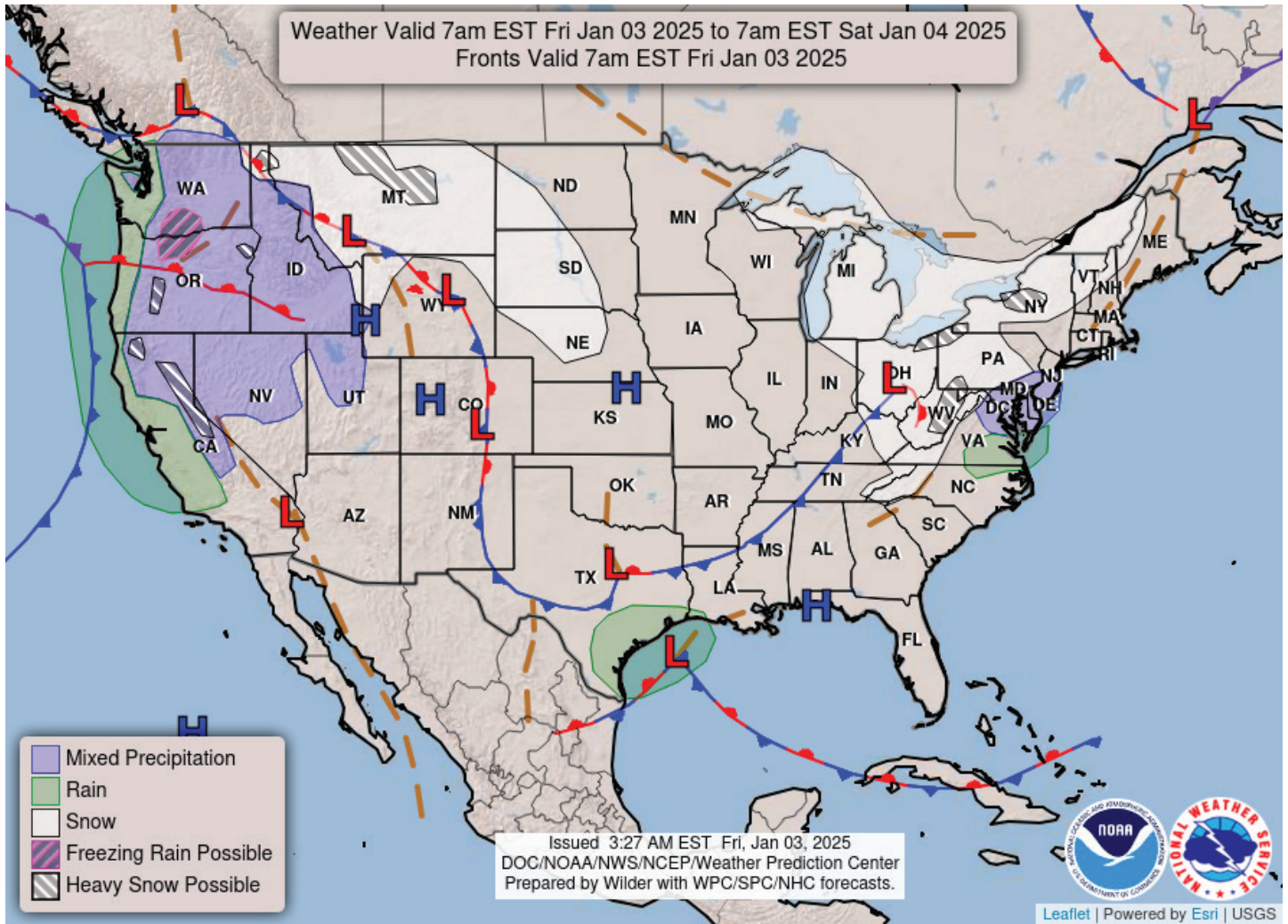
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.06

Precip Year to Date: 21.71

Sunset Tonight: 5:03:51 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:10:18 am



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Today in Weather History

January 3, 1997: A powerful area of low pressure and deep Arctic high pressure brought almost all winter elements to central and northeast South Dakota and west-central Minnesota from the afternoon of the 3rd to the morning of the 5th. The storm began with widespread freezing rain, mainly over northeast South Dakota and west-central Minnesota, where significant accumulations of ice occurred on roads, trees, and power lines. Late in the evening of the 3rd, the freezing rain changed to sleet and then snow, with substantial snowfall accumulations of 6 to as much as 27 inches by late on the 4th. As the Arctic high pressure pushed in through the morning and afternoon of the 4th, northwest winds increased to 25 to 45 mph gusting to 55 mph, creating widespread blizzard conditions, drifts up to 20 feet, and wind chills from 40 to 70 below. The massive accumulation of ice and snow across parts of central and mainly across northeast South Dakota resulted in the roof collapse of over 150 rural buildings. The roofs collapsed onto farm machinery and livestock with a lot of the machinery damaged and a lot of animals injured or killed. The collapse of so many buildings from snow and ice was believed to be the first in this area. On most other buildings, the snow had to be shoveled or blown off. One man was killed in west-central Minnesota as he was trying to shovel snow off the roof of a building. One roof collapse near Lake Poinsett, seven west of Estelline, killed four horses, damaged a boat, and flattened a car. The significant snow drifts buried a few homes during the storm. Many power outages also occurred across parts of central and northeast South Dakota as power lines and poles were downed from the heavy ice accumulation. Some people were without power for several days in the extreme cold conditions. The cities of Miranda, Rockham, Zell, Garden City, Bryant, Vienna, Glenham, Hazel, and other cities were without power for many hours. Some of the communities were out of power for up to 2 days.

In Aberdeen, heavy snow blocking a furnace exhaust vent sent three family members to the hospital for carbon monoxide poisoning. Also, in Aberdeen, the snowmobile club, the drift busters, were called upon for the first time in several years to deliver medicine, take patients to the hospital, and carry essential workers to work and home. Emergencies were challenging to respond to, making many hours to short distances. Throughout central and northeast South Dakota, many businesses and grocery stores were closed. Interstates 29 and 90 were both closed for a few days, along with most state highways. The rest of the roads were either blocked by huge drifts or had one-lane traffic. Snowplows were called off the streets until conditions improved, and when they did start to clear the roads, they worked 12 to 18 hour days. Many vehicles went into the ditch, with mainly minor injuries. Some people had to be rescued. Travelers and truckers were stranded for several days until the roads opened. When Interstate-29 re-opened, there was a logjam of vehicles for 3 miles. One Watertown policeman said he has never seen an impasse as bad as this in 28 years. Area airports were closed, or flights were canceled or delayed. The mail was delayed for several days, most activities were canceled or postponed, and many schools closed on the 6th. The heavy snowfall from this storm brought the widespread snowpack up to 2 to 5 feet. For the winter season so far, the area had record snowfall and recorded cold. Some of the snowfall amounts include 6 inches at McLaughlin, 8 inches 22 SSW Keldron and 4 NW Onida, 9 inches at Pollock, Timber Lake, Highmore, Mobridge, and Kennebec, 10 inches at Castlewood, Clear Lake, Miller, Fort Thompson, and Clark. Snowfall amounts of 1 to over 2 feet include 12 inches at Eureka, and Redfield, 13 inches at Selby and Aberdeen, 14 inches at Pierre and Roscoe, 15 inches at Ortonville MN, 16 inches at Mellette and Browns Valley, MN 18 inches at Faulkton and 1 ENE Stephan, 20 inches at Webster, 22 inches at Britton, 24 inches at Sisseton, 26 inches 10 NW Britton, and 27 inches at Wheaton.

1777 - An overnight freeze enabled George Washington and his troops to flank the British at Trenton, cross their lines at Princeton, and seek security in the hills of northern New Jersey. (David Ludlum)

1824: The oldest known weather information in Oklahoma begins on this today at Fort Gibson in 1824. Now known as Muskogee County.

1883: A remarkably brilliant meteor display occurred on the night of January 3rd. The phenomenon was observed at stations in Wisconsin, Michigan, Missouri, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. This meteor was described as having resembled a large, bright ball of fire.

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1886: A severe ice storm struck portions of northeastern Iowa when heavy accumulations of freezing rain brought down trees and branches across the area. An observer near Garnavillo in Clayton County wrote that "the rain...mostly froze as it fell, and coated twigs of trees with ice an inch thick, and many trees were seriously broken. Our telephone wires were broken in many places. Large old trees and large limbs broken. In the woods, many trees bent their tops, so the ground and the roads were impassible until the treetops were cut off." In Fayette County, it was reported that "ice formed on the trees so thick that many limbs, from four to eight inches through, were broken and the tops of the trees, thirty feet high, rested on the ground in many instances blockading the roads." An observer at Waukon noted that "ice formed on the trees to such an extent that in very many cases our shade trees were ruined. All afternoon and night, it was a continual crash."

1949: During the late afternoon hours, an estimated F4 tornado destroyed Warren, Arkansas. The tornado killed 55 people and injured more than 250 others. The destruction of the Bradley mill displaced 1,000 employees.

1961 - A three day long icestorm was in progress over northern Idaho which produced an accumulation of ice eight inches thick, a U.S. record. Heavy fog, which blanketed much of northern Idaho from Grangeville to the Canadian border, deposited the ice on power and phone lines causing widespread power outages. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A powerful Pacific coast storm blasted the western U.S. with high winds, heavy rain and heavy snow. Winds gusted to 96 mph at Cape Blanco OR, and snowfall totals reached 20 inches in the Sierra Nevada Range of California. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - After a day of rest, "Old Man Winter" came back as a triple threat, hitting both coasts with winter storms, and blasting the central U.S. with cold arctic air. Snow and ice in the eastern U.S. caused 4.5 million dollars damage to homes and vehicles in North Carolina, the storm in the western U.S. produced two feet of snow in the Lake Tahoe area of Nevada, and temperatures in North Dakota plunged to 30 degrees below zero, with wind chill readings as cold as 95 degrees below zero. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thirteen cities in the southeastern U.S., and five more in Washington and Oregon, reported new record high temperatures for the date. Highs of 78 degrees at Galveston TX and 82 degrees at Lake Charles LA were records for the month of January. (National Weather Summary)

1990 - A winter storm in the southwestern U.S. spread snow across Colorado and New Mexico. Heavy snow fell in southwestern Colorado, with 13 inches reported at Wolf Creek Pass. Snow spread into the Central Plains Region during the day, with six inches reported at Garden City KS. (National Weather Summary)

1994 - A heavy wet snow blanketed much of the state of Ohio, with 12 to 18 inches reported in counties along the Ohio River. Newport received 21 inches. Thunder and lightning accompanied the snow, with five inches reported in Washington County and Noble County between 7 AM and 8 AM Tuesday. Parts of Washington County were without electricity for eight days following the storm.(National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2000: Two F3 tornadoes struck northwest Kentucky late in the afternoon of January 3. Owensboro, Kentucky, sustained the most severe damage and the highest number of injuries.

2004: The Mars Exploration Rover A, also known as "Spirit," landed on Mars. Over its approximately 6 year mission, Spirit returned about 124,000 photographs from the surface of the red planet.

2018: The first time in 28 years, light snowfalls in Tallahassee, Florida. The NWS Office in Tallahassee measured 0.1" of snow/sleet at 8:30 am.



BEEN THERE – EXPERIENCED THAT

Joseph is a well-known painter of seascapes. His paintings capture calm waters and threatening storms. Once, an admirer was looking at one of his famous paintings and asked, "How were you able to paint with such realism the violence of a storm at sea?"

"Sir," he replied, "I was on the bow of a ship one evening facing that storm. I not only saw it, I felt it. I experienced it."

Like the painter, our Lord experienced the storms of life. Often we neglect to think of what the writer of the book of Hebrews said: "Since He himself has gone through suffering and temptation, he is able to help us when we are being tempted."

When we neglect to walk along side of Jesus in the Gospels, we fail to remember that He was as human as we are. We don't often remember and recall the fact that whatever we experience in our lives He also experienced it in His life. However, He persevered because of His faith and trust in His Heavenly Father.

When we lose a loved one, we need to remember that He stood by a grave side one day and wept.

When we experience loneliness, we need to recall His feelings of desertion when His followers left Him.

When we experience suffering, we need to look at Him as He hung on His cross on our behalf and try to feel His pain and humiliation.

Prayer: How blest we are, Father, to know that we have a "High Priest" who has experienced our pains and knows our problems and is waiting to heal and help us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Since He himself has gone through suffering and temptation, he is able to help us when we are being tempted. Hebrews 4:15-16

We all need the encouragement, comfort, and peace that comes through God's grace. Our daily devotionals, known as Seeds of Hope, have been a means through which thousands of people have experienced this grace. Each devotional comes from God's Word and we pray this good "seed" finds good soil in your heart. Our aim is that the Seeds of Hope will be a great source of daily encouragement to you and that God will use them to draw you near to Him

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.31.24

13 22 27 29 35 1

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$42,000,000

NEXT 17 Hrs 12 Mins 7
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.01.25

1 2 8 14 30 6

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$19,840,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 27
DRAW: Mins 7 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.02.25

12 14 27 44 46 6

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 16 Hrs 42 Mins
DRAW: 7 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.01.25

6 18 20 27 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$200,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 42
DRAW: Mins 7 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.01.25

8 10 25 33 66 20

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 11
DRAW: Mins 8 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.01.25

6 12 28 35 66 26

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$200,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 11
DRAW: Mins 8 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

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News from the **AP** Associated Press

Thursday's Scores

The Associated Press

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Roncalli 57, Warner 40
Bon Homme 48, Alcester-Hudson 46, OT
Bridgewater-Emery 72, Oldham-Ramona-Rutland 51
Corsica/Stickney 44, Sanborn Central-Woonsocket 43
Dell Rapids St Mary 55, DeSmet 36
Flandreau 48, Dell Rapids 43
Freeman 52, Colman-Egan 50
Harding County 47, Belfield, N.D. 43
Kadoka 70, Hitchcock-Tulare 41
Kimball-White Lake 43, Chamberlain 30
Lennox 67, Canton 48
Milbank 51, Florence-Henry 34
North Central 41, Timber Lake 36
Philip 59, Edgemont 53
Sioux Falls Washington 53, Huron 42
Waubay/Summit 40, Elkton-Lake Benton 25
White River 40, Potter County 32
Wolsey-Wessington 59, Waverly-South Shore 26

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Alcester-Hudson 56, Bon Homme 36
Centerville 61, Gayville-Volin High School 43
Chamberlain 50, Kimball-White Lake 43
Clark-Willow Lake 52, Milbank 35
Dell Rapids 59, Mobridge-Pollock 39
Dell Rapids St Mary 56, DeSmet 48
Dupree 61, Bison 35
Elkton-Lake Benton 57, Waubay/Summit 43
Lennox 90, Canton 23
Northwestern 60, Bennett County 39
Potter County 62, Hitchcock-Tulare 49
Sanborn Central-Woonsocket 77, Corsica/Stickney 50
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 73, Tea 71
Sioux Falls Washington 47, Huron 42
Sioux Falls Washington 59, Mobridge-Pollock 39
Timber Lake 63, North Central 40
Wolsey-Wessington 68, Kadoka 62

Some high school basketball scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

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Brown's 19 lead UMKC past South Dakota 68-54

By The Associated Press undefined

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Jamar Brown had 19 points in UMKC's 68-54 victory over South Dakota on Thursday night.

Brown added 11 rebounds and three steals for the Kangaroos (9-7, 1-0 Summit League). Cameron Faas scored 17 points while going 6 of 14 from the floor, including 3 for 8 from 3-point range, and 2 for 3 from the line and added seven rebounds. Jayson Petty had 11 points and went 4 of 9 from the field (2 for 5 from 3-point range).

The Coyotes (9-7, 0-1) were led by Chase Forte, who posted 12 points and four assists. Paul Bruns added eight points and two steals for South Dakota. Ashton Smith finished with seven points.

Both teams next play Saturday. UMKC hosts Oral Roberts and South Dakota plays Denver at home.

Immigrant Advocates 'Preparing for Disaster' as Trump Returns

Illan Ireland, Mississippi Free Press undefined

Jackson, MS (Mississippi Free Press)

In the days after the Nov. 5 presidential election, Michael Oropeza answered a flurry of phone calls at her office in Forest, Miss. Oropeza is executive director of El Pueblo, a group offering humanitarian and legal aid to vulnerable immigrants across the state, and the outcome of the election had sent shock waves through the communities she serves.

"It's a very anxious time," Oropeza said. "We started receiving calls ... with people having questions: Should they quit their job? Should they move? It's just a heightened sense of fear."

Many immigrants in Mississippi have good reason to be fearful. Throughout his campaign to return to the White House, President-elect Donald Trump has repeatedly vowed to round up and remove people living in the U.S. without authorization. Trump doubled down on those promises after his victory in November, reiterating his intent to launch "the largest deportation program in American history."

Trump's proposed crackdown would extend beyond migrants with criminal records, targeting gainfully employed, tax-paying households and community members and even families with mixed immigration statuses. The former president and his associates have suggested a range of harsh, legally contentious approaches for carrying out mass deportations, including conducting immigration raids at worksites and other public spaces and deploying the U.S. military to assist with arrests and removals. Trump has also called for ending birthright citizenship in the U.S., effectively stripping children born to undocumented parents of rights guaranteed in the Constitution.

The threat of workplace raids and related enforcement actions is all too familiar for Mississippi immigrants. In 2019, under the previous Trump administration, federal officials arrested more than 680 workers at Mississippi poultry plants in a single day, leading to detainments, deportations and family separations. The operation was the largest of its kind in recent U.S. history and left scars in local communities that have not yet healed, as the Mississippi Free Press reported in August.

Trump's planned deportation program is likely to face significant challenges, from lawsuits and other resistance in Democrat-led cities to inadequate funding and infrastructure. The expected economic downturn and potential human-rights abuses from such a campaign could also incite political backlash.

Nevertheless, immigrant-advocacy groups in Mississippi and elsewhere say they are bracing for a worst-case scenario under the incoming administration.

"We are preparing for disaster," Oropeza said, noting that many residents of Forest and nearby municipalities have been living in fear since the 2019 raids. "The reality is, it happened here. So people know ... it can happen again."

While disparaging migrants and restricting immigration have long been cornerstones of Donald Trump's political agenda, the former and upcoming president's rhetoric and policy proposals have grown more incendiary leading up to his second term.

On his first day in office, the president-elect plans to take immediate action to curb legal and illegal

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immigration and to kickstart mass deportations across the country, members of his transition team have told various media outlets. Potential measures include deploying the U.S. National Guard to help round up undocumented migrants and reshuffling federal law-enforcement personnel to swell the ranks of Immigration Customs Enforcement. Trump could also declare a national emergency as he did during his previous term, unlocking federal funds to expand the country's detention system and to create temporary holding sites, or camps, for migrants waiting to be processed.

"They're poisoning the blood of our country," Trump said about immigrants at a 2023 campaign rally, echoing remarks made by fascist dictators Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler. "The threat from outside forces is far less sinister, dangerous and grave than the threat from within."

Trump has signaled that he aims to follow through on his mass-deportation plans by filling his new administration with immigration hard-liners. The president-elect has tapped South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, a staunch supporter of Trump's past immigration policies, to lead the Department of Homeland Security, pending Senate confirmation. Longtime adviser Stephen Miller will build on his role in the previous Trump White House as deputy chief of staff for policy, and former Acting ICE Director Tom Homan will serve as his "border czar."

Miller and Homan have generated controversy during and after their stints in the first Trump administration. Both played prominent roles in crafting and enforcing the administration's "zero tolerance" policy for migrants apprehended at the southern border, which led to thousands of children being separated from their parents and detained on their own.

Miller has since led an organization listed as a contributor to Project 2025, the Heritage Foundation's blueprint for the next Republican White House. The document contains policies so extreme that the Trump campaign deemed it a political liability, even though dozens of Trump's own allies drafted it and he once hinted that it would "lay the groundwork" for his next administration.

Homan, meanwhile, has recently suggested that families with mixed immigration status may be deported together during Trump's second term -- an idea that the president-elect has also floated and that civil-rights groups have blasted as illegal.

"It's ludicrous," League of United Latin American Citizens CEO Juan Proaño told the Mississippi Free Press on Dec. 9. "We've seen ... reports that they'll have about 400,000 U.S. citizens potentially caught up in these sweeps because they would be deported with their undocumented parents. So then you have the opposite situation, where you have undocumented Americans in Mexico."

While mixed-status family removals and other eye-catching immigration proposals have dominated the news cycle since the election, Proaño says Trump can take easier steps to expedite deportations in the U.S.

"Probably the first thing that you're going to see is ... the administration stripping folks of (temporary protected status), refugee status and asylum status," he explained, noting that these groups are likely to be most at risk when Trump takes office. Temporary Protected Status, a program that currently covers roughly 860,000 people, grants temporary residency and work authorization to citizens of certain countries experiencing armed conflicts or other disasters.

Ultimately, however, Proaño believes Trump will succeed in getting a bill through Congress that will put all undocumented migrants in jeopardy.

"I do think he will pass immigration reform legislation in his first two years," he said. "And it will be some of the most restrictive legislation that we will potentially see, including going after birthright citizenship."

Five years after ICE rounded up hundreds of migrant workers in Mississippi, local immigrants and allies are bracing for another wave of arrests and family separations. While the state's immigrant population is small relative to the rest of the country (less than 3% of residents were foreign-born in 2023), civil-rights attorneys warn that the incoming administration's mass-deportation plans will have chilling consequences for all Mississippians.

"Our communities are going to become less culturally diverse and rich ... and our children are going to lose dear friends and teammates and bandmates," Cliff Johnson, director of the MacArthur Justice Center at the University of Mississippi School of Law, told the Mississippi Free Press on Dec. 11. "To the extent

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that people can't focus on the extraordinary damage inflicted on immigrant families, they should at least consider the impact on local communities where they live."

Independent experts project that the mass deportation of migrants would send the U.S economy into a tailspin, shrinking growth and the domestic labor force while causing prices to skyrocket. In Mississippi, Johnson stressed that an operation of such scale would affect whole industries down to individual landlords and store owners.

"The reality is that these are law-abiding members of our communities who are performing jobs that nobody else wants to do," he said. "And if they are taken away, those jobs will likely go unfinished."

Ahead of Trump's inauguration in January, Johnson is supporting El Pueblo and other advocacy groups as they prepare local communities and institutions for the next administration. Under Oropeza's leadership, El Pueblo has held statewide meetings to educate immigrants on their rights and created emergency preparedness plans to facilitate identity verification and document retrieval. The organization has also met with school-district leaders and law-enforcement officials who may be asked to participate in immigration crackdowns.

"We know what happened in the past," Oropeza said, noting that students in Forest and nearby areas had no one to pick them up on the day of the ICE raids because their parents had been detained. "We're trying to be more proactive so our communities are better prepared all the way around."

Trump's ability to deliver on his second-term immigration plans will largely depend on the support he receives outside of Washington. The mass deportation program he has promised could cost as much as \$350 billion, immigration experts say, and his administration is expected to lean heavily on Republican-led states to assist with roundups and detainments. Already, Texas has offered up a 1,400-acre ranch as a possible detention site for migrants.

Johnson says he is interested to see whether law-enforcement officers in Mississippi and elsewhere will allow themselves to "be deputized by the Trump administration" over the next four years.

"I confess that I have grave concerns about overzealous local law enforcement attempting to promote and carry out the Trump administration's policies," he said. "My hope is that state officials, regardless of where they come down on the issue, will honor the historic practice of leaving immigration policy and enforcement to those in Congress and in the White House."

How Mississippi responds to Trump's immigration agenda will say a lot about the character of its residents, Johnson concluded.

"I think this may reveal a good bit about who we really are," he said. "And the extent to which we vilify and criminalize these local members of our community who are not causing problems, who are not taking jobs that local Mississippians want, and who are doing everything they can to support their children."

Come home, Ghana told the African diaspora. Now some Black Americans take its citizenship

By ANNIE RISEMBERG Associated Press

ACCRA, Ghana (AP) — Flipping through a family album, Keachia Bowers paused on a photo of her as a baby on her father's lap as he held the 1978 album "Africa Stand Alone" by the Jamaican reggae band Culture.

"He joined the ancestors when I was 10 years old. I was supposed to come to Ghana with him," she said.

Bowers and her husband, Damon Smith, are among the 524 diaspora members, mostly Black Americans, who were granted Ghanaian citizenship in a ceremony in November.

A day earlier, Bowers had marked 10 years since her father's death. Though he was a Pan-Africanist who dreamed of visiting Ghana, he never made it here.

Bowers and Smith moved to Ghana from Florida in 2023 after visiting the region several times between them since the '90s. They now run a tour business that caters to Black people who want to visit Ghana or elsewhere in West Africa, or like them have come to consider a permanent move.

The November group was the largest one granted citizenship since Ghana launched the "Year of the Re-

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turn" program, aimed at attracting the Black diaspora, in 2019. It marked 400 years since the first African slaves arrived in Virginia in 1619.

Ghana's Tourism Authority and the Office of Diaspora Affairs have extended the program into "Beyond the Return," which fosters the relationship with diasporans. Hundreds have been granted citizenship, including people from Canada, the U.K. and Jamaica.

Bowers said moving to Ghana gave her family a certain feeling of ease they didn't have in the U.S.

"When we see Trayvon Martin, Sandra Bland, all these stories of people being murdered just in their home, living in their home and being murdered at the hands of police brutality, hearing about it creates trauma," she said.

She also worried about her son Tsadik, 14.

Tsadik towers over loved ones in the way that lanky teenage boys often do. He is shy but opens up around his younger sister Tselah, 11, and the family's dog, Apollo.

"In America, being a Black male with locs who's very tall for his age, he is treated like a threat," Bowers said.

Americans face few obstacles to living in Ghana, with most people paying an annual residency fee. But Bowers said getting citizenship signified more than simply living in Ghana.

"I didn't need (citizenship) to tell me that I'm African. Anywhere that I go in the world and someone looks at me, I'm melanated," she said.

"But my ancestors who wanted to return and come back home, those ancestors who never made it back," she said, "that passport, for me, is for them."

Between 10 to 15 million people were forcibly taken from Africa to the Americas during the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the majority from West and Central Africa.

Ghana, then a British colony known as the Gold Coast, was a main point of departure.

As memorials to the slave trade become tourist destinations across West Africa, painful reminders of its brutality are easily accessible. From Ghana to Senegal to Benin, one can visit variations of the "Door of No Return," haunting doorways that open to the Atlantic Ocean where slaves left Africa, and their families, for the last time.

The joy that people feel in finding connections that were broken long ago is palpable. Videos of the recent citizenship ceremony show men and women of all ages waving Ghanaian flags and cheering.

Deijha Gordon, 33, was one of them.

"I first visited Ghana in 2015. From then on, I knew this is a place that I wanted to be and a place where I wanted to show other diasporans, African-Americans, that we have a place where we belong," she said.

She moved from Brooklyn to Ghana in 2019 and opened a food truck, Deijha Vu's Jerk Hut, selling Jamaican food.

Between bagging to-go orders and speaking to a Black American tourist couple, she explained how she built the business from scratch.

Gordon was giddy while recalling the moment she got citizenship.

"It just feels good to have a connection to an African country as an African-American, as a Black American. Because back in America we don't have anything to trace our roots to but Africa. To have that connection here, I feel like I've done something right," she said.

Like Bowers, Gordon has had a stream of people reaching out and asking about the citizenship process.

The path is not clearly defined. Citizenship must come from a concession from Ghana's presidency, a process made legal under the 2000 Citizenship Act. It's granted to those residing in Ghana who have told the Office of Diaspora Affairs that they are interested in citizenship.

Ghana's government in part describes the program as a benefit to the economy and focuses on investment opportunities for those wishing to relocate.

Festus Owooson with the local nonprofit Migration Advocacy Center said that though the government emphasizes the economic angle, the real benefits of citizenship are intangible.

"I don't think (recipients) were crying because they have landed a gold mine, or they've found oil or

some kind of business opportunity. But it's something so relieving, which you cannot put value or a price on," he said.

President Nana Akufo-Addo's administration, which launched the "Year of the Return," is on its way out. Ghana's main opposition party won the presidential election on Dec. 7.

But Owooson said Black Americans and other diaspora citizens are likely to continue receiving citizenship by presidential concession.

Citizenship also can pass to the next generation. The children of Bowers and Smith received it automatically after their parents' ceremony.

Bowers' father, like her husband and children, was a follower of the Rastafari faith. "Part of the Rastafarian tradition is to repatriate. We see repatriation as the ultimate experience that you can have on this earth," she said.

She believes that her father is proud of her. "I really feel like he's smiling, where he is. He wanted to experience this for himself, so he's experiencing it through me."

At least 30 people killed by Israeli strikes in Gaza as stalled ceasefire talks set to resume

By WAFAA SHURAFU and SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — At least 30 people, including children, were killed in Gaza by Israeli strikes overnight and into Friday morning, said hospital staff, as air sirens sounded across Israel and stalled ceasefire talks were set to resume.

Staff at the Al Aqsa Martyrs hospital said more than a dozen women and children were killed in strikes that hit various places in Central Gaza, including Nuseirat, Zawaida, Maghazi and Deir al Balah. Dozens of people were also killed across the enclave the previous day, bringing the total of people killed in the past 24 hours to 56.

The Israeli army did not immediately comment on the latest strikes, but says it only targets militants and blames Hamas for civilian deaths.

Strikes Thursday hit Hamas security officers and an Israeli-declared humanitarian zone. Among those killed early Friday, was Omar al-Derawi, a freelance journalist. Associated Press reporters saw friends and colleagues mourning over his body at the hospital, with a press vest laid on top of his shroud.

Israelis also woke up to attacks early Friday morning. Israel said missiles were fired into the country from Yemen, which set off air raid sirens in Jerusalem and central Israel and sent people scrambling to shelters. There were no immediate reports of injuries or damage, though a faint explosion, likely either from the missile or from interceptors, could be heard in Jerusalem. Israel's army said a missile was intercepted.

As the attacks were underway, efforts at ceasefire negotiations were expected to resume Friday.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said he had authorized a delegation from the Mossad intelligence agency, the Shin Bet internal security agency and the military to continue negotiations in Qatar. The delegation is leaving for Qatar on Friday.

The U.S.-led talks have repeatedly stalled during 15 months of war, which was sparked by Hamas-led militants' Oct. 7, 2023 attack into Israel. The militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted around 250. Around 100 hostages are still inside Gaza, at least a third believed to be dead.

Israel's offensive in retaliation has killed over 45,500 Palestinians in Gaza, according to the territory's Health Ministry, which says women and children make up more than half the dead. The ministry does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its tally.

Israel's military says it only targets militants and blames Hamas for civilian deaths because its fighters operate in dense residential areas. The army says it has killed 17,000 militants, without providing evidence.

The war has caused widespread destruction and displaced some 90% of Gaza's population of 2.3 million, many of them multiple times.

Will a devastating New Year's Eve explosion change Hawaii's fireworks culture?

By AUDREY McAVOY, JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER and GENE JOHNSON Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — In recent years, occasions large and small — parties, Super Bowls, mixed-martial arts fights, even Thanksgiving — have provided a reason for residents across Hawaii to set off illegal fireworks.

The increasingly sophisticated displays, loved by some and loathed by others, are so prevalent that some people consider them part of the state's culture. They have rattled neighborhoods of tightly packed houses, started fires, terrorized pets and knocked a light fixture off the ceiling of an Associated Press reporter's home, where it narrowly missed a child and shattered on the floor.

Each New Year's Day, Honolulu officials publish a list of fireworks casualties from the night before, typically a litany of burns, shrapnel wounds or amputations. Sometimes there are deaths.

But none of the damage has matched Tuesday night's tragedy, when a lit bundle of mortar-style aerials tipped over and shot into crates of unlit fireworks, causing a rapid-fire series of blasts that killed three women and injured more than 20 people, including children. Another person was killed in an unrelated fireworks explosion on Oahu.

Authorities and residents alike are now wondering whether the toll will dissuade people from putting on such shows in the future, or whether it will prompt more effective efforts by police to crack down.

"This incident is a painful reminder of the danger posed by illegal fireworks," Honolulu Mayor Rick Blangiardi told a news conference. "They put lives at risk, they drain our first responders and they disrupt our neighborhoods."

Efforts to crack down on contraband fireworks have had limited effect. In 2023, lawmakers created an illegal fireworks task force. Based on the ease with which it seized fireworks, including three shipping containers in its first few months in operation, the state Department of Law Enforcement concluded illegal fireworks are likely smuggled into Hawaii on a daily basis.

The task force has seized 227,000 pounds (about 103,000 kilograms) of fireworks in all, according to Gov. Josh Green.

And yet, the Honolulu Fire Department reported Thursday that there were 30 fireworks-related blazes between Tuesday and Wednesday, a 30% increase from last New Year's celebrations.

Rep. Gregg Takayama, who sponsored legislation passed last year to tighten fireworks controls, said he remembers setting them off when he was younger and agrees it's a tradition for many. But the ones he played with, including Roman candles, pale in comparison to those on the black market today.

"The kind of aerial fireworks that are being used now are really explosive bombs," he said. "And so the danger is magnified."

Charmaine Doran, the vice-chair of the neighborhood board in Pearl City, northwest of Honolulu, called the notion that fireworks are part of Hawaii culture a misconception: "They have been outlawed for all of my life ... and I'm pretty old."

In her neighborhood, the fireworks ramp up after Halloween, exploding in the middle of the night until New Year's. Doran said she can tell if there is a big mixed martial arts fight on TV because the booms begin earlier in the day.

Enforcement is complicated because people are reluctant to report their neighbors on a small island where "we're related to everybody, everybody knows everybody," Doran said.

People fear retribution, she added: "If I dial 911, they're going to egg my house."

That was the theme of some testimony to the Legislature last January. Beverly Takushi, a Pearl City resident, described once being threatened by a neighbor when she told his brother to stop launching illegal fireworks in a show that lasted from 5:30 p.m. on New Year's Eve until after midnight.

"It was the first time I was threatened not only by the danger of the aerial fireworks to my family and property, but also for my safety from this neighbor who accused me of not respecting his culture," Takushi said. "He has since apologized, but this is the reason why no one wants to get involved and report their neighbors setting off bombs and aerials."

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Many historians believe fireworks were invented in China more than 2,000 years ago and their use came to signify joy and prosperity, as well as warding off evil. In Hawaii they are celebrated not just by residents of Chinese descent but all across the state's diverse communities.

Takushi echoed Takayama's point about the big difference between today's large, professional-grade fireworks and the smaller ones of yesteryear.

"A string of firecrackers at midnight to ward off bad spirits is cultural, not loud explosives that sound like you are in the middle of a war," Takushi said.

Richard Oshiro, secretary of the neighborhood board for Waipahu, known as one of Oahu's hotspots for aerial displays, said he hopes this week's deaths will spur a change of mentality about playing with explosives.

He said he tries to report them whenever he can, even though he knows there is not much police can do if "they can't catch people in the act."

Possession of over 50 pounds (about 23 kilograms) of aerial or other illegal fireworks in Hawaii is a felony punishable by up to five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine. Takayama noted the law now allows photographs and videos of fireworks to be submitted as evidence in court, but said prosecutions still face hurdles.

"We already have laws on the books. We need to find better ways to enforce them," he said. "I mean we constantly hear about people who report on their neighbors using illegal aerials, but nothing is done about it."

The best way to control fireworks is to stop them at Hawaii's ports, Takayama said. Law enforcement has intelligence about which shipments contain illegal fireworks and U.S. authorities have the power to open suspicious cargo. The task force has made seizures but needs to do more, he said.

"We need to find ways to restrict the amount of fireworks that are coming in, because once they arrive and once they're in the community, it's very difficult to track them down," Takayama said.

South Korea's impeached president defies warrant after hourslong standoff

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korean investigators left the official residence of impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol after a near-six-hour standoff on Friday during which he defied their attempt to detain him. It's the latest confrontation in a political crisis that has paralyzed South Korean politics and seen two heads of state impeached in under a month.

The country's anti-corruption agency said it withdrew its investigators after the presidential security service blocked them from entering Yoon's residence for hours, due to concerns about their safety.

The agency said its outnumbered investigators had several scuffles with presidential security forces and expressed "serious regret about the attitude of the suspect, who did not comply with the legal process."

It said detaining Yoon would be "virtually impossible" as long as he is protected by the presidential security service. The agency plans to "strongly demand" that the country's acting leader, Deputy Prime Minister Choi Sang-mok, instruct the service to comply with their execution of the detainment warrant.

Outside the residence, a large group of pro-Yoon protesters braved freezing temperatures for hours, waving South Korean and American flags while chanting slogans vowing to protect him.

The National Police Agency said it planned to investigate the chief and deputy chiefs of the presidential security service on suspicion of obstructing official duty and summoned them for questioning on Saturday.

Yoon, a former prosecutor, has resisted investigators' attempts to question him for weeks. The last time he is known to have left the residence was on Dec. 12, when he went to the nearby presidential office to make a televised statement to the nation, making a defiant statement that he will fight efforts to oust him.

Investigators from the country's anti-corruption agency are weighing charges of rebellion after Yoon, apparently frustrated that his policies were blocked by an opposition-dominated parliament, declared martial law on Dec. 3 and dispatched troops to surround the National Assembly.

Parliament overturned the declaration within hours in an unanimous vote and impeached Yoon on Dec.

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14, accusing him of rebellion, while South Korean anti-corruption authorities and public prosecutors opened separate investigations into the events.

A Seoul court issued a warrant to detain Yoon and a separate warrant to search his residence on Tuesday, but enforcing them is complicated as long as he remains in his official residence.

Yoon's lawyers, who filed a challenge to the warrant on Thursday, say it cannot be enforced at his residence due to a law that protects locations potentially linked to military secrets from search without the consent of the person in charge.

The office said it will discuss further actions but did not immediately say whether it would make another attempt to detain Yoon. The warrant for his detention is valid for one week.

Yoon's lawyers have also argued that the Corruption Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials, which is leading a joint investigation with police and military investigators, lacks the authority to investigate rebellion charges. They said that police officers don't have the legal authority to assist in detaining Yoon, and could face arrest by either the "presidential security service or any citizens." They didn't elaborate further on the claim.

If investigators manage to detain Yoon, they will likely ask a court for permission to make a formal arrest. Otherwise, he will be released after 48 hours.

During a background briefing to reporters, an official from the anti-corruption agency said its investigators were able to approach within 200 meters (yards) of Yoon's residence but were stopped by a barricade comprising around 10 vehicles and approximately 200 members of the presidential security forces and troops. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity per department rules, said three of its prosecutors were eventually allowed to approach the building but they weren't able to confirm whether Yoon was inside.

While the presidential security act mandates protection for Yoon, it does not authorize the presidential security service to block court-ordered detentions, which would amount to an infringement on judicial authority, said Park Seong-bae, an attorney specializing in criminal law. While the president mostly has immunity from prosecution while in office, the protection does not extend to allegations of rebellion or treason.

"There's a high possibility that the act of blocking the execution of a detention warrant would constitute an obstruction of official duty," he said.

The law requiring consent of the person in charge for searches in locations with potential military secrets could continue to hinder Yoon's detention. Courts often require law enforcement officials to obtain search warrants with detention warrants in case they need to search the site to locate the suspect, which is also what the anti-corruption agency did in their pursuit of Yoon.

It's unlikely that the approval could come from the country's acting leader, Choi, as it would be difficult to see him as the person in charge of Yoon's residence, Park said.

Park Chan-dae, floor leader of the liberal opposition Democratic Party, called the anti-corruption agency's withdrawal regrettable and urged the agency to make another attempt to detain Yoon on Friday.

Kwon Young-se, who heads the emergency leadership committee of Yoon's conservative People Power Party, called the agency's effort to detain Yoon "highly unfair and exceedingly improper," saying that there is no risk of Yoon attempting to flee or to destroy evidence.

Thousands of police officers gathered at Yoon's residence on Friday, forming a perimeter around a growing group of pro-Yoon protesters who braved freezing temperatures for hours, waving South Korean and American flags while chanting slogans vowing to protect him. There were no immediate reports of major clashes outside the residence.

Yoon's defense minister, police chief and several top military commanders have already been arrested over their roles in the period of martial law.

Yoon's presidential powers have been suspended since the National Assembly voted to impeach him on Dec. 14. Yoon's fate now lies with the Constitutional Court, which has begun deliberations on whether to uphold the impeachment and formally remove Yoon from office or reinstate him. At least six justices on the nine-member Constitutional Court must vote in favor to remove him from office.

The National Assembly voted last week to impeach Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, who became acting president after Yoon's powers were suspended, over his reluctance to fill three Constitutional Court vacancies ahead of the court's review of Yoon's case.

Facing growing pressure, the new acting president, Choi, appointed two new justices on Tuesday, which could increase the chances of the court upholding Yoon's impeachment.

2 dead and 19 injured in Southern California plane crash

By JAIMIE DING and DAMIAN DOVARGANES Associated Press

FULLERTON, Calif. (AP) — Two people died and 19 were injured Thursday when a small plane crashed through the roof of a sprawling furniture manufacturing building in Southern California where at least 200 people were working, police said.

The people who died were believed to have been on the plane, while those injured were inside the building. The deceased victims will be identified after officials have contacted the next of kin, the Fullerton Police Department said in a statement.

Eleven people were taken to hospitals, while eight were treated and released at the scene, police said. The injuries ranged from minor to very serious, said Michael Meacham, Fullerton deputy chief of fire operations.

Elliott Simpson, a National Transportation Safety Board aviation accident investigator, said the pilot asked for an immediate return to the airport at about 900 feet (274 meters) and the tower confirmed it could immediately land. The pilot did not say why he needed to return.

The plane crashed less than two minutes after taking off from the Fullerton Municipal Airport in Orange County, located 6 miles (10 kilometers) from Disneyland, according to the flight-tracking website FlightAware. The crash occurred about 1,000 feet (305 meters) short of Runway 24, Simpson said.

Security camera footage from Rucci Forged, a wheel manufacturer across the street, shows the plane was tilted on its side as it dove into the building, causing a fiery explosion and black plume of smoke.

Firefighters and police arrived on scene and battled the blaze and evacuated surrounding businesses, Fullerton police spokesperson Kristy Wells said.

Chris Villalobos, an airport operations worker, came to the warehouse to see what had happened after receiving a phone call about a plane going down nearby. He noted the airplane's owner was a regular at the airport and has frequently taken off from there.

"He has a hangar here and everything," Villalobos said.

After taking off, the pilot told air traffic control he was going to turn around to make an emergency landing, but it was unclear what the issue with the plane was, Villalobos said.

The building struck by the plane was occupied by Michael Nicholas Designs, a furniture upholstery manufacturer, according to a sign on a door. There appeared to be sewing machines and textile stock inside.

The Federal Aviation Administration is investigating the accident and identified the plane as a single-engine, four-seat Van's RV-10. Simpson of the NTSB said the aircraft was built in 2011 and is a popular "kit-built airplane."

The airport in Fullerton has one runway and a heliport. Metrolink, a regional train line, is nearby and flanks a residential neighborhood and commercial warehouse buildings.

The Fullerton City Council posted a statement on social media calling the crash a "solemn tragedy."

"The City of Fullerton is committed to providing support for all those affected and working with the agencies involved to uncover the details of this incident," Mayor Fred Jung said in the statement. "We are grateful for the strength of our community and the compassion we show one another in times of crisis."

Another four-seat plane crashed into a tree a half-mile from the airport in November while making an emergency landing shortly after takeoff, The Orange County Register reported. Both people on board suffered moderate injuries.

Fullerton is a city of about 140,000 people about 25 miles (40 kilometers) southeast of Los Angeles.

Carter's quest for Mideast peace didn't end with Camp David

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — As president, Jimmy Carter brokered the watershed peace agreement that removed Israel's most powerful enemy from the battlefield. But he incurred the Israeli government's wrath decades later when he said its military rule over the Palestinians amounted to apartheid.

The Camp David peace accords, signed by Israel and Egypt in 1978, remain the biggest achievement from decades of mostly failed U.S. peacemaking in the Middle East.

But for Carter, who died on Sunday at the age of 100, they were clouded by what he saw as the continued oppression of the Palestinians and Israel's expansion of settlements on lands they want for a future state.

Carter did not speak publicly after entering hospice care, months before the outbreak of the latest war in Gaza. But he devoted much of his life during and after his presidency trying to broker a just solution to the wider conflict.

A historic peace between Israel and Egypt

When Carter assumed office in 1977, Egypt and Israel had fought four devastating wars, the last of which began with an Egyptian surprise attack in 1973 that initially seemed to threaten Israel's existence.

Carter's efforts led to Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's landmark visit to Jerusalem and saw U.S. negotiators eventually wear down the famously hawkish Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin.

"There would not be a peace agreement between Israel and Egypt without President Carter," said Aharon Barak, a former Israeli attorney general and Supreme Court president who served as the Israeli legal adviser during the negotiations.

Barak described Carter as a dogged negotiator, forcing the sides to work from 6 a.m. until after midnight and getting involved in the smallest details.

"He was very tough, knew what he wanted, and he got what he wanted. And I admired it," he said.

The first ever peace treaty between Israel and an Arab country saw Israel withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula, which it had captured in the 1967 Mideast war, and forge full diplomatic ties with Egypt, which had led the Arab struggle against Israel since its establishment in 1948.

The two countries remain at peace nearly a half-century later.

Peace efforts languished after Carter

Although the Camp David agreements called for a transition to Palestinian self-government in the West Bank and Gaza, which Israel also seized in 1967, it was never carried out. Carter was voted out of office two years later amid the Iran hostage crisis, and Mideast peace efforts languished.

When Israelis and Palestinians finally came together to sign the Oslo Accords in 1993, the plan was similar to the one Carter had written 15 years earlier, with the creation of a Palestinian Authority and Israel's gradual withdrawal from the occupied territories.

But the peace process stalled out yet again in 2000, when the two sides were unable to reach a final agreement at Camp David. An armed Palestinian uprising erupted months later, and Israel launched a heavy military crackdown.

Carter remained actively engaged in the Middle East as a global campaigner for human rights and democracy, with his Carter Center observing Palestinian elections. He spoke out against the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, calling George W. Bush the worst president in the history of foreign affairs.

Apartheid allegations angered Israel

In speeches, articles and a controversial book titled "Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid," he called on the Palestinians to renounce violence and for U.S. intervention to end the conflict.

But he reserved some of his strongest language for Israel's sprawling Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank, saying they were far more built-up than people knew and undermined hope for a negotiated solution to the century-old conflict.

Most controversial was his contention that the situation in the West Bank — where some 3 million Palestinians live under Israeli military rule alongside hundreds of thousands of Jewish settlers who have full citizenship — amounts to apartheid.

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In a 2007 interview defending the book, Carter said the term was a "very accurate description" of the "total domination and oppression of Palestinians."

Carter insisted the tough talk was coming from someone who had devoted his life to trying to bring about a lasting peace for Israel, but few Israelis saw it that way. Israel's supporters said the book was slanted against it and contained a number of inaccuracies.

Israel bristles at any suggestion that its open-ended rule over the Palestinians amounts to apartheid, viewing it as an attack on its very legitimacy. It points to the fact that its own Arab minority has full citizenship, including the right to vote.

Barak rejected the apartheid assertions, saying that as head of the Supreme Court he had presided over numerous rulings in favor of Palestinians against Israeli security bodies. "That's not apartheid," he said.

"He was a complicated person," Barak said of Carter. "But on balance, I think he was a friend of Israel."

The situation Carter described has only grown worse for the Palestinians. There have been no peace talks in well over a decade, Israel is rapidly expanding settlements, and its far-right government supports outright annexation of parts of the West Bank, making the establishment of a viable Palestinian state virtually impossible.

Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and the Israeli rights group B'Tselem have meanwhile adopted Carter's language to describe the conflict, publishing lengthy reports in recent years arguing that Israel is guilty of the international crime of apartheid.

Omar Shakir, the Israel and Palestine director of Human Rights Watch, said Carter's words were groundbreaking.

"Today, apartheid is the consensus within the global human rights movement and yet, despite the increasingly transparent reality on the ground, few leaders in the U.S. and Europe dare to utter the words President Carter did more than 16 years ago," Shakir said.

Outreach to Hamas

In April 2008, an 83-year-old Carter toured the region with the Elders, a group of retired international leaders founded by Nelson Mandela. He once again courted controversy by meeting with the top leaders of the Islamic militant group Hamas, which had recently seized control of the Gaza Strip. Hamas does not accept Israel's existence and has carried out hundreds of deadly attacks over the years.

But Carter said he had secured a personal commitment that Hamas would accept a Palestinian state on the 1967 borders if the agreement were approved in a Palestinian referendum — a potentially big step toward accepting Israel.

The Israeli government refused to meet with Carter, and both Israel and the U.S. criticized his decision to meet with Hamas.

Israel and Hamas went on to fight five wars in Gaza, the deadliest of which was triggered by a bloody Hamas incursion into southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, and is still ongoing.

For Carter, now remembered the world over as a statesman and a humanitarian, the failure to resolve the conflict was a bitter disappointment.

"The most important single foreign policy goal in my life has been to bring peace to Israel, and peace and justice to Israel's neighbors," Carter told an Israeli newspaper during the 2008 visit.

"I have done everything I could in office and since I left office to do that."

New Orleans inches toward normalcy while mourning victims of deadly New Year's rampage

By ERIC TUCKER, JIM MUSTIAN, KEVIN MCGILL and JACK BROOK Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — A mix of law enforcement, street performers and football fans has filled New Orleans' blocks as the city inches back to normalcy while mourning victims of the deadly New Year's rampage in which an Army veteran plowed a truck into revelers.

The attack along Bourbon Street killed 14 people, along with the driver, Shamsud-Din Jabbar, who officials said was inspired by the Islamic State militant group. Jabbar was fatally shot in a firefight with police after

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steering his speeding truck around a barricade and plowing into the crowd. About 30 people were injured.

Authorities finished processing the scene Thursday morning, removing the last of the bodies. Bourbon Street — famous worldwide for music, open-air drinking and festive vibes — reopened for business by early afternoon.

On the same block where the attack took place, trombone player and lifelong New Orleanian Jonas Green said it was important for his band to be out there the day after the violence.

"I know with this music, it heals, it transforms the feelings that we're going through into something better," Green said. "Got to keep on going."

The Sugar Bowl college football game between Notre Dame and Georgia, which was postponed by a day in the interest of national security, was played Thursday evening.

The Joan of Arc parade in the French Quarter is still scheduled to take place Monday to kick off carnival season ahead of Mardi Gras, said Antoinette de Alteriis, one of the organizers. She said they expect close to its typical crowd of around 30,000 participants

The FBI has continued to hunt for clues about Jabbar but, a day into its investigation, the agency said it was confident he was not aided by anyone else in the attack, which killed an 18-year-old aspiring nurse, a single mother, a father of two and a former Princeton University football star, among others.

The FBI said that hours before the attack, Jabbar, a 42-year-old American citizen from Texas, posted five videos on his Facebook account in which he proclaimed his support for the Islamic State group and previewed the violence that he would soon unleash in the famed French Quarter district.

It was the deadliest IS-inspired assault on U.S. soil in years, laying bare what federal officials have warned is a resurgent international terrorism threat. It also comes as the FBI and other agencies brace for dramatic leadership upheaval, and likely policy changes, after President-elect Donald Trump's administration takes office.

Christopher Raia, the deputy assistant director of the FBI's counterterrorism division, stressed there was no indication of a connection between the New Orleans attack and the explosion Wednesday of a Tesla Cybertruck filled with explosives outside Trump's Las Vegas hotel.

The New Orleans attack plans also included the placement of crude bombs in the neighborhood in an apparent attempt to cause more carnage, officials said. Two improvised explosive devices left in coolers several blocks apart were rendered safe at the scene. Other devices were determined to be nonfunctional.

Investigators also were trying to understand more about Jabbar's path to radicalization, which they say culminated with him picking up a rented truck in Houston on Dec. 30 and driving it to New Orleans the following night.

The FBI recovered a black IS flag from Jabbar's rented pickup and reviewed five videos posted to Facebook, including one in which he said he originally planned to harm his family and friends but was concerned news headlines would not focus on the "war between the believers and the disbelievers," Raia said.

Jabbar also stated he joined IS before last summer and provided a last will and testament, the FBI said.

Jabbar joined the Army in 2007, serving on active duty in human resources and information technology and deploying to Afghanistan from 2009 to 2010, the service said. He transferred to the Army Reserve in 2015 and left in 2020 with the rank of staff sergeant.

A U.S. government official, speaking on condition of anonymity because the official was not authorized to speak publicly, said Jabbar traveled to Egypt in 2023, staying in Cairo for a week, before returning to the U.S. and then traveling to Toronto for three days. It was not immediately clear what he did during those travels.

Abdur-Rahim Jabbar, Jabbar's younger brother, told The Associated Press on Thursday it "doesn't feel real" that his brother could have done this.

"I never would have thought it'd be him," he said. "It's completely unlike him."

He said his brother had been isolated in the last few years but also had been in touch with him recently and did not see any signs of radicalization.

On Bourbon Street, flowers and candles were arranged as memorials to the victims, while yellow posts

were set up on the surrounding blocks. By Thursday night, bouncers danced to music blasting from clubs, tourists posed for photos and a group of street performers preparing to flip over a line of people had no trouble attracting a massive audience.

Mark Tabor, the manager of a Willie's Chicken Shack on Bourbon Street, said it was strange to feel the disconnect between the normal hustle of the French Quarter outside and the violence he had witnessed less than 48 hours earlier.

"I'm glad they cleaned up the streets, but it's like everything's forgotten," he said. "It's sad."

Israeli airstrike hits a Gaza humanitarian zone as Netanyahu OKs a delegation to talks in Qatar

By WAFAA SHURAFU and FATMA KHALED Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israeli airstrikes killed at least 50 people, including several children, across the Gaza Strip, hitting Hamas security officers and an Israeli-declared humanitarian zone.

As the bombardment continued on Thursday and into Friday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said he had authorized a delegation from the Mossad intelligence agency, the Shin Bet internal security agency and the military to continue negotiations in Qatar toward a ceasefire deal.

Israeli media said the delegation would depart on Friday. There was no immediate Hamas comment. The U.S.-led talks have repeatedly stalled during 15 months of war.

The Israeli strike in the seaside humanitarian zone known as Muwasi occurred as hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians have been huddling there in damp winter weather.

"Everyone was taking shelter in their tents from the cold, and suddenly we found the world turning upside down. Why, and for what?" said Ziyad Abu Jabal, displaced from Gaza City.

The early morning strike killed at least 10 people, including three children and two senior Hamas police officers.

Israel's military said it targeted a senior police officer, saying he was involved in gathering intelligence used by Hamas' armed wing in attacks on Israeli forces.

Another Israeli strike killed at least eight people in Deir al-Balah in central Gaza. The men were members of local committees that help secure aid convoys, according to Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, which received the bodies. An Associated Press journalist there confirmed the toll.

There was no immediate comment from Israel's military.

In southern Gaza, the military killed five policemen in eastern Khan Younis. Israeli government spokesman David Mencer said the strike targeted the head of the Hamas internal security force in southern Gaza.

"Where did we find him? Where else, but of course hiding in the humanitarian zone in Khan Younis, where Gazans are sheltering from this war," Mencer said.

Israel has repeatedly targeted Gaza's police during the war, contributing to a breakdown of law and order that has made it difficult for humanitarian groups to deliver aid. Israel accuses Hamas of hijacking aid for its own purposes.

The Hamas-run government had a police force numbering in the tens of thousands that maintained a high degree of public security before the war, while also violently suppressing dissent. Now officers have largely vanished from the streets in many areas.

Meanwhile, three Palestinians were killed in an Israeli strike that hit a group of people walking in the street in Maghazi in central Gaza. Their bodies were taken to Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital.

Late Thursday and early Friday, Israeli strikes in central Gaza, including Maghazi and the Nuseirat refugee camp, killed at least 24 people, including children, according to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital.

The war was sparked by Hamas-led militants' Oct. 7, 2023 attack into Israel. The militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted around 250. Around 100 hostages are still inside Gaza, at least a third believed to be dead.

Israel's offensive in retaliation has killed over 45,000 Palestinians in Gaza, according to the territory's

Health Ministry, which says women and children make up more than half the dead. The ministry does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in their tally.

Israel's military says it only targets militants and blames Hamas for civilian deaths because its fighters operate in dense residential areas. The army says it has killed 17,000 militants, without providing evidence.

The war has caused widespread destruction and displaced some 90% of Gaza's population of 2.3 million, many of them multiple times.

Hunger is widespread. Children, some barefoot or in sandals, waited in line with metal pails or other containers at a food distribution center in Deir al-Balah on Thursday.

Netanyahu leaves the hospital after surgery

Netanyahu was released from the hospital Thursday after having prostate surgery Sunday.

Doctors at Hadassah Ein Kerem Hospital said Netanyahu was recuperating well, although he has a period of recovery ahead. Despite doctor's orders to remain hospitalized, the 75-year-old leader briefly left the facility to participate in a vote in Israel's parliament on Tuesday.

Netanyahu has vowed to press ahead in Gaza until Hamas is destroyed. But the militant group, while greatly weakened, has repeatedly regrouped in parts of the territory — notably the largely isolated north — after Israeli forces withdraw.

Federal courts won't refer Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas to attorney general over ethics

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The federal courts will not refer allegations that Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas may have violated ethics laws to the Justice Department, the judiciary's policymaking body said Thursday.

Thomas has agreed to follow updated requirements on reporting trips and gifts, including clearer guidelines on hospitality from friends, the U.S. Judicial Conference wrote to Democratic senators who had called for an investigation into undisclosed acceptance of luxury trips.

Thomas has previously said he wasn't required to disclose the many trips he and his wife took that were paid for by wealthy benefactors like Republican megadonor Harlan Crow because they are close personal friends. The court didn't immediately respond to a request for comment Thursday.

The Supreme Court adopted its first code of ethics in 2023 in the face of sustained criticism, though the new code still lacks a means of enforcement.

It's unclear whether the law allows the U.S. Judicial Conference to make a criminal referral regarding a Supreme Court justice, U.S. District Judge Robert Conrad wrote. He serves as secretary for the conference, which sets policy for the federal court system and is led by Chief Justice John Roberts.

A referral in this case isn't necessary, Conrad said, because two Democratic senators called on Attorney General Merrick Garland to appoint a special counsel over the summer. No such appointment has been publicly made.

The group Fix the Court said the financial disclosure law is clear and should apply to justices. "The Conference's letters further underscore the need for Congress to create a new and transparent mechanism to investigate the justices for ethics violations since the Conference is unwilling to act upon the one method we had presumed existed to do that," Executive Director Gabe Roth said in a statement.

Conrad also sent a similar response to a separate complaint from a conservative legal group, the Center for Renewing America, in regard to Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson's reports on the source of her husband's consulting income. Jackson has since amended her disclosures and also agreed to updated reporting requirements, Conrad wrote.

South Korean investigators attempt to detain impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korean investigators arrived at the presidential residence with a warrant to detain impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol over his short-lived imposition of martial law, but faced resistance from presidential security staff as hundreds of Yoon's supporters gathered outside vowing to protect him.

It's the latest confrontation in a political crisis that has paralyzed South Korean politics and seen two heads of state impeached in under a month. It began on Dec. 3 when Yoon, apparently frustrated that his policies were blocked by an opposition-dominated parliament, declared martial law and dispatched troops to surround the National Assembly.

Parliament overturned the declaration within hours in an unanimous vote and impeached Yoon himself on Dec. 14, while South Korean authorities opened a criminal investigation into the events. Yoon has remained defiant, ignoring requests for questioning and vowing to fight to remain in office.

Four hours after dozens of investigators and police officers were seen entering the gate of the residence in Seoul to execute a warrant for Yoon's detention, the dramatic scene appeared to have developed into a standoff.

The anti-corruption agency didn't immediately reply to questions about whether investigators successfully entered Yoon's residential building, but South Korea's YTN television reported scuffles as investigators and police confronted the presidential security forces.

Seok Dong-hyeon, one of several lawyers on Yoon's legal team, confirmed that the investigators arrived at the building but said it was unlikely that they would be able to detain the president on Friday. He said the agency's efforts to detain Yoon were "reckless" and showed an "outrageous discard for law."

South Korea's Defense Ministry confirmed that the investigators and police officers got past a military unit guarding the residence's grounds before arriving at the building. The presidential security service, which controls the residence itself, refused to comment on whether its members were confronting investigators and whether they planned to block the detention attempt.

The hourslong standoff prompted the liberal opposition Democratic Party to call on the country's acting leader, Deputy Prime Minister Choi Sang-mok, to order the presidential security service to stand down. Choi, who also serves as finance minister, didn't immediately comment on the situation.

"We warn presidential security service chief Park Jong-joon not to further participate in a rebellion. Do not drag the upright staff of the presidential security service and other public officials into the depths of crime," said Jo Seung-lae, a Democratic lawmaker. Choi must "remember that swiftly addressing the rebellion and preventing further chaos is your responsibility," Jo said.

In a defiant New Year's message to conservative supporters rallying outside his residence, Yoon said he will "fight to the end" against "anti-state forces." His lawyers have described the warrant as "invalid" and "illegal," and said that the presidential security force could arrest police trying to execute it.

Thousands of police officers gathered at Yoon's residence and formed a perimeter around a growing group of pro-Yoon protesters, who braved subfreezing temperatures for hours, waving South Korean and American flags while chanting slogans in his support. There were no immediate reports of major clashes.

A Seoul court issued a warrant for Yoon's detention on Tuesday after he evaded multiple requests to appear for questioning and blocked searches of his office in Seoul, hindering an investigation into whether his ill-conceived power grab on Dec. 3 amounted to rebellion.

The warrant is valid for one week, and investigators may make another attempt to detain Yoon if they are unable to do so on Friday.

Investigators from the anti-corruption agency were earlier seen loading boxes into several vehicles before leaving their building in the city of Gwacheon early in the morning. Television footage later showed some of those vehicles weaving between police buses that tightly packed and barricaded the streets near Yoon's residence.

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If Yoon is detained, the anti-corruption agency will have 48 hours to either request a warrant for his formal arrest or release him. Yoon's defense minister, police chief and several top military commanders have already been arrested over their roles in the period of martial law.

Yoon Kap-keun, another lawyer representing the president, described the investigators' efforts to detain him as illegal and said they would plan to pursue unspecified legal steps against the anti-corruption agency.

Yoon Suk Yeol's lawyers have argued the court's detention warrant is invalid, claiming that the anti-corruption agency lacks the legal authority to investigate rebellion charges. They also accuse the court of bypassing a law that says locations potentially linked to military secrets cannot be seized or searched without the consent of the person in charge.

The lawyers have said police officers would be exceeding their legal authority if they assist in detaining Yoon, and could face arrest by either the "presidential security service or any citizens." They didn't elaborate further on the claim.

Critics accused Yoon of inciting his supporters to obstruct attempts to detain him. South Korean law permits anyone to make an arrest to stop an active crime.

The Democratic Party, which drove the legislative vote that impeached Yoon Suk Yeol on Dec. 14 over his imposition of martial law, accused the president of trying to mobilize his supporters to block his detention and called for law enforcement authorities to execute the warrant immediately.

Yoon Kap-keun, the president's lawyer, filed a challenge with the Seoul Western District Court on Thursday to block both the detention warrant for Yoon Suk Yeol and a related search warrant for his residence. The lawyer argued that both warrants violate criminal laws and the constitution.

Yoon's presidential powers were suspended following a National Assembly vote to impeach him on Dec. 14 over his imposition of martial law, which lasted only hours but has triggered weeks of political turmoil, halted high-level diplomacy and rattled financial markets. Yoon's fate now lies with the Constitutional Court, which has begun deliberations on whether to uphold the impeachment and formally remove Yoon from office or reinstate him.

To formally end Yoon's presidency, at least six justices on the nine-member Constitutional Court must vote in favor.

The National Assembly voted last week to also impeach Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, who became acting president after Yoon's powers were suspended, over his reluctance to fill three Constitutional Court vacancies ahead of the court's review of Yoon's case.

Facing growing pressure, the new acting president, Choi, appointed two new justices on Tuesday, which could increase the chances of the court upholding Yoon's impeachment.

Yoon's imposition of martial law ended after only six hours when the National Assembly voted 190-0 to lift it despite attempts by heavily armed soldiers to prevent them from voting.

Yoon has defended his martial law decree as a necessary act of governance, portraying it as a temporary warning against the Democratic Party, which he has described as an "anti-state" force obstructing his agenda with its legislative majority.

Postponed Sugar Bowl played with enhanced security about 36 hours after terror attack in New Orleans

By BRETT MARTEL AP Sports Writer

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Georgia and Notre Dame fans packed a plaza adjacent to the Superdome and enjoyed music under clear skies — under the watch of snipers on rooftops — before filtering into the stadium for Thursday's College Football Playoff quarterfinal at the Sugar Bowl.

"It was a lot of fun. It felt safe," said Shannon Horsey, a Georgia fan in her 40s who lives in Austin, Texas. "Coming in they searched my bag thoroughly. So I felt like, OK, they're really paying attention."

Horsey was in New Orleans with her husband, Joe, a 48-year-old Georgia graduate, and their teenage children, Jack and Zoe.

They extended their stay after the game, originally scheduled for Wednesday night, was postponed be-

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cause of an attack by a man who drove a pickup truck into crowds in the French Quarter, killing 14 New Year's revelers before police killed the attacker in a shootout. Dozens more were injured.

Notre Dame beat Georgia 23-10 in a game that concluded without incident amid the enhanced security.

"We can see the presence up on the rooftop," Horsey said, pointing at a sniper above Champions Square. "So, I kind of felt like this is probably one of the safest places to be in the city."

Joe Horsey said the pregame crowd was larger than he expected but he also found the "energy lower than a normal football game."

"You could sense the musicians trying to get people riled up. People are kind of going through the paces, a little bit in shock, but trying to make the best out of the day," he said.

It also seemed to Horsey that opposing fans were being a little more polite to one another than at a typical game.

"SEC football can get nasty on game day and can get a little raucous," he said. "But there's a little different sense of civility and that there's bigger things than football."

Flags were at half-staff outside nearby government buildings in memory of those killed in the attack, which has been labeled by authorities as an act of terrorism.

"Obviously the events that occurred were very challenging, and I just want everybody to know that the Notre Dame family, every single person in our locker room is praying for those families," Notre Dame quarterback Riley Leonard said. "I also want to thank the New Orleans police department for responding the way they did and creating a safe environment for us to play today, so quickly after the events."

The attack occurred on Bourbon Street, which runs through the heart of the French Quarter and is famously lined with bars, restaurants and clubs, near the corner of Canal Street, a main downtown artery.

The crime scene, which was gradually cleared so it could be reopened to the public on Thursday, is about a mile's walk from the Superdome.

Security was ramped up in and around the stadium.

Police blocked regular traffic from passing by the main Superdome entrance on Poydras Street, an eight-lane downtown artery.

A helicopter circled overhead.

Security officers around the 70,000-seat stadium were handling dogs trained to sniff for explosive devices. They encircled cars entering the dome's parking garage and in some cases sniffed bags and backpacks.

The game, originally scheduled for 7:45 p.m. CST on Wednesday, was pushed back to 3 p.m. Thursday, about 36 hours after the attack. It was the first time the Sugar Bowl had been postponed in its 91-year history, although it was relocated at the end of the 2005 season because of Hurricane Katrina.

The Superdome also is scheduled to host the Super Bowl on Feb. 9.

Notre Dame advanced to the Orange Bowl next Thursday against Fiesta Bowl winner Penn State.

Mark Oldani, a 58-year-old Nashville resident and 1988 graduate of Notre Dame, took a group photo for a gathering of Georgia fans in front of the venue.

The crowd was "friendly, nobody yelling back and forth at each other," he said. "I think everybody's coming in hoping for a good game and wanting to make the most of a really difficult situation."

Before the singing of the national anthem, a moment of silence, lasting close to half a minute, was held.

While many fans extended their stay to attend the game, the postponement meant some were able to attend because of travel plans that were deemed too expensive or logistically difficult to change.

Numerous tickets were listed for resale online at prices as low as \$23.

Postponing the game "was absolutely the right call," said Lisa Borrelli, a 34-year-old Philadelphia resident who came to New Orleans with her fiancée, a 2011 Notre Dame graduate, but could not stay for the game.

She said they paid more than \$250 per ticket and weren't sure if they'd bother listing them for resale because prices were so low.

"Of course we're disappointed to miss it and to lose so much money on it, but at the end of the day it doesn't matter," Borrelli said. "We're fortunate enough that we'll be fine."

Freeman and Notre Dame handle 'tough moments' and oust Georgia from CFP with 23-10 win in Sugar Bowl

By BRETT MARTEL AP Sports Writer

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Notre Dame coach Marcus Freeman and the Fighting Irish found the right balance of family and football to produce a memorable performance under unprecedented, emotionally trying circumstances.

Riley Leonard passed for a touchdown, Jayden Harrison returned a kickoff 98 yards for a score, and Notre Dame's defense made it hold up in a 23-10 victory over No. 2 Georgia in the Sugar Bowl on Thursday that sent the third-ranked Fighting Irish into the semifinals of the College Football Playoff.

The triumph came in wake of a deadly terror attack in the host city early Wednesday — the day the game was supposed to have been played. The first postponement of a Sugar Bowl in the event's 91-year history followed hours later.

"We spent some time together, and I think that's what you do in tough moments," Freeman said in recounting how the Irish handled their unexpected down time on Wednesday. "You want to spend time with family, and that's what we are."

Notre Dame (13-1, CFP No. 5) came through with enough big plays, avoided major mistakes and all but sealed it with a clever move by Freeman.

"Our coaches called the game aggressive. Our players executed, put everything on the line," Freeman said. "I'm really proud of them. Proud of the way they handled the events of the last 24 hours."

Georgia (11-3, CFP No. 2) was in position to close within one score when Notre Dame stopped the Bulldogs on fourth-and-5 from the Irish 9-yard line with 9:29 to go.

Minutes later, Notre Dame had a fourth-and-short deep in his own territory when Freeman sent the punt team out before running all 11 players off the field and sending the offense back out. Georgia raced to match up and then jumped offside as the play clock ticked down, giving the Irish a clock-sapping first down with 7:17 to go.

"They were going to hard-count us. We prepare for that. We do it every week," Georgia coach Kirby Smart said. "We jumped offsides."

By the time the Bulldogs got the ball back, just 1:49 remained, and Notre Dame was on its way to a 12th straight victory and a date with No. 5 Penn State (13-2, CFP No. 6 seed) in a semifinal at the Orange Bowl in Miami next Thursday.

"That's the aggressiveness in terms of our preparation that I want our program to have," Freeman said. "That's got to be one of our edges, that we are going to be an aggressive group and not fear making mistakes."

Georgia played without starting quarterback Carson Beck, who injured his elbow in the Southeastern Conference championship game. He was replaced by Gunner Stockton, who was 20 of 32 for 234 yards and one touchdown.

The Bulldogs outgained Notre Dame 296 yards to 244, but Georgia was stopped on all three of its fourth-down attempts and lost two fumbles — one deep in Notre Dame territory and one inside its own 20.

"The turnovers are the difference in the game, guys," Smart said. "I mean, you should know when you turn it over twice and they return a kickoff for a touchdown, you're not going to have a lot of success."

Leonard finished with 90 yards passing and a team-high 80 yards rushing, including a late first-down run in which he was sent head over heels as he tried to leap over a defender.

"We're in the playoffs," Leonard said. "Everybody else can put their body on the line, I'm going to do it right there with them."

The game had been set for Wednesday night as part of a New Year's Day playoff tripleheader, but it was postponed after an Army veteran inspired by the Islamic State group drove a pickup truck into a crowd on Bourbon Street early Wednesday morning, killing 14 revelers. Security was increased at the Superdome — which will also host the Super Bowl next month — and arriving fans said they felt safe.

With some fans unable to alter their travel plans, attendance in the 70,000-seat stadium was announced

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at 68,400. There were patches of empty seats in the upper levels, but passionate supporters made no shortage of noise trying to will their teams into the next round of college football's first 12-team playoff.

The game was tied at 3-all before Notre Dame scored 17 points in a span of 54 seconds.

The unusual sequence began with Mitch Jeter's 48-yard field goal with 39 seconds left in first half.

Soon after, Georgia paid for a decision to attempt a drop-back pass from its own 25. RJ Oben's blind-side sack caused Stockton to fumble at the 13, where Irish defensive lineman Junior Tuihalamatika recovered. Leonard found Beaux Collins over the middle for a touchdown on the next play for a 13-3 lead that stood at halftime.

By the time 15 seconds had elapsed in the third quarter, Notre Dame led 20-3.

Harrison took Georgia's second-half kickoff all the way to the end zone, slipping a tackle near the middle of the field, cutting toward the right sideline and outrunning everyone.

Georgia closed the gap to 20-10 when Stockton hit reserve running back Cash Jones for a 32-yard score before Jeter's third field goal of the game gave the Irish their winning margin.

"Holding a team like that to 10 points, it's a low amount, it's pretty good," safety Xavier Watts said. "Just really proud of the performance we put up."

Takeaways

Notre Dame: With a dominant defense and the dual-threat nature of Leonard's playmaking, the Irish look dangerous heading into the semifinals.

Georgia: A team trying to win big games without its starting QB can't afford big mistakes, and missed opportunities doomed the Bulldogs and Smart, who will have to wait a year for another chance at his third national title.

Up next

Notre Dame: The Irish resume a series with the Nittany Lions that is currently even at 9-9-1.

Georgia: The 2025 season opener will be at home against Marshall on Aug. 30.

An aspiring nurse, a football star, a single mother and a father of 2 killed in New Orleans attack

By MARTHA BELLISLE Associated Press

An 18-year-old woman dreaming of becoming a nurse, a single mother, a father of two and a former Princeton football star were killed when the driver of a white pickup truck sped down Bourbon Street, packed with holiday revelers.

Officials have not yet released the names of the 14 people killed in the New Orleans New Year's Day truck attack, but their families and friends have started sharing their stories.

New Orleans Coroner Dr. Dwight McKenna said in a statement late Wednesday that the names of the dead will be released once autopsies are complete and they've talked with the next of kin. A spokesperson for the coroner said Thursday that there were no updates. About 30 people were injured.

Billy DiMaio

Billy DiMaio, 25, was humble and gentled-hearted, so devoted to family that he had a tattoo featuring all of his cousins' names, his parents told NOLA.com.

A New York City-based account executive for the media company Audacy, DiMaio was in New Orleans to celebrate New Year's Eve and see friends who planned to go to the Sugar Bowl, Tracie and Bill DiMaio, of Holmdel, New Jersey, told the news site. His friends escaped injury.

"He was a good, humble kid," Bill DiMaio said. "He loved life."

Billy DiMaio grew up on Long Island, New York, before the family moved to New Jersey. He graduated in 2022 from Chestnut Hill College in Philadelphia, where he was on the lacrosse team and earned a master's degree.

"He was a pure, gentle-hearted soul," his mother said. "He will be truly missed."

He had worked for Audacy since 2023.

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"Beyond his professional achievements, Billy will be fondly remembered for his unwavering work ethic, positive attitude, and kindness," Audacy said in an emailed statement. "He was a true asset to the Audacy team, and his contributions and presence will be deeply missed."

Hubert Gauthreaux

Archbishop Shaw High School, in Marrero, Louisiana, posted on Facebook that class of 2021 alum Hubert Gauthreaux, was among the victims.

Gauthreaux "was tragically killed in the senseless act of violence that occurred early this morning in the French Quarter. He was 21 years old," the Catholic boys school posted Wednesday evening. "We are asking the entire Archbishop Shaw family to pray for the repose of Hubert's soul, his family and friends during this difficult time, and all those affected by this tragedy."

Kareem Badawi

University of Alabama freshman Kareem Badawi was among those killed in the attack. A native of Louisiana and a graduate of the Episcopal School of Baton Rouge, Badawi had started at the Alabama university this fall.

Back home in Baton Rouge for winter break, Badawi had gone to New Orleans with friends to celebrate the new year, his father, Belal Badawi said in an interview.

"He is a lovely boy. I lost my son. He's a good boy," he said of his son. "Unfortunately, his life ended that quick and with no reason. Just nothing he did to deserve for somebody to come and kill him."

Belal Badawi had posted in May celebrating his son's high school graduation and plans to attend the University of Alabama.

The university issued a statement confirming the freshman's death.

"I grieve alongside family and friends of Kareem in their heartbreaking loss," University of Alabama President Stuart R. Bell said.

Drew Dauphin

Christopher B. Roberts, president of Auburn University in Auburn, Alabama, said on the social platform X that 2023 graduate Drew Dauphin died in the attack.

"Words cannot convey the sorrow the Auburn Family feels for Drew's family and friends during this unimaginably difficult time," Roberts said. "Our thoughts are with the Dauphin family and the families of all the victims of this senseless tragedy."

Dauphin was a supplier process engineer at the American Honda Motor Company in Birmingham, Alabama, according to his LinkedIn profile.

Matthew Tenedorio

The parents of Matthew Tenedorio told NBC News that their son was one of the people killed in the attack.

"He was 25 years old. He was just starting life. He had the job of his dreams," Cathy Tenedorio said. "It's just very sad."

A GoFundMe page created by a cousin says he was an audiovisual technician at the Superdome.

"He was a wonderful kid," Louis Tenedorio added. "He loved people. He loved animals. He always had a smile. So many friends. He had so many friends."

Cathy Tenedorio said she had spent New Year's Eve with Matthew and another one of her sons.

"We had dinner and we did fireworks outside, and just laughing and hugging each other and telling each other we loved each other," she said. She added that they had tried to dissuade him from going into the city.

"They don't think about risk," she said.

Nikyra Dedeaux

Zion Parsons, of Gulfport, Mississippi, had been celebrating New Year's Eve at his first night on Bourbon Street when a vehicle appeared and plowed into his friend, 18-year-old Nikyra Dedeaux, who he said had dreamed of becoming a nurse.

"A truck hit the corner and comes barreling through throwing people like in a movie scene, throwing people into the air," Parsons told The Associated Press. "It hit her and flung her like at least 30 feet and I was just lucky to be alive."

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As the crowd scattered in the chaos he ran through a gruesome aftermath of bleeding and maimed victims, hearing gunshots and explosive sounds.

"Bodies, bodies all up and down the street, everybody screaming and hollering" Parsons said. "People crying on the floor, like brain matter all over the ground. It was just insane, like the closest thing to a war zone that I've ever seen."

Dedeaux was a responsible daughter who helped take care of her siblings, Parsons said. Dedeaux had a job at a hospital and was set to start college and begin working towards her goal of becoming a registered nurse.

"She had her mindset — she didn't have everything figured out but she had the plan laid down," Parsons said.

Reggie Hunter

A 37-year-old father of two from Baton Rouge, Reggie Hunter had just left work and headed to celebrate New Year's with a cousin when the attack happened, his first cousin Shirell Jackson told Nola.com.

Hunter died and his cousin was injured, Jackson said.

Tiger Bech

A former high school and college football player from Louisiana was among those who died, according to an education official.

Tiger Bech, 27, died Wednesday morning at a New Orleans hospital, according to local media outlets citing Kim Broussard, the athletic director at St. Thomas More Catholic High School in Lafayette. Bech attended the high school, where he played wide receiver, quarterback, punt returner and defensive back, NOLA.com reported.

Bech played football at Princeton University before graduating in 2021. Most recently he was working as an investment trader at a New York brokerage firm.

Marty Cannon, STM principal and former coach of Bech, said he was charismatic, intelligent and an incredibly talented football player. He regularly returned home to visit his tight-knit family, close friends and people at the school. He was home over Christmas.

"We live in a relatively small community here where not a lot of people leave but many do," Cannon said. "I'm not surprised at all that Tiger could take off from south Louisiana and go off and get an amazing education at a place like Princeton and then lock himself into a community up there and just flourish. He's that kind of guy."

Princeton football coach Bob Surace said Wednesday that he had been texting with Bech's father, sharing memories of the player, who was a school kick returner and receiver from 2017 to 2019. He earned All-Ivy League honors as a returner.

"He might be the first Tiger to ever play for us, and that nickname kind of described him as a competitor," Surace told ESPN. The school's mascot is the tiger. "He was somebody that somehow, like in the key moments, just excelled and was full of energy, full of life."

Bech has been working at Seaport Global, where company spokesperson Lisa Lieberman could not confirm his death. She told the AP, "He was extremely well regarded by everybody who knew him."

Bech's younger brother, Jack, is a top wide receiver at Texas Christian University.

In a response to a KLFY-TV report posted on X about Tiger Bech's death, a post from an account for a Jack Bech on the social media site said: "Love you always brother ! You inspired me everyday now you get to be with me in every moment. I got this family T, don't worry. This is for us."

Nicole Perez

Nicole Perez was a single mother to a 4-year-old son working hard to make life better for her family when she was killed, according to her employer.

Perez, who was in her late 20s, was recently promoted to manager at Kimmy's Deli in Metairie, Louisiana, and "was really excited about it," deli owner Kimberly Usher said in a phone interview with the AP. Usher confirmed Perez's death through her sister, who also works for her.

Usher said Perez would walk in the morning to the deli, which opened at breakfast time, and ask lots of

questions about the business side of the operations. She also was permitted to bring her son, Melo, to work. "She was a really good mom," said Usher, who started a GoFundMe account to cover Perez's burial costs and to help with expenses for her son that "he will need to transition into a new living situation," the donation request says.

Injured in the Attack

— Heaven Sensky-Kirsch said her father, Jeremi Sensky, endured 10 hours of surgery for injuries that included two broken legs. He was taken off a ventilator Thursday.

Jeremi Sensky was ejected from the wheelchair he was using and had bruises to his face and head, Sensky-Kirsch said in a phone interview from a hospital intensive care unit.

"He's talking right now," Sensky-Kirsch said late Thursday morning.

Sensky, 51, who works in the family's tree service business, had driven from his home in Canonsburg, Pennsylvania, to New Orleans to celebrate the holiday.

Before the attack, Sensky and the two friends had been having pizza, his daughter said. Sensky left them to return to his hotel on Canal Street because he felt cold, she said.

Sensky-Kirsch said others could see the attacker coming and were able to run out of the way, but her father "was stuck on the road." His wheelchair can be seen in some images lodged against a crane.

When he didn't return to the hotel, they went to look for him, she said.

"We thought he was dead," Sensky-Kirsch said. "We can't believe he's alive."

— Ryan Quigley, who was a teammate of Bech's at Princeton, was with him when they were struck by the truck. Quigley was injured, according to family and friends.

"Ryan is doing okay. He is stable and resting in the company of his family and friends," the Quigleys said in an update on a GoFundMe page set up by his friends. "Ryan loves you all. Please keep the Bech family, the other families, and all of those affected by this tragedy in your prayers. Thank you all."

— University of Georgia President Jere W. Morehead said on X that a student was critically injured in the attack and is receiving medical treatment. He did not name the student.

— The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on X that two Israeli citizens were injured in the attack.

— University of Mississippi Chancellor Glenn Boyce said Thursday that one of the university's students was critically injured in New Orleans. Boyce did not identify the student.

The Latest: The FBI now says the New Orleans truck attacker acted alone in an 'act of terrorism'

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — The FBI now says the New Orleans truck attacker acted alone in an "act of terrorism" when he drove a pickup truck into a crowd of New Year's revelers early Wednesday, killing 14 people. The driver had posted videos on social media hours before the carnage saying he was inspired by the Islamic State group and expressing a desire to kill, President Joe Biden said.

The FBI identified the driver as 42-year-old Shamsud-Din Bahar Jabbar.

Officials have not yet released the names of the people killed in the attack, but their families and friends have started sharing their stories. About 30 people were injured.

Here is the latest:

'His life ended that quick and with no reason,' father of a victim says

Kareem Badawi, 18, had just finished his first semester at the University of Alabama, where he was studying mechanical engineering. He had made A's in his first semester in college and joined a fraternity.

Home for winter break, Badawi had gone to New Orleans with friends to celebrate the new year. He was one of the 14 people killed in the New Year's Day attack.

"My son is full of life. His is a social guy who likes to have friends and build friendship," his father Belal Badawi said.

An honors student in high school and college, he was also athletic, playing football and other sports in high school.

"He is a lovely boy. I lost my son. He's a good boy," Badawi said of his son. "Unfortunately, his life ended

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that quick and with no reason. Just nothing he did to deserve for somebody to come and kill him.”

‘Unfortunately, it’s business as usual’

Mark Tabor, 61, the manager of a Willie’s Chicken Shack on Bourbon, said it was strange to feel the disconnect between the normal hustle of the French Quarter outside and the violence he had witnessed less than 48 hours earlier.

“I’m glad they cleaned up the streets, but it’s like everything’s forgotten. It’s sad,” he said in an interview Thursday afternoon.

He had been getting ready to close up when the violence started early on New Year’s Day, but there were still diners at every table, he said. Gun shots rang out, everybody started running inside, and he locked the doors and hid in the back of the restaurant with his employees and customers until police said it was safe to come out.

He said officers tried to lead people so they could avoid seeing the bodies in the street.

“It looked like a nightmare,” he said.

Tabor sounded calm as he talked about the events, but he said he was still feeling jumpy. While he said he is used to dealing with the reality of violence in the city, there were some images he just couldn’t get out of his head.

He said one of the victims was a girl his daughter had gone to school with.

“She lost her life right in front,” he said.

Outside, tourists strolled down the street past groups of armed police officers. The bars were filling up just as the sun began to set. A woman danced in the street in front of a daiquiri shop, closing her eyes as she swallowed a sugary beignet.

“They always come back,” said Tabor. “Unfortunately, it’s business as usual.”

FBI releases photos of the attacker from an hour before he drove through Bourbon Street

The FBI has released photos of surveillance footage that the agency says shows Shamsud-Din Jabbar an hour before he drove a truck down Bourbon Street, killing 14 people and injuring dozens of others.

In the surveillance footage, Jabbar is dressed in a long light brown coat, a button-down shirt, blue jeans, and what appears to be brown dress shoes. He is wearing glasses.

The footage captures Jabbar walking down Dauphine Street, a block away from Bourbon Street, shortly after 2 a.m.

Biden ‘going to try’ to visit New Orleans

Biden’s days in office are numbered, with the inauguration of President-elect Donald Trump on Jan. 20 approaching fast.

Biden is expected to eulogize former President Jimmy Carter next week before he travels to Rome for several days to meet with Pope Francis and Italian government officials.

Asked at the White House on Thursday if he planned on visiting New Orleans, Biden said: “I’m going to try.”

Music is back on Bourbon Street

Along the same block of Bourbon Street where the truck rampaged, a brass band plays to a large crowd. Across the street, a bouquet of white flowers rests on the brick sidewalk.

“Rest in peace, y’all,” one of the drummers shouts after the band finishes a song.

Trombone player and lifelong New Orleans resident Jonas Green, 22, said it was important for his band to be out on Bourbon Street the day after the attack.

“I know with this music, it heals, it transforms the feelings that we’re going through into something better,” Green said. “Gotta keep on going.”

While the historic street has reopened to the public, a group of heavily armed Homeland Security troops still walked in the area alongside tourists.

Temporary bollards and extra security in place along Bourbon Street

As Bourbon Street reopened to the public Thursday afternoon, people strolled past temporary yellow bollards placed in the street.

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In addition to tourists, locals, reporters, local law enforcement and heavily armed Homeland Security officers walked along the typically raucous stretch of street.

At a morning news conference, officials had promised additional resources and safety details as thousands of people attended the Sugar Bowl at the Superdome, about a mile (1.6 kilometers) away from where Wednesday morning's attack occurred.

'I never saw this coming'

Chris Pousson, of Beaumont, Texas, said he became friends with Shamsud-Din Jabbar in middle school and recalled him as quiet and reserved.

"This is a complete shock," Pousson said. "Everyone I spoke with, all of our classmates, we're all just in disbelief really."

He said that after high school, they reconnected on Facebook around 2008 or 2009 and would message back and forth until around 2018 or 2019.

"He was always like glory to God and all that stuff, praise to the highest," Pousson, 42, said. "He was always promoting his faith in a positive manner. It was never anything negative."

Pousson, who is retired after serving 16 years in the Air Force, where he worked in anti-terrorism, said, "I never saw this coming."

"If any red flags would have popped off, I would have caught them and I would have contacted the proper authorities," he said. "But he didn't give anything to me that would have suggested that he is capable of doing what happened."

Biden salutes New Orleans' 'tremendous spirit'

"It can't keep it down. It really can't, and we're seeing that today. The Sugar Bowl is back on," President Joe Biden said at an unrelated White House event. He noted that Bourbon Street had reopened with reinforced security the day after the attack.

"The people of New Orleans are sending an unmistakable message. They will not let this attack or the attacker's deluded ideology overcome us," Biden said.

Biden orders accelerated investigations into New Orleans attack, Las Vegas explosion

The president spoke about the two incidents at an unrelated White House event on Thursday.

He says he ordered accelerated investigations "so we have answers to our unanswered questions." He said he also has ordered that every single federal resource be provided "to get the job done."

The FBI earlier Thursday said there is no "definitive link," as of now, between the events in New Orleans and Las Vegas.

'They ain't gonna kill our good time'

Ohio residents Jeffrey and Briana Tolle, both in their fifties, strolled down Bourbon Street for their very first time shortly after it reopened, with Mardi Gras beads around their necks and beverages in hand.

They had spent the morning enjoying beignets and remained determined to enjoy their trip.

"We're like, well we're going, we're not stopping," Jeffrey Tolle said. "They ain't gonna kill our good time."

Fans gear up and turn out for the Sugar Bowl

Ticketed fans in Georgia and Notre Dame gear packed a plaza adjacent to the Superdome and enjoyed music under clear skies — and the watch of snipers on rooftops — before filtering into the stadium for Thursday's College Football Playoff quarterfinal at the Sugar Bowl.

"It was a lot of fun. It felt safe," said Shannon Horsey, a Georgia fan in her 40s who lives Austin, Texas.

"Coming in they searched by bag thoroughly. So I felt like, 'OK, they're really paying attention.'"

Joe Horsey, a Georgia graduate, found the pre-game crowd larger than he expected, but the "energy lower than a normal football game."

Meanwhile, Horsey found opposing fans were being somewhat more polite to one another than usual.

"SEC football can get nasty on game day and can get a little raucous," he said. "But there's a little different sense of civility and that there's bigger things than football."

New Orleans locals roll up their sleeves at a blood drive

The mood was patient and upbeat at 2609 Canal Street. Donors stood in line or sat on fold-out chairs,

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chatting cheerfully and snacking on potato chips as they waited.

Billy Weales, CEO of The Blood Center, said the last time he had seen similar turnout was for 9/11.

"I think we need a bigger parking lot," he said, looking out at about 60 people who were waiting to give blood at one of the donation trucks parked outside.

Mandy Garrett, a 34-year-old engineer, said she heard about the blood drive on Instagram.

"It's what I can do. There's really not much else we can do ... where you feel like you have a little bit of control of the outcome," she said.

The New Year's Day attack on Bourbon Street injured dozens and killed 14 people. The attacker also died.

How did authorities conclude that the attacker acted alone?

Officials have reviewed surveillance video showing people standing near an improvised explosive device that Jabbar placed in a cooler along the city's Bourbon Street, where the attack occurred.

Following the review, authorities "do not believe at this point these people are involved ... in any way," said Christopher Raia, deputy assistant director of the FBI's counter-terrorism division.

Louisiana's attorney general: The Sugar Bowl 'had to go on'

"I believe New Orleans is very secure," Attorney General Liz Murrill said Thursday in a post on the social platform X. "We can honor the lives that were lost by not bowing down to fear brought on by a cowardly terrorist attack."

The College Football Playoff quarterfinal is scheduled to begin at 3 p.m. CST on Thursday, 36 hours after the deadly attack on Bourbon Street.

The scene near the Superdome

Crowds are already flocking to the Caesars Superdome ahead of the Sugar Bowl. Alongside food trucks and foot traffic, a fleet of armored vehicles maintains a watchful presence.

Man injured in the attack spent hours in surgery, family says

Heaven Sensky-Kirsch says her father, Jeremi Sensky, endured 10 hours of surgery for injuries from the truck attack that included two broken legs. He was taken off a ventilator Thursday.

Jeremi Sensky was ejected from the wheelchair he has used since a 1999 car accident and had bruises to his face and head, Sensky-Kirsch said in a phone interview with The Associated Press.

Sensky, 51, had driven from his home in Canonsburg, Pennsylvania, to New Orleans to celebrate the holiday.

He and his wife, his daughter, his son-in-law and two friends stopped for a few days in Nashville before arriving in New Orleans.

Before the attack, Sensky and the two friends had been having pizza, his daughter said. Sensky left them to return to his hotel on Canal Street because he felt cold, she said.

Sensky-Kirsch said others could see the attacker coming and were able to run out of the way, but her father "was stuck on the road."

When he didn't return to the hotel, they went to look for him, ending up in an emergency room, she said.

"We thought he was dead," Sensky-Kirsch said. "We can't believe he's alive."

'The mood in the city, we feel it today'

As New Orleans approaches the start of its carnival season on Monday, a monthslong period leading up to Mardi Gras, the city normally celebrates with parades and king cake.

But Kim Do, 47, whose Hi-Do bakery is a beloved supplier of the carnival treat, says she worries that orders for the biggest moneymaker of her family-run business will be significantly down.

"The mood in the city, we feel it today, I don't know how we're going to move forward after this tragedy," Do said.

"I personally would be scared to even go out there, to be in the parades — I think there's going to be a lot less people, a lot less activities," she said. "I think the city will try to go back to the normal stuff as much as possible but I think we're all going to be a little more cautious."

FBI clarifies death toll in New Orleans attack

Fifteen people were killed in the attack, said Christopher Raia, deputy assistant director of the FBI's

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counter-terrorism division. That number includes the 14 victims killed plus the assailant, Shamsud-Din Jabbar.

FBI says it isn't sure why Bourbon Street was targeted

"We know that he specifically picked out Bourbon Street, not sure why," said Christopher Raia, deputy assistant director of the FBI's counterterrorism division.

"He was 100 percent inspired by ISIS," he added.

Bourbon Street to reopen ahead of the Sugar Bowl, mayor says

"The city of New Orleans, we're resilient," New Orleans Mayor Latoya Cantrell said.

"The confidence is there to reopen Bourbon Street to the public before game time today," Cantrell added.

FBI says New Orleans truck attacker acted alone in 'act of terrorism'

The FBI obtained surveillance video of Shamsud Din Jabbar placing the explosive devices where they were found, said Christopher Raia, deputy assistant director of the FBI's counter-terrorism division.

The FBI also found "no definitive link" between the New Orleans attack and the Tesla Cybertruck explosion outside a Trump hotel in Las Vegas.

Hundreds of tips have come in

The FBI has received more than 400 tips from the public, some from New Orleans and others from other states, Christopher Raia, deputy assistant director of the FBI's counter-terrorism division, said at a news conference on Thursday.

Is there a connection between the New Orleans attack and a Cybertruck explosion in Las Vegas?

U.S. President Joe Biden said Wednesday evening the FBI was looking into whether an explosion outside a Las Vegas hotel owned by President-elect Donald Trump was connected to the New Orleans attack.

Fireworks and camp fuel canisters were found in a Tesla Cybertruck that blew up outside the Trump International Hotel early Wednesday, killing a suspect inside the vehicle.

The person who died in the explosion was an active-duty U.S. Army soldier who spent time at the base formerly known as Fort Bragg, three U.S. officials told The Associated Press on Thursday. The officials also spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to disclose details of his service.

The truck explosion came hours after a driver, 42-year-old Shamsud-Din Bahar Jabbar, rammed a truck into a crowd in New Orleans. Jabbar, a U.S. Army veteran, also spent time at Fort Bragg, a massive Army base in North Carolina that is home to Army special forces command. An official told the AP that there is no apparent overlap in their assignments there.

The investigation so far has not shown the incidents are related, and authorities don't think the men knew each other, two law enforcement officials said. The officials were not authorized to discuss details of the investigation publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

What is the Islamic State group?

The FBI says it recovered the black banner of the Islamic State group from the truck that smashed into New Year's partygoers. The investigation is expected to look in part at any support or inspiration that driver Shamsud-Din Jabbar may have drawn from that violent Middle East-based group or from any of at least 19 affiliated groups around the world.

Routed from its self-proclaimed caliphate in Syria and Iraq by a U.S. military-led coalition more than five years ago, IS has focused on seizing territory in the Middle East more than on staging massive al-Qaida-style attacks on the West.

But in its home territory, IS has welcomed any chance to behead Americans and other foreigners who come within its reach. The main group at peak strength claimed a handful of coordinated operations targeting the West, including a 2015 Paris plot that killed 130 people. It has had success, although abated in recent years, in inspiring people around the world who are drawn to its ideology to carry out ghastly attacks on innocent civilians.

Authorities to give an update on the investigation

Louisiana Governor Jeff Landry will be joined at the news conference by officials from the FBI, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the U.S. Attorney's Office, the Louisiana State Police and the New Orleans Police Department.

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The conference is scheduled to begin around 10:15 a.m. CST.

'We have all the confidence that we're going to be able to put this game on'

"The Superdome is completely secure," Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry said on Fox News. "Again, the FBI continues to pour resources into the state."

Landry said he plans to attend Thursday afternoon's college football playoff game between the University of Georgia and the University of Notre Dame.

"We need not let fear paralyze us," Landry added. "That's the problem in this country. When we do that, the terrorists win."

Pope Francis and Italy's president send condolences

ROME — A telegram of condolences, addressed to Archbishop Gregory Aymond, said Francis was saddened to learn of the attack in New Orleans and was spiritually close to the city.

Francis "prays for healing and consolation of the injured and bereaved," said the telegram, which was signed by the Vatican secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin.

Separately, Italian President Sergio Mattarella also sent condolences to President Joe Biden, whom he will see during Biden's visit to Rome next week, saying all of Italy was mourning the loss of life.

"At this time of sorrow for the American people, I would like to reaffirm the firm resolve of the Italian Republic to oppose in the strongest terms all forms of terrorism, on the basis of those values of civilization, democracy and respect for human life that have always been shared with the United States," he said in a statement.

Sugar Bowl scheduled to take place in New Orleans this afternoon

The College Football Playoff quarterfinal at the Sugar Bowl between Georgia and Notre Dame was postponed by a day because of the truck attack, which unfolded about a mile away.

The game, originally scheduled for 7:45 p.m. CST at the 70,000-seat Superdome on Wednesday, was pushed back to 3 p.m. Thursday. The winner advances to the Jan. 9 Orange Bowl against Penn State.

"Public safety is paramount," Sugar Bowl CEO Jeff Hundley said at a media briefing alongside federal, state and local officials, including Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry and New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell. "All parties all agree that it's in the best interest of everybody and public safety that we postpone the game."

The decision to postpone the game meant numerous traveling fans with tickets would not be able to attend. Ticket prices online plummeted in some cases to less than \$25 as fans with plans to depart on Thursday tried to unload them.

The Superdome was on lockdown for security sweeps on Wednesday morning. Both teams spent most of the day in their hotels, holding meetings in ballrooms.

An aspiring nurse, a football star, a single mother: What we know about the victims

Officials have not yet released the names of the 15 people killed in the New Orleans New Year's Day truck attack, but their families and friends have started sharing their stories.

Here's a look at some of what we know:

1. Nikyra Dedeaux: Zion Parsons of Gulfport, Mississippi, had been celebrating New Year's Eve on his first night on Bourbon Street when a vehicle appeared and plowed into his friend, 18-year-old Nikyra Dedeaux, who he said had dreamed of becoming a nurse. Dedeaux was a responsible daughter — shorter than all her siblings but the one who helped take care of everyone, Parsons said.

2. Reggie Hunter: A 37-year-old father of two from Baton Rouge, Hunter had just left work and headed to celebrate New Year's with a cousin when the attack happened, his first cousin Shirell Jackson told Nola.com.

3. Nicole Perez: A single mother to a 4-year-old son, Perez was working hard to make life better for her family, according to her employer. Perez, who was in her late 20s, was recently promoted to manager at Kimmy's Deli in Metairie, Louisiana, and "was really excited about it," deli owner Kimberly Usher said in a phone interview with The Associated Press.

What we know about a vehicle attack on pedestrians in New Orleans that killed at least 15

Authorities say the driver of a pickup truck sped through a crowd of pedestrians gathered in New Orleans'

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bustling French Quarter district early on New Year's Day, killing at least 15 people and injuring about 30 others. The suspect was killed in a shootout with police.

The FBI is investigating the attack as an act of terrorism and said it does not believe the driver acted alone.

Wednesday's attack unfolded on Bourbon Street, known worldwide as one of the largest destinations for New Year's Eve parties. Large crowds had also gathered in the city ahead of the College Football Playoff quarterfinal at the Sugar Bowl, which had been scheduled for later Wednesday at the nearby Superdome. The game was postponed until Thursday afternoon following the attack.

Biden awards the 2nd highest civilian award to leaders of the Jan. 6 committee and 18 others

By COLLEEN LONG and DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

President Joe Biden on Thursday awarded the second highest civilian medal to Liz Cheney and Bennie Thompson, leaders of the congressional investigation into the Capitol riot who Donald Trump has said should be jailed for their roles in the inquiry.

Biden awarded the Presidential Citizens Medal to 20 people in a ceremony in the East Room, including Americans who fought for marriage equality, a pioneer in treating wounded soldiers, and two of the president's longtime friends, former Sens. Ted Kaufman, D-Del., and Chris Dodd, D-Conn.

"Together, you embody the central truth: We're a great nation because we're a good people," he said. "Our democracy begins and ends with the duties of citizenship. That's our work for the ages and it's what all of you embody."

Biden last year honored people who were involved in defending the Capitol from a mob of angry Trump supporters on Jan. 6, 2021, or who helped safeguard the will of American voters during the 2020 presidential election, when Trump tried and failed to overturn the results.

Cheney, a Republican former Wyoming congresswoman, and Rep. Thompson, a Mississippi Democrat, led the House committee that investigated the insurrection. The committee's final report asserted that Trump criminally engaged in a "multi-part conspiracy" to overturn the lawful results of the election he lost to Biden and failed to act to stop his supporters from attacking the Capitol. Thompson wrote that Trump "lit that fire."

The audience erupted in loud cheers and stood when Cheney took the stage. Biden clasped her hand and gave her the medal. The announcer said she was being given it "for putting the American people over party."

Cheney, who lost her seat in the GOP primary in August 2022, later said she would vote for Democrat Kamala Harris in the 2024 presidential race and campaigned with the Democratic nominee, raising Trump's ire. Biden has been considering whether to offer preemptive pardons to Cheney and others Trump has targeted.

Thompson, who also received a standing ovation, was recognized "for his lifelong dedication to safeguarding our Constitution."

Trump, who won the 2024 election and will take office Jan. 20, still refuses to back away from his lies about the 2020 presidential race and has said he would pardon the rioters once he is back in the White House.

During an interview with NBC's "Meet the Press," the president-elect said that "Cheney did something that's inexcusable, along with Thompson and the people on the un-select committee of political thugs and, you know, creeps," claiming without evidence they "deleted and destroyed" testimony they collected.

"Honestly, they should go to jail," he said.

Cheney and Thompson were "an embarrassment to this country" for their conduct on the committee, Trump's communications director Steven Cheung asserted.

Biden also awarded the medal to attorney Mary Bonauto, who fought to legalize same-sex marriage, and Evan Wolfson, a leader of the marriage equality movement.

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Other honorees included Frank Butler, who set new standards for using tourniquets on war injuries; Diane Carlson Evans, an Army nurse during the Vietnam War who founded the Vietnam Women's Memorial Foundation; and Eleanor Smeal, an activist who led women's rights protests in the 1970s and fought for equal pay.

He bestowed the honor to photographer Bobby Sager, academics Thomas Vallely and Paula Wallace, and Frances Visco, the president of the National Breast Cancer Coalition.

Other former lawmakers honored included former Sen. Bill Bradley, D-N.J.; former Sen. Nancy Kassebaum, the first woman to represent Kansas; and former Rep. Carolyn McCarthy, D-N.Y., who championed gun safety measures after her son and husband were shot to death.

After he presented the awards, he went back to the lectern to ask lawmakers in the room to stand, as well as John Kerry, a former U.S. senator and Biden's first climate envoy.

"Let's remember, our work continues," he said to the room after he thanked the families in attendance for the support they gave to the nominees. "We've got a lot more work to do to keep this going."

Biden honored four people posthumously: Joseph Galloway, a former war correspondent who wrote about the first major battle in Vietnam in the book "We Were Soldiers Once ... and Young"; civil rights advocate and attorney Louis Lorenzo Redding; former Delaware judge Collins Seitz; and Mitsuye Endo Tsutsumi, who was held with other Japanese Americans during World War II and challenged the detention.

The Presidential Citizens Medal was created by President Richard Nixon in 1969 and is the country's second highest civilian honor after the Presidential Medal of Freedom. It recognizes people who "performed exemplary deeds of service for their country or their fellow citizens."

FBI says driver in New Orleans rampage acted alone and was '100%' inspired by Islamic State group

By ERIC TUCKER, JIM MUSTIAN, KEVIN MCGILL and JACK BROOK Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — The Army veteran who drove a pickup truck into a crowd of New Year's revelers in New Orleans acted alone, the FBI said Thursday, reversing its position from a day earlier that he likely worked with others in the deadly attack that officials said was inspired by the Islamic State group.

The FBI also revealed that the driver, Shamsud-Din Jabbar, an American citizen from Texas, posted five videos on his Facebook account in the hours before the attack in which he proclaimed his support for the militant group and previewed the violence that he would soon unleash in the famed French Quarter district.

"This was an act of terrorism. It was premeditated and an evil act," said Christopher Raia, the deputy assistant director of the FBI's counterterrorism division, calling Jabbar "100% inspired" by the Islamic State.

The attack along Bourbon Street killed 14 revelers, along with Jabbar, 42, who was fatally shot in a fire-fight with police after steering his speeding truck around a barricade and plowing into the crowd. About 30 people were injured.

It was the deadliest IS-inspired assault on U.S. soil in years, laying bare what federal officials have warned is a resurgent international terrorism threat. It also comes as the FBI and other agencies brace for dramatic leadership upheaval — and likely policy changes — after President-elect Donald Trump's administration takes office.

Raia stressed that there was no indication of a connection between the New Orleans attack and the explosion Wednesday of a Tesla Cybertruck filled with explosives outside Trump's Las Vegas hotel. The person inside that truck, a decorated U.S. Army Green Beret, shot himself in the head just before detonation, authorities said.

The FBI continued to hunt for clues about Jabbar but said that a day into its investigation, it was confident he was not aided by anyone else in the attack, which killed an 18-year-old aspiring nurse, a single mother, a father of two and a former Princeton University football star, among others.

The attack plans also included the placement of crude bombs in the neighborhood in an apparent attempt to cause more carnage, officials said. Two improvised explosive devices left in coolers several blocks apart were rendered safe at the scene. Other devices were determined to be nonfunctional.

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Officials reviewed surveillance video showing people standing near one of the coolers but concluded that they were not connected “in any way” with the attack, though investigators still want to speak with them as witnesses, Raia said.

Investigators were also trying to understand more about Jabbar’s path to radicalization, which they say culminated with him picking up a rented truck in Houston on Dec. 30 and driving it to New Orleans the following night.

The FBI recovered a black Islamic State flag from his rented pickup and reviewed five videos posted to Facebook, including one in which he said he originally planned to harm his family and friends but “was concerned that news headlines would not focus on the “war between the believers and the disbelievers,” Raia said. Jabbar also stated that he joined IS before last summer, and he provided a last will and testament, the FBI said.

Jabbar joined the Army in 2007, serving on active duty in human resources and information technology and deploying to Afghanistan from 2009 to 2010, the service said. He transferred to the Army Reserve in 2015 and left in 2020 with the rank of staff sergeant.

A U.S. government official, speaking on condition of anonymity because the official was not authorized to speak publicly, said Jabbar traveled to Egypt in 2023, staying in Cairo for a week, before returning to the U.S. and then traveling to Toronto for three days. It was not immediately clear what he did during those travels.

Abdur-Rahim Jabbar, Jabbar’s younger brother, told The Associated Press on Thursday that it “doesn’t feel real” that his brother could have done this.

“I never would have thought it’d be him,” he said. “It’s completely unlike him.”

He said that his brother had been isolated in the last few years, but that he had also been in touch with him recently and had not seen any signs of radicalization.

“It’s completely contradictory to who he was and how his family and his friends know him,” he said.

Chris Pousson, of Beaumont, Texas, said he became friends with Shamsud-Din Jabbar in middle school, describing him as someone who was quiet and reserved and did not get into trouble.

After high school, he said, they reconnected on Facebook around 2008 or 2009 and would message back and forth throughout the next decade.

“If any red flags would have popped off, I would have caught them, and I would have contacted the proper authorities,” he said. “But he didn’t give anything to me that would have suggested that he is capable of doing what happened.”

In New Orleans on Thursday, a still-reeling city inched back toward normal operations.

Authorities finished processing the scene early in the morning, removing the last of the bodies, and Bourbon Street — famous worldwide for music, open-air drinking and festive vibes — reopened for business by early afternoon.

The Sugar Bowl college football playoff game between Notre Dame and Georgia, initially set for Wednesday night and postponed by a day in the interest of national security, was played Thursday evening. The city also planned to host the Super Bowl next month.

New Orleans “is not only ready for game day today, but we’re ready to continue to host large-scale events in our city because we are built to host at every single turn,” New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell said.

Soldier shot self in head before Cybertruck exploded outside Trump’s Las Vegas hotel, officials say

By TARA COPP, ALANNA DURKIN RICHER, COLLEEN LONG and TY ONEIL Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — The highly decorated Army soldier inside a Tesla Cybertruck packed with fireworks that exploded outside Trump International Hotel in Las Vegas shot himself in the head just before detonation, authorities said Thursday.

The explosion caused minor injuries to seven people but virtually no damage to the hotel. Clark County Sheriff Kevin McMahaill said Matthew Livelsberger, a 37-year-old Green Beret, likely planned a more damag-

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ing attack but the steel-sided vehicle absorbed much of the force from the crudely built explosive.

Damage from the blast was mostly limited to the interior of the truck because the explosion “vented out and up” and didn’t hit the Trump hotel doors just a few feet away, the sheriff said.

“The level of sophistication is not what we would expect from an individual with this type of military experience,” said Kenny Cooper, a special agent in charge for the the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

Authorities are still working to determine a motive.

“It’s not lost on us that it’s in front of the Trump building, that it’s a Tesla vehicle, but we don’t have information at this point that definitively tells us or suggests it was because of this particular ideology,” said Spencer Evans, the Las Vegas FBI’s special agent in charge.

Livelsberger had recently returned from an overseas assignment in Germany and was on approved leave when he died, according to a U.S. official.

A law enforcement official said investigators learned through interviews that he may have gotten into a fight with his wife about relationship issues shortly before he rented the Tesla and bought the guns. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the ongoing investigation.

Among the charred items found inside the truck were a handgun at Livelsberger’s feet, another firearm, a number of fireworks, a passport, a military ID, credit cards, an iPhone and a smartwatch, McMahill said. Authorities said both guns were purchased legally.

Investigators identified the vehicle’s driver — who was burned beyond recognition — as Livelsberger, of Colorado Springs, on Thursday. The cause of death was suicide by gunshot, according to the Clark County coroner.

Livelsberger served in the Green Berets, highly trained special forces who work to counter terrorism abroad and train partners. He had served in the Army since 2006, rising through the ranks with a long career of overseas assignments, deploying twice to Afghanistan and serving in Ukraine, Tajikistan, Georgia and Congo, the Army said.

He was awarded a total of five Bronze Stars, including one with a valor device for courage under fire, a combat infantry badge and an Army Commendation Medal with valor.

McMahill said Livelsberger rented the Tesla electric vehicle in Denver on Saturday and the sheriff displayed a map showing that it was charged in the Colorado town of Monument near Colorado Springs on Monday. On New Year’s Eve, it was charged in Trinidad, Colorado, and three towns in New Mexico along the Interstate 40 corridor.

Then on Wednesday, the day of the explosion, it was charged in three Arizona towns before video showed it on the Las Vegas Strip about 7:30 a.m.

McMahill said investigators obtained charging station photos showing Livelsberger “was the individual that was driving this vehicle” and was alone.

“We’re not aware of any other subjects involved in this particular case,” the sheriff said.

Authorities searched a townhouse in Colorado Springs, Colorado, on Thursday as part of the investigation. Neighbors said the man who lived there had a wife and a baby and did not give any sign of posing a danger to anyone.

Cindy Helwig, who lives diagonally across a narrow street separating the homes, said she last saw the man she knew as Matthew about two weeks ago when he asked her if she had a tool he needed to fix the SUV he was working on.

“He was a normal guy,” said Helwig, who said she last saw his wife and baby earlier this week. Helwig noted that people in the townhome on a hill with views of the mountains don’t interact much except for when they’re getting the mail or walking their dogs.

The explosion of the truck, packed with firework mortars and camp fuel canisters, came hours after 42-year-old Shamsud-Din Bahar Jabbar rammed a truck into a crowd in New Orleans’ famed French Quarter early on New Year’s Day, killing at least 14 people before being shot to death by police. That crash

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was being investigated as a terrorist attack. The FBI said Thursday that they believe Jabbar acted alone, reversing its position from a day earlier that he likely worked with others.

Both Livelsberger and Jabbar spent time at the base formerly known as Fort Bragg, a massive Army base in North Carolina that is home to multiple Army special operations units. However, one of the officials who spoke to the AP said there is no overlap in their assignments at the base, now called Fort Liberty.

Chris Raia, FBI deputy assistant director, said Thursday that officials have found "no definitive link" between the New Orleans attack and the truck explosion in Las Vegas.

Tesla CEO Elon Musk said Wednesday afternoon on X that "we have now confirmed that the explosion was caused by very large fireworks and/or a bomb carried in the bed of the rented Cybertruck and is unrelated to the vehicle itself."

Musk has recently become a member of President-elect Donald Trump's inner circle. Neither Trump nor Musk was in Las Vegas early Wednesday. Both had attended Trump's New Year's Eve party at his South Florida estate.

Musk spent an estimated \$250 million during the presidential campaign to support the former president. He was at Trump's resort on election night and has been a frequent guest there. Trump has named Musk, the world's richest man, to co-lead a new effort to find ways to cut the government's size and spending.

Turo-rented cars were involved in 2 deadly incidents this New Year's. Here's what we know

NEW YORK (AP) — Two deadly incidents on New Year's Day — an attack being investigated as an act of terrorism in New Orleans and an explosion of a Tesla Cybertruck in Las Vegas — both involved vehicles that were rented on Turo, a peer-to-peer car sharing company.

Early Wednesday, 42-year-old Army veteran Shamsud-Din Bahar Jabbar rammed a pickup truck into a crowd in New Orleans' famed French Quarter — killing 14 people who were celebrating the New Year. And police fatally shot Jabbar in a following firefight. Just hours after, outside of President-elect Donald Trump's hotel in Las Vegas, a Tesla Cybertruck packed with explosives also burst into flames. The person inside, identified as active-duty U.S. Army Green Beret Matthew Livelsberger, died. Officials later said he suffered a gunshot wound to the head before the explosion.

Turo said it is "shocked and saddened" Wednesday's events and that "our hearts are with the victims and their families."

The company added that is "outraged by the misuse of our marketplace by the two individuals who perpetrated these acts."

While both incidents involved vehicles rented through Turo, the FBI has said that it has found "no definitive link" between the New Orleans attack and the Las Vegas explosion.

Still, the incidents have put a spotlight on the car-sharing platform. Here's what we know about Turo.

What is Turo?

Turo is a peer-to-peer car-sharing company. The online platform allows car owners to rent their own vehicles directly to other nearby drivers, or "guests." "Hosts" set their prices, availability and delivery options for renters to choose from and book via Turo's website or app.

Billing itself as "the world's largest car sharing marketplace" today, Turo says it operates through a network of hosts across the U.S., U.K., Canada, Australia and France.

The origins of the San Francisco-based company date back almost 15 years, with its first trip completed in May 2010 and nationwide launch later arriving in 2012. The platform was originally introduced as "RelayRides," but rebranded to Turo in 2015.

Over the last 12 years of operating history, Turo says it collected data from over 90 million booked days, 27 million trips, 8.6 billion miles (13.8 billion kilometers) driven as of Sept. 30, 2024. Less than 0.1% of those Turo trips ended with a serious incident such as a vehicle theft, the company said Thursday.

How was Turo used for the cars involved in these New Year's Day events?

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Again, investigators have not found any definitive connections between Wednesday's attack in New Orleans and following explosion in Las Vegas. But both incidents involved vehicles rented on Turo.

Authorities have said that the Cybertruck involved in the Las Vegas explosion was rented through the Turo app in Colorado. Kevin McMahill, the elected sheriff of Clark County, which includes Las Vegas, said Wednesday that authorities knew who rented this truck, but were not releasing the name until investigators determine if it is the same person who died.

On Wednesday, Turo confirmed that both the Cybertruck and the pickup truck used in the New Orleans attack were rented using the platform.

What else has the company said?

Turo has said it's sharing any information it has with law enforcement as investigations continue. The company has also noted that the individuals involved did not have criminal backgrounds that would have identified them as security threats. It said every Turo renter is screened through a "multi-layer, data-science-based trust and safety process."

The men involved in the incidents had valid driver's licenses, clean background checks, and were honorably discharged from the U.S. military, Turo noted Thursday.

"They could have boarded any plane, checked into a hotel, or rented a car or truck from a traditional vehicle rental chain," the company said. "We do not believe these two individuals would have been flagged by anyone — including Big Rental or law enforcement."

FBI releases new video of a suspect planting a pipe bomb near DNC offices on eve of the Capitol riot

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A harrowing chapter in American history remains shrouded in mystery: Who planted pipe bombs outside offices of the Democratic and Republican national committees in Washington on the eve of the attack on the Capitol?

Hoping to generate new tips from the public, the FBI is releasing more information about its pipe bomb investigation, including an estimate that the unidentified suspect is about 5 feet 7 inches tall. The bureau also is posting previously unreleased video of the suspect placing one of the bombs.

A host of basic questions remains unanswered four years later. For starters, investigators haven't determined if the suspect is a man or a woman. Nor have they established a clear link between the pipe bombs and the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the Capitol by a mob of Donald Trump's supporters.

The FBI "can't work on assumptions," said David Sundberg, assistant director in charge of the bureau's Washington field office.

"Without being able to confirm the suspect's identity, it is very hard to definitively establish motive," Sundberg told The Associated Press. "Therefore, it would be difficult for us to state that there is a link, although we can't state there is not one."

In the absence of harder evidence, Republican lawmakers and right-wing media outlets have promoted conspiracy theories about the pipe bombs. House Republicans also have criticized security lapses, questioning how law enforcement failed to detect the bombs for 17 hours.

"We remain focused on conducting an investigation using all of the tools we have at our disposal," Sundberg said. "But it is incumbent upon us to follow facts and evidence."

The FBI has assessed over 600 tips, reviewed about 39,000 video files and conducted more than 1,000 interviews over the past four years. Images show the suspect was wearing a gray hooded sweatshirt, a face mask, black gloves and a black and grey pair of Nike Air Max Speed Turf shoes with a yellow logo. The person also wore or carried a backpack containing the bombs.

Surveillance video captured the suspect placing the pipe bombs near the committees' offices between 7:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. on Jan. 5, 2021. Nobody was hurt before the bombs were rendered safe, but the FBI says both devices could have been lethal.

Kamala Harris, then the Vice President-elect, was inside the DNC offices when the pipe bomb was found

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outside the building about 1:05 p.m. on Jan. 6. Before the bomb was deactivated, then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's motorcade passed by the DNC building as she was evacuated from the Capitol, according to House Republicans.

This week, the FBI is releasing a minute-long video that shows the suspect sitting on a park bench outside the DNC before placing the first bomb there at about 7:54 p.m. The suspect placed the second bomb about 8:16 p.m., in an alley behind the RNC, the FBI says.

The FBI also is releasing closeup images of the type of Nike sneakers worn by the suspect. Fewer than 25,000 pairs of the same shoe were sold between August 2018 and January 2021, according to the FBI.

"Based on attire, those are probably the most remarkable or distinctive feature when it comes to clothing the suspect wore," Sundberg said. "We're hoping that somebody might recognize that."

The FBI used surveillance footage to track the suspect's movements through Capitol Hill on the night of Jan. 5. The suspect initially is captured on video at about 7:34 p.m. at the intersection of First Street and North Carolina Avenue. The suspect is last seen on camera around 8:18 p.m. heading east on Rumsey Court.

"The suspect in this case did a very good job covering themselves up at a time that this would not be abnormal, so it didn't raise any attention," Sundberg said, referring to face masking during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Video of the suspect was sporadically available and often of poor quality, according to Sundberg. The 17-hour gap between the planting and discovery of the pipe bombs made it more difficult to identify potential witnesses, he said.

Authorities previously offered a reward of up to \$500,000 for information leading to the suspect's arrest and conviction.

President-elect Trump, who returns to the White House on Jan. 20, repeatedly has vowed to pardon some or many of the rioters who stormed the Capitol. More than 1,500 people have been charged with Jan. 6-related crimes. About 1,100 have been convicted and sentenced. Over 700 defendants got terms of imprisonment ranging from a few days to 22 years.

Sundberg said he doesn't expect the change in administration to alter the course of the FBI's pipe bomb investigation.

"We don't know who the suspect is," he added. "And I expect that we will continue to work this case until its logical conclusion and we identify a suspect."

An Army veteran's path to radicalization followed divorces, struggling businesses in Texas

By KRISTIE RIEKEN Associated Press

BEAUMONT, Texas (AP) — Shamsud-Din Jabbar grew up in Texas, joined the U.S. Army and eventually settled in Houston, where he spun up a real estate business and made \$120,000 a year for one of the world's largest consulting firms.

But the 42-year-old U.S. citizen, who authorities say plowed a rented truck through New Year's revelers in New Orleans before being shot and killed by police, also faced pressures. He finalized a third divorce in 2022, saying in filings he couldn't pay his mortgage and his business was losing money.

On Thursday, authorities and relatives were still piecing together why Jabbar barreled through a crowd in a Ford F-150 on Bourbon Street, killing 14 revelers and injuring at least 30 others. Officials said the attack was inspired by the Islamic State group, making it one of the deadliest IS-inspired assaults on U.S. soil in years.

FBI officials said Jabbar posted five videos to his Facebook account in the hours before the attack in which he aligned himself with IS. Authorities also found an Islamic State flag on the truck used in the attack early Wednesday.

"It's completely contradictory to who he was and how his family and his friends know him," Abdur-Rahim Jabbar, one of his brothers, told The Associated Press on Thursday at his home in Beaumont, about 90

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miles outside Houston.

The 24-year-old said his older brother had increasingly isolated himself from family and friends in the last few years but he hadn't seen any signs of radicalization when they talked. He said it had been a few months since he had seen his brother in-person and a few weeks since they talked on the phone.

"Nothing about his demeanor seemed to be off. He didn't seem to be angry or anything like that. He was just his calm, well-mannered, well-tempered self," the younger brother said.

Law enforcement officials said after driving into the Bourbon Street crowd and crashing the truck, Jabbar exited the car wearing a ballistic vest and helmet and fired at police, injuring at least two before he was shot and killed by officers returning fire.

Army, court and other public records piece together a picture of a man who had been stationed or lived in multiple states including North Carolina, Texas, Georgia and Alaska, had been married multiple times and seemed to be experiencing financial difficulties as he tried to adjust to civilian life.

Jabbar joined the Army in 2007, serving on active duty in human resources and information technology and deploying to Afghanistan from 2009 to 2010, the service said. He transferred to the Army Reserve in 2015 and left in 2020 with the rank of staff sergeant.

A spokesperson for Georgia State University confirmed Jabbar attended the school from 2015-2017 and graduated with a bachelor's degree in computer information systems in 2017.

He had been married at least three times over the last two decades and had at least three children who were mentioned in divorce and custody agreements. His two most recent marriages, in Georgia and Texas, each lasted about three years, according to court documents.

Dwayne Marsh, who is married to one of Jabbar's ex-wives, told The New York Times that Jabbar had been acting erratically in recent months. Marsh said he and his wife had stopped allowing the two daughters she shared with Jabbar to spend time with him.

The AP left a message at a number listed for Marsh Thursday. Messages were also left for Jabbar's two other ex-wives at their numbers or with their attorneys.

The AP also left messages for Jabbar's mother that were not returned as of Thursday afternoon. Abdur-Rahim Jabbar said their father had declined to speak with reporters.

Divorce records also show Jabbar faced a deteriorating financial situation in January 2022. Jabbar said he was \$27,000 behind on house payments and wanted to quickly finalize the divorce.

"I have exhausted all means of bringing the loan current other than a loan modification, leaving us no alternative but to sell the house or allow it to go into foreclosure," he wrote in a January 2022 email to his now-ex-wife's attorney.

His businesses were struggling, too. One business, Blue Meadow Properties LLC, lost about \$28,000 in 2021. Two other businesses he started, Jabbar Real Estate Holdings LLC and BDQ L3C, weren't worth anything. He had also accumulated \$16,000 in credit card debt because of expenses like attorneys fees, according to the email.

Court documents show he was making about \$10,000 a month doing business development and other work for the consulting firm Deloitte in 2022.

On Wednesday, police blocked access to a Houston neighborhood where Jabbar's last address was listed, a small white mobile home in a gated community where ducks and goats were roaming in the grass. On Thursday, the FBI said it had finished a search of the area but did not release more details.

Despite the tumult indicated by court documents, Abdur-Rahim Jabbar said his brother hadn't shown any outward signs of distress or anger about his relationships.

"I think he blamed himself more than anything for his divorces. ... And he never was bitter towards his ex-wives," the younger Jabbar said.

Childhood friend and fellow veteran Chris Pousson reconnected with Jabbar on Facebook around 2009, before the two lost touch again around 2019. From his home in Beaumont, he said his biggest takeaway from periodic check-ins with Jabbar were positive messages and praise for his faith, but nothing that raised any flags.

"I never saw this coming. And in the military, actually, I did anti-terrorism in the military. And if any red

flags would have popped off, I would have caught them and I would have contacted the proper authorities," he said.

"But he didn't give anything to me that would have suggested that he is capable of doing what happened."

Wayne Osmond, singer and guitarist for The Osmonds, is dead at 73

NEW YORK (AP) — Wayne Osmond, a singer, guitarist and founding member of the million-selling family act The Osmonds, who were known for such 1970s teen hits as "One Bad Apple," "Yo-Yo" and "Down By the Lazy River," has died. He was 73.

Sibling Merrill Osmond posted on his Facebook page that Wayne died this week at a Salt Lake City hospital after suffering a "massive stroke."

"I've never known a man that had more humility. A man with absolutely no guile," Merrill wrote. "An individual that was quick to forgive and had the ability to show unconditional love to everyone he ever met."

Wayne Osmond was the fourth oldest of nine children raised in a Mormon household in Ogden, Utah, and the second oldest among the musical performers. The siblings' career began in the 1950s when Wayne, Alan, Merrill and Jay sang as a barbershop quartet.

Their popularity grew in the 1960s after being supported by singer Andy Williams, and they peaked as a quintet in the early 1970s, with younger brother Donny Osmond the breakout star. "One Bad Apple" and other songs were often compared to the music of The Osmonds' contemporaries, the Jackson 5, and Donny was positioned as the white counterpart to the Jacksons' lead singer, Michael Jackson.

The Osmonds' popularity faded by the mid-1970s, although Donny and Marie Osmond both enjoyed successful careers as solo performers and as a brother-sister duo.

In the 1980s, Wayne Osmond regrouped with Alan, Merrill and Jay as a country act and had a handful of hits, including "I Think About Your Lovin'."

But in the mid-1990s he was diagnosed with a brain tumor and lost much of his hearing from the surgery and treatment. A stroke in 2012 left him unable to play guitar.

"I've had a wonderful life. And you know, being able to hear is not all that it's cracked up to be, it really isn't," he told the Deseret News in 2018. "My favorite thing now is to take care of my yard. I turn my hearing aids off, deaf as a doorknob, tune everything out, it's really joyful."

Wayne Osmond married Kathlyn White in 1974. They had five children.

10 people are wounded in a shooting at a memorial for a teenager who was killed in NYC

NEW YORK (AP) — Ten people were wounded in a shooting Wednesday night outside a nightclub in New York City that was holding a memorial for a teenager who had been previously killed in the city.

Police said three or four men fired about 30 shots at a crowd of people who were standing outside Amazura Concert Hall in Jamaica, Queens, for the private event before running to a car and driving off.

Six females and four males between the ages of 16 and 20 were taken to hospitals but are expected to recover, police said.

Queens Borough President Donovan Richards said the club was holding a small private event to celebrate the life of a teen who had been killed in Brooklyn late last year.

"They just wanted to cause destruction," he said of the shooters.

In a statement on social media, Gov. Kathy Hochul said "a memorial for a teen lost to gun violence turned to horror when gunmen opened fire on the crowd."

"This cannot be our normal," Hochul wrote.

Police have not yet announced any arrests.

Images from outside the club after the shooting show debris strewn across the sidewalk and police gathering evidence and taking photographs. Nearby residents described quick bursts of gunfire along

with screaming.

"It was bam, bam, bam, bam," Maria Lopez told The New York Times. "I thought it was fireworks. I was saying to myself, it's too late in the evening for this, too late for it to be New Year's celebrations."

About 90 people were inside the club while a smaller group of about 15 were standing outside, police said.

"It lasted about 10 seconds and then there was silence," neighborhood resident Juan Alulema told the New York Post. "I saw people screaming."

Amazura Concert Hall urged the public to contact police with any information about the shooting.

"We are deeply saddened by the recent and unfortunate isolated incident that occurred," the venue said in an Instagram post. "Our hearts go out to all those affected by this senseless act."

Tesla sales dropped 1.1% in 2024, its first annual decline in a dozen years

By TOM KRISHER and BERNARD CONDON Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — Tesla posted its first annual sales drop in more than a dozen years Thursday, undercutting a stock that has soared since Donald Trump's victory on optimism Elon Musk's close relationship to the president-elect will help the company.

Tesla's global vehicle sales rose 2.3% in the final quarter of 2024 thanks to 0% financing, free charging and low-priced leases. But that was not enough for billionaire Musk's most valuable holding to overcome last year's sluggish start.

The Austin, Texas, company sold 495,570 vehicles from October through December, boosting deliveries to 1.79 million for the full year. That was 1.1% below 2023 sales of 1.81 million as overall demand for electric vehicles in the U.S. and elsewhere slowed.

The year-over-year global sales drop is Tesla's first since 2011, according to figures from analytics firm Global Data. The company sold 1,306 vehicles in 2010, but that dropped slightly to 1,129 the following year.

The fourth-quarter boost came with a cost. Analysts polled by FactSet expected Tesla's average sales price to fall to just over \$41,000 in the quarter, the lowest in at least four years.

That doesn't bode well for Tesla's fourth-quarter earnings report on Jan. 29 and Tesla's stock fell 6.1% on Thursday.

Musk donated more than \$250 million to Trump's campaign and is a regular guest at Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida. Tesla investors have pushed the stock up more than 50% since the election on hopes the new administration will streamline electric vehicle regulations and address other Musk policy priorities.

In 2022, Tesla predicted that its sales would grow 50% most years, but the prediction ran into an aging model lineup and increased competition in China, Europe and the U.S. In the U.S., analysts say most early adopters of technology already own electric vehicles, and more mainstream buyers have concerns about range, price and the ability to find charging stations on longer trips.

The fourth-quarter deliveries fell thousands short of Wall Street expectations. Analysts polled by data provider FactSet expected sales of 498,000 vehicles.

Falling sales early in the year led to once-unheard of discounts for the automaker, cutting into its industry-leading profit margins.

Competition from legacy and startup automakers is also growing as they try to nibble away at the company's market share.

Daniel Ives, a financial analyst at Wedbush, said he thinks the stock should be valued more on its promise of creating fully self-driving, autonomous vehicles and its AI technology and is still worth buying despite the sales drop.

"We have never viewed Tesla simply as a car company ... instead we have always viewed Musk and Tesla as a leading disruptive technology global player," wrote Ives. "And the first part of this grand strategic vision has taken shape."

The fourth-quarter sales, while a record for Tesla, show that the company's aging model lineup is reaching saturation in the entry-level luxury vehicle market, said Morningstar Analyst Seth Goldstein.

Aside from the Cybertruck, which has had limited appeal, Tesla's newest consumer model is the Y small SUV which first went on sale in 2020.

To meet Tesla management's guidance of 20% to 30% annual sales growth this year, the company will need to come out with a vehicle priced in the mid \$30,000s to appeal to more mainstream buyers who might be considering gas, electric or hybrid vehicles, Goldstein said.

Tesla has floated the possibility of a new version of the Model Y that would cost in the mid \$30,000s that may be smaller inside than the current Y with fewer features, Goldstein said.

"At that point you're comparable to some Hondas and Fords and GMs," Goldstein said. "It takes you out of the luxury market to the more affordable vehicle market."

Jeff Schuster, vice president of automotive research Global Data, said Tesla faces intense competition worldwide from EV makers in China, the U.S. and elsewhere, many of which are selling EVs to more mainstream buyers. "If they want to continue to see the growth they had, they need to expand to other sizes and price points," he said.

Musk's support of Trump for U.S. president also could be turning off some buyers who may be more environmentally conscious and lean toward Democrats, Schuster said. A broader, less costly lineup would appeal to a larger group of buyers, he said. "I suppose the choices that he's made on the political front don't line up with a good portion of his buyers' profile," Schuster said.

Industry experts say that Tesla used to be the only automaker with credible electric vehicles, but now others such as China's BYD now have more to offer.

At present, automakers have 75 electric vehicle models for sale in the U.S. Through the first nine months of last year, electric vehicle sales slowed in the U.S., but they are still growing.

Through September, new EV sales rose 7.2% to about 936,000 in the U.S., according to Motorintelligence.com. That's slower growth than the 47% increase in 2023. But EV sales this year still are likely to surpass last year's record of 1.19 million. Most other automakers will report full-year sales on Friday.

Nearly all of Tesla's sales last quarter came from the smaller and less-expensive Models 3 and Y, with the company selling only 23,640 of its more expensive models that include X and S, as well as the new Cybertruck.

Tesla's global electric vehicle sales edged out Chinese rival BYD, which announced Thursday that its sales soared 41% last year including 1.77 million EVs. The company is vying with Tesla for the world's top selling EV maker.

Fourth-quarter production of 459,445 vehicles was below total deliveries for the quarter, and full year production of 1.77 million was less than the year's sales.

Puerto Rico's new governor sworn in days after a major blackout left much of the island in the dark

By DÁNICA COTO Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Jenniffer González Colón was sworn in Thursday as Puerto Rico's new governor during a normally ebullient ceremony held amid widespread anger over a blackout that hit the U.S. territory days ago.

González, a Republican who backs President-elect Donald Trump and whose pro-statehood New Progressive Party secured a historic third consecutive term after she won the Nov. 5 election, has pledged to stabilize the Caribbean island's crumbling power grid.

"There are many challenges facing our island," she said in her first public address as governor as she acknowledged the blackout in a speech to a crowd gathered in front of the seaside Capitol. "That is precisely what moves me to address that first challenge with a sense of urgency."

She pledged to improve Puerto Rico's infrastructure, hospitals and schools, adding that she intends to boost bilingual education.

"I'm going to fulfill my promises to you," she said. "I am not going to govern only for those who voted for me. I am going to be the governor of all Puerto Ricans."

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Before the start of a ceremony to celebrate her swearing in, González attended Mass surrounded by family and supporters.

"What better than to come first to thank God and to ask God to give me the wisdom, the fortitude and the tools to fulfill everything I promised the people of Puerto Rico," she told reporters.

A protester with her face covered interrupted the Mass at Parroquia Santa Teresita in San Juan. She yelled, "Jennifer, we came for you! Puerto is without power."

Meanwhile, a small group of protesters gathered at the Capitol before González's arrival. They were especially rankled that a well-known, outspoken activist elected to Puerto Rico's Senate for the first time was not allowed inside the Capitol, with the elections commission noting he had not yet been officially certified.

Protesting the ceremony was Yara Humarán Martínez, an aquatic physical therapist whose 83-year-old mother remains without power.

"I don't have any hope that she will change anything," she said of the new governor.

González has promised to appoint an energy "czar" to review potential contractual breaches while another operator is found to possibly replace Luma Energy, a private company that oversees the transmission and distribution of power in Puerto Rico.

However, no contract can be canceled without prior approval from Puerto Rico's Energy Bureau and a federal control board that oversees the island's finances.

Outages were still being reported on Thursday as crews tried to stabilize the grid following the blackout that hit early Tuesday, leaving 1.3 million customers in the dark as Puerto Ricans prepared for New Year's Eve.

While electricity had been restored to 99% of the utility's 1.47 million total customers, more than 600,000 were temporarily left without power on New Year's Day when part of the system collapsed again, according to Luma.

"The stability of the system is fragile," Luma said late Wednesday as it warned of more outages on Thursday given an ongoing lack of generation. "We know and understand how frustrating it is for our clients to be without service for long periods of time."

Backup generators were put in place to ensure a smooth swearing-in ceremony on Thursday given that renowned musicians were scheduled to perform.

The anticipated revelry was characteristic of González, a 48-year-old attorney and recent mother of twins who prior to the election showed up at her party's assembly wearing a Wonder Woman tiara and cuffs. She also made the news after peeling out of one of her party's conventions in an off-road vehicle earlier this year.

Supporters and critics gathered for the ceremony, some clutching umbrellas to shield themselves from the blistering sun.

"Because she's a woman, she's going to be a great governor," said Amanda Sánchez León, a retired government employee, who arrived two hours early to secure a spot outside an area reserved for guests. She said she was hopeful that González would reduce violent crimes and improve education and health, "especially for us older people." She also believed the power crisis would improve and that González would see her promises through.

"The people are suffering," Sánchez said.

Also supporting the new governor was Lizbeth Rodríguez, a school nurse, who believed that as a mother, González would prioritize the island's weak education system and tackle crime.

But Rodríguez remains rankled at what she believes is the misspending of government money.

"That's what bothers the people. You're doing fine, sure, but look at us," she said.

González, of the pro-statehood New Progressive Party, had beat former Gov. Pedro Pierluisi during their party's primary in June.

At the time, she was Puerto Rico's representative in Congress and had run on Pierluisi's ticket four years ago.

After beating him, she won the Nov. 5 general election with more than 526,000 votes, or 41%. Trailing her was Juan Dalmau, who represented Puerto Rico's Independence Party and the Citizen Victory Movement.

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It was the first time that the Popular Democratic Party, which supports the island's territorial status quo and is one of Puerto Rico's two main parties, came in third in a gubernatorial race.

While González's immediate challenge is Puerto Rico's fragile power grid, she also inherits a feeble economy that has slowly been strengthening since the U.S. territory's government declared in 2015 that it was unable to pay its more than \$70 billion public debt load.

In 2017, it filed for the biggest U.S. municipal bankruptcy in history.

All but one government agency has since restructured its debt, with Puerto Rico's Electric Power Authority still struggling to do so. It holds more than \$9 billion in debt, the largest of any government agency.

Experts warn the island will keep struggling to attract investors until the debt is restructured and the power grid strengthened.

González also will have to work alongside a federal control board that U.S. Congress created in 2016 to oversee Puerto Rico's finances and supervise the ongoing reconstruction after Hurricane María slammed into the island in September 2017 as a powerful Category 4 storm, razing the electrical grid.

She also faces pressure to create affordable housing, lower power bills and the general cost of living, reduce violent crime, boost Puerto Rico's economy, with the island locked out of capital markets since 2015, and improve a limping health care system as thousands of doctors flock to the U.S. mainland.

Like other governors of the pro-statehood party, González has said she would push for Puerto Rico to become the 51st state, but such a change would require approval from U.S. Congress and the U.S. president.

A nonbinding referendum held during the Nov. 5 election, the seventh of its kind, asked voters to choose one of three options: statehood, independence and independence with free association, under which issues like foreign affairs, U.S. citizenship and use of the U.S. dollar would be negotiated.

With 63% of voters participating, statehood earned more than 615,000 votes, or 59%, with independence coming in second for the first time with more than 309,000 votes, or 29%. Independence with free association garnered more than 128,000 votes, or 12%.

While Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens, they are not allowed to vote in presidential elections, and officials with the New Progressive Party have noted the island receives unequal treatment when it comes to Medicaid, Medicare and other federal programs.

"Statehood means equality, and I want us to have that access to opportunities," González said. "I want to have those opportunities here so that our people can move forward."

Why Mike Johnson's bid to remain House speaker could be a struggle despite Trump's support

By FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Mike Johnson is fighting for his political life, again.

The Louisiana Republican's hold on the House speaker's gavel and his position as second in line to the presidency will be tested Friday when a new Congress convenes and House Republicans weigh whether to reelect him to the post.

The challenge, as always, is that Johnson will need almost every Republican vote to win.

Johnson has a singular asset in his favor: President-elect Donald Trump endorsed him for speaker in a social media post at the start of the week. But it's uncertain whether Trump's blessing will be enough to persuade far-right Republicans who have at times grown frustrated with Johnson's leadership and who are prone to demand concessions when their votes become essential.

Johnson, 52, ascended to the speakership in October 2023 almost by accident after Republicans struggled to replace Kevin McCarthy following the unprecedented removal of the California Republican from the job. Several contenders tried and failed before Republicans settled on Johnson, who is well liked across the conference.

But Johnson's handling of major funding fights, including passage of aid to Ukraine last spring and, most recently, a short-term spending bill, has turned at least a few allies into detractors.

With Republicans holding a narrow 220-215 majority in the House, it would take only two GOP lawmakers

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voting for other candidates to deny Johnson a majority for the speakership, forcing more rounds of voting. Here's what to know about how the House elects a speaker:

No House without a speaker

Electing a speaker is the first order of business for the House after a new session of Congress begins at noon. It's a vote that members take even before being sworn into office.

The House cannot organize until it has a speaker because that person effectively serves as the House's presiding officer and the institution's administrative head. The House can elect a new speaker at any time if the person occupying that role dies, resigns or is removed from office. The speakership has been vacant only 13 times in U.S. history, according to the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service. No speaker had ever been removed until eight Republicans joined with Democrats to oust McCarthy.

Barring those instances, a speaker is normally elected at the start of a new Congress and serves in the job for the full two-year session.

The House clerk presides over the speaker's election. Lawmakers call out the name of their choice for speaker from the floor, a rare and time-consuming roll call that heightens the drama on the floor. Members often liven up the proceedings by shouting or standing when casting their vote.

Who can be nominated?

Any name can be called out from the House floor. While it has been the tradition for the speaker to be a member of the House, it is not required.

In past years, Democratic President Joe Biden, Trump and even a senator, Republican Rand Paul of Kentucky, have received votes for House speaker. None received the majority of the vote. And generally, a party's official nominee for speaker is who ends up with the gavel.

Republicans chose Johnson as their nominee for speaker in a closed-door vote in November. A week later, Democrats unanimously chose Rep. Hakeem Jeffries, D-N.Y., to remain their leader despite the party's electoral losses.

Lawmakers are not obligated to vote for their party's nominated candidate. And that is why the process can quickly get messy.

Let the voting begin

Once the House is in a quorum — meaning the minimum number of members are present to proceed — nominating speeches will be made on behalf of the nominees for speaker. The clerk appoints lawmakers from each party as tellers to tally the votes before the roll call begins.

To become speaker, a candidate needs a majority of the votes from House members who are present and voting.

Historically, the magical number has been 218 out of the 435 members of the House. But many previous speakers, including McCarthy, have won with fewer votes because members sometimes vote "present" instead of calling out a name. Every lawmaker voting "present" lowers the overall tally needed to reach a majority.

It remains to be seen whether Johnson will reach a majority to become speaker on the first ballot. Should he come up short, it is likely the clerk will move to start another roll call vote.

McCarthy went through a grueling 15 ballots over four days before he gained enough support to become the 55th speaker in January 2023.

Passing of the gavel

Once a speaker candidate wins a majority of those present and voting, the clerk will announce the results of the election.

A bipartisan committee, usually consisting of members from the home state of the chosen candidate, will escort the speaker-elect to the chair on the dais where the oath of office is administered. The oath is identical to the one new members will take once a speaker is chosen.

The outgoing speaker usually joins the successor at the speaker's chair, where the gavel is passed as a nod to the peaceful transition of power from one party leader to another. But this time around, given that Johnson is already the speaker, it will likely be Jeffries who would once again hand Johnson the gavel.

5 things we know and still don't know about COVID, 5 years after it appeared

By LAURAN NEERGAARD, LAURA UNGAR and MIKE STOBBE Associated Press

Five years ago, a cluster of people in Wuhan, China, fell sick with a virus never before seen in the world. The germ didn't have a name, nor did the illness it would cause. It wound up setting off a pandemic that exposed deep inequities in the global health system and reshaped public opinion about how to control deadly emerging viruses.

The virus is still with us, though humanity has built up immunity through vaccinations and infections. It's less deadly than it was in the pandemic's early days and it no longer tops the list of leading causes of death. But the virus is evolving, meaning scientists must track it closely.

Where did the SARS-CoV-2 virus come from?

We don't know. Scientists think the most likely scenario is that it circulated in bats, like many coronaviruses. They think it then infected another species, probably racoon dogs, civet cats or bamboo rats, which in turn infected humans handling or butchering those animals at a market in Wuhan, where the first human cases appeared in late November 2019.

That's a known pathway for disease transmission and likely triggered the first epidemic of a similar virus, known as SARS. But this theory has not been proven for the virus that causes COVID-19. Wuhan is home to several research labs involved in collecting and studying coronaviruses, fueling debate over whether the virus instead may have leaked from one.

It's a difficult scientific puzzle to crack in the best of circumstances. The effort has been made even more challenging by political sniping around the virus' origins and by what international researchers say are moves by China to withhold evidence that could help.

The true origin of the pandemic may not be known for many years — if ever.

How many people died from COVID-19?

Probably more than 20 million. The World Health Organization has said member countries reported more than 7 million deaths from COVID-19 but the true death toll is estimated to be at least three times higher.

In the U.S., an average of about 900 people a week have died of COVID-19 over the past year, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The coronavirus continues to affect older adults the most. Last winter in the U.S., people age 75 and older accounted for about half the nation's COVID-19 hospitalizations and in-hospital deaths, according to the CDC.

"We cannot talk about COVID in the past, since it's still with us," WHO director Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said.

What vaccines were made available?

Scientists and vaccine-makers broke speed records developing COVID-19 vaccines that have saved tens of millions of lives worldwide — and were the critical step to getting life back to normal.

Less than a year after China identified the virus, health authorities in the U.S. and Britain cleared vaccines made by Pfizer and Moderna. Years of earlier research — including Nobel-winning discoveries that were key to making the new technology work — gave a head start for so-called mRNA vaccines.

Today, there's also a more traditional vaccine made by Novavax, and some countries have tried additional options. Rollout to poorer countries was slow but the WHO estimates more than 13 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been administered globally since 2021.

The vaccines aren't perfect. They do a good job of preventing severe disease, hospitalization and death, and have proven very safe, with only rare serious side effects. But protection against milder infection begins to wane after a few months.

Like flu vaccines, COVID-19 shots must be updated regularly to match the ever-evolving virus — contributing to public frustration at the need for repeated vaccinations. Efforts to develop next-generation vaccines are underway, such as nasal vaccines that researchers hope might do a better job of blocking infection.

Which variant is dominating now?

Genetic changes called mutations happen as viruses make copies of themselves. And this virus has proven to be no different.

Scientists named these variants after Greek letters: alpha, beta, gamma, delta and omicron. Delta, which became dominant in the U.S. in June 2021, raised a lot of concerns because it was twice as likely to lead to hospitalization as the first version of the virus.

Then in late November 2021, a new variant came on the scene: omicron.

"It spread very rapidly," dominating within weeks, said Dr. Wesley Long, a pathologist at Houston Methodist in Texas. "It drove a huge spike in cases compared to anything we had seen previously."

But on average, the WHO said, it caused less severe disease than delta. Scientists believe that may be partly because immunity had been building due to vaccination and infections.

"Ever since then, we just sort of keep seeing these different subvariants of omicron accumulating more different mutations," Long said. "Right now, everything seems to be locked on this omicron branch of the tree."

The omicron relative now dominant in the U.S. is called XEC, which accounted for 45% of variants circulating nationally in the two-week period ending Dec. 21, the CDC said. Existing COVID-19 medications and the latest vaccine booster should be effective against it, Long said, since "it's really sort of a remixing of variants already circulating."

What do we know about long COVID?

Millions of people remain in limbo with a sometimes disabling, often invisible, legacy of the pandemic called long COVID.

It can take several weeks to bounce back after a bout of COVID-19, but some people develop more persistent problems. The symptoms that last at least three months, sometimes for years, include fatigue, cognitive trouble known as "brain fog," pain and cardiovascular problems, among others.

Doctors don't know why only some people get long COVID. It can happen even after a mild case and at any age, although rates have declined since the pandemic's early years. Studies show vaccination can lower the risk.

It also isn't clear what causes long COVID, which complicates the search for treatments. One important clue: Increasingly researchers are discovering that remnants of the coronavirus can persist in some patients' bodies long after their initial infection, although that can't explain all cases.

'Dinosaur highway' tracks dating back 166 million years are discovered in England

By BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — A worker digging up clay in a southern England limestone quarry noticed unusual bumps that led to the discovery of a "dinosaur highway" and nearly 200 tracks that date back 166 million years, researchers said Thursday.

The extraordinary find made after a team of more than 100 people excavated the Dewars Farm Quarry, in Oxfordshire, in June expands upon previous paleontology work in the area and offers greater insights into the Middle Jurassic period, researchers at the universities of Oxford and Birmingham said.

"These footprints offer an extraordinary window into the lives of dinosaurs, revealing details about their movements, interactions, and the tropical environment they inhabited," said Kirsty Edgar, a micropaleontology professor at the University of Birmingham.

Four of the sets of tracks that make up the so-called highway show paths taken by gigantic, long-necked, herbivores called sauropods, thought to be Cetiosaurus, a dinosaur that grew to nearly 60 feet (18 meters) in length. A fifth set belonged to the Megalosaurus, a ferocious 9-meter predator that left a distinctive triple-claw print and was the first dinosaur to be scientifically named two centuries ago.

An area where the tracks cross raises questions about possible interactions between the carnivores and herbivores.

"Scientists have known about and been studying Megalosaurus for longer than any other dinosaur on Earth, and yet these recent discoveries prove there is still new evidence of these animals out there, wait-

ing to be found," said Emma Nicholls, a vertebrate paleontologist at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History.

Nearly 30 years ago, 40 sets of footprints discovered in a limestone quarry in the area were considered one of the world's most scientifically important dinosaur track sites. But that area is mostly inaccessible now and there's limited photographic evidence because it predated the use of digital cameras and drones to record the findings.

The group that worked at the site this summer took more than 20,000 digital images and used drones to create 3-D models of the prints. The trove of documentation will aid future studies and could shed light on the size of the dinosaurs, how they walked and the speed at which they moved.

"The preservation is so detailed that we can see how the mud was deformed as the dinosaur's feet squelched in and out," said Duncan Murdock, an earth scientist at the Oxford museum. "Along with other fossils like burrows, shells and plants we can bring to life the muddy lagoon environment the dinosaurs walked through."

The findings will be shown at a new exhibit at the museum and also broadcast on the BBC's "Digging for Britain" program next week.

Meet the Danish-Swedish farmdog, the newest breed in the American Kennel Club's lineup

By JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Say hello to the latest dog in the American Kennel Club's lineup of recognized breeds. Or you might say "hej."

The Danish-Swedish farmdog — yep, that's the official name — joined the pack Thursday. The designation makes the breed eligible to compete for many best in show trophies, and it likely augurs more widespread interest in the small, sprightly dogs. The prospect both gladdens and concerns their biggest fans.

"We're excited about it. We're looking forward to it," said Carey Segebart, one of the people who worked to get Danish-Swedish farmdogs recognized by the AKC. She proudly plans to debut one of her own at a dog show this month near her Iowa home.

Still, she thinks increased exposure is "a double-edged sword" for the fleet, versatile pups.

"We don't want the breed to just explode too quickly," she said.

Called the farmdog or DSF for short, the breed goes back centuries in parts of what are now Denmark, southern Sweden and some other European countries, according to the Danish-Swedish Farmdog Club of America.

"They're interesting, fun little dogs," said Segebart, who has owned them since 2011 and is the club's incoming president. "They're essentially up for anything. They succeed at most everything."

In their original homelands, the dogs' main job was rodent patrol, but they also would herd a bit, act as watchdogs and play with farmers' children. Some even performed in circuses, according to the club.

After Denmark and Sweden became more urban and suburban in the 20th century, farmdog fanciers set out to secure the breed's place in both nations (where "hej" translates to the English "hello"). Kennel clubs there began registering farmdogs in 1987.

In the U.S., many of the just about 350 farmdogs nationwide compete in agility, obedience or other canine sports that are open to all dogs, including mixed breeds.

But until now, farmdogs couldn't enter the traditional breed-by-breed judging that leads to best in show prizes at events including the prominent Westminster Kennel Club dog show in New York. The entry deadline has passed for February's Westminster show, so farmdogs will have to wait for 2026 there, but they may well appear later this year at two other major, televised shows, the National Dog Show and AKC National Championship.

The Danish-Swedish farmdog is the AKC's 202nd breed and "a wonderful addition to a family that is able to provide it with the exercise and mental stimulation that it needs," said the club's Gina DiNardo.

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The AKC is the United States' oldest purebred dog registry and essentially a league for many dog competitions. Registration is voluntary, and requirements for breed recognition include at least 300 pedigreed dogs spread through at least 20 states. Some breeds are in other kennel clubs or none at all.

Danish-Swedish farmdog fanciers deliberated for several years before pursuing AKC recognition and the attention that's likely to come with it, Segebart said. The number of farmdog puppy-seekers has grown substantially over the last decade; each of the few breeders receives multiple inquiries a week, and the typical wait for a puppy is a year or more, she said.

Farmdog folk fear that their appealing, relatively easy-care breed could quickly become too popular for its own good. They're not the first to worry: Much fur has flown in dogdom over the rise of the French bulldog, which the AKC now ranks as the most popular breed in the country.

Some animal rights activists echo those concerns to argue against dog breeding in general. They say purebred popularity trends divert people from adopting shelter animals, fuel puppy mills and prize dogs' appearance over their health.

The AKC says it promotes responsibly "breeding for type and function" to produce dogs with at least somewhat predictable traits, whether as basic as size or as specialized as bomb-sniffing skills. The club says it has given over \$35 million since 1995 to its canine health research charity.

Pro Bowl rosters include 9 Ravens, 7 Lions, 6 Vikings and Eagles and no Patrick Mahomes

By ROB MAADDI AP Pro Football Writer

Nine Baltimore Ravens, including two-time NFL MVP Lamar Jackson and Derrick Henry, were selected for the Pro Bowl Games.

The Detroit Lions are next with seven players and the Minnesota Vikings and Philadelphia Eagles each have six players on the NFC roster.

Patrick Mahomes wasn't selected to the AFC roster for the first time since becoming Kansas City's starting quarterback in his second season. Mahomes, a three-time Super Bowl MVP and six-time Pro Bowl pick, wasn't among five Chiefs chosen. Teammate Travis Kelce made it for the 10th time.

Washington's Jayden Daniels is just the fourth rookie quarterback since 1970 selected to the initial Pro Bowl roster. Raiders tight end Brock Bowers and Rams outside linebacker Jared Verse are the other rookies among 24 players chosen for the first time.

Detroit's Jared Goff is the NFC's starting quarterback and Minnesota's Sam Darnold also made the team. The AFC's starting quarterback is Buffalo's Josh Allen. Jackson and Cincinnati's Joe Burrow are the backups.

Philadelphia's Saquon Barkley, who became the ninth player to rush for 2,000 yards, is the NFC's starting running back.

San Francisco's Kyle Juszczyk was selected to his ninth Pro Bowl, the most ever by a fullback. Indianapolis' Quenton Nelson is the third offensive lineman since 1970 to be selected to the Pro Bowl in each of his first seven career seasons.

Cincinnati's Ja'Marr Chase is the fourth wide receiver to be selected in each of his first four seasons. Dallas' Micah Parsons is the first defensive player chosen in each of his first four seasons since Aaron Donald went to 10 straight.

Wide receiver Zay Flowers, safety Kyle Hamilton, cornerback Marlon Humphrey, center Tyler Linderbaum, defensive tackle Nnamdi Madubuike, fullback Patrick Ricard and inside linebacker Roquan Smith are the other Ravens.

Safety Brian Branch, running back Jahmyr Gibbs, center Frank Ragnow, right tackle Penei Sewell, wide receiver Amon-Ra St. Brown and punter Jack Fox join Goff from the Lions.

Wide receiver Justin Jefferson, outside linebackers Andrew Van Ginkel and Jonathan Greenard, cornerback Byron Murphy and long snapper Andrew DePaola are the other Vikings.

Right tackle Lane Johnson, center Cam Jurgens and left guard Landon Dickerson, defensive tackle Jalen

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Carter and inside linebacker Zack Baun are going from Philadelphia.

The Dolphins, Jets, Titans and Saints are the only teams not represented.

This is the third year of the Pro Bowl Games after the NFL eliminated its full-contact all-star game and replaced it with weeklong skills competitions and a flag football game.

The games will take place at Central Florida and finish with a seven-on-seven flag football game between the AFC and NFC at Camping World Stadium on Feb. 2.

Peyton and Eli Manning again will be head coaches for the two conferences.

With a nod to her mentor Shirley Chisholm, Rep. Barbara Lee exits Congress as a renegade herself

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rep. Barbara Lee has always stood apart, a matter-of-fact renegade with a long list of firsts.

In high school, she was the first Black student to integrate her Southern California cheerleading squad.

During the Democrat's more than two decades in Congress, she has been the only Black woman elected to the House from California's regions north of Los Angeles.

But it was Lee's lonely 2001 vote as the only lawmaker against the authorization for the use of military force against those responsible for the Sept. 11 attacks that indelibly set her apart.

"If you really believe that this is the right thing for the country, for your district, for the world, then you have to do it, and be damned everything else," Lee told The Associated Press during a recent breakfast interview at the Capitol.

"You don't do that all the time, but there's some moments when you have to do that."

As Lee heads for the exit, wrapping up a storied career representing the Oakland area, the 78-year-old congresswoman once seen as an outlier with deeply unpopular positions — her vote against the war resulted in death threats — has watched her views come to be respected, accepted and even emulated. Casting her final vote on the House floor in late December, Lee was met with applause, her legacy a touchstone for a new generation.

Yet her experiences — including losing a Senate primary in March for a seat later won by a then-House colleague, Democrat Adam Schiff, in the same year that voters nationwide rejected Vice President Kamala Harris for President-elect Donald Trump, — also provide a stark reminder of the challenges Black women confront in American electoral politics.

"There are few congressional leaders, public servants, that have served with the kind of courage and tenacity as Congresswoman Lee," said outgoing Sen. Laphonza Butler, the California Democrat who was appointed temporarily to the seat after the death of long-serving Democratic Sen. Dianne Feinstein.

With Butler, Lee teamed up to pass one of the final bills of the 118th Congress, awarding the Congressional Gold Medal posthumously to her mentor and friend Shirley Chisholm, another trailblazer — the first Black woman elected to Congress, joining in 1969, who went on to make a longshot presidential run — in what would have been the New York Democrat's 100th birthday. It was approved by the House and Senate without opposition, and signed into law by Democratic President Joe Biden in December.

A single mom and social worker by training, Lee had been disconnected from politics. She was a volunteer community worker with the Black Panther Party when she met Chisholm. Lee found in "Mrs. C" a new kind of leader who "stood up for people." Lee got involved in Chisholm's 1972 presidential campaign. Lee eventually worked in Congress and ran for office herself, taking over the seat after her boss, Rep. Ron Dellums, retired.

But as Lee tells it, what's particularly noteworthy about her own career, is that she's number 20 — the 20th Black woman elected to the House.

"I'm only the 20th one!" she said.

"Can you imagine that? I mean, that's pretty scary. Black women haven't had their voices and their

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perspectives and their experiences reflected in the policies.”

Over and over, she has stories of being among the only Black women at the table — most prominently when she and others pushed Republican President George W. Bush to launch the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) to fight global HIV/AIDS. It’s an effort that continues to this day.

Similarly, she was an early critic of the Hyde Amendment, which prohibits federal funds for abortion services with few exceptions in the cases of rape, incest or if the pregnancy endangers the life of the pregnant person. Lee views it as discriminatory against low-income women who rely on federal health care. Hers was a once rare position that has since gained wider support.

“I’ve been at tables all these years by myself, which meant I had to form allies and alliances to be effective,” she said, “which I did.”

She explains that as a Black woman, she brings a perspective that is often lost on others, going through life with “antennae” that sense what’s going on “because of our history.”

Lee’s antennae were definitely picking up signals on the eve of Jan. 6, 2021, amid the chatter of far-right groups coming to Washington.

“I wore tennis shoes to work that day,” she said.

When the mob of Trump supporters stormed the Capitol and she and other lawmakers were fumbling to put on their gas masks and evacuate the House chamber, she remembers how the House chaplain rose and started praying.

“I said: ‘Oh, Lord. This is serious. We got to start praying, too,’” she said. Those sneakers “came in handy.”

But it was her vote two decades earlier, in the days after the attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, that would ever define Lee’s legacy in Congress.

She agonized over the choice, and said she was as surprised as anyone at being the only vote against the resolution that authorized what she warned of: America’s long war in Afghanistan and beyond.

The reaction was fierce and menacing, but also affirming of her conviction. Other Democratic lawmakers crossed to her side and she has since built a coalition, including with hard-right Republicans opposed to overseas military action.

“She’s always dreamed big, she’s always been bold, she’s always had a strength of conviction — and she’s very strategic,” said Rep. Ayanna Pressley, D-Mass., part of the “Squad” of progressive lawmakers first elected in 2018. “She’s passionate, but not reactive, she’s thoughtfully responsive.”

The younger lawmakers often call Lee “O.G.”

Lee notes there are now several dozen Black women elected to the House — an improvement but, she said, still not enough to catch up for the nation’s 200-plus-year history.

She works with the organization Representation Matters to support women of color running for office, and did so this past election cycle. She backed Democrats Angela Alsobrooks of Maryland and Lisa Blunt Rochester of Delaware, who went on to make history as two Black women joining the Senate.

“I got to make sure other Black women don’t have to go through what I’ve been through,” she said.

Lee’s next chapter is to be determined. She spent the final days of the congressional session pushing priorities out the door and finding the next generation of leaders to carry forward her unfinished business, including repealing the Hyde Amendment and the authorization for the use of military force.

“My mother told me that ‘can’t’ is not in the dictionary,” she said. “Shirley Chisholm encouraged me to shake things up, not to go along to get along.”

Today in History: January 3, the ‘Curse of the Bambino’ begins

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Friday, Jan. 3, the third day of 2025. There are 362 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Jan. 3, 1920, Boston Red Sox owner Harry Frazee sold the contract of Babe Ruth to the New York Yankees, beginning a championship era for the Yankees and decades of heartache for Red Sox fans. (The Red Sox would ultimately break the “curse” in 2004, winning their first World Series in 86 years.)

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Also on this date:

In 1777, Gen. George Washington's army routed British troops in the Battle of Princeton, New Jersey.

In 1861, more than two weeks before Georgia seceded from the Union, the state militia seized Fort Pulaski at the order of Gov. Joseph E. Brown.

In 1977, Apple Computer was incorporated in Cupertino, California, by Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak and Mike Markkula (MAHR'-kuh-luh) Jr.

In 1990, ousted Panamanian leader Manuel Noriega surrendered to U.S. forces, 10 days after taking refuge in the Vatican's diplomatic mission.

In 2022, a jury in San Jose, California, convicted Elizabeth Holmes of duping investors into believing that her startup company Theranos had developed a revolutionary medical device that could detect diseases and conditions from a few drops of blood.

Today's Birthdays: Musician Stephen Stills is 80. Musician John Paul Jones (Led Zeppelin) is 79. Actor-director Mel Gibson is 69. Basketball Hall of Famer Cheryl Miller is 61. Former NFL quarterback Eli Manning is 44. R&B singer Lloyd Polite, Jr. is 39. Actor Florence Pugh is 29. Environmental activist Greta Thunberg is 22.