

Groton Daily Independent

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Monday, March 24

Senior Menu: Creamed chicken, capri blend, fruit, biscuit.

School Breakfast: Stuffed bages.

School Lunch: Corn dogs, baked beans.

School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.

Groton Senior Citizens Meet, Noon Potluck., Groton Community Center

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

United Methodist: PEO Meeting, 7 p.m.

Tuesday, March 25

Senior Menu: Sloppy joe on bun, oven roasted potatoes, corn, fruited Jell-O.

School Breakfast: Waffles.

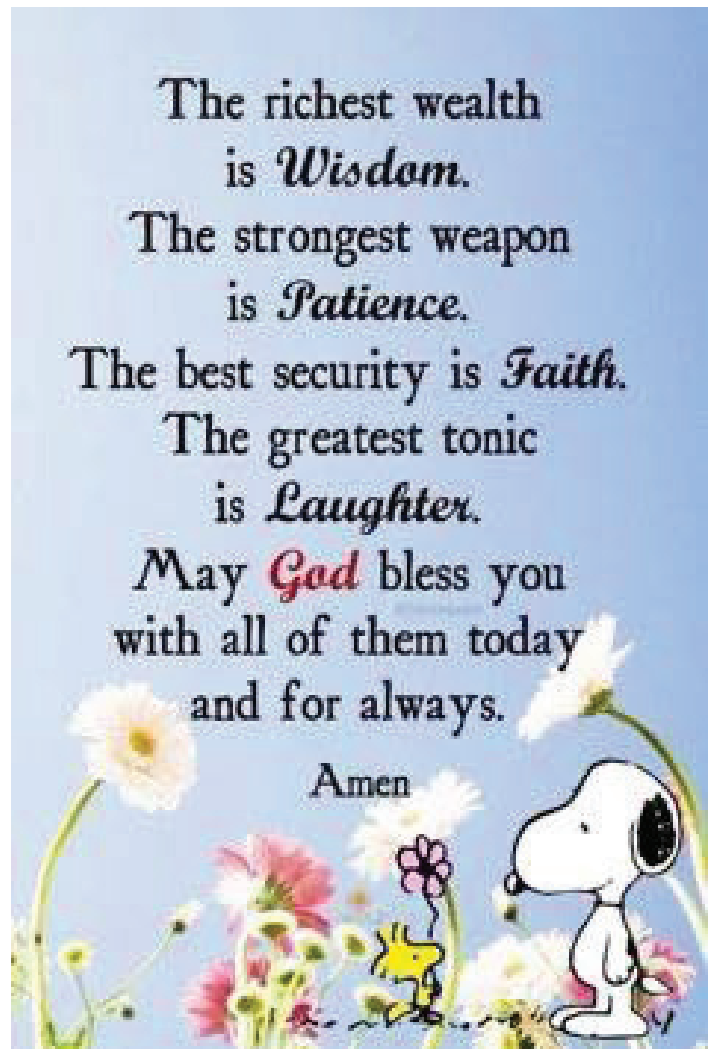
School Lunch: Chicken strips, tri taters.

Milbank FFA CDE

NSU Indoor Track Meeting, 1 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.; Lenten Supper (Host-Nigeria Circle), 6 p.m.; Worship, 7 p.m.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.



Wednesday, March 26

Senior Menu: Pork chop, scalloped potatoes, winter blend, oranges, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Muffins.

School Lunch: Quesadilla, southwest corn.

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

Groton C&MA: Kid's Club, Youth Group, Adult Bible Study, 7 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.; Lenten Service, 7 p.m.

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

Thursday, March 27

Senior Menu: Beef noodle stroganoff, mixed vegetables, pineapple, cookie, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Breakfast pizza.

School Lunch: Old school chili, cornbread.

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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.

Ukraine-Russia Talks

US officials are meeting separately with Ukrainian and Russian delegations in Saudi Arabia this week to begin negotiations on a limited ceasefire plan, with hopes of reaching a deal by April 20. Talks with Ukraine were held yesterday evening, while talks with Russia will be held today.

Discussions are expected to focus on safety for shipping in the Black Sea and temporarily protecting energy facilities and critical infrastructure from attacks. Russia and Ukraine agree on the latter, but details on when and how still need to be decided. US special envoy Steve Witkoff is aiming for a 30-day ceasefire to allow time for negotiations on a permanent truce. Ukraine previously accepted a 30-day ceasefire proposal, but Russian President Vladimir Putin declined to endorse it. Russia's demands for any agreement include an end to arms supplies for Ukraine, which Kyiv rejects.

The talks come after Russia and Ukraine traded drone attacks over the weekend.

Columbia Concedes

Columbia University has agreed to a series of demands from the Trump administration in an effort to restore \$400M in funding that was revoked earlier this month. The administration had canceled federal grants and contracts over concerns that Columbia failed to adequately protect against antisemitism on campus.

The university's policy changes include banning identity-concealing masks during protests, hiring 36 campus security officers who can arrest or remove people, appointing a new senior vice provost to oversee the Middle East, South Asian, and African Studies department, and implementing a formal definition of antisemitism. It is unclear whether the changes are sufficient enough to reinstate federal funding.

The move has raised concerns about government interference in academic affairs and sets a precedent for other colleges and universities facing similar scrutiny, including Harvard, Stanford, and the University of Michigan. Last week, the Trump administration paused \$175M in funding to the University of Pennsylvania for allowing a transgender woman to compete in women's sports.

Francis Leaves Hospital

Pope Francis returned Sunday to his Vatican apartment after a five-week stay at a hospital for a double pneumonia. He was initially admitted to the hospital on Valentine's Day for a respiratory infection, which rapidly worsened, requiring regular ventilation, multiple blood transfusions, and several procedures. Francis will now begin a two-month convalescence after enduring two nearly fatal critical episodes.

The pontiff appeared for the first time in public since Feb. 14 on a balcony at Rome's Gemelli Hospital, whose 10th-floor suite has hosted ailing popes since the 1980s. Observers noted the 88-year-old appeared bloated and frail, and his speech sounded thin and gasping due to severe lung damage. Before his stay, Francis had maintained a relatively rigorous schedule of meetings, speeches, and travel—a routine analysts expect the Argentine will not revive soon.

The 38-day hospitalization was the longest of Francis's 12-year papacy—he had been admitted three other times—and marks the second-longest of any recent pope behind John Paul II's 1981 55-day stay.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Sweet 16 set for NCAA men's basketball tournament; see complete bracket ... and women's Round of 32 wraps today.

George Foreman, two-time world heavyweight boxing champion, Olympic gold medalist, and entrepreneur, dies at 76.

Conan O'Brien, comedian and five-time Emmy winner, becomes 26th recipient of prestigious Mark Twain Prize for American Humor.

Science & Technology

Joint studies from OpenAI and MIT Media Lab find higher use of ChatGPT may correspond with increased loneliness and higher emotional dependence on the chatbot.

Archaeologists discover over 3,000-year-old Egyptian tomb believed to belong to a pharaoh during the less-known Abydos Dynasty; discovery is second of its kind this year.

Study finds carbon absorbed by the land—about one-third of all carbon emissions—is mainly stored in nonliving pools like soils and sediments, allowing the carbon to remain sequestered 10 to 100 times longer than in living plants.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher Friday (S&P 500 +0.1%, Dow +0.1%, Nasdaq +0.5%); S&P 500 and Nasdaq snap four consecutive weeks of declines.

Ticket reseller StubHub files for initial public offering; reports net loss of \$2.8M on revenue of roughly \$1.8B for 2024, compared with a \$405M profit on \$1.4B in revenue for 2023.

Tesla vehicles from model year 2017 or newer accounted for record 1.4% of all vehicles traded in this month through March 15, up from 0.4% in the same period last year, per analysis from national car shopping site Edmunds.

Politics & World Affairs

South Korean court overturns impeachment of Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, reinstating him as acting president.

Turkish court formally arrests and orders jailing of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu—President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's rival—pending outcome of corruption trial.

Department of Defense personnel may be subjected to polygraph tests amid new investigation into alleged leaks at the Pentagon, according to internal memo.

President Donald Trump announces \$20B contract with Boeing for new F-47 fighter jet.

IRS reportedly nearing agreement to verify whether ICE officials have correct address for people expected to be deported.

Israeli airstrike in Gaza's southern city of Khan Younis kills Hamas political leader Salah Bardawil; Gaza death toll passes 50,000, per Hamas-run Health Ministry.

Israel strikes Lebanon after Hezbollah fires rockets into Israel; exchange considered worst violence since November.

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Weekly Vikings Roundup

By Jordan Wright

After an active and impactful first week of free agency, the Minnesota Vikings decided to keep spending, bringing in three more players to provide depth and experience on special teams. Two of those players are wide receivers Tim Jones and Rondale Moore. Jones, a former undrafted rookie who played for the Jacksonville Jaguars since 2021 will fill the role vacated by Trent Sherfield when he left for the Denver Broncos. Moore, on the other hand, is a speedy receiver who will battle Jalen Nailor for the WR3 spot. The third player the Vikings brought in recently is cornerback Jeff Okudah. The former Detroit Lion was the third overall pick in 2020, and although he has great size and speed, he hasn't been able to put it all together in the NFL yet. The Vikings are taking a low-risk gamble here, but the payoff could be huge.

As we continue the 2024 roster breakdown, we pivot to the defensive side of the ball. The Vikings' starting defensive line last season consisted of Harrison Phillips, Jonathan Bullard, and Jerry Tillery, while Jalen Redmond, Levi Drake Rodriguez, and Taki Taimani were the primary backups.

Harrison Phillips was the best defensive lineman on the team last season and everyone knew it, so opposing teams simply had to double-team him every play and essentially negate the entire position group. Phillips will be back in 2025, and he's now joined by two Pro Bowl defensive tackles (Jonathan Allen and Javon Hargrave).

Despite starting all 17 games for the Vikings last season, Jonathan Bullard is still a free agent. I'm guessing the Vikings have an offer out to Bullard, and he's just waiting to see if he can get a better one on the market. I wouldn't be surprised if he's back next season, although in a backup role.

Jerry Tillery was signed last offseason, hoping a change of scenery would help the former first-round pick take his game up a notch. He had a good (but not great) season for the Vikings in 2024, and he turned that into a new contract with the Kansas City Chiefs.

Jalen Redmond was a pleasant surprise last season, gradually earning more playing time as the season progressed and even getting two starts. Redmond will be back as a backup this season, but as of right now he's the top backup, so he should see the field often.

The Vikings spent a seventh-round pick on Levi Drake Rodriguez last year. LDR showed flashes in training camp and the preseason, but once the regular season began, he only played in two games. However, after playing college ball at Texas A&M-Commerce, the Vikings knew he would be a work in progress.

Taki Taimani was an undrafted free agent who got into seven games last season. The former Oregon Duck will once again battle it out with LDR for depth chart positioning.

One of the biggest weak spots on the Vikings' roster last season was the defensive line, so the team went out and spent big bucks to bring in some big names. The unit will undoubtedly be improved in 2025, but one area that could be addressed is the nose tackle position. The Vikings don't have a true nose tackle on the roster, and I'd love for them to bring in a big body to make big plays against the run and at the goal line. Skol!

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The parents are pictured with their varsity boys basketball players during the homecoming event held Sunday. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Teylor Diegel (25) is the only player to play with all three of the Zak boys in a state tournament. He played with Jacob (left) in 2024, with Karson (22) this year and with Jayden (right) in 2022. (Courtesy Photo)



The teams are pictured above (boys basketball and cheerleaders) during the homecoming held Sunday afternoon. The boys took seventh in state and the girls won the second consecutive Spirit of Six Award. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

"Pneumonia Vaccine Saves Lives"

Over one hundred years ago, the gold mining industry of South Africa had a problem: too many workers were dying from pneumonia. They turned to Dr. Almorph Wright, a British physician who had successfully created a vaccine against typhoid fever that saved countless lives of British soldiers in World War I and other wars. Wright and his colleagues developed an inoculation of killed pneumococci bacteria which resulted in a substantial reduction of cases of pneumonia and death in the miners.

Pneumonia is an infection in the lungs that causes inflammation and accumulation of fluid or pus, making it difficult to breathe. Pneumonia can be caused by viruses, bacteria, and fungi. Risk factors for pneumonia include old age, young children, smoking, lung diseases such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and asthma, other chronic medical conditions, poor air quality, and more.

Antibiotics have been revolutionary in treating bacterial pneumonia, decreasing the rates of death substantially. Unfortunately, antibiotics do not treat viruses, and early use of antibiotics in the course of a virus will not decrease the risk of pneumonia. If someone has cold symptoms, rest, fluids, time, and an expectorant like guaifenesin can be helpful. If symptoms get worse with the return or persistence of fevers, worsening cough, shortness of breath, or chest pain, please seek medical attention.

Vaccines for pneumonia, influenza, haemophilus influenzae (Hib), and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) have significantly decreased the rates of pneumonia. The pneumonia vaccine is now recommended for infants and young children, all adults over 50 years of age and those with certain chronic medical conditions. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) lowered the age recommendation from 65 to 50 in October 2024 since adults aged 50+ are 6.4x more likely than younger adults to get pneumococcal pneumonia.

The pneumonia vaccine has changed and updated through the years with the types of bacteria that are targeted. If you have already received a pneumonia vaccine, depending on what you have received and if it has been several years or if you have chronic medical conditions, you may want to talk to your healthcare provider about getting a new pneumonia vaccine.

Prevention is the best way to fight disease. To prevent pneumonia, it is helpful to wash your hands, do not smoke, consider vaccination, and help keep your immune system strong by getting good sleep, exercising, and eating healthy.

Andrew Ellsworth, MD. is part of The Prairie Doc® team of physicians and currently practices Family Medicine at Avera Medical Group in Brookings, South Dakota. Follow The Prairie Doc® at www.prairiedoc.org, Facebook, Instagram, Youtube and Threads. Prairie Doc Programming includes On Call with the Prairie Doc®, a medical Q&A show (most Thursdays at 7pm on SDPB and streaming on Facebook), 2 podcasts, and a Radio program (on SDPB), providing health information based on science, built on trust.



Andrew Ellsworth, MD



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Veterans' advocates say VA staffing cuts put vets out of work

Further impacts feared from Trump administration plan to cut 80,000 employees

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - MARCH 23, 2025 8:00 AM

Staffing cuts in the federal Department of Veterans Affairs are disproportionately affecting the veterans that the department preferentially hires, said members of a South Dakota veterans' advocacy group.

They worry the Trump administration's goal of cutting 80,000 VA employees will put more veterans out of work without a vetting process, and erode the quality of services provided.

Eugene Murphy, of Sioux Falls, is a past national commander of Disabled American Veterans and a Vietnam War vet who was paralyzed by gunshot wounds.

"How are you going to treat my brothers and sisters like that?" he said. "This is not right."

The VA provides services for veterans including health care, housing options, life insurance, pensions, education stipends and more. One-quarter of the VA's 482,000 employees are veterans.

Disabled American Veterans of South Dakota says the Trump administration's initial round of cuts to probationary employees disproportionately impacted disabled veterans. The national organization shared testimonials on its website of some of the disabled and decorated veterans who have already been fired.

"I found out I lost my job off the clock, on my day off, without a warning, without a meeting, without even a termination letter," said Navy veteran Kara Oliver, of Michigan. "Just a locked computer screen and a stunned supervisor confirming the news. And here's the worst part: The veterans lost more than I did."

About 2,400 of the VA's roughly 46,000 probationary employees — generally those who've been in their jobs less than two years — were terminated last month.

Judges have ruled that the mass firings of federal probationary workers that began last month were illegal, and ordered the workers reinstated pending further litigation. The Trump administration has begun the process of reinstating tens of thousands of them, though most are just being placed on administrative leave as the government cites the "burdens" of rehiring, court filings reviewed by States Newsroom show.

The cuts are part of a broader effort by the Trump administration and the world's richest person, Elon Musk, leader of Trump's so-called Department of Government Efficiency, to reduce government spending.

Veterans Affairs Secretary Doug Collins said in a recent video that he intends to return the agency to 2019 staffing levels of around 398,000. He said the savings will be reinvested in health care and services.

"The federal government doesn't exist to employ people. It exists to serve people," Collins said.

He said doctors and nurses are not being fired.

"You know where we're going to be looking? At the bureaucracy layer that goes from my doctor to the central office in Washington, D.C.," Collins said.

'Makes my blood boil'

That doesn't ease the concerns of Marty Pennock, an Army veteran who directs the South Dakota department of Disabled American Veterans, headquartered in Sioux Falls.

"It just makes my blood boil knowing the politicians doing this never have to worry about where their paychecks are going to come from," he said.

Pennock referenced the example of a disabled veteran and single mother who served 16 years in the military and was recently fired from the Sioux Falls VA hospital.

"I have great concern that all these cuts are going to impact the services provided, but I'm also concerned about the impact on those let go," Pennock said. "Many of the people working for the department

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are disabled veterans. And if not, they're all people who have put in time to serve people I care about. They deserve better than being fired without any justification or a basis."

U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds, R-South Dakota, serves on the Armed Services and Appropriations committees. He said the volume of calls his staff receives has more than doubled following the Trump-Musk cuts. He said they will continue monitoring the situation and advocate for rehiring when appropriate. He shares concerns about firing veterans.

"I think that's what we have got to be on guard for," Rounds said.

The cuts come at a time when veterans' health care needs are increasing. The VA enrolled 400,000 veterans in its benefits system from March 2023 through March 2024, 30% more than the prior year. It also expanded eligibility for former service members to receive VA health care.

The agency has grown in recent years in response to the increase in veterans of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan needing services as they age, as well as a new benefit from a 2022 toxic exposure law known as the PACT Act. The law is intended to help veterans exposed to the military's use of open-air burn pits in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Because of that, Pennock said, VA staff cuts will hurt benefits.

"Since the PACT Act, demands on the system increased greatly," Pennock said. "Many of the new people were brought on to help with a backlog of disability claims."

Staff shortages have led to long wait times for care, with some VA clinics so understaffed that they are unable to take new patients for primary care or mental health needs.

Pennock met with the state's congressional delegation about one month ago in Washington, D.C. While Secretary Collins said benefits could ultimately improve via a reallocation of funding, Pennock said he left D.C. not feeling optimistic.

Pennock is worried that options presented in the Congressional Budget Office's recent report on reducing the federal deficit may soon come true. Possibilities include eliminating disability compensation for households making over \$137,000 (or "means testing"), reducing disability benefits for retired veterans, and making veteran disability income taxable.

"Most families would lose their benefits if that means-testing option is implemented," Pennock said. This is huge," Pennock said.

Rounds said the Congressional Budget Office's report does nothing more than offer options where cuts could be made.

"None of those have been presented as a proposal to be voted on," Rounds said.

U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-South Dakota, said in a statement that he has heard concerns about changes to the VA, "and I'm seeking more information on the administration's plans."

"Despite the claims of some, Congress won't cut VA benefits as a part of this year's appropriations process," Johnson said. "Of course, we'll work to find efficiencies, but saved dollars will be reinvested in the system to improve care."

SD veteran protests

Protests last week drew more than 100 people to the VA Medical Center in Sioux Falls.

Sheila and Donald Aaker attended the protest. The two are worried veterans' health care services will be negatively impacted. Donald served in Vietnam, "and he did his duty," Sheila said.

"It's just not right," Sheila said. "It's not right for people to have to struggle with an illness and wonder if their health care will be available. He was promised that, and I think the country owes it to him."

Air Force veteran Larry Williams said witnessing gruesome deaths during a deployment to Europe during the 1970s wore on his mental health.

"I got the help that I needed," Williams said. "And today I'm doing a lot better than I was. But I am here for my fellow comrades. These services are vital. We signed a blank check saying we will surrender our lives in battle, but some of us have come home. And we're still being treated like s—."

Jody Fleischhacker is an Air Force veteran. She said what is happening in D.C. is "unbelievable." Her

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daughter was a federal employee fired by the Trump administration.

"There is such a disregard for a lot of people," she said. "And they don't care. It's the billionaire boys club out there. Rounds, Thune and Dusty Johnson are worthless. They sit up there and turn their backs on South Dakota."

Bruce Watts joined the Army out of high school and served in Korea. He too wants to see South Dakota's congressional delegation take action.

"Step up and protect veterans' rights," he said. "And stop this anti-democratic move happening in Washington."

State-provided veterans benefits and staffing will not be impacted by the federal cuts, according to the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. Public affairs officers with the Sioux Falls and Rapid City VA offices did not respond to requests for comment.

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.

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**BROWN COUNTY
BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA
REGULAR MEETING TUESDAY**

March 25, 2025, 8:45 A.M.

COMMISSIONER'S CHAMBERS, COURTHOUSE ANNEX - 25 MARKET STREET, ABERDEEN SD

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. Opportunity for Public Comment
4. Mike Scott, Landfill Manager
 - a. Bid Openings
 - i. Waste Tire Removal
 - ii. Wood Waste Grinding
 - b. Waive Fees for Free Residential Spring Cleanup
 - c. Discuss & Approve Pickup Purchase
 - d. Department Update
5. Chris Hemen, Weed & Pest Supervisor
 - a. Bid Opening for Chemical Bids
 - b. Surplus Property for Disposal at Landfill
6. Resolution #2025-15 – Lien Settlement
7. Consent Calendar
 - a. Approval of General Meeting Minutes of March 18, 2025
 - b. Claims/Payroll
 - c. HR Report
 - d. Claim Assignment
 - e. Auditors Report of Accounts for January 2025
 - f. Abatement
 - g. Travel Requests
 - h. Approve & Authorize Chairman to sign Lottery Permit for Brown County Fair Foundation
 - i. Zoning Ordinances – Set Hearing Date/Authorize Advertising
 - j. Final Plats:
 - i. Young Family First Addition
 - ii. Young Family Second Addition
8. Other Business
9. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
10. Adjourn

Brown County Commission Meeting

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet, or smartphone.

<https://meet.goto.com/BrCoCommission>

You can also dial in using your phone. United States: [+1 \(872\) 240-3311](tel:+18722403311)

Access Code: 601-168-909 #

Get the app now and be ready when your first meeting starts: <https://meet.goto.com/install>

Public comment provides an opportunity for the public to address the county commission.

Presentations may not exceed 3 minutes.

Public comment will be limited to 10 minutes (or at the discretion of the board) - Public comment will be accepted virtually when the virtual attendance option is available.

Official Recordings of Commission Meetings along with the Minutes can be found at <https://www.brown.sd.us/node/454>

EARTHTALK

Dear EarthTalk: Can we do a better job repurposing outdated technology instead of recycling or trashing it?

-- R.T Smith, via e-mail

The annual production of “e-waste”—electronic products that have reached the end of their useful life and tossed—is rising by 2.6 million tons globally, on track to reach 82 million tons by 2030. While recycling is often viewed as the best solution for managing e-waste, it is a complex and costly requiring substantial resources, specialized equipment, and energy to process hazardous materials. A more sensible alternative is repurposing the technology through practices like IT Asset Disposition. By refurbishing devices, we can conserve resources and achieve financial savings—all while extending the lifespan of technology.



Repurposing your e-waste is often the greenest way to deal with your outdated hardware. Credit: Pexels.com

Repurposing technology preserves critical materials like minerals and metals, otherwise often extracted at a significant environmental cost. Redistributing components within a company instead of making new ones saves time and resources—and extends hardware life. “The more metals we recycle, the fewer have to be mined,” says Kees Baldé, senior scientific specialist at the UN Institute for Training and Research.

Dell, HP, Microsoft, Apple, Lenovo, Cisco, Google, Amazon and Sony all have programs to take back and find new homes for outdated tech hardware. Also, TechSoup, Good360 and Computers with Causes are non-profits which specialize in redistributing refurbished tech to charitable organizations.

E-waste is one of the fastest-growing waste streams, yet less than a quarter is properly recycled. E-waste contains substances like lead, mercury and cadmium, which can leach into soil and water supplies and are linked to neurological, respiratory and developmental disorders, particularly in vulnerable populations.

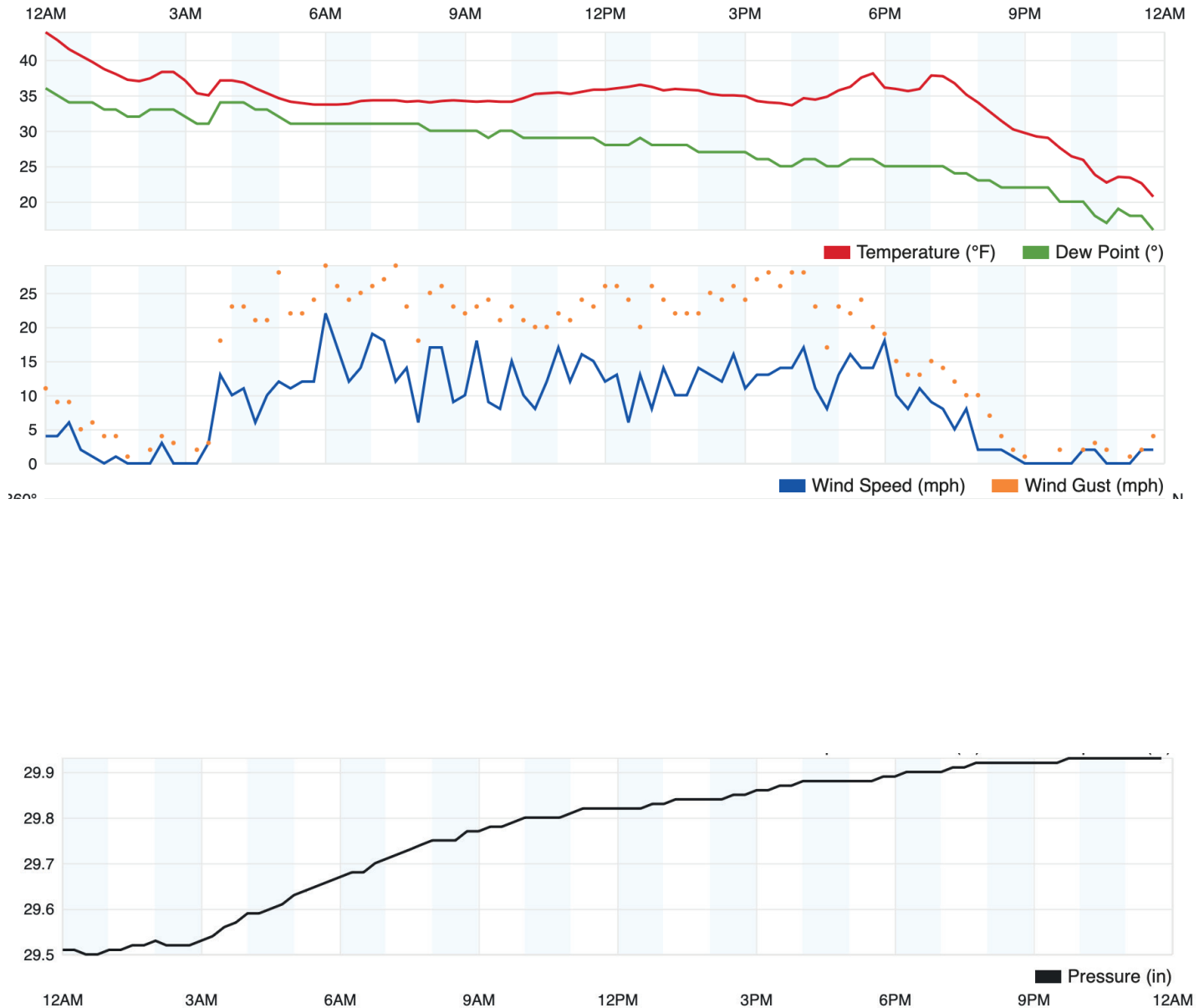
Beyond environmental advantages, repurposing technology saves money by selling or trading in old devices through eBay or manufacturer trade-in programs. Leasing arrangements also provide access to updated technology sans frequent disposal. With creativity, you can DIY old devices into something completely new, like a tablet into a digital recipe book or an old laptop into a home media server.

The EU’s “Right-to-Repair” laws highlight this trend: “We expect Council to adopt their position soon, so we can begin negotiations to transform these measures into law and pave the way for a truly circular European economy,” European Parliament member Rene Repasi shares. With less than a quarter of e-waste recycled properly globally, adopting a thrifty mindset can drive real change. As a consumer, choose to donate or repurpose outdated devices can conserve resources, save money, and reduce environmental impact. In our technology-dependent world, this shift isn’t simply beneficial—it’s essential.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



High: 54 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Tonight



Low: 28 °F

Decreasing
Clouds

Tuesday



High: 56 °F

Mostly Sunny
then Mostly
Sunny and
Breezy

Tuesday Night



Low: 25 °F

Mostly Clear

Wednesday



High: 57 °F

Partly Sunny

March 24, 2025 3:09 AM

Today



Highs: 49-58°F
Lows: 28-39°F

20-45% chance
of AM rain
west of James
River

Tuesday



Highs: 49-60°F
Lows: 28-33°F

Very High
grassland fire
danger

Wednesday



Highs: 52-68°F
Lows: 31-38°F

Temperatures will be increasing through the week with highs near 70 expected Wednesday in portions of central SD. Areas west of the James River have a 20-45% chance of some light rain this morning with clouds lasting through the day. Increased fire weather concerns return Tuesday

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 44 °F at 12:00 AM

Low Temp: 23 °F at 10:43 PM

Wind: 30 mph at 7:04 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 12 hours, 26 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 80 in 1939

Record Low: -10 in 1893

Average High: 46

Average Low: 23

Average Precip in March.: 0.64

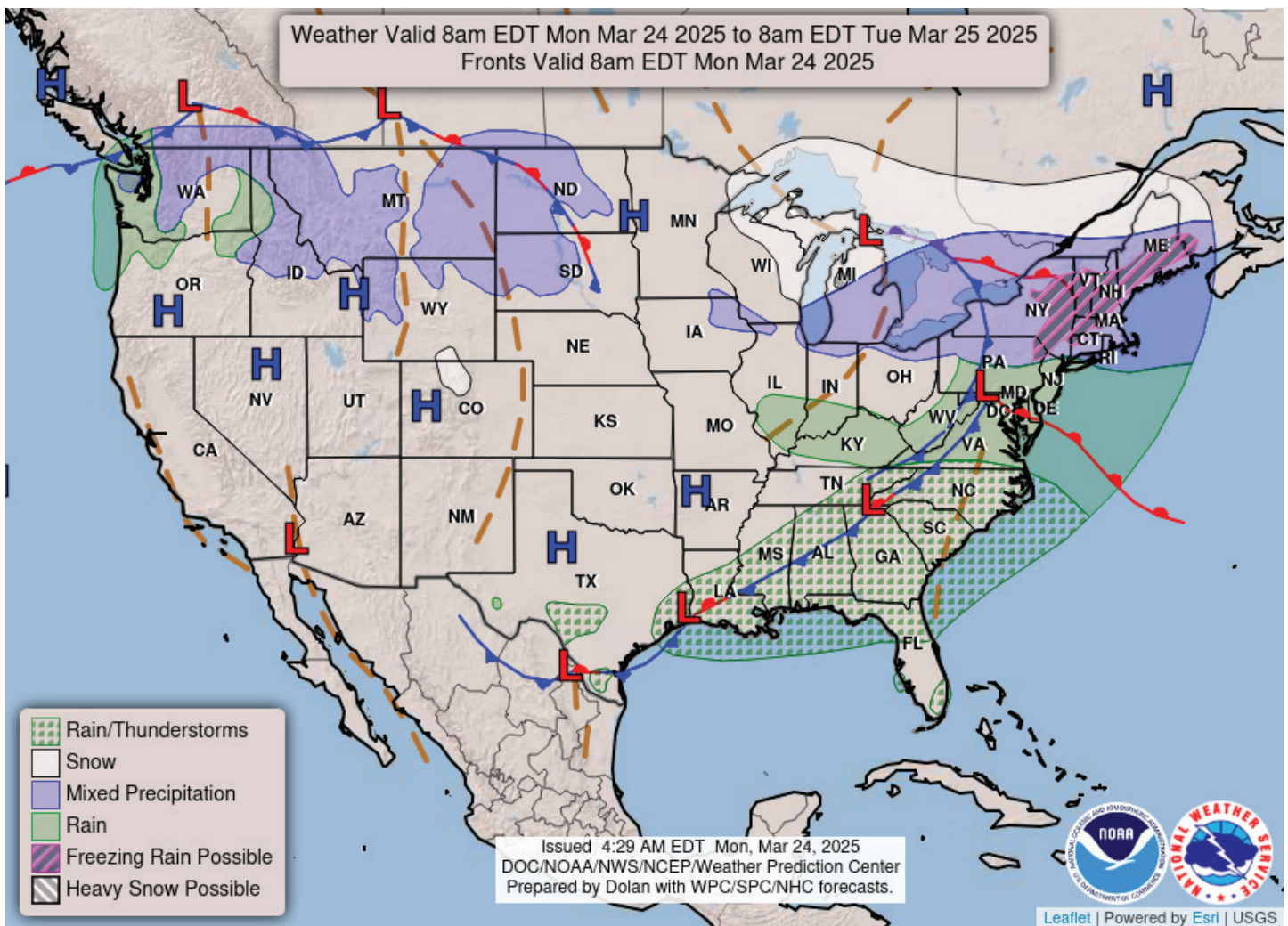
Precip to date in March.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 1.81

Precip Year to Date: 0.45

Sunset Tonight: 7:51:51 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:23:14 am



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Today in Weather History

March 24th, 1996: North winds of 30 to 40 mph, gusting to 55 mph, combined with the falling snow and the previous day's snowfall to create blizzard conditions. Travel became extremely difficult. Several cars went into ditches, and flights out of Aberdeen were canceled. Schools and activities were either delayed or canceled. Some of the more significant two-day snowfall amounts include 6 inches at Sisseton and Aberdeen, 7 inches at Sand Lake NWR, 8 inches near Veblen, 9 inches at Britton, and 10 inches near Victor.

March 24th, 2009: An area of low pressure moved out of the Rockies and into the Northern Plains, producing snow and widespread blizzard conditions across central and north-central South Dakota. Winds gusting to over 60 mph and several inches of snow caused hazardous travel conditions. Interstate 90 was closed across much of Jones and part of Lyman County. Power was also briefly out in parts of Pierre and Mobridge. Some snowfall amounts included 2 inches at Pierre, 5 inches in Hayes and Timber Lake, 6 inches in Murdo, McLaughlin, and 6 miles southeast of McIntosh; 7 inches 14 miles northeast of Isabel; 8 inches in Eagle Butte, and 12 inches 8 miles southwest of Keldron.

1912 - Residents of Kansas City began to dig out from a storm produced 25 inches of snow in 24 hours. The snowfall total was nearly twice that of any other storm of modern record in Kansas City before or since that time. A record 40 inches of snow fell during the month of March that year, and the total for the winter season of 67 inches was also a record. By late February of that year Kansas City had received just six inches of snow. Olathe KS received 37 inches of snow in the snowstorm, establishing a single storm record for the state of Kansas. (23rd-24th) (The Kansas City Weather Almanac) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A winter-like storm in the central U.S. produced blizzard conditions from South Dakota to western Kansas. Snowfall totals ranged up to 24 inches at Neligh NE, with 19 inches at Winner SD. Winds gusting to 60 mph created twelve foot snow drifts in Nebraska stranding thousands on the highways. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms developing along a cold front produced severe weather from Minnesota to north-eastern Texas. The thunderstorms spawned ten tornadoes, including one which injured five persons near Raymondville MO. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Low pressure off the coast of Virginia brought heavy rain to the Middle Atlantic Coast States, and heavy snow to the Northern Appalachians. Cape Hatteras NC was soaked with 5.20 inches of rain in 24 hours, and snowfall totals in Vermont ranged up to 12 inches. Winds gusted to 52 mph at New York City. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - The storm system which produced heavy snow in the Lower Missouri Valley the previous day, spread heavy snow across parts of the Upper Ohio Valley and the Middle Atlantic Coast Region. Snowfall totals of 2.2 inches at Philadelphia PA and 2.4 inches at Atlantic City NJ were records for the date. Up to six inches of snow blanketed southern Ohio. In the Middle Atlantic Coast Region, snow coated the blossoms of cherry trees which had bloomed in 80 degree weather the previous week. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

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DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE?

"Wire-walkers" are known for their death-defying performances. These well-prepared and highly skillful entertainers are known for walking on thin wires that are suspended high in the air over dangerous sites. Normally they use a long pole for balance.

There was one "high-wire walker" who decided to use a wheelbarrow filled with 200 pounds of bricks for his balance as he crossed Niagara Falls. After he accomplished his feat, a crowd of reporters gathered around him and began to ask questions. After he answered the last question, he pointed to one of them and asked, "Do you believe that I can take this wheelbarrow that is now filled with bricks back to the other side?"

"Certainly," came the reply.

"Good!" The wire-walker then dumped the bricks on the ground and said to the reporter, "Get in and I'll take you to the other side."

Mark tells the story of a father who brought his demon-possessed boy to the disciples for healing. They failed. Then, he took his son to Jesus, and said, "Do something if you can." And Jesus said, "If I can? Anything is possible if you believe. But, do you believe?"

And the father replied, "Lord, help my unbelief!"

Our faith only grows when we pray, give our fears to God, and trust in Him alone.

Prayer: Father, remove our doubts and fears and fill our minds and hearts with a faith that completely relies on You for all things. Please, remove our unbelief. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: The father instantly cried out, "I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief!" Mark 9:24

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: 03.21.25

15 22 31 52 57 2

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$344,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 23 Mins
8 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.22.25

6 21 43 47 52 3

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$27,110,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 38 Mins 8
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.23.25

16 19 21 39 47 6

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 53 Mins 8
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.22.25

9 10 13 17 33

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$76,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 53
Mins 8 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.22.25

2 4 47 53 64 11

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 22 Mins 8
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 03.22.25

6 7 25 46 57 12

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$461,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 22 Mins 8
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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Upcoming Groton Events

03/22/2025 Spring Vendor Fair at the GHS Gym 10am-2pm
03/29/2025 Men's Singles Bowling Tournament at the Jungle 10am, 1pm & 4pm
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
04/12/2025 Groton Firemens Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
05/03/2025 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
05/12/2025 High School Girls Golf Meet at Olive Grove
05/26/2025 Memorial Day Services Groton Union Cemetery with lunch at Legion Post #39, 12pm
06/07/2025 Day of Play
06/13/2025 SDSU 4 Person Scramble at Olive Grove
06/21/2025 Groton Triathlon
06/23/2025 Ladies 2 Person Scramble at Olive Grove
07/04/2025 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
07/09/2025 Legion Auxiliary #39 Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar at the Groton Legion 11am-1pm
07/11-13/25 2025 VFW 12U Class B State Baseball Tournament
07/13/2025 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm
07/16/2025 Men's Pro Am Golf at Olive Grove
07/25/2025 Ferney Open Scramble Golf at Olive Grove
08/01/2025 Wine on Nine Fundraiser at Olive Grove
08/09/2025 2nd Annual Celebration in the Park/Rib Cook-Off 1-9:30pm
08/14/2025 Family Fun Fest, Downtown Main Street 5:30-7:30pm (2nd Thursday)
08/23/2025 Glacial Tournament at Olive Grove
09/05/2025 Homecoming Parade 1pm
09/06/2025 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
09/07/2025 Sunflower Classic Couples Scramble at Olive Grove
10/10/2025 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am
10/11/2025 Pumpkin Fest 10am-3pm City Park
10/31/2025 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
11/27/2025 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1:30pm
12/06/2025 Olive Grove Holiday Party and Silent Live Auction Fundraiser

News from the **AP** Associated Press

March Madness: South Dakota State, UConn can both call upon deep benches as they meet in 2nd round

By JIM FULLER Associated Press

STORRS, Conn. (AP) — If South Dakota State and UConn played in March Madness last season, neither team would have many options to summon players off the bench because neither had much depth due to injuries.

What a difference a year makes. The two teams will meet on Monday night with a spot in the Sweet 16 at stake.

South Dakota State's starters averaged from 28 to 31 minutes per game while UConn's top six players were on the court for at least 30 minutes per game.

Heading into the second-round game, nobody from second-seeded UConn is averaging at least 30 minutes per game while 10 players for the Jackrabbits see more than 10 minutes per contest.

"I've gotten so used to not having a full complement of players that I had forgotten that coaching is hard," UConn women's basketball coach Geno Auriemma said. "A lot of coaches have to make decisions on what's my lineup going to look like. I haven't had to make that decision in four years. I haven't had to sub in four years. So, I haven't had any (ticked) off players in four years. Everybody plays 40 minutes and they all love life."

KK Arnold and Ashlynn Shade started for a UConn team that reached the 2024 Final Four. With Azzi Fudd back after being limited to two games a season ago and Princeton transfer Kaitlyn Chen earning a starting role, they now come off the bench.

"Coming off the bench, you kind of emphasize that when you do when you go into the game, change the game when you are in there," said Shade, who had 20 points in a first-round win over Arkansas State. "Just being a spark off the bench is something we take very seriously."

South Dakota State head coach Aaron Johnston tightened the rotation up a bit in the NCAA opener with Oklahoma State as he went with mostly a seven-player rotation for the 10th-seeded Jackrabbits. He can go deeper into his bench if he wants to give the favored Huskies a different look.

"Rotations every year are always different just based on injuries, who's available, things like that," Johnston said. "So this year's team, it's worked out. We do have a lot of depth just because of things we've dealt with over the past couple years. We've had several players returning this year who have been starters for us at some point in their career."

"I think we have the talent. We have the depth where we can go into our bench and feel like it's really productive. But at the same time, we've got key players that really have to be on the floor and have to play well, too."

Minnesota Stars Reunited In Storrs

When the NCAA women's basketball bracket came out, the four Minnesota natives on the South Dakota State team took a few seconds to wonder what it would be like to go up against Minnesota basketball prodigy Paige Bueckers and the 11-time national champion UConn Huskies in the second round of the March Madness bracket.

They will get their wish.

"Paige Bueckers is an incredible player and we are excited to battle it out with them," said South Dakota State guard Madison Mathiowetz, who didn't play against Bueckers in either high school or AAU but could see plenty of her Monday night. "I watched in her AAU passing through the gym and on TV growing up. She is somebody who has put a lot of time into basketball."

South Dakota State senior forward Kallie Theisen had plenty of games against Bueckers in high school. Now, they will meet one last time in what will be Bueckers' final home game at UConn.

"I have had quite a few matchups with her over the years," Theisen said. "It is fun to play her on college

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basketball's biggest stage. It has come a little full circle.

"People are really drawn to her, she has been a great player since high school and she has a lot of eyes on her at all times and she handles it really well."

So why are there so many girls' basketball players from Minnesota who make an impact at high-profile programs?

"I attribute it a little to the cold weather and wanting to be inside," Bueckers said. "I always found myself at the gym and I am sure a lot of people can say the same thing."

"It is great for the state of Minnesota, I have always said Minnesota is a basketball state. Everybody knows it as a hockey state but for us to play on this stage and in March Madness, it is everything you dream of as kids."

Middle East latest: Israeli strikes kill at least 25 in Gaza as Egypt offers new ceasefire proposal

By The Associated Press undefined

Israeli strikes across the Gaza Strip killed at least 25 Palestinians, including several women and children, according to three hospitals Monday. The strikes came nearly a week after Israel ended its ceasefire with Hamas with a surprise bombardment that killed hundreds.

Meanwhile, officials say Egypt has introduced a new proposal to try and get the Israel-Hamas ceasefire back on track.

Hamas would release five living hostages, including an American-Israeli, in return for Israel allowing humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip and a weeklong pause in the fighting, an Egyptian official said Monday. Israel would also release hundreds of Palestinian prisoners.

A Hamas official said the group had "responded positively" to the proposal, without elaborating. Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief media on the closed-door talks.

— By Samy Magdy in Cairo

Here's the latest:

An attacker hits a bus stop in northern Israel, killing 1

Israeli officials say an attacker in a vehicle ran over several people at a bus stop in northern Israel before opening fire, killing a man in his 70s.

Police said officers shot and killed the attacker, whose identity was not immediately disclosed. Police referred to it as a terrorist attack, indicating they believe the assailant was a Palestinian militant.

Israel's Magen David Adom emergency service said a man in his 70s was killed and another man, around 20 years old, was taken to a hospital in serious condition.

There has been a surge in Palestinian attacks since Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, rampage into southern Israel ignited the war in the Gaza Strip.

Israel has carried out wide-scale military operations in the occupied West Bank that have killed hundreds of Palestinians, and there has also been a rise in attacks by Jewish settlers.

Thousands are trapped in Rafah in southern Gaza as Israeli forces encircle part of it

Thousands of people are trapped in the city of Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip after Israeli forces encircled part of it on Sunday, Palestinian officials said.

Israel ordered the evacuation of the Tel al-Sultan neighborhood, telling people to leave by a single route on foot to Muwasi, a sprawling cluster of tent camps along the coast.

Thousands fled, but residents said many were trapped by Israeli forces.

The Rafah municipality said Monday that thousands were still trapped, including first responders from the Civil Defense, which operates under the Hamas-run government, and the Palestinian Red Crescent.

Israel defense minister says it is trying to avoid civilian casualties

Israel's defense minister says it is trying to avoid harming civilians as it strikes Hamas militants in the Gaza Strip.

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Israel Katz's statement came nearly a week after Israel ended its ceasefire with Hamas by launching a surprise wave of strikes that killed hundreds of Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to local health officials.

Katz said Monday that "Israel is not fighting the civilians in Gaza and is doing everything that international law requires to mitigate harm to civilians."

He went on to blame Hamas for any civilian deaths, saying the militant group "fights in civilian dress, from civilian homes, and from behind civilians," putting them in danger.

He said Israel would not halt its offensive until Hamas releases all its hostages and is no longer in control of Gaza or a threat to Israel.

Israeli strikes across Gaza kill at least 25 Palestinians

Israeli strikes across the Gaza Strip have killed at least 25 Palestinians, including several women and children, according to three hospitals. The strikes come nearly a week after Israel ended its ceasefire with Hamas with a surprise bombardment that killed hundreds.

Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza City received 11 bodies from strikes overnight into Monday, including three women and four children. One of the strikes killed two children, their parents, their grandmother and their uncle.

Nasser Hospital in the southern city of Khan Younis received seven bodies from strikes overnight and four from strikes the previous day. The European Hospital received three bodies from a strike near Khan Younis.

Gaza's Health Ministry said Sunday that the Palestinian death toll from the 17-month war has passed 50,000. It has said that women and children make up more than half the dead but does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its count.

Israel says it has killed some 20,000 militants, without providing evidence. Hamas-led militants killed around 1,200 people, mainly civilians, and abducted 251 people in the Oct. 7, 2023, attack that ignited the war.

US surgeon in Gaza says most patients hurt in Israeli attack on hospital had been wounded in earlier strikes

An American trauma surgeon working in Gaza says most of the patients injured in an Israeli attack on the largest hospital in southern Gaza had been previously wounded when Israel resumed airstrikes last week.

Californian surgeon Feroze Sidhwa, who is working with the medical charity MedGlobal, said Monday he had been in the intensive care unit at Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis when an airstrike hit surgical wards on Sunday.

Most of the injured had been recovering from wounds suffered in airstrikes last week when Israel resumed the war, he said.

"They were already trauma patients and now they've been traumatized for a second time," Sidhwa, who was raised in Flint, Mich., told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

Sidhwa said he had operated on a man and boy days before who died in the attack.

US and Russian negotiators launch ceasefire talks in Saudi Arabia

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — U.S. and Russian negotiators on Monday sat down for talks in Saudi Arabia on a partial ceasefire in Ukraine, hours after a round of negotiations between U.S. and Ukrainian delegations, Russian news reports said.

The state Tass and RIA-Novosti news agencies said the negotiations had begun in the capital Riyadh. The meeting is expected to be followed by another contact between U.S. and Ukrainian teams.

The separate meetings are set to discuss details of a pause in long-range attacks from both Russia and Ukraine against energy facilities and civilian infrastructure, as well as a halt on attacks in the Black Sea to ensure safe commercial shipping.

Ukraine and Russia agreed in principle Wednesday to a limited ceasefire after U.S. President Donald Trump spoke with the countries' leaders, but the parties have offered different views of what targets would be off-limits to attack and accused each other of undermining efforts to reach a pause.

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While the White House said "energy and infrastructure" would be covered, the Kremlin declared that the agreement referred more narrowly to "energy infrastructure." Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he would also like railways and ports to be protected.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov emphasized Friday that the agreement reached between Trump and Putin referred only to energy facilities, adding that the Russian military is fulfilling Putin's order to halt such attacks for 30 days.

Peskov accused Ukraine of derailing the partial ceasefire with an attack on a gas metering station in Sudzha in Russia's Kursk region. Ukraine's military General Staff rejected Moscow's accusations and blamed the Russian military for shelling the Sudzha gas metering station, a claim Peskov rejected as "absurd."

As negotiations on a partial ceasefire progressed, Russia launched a barrage of drones across Ukraine overnight on Saturday that killed at least seven people, including a father and his 5-year-old daughter in the capital Kyiv.

In a televised statement Sunday evening, Zelenskyy said that "since March 11, a proposal for an unconditional ceasefire has been on the table, and these attacks could have already stopped. But it is Russia that continues all this."

"There must be more pressure on Russia to stop this terror," Zelenskyy said, adding that it "depends on all our partners — the U.S., Europe, and others around the world."

Zelenskyy has emphasized that Ukraine is open to a full, 30-day ceasefire that Trump has proposed, while Russian President Vladimir Putin has made a complete ceasefire conditional on a halt of arms supplies to Kyiv and a suspension of Ukraine's military mobilization — demands rejected by Ukraine and its Western allies.

Speaking on "Fox News Sunday," Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff said he expected "some real progress" at the talks in Saudi Arabia, "particularly as it affects a Black Sea ceasefire on ships between both countries, and from that you'll naturally gravitate into a full-on shooting ceasefire."

As for Sunday talks in Riyadh between Ukrainian and U.S. representatives, Zelenskyy said they had been conducted on a more "technical level" compared to similar meetings last week, this time involving representatives from Ukraine's military, energy ministry and diplomatic corps.

"Our team is working in a fully constructive manner, and the discussion is quite useful. The work of the delegations continues," Zelenskyy said. "But no matter what we're discussing with our partners right now, Putin must be pushed to issue a real order to stop the strikes, because the one who brought this war must be the one to take it back."

Ukrainian railways come under cyber attack

Ukrainian state railway operator Ukrzaliznytsia came under a "massive targeted cyber attack" on its on-line services on Sunday, the company wrote on Telegram, adding that the restoration of its systems was ongoing as of Monday morning.

The company said the cyberattack did not affect train movements or schedules, but that the online purchase of tickets was currently unavailable.

"The railway continues to operate despite physical attacks on the infrastructure, and even the most vile cyber attacks cannot stop it," the company wrote.

Russian troops fired 99 strike and decoy drones into Ukraine overnight Sunday, according to Ukraine's air force, of which 57 were shot down and 36 were lost from radar. The remaining drones caused damage in at least five regions of Ukraine, the air force report says.

In the Kyiv region, one man suffered injuries overnight as a Russian drone struck a residential area.

"The man has superficial shrapnel wounds to his abdomen, chest, thighs, and head," the acting head of the Kyiv region, Mykola Kalashnyk, wrote on Telegram on Monday.

In the Kharkiv region, a Russian drone struck a residential building in the village of Velyka Babka, injuring a 25-year-old man and a pregnant woman. Both were hospitalized, regional head Oleh Syniehubov said on Telegram on Monday morning.

In Zaporizhzhia, Russian drones damaged several houses of local residents overnight with one elderly

woman suffering light injuries, regional head Ivan Fedorov wrote on Telegram.

Gérard Depardieu's trial on sexual assault charges is starting in France

By THOMAS ADAMSON Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — French actor Gérard Depardieu is standing trial on Monday in Paris accused of sexually assaulting two women during the filming of a movie in 2021.

Depardieu, 76, is facing charges that he groped a 54-year-old set dresser and a 34-year-old assistant director during production of the film "Les Volets Verts" ("The Green Shutters").

Prosecutors allege the incidents included obscene remarks and inappropriate touching, including an incident in which Depardieu allegedly used his legs to trap one of the women before groping her in front of other crew members. Both women have filed formal complaints. Their identities have not been disclosed to protect alleged victims of sexual assault.

The actor denies the charges.

In an open letter published in Le Figaro in Oct. 2023, Depardieu wrote: "Never, but never, have I abused a woman."

The trial was initially scheduled for October 2024 but was postponed due to Depardieu's health. His lawyer, Jérémie Assous, said the actor had undergone a quadruple heart bypass and suffers from diabetes. A court-appointed medical expert determined he is fit to stand trial. He is expected to attend the two-day hearing, reportedly with scheduled breaks.

This is the first time Depardieu, one of France's most prominent film actors, has gone to trial over sexual assault allegations. He has previously been accused of misconduct by about 20 women, but no other case has proceeded to court. Some were dropped due to lack of evidence or the statute of limitations.

The court is expected to hear witness testimony during the trial. A verdict is not expected immediately.

Comedian's jokes about an Indian state leader are being investigated as potential defamation

NEW DELHI (AP) — A comedian popular for his biting political humor is being investigated for possible defamation over jokes made about an Indian state leader who is an ally of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in yet another case raising questions over freedom of speech in the country.

Police in the western city of Mumbai opened the investigation Monday against Kunal Kamra over a comedy skit referring to Eknath Shinde, the second highest elected leader of Maharashtra state, following a complaint filed by a politician from Shinde's Shiv Sena party.

Kamra had made the remarks in a comedy skit, but it was unclear when the performance took place.

A video clip of the skit Kamra posted on his Instagram profile on Sunday showed him taunting Shinde in a parody song. Kamra's use of the term "traitor" particularly triggered Shiv Sena party workers and on Sunday they ransacked the studio where he had performed the skit.

Police are also investigating the vandalism.

One lawmaker from the party Sunday threatened Kamra, saying he would be chased by the party workers throughout the country. "You will be forced to flee India," lawmaker Naresh Mhaske warned Kamra in a video message.

Shinde has not commented about the matter, but Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said Kamra should apologize for his remarks.

"We respect freedom of expression, but recklessness will not be tolerated," Fadnavis told reporters.

Kamra has made no comment on the investigation, but late Sunday he shared on his Instagram a picture of himself holding the Indian Constitution with caption: "The only way forward."

The Habitat Comedy Club, where Kamra had performed, said it was shutting down following the vandalism.

"We are shocked, worried and extremely broken by the recent acts of vandalism targeting us," it said

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in a statement Monday, adding that the club will remain shut "till we figure out the best way to provide a platform for free expression without putting ourselves and our property in jeopardy."

Kamra has faced the ire of Hindu nationalist groups and political parties in the past, particularly for jokes about Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party politicians.

Other Indian comedians have been arrested or had shows canceled for making fun of politicians or making references to the Hindu religion or national icons.

Families of victims mark 10 years since Germanwings plane crashed in the French Alps

By KIRSTEN GRIESHABER Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Hundreds of victims' families will commemorate on Monday the 10th anniversary of the crash of Germanwings Flight 9525 in the French Alps, which killed all 150 people on board.

The plane departed in the morning of March 24, 2015, in Barcelona, Spain and was supposed to land a few hours later in Duesseldorf, Germany. But it never arrived because, investigators said, the plane was deliberately downed by the co-pilot, Andreas Lubitz.

The victims included a group of 16 students and two teachers from a high school in the western German town of Haltern am See who were flying home from an exchange trip to Spain.

Also killed were two babies, a pair of acclaimed German opera singers and a member of an Argentine rock band, three generations of the same family, a vacationing mother and son, a recently married couple, people on business trips and others going home.

Memorial ceremonies are planned for 10:41 a.m. — the moment of the crash — at the German high school that lost so many students and also in the French village of Le Vernet, near the crash site in the mountains.

In Haltern, high school students will lay down white roses for the victims and the town's church bells will ring.

"There was hardly a family that wasn't affected somewhere in their circle of friends or relatives," the high school's principal, Christian Krahle, told German news agency dpa.

Many family members also traveled to Le Vernet. Lufthansa, which owned Germanwings, is inviting the victims' relatives every year to the village near the crash site and is expecting around 300 mourners to attend this year's memorial service, dpa reported.

Commemorations are also planned at the airports in Düsseldorf and Barcelona. At Düsseldorf Airport, a book of condolences was available in the so-called Room of Silence for employees and travelers, dpa reported.

The crash shocked and caused disbelief when investigators revealed that co-pilot Lubitz locked the flight's captain out of the cockpit to deliberately set the plane on a collision course with a mountainside.

Lubitz had in the past suffered from depression, but authorities and his airline later deemed him fit to fly. In the months ahead of the crash, Lubitz suffered from sleeplessness and feared losing his vision, but he hid that from his employer.

"This state of shock, the deeply felt sympathy of all the residents for the families and the question of why this happened are still with us today," Haltern Mayor Andreas Stegemann told dpa.

"The Germanwings crash is a permanent part of our town's history," he said.

South Korean Prime Minister Han Duck-soo reinstated as acting president after impeachment overturned

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea's Constitutional Court overturned the impeachment of Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, reinstating the nation's No. 2 official as acting leader Monday while not yet ruling on the separate impeachment of President Yoon Suk Yeol over his shocking imposition of martial law late

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in December.

Many observers said the 7-1 ruling in Han's case did not signal much about the upcoming verdict on Yoon, as Han wasn't a key figure in imposing martial law. But the ruling could still embolden Yoon's staunch supporters and ramp up their political offensive on the opposition.

Speaking with reporters following his reinstatement, Han thanked the court for what he called "a wise decision" and promised to focus on tackling "urgent matters," including a fast-changing global trade environment, in an apparent reference to the Trump administration's aggressive tariffs policy. He also called for national unity, saying: "There's no left or right — what matters is the advancement of our nation."

South Korea has been thrown into huge political turmoil, since Yoon, a conservative, declared martial law on Dec. 3 and sent hundreds of troops to the liberal-controlled National Assembly and other places in Seoul. Yoon's decree lasted only six hours as enough lawmakers managed to enter an assembly hall and voted it down quickly.

The impeachment arguments

The assembly impeached Yoon on Dec. 14, alleging he violated the constitution and other laws by suppressing assembly activities and trying to detain politicians. Yoon's impeachment made Han acting president until he was impeached in late December.

The unprecedented, successive impeachments that suspended the country's top two officials intensified domestic division and deepened worries about the country's diplomatic and economic activities.

Han, who attempted to reassure diplomatic partners and stabilize markets during his time as acting president, was accused in the impeachment motion of abetting Yoon's martial law declaration and obstructing efforts to restore the Constitutional Court's full membership and investigate Yoon's alleged rebellion.

The nine-member court at the time had three vacancies, but ousting Yoon would require support from at least six justices. After Han was suspended, his successor as acting president, Choi Sang-mok, appointed two new justices but left the ninth seat vacant.

Seven of the Constitutional Court's eight justices ruled to overturn or dismiss Han's impeachment. They ruled the accusations against him weren't against the law or weren't serious enough to remove him from office or his impeachment motion didn't even meet a required quorum when it passed thorough the assembly. One justice upheld Han's impeachment.

The Democratic Party expressed regret over the court's decision to reinstate Han and urged it to dismiss Yoon's case quickly. Yoon's office welcomed Monday's ruling, saying it shows again the opposition's abuse of impeachment motions were "reckless, malicious political offensive."

What's next?

Observers earlier had predicted the Constitutional Court would rule on Yoon's case in mid-March, but it hasn't done so, sparking varied speculation on possible reasons.

"Today's verdict will give hope to Yoon's supporters for a similar fate and hope for Yoon's opponents for his ouster," said Duyeon Kim, a senior analyst at the Center for a New American Security in Washington. "But it's too soon to predict the court's verdict on Yoon because the specific details of both cases and allegations are different."

Kim said the the reinstatement of Han, a career bureaucrat, will bring more stability to South Korea compared to when his powers as acting president were suspended.

Massive rival rallies backing Yoon or denouncing Yoon have divided the streets of Seoul and other major cities in South Korea. Earlier surveys showed that a majority of South Koreans were critical of Yoon's martial law enactment, but those supporting or sympathizing with Yoon have later gained strength.

Yoon argues that his martial law introduction was a desperate attempt to bring attention to the "wickedness" of the main liberal opposition Democratic Party which obstructed his agenda and filed many impeachment motions against senior officials. Yoon critics counter he likely tried to use military rule to frustrate possible special investigations into scandals involving him and his wife.

Senior military and police officers sent to the assembly have said that Yoon ordered them to drag out lawmakers to prevent a floor vote to overturn his decree. Yoon says the troops' deployment was designed

to maintain order.

If the court upholds Yoon's impeachment, South Korea must hold a presidential election to choose his successor. If it rules for him, Yoon will regain his presidential powers.

Yoon has separately been charged with rebellion in connection with his martial law decree, a charge that carries the death penalty or a life sentence if he is convicted.

Gaza's Health Ministry says Israel has struck the largest hospital in the territory's south

By WAFAA SHURAFI and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israel's military struck the largest hospital in southern Gaza on Sunday night, killing two people, wounding others and causing a large fire, the territory's Health Ministry said.

The strike hit the surgical building of Nasser Hospital in the city of Khan Younis, the ministry said, days after the facility was overwhelmed with dead and wounded when Israel resumed the war in Gaza last week with a surprise wave of airstrikes.

Those killed in Sunday night's strike included a 16-year-old boy who underwent surgery two days ago, according to the Health Ministry. Also killed was Ismail Barhoum, a member of Hamas' political bureau, who was being treated at the hospital, Hamas said in a statement.

Israel's military confirmed the strike on the hospital, saying it hit a Hamas militant operating there. Israel blames civilian deaths on Hamas because it operates in densely populated areas.

Like other medical facilities around Gaza, Nasser Hospital has been damaged by Israeli raids and strikes throughout the war.

More than 50,000 Palestinians have now been killed in the war, the Health Ministry said earlier Sunday.

The military claimed to have "eliminated" dozens of militants since Israel ended a ceasefire Tuesday with strikes that killed hundreds of people on one of the deadliest days in the 17-month war.

Israel's unrest over Gaza and political issues grew Sunday, with anger at Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as his government voted to express no confidence in the attorney general, seen by many as a check on the power of his coalition.

"I'm worried for the future of this country. And I think it has to stop. We have to change direction," said Avital Halperin, one of hundreds of protesters outside Netanyahu's office. Police said three were arrested.

'Displacement under fire'

Israel's military ordered thousands of Palestinians to leave the heavily destroyed Tel al-Sultan neighborhood in the southern city of Rafah. They walked to Muwasi, a sprawling area of squalid tent camps. The war has forced most of Gaza's population of over 2 million to flee within the territory, often multiple times.

"It's displacement under fire," said Mustafa Gaber, a journalist who left with his family. He said tank and drone fire echoed nearby.

"The shells are falling among us and the bullets are (flying) above us," said Amal Nassar, also displaced. "The elderly have been thrown into the streets. An old woman was telling her son, 'Go and leave me to die.' Where will we go?"

"Enough is enough. We are exhausted," said a fleeing Ayda Abu Shaer, as smoke rose in the distance.

The Palestinian Red Crescent emergency service said it lost contact with a 10-member team responding to the strikes in Rafah. Spokesperson Nebal Farsakh said some were wounded.

Israel's military said it had fired on advancing "suspicious vehicles" and later discovered some were ambulances and fire trucks.

In Gaza City, an explosion hit next to a tent camp where people had been told to evacuate. "My husband is blind and started running barefoot, and my children were running," said witness Nidaa Hassuna.

Strikes kill Hamas leader

Hamas said Salah Bardawil, a well-known member of its political bureau, was killed in a strike in Muwasi that also killed his wife. Israel's military confirmed it.

Hospitals in southern Gaza said they received a further 24 bodies from strikes overnight, including several

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women and children.

Gaza's Health Ministry said 50,021 Palestinians have been killed in the war, including 673 people since Israel's bombardment on Tuesday shattered the ceasefire.

Dr. Munir al-Boursh, the ministry's general director, said the dead include 15,613 children, with 872 of them under 1 year old.

The ministry does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its count but says women and children make up over half the dead. Israel says it has killed around 20,000 fighters, without providing evidence.

Ceasefire in tatters

The ceasefire that took hold in January paused more than a year of fighting ignited by Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack into Israel, in which militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took 251 hostage. Most captives have been released in ceasefire agreements or other deals.

In the latest ceasefire's first phase, 25 Israeli hostages and the bodies of eight others were released in exchange for nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners. Israeli forces allowed hundreds of thousands of people to return home. There was a surge in humanitarian aid until Israel cut off all supplies to Gaza earlier this month to pressure Hamas to change the ceasefire agreement.

The sides were supposed to begin negotiations in early February on the ceasefire's next phase, in which Hamas was to release the remaining 59 hostages — 35 of them believed to be dead — in exchange for more Palestinian prisoners, a lasting ceasefire and an Israeli withdrawal. Those talks never began.

New settlements in the West Bank

Israel's Cabinet passed a measure creating 13 new settlements in the occupied West Bank by rezoning existing ones, according to Bezalel Smotrich, Israel's far-right finance minister, who is in charge of settlement construction.

This brings the number of settlements, considered illegal by the majority of the international community, to 140, said anti-settlement watchdog group Peace Now. They will receive independent budgets from Israel and can elect their own local governments, the group said.

Former Utah Rep. Mia Love, the first Black Republican woman elected to the US House, has died

By HANNAH SCHOENBAUM and MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Former U.S. Rep. Mia Love of Utah, a daughter of Haitian immigrants who became the first Black Republican woman elected to Congress, died Sunday.

She was 49.

Love's family posted news of her death on Love's X account.

She had undergone recent treatment for brain cancer and received immunotherapy as part of a clinical trial at Duke University's brain tumor center. Her daughter said earlier this month that the former lawmaker was no longer responding to treatment.

Love died at her home in Saratoga Springs, Utah, according to a statement posted by the family.

"With grateful hearts filled to overflowing for the profound influence of Mia on our lives, we want you to know that she passed away peacefully," her family said. "We are thankful for the many good wishes, prayers and condolences."

Utah Gov. Spencer Cox referred to Love as a "true friend" and said her legacy of service inspired all who knew her.

Love entered politics in 2003 after winning a seat on the city council in Saratoga Springs, a growing community about 30 miles (48 kilometers) south of Salt Lake City. She later became the city's mayor.

In 2012, Love narrowly lost a bid for the House against the Democratic incumbent, former Rep. Jim Matheson, in a district that covers a string of Salt Lake City suburbs. She ran again two years later and defeated first-time candidate Doug Owens by about 7,500 votes.

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Love didn't emphasize her race during her campaigns, but she acknowledged the significance of her election after her 2014 victory. She said her win defied naysayers who had suggested that a Black, Republican, Mormon woman couldn't win a congressional seat in overwhelmingly white Utah.

She was briefly considered a rising star within the GOP and she kept her distance from Donald Trump, who was unpopular with many Utah voters, while he was running for president ahead of the 2016 election.

In an op-ed published earlier this month in the Deseret News, Love described the version of America she grew up loving and shared her enduring wish for the nation to become less divisive. She thanked her medical team and every person who had prayed for her.

Love said her parents immigrated to the U.S. with \$10 in their pocket and a belief that hard work would lead to success. She said she was raised to believe passionately in the American dream and "to love this country, warts and all." America at its roots is respectful, resilient, giving and grounded in gritty determination, she said.

Her career in politics exposed Love to America's ugly side, but she said it also gave her a front row seat to be inspired by people's hope and courage. She shared her wish for neighbors to come together and focus on their similarities rather than their differences.

"Some have forgotten the math of America — whenever you divide you diminish," Love wrote.

She urged elected officials to lead with compassion and communicate honestly with their constituents.

"In the end, I hope that my life will have mattered and made a difference for the nation I love and the family and friends I adore," Love wrote. "I hope you will see the America I know in the years ahead, that you will hear my words in the whisper of the wind of freedom and feel my presence in the flame of the enduring principles of liberty. My living wish and fervent prayer for you and for this nation is that the America I have known is the America you fight to preserve."

In 2016, facing reelection and following the release of a 2005 recording in which Trump made lewd comments about groping women, Love skipped the Republican National Convention and released a statement saying definitively that she would not vote for Trump. She instead endorsed Texas Sen. Ted Cruz in the GOP race, but he dropped out months later.

While seeking a third term in 2018, Love tried to separate herself from Trump on trade and immigration while still backing her party's positions on tax cuts. Despite Republican voters outnumbering Democrats by a nearly three-to-one margin in her district, though, she lost by fewer than 700 votes to Democrat Ben McAdams, a former mayor of Salt Lake City.

Trump called out Love by name in a news conference the morning after she lost, where he also bashed other Republicans who didn't fully embrace him.

"Mia Love gave me no love, and she lost," Trump said. "Too bad. Sorry about that, Mia."

After her loss, Love served as a political commentator on CNN and as a fellow at the University of Sydney.

Following Trump's election in November, Love said she was "OK with the outcome."

"Yes, Trump says a lot of inconsiderate things that are unfortunate and impossible to defend," Love wrote in a social media post. "However, his policies have a high probability of benefiting all Americans."

A mix of science and tradition helps restore relics in China's Forbidden City

By KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — It's highly technical work in what looks more like a lab than a museum: A fragment of a glazed roof tile from Beijing's Forbidden City is analyzed in a state-of-the-art X-ray diffraction machine that produces images, which are then projected onto computer screens.

The fragment being examined has a dark area on its surface that restorers want to understand. Their objective is to better preserve the artifacts at the sprawling imperial palace, the former home of China's emperors and its seat of power for hundreds of years.

"We want to learn what the black material is," said Kang Baoqiang, one of the restorers at the complex, today a museum that attracts tourists from all over the world. "Whether it's atmospheric sediment or the

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result of substantial change from within.”

About 150 workers on the team fuse scientific analysis and traditional techniques to clean, patch up and otherwise revive the more than 1.8 million relics in the museum’s collection.

They include scroll paintings, calligraphy, bronzes, ceramics — and, somewhat unexpectedly, ornate antique clocks that were gifted to emperors by early European visitors.

Down the hall from the X-ray room, two other restorers patch up holes on a panel of patterned green silk with the Chinese character for “longevity” sewn into it, carefully adding color in a process called “inpainting.”

The piece is believed to have been a birthday gift to Empress Dowager Cixi, the power behind the throne in the late 19th and early 20th century.

Much of the work is laborious and monotonous — and takes months to complete.

“I don’t have the big dreams of protecting traditional cultural heritage that people talk about,” said Wang Nan, one of the restorers. “I simply enjoy the sense of achievement when an antique piece is fixed.”

Now a major tourist site in the heart of Beijing, the Forbidden City is the name that was given to the sprawling compound by foreigners in imperial times because entry was forbidden to most outsiders. It’s formally known as the Palace Museum.

Many of its treasures were hurriedly taken away during World War II to keep them from falling into the hands of the invading Japanese army. During a civil war that brought the Communist Party to power in 1949, the defeated Nationalists took many of the most prized pieces to Taiwan, where they are now housed in the National Palace Museum.

Beijing’s Palace Museum has since rebuilt its collection.

Restoration techniques have also evolved, said Qu Feng, head of the museum’s Conservation Department, though the old ways remain the foundation of the work.

When we preserve an antique piece, we “protect the cultural values it carries,” Qu said. “And that is our ultimate goal.”

Takeaways from AP’s report on sexual misconduct in US statehouses

By ISABELLA VOLMERT Associated Press

The #MeToo movement hit critical mass in 2017, toppling politicians and public figures across the country. Allegations of harassment and misconduct — some from many years prior — emerged. Many state legislatures responded by adopting or enhancing policies against sexual misconduct.

In the years since, women’s representation in U.S. statehouses has reached an all-time high.

As more women fill seats and hold leadership positions, lawmakers and others are divided about whether anything has changed. But allegations continue to surface — at the state level and beyond.

The Associated Press tallied allegations against state lawmakers across the country, examined the sexual harassment policies of legislative chambers in all 50 states, and talked to lawmakers, lobbyists and staff.

Here are key takeaways from the investigation:

144 state lawmakers accused since #MeToo

Since 2017, The Associated Press has cataloged at least 147 state lawmakers across 44 states who have been accused of sexual harassment or misconduct. Most allegations were reported during the first two years of #MeToo, but more have surfaced every year since.

The total includes allegations of incidents both in state government and outside of it.

In 2024 alone, the AP tallied at least 14 state lawmakers from 12 states who were accused — about twice as many as the previous year.

In total, over a third of accused lawmakers resigned or were expelled from office. Roughly another third faced repercussions like losing party or committee positions. A dozen top state executive officials, including governors and attorneys general, faced similar allegations during that time and most resigned.

According to the National Women’s Defense League, which advocates for sexual harassment policies in

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statehouses and keeps its own count, Republicans and Democrats are nearly equally accused and 94% of those overall are men.

Transparency still lacking despite updated policies and training

An AP survey, conducted from last November through January, found nearly half of all legislative chambers had updated their sexual harassment policies over the past five years. However, many policies are difficult for the general public to locate.

Near the beginning of #MeToo, an AP survey found about a third of legislative chambers didn't require lawmakers to take sexual harassment training.

Almost all state legislatures now offer it, though it's not always mandatory and content, format and frequency vary. Only about one-third of legislative chambers conduct training annually, according to AP's survey.

The Arkansas Senate is the only legislative chamber without a specific sexual harassment policy. Officials in the Oklahoma Senate, the Mississippi Senate and both chambers of the West Virginia Legislature did not provide their sexual harassment policies to the AP.

Less of a 'boys' club' — but with caveats

Lawmakers and others are divided about whether anything has changed.

Michigan state Sen. Mallory McMorrow, who filed a sexual harassment complaint against a fellow lawmaker in 2020, said any improvements have less to do with "policy changes or work groups," and more to do with "just the fact that we have significantly more women in charge."

Others still see sexism.

"Sometimes it feels like we should just smile more and not be disruptive and not challenge anyone. That hasn't gone away," said Georgia state Rep. Shea Roberts, who resigned as Democratic Caucus treasurer to protest a fellow lawmaker who was accused last year of sexually harassing a staffer.

Women's representation is still lower than 50% in most places

Advocates and lawmakers say the statehouse environment can still be hostile enough to keep many women from running for office.

"When men run for office, it's about whether they can do the job," said Erin Maye Quade, a Minnesota senator. "When women run for office, it's about a lot more than that."

Men still make up two-thirds of all state lawmakers in the U.S., and some say #MeToo gave them space to join the discussion and to acknowledge more work is needed.

Republican state Rep. Mark Schreiber of Kansas said attitudes have evolved over the years — from a "boys will be boys" ethos to acknowledging the harassment, while still blaming women. In more recent years, he said, men realized, "We're blaming the wrong people."

Women hold more statehouse seats than ever. After #MeToo, do they feel any safer?

ISABELLA VOLMERT, DAVID A. LIEB and OLIVIA DIAZ Associated Press

Virginia lawmaker Jackie Glass said she got a "safety brief" when she joined the Legislature.

"I was told who not to go drink with, who not to be alone with and who to just watch out for," she said on the Statehouse floor in 2024. Addressing the male House speaker, she said, "I don't think you got that brief."

The Democrat was discussing a pervasive culture of sexual misconduct in the Statehouse, something that remains despite the #MeToo movement hitting critical mass in 2017.

The movement toppled politicians, celebrities and others across the country. Allegations of harassment and misconduct, some from many years prior, came to light — highlighting a toxic culture where such behavior was perhaps as rampant and accepted as the silence that buried it.

Many state legislatures responded by adopting or enhancing policies against sexual misconduct. As the number of female state lawmakers reaches new heights, some say statehouses are less of a "boys' club."

But allegations continue to surface — at the state level and beyond.

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In an interview with The Associated Press, Glass questioned why she would encourage women to join the legislative ranks when it feels little has changed.

"I just don't know how we keep women — and well, quite frankly, people — safe when it feels like it goes hand in hand with the work," she said.

12 dozen lawmakers accused in 8 years

Since 2017, The Associated Press has cataloged at least 147 state lawmakers across 44 states who have been accused of sexual harassment or sexual misconduct.

Over a third resigned or were expelled from office and roughly another third faced repercussions, such as losing party or committee leadership positions. A dozen top state executive officials, including governors and attorneys general, also faced sexual misconduct allegations during that time, and most resigned.

The total includes allegations of incidents in state government and outside of it. That includes Minnesota Republican state Sen. Justin Eichorn, who resigned on Thursday after being charged with soliciting a minor for prostitution. A federal defender said Thursday that Eichorn was still in the process of hiring a private lawyer.

Most allegations were reported in the first two years of #MeToo, but more have emerged every year since.

In 2024 alone, the AP tallied at least 14 state lawmakers from a dozen states who were accused — about twice as many as the previous year.

According to the National Women's Defense League, which advocates for sexual harassment policies in statehouses and keeps its own count, Republicans and Democrats are nearly equally accused and 94% of those overall are men.

New policies and training, but not always transparency

An AP survey of the legislative chambers in each state, conducted from last November through January, found about half had updated their sexual harassment policies over the past five years.

The Nevada Legislature, for example, expanded its definition of sexual harassment to include "visual" conduct — such as derogatory photos or gestures.

And the Kentucky General Assembly added sexual harassment to its list of "ethical misconduct," taking action several years after revelations that four lawmakers had signed a secret sexual harassment settlement with a female employee.

Near the beginning of #MeToo, an AP survey found about a third of legislative chambers didn't require lawmakers to take sexual harassment training.

Almost all state legislatures now offer it, though it's not always mandatory and content, format and frequency vary.

Academic experts and women's advocacy groups say frequent training is best — conducted in person and with real-life scenarios. While most chambers offer in-person training, only about one-third nationwide conduct training annually, according to AP's survey.

Not every legislative chamber is transparent about its policies or efforts to mitigate sexual harassment and misconduct, though.

The Oklahoma Senate and both chambers of the West Virginia Legislature declined to provide their sexual harassment policies to the AP, asserting they are internal documents exempt from disclosure. The Mississippi Senate did not respond to requests for its written policy.

The Arkansas Senate is the only legislative chamber without a specific sexual harassment policy, but Senate legal counsel said it has an ethics code and the authority to discipline members.

Lawmakers in California created a body independent of the Legislature to investigate reports of sexual harassment with a call line. However, investigation findings are only released publicly if the complaint is found to be substantiated against a lawmaker or high-level staffer.

'If that's what it takes to keep people acting right, that's fine'

Lawmakers and others are divided about whether anything has changed — and if so, why.

Rep. Abby Major, a Pennsylvania Republican, says male colleagues have treated women better after recent sexual harassment scandals.

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"I think maybe the men are afraid to do anything lest I am doing a press conference about them next," Major said, referring to her disclosure that a fellow representative in 2022 propositioned her and followed her to her car. "If that's what it takes to keep people acting right, then that's fine. I'll be the boogeyman."

Michigan Democratic state Sen. Mallory McMorrow, who filed a sexual harassment complaint against Republican state Sen. Peter Lucido in 2020, said improvements have less to do with policy changes and more to do with the fact more women are in charge.

"By our very nature, we changed how the Legislature operates," she said.

Lucido did not respond to requests for comment.

According to data kept by the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University, the number of female state lawmakers saw the greatest rise in 2018 since the 1990s, largely driven by the success of Democratic women in that year's midterms. Women now occupy 33% of all legislative seats nationwide, although representation by state varies.

Others still see sexism, especially in male-dominated, Republican-majority chambers.

"Sometimes it feels like we should just smile more and not be disruptive and not challenge anyone. That hasn't gone away," said Georgia state Rep. Shea Roberts, who resigned as Democratic Caucus treasurer to protest after the caucus leader was accused last year of sexually harassing a staffer.

Coming forward sometimes has other consequences

Even with updated sexual harassment policies and cultural shifts, the decision to report is fraught.

Misconduct reports may be handled by a third party or more commonly, by ethics committees or caucus leadership. Accusers often consider which leaders and parties are in power, according to the National Women's Defense League.

"This is a political workplace and therefore harassment issues inside of the statehouse are inherently political," said Emma Davidson Tribbs, the NWDL's founding director.

Experts say a third party is crucial to ensuring a fair investigation and to encourage reporting.

Only about one-quarter of legislative chambers require external investigations when such complaints are made, according to AP's survey. Dozens of others allow external investigations at the case-by-case discretion of legislative leaders.

Oregon's Legislative Equity Office, which investigates complaints, found in its annual report released earlier this month that legislative staff reached out to the office more than any other group.

Oregon Democratic state Sen. Sara Gelser Blouin was one of two female lawmakers who filed complaints about unwanted touching by a fellow senator in 2017.

"I still remember the first time I turned on the radio and heard my name and people talking about my breasts or my thighs," she told the AP. "It felt very, very invasive. And it made it a lot more clear to me why people don't make their complaints or why they don't come forward."

Despite legal protections against retaliation, accusers' reputations and careers often take a hit after coming forward.

Gabrielle Brock, then a communications staffer for Indiana Senate Democrats, was 23 when she and three other women accused then-Attorney General Curtis Hill, a Republican, of groping them at a 2018 party. Their accusations led to a misconduct hearing before the state Supreme Court and Hill's law license was suspended for 30 days.

Hill, who denied the allegations, lost his 2020 reelection bid thereafter and ran unsuccessfully for governor in 2024.

Brock and the other women left their jobs in the Statehouse as a result.

"I felt like that story overshadowed any work that I was doing for the state, for my caucus at the time," Brock said.

Brock had found a passion for working in government but says the Statehouse environment made it too uncomfortable a place to work.

"Every woman had a story of some kind of inappropriate interaction, primarily with an elected official," she said.

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The women dropped a lawsuit against Hill last December, saying through their attorney they felt the trial would bring no relief — monetary or otherwise.

When reached for comment, Hill called the original allegations “vague” and “thin.”

“We’re blaming the wrong people”

Men still make up two-thirds of all state lawmakers in the U.S. and though #MeToo has primarily spotlighted women’s voices, some say the reckoning gave them the space to join women in discussing misconduct and to acknowledge more work is needed.

Republican state Rep. Mark Schreiber of Kansas, who joined the Legislature in 2017, said he saw a “boys will be boys” ethos when he started coming to the Statehouse decades ago as a utility company executive. That later gave way to acknowledging harassment — while still blaming women.

In more recent years, he said, men realized, “We’re blaming the wrong people,” and “We need to correct the behavior of these men.”

Advocates and lawmakers alike hope that improvements continue, saying hostile work environments remain pervasive enough to keep women from running for office.

“When men run for office, it’s about whether they can do the job,” said Erin Maye Quade, a Minnesota Democratic senator. “When women run for office, it’s about a lot more than that.”

Many question the overall progress of #MeToo, pointing to sexual misconduct allegations against several of President Donald Trump’s cabinet nominees and the president himself — many of whom have denied them.

“It sends a message of normalization about this kind of behavior,” said Debbie Walsh, director of the Center for American Women and Politics.

“I do think things are better than they were. I do think the MeToo movement had an impact,” she added. “But that momentum has to stay because it doesn’t just get fixed in a couple of years.”

Concerns about espionage rise as Trump and Musk fire thousands of federal workers

By DAVID KLEPPER and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As President Donald Trump and billionaire Elon Musk work to overhaul the federal government, they’re forcing out thousands of workers with insider knowledge and connections who now need a job.

For Russia, China and other adversaries, the upheaval in Washington as Musk’s Department of Government Efficiency guts government agencies presents an unprecedented opportunity to recruit informants, national security and intelligence experts say.

Every former federal worker with knowledge of or access to sensitive information or systems could be a target. When thousands of them leave their jobs at the same time, that creates a lot of targets, as well as a counterespionage challenge for the United States.

“This information is highly valuable, and it shouldn’t be surprising that Russia and China and other organizations — criminal syndicates for instance — would be aggressively recruiting government employees,” said Theresa Payton, a former White House chief information officer under President George W. Bush, who now runs her own cybersecurity firm.

Many agencies oversee crucial data

Each year an average of more than 100,000 federal workers leave their jobs. Some retire; others move to the private sector. This year, in three months, the number is already many times higher.

It’s not just intelligence officers who present potential security risks. Many departments and agencies oversee vast amounts of data that include personal information on Americans as well as sensitive information about national security and government operations. Exiting employees could also give away helpful security secrets that would allow someone to penetrate government databases or physical offices.

The Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, for instance, maintains information on trade negotiations that could help an adversary undercut the United States. Federal records house data on clandestine intel-

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ligence operations and agents. Pentagon databases contain reams of sensitive information on U.S. military capabilities. The Department of Energy oversees many of the nation's most closely guarded nuclear secrets.

"This happens even in good times — someone in the intelligence community who for personal financial or other reasons walks into an embassy to sell America out — but DOGE is taking it to a whole new level," said John Schindler, a former counterintelligence official.

"Someone is going to go rogue," he said. "It's just a question of how bad it will be."

Only a tiny fraction of the many millions of Americans who have worked for the federal government have ever been accused of espionage. The overwhelming number are conscientious patriots who would never sell out their country, Payton said.

Background checks, employee training and exit interviews are all designed to prevent informants or moles — and to remind departing federal employees of their duty to preserve national secrets even after leaving federal service.

Even one person can do serious damage

It takes only one or two misguided or disgruntled workers to cause a national security crisis. Former FBI agent Robert Hanssen and former CIA officer Aldrich Ames, who both spied for Russia, show just how damaging a single informant can be.

Hanssen divulged sweeping information about American intelligence-gathering, including details that authorities said were partly responsible for the outing of U.S. informants in Russia who were later executed for working on America's behalf.

The odds that one angry former employee reaches out to a foreign power go up as many federal employees find themselves without a job, experts said. What's not in doubt is that foreign adversaries are looking for any former employees they can flip. They're hunting for that one informant who could deliver a big advantage for their nation.

"It's a numbers game," said Schindler.

Frank Montoya Jr., a retired senior FBI official and former top U.S. government counterintelligence executive, said he was less concerned about well-trained intelligence community employees betraying their oaths and selling out to American adversaries. But he noted the many workers in other realms of government who could be targeted by Russia or China,

"When it comes to the theft of intellectual property, when it comes to the theft of sensitive technology, when it comes to access to power grids or to financial systems, an IRS guy or a Social Service guy who's really upset about what DOGE is doing, they actually are the bigger risk," Montoya said.

Once military and intelligence officials were the primary targets of foreign spies looking to turn an informant. But now, thanks to the massive amount of information held at many agencies, and the competitive edge it could give China or Russia, that's no longer the case.

"We have seen over the last generation, the last 20–25 years, the Chinese and the Russians increasingly have been targeting non-national defense and non-classified information, because it helps them modernize their military, it helps them modernize their infrastructure," Montoya said.

Online activity makes it easier than it once was

The internet has made it far easier for foreign nations to identify and recruit potential informants.

Once, Soviet intelligence officers had to wait for an embittered agent to make contact, or go through the time-consuming process of identifying which recently separated federal employees could be pliable. Now, all you need is a LinkedIn subscription and you can quickly find former federal officials in search of work.

"You go on LinkedIn, you see someone who was 'formerly at Department of Defense now looking for work' and it's like, 'Bingo,'" Schindler said.

A foreign spy service or scammer looking to exploit a recently laid-off federal worker could bring in potential recruits by posting a fake job ad online.

One particularly novel concern involves the fear that a foreign agent could set up a fake job interview and hire former federal officials as "consultants" to a fake company. The former federal workers would be paid for their expertise without even knowing they were supplying information to an enemy. Russia has paid unwitting Americans to do its business before.

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Payton's advice for former federal employees looking for work? It's the same as her guidance for federal counterespionage officials, she said: "Be on high alert."

The Office of the Director of National Intelligence did not respond to questions about the risks that a former federal worker or contractor could sell out the country. Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard recently announced plans to investigate leaks within the intelligence community, though her announcement was focused not on counterespionage concerns but on employees who pass information to the press or the public.

In a statement, the office said it would investigate any claims that a member of the intelligence community was improperly releasing information.

"There are many patriots in the IC that have reached out to DNI Gabbard and her team directly, explaining that they have raised concerns on these issues in the past but they have been ignored," the office said. "That will no longer be the case."

Deadly hit-and-run in New Mexico brings juvenile justice challenges into focus

By SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — Behind the wheel of the stolen car was a 12-year-old boy. In the front passenger seat was a boy who just days earlier had marked his 11th birthday. He was waving a handgun as a 15-year-old boy in the backseat recorded video of what police described as a deliberate hit-and-run.

A voice believed to be the 15-year-old's says, "Just bump him, brah." The driver asks, "Like bump him?" The rear passenger responds, "Yeah, just bump him. Go like ... 15 ... 20."

The car smashed into a bicyclist on his way to work. The windshield shattered and the car sped away in the predawn hours that May morning.

Months passed with no arrests. Then in February a video of the deadly crash surfaced on social media. Remarkably it led police back to an 11-year-old who last June was arrested and placed in custody for a series of break-ins and burglaries in northeast Albuquerque. Police also accused the boy of shooting and wounding another teen, which prompted an investigation that turned up firearms and a bullet-proof vest that had been stolen from a police vehicle.

But the allegations of running down and killing a person were on another level, one seldom dealt with in New Mexico's juvenile justice system.

The 11-year-old and the other boys in the car, now ages 13 and 16, were arrested last week in connection with the death of Scott Dwight Habermehl, a father of two and a successful engineer.

Prosecutors said Friday that all three boys will face the same charges: counts of first-degree murder, conspiracy to commit murder, leaving the scene of an accident involving great bodily harm or death and unlawful possession of a handgun by a person under 19. Prosecutors are seeking to have the oldest boy charged as an adult.

The spike in juvenile violence — particularly this latest case — has shaken the community, further frustrated law enforcement and added to the pressure on policymakers to reconsider the limitations of a juvenile justice system that wasn't designed to deal with children as young as 11.

Authorities have suggested there is a perception among juveniles that they won't face consequences for violent crimes.

How are young defendants handled?

Albuquerque police have arrested numerous teens, most being 15 or older, in homicide cases over the last year. Legal experts and authorities can't recall a case in which someone as young as 11 has faced a murder charge.

Under state law, the 11-year-old cannot be held in a juvenile detention center but will remain in the custody of the state child welfare agency. The other two boys were ordered to remain in a juvenile detention center as their cases proceed, with children's court judges finding they were a danger to themselves and the community.

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Santa Fe-based attorney John Day said New Mexico's juvenile justice system was meant to intervene and get help for children so they wouldn't commit crimes as adults. It was designed with the assumption that kids this young weren't competent to engage in this kind of violent behavior, he said.

"Obviously when you have 11-year-olds who are being accused of participating in running over bicyclists and brandishing guns, that's something that when they were drafting these laws was really not taken into consideration because it was a different time. It was a different era," Day said.

There is a minimum age for prosecuting juveniles in 26 states, with statutes spelling out various exceptions, according to the National Juvenile Justice Network. But New Mexico is among the many states without a minimum age and state law allows for teenagers as young as 14 in some instances to be tried in adult court only for first-degree murder.

Bernalillo County District Attorney Sam Bregman says the children's code is antiquated, but efforts have failed to get the Democratic-controlled Legislature to expand the types of violent crimes juveniles could be charged in as adults.

"The single most effective step to reduce violent crime in our community is modernizing our juvenile justice system with meaningful consequences alongside behavioral health support," Bregman said recently.

Democratic Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham on Saturday reiterated her disappointment that lawmakers failed to pass legislation to address juvenile justice and what she described as a crime crisis. She also pointed to a deadly shooting at a park in Las Cruces on Friday night, saying lawmakers should expect to be called back for a special session.

How has juvenile justice changed in the US?

Before the creation of juvenile courts more than a century ago, children who were older than 7 were processed and incarcerated under common law just as adults would be. Younger children were considered incapable of possessing criminal intent.

Along with that history, the U.S. Justice Department's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention notes on its website that the juvenile court system also was established to provide positive social development for children who lack support at home.

It's not clear what home life was like for the 11-year-old accused in the New Mexico case. The New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department has declined to comment. The Albuquerque school district confirmed he was not enrolled in school.

Juvenile justice advocates say cases in which young children are accused of murder are rare but not unheard of. In 2008, Arizona prosecutors handled the case of an 8-year-old boy who shot and killed his father and his father's friend. He pleaded guilty to negligent homicide in the death of the friend. Prosecutors dropped the charge for killing his father, saying it was best for the boy not to have to acknowledge killing his father.

Some advocates have pushed for setting the minimum age for prosecution at least 14, citing research suggesting children who enter the juvenile justice system earlier in their lives have more adverse outcomes than older teens.

Regardless of the timing, children in the system are likely to be exposed to harsh conditions and face disruptions to their education and family relationships.

"That type of harm caused at such a young age has a serious impact on the rest of their life," said Riya Saha Shah, the CEO of the Philadelphia-based Juvenile Law Center.

Can children comprehend the consequences?

Before knowing the hit-and-run in New Mexico was deliberate, authorities had warned in a criminal complaint naming the 11-year-old in other crimes that the pattern of misconduct was escalating in violence. The document went on to suggest the boy was a danger to himself and the public.

Cases like this beg questions about how children end up in situations like this and what systems failed them along the way, said Amy Borrer, a senior youth policy strategist with The Gault Center, a Washington, D.C.-based youth rights advocacy group.

Another consideration, she said, is that adolescents' brains are wired differently. Borrer pointed specifically to the part of the brain that controls reasoning, rational thought and the ability to comprehend the

effects of actions.

"That's why kids and teenagers act exactly like kids and teenagers act," she said, referring to risk-seeking behavior that intensifies while in groups.

The difficulty comes with figuring out how to hold someone accountable when they don't have the same level of rational decision making that adults do, said Joshua Kastenberg, a former lawyer and judge in the U.S. Air Force who now teaches at the University of New Mexico Law School.

"Kids in the criminal justice system are one of the more difficult questions in the law," Kastenberg said. "Unlike adults, where you can simply say, 'Well, this person intentionally ran down a cyclist in their car, they're a danger to society.' Whether they have anger management problems or they hate cyclists or whatever, they completely disregarded the right of another human being to simply live. ... But when you're talking about kids, none of that sinks in."

Conan O'Brien accepts Mark Twain Prize for humor as politics roils the Kennedy Center

By ASHRAF KHALIL Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — On a night when half a dozen people made jokes about this being the last-ever Mark Twain Prize, Conan O'Brien made sure the ceremony at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts ended on a high note.

O'Brien accepted the award for lifetime achievement in comedy Sunday night while acknowledging the backstage turmoil that hangs over the future of the cultural center in Washington.

O'Brien, 61, was named the 26th recipient of the Mark Twain Prize in mid-January, about three weeks before President Donald Trump upended the Kennedy Center by ousting longtime president Deborah Rutter and board chairman David Rubenstein. Trump dismissed the board of trustees and replaced them with loyalists, who then elected him as chairman.

On Sunday, O'Brien specifically thanked Rubenstein and Rutter — drawing an extended round of applause — and also Kennedy Center staffers who, he said, were "worried about what the future might bring."

He said the example of Mark Twain's own life and career was particularly resonant at this moment in American history.

"Twain hated bullies. ... He punched up, not down, and he deeply empathized with the weak," O'Brien said. "Twain loved America, but he knew it was deeply flawed."

A Mark Twain impersonator then emerged from the audience. After a back-and-forth debate with O'Brien, he joined him on stage and the pair slow danced for a while. They were then joined by a dozen more Twain impersonators and previous Twain Prize recipient Adam Sandler for a raucous rendition of Neil Young's "Rockin in the Free World."

That musical ending capped off a night when the uncertain fate of the Kennedy Center itself was woven through the multiple tributes and testimonials to O'Brien.

"I think it would be insane not to address the elephant in the room," comic Nikki Glaser said on the red carpet before the ceremony. "It's in the air tonight. This night is about Conan, but it can be both."

Once the festivities began, Stephen Colbert joked that the Kennedy Center had announced two new board members: Bashar Assad, the ousted president of Syria, and Skeletor, a fictional supervillain.

John Mulaney quipped that the entire building would soon be renamed "the Roy Cohn Pavilion" after one of Trump's mentors. And Sarah Silverman made multiple Trump jokes that were too vulgar to print.

Trump, in announcing the Kennedy Center changes, posted on social media that those who were dismissed "do not share our Vision for a Golden Age in Arts and Culture."

How that vision takes shape remains to be seen, but Trump has spoken about wanting to book more Broadway shows there and floated the idea of granting Kennedy Center Honors status to actor Sylvester Stallone and singer-songwriter Paul Anka.

Into this maelstrom stepped O'Brien, whose comedic persona has never been particularly political. The comic has always tended more toward goofiness and self-deprecation. But he has also leaned into sensi-

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tive societal issues at times. In 2011, O'Brien officiated a gay wedding live on his show, overseeing the marriage of his longtime costume designer Scott Cronick and his partner David Gorshein.

O'Brien vaulted into the spotlight from near-total obscurity in 1993 when he was chosen to replace David Letterman as host of "Late Night" despite no significant on-camera experience. The former Harvard Lampoon editor had spent the previous years as a writer for "Saturday Night Live" and "The Simpsons," appearing on camera only as an occasional background extra in "SNL" skits.

He went on to host "Late Night" for 16 years, longer than any other host. O'Brien was later tapped to replace Jay Leno as host of "The Tonight Show," but that experiment ended in public failure. After seven months of declining ratings, NBC executives brought Leno back for a new show that would bump "The Tonight Show" back. O'Brien refused to accept the move, leading to a public spat that ended with a multimillion-dollar payout for O'Brien and his staff to exit the network in early 2010.

O'Brien went on to host another talk show on the cable station TBS, while launching successful podcasts and travel shows. He is currently on a late-career elder statesman hot streak. His travel series, "Conan O'Brien Must Go," drew popular and critical acclaim, with a second season coming. His recent gig hosting the Academy Awards was so well received that the producers announced they are bringing him back next year.

In the wake of Trump's takeover of the Kennedy Center, several artists, including the producers of "Hamilton" and actress and writer Issa Rae, announced they were canceling appearances at the venue.

Others have chosen to perform while making their sentiments known from the stage. Leftist comic W. Kamau Bell directly addressed the controversy in his performance just days after the shake-up. Earlier this month, cellist Erin Murphy Snedecor ended her set with a performance of the Woody Guthrie protest anthem "All You Fascists Bound to Lose."

Other comedians receiving the lifetime achievement award include both Letterman and Leno, along with George Carlin, Whoopi Goldberg, Bob Newhart, Carol Burnett, Bill Murray and Dave Chappelle.

The ceremony will be streamed on Netflix on May 4.

Wildfires prompt evacuation in the Carolinas as New Jersey crews battle their own blaze

By The Associated Press undefined

Wildfires forced a mandatory evacuation Sunday in a North Carolina county still recovering from Hurricane Helene, and South Carolina's governor declared an emergency in response to a growing wildfire in that state. Hundreds of miles north, the New Jersey Forest Fire Service was battling a blaze in the Wharton State Forest.

The North Carolina Department of Public Safety announced a mandatory evacuation starting at 8:20 p.m. Saturday for parts of Polk County in western North Carolina about 80 miles (129 kilometers) west of Charlotte.

"Visibility in area will be reduced and roads/evacuation routes can become blocked; if you do not leave now, you could be trapped, injured, or killed," the agency said in a social media post.

A shelter had been established in Columbus, North Carolina.

There were three active fires in Polk County, with one spanning 1.9 square miles (5 square kilometers) and another spread over 2.8 square miles (7.3 square kilometers) with no containment by Sunday afternoon. County spokesperson Kellie Cannon said one home was lost to the larger of the two fires.

A third fire that had burned about 199 acres (81 hectares) with 50% containment had destroyed three homes. And earlier evacuation order associated with that fire had been lifted, Cannon said.

Additional mandatory evacuations were ordered for areas of Polk County on Sunday evening, according to a North Carolina Emergency Management social media post.

The North Carolina Forest Service's online wildfire public viewer indicated active fires Sunday in Burke County and in Stokes County on the northern border with Virginia.

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In South Carolina, Gov. Henry McMaster declared a state of emergency Saturday as emergency crews in Pickens County fought the Table Rock Fire in the Blue Ridge Mountains.

"The State of Emergency allows us to mobilize resources quickly and ensure our firefighters have the support they need," McMaster said in a statement that reinforced a statewide outdoor burning ban issued Friday by the South Carolina Forestry Commission.

Local fire officials called for voluntary evacuations Saturday of some residents near Table Rock Mountain, the forestry commission said in a social media post.

That human-caused fire grew to more than 300 acres (121 hectares) with no containment, the commission said Sunday. Spot fires ignited fresh flames outside of the original fire area and the steep terrain was making it hard for heavier equipment used to contain fires to reach the area, officials said. Downed timber from Hurricane Helene was exacerbating the situation. Voluntary evacuations of approximately 100 residences remained in effect Sunday afternoon.

North Carolina's western region already had been hit hard by Hurricane Helene in September. The hurricane damaged or impacted 5,000 miles (8,046 kilometers) of state-maintained roads and damaged 7,000 private roads, bridges and culverts in North Carolina.

Also this weekend, the New Jersey Forest Fire Service has been battling a wildfire that broke out in the Wharton State Forest on Saturday. The fire had consumed about 2.7 square miles (7 square kilometers) as of early Sunday morning and was about 50% contained, according to an 8 a.m. update on the service's Facebook page.

Emergency officials said they evacuated two campgrounds in the park. Eighteen buildings were near the fire, but the flames were moving away from them and no structures had been evacuated.

The cause of that fire was under investigation.

Second lady Usha Vance will visit Greenland as Trump talks up US takeover

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Second lady Usha Vance plans a trip to Greenland, at a time when President Donald Trump has suggested the United States should take control over the self-governing, mineral-rich territory of American ally Denmark.

Vance will leave on Thursday and return Saturday, according to her office. Vance and one of her three children will be part of a U.S. delegation that will "visit historic sites" and "learn about Greenlandic heritage."

Media outlets in Greenland and Denmark reported that Vance would be accompanied by Trump's national security adviser, Mike Waltz. The White House and the National Security Council did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Trump had mused during his first term about buying the world's largest island, even as Denmark, a NATO ally, insisted it wasn't for sale. The people of Greenland also have firmly rejected Trump's plans.

Vice President JD Vance said Sunday that Trump "doesn't care" what the Europeans think.

He said Denmark is "not doing its job" with Greenland and "not being a good ally," and "if that means that we need to take more territorial interest in Greenland that is what President Trump is going to do," Vance said on Fox News' "Sunday Morning Futures."

"Because he doesn't care about what the Europeans scream at us, he cares about putting the interests of American citizens first," Vance said.

Since returning to the White House, Trump has repeatedly said that the U.S. will come to control Greenland while insisting he supports the idea for strategic national security reasons — not with an eye toward American expansionism.

"I think we will have it," Trump said of Greenland shortly after beginning his second term on Jan. 20. The U.S. already has a military base on Greenland and the president's eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., visited it in January.

On her visit, Usha Vance will attend the Avannaata Qimussersu, Greenland's national dogsled race, fea-

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turing about 37 mushers and 444 dogs. The statement said Vance and the U.S. delegation "are excited to witness this monumental race and celebrate Greenlandic culture and unity."

During a recent Oval Office meeting with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, Trump said "Denmark's very far away" from Greenland, and questioned whether that country still had a right to claim the world's largest island as part of its kingdom.

"A boat landed there 200 years ago or something. And they say they have rights to it," Trump said. "I don't know if that's true. I don't think it is, actually."

All five parties in Greenland's parliament issued a joint statement last week rejecting Trump's remarks. Denmark has recognized Greenland's right to independence at a time of its choosing.

Beyond his focus on Greenland, Trump has refused to rule out military intervention in Panama to retake that country's canal, said that Canada should be America's 51st state and suggested that U.S. interests could assume control of the war-torn Gaza Strip from Israel and redevelop it as a "Riviera"-like seaside resort.

A Russian drone attack kills 7 in Ukraine ahead of ceasefire talks

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia launched a barrage of drones across Ukraine overnight Sunday that killed at least seven people, according to local Ukrainian officials and emergency services.

The attacks, including on the capital, Kyiv, came ahead of ceasefire negotiations in Saudi Arabia in which Ukraine and Russia are expected to hold indirect U.S.-mediated talks on Monday to discuss a pause in long-range attacks targeting energy facilities and civilian infrastructure.

The Ukrainian delegation is expected to meet with U.S. officials in Saudi Arabia a day ahead of the indirect talks, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said. Ukraine is planning to send technical teams to discuss the details of the partial ceasefire.

Speaking on "Fox News Sunday," Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff said he expected "some real progress" at the talks in Saudi Arabia, "particularly as it affects a Black Sea ceasefire on ships between both countries, and from that you'll naturally gravitate into a full-on shooting ceasefire."

Asked about concerns that Russian President Vladimir Putin may be looking beyond Ukraine and could press further into Europe, even if Russia is awarded territory within Ukraine now, Witkoff said he has been asked his opinion on what Putin's motives are on a large scale.

"I simply have said that I just don't see that he wants to take all of Europe. This is a much different situation than it was in World War II. In World War II there was no NATO. You have countries that are armed there. I take him at his word in this sense. And I think the Europeans are beginning to come to that belief, too. But it sort of doesn't matter. That's an academic issue. ... The agenda is stop the killing, stop the carnage, let's end this thing."

Asked whether he was convinced that Putin wanted peace, Witkoff said: "I feel that he wants peace."

Residential buildings hit by debris

Russia launched 147 drones across Ukraine overnight, according to the Ukrainian Air Force. Ukrainian air defenses shot down 97, and 25 others didn't reach targets due to Ukrainian countermeasures. The attacks struck the Kharkiv, Sumy, Chernihiv, Odesa and Donetsk regions, as well as the capital, Kyiv.

Three people, including a 5-year-old child, were killed and 10 others were injured in a drone attack on Kyiv, the city's military administration said. Extended sounds of explosions were heard across the Ukrainian capital in the early hours as the air raid blared for over five hours. Russian drones and debris from shot-down drones, which were flying at lower altitudes to evade air defenses, fell on residential buildings.

Residents in Kyiv surveyed the damage done to their homes and neighborhoods on Sunday morning. Many were disparaging of the upcoming ceasefire talks, pointing to the burned out properties destroyed in the drone attack, saying these were more indicative of Russia's true intentions.

In an old multistory building on Kyiv's left bank that was damaged in the overnight attack, Dmytro Zapadnya, 37, said he had no faith in Russia upholding any ceasefire agreement.

"There is no point in signing anything (with Russians), because it will not be worth the cost of paper

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where you put this signature. Well, the only thing that is not very pleasant is that now the United States seems to have little understanding of our situation," he said.

Elsewhere, four people were killed in Russian attacks on Ukraine's Donetsk region, regional Gov. Vadym Filashkin said, including three who died in a strike on the frontline town of Dobropillya.

'New solutions are needed'

In a statement on social media, Zelenskyy said attacks such as the one in Kyiv were a daily occurrence for Ukraine.

"This week alone, more than 1,580 guided aerial bombs, almost 1,100 strike drones and 15 missiles of various types were used against our people," he said. "New solutions are needed, with new pressure on Moscow to stop both these strikes and this war."

Also on Sunday, Russia's Ministry of Defense said it had shot down 59 Ukrainian drones overnight, including 29 over the region of Rostov and 20 more over southwestern Astrakhan. In Rostov, one person was killed and a car caught fire due to the Ukrainian drone attack, according to the area's temporary governor, Yuri Slyusar.

A woman also died in the Russian border village of Novostroyevka-Pervaya in the Belgorod region when a Ukrainian drone hit a car in which she was traveling.

The driver, the woman's daughter, was also seriously injured in the attack, said local Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov.

Brackets busted: No perfect March Madness brackets remain after Sunday's games

By The Associated Press undefined

Brackets, busted.

The handful of remaining perfect brackets in the NCAA Tournament busted out on Sunday, ending the hopes of millions against exceptionally long odds.

The final perfect brackets on Yahoo Sports and CBS Sports were shredded with Saturday's games. Top-seeded Florida's 77-75 win over two-time reigning national champion UConn continued the carnage on Sunday.

Duke's 89-66 win over Baylor left one remaining perfect bracket on ESPN's tracker and it didn't last long. That bracket imploded with Kentucky's 84-75 win over Illinois, creating 24.3 million imperfect brackets.

The Wildcats' win also killed off the last bracket of the 34 million on the NCAA's platform.

Michigan's 91-79 win over Texas A&M on Saturday night shredded the final perfect Yahoo Sports bracket. Poor Shawno had been correct on every pick with his Grand Bracket until the fifth-seeded Wolverines sent the fourth-seeded Aggies home.

CBS Sports lost its last perfect bracket with Saturday night's games, including No. 6 seed BYU's two-point win over third-seeded Wisconsin and Texas Tech's 77-64 win over No. 11 seed Drake.

Creighton was listed as ESPN's top bracket buster after its 89-75 win over Louisville in Thursday's first game, knocking out 13,339,089.

On the other end of the spectrum, ESPN reported that every pick was wrong on 30 of its brackets — a nearly impossible feat in its own right even if a contestant were trying to pick all losers.

Georgia jury orders Monsanto parent to pay nearly \$2.1 billion in Roundup weedkiller lawsuit

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A jury in Georgia has ordered Monsanto parent Bayer to pay nearly \$2.1 billion in damages to a man who says the company's Roundup weed killer caused his cancer, according to attorneys representing the plaintiff.

The verdict marks the latest in a long-running series of court battles Monsanto has faced over its Roundup

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herbicide. The agrochemical giant says it will appeal the verdict, reached in a Georgia courtroom late Friday, in efforts to overturn the decision.

The penalties awarded include \$65 million in compensatory damages and \$2 billion in punitive damages, law firms Arnold & Itkin LLP and Kline & Specter PC said in a statement. That marks one of the largest legal settlements reached in a Roundup-related case to date.

Plaintiff John Barnes filed his lawsuit against Monsanto in 2021, seeking damages related to his non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Arnold & Itkin attorney Kyle Findley, the lead trial lawyer on the case, said the verdict will help put his client in a better position to get the treatment he needs going forward.

"It's been a long road for him ... and he was happy that the truth related to the product (has) been exposed," Findley told The Associated Press on Sunday. He called the verdict an "important milestone" after "another example of Monsanto's refusal to accept responsibility for poisoning people with this toxic product."

Germany-based Bayer, which acquired Monsanto in 2018, has continued to dispute claims that Roundup causes cancer. But the company has been hit with more than 177,000 lawsuits involving the weedkiller and set aside \$16 billion to settle cases.

In a statement, Monsanto said Friday's verdict "conflicts with the overwhelming weight of scientific evidence and the consensus of regulatory bodies and their scientific assessments worldwide." The company added that it continues "to stand fully behind the safety" of Roundup products.

For a variety of crops — including corn, soybeans and cotton — Roundup is designed to work with genetically modified seeds that resist the weedkiller's deadly effect. It allows farmers to produce more while conserving the soil by tilling it less.

Some studies associate Roundup's key ingredient, glyphosate, with cancer, although the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has said it is not likely to be carcinogenic to humans when used as directed. Still, numerous lawsuits over the weedkiller allege glyphosate does cause non-Hodgkin lymphoma, arguing that Monsanto has failed to warn the public about serious risks for years.

Findley said that evidence relating to Barnes' case show "many years of cover-ups" and "backroom dealings." He accused Monsanto of ignoring several scientific studies related to the toxicity of Roundup and said the company "tried to find ways to persuade and distract and deny the connection between this product and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma."

Friday's decision marks the fourth Roundup-related verdict that Findley's team has won to date — the largest of which was awarded in Philadelphia in January 2024, with damages totaling \$2.25 billion. And he said his law firm has "many more clients who are similarly situated as Mr. Barnes."

Monsanto, meanwhile, also maintains that it "remains committed to trying cases" — and argues its wider record of Roundup-related litigation continues to reinforce the safety of its products. The company said it has prevailed in 17 of the last 25 related trials, while some previous damage awards have been reduced.

Bayer has recently renewed and expanded an effort across a handful of U.S. states to protect pesticide companies from claims they failed to warn that a product causes cancer, if labeling otherwise complies with EPA regulations. The company and other industry supports argue that litigation costs are unsustainable and could impact Roundup's future availability. But opponents stress that such legislation would limit accountability.

Canada's prime minister and his opponent kick off election saying Trump must respect sovereignty

By ROB GILLIES Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — New Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney and his Conservative opponent said U.S. President Donald Trump must respect Canada's sovereignty as they kicked off their election campaigns Sunday against the backdrop of a trade war and Trump's annexation threats.

Carney announced a five-week election campaign before the vote on April 28.

"We are facing the most significant crisis of our lifetimes because of President Trump's unjustified trade

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actions and his threats to our sovereignty," Carney said.

"President Trump claims that Canada isn't a real country. He wants to break us so America can own us. We will not let that happen," he added.

The governing Liberals appeared poised for a historic election defeat this year until Trump declared a trade war. He has repeatedly said Canada should become the 51st U.S. state and has acknowledged he's upended Canadian politics.

Trump's almost daily attacks on Canada's sovereignty have infuriated Canadians and led to a surge in Canadian nationalism that has bolstered Liberal poll numbers.

"They want our resources. They want our water. They want our land. They want our country. Never," Carney said at a rally in Newfoundland.

The election campaign for 343 seats or districts in the House of Commons will last 37 days. Although other parties are running, the Liberals and the Conservatives are the only two that have a chance to form a government. The party that commands a majority in Parliament, either alone or with the support of another party, will form the next government and its leader will be prime minister.

Carney replaced Justin Trudeau, who announced his resignation in January but remained in power until the Liberal Party elected a new leader following a leadership race.

The opposition Conservatives hoped to make the election about Trudeau, whose popularity declined as food and housing prices rose and immigration surged. But after decades of bilateral stability, the vote is now expected to focus on who is best equipped to deal with Trump.

Carney said the choice for Canadians is a "Canadian Trump or a government that unites."

"Canadians are always ready when someone else drops the gloves," Carney said in a hockey reference. "In this trade war, just like in hockey, we will win."

Trump put 25% tariffs on Canada's steel and aluminum and is threatening sweeping tariffs on all Canadian products — as well as all of America's trading partners — on April 2.

Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre is Carney's main challenger. The party and Poilievre were heading for a huge victory in Canada's election until Trump's near-daily trade and annexation threats derailed them.

Alberta Premier Danielle Smith, a conservative ally, said Poilievre would be "very much in sync" with the "new direction in America."

"The content of this interview is very bad news for the Conservatives because it reinforces the Liberals' narrative about Pierre Poilievre and his perceived ideological proximity with Donald Trump," said Daniel Béland, a political science professor at McGill University in Montreal.

Poilievre said he will stand up to Trump.

"I will insist the president recognizes the independence and sovereignty of Canada. I will insist he stops tariffing our nation," he said as he launched his campaign.

"I know a lot of people are worried, angry and anxious. And with good reason as a result of the president's unacceptable threats against our country," Poilievre said.

Carney still hasn't had a phone call with Trump and that might not happen now until after the election. Trump mocked Trudeau by calling him governor, but he has not yet mentioned Carney's name.

"Trump must recognize that Canada is a sovereign country," Carney said. "He has to say that, he has to accept that, before we can have a discussion about a trade agreement. ... Let's just say there is no meeting that has been planned."

Carney, 60, was the head of the Bank of Canada during the 2008 financial crisis. In 2013, he became the first noncitizen of the United Kingdom to run the Bank of England, helping to manage the impact of Brexit.

Carney, a political novice, said Canadians want change and he's moved the Liberal Party to the right, announcing a middle-class tax cut Sunday and scrapping Trudeau's signature carbon tax and reversing a capital gains tax increase.

Poilievre, 45, for years the party's go-to attack dog, is a career politician and firebrand populist who says he will put "Canada first." Elon Musk, who is playing an integral role in the Trump administration, has endorsed and praised him.

Turkish court orders Erdogan rival jailed pending trial on corruption charges as protests grow

ISTANBUL (AP) — Hundreds of thousands of opposition supporters gathered outside Istanbul city hall Sunday night to protest the arrest of the city's mayor, a key rival to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Earlier Sunday, a court formally arrested Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu and ordered him jailed pending the outcome of a trial on corruption charges. His detention Wednesday morning sparked the largest wave of street demonstrations in Turkey in more than a decade, with large crowds gathering outside city hall for the fifth night in a row. It also deepened concerns over democracy and rule of law in Turkey. His imprisonment is widely regarded as a political move to remove a major contender from the next presidential race, currently scheduled for 2028. Government officials reject the accusations and insist that Turkey's courts operate independently. "If you weren't here today, if you hadn't rushed here since the first day, if you had yielded to tear gas and barricades, if you had gotten scared and remained at home, then today a caretaker appointed by Tayyip Erdogan would be residing here in this building," said Ozgur Ozel Sunday night, pointing at city hall as he spoke to the massive crowd chanting anti-government slogans. Ozel is the head of the Republican People's Party, or CHP, to which Imamoglu belongs.

Suspicion of running criminal organization

The prosecutor's office said the court decided to jail Imamoglu on suspicion of running a criminal organization, accepting bribes, extortion, illegally recording personal data and bid-rigging. A request for him to be imprisoned on terror-related charges was rejected although he still faces prosecution. Following the court's ruling, Imamoglu was transferred to Silivri prison, west of Istanbul.

The Interior Ministry later announced that Imamoglu had been suspended from duty as a "temporary measure." The municipality had previously appointed an acting mayor from its governing council.

Alongside Imamoglu, 47 other people were also jailed pending trial, including a key aide and two district mayors from Istanbul, one of whom was replaced with a government appointee. A further 44 suspects were released under judicial control.

Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said Sunday that 323 people were detained the previous evening over disturbances at protests.

Largely peaceful protests across Turkey have seen hundreds of thousands come out in support of Imamoglu. However, there has been some violence, with police deploying water cannons, tear gas, pepper spray and firing plastic pellets at protesters in Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir, some of whom hurled stones, fireworks and other missiles at riot police.

A primary to endorse Imamoglu and "solidarity ballots"

The formal arrest came as more than 1.7 million members of the opposition CHP began holding a primary presidential election to endorse Imamoglu, the sole candidate.

The party has also set up symbolic ballot boxes nationwide to allow people who are not party members to express their support for the mayor. Large crowds gathered early Sunday to cast a "solidarity ballot."

"This is no longer just a problem of the Republican People's Party, but a problem of Turkish democracy," Fusun Erben, 69, said at a polling station in Istanbul's Kadikoy district. "We do not accept our rights being so easily usurped. We will fight until the end."

Speaking at a polling station in Bodrum, western Turkey, engineer Mehmet Dayanc, 38, said he feared that "in the end we'll be like Russia, a country without an opposition, where only a single man participates in elections."

At the time of Sunday night's protest, the vote count had reached around 15 million people, of which around a little over 13 million were from non-party members voting in solidarity. In a post on social media, Imamoglu praised the result from Silivri Prison, writing that the people had told Erdogan "enough is enough." "That ballot box will arrive, and the nation will deliver a slap to the administration it will never forget."

Domestic and international supporters slam the court's action

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"Honestly, we are embarrassed in the name of our legal system," Ankara Mayor Mansur Yavas, a fellow member of Imamoglu's CHP, told reporters after casting his vote, criticizing the lack of confidentiality in the proceedings.

CHP leader Ozgur Ozel said Imamoglu's imprisonment was reminiscent of "Italian mafia methods." Speaking at Istanbul City Hall, he added: "Imamoglu is on the one hand in prison and on the other hand on the way to the presidency."

The Council of Europe, which focuses on promoting human rights and democracy, slammed the decision and demanded Imamoglu's immediate release.

The German government called the mayor's imprisonment "a serious setback for democracy in Turkey," adding that "political competition must not be conducted with courts and prisons."

Soner Cagaptay, director of the Turkish Research Program at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and an author of a biography of Erdogan, said the president was "determined to do whatever it takes to end Imamoglu's career."

Imamoglu's long history of criminal cases

Before his detention, Imamoglu had already faced multiple criminal cases that could result in prison sentences and a political ban. He was also appealing a 2022 conviction for insulting members of Turkey's Supreme Electoral Council.

Earlier in the week, a university nullified his diploma, citing alleged irregularities in his transfer from a private university in northern Cyprus some 30 years ago. The decision effectively bars him from running for president, since the position requires candidates to be university graduates. Imamoglu had vowed to challenge the decision.

Imamoglu was elected mayor of Turkey's largest city in March 2019, in a major blow to Erdogan and the president's Justice and Development Party, which had controlled Istanbul for a quarter-century. Erdogan's party pushed to void the municipal election results in the city of 16 million, alleging irregularities.

The challenge resulted in a repeat of the election a few months later, which Imamoglu also won.

The mayor retained his seat following local elections last year, during which the CHP made significant gains against Erdogan's governing party.

Proctor, Flagg help No. 1 seed Duke roll past Baylor 89-66 to reach Sweet 16 of March Madness

By AARON BEARD AP Basketball Writer

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Tyrese Proctor couldn't miss. And top-seeded Duke showed the toughness to push back when pushed.

Proctor had career highs of seven 3-pointers and 25 points to continue his recent tear, helping Duke beat Baylor 89-66 on Sunday in the second round of the NCAA Tournament.

Freshman star Cooper Flagg had 18 points, nine rebounds and six assists for the Blue Devils (33-3), the East Region headliners who faced little drama in two home-state wins to secure a spot in the Sweet 16.

"For us to win by this margin, I think this speaks to the level of killer instinct that our guys have, the competitiveness and the connectivity," coach Jon Scheyer said.

Duke will face either Oregon or Arizona in the Sweet 16 on Thursday in Newark, New Jersey.

Proctor, a junior, made 7 of 8 3-pointers — his third straight game with at least six 3s and an abrupt turnaround after going 0 for 10 in his first two Atlantic Coast Conference Tournament games. He made 9 of 10 shots overall Sunday.

"I think it's just my preparation, just behind the scenes putting in the work and trusting myself," Proctor said.

Duke shot 64.4% to set a program record for a tournament game, hit 12 3-pointers and turned it over just six times.

"You look at it and the analytics showed they didn't have any weaknesses," Baylor coach Scott Drew said, adding: "They're blessed because they have size and length and skill."

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Freshman V.J. Edgecombe scored 16 points for the ninth-seeded Bears (20-15), who haven't reached the tournament's second weekend since Drew's team won it all in the Indianapolis bubble in 2021.

Duke took over in the 7 1/2 minutes before halftime, outscoring Baylor 24-6 with clean offensive execution while also holding up better against the Bears' relentless work on the offensive glass that upped the physicality of the game. That included Flagg getting poked in the right eye and teammate Mason Gillis picking up a red scratch stretching from the right side of his neck around toward his throat during a rebounding scrum.

Duke led 47-30 at the half, and Baylor got no closer than 13 points afterward. The Bears shot 36.8% and hung around by taking an 18-3 edge in offensive rebounding, which gave them 23 more shots than Duke.

"If you go into a game and you say you're going to outrebound somebody 18-3 on the offensive glass and only going to have five turnovers, you'd probably feel pretty good about that," Drew said.

Takeaways

Baylor: The Bears opened the tournament by holding off eighth-seeded Mississippi State on Friday, but they were ousted in the second round for the fourth straight year.

Duke: The Blue Devils were playing about a half-hour's drive from their Durham campus, though the building had been the site of some unusual struggles. Duke had lost seven of 11 games at Lenovo Center entering the tournament, six coming in trips to Atlantic Coast Conference neighbor N.C. State and the other a first-round March Madness loss to 14-seed Mercer in 2014. But Duke cruised right along this time, starting with Friday's win against 16-seed Mount St. Mary's, as Flagg had a smooth return from an ankle injury.

Hello again

The game marked a reunion between guard Jeremy Roach and his former Duke program. Roach played four seasons at Duke, including the Final Four run in Hall of Famer Mike Krzyzewski's farewell season and Scheyer's first two years as Coach K's successor.

Roach had seven points and three rebounds Sunday.

Jawing

The game included a testy moment when Baylor reserve big man Marino Dubravcic was called for a flagrant-1 foul after hooking the right arm of Duke defender Patrick Ngongba, then dragging him to the court in a tangled pile.

As the 6-foot-10 Dubravcic got to his feet, he traded words with the 6-9 Flagg as the two loomed over official Brian O'Connell, who stood between them.

Pope Francis is back home after a 5-week hospital stay for life-threatening double pneumonia

By NICOLE WINFIELD, PAOLO SANTALUCIA and TRISHA THOMAS Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — A frail Pope Francis returned to the Vatican on Sunday after a five-week hospitalization for life-threatening double pneumonia, and he made a surprise stop at his favorite basilica on the way home before beginning two months of prescribed rest and recovery.

The 88-year-old pope sat in the front passenger seat of his white Fiat 500L wearing nasal tubes to give him supplemental oxygen as he entered the Perugino gate of Vatican City, where his return brought relief after fears that his illness could be fatal or lead to another papal resignation.

Francis' motorcade from Gemelli hospital overshot the Vatican initially and took a detour across town to stop at St. Mary Major basilica, where the pope's favorite icon of the Madonna is located and where he always goes to pray after a foreign visit.

He didn't get out of the car but gave a bouquet of flowers to the basilica's cardinal to place in front of the Salus populi Romani icon. The Byzantine-style painting on wood is revered by Romans and is so important to Francis that he has chosen to be buried in the basilica to be near it.

The tour through Rome's historic center came after Francis made his first appearance in five weeks to give a thumbs-up and brief blessing from a hospital balcony. Hundreds of people had gathered on a brilliant spring Sunday morning to say goodbye and catch a first glimpse of Francis, who seemed to be

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gasping for air.

"I see this woman with the yellow flowers. Brava!" a bloated-looking Francis said in a breathless voice. He gave a weak sign of the cross before being wheeled back inside.

Chants of "Viva il papa!" and "Papa Francesco" erupted from the crowd, which included patients who had been wheeled outside just to catch his brief appearance.

Resting at home

Doctors say Francis needs two months of rest and convalescence at the Vatican, during which he should refrain from meeting with big groups of people or exerting himself. But they said he should be able to resume all his normal activities eventually.

His return home, after the longest hospitalization of his 12-year papacy and the second-longest in recent papal history, brought tangible relief to the Vatican and Catholic faithful who have been anxiously following 38 days of medical ups and downs and wondering if Francis would make it.

"Today I feel a great joy," said Dr. Rossella Russomando, who was at Gemelli on Sunday but did not treat Francis. "It is the demonstration that all our prayers, all the rosary prayers from all over the world, brought this grace."

The Rev. Enzo Fortunato, who heads a papal committee dedicated to children, said it was clear that Francis was happy to return home and would surely improve, especially after receiving so many get-well cards from children from around the world.

"If the first medicine was the affection of the children, the second medicine is definitely (going) home," Fortunato said. "It will certainly speed up his recovery."

Pope is to receive 24-hour care

At the Vatican, where a Holy Year is under way, pilgrims cheered and applauded when Francis' greeting from Gemelli was broadcast live on giant TV screens in St. Peter's Square.

"For me it was an important emotional experience to see him, because many people were waiting for this moment," said Sister Luisa Jimenez, a nun from Francis' native Argentina.

Another nun from the same order, Colombian Sister Angel Bernal Amparo, expressed concern, given his bloating and inability to speak much.

"He didn't look well," she said. "He couldn't (talk) and I realized it was because of his breathing and, well, he left right there. But I was glad to have seen him."

No special arrangements have been made at the Domus Santa Marta, the Vatican hotel where Francis lives in a two-room suite on the second floor next to the basilica. He will have supplemental oxygen and 24-hour medical care as needed, although his personal physician, Dr. Luigi Carbone, said he hoped Francis would progressively need less and less assistance breathing as his lungs recover.

Two life-threatening crises

The Argentine pope, who has chronic lung disease and had part of one lung removed as a young man, was admitted to Gemelli on Feb. 14 after a bout of bronchitis worsened.

Doctors first diagnosed a complex bacterial, viral and fungal respiratory tract infection and soon thereafter, pneumonia in both lungs. Blood tests showed signs of anemia, low blood platelets and the onset of kidney failure, all of which later resolved after two blood transfusions.

The most serious setbacks began Feb. 28, when Francis experienced an acute coughing fit and inhaled vomit, requiring the use of a noninvasive mechanical ventilation mask to help him breathe. He suffered two more respiratory crises a few days later, which required doctors to manually aspirate "copious" amounts of mucus from his lungs, at which point he began sleeping with the ventilation mask at night to help his lungs clear the accumulation of fluids.

He was never intubated and at no point lost consciousness. Doctors reported he always remained alert and cooperative, although they say he has probably lost a bit of weight given a natural loss of appetite.

"Unfortunately yes, there was a moment when many were saying that he might not make it. And it was painful for us," said Mario Balsamo, the owner of coffee shop in front of Gemelli. "Instead, today with the discharge, we are very happy that he is well and we hope he will recover soon and will recover his strength."

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'I'm still alive!'

Dr. Sergio Alfieri, the medical and surgical chief at Gemelli who coordinated Francis' medical team, stressed that not all patients who develop such a severe cases of double pneumonia survive, much less are released from the hospital. He said Francis' life was at risk twice, during the two acute respiratory crises, and that the pope at the time understandably lost his typical good sense of humor.

"But one morning we went to listen to his lungs and we asked him how he was doing. When he replied, 'I'm still alive,' we knew he was OK and had gotten his good humor back," he told a news conference late Saturday.

Alfieri confirmed that Francis was still having trouble speaking due to the damage to his lungs and respiratory muscles. But he said such problems were normal, especially in older patients, and predicted his voice would eventually return. Francis is also continuing to take medication to treat a more minor respiratory infection.

No confirmed appointments for now

Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni declined to confirm any upcoming events, including a scheduled audience on April 8 with King Charles III or Francis' participation in Easter services at the end of the month. But Carbone said he hoped Francis might be well enough to travel to Turkey at the end of May to participate in an important ecumenical anniversary.

Only St. John Paul II recorded a longer hospitalization in 1981, when he spent 55 days at Gemelli for minor surgery and treatment of an infection.

Florida ends UConn's bid for third straight national title with 77-75 March Madness win

By STEVE REED AP Sports Writer

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — For 30 minutes, UConn showed the mettle and toughness that delivered back-to-back national championships for Dan Hurley, outplaying top-seeded Florida in the second round of the NCAA Tournament.

And then Walter Clayton Jr. took over.

The Gators' first-team All-America guard scored 13 of his 23 points in the final eight minutes on Sunday, including two crucial 3-pointers down the stretch, and Florida rallied to a scintillating 77-75 victory over the Huskies, ending UConn's pursuit of a third straight title.

Florida (32-4) advanced to the Sweet 16 for the first time since 2017 and will play Colorado State or Maryland in the West Region semifinals in San Francisco.

"This is a great win for our program," coach Todd Golden said. "The time was now for us to take that next step. Again, Florida basketball, back where it belongs. Being in the Sweet 16 is a great step in the right direction. ... We made winning play after winning play down the stretch in the last six minutes."

There's little doubt about that.

But they also had help from the Huskies, who made some uncharacteristic mistakes, including twice allowing the Gators to corral offensive rebounds off missed free throws, resulting in four second-chance points.

The Huskies (24-11) came in with modest outside expectations as a No. 8 seed but led for most of the second half. During his postgame news conference, Hurley struggled several times to hold back tears.

"This was just historic run that these guys have been on and the guys that have worn the uniform the past couple years," Hurley said. "If it's going to come to an end for us, I wouldn't have wanted it to be in a game where we lost to a lower seed."

"There's some honor, I guess, in the way that this went down."

UConn was seeking to become the first team to three-peat since UCLA's run of seven straight titles from 1967-73.

The Huskies won the 2023 title in Houston and last year in Glendale, Arizona, joining Duke (1991-92) and Florida (2006-07) as the only schools to win back-to-back since the Bruins' run under John Wooden.

Florida entered the game as a 9 1/2-point favorite and ranked No. 1 in KenPom's adjusted offensive

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efficiency by scoring 128.9 points per 100 possessions, and the Gators of the powerful Southeastern Conference joined fellow 1-seed Duke as the only teams to rank in the top 10 on both sides of the ball, making them a popular pick to cut down the nets.

But the Huskies' defense stymied Clayton and company for most of the game, holding Florida to 35% shooting through the first 30 minutes to build a 52-46 lead.

The Gators chipped away and then Clayton showed why he's one of the best players in the country.

He made a 3 from the right wing with 2:54 left to put Florida ahead 62-61, and teammate Will Richard followed with a steal and dunk. Clayton's 3 from the same spot with 1:06 left made it 70-64 — part of a 14-3 run that gave Florida an eight-point advantage with 40 seconds left.

Champs battle to the buzzer

Even when Florida seemed to have the game in hand, UConn kept fighting. Thomas Haugh's two free throws with 5.9 seconds left pushed the Gators' lead to five to seal the win.

Hurley watched, arms folded, standing on the sideline as Liam McNeeley's 3-pointer at the buzzer sailed skyward and dropped through the net as the horn sounded.

Afterward, Clayton thanked his teammates for believing in him after his rough start.

"We knew this game wasn't going to be easy," Clayton said. "(UConn) has got a championship pedigree, back-to-back champions. That's a great team. They had that experience. We knew it wasn't going to be easy. We kept our composure."

McNeeley led UConn with 22 points, and Alex Karaban scored 14. Alijah Martin contributed 18 points for Florida and Richard had 15.

Takeaways

UConn: A major rebuild is in store for the Huskies, who struggled to replace losing four starters to the NBA last season.

Florida: The Gators took a huge step forward. Golden has resurrected the program in a span of three years, but he had never won a March Madness game before this year.

Texas fires coach Rodney Terry after Longhorns make another quick exit from NCAA Tournament

By JIM VERTUNO AP Sports Writer

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — The University of Texas fired basketball coach Rodney Terry on Sunday after a disappointing first season in the Southeastern Conference and another quick exit from the NCAA Tournament.

The move comes two years after Terry led Texas to the Elite Eight in the 2022-2023 season when, as an assistant coach, he took over the program at midseason after then-coach Chris Beard was arrested on a felony family violence charge and was fired. The charge against Beard was later dismissed.

Terry's ability to keep the team together and thrive amid the turmoil saw Texas win the Big 12 Conference Tournament, then make its deepest run in the NCAA Tournament since 2008. He was rewarded with the full-time job and a five-year, \$15 million contract.

But duplicating anything close to that success was a struggle, and he was fired with three years left on his deal. Terry was 40-29 in his two full seasons as head coach.

"My philosophy has always been to wait until the end of the season and review every facet of our program before making any final decisions, and we've been doing that since our heartbreaking First Four loss in the NCAA Tournament," athletic director Chris Del Conte said in a statement. "In looking at everything over the past three seasons, our first year in the SEC this past year, and where we're headed in the future, Coach Terry and I have decided it is in the best interest of The University of Texas to move in a different direction."

Texas joined the SEC in 2024 and started this season ranked No. 19. But the Longhorns lost their season opener and were unranked by the following week. Conference play started with a 0-3 skid as Texas played three straight opponents ranked in the Top 10.

The Longhorns lost seven of their last nine games in the regular season and went 6-12 in league play despite having the SEC scoring leading Tre Johnson, who was named conference freshman of the year.

Texas still earned a bid to the NCAA Tournament behind two strong victories in the conference tournament but only as an 11-seed, forced to win a play-in game to join the final 64 teams playing for the national championship.

Texas' season ended when the Longhorns blew a 13-point lead in a 86-80 loss to Xavier and finished 19-16 overall. Texas lost in the second round of the tournament last year.

"It was a dream of mine to be the head coach of the Longhorns, and I've been able to live that dream," Terry said in a statement released by the school. "I'll forever be a Longhorn."

Terry struggled to stitch together cohesive rosters in the new era of the open transfer portal and players earning money for their name, image and likeness. While he signed Johnson, who likely will be a high NBA draft pick this summer, other top recruits have not flocked to the Texas campus.

Before his first full season, top recruits Ron Holland and A.J. Johnson both turned pro instead of playing for Texas, and Terry had no top high school players set to join the Longhorns next season.

Figure skating's world championships are headed to Boston, another chance to heal after DC crash

By DAVE SKRETTA AP Sports Writer

WICHITA, Kan. (AP) — It has been nearly two months since American Airlines Flight 5342 lifted off from a wintry runway in southeast Kansas, destined for Washington, D.C., with dozens of members of the tight-knit figure skating community aboard it.

They were just kids, accompanied by parents and coaches, who had been attending a development camp that followed the U.S. championships in Wichita. Many had posted on social media what they had learned — those jumps and spins and techniques that form the foundation of their sport — and how eager they were to share their newfound knowledge back home.

They never got that chance. On that January night, their regional jet was on approach to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport when it collided with an Army helicopter, killing all 67 people aboard the two aircraft.

"I'll always have them in my head and my heart," said world champion Ilia Malinin, the 20-year-old American wunderkind, who will be defending his title in Boston this week. Some of his fellow members of the Washington Figure Skating Club were aboard Flight 5342, and many of them had cheered him to victory at the U.S. championships.

"Still some days I have some of those thoughts, kind of thinking about it. It does upset me a little bit that some days I won't see them on the ice, training with me and looking up to me," Malinin continued. "This worlds, I really want to dedicate to everyone on that flight, and give my all to the performance, and really make it special for them."

When the world championships begin Wednesday at TD Bank Garden, home of the Bruins and Celtics, they will be hosted by the renowned Skating Club of Boston, which produced such Olympic icons as Tenley Albright, Dick Button and Nancy Kerrigan.

The club was rocked on Jan. 29 when it learned that three of its own young skaters — Jinna Han, Spencer Lane and Olivia Ter — and coaches Evgenia Shishkova and Vadim Naumov were killed in the crash. The next morning, flowers accumulated in the club's lobby in nearby Norwood, and a single white rose was placed on a table for each member who died.

Kerrigan and Albright were among those who showed up at the club so they wouldn't have to grieve alone.

"You don't have to know everybody to feel that connection," Kerrigan said. "We've been through the same thing — that training, that rigorous schedule of falling over and over and somehow picking yourself up, which is the main lesson learned in skating: You get back up, keep on trying. And even when it's hard, you get back up."

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Time has begun to heal some of the wounds. Others, no doubt, will never fully recover.

The healing was aided in part by a gala celebration earlier this month in Washington that included performances by Malinin, U.S. champion Amber Glenn, and former Olympic champions such as Scott Hamilton, Brian Boitano and Kristi Yamaguchi.

It was broadcast locally and streamed on Peacock, and NBC will be airing an encore performance next Sunday.

During the 2-plus hour event, 13-year-old Isabella Aparicio skated in memory of her brother, Franco, and father, Luciano, who were on the flight. Maxim Naumov, who lost his parents in the crash, performed in their honor. The tears were flowing from the best figure skaters of past and present, and more than \$1.2 million was raised for the families of those affected.

Now, the world championships provide another chance for the skating community to heal.

International Skating Union president Jae Youl Kim made a tearful announcement during the European championships in Estonia that those killed in the crash would be honored in Boston. The highlight comes Wednesday, on the opening night of competition, when a tribute and remembrance will take place between the women's and pairs short programs.

"This is almost part of a process of recovery, of dealing with the grief and supporting the families, and then it's still focusing on competition as a way of dealing with all that," said Sam Auxier, the interim CEO of U.S. Figure Skating. "Boston will be a bit of a peak of all that energy we're seeing now around this tragedy, and how it could become something very positive."

In that respect, the skating community is rising en masse for the world championships this week. Malinin called it a coincidence — "an unfortunate coincidence," he said — that worlds would be taking place on American soil after the crash.

Unfortunate that the crash occurred. Fortuitous that it can provide another chance to honor and remember.

"Boston is a great host," said Evan Bates, who along with his American partner and wife, Madison Chock, will be chasing their third consecutive ice dance world title. "The Skating Club of Boston, it's steeped in history with U.S. Figure Skating. We have so much respect for the community. And we know the community has been through some hard times.

"We're looking forward to a great event," Bates said. "I think everybody is looking forward to something to cheer for."

A legal showdown looms in Israel as Netanyahu moves to oust top officials

By TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Israel again is fighting a war on multiple fronts, but a battle is also brewing inside the country.

Tens of thousands of Israelis have joined anti-government protests in recent days. A former Supreme Court chief justice has warned of civil war. And experts are saying a constitutional crisis could be on the horizon if the Israeli government moves ahead with plans to fire top legal and security officials.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced last week he was firing Ronen Bar, the head of the Shin Bet internal security service, citing a crisis of confidence sparked by the failures to prevent Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attacks. Netanyahu's government has also launched a process to dismiss the attorney general, accusing her of obstructing its agenda.

The moves come as the Shin Bet is investigating a possible infiltration of Netanyahu's office by an Arab country and as Netanyahu is on trial for corruption.

They are setting up a showdown between Netanyahu and the judiciary that is deepening divisions in Israel and could set off upheaval at a time when Israel is bogged down by war.

Tensions between the government and state institutions

Netanyahu's government launched a sweeping overhaul of the judiciary in early 2023, a process that

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touched off mass protests.

Critics said the overhaul would undermine the country's delicate system of checks and balances by granting too much power to Netanyahu. He and his governing coalition argued the judiciary had become overly interventionist and was blocking its legislative agenda.

Opponents also criticized Netanyahu for promoting the changes while on trial for corruption. They say a strong and independent judiciary is a necessary safeguard against authoritarian rule.

Hamas' Oct. 7 attacks, which sparked the war in Gaza, paused the overhaul. But it opened up new divisions in the country over who shouldered blame for not preventing the deadliest day in Israel's history.

Netanyahu has sidestepped accepting responsibility, seeking instead to point a finger at the heads of the military and the Shin Bet. He has long blamed the "deep state" for wanting to topple his rule.

In a surprise announcement last week, Netanyahu said he was dismissing Bar, sparking mass protests by critics who said the move would undermine Israel's independent state institutions and was meant as punishment for the Shin Bet's investigation into Netanyahu's office, or to derail it entirely.

The step helped usher the far-right politician Itamar Ben-Gvir back into Netanyahu's government, bolstering the Israeli leader's rule ahead of a key budget vote. Ben-Gvir had resigned weeks earlier to protest a temporary ceasefire, and his return to office came hours after the resumption of the war in Gaza.

Bar himself said he had planned to leave his post in due time, including after he wrapped up the sensitive investigations into whether the Gulf state of Qatar — which has close ties with Hamas — had hired Netanyahu advisers to launch an influence campaign in Israel. Netanyahu has suggested, with little evidence, that the probe was a result of collusion between Bar and the attorney general as a way to thwart the domestic security chief's dismissal.

Netanyahu's government on Sunday voted to remove Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara, beginning a process that could take weeks.

Disobeying the Supreme Court could bring chaos

In a country with no official constitution and just one house of parliament that is controlled by Netanyahu's coalition, Israel's Supreme Court has long served as an important check on government decisions.

The decision to dismiss Bar already has been challenged at the court, which issued an injunction that froze the move until further hearings. In the coming weeks, the court will be expected to rule on whether the dismissal was legal and whether there was a conflict of interest in light of the Qatar investigation.

With the attorney general, the government passed a largely symbolic decision Sunday calling for her dismissal. A committee, which is expected to be stacked with Netanyahu's allies, will hear the government's and Baharav-Miara's positions before issuing a recommendation. Only then will Netanyahu's government make its final decision on her fate.

If the committee goes ahead with her dismissal, it will likely face a challenge in the Supreme Court. Once again, it is expected to decide whether Netanyahu has a conflict of interest because he is firing the official who serves as the head of the public prosecution's office that is trying him for corruption.

It is unclear whether the government would accept a decision it does not like.

"The dangerous scenario is if they don't accept the ruling," said Amir Fuchs, a senior researcher at the Israel Democracy Institute, a Jerusalem think tank. That would prompt a crisis over which authority's rule should be followed — the court's or the government's -- and could lead to chaos, he said.

Fears are mounting over internal strife

Those fears have grown since the dismissals were set in motion. In a series of media interviews this weekend, 88-year-old Aharon Barak, Israel's preeminent legal mind, aired his concerns over the eruption of a potential civil war. He also joined nearly 20 former Supreme Court judges in a letter Sunday saying that firing the attorney general threatens the rule of law.

Opposition leader Yair Lapid called for a tax revolt if the government disobeys the ruling. The leader of the country's top labor union said ignoring a court ruling was a red line, suggesting he might launch general strikes in response.

The warnings have been eerily similar to 2023, when the legal overhaul was announced. Tens of thousands of people poured into the streets in sustained protests.

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General strikes were called and reservists threatened to not report for military service if the overhaul went ahead. Military service is compulsory for most Jews at the age of 18, but the army relies heavily on older reserve units, especially during wartime. Such internal strife was seen by some analysts as a factor in the timing of Hamas' attack. That upheaval could be just a precursor.

"Disobeying the courts is an illegal act," wrote commentator Nadav Eyal in the Yediot Ahronot daily. The result could be "widespread civil disobedience, the type of which the government will not survive."

'Snow White' opens with a sleepy \$43 million at box office

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The Walt Disney Co.'s live-action, controversy-bedeviled "Snow White" opened in theaters with a sleepy \$43 million in ticket sales, according to studio estimates Sunday.

With a budget above \$250 million, "Snow White" had set out with higher ambitions, particularly since it returns Disney to its very origins. The 1937 original "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" was the company's first animated feature, and paid for its Burbank studio lot.

But this "Snow White" struggled to find anything like a fairy tale ending. The runup to release was plagued by controversies over the film's handling of the dwarfs, who are rendered in CGI, and backlashes over comments by its star, Rachel Zegler. The PR headaches prompted Disney to pull back on its premiere.

Also working against the film, directed by Marc Webb: poor reviews. Critics were largely not impressed with Disney's latest live-action remake, with reviews coming in just 43% "fresh" on Rotten Tomatoes.

There's been a wide variance between the box-office performance of other "live-action" Disney remakes, but "Snow White" might mark a new nadir. Jon Favreau's photorealistic "The Lion King" (2019) didn't have great reviews, either, but grossed more than \$1.6 billion worldwide. "Snow White" opened worse than "Dumbo" (a \$46 million opening in 2019) and well shy of "Cinderella" territory (\$67.9 million in 2015).

Overseas, "Snow White" added \$44.3 million for a global launch of \$87.3 million. But going into the weekend, "Snow White" had been eyeing a worldwide total closer to \$100 million – and a few weeks back, expectations were significantly higher.

The result will surely add to questions over Disney's long-term strategy of mining its vault for live-action remakes. In the pipeline are upcoming new versions of "Moana" and "Tangled." A live-action "Lilo & Stitch" launches in May.

Efforts to modernize "Snow White," though, quickly ran afoul. In 2022, actor Peter Dinklage criticized the remake plans as "backward." Disney ultimately opted to drop "and the Seven Dwarfs" from the original's title, and animate the dwarfs. Some right-wing commentators targeted "Snow White" and Zegler's casting as an overly "woke" production. Delays and reshoots also ran up costs.

Disney, though, has recently steered a handful of films from modest starts to enviable final hauls. The Barry Jenkins-directed "Mufasa: The Lion King" opened with \$35.4 million domestically, but ultimately surpassed \$717 million worldwide. "Snow White" will face little direct competition in the coming weeks. Audiences gave it a "B+" CinemaScore.

Warner Bros.' "Alto Knights," a period gangster film starring Robert De Niro in both lead roles, was a total misfire. The Barry Levinson-directed film, which cost about \$45 million to make, opened with just \$3.2 million from 2,651 theaters. The flop of "Alto Knights" followed another misfire for Warner Bros. with Bong Joon Ho's big-budget sci-fi "Mickey 17." In three weeks, it's tallied \$40.2 million domestically against a \$118 million budget.

"Magazine Dreams," starring Jonathan Majors as a disturbed aspiring bodybuilder, opened with \$700,000 for Briarcliff Entertainment in 815 locations. The film was dropped by Searchlight Pictures after Majors was convicted of two misdemeanor counts of assault and harassment against Grace Jabbari, his ex-girlfriend. Majors avoided jail time but was given a year of probation.

The disappointment-filled weekend added to a rough 2025 so far for Hollywood. The box office is down 6.9% from last year, according to data firm Comscore, and 38.6% from 2019.

Top 10 movies by domestic box office

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With final domestic figures releasing Monday, this list factors in the estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Comscore.

1. "Snow White," \$43 million.
2. "Black Bag," \$4.4 million
3. "Captain America: Brave New World," \$4.1 million.
4. "Mickey 17," \$3.9 million.
5. "Novocaine," \$3.8 million.
6. "The Alto Knights," \$3.2 million.
7. "The Day the Earth Blew Up," \$1.8 million.
8. "The Monkey," \$1.5 million.
9. "Dog Man," \$1.5 million.
10. "The Last Supper," \$1.3 million.

Segway recalls 220,000 of its scooters due to a fall hazard that has resulted in 20 injuries

NEW YORK (AP) — Segway is recalling about 220,000 of its scooters sold across the U.S. due to a fall hazard that has resulted in user injuries ranging from bruises to broken bones.

According to a notice published by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, the folding mechanism in Segway's Ninebot Max G30P and Max G30LP KickScooters can fail during use — causing the handlebars or stem of the scooters to fold.

That can result in serious injuries, the Commission warns. Thursday's recall notice notes that Segway has received 68 reports of folding mechanism failures — with 20 injuries that include abrasions, bruises, lacerations and broken bones.

Consumers in possession of these now-recalled scooters are urged to stop using them immediately and contact Segway to request a free maintenance kit. This kit includes tools and step-by-step instructions to inspect and adjust the scooters' locking mechanism as needed, Segway says.

"Over time, depending on riding conditions, the folding mechanism may require periodic checks and tightening," California-based Segway writes on its website. "No returns or replacements are involved."

According to the CPSC, the Segway scooters involved in this recall were manufactured in China and Malaysia and sold at retailers across the U.S. — like Best Buy, Costco, Walmart, Target and Sam's Club, as well as online at Segway.com and Amazon.com, between January 2020 and February 2025. Sale prices ranged from \$600 to \$1,000.

2 months into Trump's second administration, the news industry faces challenges from all directions

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — During the first Trump administration, the biggest concern for many journalists was labels. Would they, or their news outlet, be called "fake news" or an "enemy of the people" by a president and his supporters?

They now face a more assertive President Donald Trump. In two months, a blitz of action by the nation's new administration — Trump, chapter two — has journalists on their heels.

Lawsuits. A newly aggressive Federal Communications Commission. An effort to control the press corps that covers the president, prompting legal action by The Associated Press. A gutted Voice of America. Public data stripped from websites. And attacks, amplified anew.

"It's very clear what's happening. The Trump administration is on a campaign to do everything it can to diminish and obstruct journalism in the United States," said Bill Grueskin, a journalism professor at Columbia University.

"It's really nothing like we saw in 2017," he said. "Not that there weren't efforts to discredit the press,

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and not that there weren't things that the press did to discredit themselves."

Trump supporters say an overdue course correction is in order

Supporters of the president suggest that an overdue correction is in order to reflect new ways that Americans get information and to counter overreach by reporters. Polls have revealed continued public dissatisfaction with journalists — something that has been bedeviling the industry for years.

Tension between presidents and the Fourth Estate is nothing new — an unsurprising clash between desires to control a message and to ask probing, sometimes impertinent questions. Despite the atmosphere, the Republican president talks to reporters much more often than many predecessors, including Democrat Joe Biden, who rarely gave interviews.

An early signal that times had changed came when the White House invited newcomers to press briefings, including podcasters and friendly media outlets. The AP was blocked from covering pool events in a dispute over Trump's renaming of the Gulf of Mexico, setting off a flurry of First Amendment concerns among press advocates and leading the administration to assert that the White House, not the press, should determine who questions him.

Two months before the administration took office, former White House press secretary Ari Fleischer, who served under Republican President George W. Bush, had urged that changes be made.

"It's time to bring that (briefing) room in line with how readers and viewers consume the news in 2025," Fleischer said in an interview. "They don't get their news from The Washington Post, The New York Times and the three networks anymore. They get their news from a myriad of sources."

In practice, some newcomers have refreshingly tried to shed light on issues important to conservatives, instead of hostile attempts to play "gotcha" by the mainstream media, Fleischer said. There were also softballs, like when the Ruthless podcast asked press secretary Karoline Leavitt if reporters who questioned border policy were "out of touch." The conservative Real America's Voice network tried to knock Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy off stride by asking why he wasn't wearing a suit in the Oval Office.

While the White House Correspondents' Association has protested the AP's treatment and efforts to upend tradition, it has been largely toothless. For more extensive discussions, the president and his team generally favor interviews with outlets that speak to his supporters, like Fox News.

The Trump team's rapid response efforts to fight the 'fake media'

The White House has also established a "Rapid Response 47" account on X to disseminate its views and attack journalists or stories it objects to. The feed's stated goals are supporting the president and "holding the Fake Media accountable."

Leavitt, 27, hasn't hesitated to go toe to toe with reporters, often with a smile, and Tik-Tok collects some of those moments.

"We know for a fact there have been lies that have been pushed by many legacy media outlets in this country about this president, and we will not accept that," she said at her first press briefing. It stood in contrast to Trump's 2017 press secretary, Sean Spicer, who got into an angry confrontation with the press about the size of the president's inauguration crowd on his first day in the White House, and never truly recovered from it.

Showing the spread of the administration's disciplined approach, the Defense Department also has a rapid response account that says it "fights fake news." The Pentagon has evicted several news organizations from long-held office space, leading some reporters to worry about access to fast, reliable information during a military crisis.

"Strategically, he likes to use the press as a pawn — it is one of the institutions that he can demonize to make himself look good," said Ron Fournier, a former Washington bureau chief for the AP.

Trump has active lawsuits going against news outlets that displease him, such as CBS News for the way "60 Minutes" edited an interview with 2024 election opponent, Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris, or The Des Moines Register, for what turned out to be an inaccurate pre-election poll of Iowa voters.

The new FCC chairman, Brendan Carr, has signaled an activist stance, with investigations open against CBS for the "60 Minutes" case, ABC News for how it fact-checked the Trump-Harris debate and NBC on whether it violated federal "equal time" provisions by bringing Harris onto "Saturday Night Live."

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Even with all the change, many newsrooms are confronting the challenge

Fleischer welcomes a newly aggressive attitude toward the press. He believes many journalists were more activists than reporters during Trump's first term. He wondered why journalists were not more aggressive in determining whether Biden's advancing age made him fit for the presidency.

"I think that the press is either in denial, or they acknowledge that they have lost the trust of the people but they won't change or do anything about it," he said. "They just don't know how to do their jobs any differently."

Press advocates worry about the intimidation factor of lawsuits and investigations, particularly on smaller newsrooms. What stories will go unreported simply because it's not worth the potential hassle? "It has a very corrosive effect over time," Grueskin said.

Worth watching, too, is a disconnect between newsrooms and the people who own them. Both the Los Angeles Times and Washington Post backed off endorsements of Harris last fall at the behest of the their owners, and Post owner Jeff Bezos attended Trump's inauguration. When the Post announced a reorganization earlier this month, Leavitt took a shot: "It appears that the mainstream media, including the Post, is finally learning that having disdain for more than half the country who supports this president does not help you sell newspapers."

Many newsrooms are notably not backing down from the challenge of covering the administration. "60 Minutes" has done several hard-hitting reports, the Atlantic has added staff and Wired is digging in to cover Elon Musk's cost-cutting.

For their own industry, much of the news is grim. The future of Voice of America is in doubt, eliminating jobs and, its supporters fear, reducing the nation's influence overseas. Cost-cutters are eyeing government subscriptions for news outlets, eliminating an income source. On a broader scale, there are worries about attacks on journalists' legal protections against libel lawsuits.

"They're pulling at every thread they can find, no matter how tenuous, to try and undermine credible news organizations," Grueskin said.

It is well organized. It is coming from multiple directions.

And it has been only two months.

Timeline of Pope Francis' longest hospital stay as he returns home to Vatican

ROME (AP) — Pope Francis returned home to the Vatican on Sunday after he was hospitalized for five weeks with a life-threatening bout of pneumonia.

The 88-year-old pope suffered two life-threatening crises while hospitalized, but by the beginning of the fourth week doctors said he was no longer in critical condition. After two weeks of stable condition, they said he was well enough to continue his convalescence at the Vatican.

Here are highlights of the longest hospital stay of Francis' 12-year papacy, based on details provided by the Vatican:

Feb. 14

Pope Francis is hospitalized with bronchitis and a slight fever immediately following a morning of audiences. Doctors diagnose a respiratory tract infection.

Feb. 17

Pope Francis is diagnosed with polymicrobial (bacterial, viral and fungal) infection in the respiratory passages, marking a setback.

Feb. 18

An X-ray indicates Pope Francis has developed pneumonia in both lungs, marking another setback; cortisone and antibiotic treatments are confirmed.

Feb. 21

Pope's doctors say at a news conference that the pope remains in critical condition and isn't out of danger, but that his condition isn't imminently life-threatening. Doctors say the pope has developed steroid-induced

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diabetes that is being treated. Prognosis is guarded.

Feb. 22

Pope in critical condition after experiencing a respiratory crisis and requires high-pressure oxygen through nasal tubes, in the first mention of assisted breathing. Francis also receives two blood transfusions after tests show signs of anemia and low platelet count that are later resolved. Setback.

Feb. 23

Doctors report that the pope has gone into onset of slight kidney failure, in a setback. No repeat of the respiratory crisis, but he remains in critical condition.

Feb. 26

The mild renal failure has regressed, in an improvement.

Feb. 28

Pope suffers isolated coughing spasm during which he inhaled vomit, in a setback requiring noninvasive aspiration. Responded well. Placed on a noninvasive mechanical ventilation mask to pump supplemental oxygen into his lungs. Prognosis remains guarded.

March 3

Two acute bronchospasm episodes in a setback requiring bronchoscopies, or a camera-tipped tube with a device to remove mucus plugs, yielding abundant secretions. Pope remained alert, oriented and collaborative during maneuvers. Prognosis remains guarded.

March 6

Pope records an audio message that is broadcast to the faithful in St. Peter's Square thanking them for their prayers. His voice is weak and he's out of breath.

March 10

Doctors declare Francis is no longer in imminent danger of death from pneumonia, but keep him in the hospital for further treatment

March 12

Chest X-ray confirms improvement in pope's condition.

March 13

Pope marks 12th anniversary of papacy from the hospital, where he receives a cake and hundreds of messages and drawings with good wishes. No medical update.

March 14

Pope marks one month in the hospital. Vatican announces it will cease issuing morning updates about the pope's rest overnight and will issue fewer medical bulletins in a sign of the continuing improvements in the pope's medical condition.

March 16

The Vatican released the first photograph of Pope Francis during his hospitalization. The photo shows the pope seated from behind in front of the altar in the private chapel in the papal apartment at Gemelli hospital. No breathing tube is visible.

March 22

Doctors announced that the pope will be dismissed from the hospital the next day, and that he will have a period of convalescence of at least two months during which he is discouraged from meeting with large groups.

March 23

A weak and frail Francis leaves Gemelli hospital for the Vatican after making a brief appearance on the hospital's balcony.

Greenlanders embrace pre-Christian Inuit traditions as a way to proudly reclaim ancestral roots

By LUIS ANDRES HENAO Associated Press

NUUK, Greenland (AP) — Sitting on the pelt of a polar bear hunted by her family, Aviaja Rakel Sanimuinaq

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says she's proud to be part of a movement of Greenlanders reclaiming their Inuit traditions and spirituality.

The shaman, who has Inuit facial tattoos, works with spiritual healing practices to help people connect with their ancestors and heal generational trauma. A sign outside her studio in the Greenland capital of Nuuk conveys her role: "Ancient knowledge in a modern world."

In recent years, Greenlanders like her have been embracing pre-Christian Inuit traditions, including drum dancing and Inuit tattoos. For some, it's a way to proudly reclaim their ancestral roots. It's also a way to reject the legacy of European Christian missionaries who colonized Greenland in the 18th century and suppressed their traditions, labeling them as pagan.

"The sacredness of Christianity is still sacred in my eyes. But so is Buddhism, so is Hinduism, and so is my work," Sanimuinaq said in her studio, surrounded by skulls of seals, raven feathers and medicinal herbs. They help the "angakkoq," or shaman, communicate with "silam aappaa" or the other world — the spiritual world.

"That's where I stand — that the arising of our culture, and us as a people, is also to get the equality within our culture, to acknowledge that our culture is legit; that it has to have a space here."

The Inuit have survived and thrived for generations in one of the most remote, vast and rugged places on Earth, hunting for seals, whales and polar bears. Their traditional religion is animist.

Inuit believe that "every animal and bird, every stone and every piece of earth, the rain and the snow all have a spirit and a right to be respected," authors Gill and Alistair Campbell write in their travel book, "Greenland."

About 90% of the 57,000 Greenlanders identify as Inuit and the vast majority belong to the Lutheran Church. A Danish missionary brought that branch of Christianity to the world's largest island more than 300 years ago.

Greenland is now a semi-autonomous territory of Denmark, and Greenlanders increasingly favor getting full independence — a crucial issue in a recent parliamentary election.

Some say Greenland's independence movement received a boost after U.S. President Donald Trump pushed their Arctic homeland into the spotlight by threatening to take it over.

"We don't have to walk silenced anymore," Sanimuinaq said. "That's the change we see — that the voice we get out in the world has been forbidden even within our country. Now that we're opening, we have more freedom."

The spiritual and social value of Tunniit — the traditional Inuit tattoos

The suppression of Inuit drums and facial tattoos were part of a broader effort to Christianize and assimilate Inuit into the European way of life, said Asta Mønsted, a professor at the University of California, Berkeley. She researches Inuit oral history and its connections to Greenland's archaeology.

"Drum songs and drum duels were central to Inuit spiritual and social life, but the missionaries viewed them as pagan practices and superstitions that needed to be replaced with Christian hymns and prayers," she said. "Drums were confiscated or destroyed in order to break the connection to the pre-Christian beliefs."

In some parts of Greenland, though, the drum songs and knowledge of drum-making were preserved without the church's knowledge.

"Tattoos were also linked to Inuit cosmology and rites, but missionaries labeled them as pagan and especially viewed the facial tattoos as a defilement of God's creation," said Mønsted. "They promoted the European ideal, where the human body should remain unmarked."

"Tunniit," the traditional Inuit tattoos, were etched by poking sod from soapstone lamps onto the skin with a needle or by dragging a sod-covered sinew thread underneath the skin.

Women generally got tattoos as they experienced menstruation and childbirth, viewing them as protection against illness and malevolent spirits, Mønsted said.

But resistance to Inuit tattoos deterred many Greenlanders across generations from getting them; some who had tattoos hid them, fearing repercussions.

Growing up, Therecie Sanimuinaq Pedersen recalled how her grandmother covered her facial tattoos in soot because she didn't want to be alienated from her community.

Therecie only got the tattoos that now cover her face — the way she remembered her grandmother's

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— after her daughter, Aviaja, got them in recent years.

"The tattoos I have goes from mother to daughter for thousands of years," Therecie said in Greenlandic, translated by her daughter. "I have the same as my grandmother — that's my heritage."

These days, when she's out on Nuuk's streets and encounters others displaying Inuit tattoos, she feels encouraged, especially when she sees them on young Greenlanders.

"When I see them, it's like we have a connection," she said. "Without knowing them, and them knowing me, we say hi. Some come, give a hug, and say thank you."

Inuit drum for conflict resolution and restoring pride in ancestral tradition

For the Inuit, the "qilaat" played a crucial role in conflict resolution through drum duels.

The drum, Mønsted said, had three main functions: for entertainment and socializing, as a tool for the shaman during their seances, and as part of a pre-colonial juridical system.

"In the drum duels, opponents used songs, insults, and exaggerated body movements to argue their case before the community, which would stand in a circle around them," Mønsted said.

She said the crowd's collective laughter often determined the winner without the need for a formal ruling.

While some duels helped ease tensions, others ended in public humiliation, sometimes forcing the losing party to leave the community and become a "qivittoq" — a person living in nature outside of society. This exile could be tantamount to a death sentence in the frigid Arctic environment.

Greenland was a colony under Denmark's crown until 1953, when it became a province in the Scandinavian country. In 1979, the island was granted home rule, and 30 years ago became a self-governing entity. But Denmark retains control over foreign and defense affairs.

The former colonial ruler is accused of committing abuses against Greenland's Inuit, including removing children from their families in the 1950s with the excuse of integrating them into Danish society and fitting women with intrauterine contraceptive devices in the 1960s and 1970s — allegedly to limit population growth.

Some Greenlanders believe the recent global attention on their mineral-rich country and a unified call for independence from Denmark has allowed them to speak more openly about abuses committed by their former colonial ruler. Some have grown closer to their rich pre-Christian Indigenous culture.

"Our culture is very spiritual ... I want to bring that back," said Naja Parnuuna, an award-winning singer-songwriter.

"I want to be in that wave with my fellow young people... I feel like we've been looked down for so long, and we really haven't had a voice for a long time."

Growing up, she said she felt that it was "cooler to be a Dane, or to speak Danish, and was ashamed to be Greenlandic and follow Inuit traditions. "Maybe not embarrassing," she said, "but it was taboo or weird to do the drums or be Inuk."

Her father, Markus Olsen, is a former Lutheran pastor who was dismissed from his church position in 2022 after he allowed drum dancing during a National Day service at the Nuuk Cathedral. He knew that was risky but did it because he believes the qilaat, the Inuit traditional drum, needs to be reinstated into its valued position in religious services and other aspects of Greenlandic life.

Olsen, who wears a collar with a small qilaat and a crucifix, takes inspiration from the Latin American Liberation Theology movement, which holds that the teachings of Jesus require followers to fight for economic and social justice. He also takes inspiration from the Rastafari legend Bob Marley, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and civil rights activist Malcolm X.

Parnuuna feels inspired by her father. She began to embrace her roots through her music, which encourages Greenlanders to value their Inuit culture and history.

"The more I practiced my art, singing and writing songs, I began to realize how important it is to accept ... my roots, to have more self-respect, to have higher self-esteem and in that way have a healthier way of living and a more positive view of the world," she said.

"It's important to bring that back, so that we can love ourselves again."

AOC tries to broaden her appeal within a Democratic base spoiling for a fight

By JONATHAN J. COOPER and NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — Bernie Sanders stepped onto a stage in downtown Denver, surrounded by tens of thousands of cheering supporters in what he described as the biggest rally he had ever addressed. The Vermont senator put his hand on the shoulder of the woman who had introduced him, a signal for her to stay on stage.

"She has become an inspiration to millions of young people," Sanders said of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, recounting her biography from a girl who helped her mother clean houses and later became a bartender before emerging as political insurgent who ousted a powerful New York Democrat in a U.S. House primary.

The crowd began a chant of her well-known moniker: "AOC! AOC!"

In a leaderless Democratic Party out of power in Washington, Ocasio-Cortez has a message and a connection with a segment of liberals feeling disenchanted with both parties. Now, in her fourth term, the 35-year-old congresswoman is working to broaden her appeal beyond her progressive, anti-establishment roots.

Hitting the road last week with Sanders for his "Fighting Oligarchy" rallies, she is addressing people who disagree with her and reframing the divide in the Democratic Party not as progressive versus moderate, but as those going after Republican President Donald Trump and those being more cautious.

"No matter who you voted for in the past, no matter if you know all the right words to say, no matter your race, religion, gender identity or status," Ocasio-Cortez said to thousands in a rally at Arizona State University. "No matter even if you disagree with me on a few things. If you are willing to fight for someone you don't know, you are welcome here."

Her instinct to brawl is well-matched to the restlessness of the Democratic base, much of which sees top party officials like New York Sen. Chuck Schumer as not confrontational enough.

"We're lacking leadership right now, and we really just need someone to take the reins and tell us what to do," said Kristen Hanson, a 41-year-old small business owner from Phoenix, whose search for a call to action brought her to see Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez. "I'm not in politics, but I would be very happy to follow a leader who I believe in."

But that instinct also irritates some elected Democrats.

Sen. Elissa Slotkin of Michigan, whose profile is also rising after her November victory in a state Trump won, was challenged recently by a constituent to more aggressively confront Trump like Ocasio-Cortez, Sanders and Rep. Jasmine Crockett, a Dallas Democrat who is becoming one of her party's key messengers.

Slotkin said she had to be "more than just an activist" and noted that those lawmakers represent heavily Democratic areas.

"All of those things require me to be more than just an AOC," she said. "I can't do what she does because we live in a purple state and I'm a pragmatist."

AOC tours with Sanders

Sanders, one of the few political leaders with the resources to plan large rallies and the appeal to pack them, has stepped into the Democratic leadership vacuum with appearances across the country. Ocasio-Cortez joined him this past week for five events in Nevada, Arizona and Colorado.

In Denver, the crowd was so immense that people climbed onto statues and sat on the broad steps of buildings across the street to watch. In Tempe, Arizona, outside Phoenix, thousands of people who could not get inside the arena crowded a plaza outside or watched from a parking garage.

In speeches lasting about 25 minutes, Ocasio-Cortez blended the denunciations of economic inequality that have been central to her brand with an offering that "we are not powerless in this moment."

About two-thirds of Democrats have a favorable opinion of Ocasio-Cortez and just 5% view her unfavorably, according to Gallup polling from January. But the broader public is more divided. Among all adults, about 4 in 10 had a negative view of Ocasio-Cortez while about 3 in 10 had a positive view.

In her home state, about 4 in 10 New York voters in the November election viewed her favorably while

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about the same share had an unfavorable opinion, according to AP VoteCast, a survey of the 2024 electorate.

Ocasio-Cortez confronted head-on the perception that she is a radical by being magnanimous toward other Democratic factions. She did not walk away from her progressive views but signaled openness to disagreement, saying her movement “is not about partisan labels or purity tests,” but rather solidarity with the working class.

At each stop, she spoke supportively of local Democrats in Congress, even those who do not align with her ideologically.

“We need more people like them with the courage to brawl for the working class,” she said in Arizona, praising colleagues who voted against a Republican spending bill.

She did poke at former Arizona Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, who was elected as a Democrat in 2018 but infuriated progressives for working with Republicans and blocking Democratic priorities such as raising the minimum wage. Sinema became an independent but declined to run for a second term.

“One thing I love about Arizonans is that you all have shown that if a U.S. senator isn’t fighting hard enough for you, you’re not afraid to replace her with one who will,” Ocasio-Cortez said.

The budget fight creates enduring Democratic anger

The decision by 10 Senate Democrats, led by party leader Schumer, to allow a Republican-led spending bill to advance infuriated the Democratic base, which saw it as capitulation to Trump. (Slotkin, the Michigan senator, voted against advancing the bill.)

Schumer argued the spending bill was “terrible” but a government shutdown — had the measure not passed — would have given Trump the power to make even more cuts as his administration slashes agencies and hundreds of thousands of federal jobs. House Democrats disagreed with him in a rare show of public dissent and several liberal groups are pushing Schumer to resign.

Ocasio-Cortez gave voice to that anger in her speeches. Her plea for “a Democratic Party that fights harder for us” drew the biggest applause of her speeches in Denver and Tempe.

Dane Burgos, 28, snapped a selfie with Ocasio-Cortez as she left the Denver rally. “I was mainly here for Bernie, because he’s the OG, but AOC – it’s clear she’s the heir apparent,” Burgos said.

Armando Valdez, a two-time Sanders voter and Navy veteran who gets his medical care through the Department of Veterans Affairs, is especially alarmed at the Trump administration’s proposed cuts.

He feels like he knows Sanders well, but is eager to hear what Ocasio-Cortez has to say.

Sanders is, too. Just not as a solo act yet.

The 83-year-old has said he’s not running for president a third time. But asked after his Tempe rally whether he sees any promising leaders rising up, he did not give his support to Ocasio-Cortez or anyone else.

“There are dozens and dozens of really strong progressives out there who are I think going to be the future political leaders of our country,” Sanders told reporters.

America’s European allies are trying to pry their unspent money back from USAID

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER, JAMEY KEATEN, MIKE CORDER AND VANESSA GERA Associated Press

Three European allies provided millions of dollars that the United States was supposed to spend for low-income countries. Then the Trump administration and Elon Musk’s government-cutters arrived.

Government officials from Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands told The Associated Press that a combined \$15 million they contributed for joint development work overseas has been parked at the U.S. Agency for International Development for months.

After the Republican administration and Musk’s Department of Government Efficiency cut USAID’s funding and the bulk of its programs, the Europeans asked whether their money would be funneled to projects as expected or refunded.

They have gotten no response.

“It’s a concern for us, especially as we want our partner organizations to be compensated for the work

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they have put into the programs,” said Julia Lindholm, a spokeswoman for the Swedish government’s international development agency.

The true total may be larger. Other foreign governments also had money entrusted with USAID for distribution in a range of joint development projects at the time President Donald Trump ordered the funding freeze on Jan. 20, according to an official directly familiar with the matter who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The worries point to the extent to which the new administration’s abrupt cutoff of foreign assistance and canceling of contracts for humanitarian and development work are raising questions about Washington’s financial reliability. They also show further strain between allies as Trump revamps American foreign policy.

The State Department and USAID did not immediately respond to questions asking how many foreign governments had money for joint development programs going unspent and unrefunded in the USAID funding freeze, how much money that was in total, and whether the administration was doing anything about it.

Concerns from American allies

Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands had been partnering with USAID on a project called Water and Energy for Food, or WE4F. It helps farmers and others in poorer countries develop innovative ways to grow more food without straining water supplies or depending on climate-damaging forms of energy.

“Most importantly,” Lindholm said by email, the U.S. failure so far to disburse or refund allies’ donations is harming “6 million of the poorest and most vulnerable farmers in the world who are dependent on the technologies for their food production and food security.”

Other administration actions already have alarmed traditional partners. Trump has said he would not necessarily follow the mutual-defense pact underlying the NATO security agreement, he has advanced some of Russia’s talking points and demands in its invasion of Ukraine and has imposed tariffs on Canada, the European Union and others.

America as a reliable financial partner

Now, doubts about the U.S. as a reliable business partner have emerged in lawsuits over the administration’s abrupt cancellation of what Secretary of State Marco Rubio said were 83% of USAID contracts, forcing partner organizations to lay off workers and driving some out of business.

In a brief supporting a lawsuit from federal workers, former Defense Secretaries Chuck Hagel and William Perry, former CIA Director Michael Hayden and more than a dozen other former senior U.S. officials said the administration’s mass canceling of thousands of USAID contracts was flouting U.S. financial regulations and “destroying the United States’ credibility as a reliable partner.”

Canceling the contracts “sends a message that this administration does not feel bound by those regulations — regulations on which every business that works with the United States relies,” the former officials said.

In another case, lawyers for nonprofits and businesses seeking payment from USAID told a judge that because of the financial chaos surrounding the agency’s dismantling, banks have stopped what used to be routine financing for USAID partners based on their contracts with the U.S. agency.

Since the Cold War, the national security argument for development programs has been that making poorer countries more prosperous and stable lessens refugee flows and conflicts.

Trump and Musk call foreign assistance through USAID in particular a fraud and scam. Administration officials are looking at focusing U.S. development efforts much more narrowly on combating China’s influence abroad and boosting U.S. trade and business opportunities.

Seeking money back from the Trump administration

Growing steadily more alarmed by the administration’s foreign aid moves, Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands initially sent USAID emails inquiring about the money they had parked in USAID accounts.

Frustrated at getting no response, two of them warned in the government-to-government emails that they were looking at talking to local media about their missing money, according to the official directly familiar with the matter.

Under court order, the administration has started making good on some \$2 billion USAID already owed

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when Trump ordered the freeze in USAID and State Department foreign assistance on Inauguration Day.

But forced leaves and firings have yanked most officials and workers at USAID's headquarters off the job. That includes many who oversaw development programs and would be involved in tracking down numbers and calculating any refunds for the foreign governments.

Sweden's development agency told the AP that it estimates it has \$12 million total, including \$5.1 million for WE4F, sitting in USAID accounts — money going unspent for people in Africa, Asia and the Middle East and unrefunded by the administration.

Lindholm, the spokesperson for Sweden's development agency, called the WE4F program "extraordinarily impactful," with measurable benefits for farmers and others many times greater than the program's initial targets.

The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation told the AP that it has received no information about the fate of a \$1.4 million funding tranche for WE4F since Trump began dissolving USAID.

The Dutch Foreign Ministry said it reached out to the U.S. aid agency on how much of the \$1.6 million it had given most recently for WE4F had yet to be disbursed by USAID and should be refunded, but that it had not yet gotten any response.

"Donor partners are now exploring other opportunities to continue to run the WE4F programme to ensure a responsible completion," Lindholm said by email.

Today in History: March 24

Exxon Valdez crashes in Alaska, creates massive oil spill

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Monday, March 24, the 83rd day of 2025. There are 282 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On March 24, 1989, the supertanker Exxon Valdez (vahl-DEEZ') ran aground on a reef in Alaska's Prince William Sound and began leaking an estimated 11 million gallons of crude oil.

Also on this date:

In 1882, German scientist Robert Koch announced in Berlin that he discovered the bacillus responsible for tuberculosis.

In 1921, the Women's Olympiad, the first international women's sporting event, began in Monte Carlo, Monaco.

In 1980, Catholic Archbishop Óscar Arnulfo Romero of El Salvador was shot to death by a sniper as he celebrated Mass in San Salvador.

In 1999, NATO launched airstrikes against Yugoslavia, marking the first time in its 50-year existence that it attacked a sovereign country.

In 2015, Germanwings Flight 9525, an Airbus A320, crashed into the French Alps, killing all 150 people on board; investigators said the jetliner was deliberately downed by the 27-year-old co-pilot, Andreas Lubitz.

In 2016, a U.N. war crimes court convicted former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadžić of genocide and nine other charges for orchestrating a campaign of terror that left 100,000 people dead during the 1992-95 war in Bosnia; Karadžić received a sentence of 40 years in prison, later increased to life.

Today's Birthdays: Chef and TV presenter Mary Berry is 90. Musician Carol Kaye is 90. Fashion and costume designer Bob Mackie is 86. Singer Nick Lowe is 76. Golf Hall of Famer Pat Bradley is 74. Fashion designer Tommy Hilfiger is 74. Actor Kelly LeBrock is 65. TV personality Star Jones is 63. Actor Lara Flynn Boyle is 55. Actor Jim Parsons is 52. Actor Alyson Hannigan is 51. Football Hall of Famer Peyton Manning is 49. Actor Jessica Chastain is 48. Basketball Hall of Famer Chris Bosh is 41. Dancer Val Chmerkovskiy is 39.