

Groton Daily Independent

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Sat., Dec. 27

Sun., Dec. 28

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

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

United Methodist: Worship at Conde, 8:15 a.m.; at Groton, 9:30 a.m.; at Britton, 11:15 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 10:30 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.

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

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

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

4th Grade BB Practice, 2 p.m.

6th Grade Boys Basketball, 6 p.m.

Mon, Dec. 29

Senior Menu: Sweet and sour pork, steamed rice, carrot and broccoli medley, corn, fruit.

No School

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

Floyd Farrand Tournament Girls Wrestling at SF Lincoln, 9 a.m.

5th/6th Volleyball Practice, 6 p.m.

Tues., Dec. 30

Senior Menu: Meat loaf, baked potato, mixed vegetables, fruit, whole wheat bread.

No School

GBB NSU Showcase, Groton vs. Lemmon, 3 p.m.

Boys BB hosts Webster (JV at 6 p.m., Varsity to follow)

7th Grade Girls Soccer Practice, 6 p.m.



Wed., Dec. 31

Senior Menu: Oven fried chicken, sweet potatoes, green beans, fruit, whole wheat bread.

No School

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

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

3rd/4th Volleyball Practice, 6 p.m.

6th Grade Boys Basketball, 7:30 p.m.

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

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1440

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

Malaysia Corruption Verdict

Malaysia's High Court yesterday sentenced jailed former Prime Minister Najib Razak to 15 years in prison and ordered roughly \$3.3B in fines and asset seizures over the misuse of a multibillion-dollar government fund.

The court found Najib, 72, guilty of abuse of power and money laundering from 1MDB, a sovereign wealth fund he established after taking office in 2009. Authorities allege Najib and his associates siphoned over \$4.5B from 1MDB between 2009 and 2014, routing funds through countries including the US, Singapore, and Switzerland. Some money was allegedly used to help finance Hollywood films, including the Oscar-nominated "The Wolf of Wall Street," and Goldman Sachs faced billions in fines for its involvement with 1MDB. Najib, who led Malaysia until 2018, has been imprisoned since 2022 on related charges. The new 15-year sentence is set to begin after his current one ends in 2028.

Najib claims he was misled by Malaysian businessman Low Taek Jho, who remains at large.

US strikes Islamic State in Nigeria after Trump warned of attacks on Christians.

The Defense Department carried out the deadly strike Thursday in cooperation with Nigerian authorities. The attack hit Sokoto, a predominantly Muslim state in northwest Nigeria, where the Islamic State-affiliated Lakurawa group has strongholds. The US earlier this month said it would restrict visas for Nigerians involved in violence against Christians; Nigeria's government and analysts have previously said people of many faiths are potential victims of extremist groups.

Powerful storm system slams California, East and Midwest brace for snow.

Los Angeles saw its wettest Christmas in 54 years as atmospheric rivers brought rain and snow across California this week, killing at least three people. At least 32 million remained under flood watches Friday. Meanwhile, on the East Coast and in the Midwest, about 66 million people were under winter weather alerts Friday. New York City is expected to see its largest snow accumulation since January 2022.

Stimulant ADHD medications work differently than thought.

New research finds common stimulant ADHD medications like Ritalin and Adderall mainly act on the brain's reward and wakefulness centers, not the attention networks traditionally thought to be their main target. The study suggests the medications make tasks feel more engaging rather than directly sharpening focus, and may also mimic the brain activity of good sleep, masking sleep deprivation in kids with ADHD.

DOJ finds over 1 million more Epstein-related files it needs to review.

The Justice Department said Wednesday it has received over 1 million new documents potentially tied to the Jeffrey Epstein case. Officials said it could take weeks to review these files produced by the FBI and a New York federal court. The trove is on top of the several hundred thousand files the DOJ said would be shared in the coming weeks. To date, the DOJ has released about 40,000 Epstein documents.

Trump-backed Asfura wins Honduras presidency after disputed election.

Honduras' electoral authority declared former Mayor Nasry Asfura the winner of the Nov. 30 vote, narrowly defeating sportscaster and four-time presidential candidate Salvador Nasralla. The official count shows Asfura of the conservative National Party winning by less than one percentage point over Nasralla of the conservative Liberal Party. Nasralla has alleged fraud, saying not all tally sheets were counted.

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Arkansas Powerball lottery player wins second-largest US jackpot ever.

Someone who bought a lottery ticket at an Arkansas gas station on Christmas Eve won a \$1.8B jackpot. The winner can choose between a lump sum payment of \$834.9M or an annuitized payout of the full prize amount over about 30 years; both options are before taxes. The largest Powerball jackpot on record was more than \$2B, won in California in 2022. The odds of hitting the jackpot are roughly one in 292.2 million.

China sanctions 20 US defense companies over Taiwan arms sale.

Boeing's defense unit and Northrop Grumman are among the sanctioned companies, as well as 10 executives, after the US announced new weapons sales to Taiwan. The move freezes any assets the companies and executives hold in China and restricts business with Chinese entities. The impact is mostly symbolic, as US defense contractors generally conduct little business in China.

Hawaii cruise passengers to face new climate change-related tax.

A federal judge cleared the way for Hawaii's new tourist tax, which includes an 11% levy on cruise ship passenger fares, prorated for days spent in port. The tax is the first of its kind in the US and will take effect in early 2026 to help fund climate resilience efforts like shoreline protection and wildfire mitigation. Officials estimate the tax will bring in \$100M annually.

Humankind(ness)

Today, we're sharing a story from reader Al B. in Chesapeake, Virginia.

"I was a police officer, with no children and had volunteered to work Christmas Day. It was not too difficult with my family (all first responders and working), but it was lonely. I was beginning to get depressed and decided to grab a cup of coffee at the only 7-Eleven that was open.

"As I was getting my coffee, a man came in with his two boys. They came over, wished me a Merry Christmas, and asked why I had to work on Christmas. I explained that while it was Christmas, some people needed our help and we are here to help and protect them.

"I left the store and continued my patrol. An hour and a half later I get a call from dispatch to meet a person at headquarters. When I arrived, I found the father and two boys who had been at the store. They had wanted to bring me Christmas cookies and some food, so I could have a merry Christmas."

What can \$20 get you?



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for details



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Single is \$35.15 per month or \$319.50 per year
2-Person is \$55.45 per month or \$575.10 per year
Family is \$67.10 per month or \$702.26 per year

Month-to-Month Rates

Student is \$35.15 per month
Single is \$40.48 per month
2-Person is \$59.78 per month
Family is \$72.43 per month

**While many other rates have gone up, ours has not.
Same rates for several years!**



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

'We can do it': A rural school near two Native American reservations nearly doubles its attendance

Norris Elementary's principal and teachers say cultural programming and intentional engagement with students and families makes a difference

BY: MEGHAN O'BRIEN

NORRIS — As the last round of students filters in from the school van to the main hallway, Principal Brian Brown greets each student by name, with a high five and an "I've been waiting for you all morning."

After students arrive, they're served breakfast, and Brown leads a boys' group and girls' group in singing Lakota songs to get the day started.

This is the morning routine at Norris Elementary, part of the White River School District in rural southwestern South Dakota. The school borders the Pine Ridge and Rosebud reservations, and serves about 50 students from kindergarten through fifth grade who are predominantly Native American.

Norris is an unincorporated community in Mellette County, one of the most impoverished counties in the state. About a third of the students are raised by their grandparents, Brown said.

"We've still got kids that live in houses with no running water," he said. "So, we have our struggles, we have our hardships."

Three years ago, barely half of the school's students were coming to class regularly. That struggle is common for schools serving Native American students in the state, according to data from the state Department of Education. Last school year, nearly half of Native American students were chronically absent, more than double the statewide rate.

But now, Norris' attendance is above 90%. That's higher than both the district and state averages. It's been achieved by engaging one-on-one with students and families and implementing Lakota language and cultural programming.

The improvement is a source of pride for Brown and his staff.

"We can do it," he said. "We can be successful, we can show people that we care about school and that we want to be the best that we can be."

South Dakota Secretary of Education Joseph Graves has noticed the improvement. He said keeping students engaged through culturally relevant lessons and communication is an important part of replicating what's happening at Norris.

"But it's also that leadership, those people who are willing to make that happen, engage with kids," Graves said. "You put those two together and it's proven to be a very strong factor in the success."

Graves said he wants to keep watching the school, to see if the trend continues and if it leads to increased proficiency and graduation rates.

The geographic isolation at Norris makes it difficult to hire and recruit teachers and staff. Two teachers are in dual-grade classrooms, the school's head custodian and office administrator are also the school's bus drivers, and Brown steps in at lunchtime to help serve food.

"We kind of have to make and manipulate our own resources just to get the kids what they need," Brown said. "It's been challenging, but then also, it's been eye-opening to address the needs of the kids out here at Norris."

Norris is one of many schools across the state trying to fill teaching positions. As of July, there were 144 open teaching positions, according to data from Associated School Boards of South Dakota.

A part of Brown's morning routine is checking in with teachers during breakfast to ask which students

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they haven't seen yet. If they aren't there for roll call, Brown hits the road for a home visit.

He would've been doing that on a recent morning, he said, if he wasn't talking to a reporter.

"I probably would've already went out this morning, and probably would have went and visited at least two houses this morning to parents and say, 'Hey, how's it going? What do you need? How can I help you?'" he said.

It's not just about getting the kids to school. It's about them wanting to come to school, Brown said.

In a small community, it takes everyone to keep students involved, said Wendy O'Brien, who teaches fourth and fifth grade at Norris.

"If you get the community members involved, and they come into the classroom and see what the kids are doing, I think they're more supportive," she said.

She wants students to form habits of good attendance. It's especially important for students in her two-grade classroom.

"When they miss school, they miss learning," O'Brien said. "Working with two grades, you don't have time to reteach lessons."

It's also important to make the kids feel seen, Brown said. After taking over as principal in 2022, Brown, who works to preserve Lakota language, songs and philosophy, started finding ways to include Lakota culture in the school day.

Now, the morning announcements are followed by a group of students leading the school in Lakota songs. He also teaches Lakota studies to each grade once a week, and started the school's first traditional Lakota drum group: the Black Pipe Singers.

"When children know their identity, they know who they are, where they come from, they will excel better academically and in basic life skills," Brown said.

It's one of the ways he can set students up for success before they get to high school, where more than one-third of Native American students in public schools don't graduate, according to recent state data.

Brown calls the habits learned in elementary school the "bread and butter" of a student's academic journey.

"It's important to go to school every day, be on time, do the best that you can and work hard," he said. "It promotes a more successful life for the children, and that's what we try to establish here at Norris."

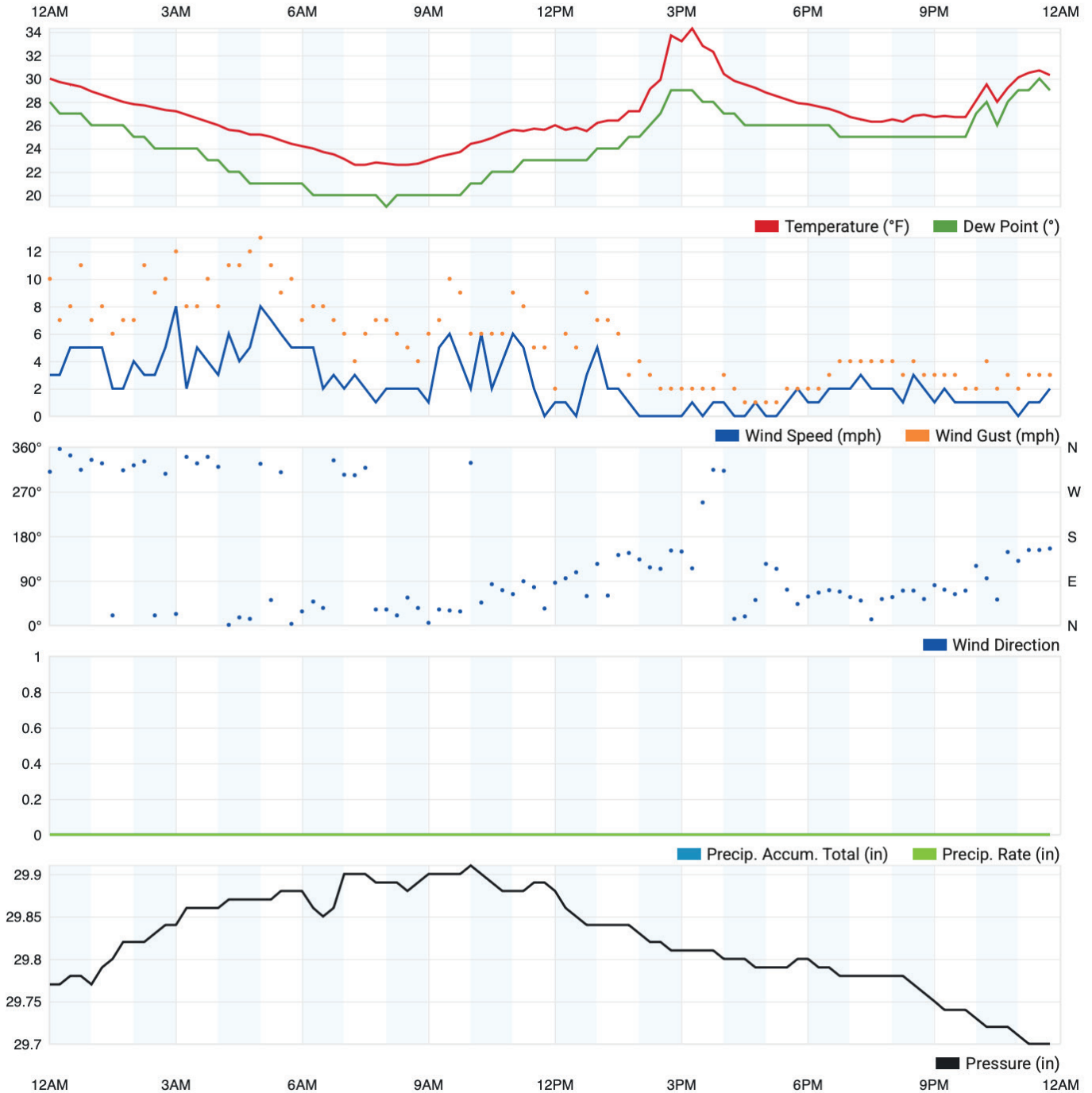
Meghan O'Brien is the audio reporter for South Dakota Searchlight where she covers the state government and its impact on South Dakotans. She's previously reported in Nebraska with a focus on health care and rural communities across the state.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

December 26, 2025



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Today

Tonight

Sunday

Sunday Night

Monday



High: 32 °F

Patchy Fog then Partly Sunny



Low: 6 °F

Patchy Fog then Chance Snow and Patchy Blowing Snow



High: 15 °F ↓↓

Chance Snow and Areas Blowing Snow



Low: 0 °F

Slight Chance Snow and Patchy Blowing Snow



High: 12 °F

Mostly Sunny

Gusty Winds Sunday December 27, 2025 3:46 AM

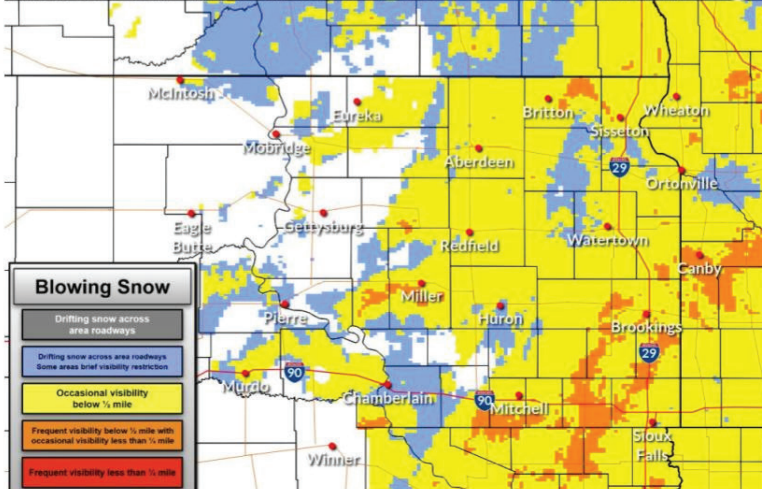
- Northwest winds tonight through Sunday gusting 35 to 50 mph
- Strong winds will combine with falling snow in northeastern SD and west-central MN to produce blowing snow and reduced visibilities down to 1/2 mile at times

Maximum Blowing Snow Forecast (12-Hourly)

Valid Sun Dec 28, 2025 12:00AM through Sun Dec 28, 2025 12:00PM CST

Weather Forecast Office
Aberdeen, SD

Issued Dec 27, 2025 3:18 AM CST



Blowing Snow

- Drifting snow across area roadways
- Drifting snow across area roadways. Some areas brief visibility restriction
- Occasional visibility below 1/2 mile
- Frequent visibility below 1/2 mile with occasional visibility less than 1/4 mile
- Frequent visibility less than 1/4 mile

Maximum Wind Gust Forecast (mph)

	12/27 Sat		12/28 Sun						12/29 Mon						
	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm
Aberdeen	17	30	37	41	45	44	40	41	35	33	31	30	25	21	18
Britton	17	28	36	41	41	40	41	41	36	36	33	33	29	24	22
Chamberlain	15	24	31	39	40	43	45	45	39	39	33	28	23	21	21
Clark	13	26	38	43	46	45	45	46	40	40	37	37	33	28	26
Eagle Butte	37	48	52	51	48	46	46	46	40	38	35	31	25	18	17
Eureka	24	38	44	46	46	45	44	44	38	37	33	31	26	21	18
Gettysburg	25	40	46	47	47	46	45	45	38	38	35	32	26	22	20
McIntosh	40	46	47	47	46	45	47	47	40	37	31	25	20	15	16
Milbank	10	23	32	38	41	40	40	40	38	39	37	37	32	30	26
Miller	17	32	41	48	48	46	45	45	38	38	36	35	30	25	23
Mobridge	28	40	45	45	43	41	40	40	37	36	31	28	21	16	15
Murdo	29	43	47	48	49	47	47	47	40	37	33	30	25	20	18
Pierre	23	39	45	45	45	44	43	44	38	36	32	29	22	16	16
Redfield	15	32	40	46	48	47	46	46	36	36	35	33	30	25	23
Sisseton	13	25	35	40	41	40	39	40	38	38	37	36	32	29	26
Watertown	10	23	33	41	47	46	43	44	40	40	37	37	33	30	26
Webster	13	25	35	40	43	43	43	44	39	38	36	35	31	28	25
Wheaton	13	24	33	37	38	38	38	38	37	38	37	36	32	30	26

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Northwest winds will pick up tonight through Sunday, with the potential for gusts to get up around 35 to 50 mph on Sunday. These strong winds will combine with falling snow to cause blowing snow mainly in northeast SD and west central MN. This blowing snow could reduce visibilities down to 1/2 mile at times.

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

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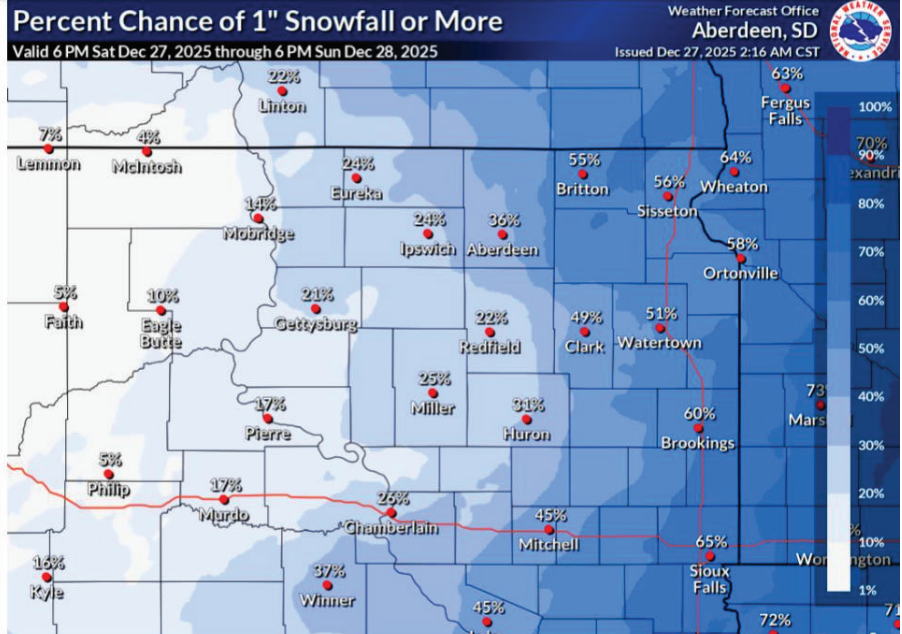


Probability of 1 Inch of Snow Sunday

December 27, 2025
3:46 AM

More snow will occur over northeastern SD

- **Snow moving** through central and northeastern SD and west central MN tonight through Sunday night
- Probability of 1" or more of snowfall is highest (40-60%) east of the James River into west central MN
 - Chance of two inches of snow accumulation or more is 15-30% for west central MN
- Falling snow and gusty winds will lead to reduced visibility



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Snow will move over central and northeastern SD and west central MN tonight through Sunday night. There is a 40-60% chance for 1 inch or more of snowfall east of the James River into west central MN, with a 15-30% chance for 2 inches or more over the same area. The falling snow in addition to the gusty winds could lead to blowing snow and reduced visibilities.



Temperature Drop Sunday and Monday

December 27, 2025
3:46 AM

Minimum Temperature Forecast (°F)

	12/27 Sat		12/28 Sun				12/29 Mon					
	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am
Aberdeen	33	27	16	9	7	5	3	3	10	8	9	17
Britton	31	24	15	8	5	3	1	1	7	5	7	15
Chamberlain	51	35	17	15	15	10	6	6	16	18	19	25
Clark	36	30	20	10	5	4	3	2	7	7	8	15
Eagle Butte	42	24	9	5	7	4	2	2	14	18	19	25
Eureka	31	23	9	3	3	2	-1	-1	6	9	11	18
Gettysburg	40	26	11	5	6	4	2	1	10	12	14	20
McIntosh	36	18	5	3	4	2	0	0	12	17	18	23
Milbank	36	28	21	13	7	4	2	2	8	5	6	16
Miller	43	31	18	12	9	6	5	4	13	12	15	21
Mobridge	36	23	11	5	5	3	1	2	10	14	15	20
Murdo	49	31	15	9	11	7	5	4	16	18	18	23
Pierre	46	32	17	12	12	8	6	6	15	17	18	22
Redfield	39	29	18	12	8	6	5	4	11	10	10	16
Sisseton	34	27	18	10	7	4	3	2	7	7	8	18
Watertown	39	29	21	12	6	4	2	2	7	5	6	14
Webster	34	27	17	10	4	3	1	0	5	5	7	15
Wheaton	31	27	18	11	7	4	1	1	5	3	3	13

- Temperatures will start to drop tonight through Monday
- Coldest Temperatures and Wind chills will occur Sunday night into Monday morning
 - Minimum temperatures will be in **the single digits to the single digits below 0**
 - Wind chills will drop into **the negative teens to negative 20s**
- Wear multiple layers when heading outside to combat the cold wind chills and stay warm



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 34 °F at 3:14 PM

Low Temp: 22 °F at 7:23 AM

Wind: 13 mph at 4:59 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 54 in 1928

Record Low: -29 in 1914

Average High: 25

Average Low: 5

Average Precip in Dec.: 0.52

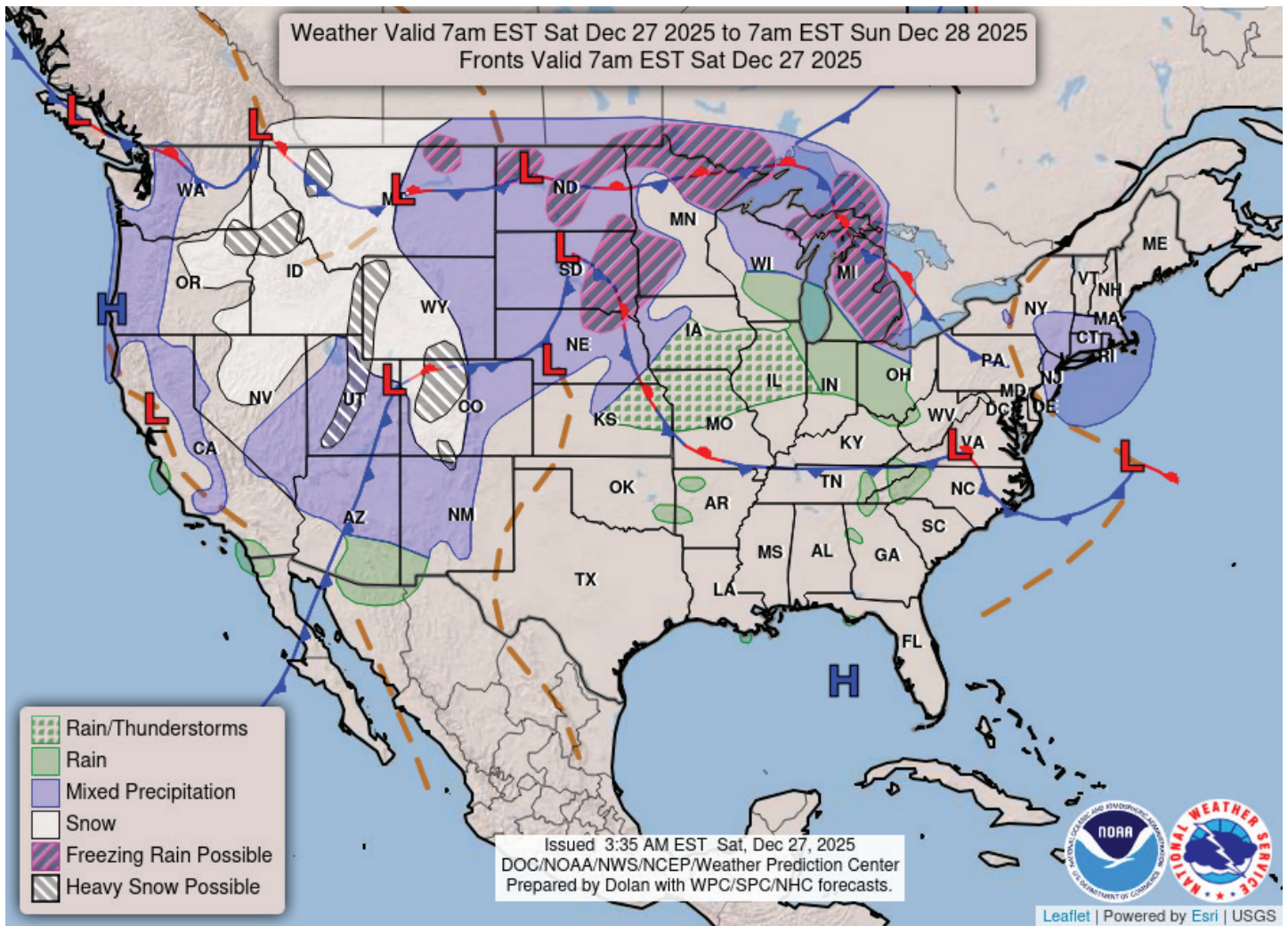
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.67

Average Precip to date: 21.73

Precip Year to Date: 25.48

Sunset Tonight: 4:55 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:11 am



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Today in Weather History

December 27, 1959: Precipitation began as freezing rain on the morning of the 27th throughout the eastern half of South Dakota, changing to snow mixed with occasional sleet late on the 27th, then continued as mostly snow through the late afternoon of the 28th. Glaze caused extensive breakage of tree limbs and power and telephone lines in southeast sections of the state and in scattered communities in the northeast counties. More than 40 communities were without telephone service for more than 24 hours. Highway travel was very dangerous; one man was killed when a tractor skidded on an icy highway and overturned on him in Kingsbury County. Strong winds averaging 20 to 25 mph both dates increased breakage of ice-laded utility wires and caused drifting and blocking of highways by the 3 to 6 inch snowfall. Damage and repair costs to utility lines were estimated at \$400,000.

December 27, 1987: A winter storm gave some freezing rain and snow to southern and eastern South Dakota and southwest and west central Minnesota on the 27th and 28th. In Minnesota, freezing rain began Sunday morning the 27th before changing to heavy snow, which extended into the 28th. The heaviest snowfall was across the high terrain of southwest Minnesota. In southern and eastern South Dakota, six to twelve inches of snow fell. Strong northwest winds of 20-40 mph hampered travel and snow removal. Snow drifts up to 6 feet deep were common. Across many areas of southern Minnesota, visibilities were reduced to zero due to blowing snow. Snowfall amounts in South Dakota included 12 inches in DeSmet; 10 inches in Wessington Springs and Madison; 9 inches in Huron; 8 inches in Pierre, Brookings, Mission and McCook County; 7 inches in Sioux Falls, Kadoka, Pine Ridge, and Martin. 8 inches also fell in Watertown and Highmore, with 7 inches at Bryant and 6 inches in Clear Lake.

1869 — A post Christmas storm in New York and Vermont produced record storm totals of 30 inches at Burlington, VT, and 39 inches at Montpelier VT. A public emergency was declared in Vermont. (David Ludlum)

1892 — An Atlantic coast storm produced a record 18.6 inches of snow at Norfolk, VA, including 17.7 inches in 24 hours. The storm also produced 9.5 inches of snow at Raleigh NC, and brought snow to northern Florida for the first time in 35 years. (26th- 28th) (The Weather Channel)

1982 — The worst Louisiana rainstorm in more than 100 years came to an end. More than 18 inches fell at Vinton, LA, during the three day storm. Flooding was widespread, and property damage was estimated at 100 to 200 million dollars. President Reagan visited the state and declared ten parishes in northeastern Louisiana disaster areas. (The Weather Channel)

1987 — A winter storm produced snow and high winds in Wyoming, Colorado and Nebraska. Denver CO experienced its worst snowstorm since December 1983 as high winds gusting to 46 mph created near blizzard conditions, whipping the fifteen inch snow into drifts five feet high, and closing Stapleton Airport. Snowfall totals in the foothills southwest of Denver ranged up to 42 inches, at Intercanyon. Blizzard conditions raged across southeastern Wyoming through the day, stranding 300 holiday travelers in the tiny town of Chugwater. Heavier snowfall totals included 19 inches at La Grange WY, and 22 inches at Elsmere NE. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 — Severe thunderstorms developing along a cold front in the south central U.S. spawned a dozen tornadoes in Mississippi between early afternoon and sunrise the following day. A tornado at Harpersville destroyed five chicken homes killing thousands of chickens. Strong thunderstorm winds gusted to 80 mph at Rolling Fork MS. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Half a dozen cities in the northeastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date, including Elkins, WV, with a reading of 13 degrees below zero. Watertown NY was the cold spot in the nation with a morning low of 37 degrees below zero. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

December 27, 2001: Typhoon Vamei forms in the South China Sea, about 100 miles north of the Equator. Vamei is the first recorded tropical cyclone to develop within 1.5 degrees of latitude about 104 miles of the equator.

2004 — A major storm system affected parts of the western United States during December 27-29, bringing a variety of weather conditions to the region. Heavy rainfall broke daily precipitation records at some locations in California. Very heavy snow fell across the Sierra Nevada Mountains, with some areas receiving several feet of accumulation. Winds with this weather system gusted over 65 mph at some coastal and mountain locations in California.

How Rebellion Happens

When making a decision, don't try to justify what you already want—ask God for wisdom to choose His best.

Psalms 107:16-21: 16 For He has shattered gates of bronze And cut bars of iron asunder.
17 Fools, because of their rebellious way, And because of their iniquities, were afflicted.
18 Their soul abhorred all kinds of food, And they drew near to the gates of death.
19 Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble; He saved them out of their distresses.
20 He sent His word and healed them, And delivered them from their destructions.
21 Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness, And for His wonders to the sons of men!

Followers of Christ can get caught in the trap of trying to justify their poor choices. Here are four ways rebellion happens:

We refuse to do what God commands. There are obvious ways to ignore God's laws, such as murder. But more often the subtle acts of disobedience, like harboring unforgiveness or ignoring others' needs, become obstacles in our path.

We pursue what is forbidden. The Lord has declared certain things off limits. (See Romans 1:28-32; Galatians 5:19-21.) He doesn't want to spoil our fun, but He knows some actions can have devastating consequences and wants to protect us from them.

We pursue something God allows, but in a sinful manner. We have a lot of freedom in the Christian life, but believers are not meant to achieve goals through theft, deceit, or injustice.

We pursue what God allows, but in our own timing. Impatience is often why people end up in debt or bad relationships. We decide to go after something before getting clear guidance from God.

Whenever you are faced with a decision, ask yourself, Is this the wisest thing for me to do? Then stop, ask the Lord for clarity, and wait until He answers. When we are doing the will of God, we never have to second-guess ourselves.

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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.26.25

9 19 31 63 64 7

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$138,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.24.25

1 18 27 41 49 9

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$10,720,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 31 Mins 31 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.26.25

2 9 15 20 24 3

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 46 Mins 31 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.24.25

1 2 3 7 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$152,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 46 Mins 31 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.24.25

3 15 19 29 35 21

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 15 Mins 31 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.24.25

4 25 31 52 59 19

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 15 Mins 31 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Nigerian villagers are rattled by US airstrikes that made their homes shake and the sky glow red

By OPE ADETAYO and TUNDE OMOLEHIN Associated Press

JABO, Nigeria (AP) — Sanusi Madabo, a 40-year-old farmer in the Nigerian village of Jabo, was preparing for bed on Thursday night when he heard a loud noise that sounded like a plane crashing. He rushed outside his mud house with his wife to see the sky glowing a bright red.

The light burned bright for hours, Madabo said: "It was almost like daytime."

He did not learn until later that he had witnessed a U.S. attack on an alleged camp of the militant Islamic State group.

U.S. President Donald Trump announced late Thursday that the United States had launched a "powerful and deadly strike" against IS militants in Nigeria. The Nigerian government has since confirmed that it cooperated with the U.S. government in its strike.

A panicked village

Nigerian government spokesperson Mohammed Idris said Friday that the strikes were launched from the Gulf of Guinea in the Atlantic Ocean shortly after midnight and involved "16 GPS-guided precision" missiles and also MQ-9 Reaper drones.

Idris said the strikes targeted areas used as "staging grounds by foreign" IS fighters who had sneaked into Nigeria from the Sahel, the southern fringe of Africa's vast Sahara Desert. The government did not release any casualty figures among the militants.

Residents of Jabo, a village in the northwestern Nigerian state of Sokoto, spoke to The Associated Press on Friday about panic and confusion among the villagers following the strikes, which they said hit not far from Jabo's outskirts. There were no casualties among the villagers.

They said that Jabo has never been attacked as part of the violence the U.S. says is widespread — though such attacks regularly occur in neighboring villages.

Abubakar Sani, who lives on the edge of the village, recalled the "intense heat" as the strikes hit.

"Our rooms began to shake, and then fire broke out," he told the AP.

"The Nigerian government should take appropriate measures to protect us as citizens," he added. "We have never experienced anything like this before."

It's a 'new phase of an old conflict'

The strikes are the outcome of a monthslong tense diplomatic clash between the West African nation and the U.S.

The Trump administration has said Nigeria is experiencing a genocide of Christians, a claim the Nigerian government has rejected.

However, Nigeria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs now said the strikes resulted from intelligence sharing and strategic coordination between the two governments.

Yusuf Tuggar, Nigeria's foreign minister, called the airstrikes a "new phase of an old conflict" and said he expected more strikes to follow.

"For us, it is something that has been ongoing," Tuggar added, referring to attacks that have targeted Christians and Muslims in Nigeria for years.

Bulama Bukarti, a security analyst on sub-Saharan Africa, said the residents' fear is compounded by a lack of information.

Nigerian security forces have since cordoned off the area of the strikes and access was not allowed.

Bukarti said transparency would go a long way to calm the local residents. "The more opaque the governments are, the more panic there will be on the ground, and that is what will escalate tensions."

Foreign fighters operate in Nigeria

Analysts say the strikes might have been intended for the Lakurawa group, a relatively new entrant to

Nigeria's complex security crisis.

The group's first attack was recorded around 2018 in the northwestern region before the Nigerian government officially announced its presence last year. The composition of the group has been documented by security researchers as primarily consisting of foreigners from the Sahel.

However, experts say ties between the Lakurawa group and the IS are unproven. The Islamic State West African Province — an IS affiliate in Nigeria — has its strongholds in the northeastern part of the country, where it is currently involved in a power struggle with its parent organization, Boko Haram.

"What might have happened is that, working with the American government, Nigeria identified Lakurawa as a threat and identified camps that belong to the group," Bukarti said.

Still, some local people feel vulnerable.

Aliyu Garba, a Jabo village leader, told the AP that debris left after the strikes was scattered, and that residents had rushed to the scene. Some picked up pieces of the debris, hoping for valuable metal to trade, and Garba said he fears they could get hurt.

The strikes rattled 17-year-old Balira Sa'idu, who has been preparing for her upcoming marriage.

"I am supposed to be thinking about my wedding, but right now I am panicking," she said. "The strike has changed everything. My family is afraid, and I don't even know if it is safe to continue with the wedding plan in Jabo."

Cambodia reports Thai air strikes as the 2 nations hold peace talks

By WASAMON AUDJARINT Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Cambodia reported that Thailand hit a site in the country's northwest with an airstrike on Saturday, even as the two countries held talks to try to put an end to renewed combat that erupted in early December just months after a ceasefire ended a previous round of border fighting.

Cambodia's Defense Ministry said that Thailand deployed F-16 fighter jets to drop four bombs on Saturday morning on a target in Serei Saophoan in the northwestern province of Banteay Meanchey.

On Friday, Cambodia said that a similar airstrike dropped 40 bombs on a target in Chok Chey village in the same province. There were no reports of casualties from that raid, but the ministry said that houses and infrastructure in the Chok Chey target area were destroyed.

Thailand's military confirmed the Friday attack, saying that a joint army-air force operation was conducted to protect Thailand's Sa Kaeo province, which borders Banteay Meanchey and where the two nations have overlapping territorial claims.

Air Marshal Jackkrit Thammavichai, a spokesperson for Thailand's air force, said at a press briefing on Friday that the operation took place after days of monitoring by the Thai military determined that civilians had been evacuated from the target area.

Long-standing competing claims of territory along the border are the root of tensions that broke into open combat in late July. Mediation by Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, backed up by pressure from U.S. President Donald Trump, led the two sides to agree to a shaky ceasefire after five days of fighting.

Each side describes its current military actions as being taken in self-defense, and blames the other for breaching the ceasefire.

"If Cambodia is not sincere about a ceasefire, peace will not be possible, and Thailand will have no choice but to proceed with full-scale military operations to defend its sovereignty," said the air force's Jackkrit.

Meanwhile on Friday, military officials from both nations held a third day of working-level talks of their already established General Border Committee at a checkpoint between Cambodia's Pailin province and Thailand's Chanthaburi province.

The committee meeting is expected to conclude later Saturday, when Thai and Cambodian defense ministers are anticipated to join and formalize an agreement.

Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul said on Friday that Thailand expected Cambodia to agree to a 72-hour ceasefire, and if it was successfully implemented, Thailand would consider repatriating Cambodian prisoners of war, a major demand.

Thailand has lost 26 soldiers and one civilian as a direct result of the combat since Dec. 7, according to officials. Thailand has also reported 44 civilian deaths from collateral effects of the situation. Cambodia hasn't issued an official figure on military casualties, but says that 30 civilians have been killed and 90 injured.

Hundreds of thousands of people have been evacuated from affected areas on both sides of the border. Trump spoke by phone with the Thai and Cambodian prime ministers on Dec. 12 and claimed on social media that they had agreed to revive their ceasefire. Anutin denied such an agreement and fighting continued.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio affirmed in a call this week to Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet that Washington is prepared "to facilitate discussions to ensure peace and stability" between Cambodia and Thailand, the U.S. State Department said.

Amid the fighting, Thai media this week have highlighted the rescue of five malnourished wild animals — a male lion, a lioness, a sun bear and two Asiatic black bears — from a casino allegedly serving as a Cambodian military stronghold that was captured on Sunday by Thai marines.

The animals were sedated and transported to wildlife breeding centers in Thailand, the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation told The Associated Press on Friday. Arriving at their new homes by Christmas, the lioness was named "Merry" and the lion "Christmas" to celebrate their rescue.

Man accused of 1996 Tupac Shakur killing seeks to suppress evidence

By JESSICA HILL Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — The attorneys for the man accused of killing rap icon Tupac Shakur in 1996 are pushing to suppress evidence obtained in what they claim was an "unlawful nighttime search."

Las Vegas criminal defense attorneys Robert Draskovich and William Brown filed a motion this week on behalf of their client, Duane "Keffe D" Davis, who was charged in the drive-by shooting of the iconic rapper off the Las Vegas Strip.

Davis' attorneys argue a judge relied on a "misleading portrait" of Davis as a dangerous drug dealer to grant the execution of a search warrant at night, which should only be done in exceptional circumstances, such as if there's a risk that evidence will disappear if officers wait until morning.

In reality, Davis, an ex-gang leader from Southern California, had left the narcotics trade in 2008 and began doing inspection work for oil refineries, his attorneys say. He was a 60-year-old retired cancer survivor with adult children and grandchildren and had been living with his wife in Henderson, a city outside of Las Vegas, for nine years at the time the warrant was executed.

"The court wasn't told any of this," his attorneys wrote in the motion. "As a result, the court authorized a nighttime search based on a portrait of Davis that bore little resemblance to reality — a clearly erroneous factual determination, in other words."

The Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department — which conducted the search and collected Davis' electronic devices, "purported marijuana" and tubs of photographs — declined to comment Friday, citing the pending litigation. At the time of the search, police said executing the warrant under the cover of darkness would allow officers to surround and secure the residence, and that if Davis barricaded himself, the darkness would allow officers to evacuate the surrounding homes with the least exposure to residents.

Davis was arrested in September 2023. He pleaded not guilty to first-degree murder and sought to be released since shortly after his arrest.

His attorneys claim Davis' arrest stems from false public statements Davis had made in which he claimed to be present in the white Cadillac from which Shakur was shot. They say he has never offered details that would firmly corroborate his presence in the car, and that he benefited from saying he was present. He dodged drug charges by telling the story in a proffer agreement, and he has made money by repeating it in documentaries and his 2019 book, according to his attorneys.

He sought to dismiss his murder charges in the Nevada Supreme Court, but in November his petition was denied.

"Think of it this way: Shakur's murder was essentially the entertainment world's JFK assassination — endlessly dissected, mythologized, monetized — so it's not hard to see why someone in Davis's position might falsely place himself at the center of it all for personal gain," his attorneys wrote.

At least 15 injured in a knife and chemical attack at a factory in Japan

TOKYO (AP) — A man was arrested after stabbing eight people and injuring seven others with what was believed to be bleach at a tire factory in central Japan on Friday, officials said. There was no immediate explanation of his motive.

Eight people were taken to hospitals after being stabbed by the man with a knife at a factory of the tiremaker Yokohama Rubber Co. in the city of Mishima, in the Shizuoka prefecture, west of Tokyo, according to the Fujisan Nanto Fire Department.

The fire department told The Associated Press that five of the people who were stabbed were in serious condition but other details were not available. All were conscious while they were being transported to hospitals, media reports said.

Shizuoka prefectural police said the attacker, a 38-year-old man, was arrested for alleged attempted murder at the factory, but did not give further details.

The attacker is believed to be a former employee at the factory, Kyodo news agency said, quoting investigative sources.

The suspect was carrying a survival knife and wearing what appeared to be a gas mask, the major Japanese newspaper Asahi reported, citing investigators.

Seven others were also injured by the bleach thrown at them during the attack, and taken to hospitals for treatment, the fire department said.

Japan has strict gun control laws and is known for violent crimes being rare, but there have been a number of high-profile knife attacks in recent years.

Kennedy Center criticizes musician who canceled performance after Trump name added to building

By STEVEN SLOAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The president of the Kennedy Center on Friday fiercely criticized a musician's sudden decision to cancel a Christmas Eve performance at the venue days after the White House announced that President Donald Trump's name would be added to the facility.

"Your decision to withdraw at the last moment — explicitly in response to the Center's recent renaming, which honors President Trump's extraordinary efforts to save this national treasure — is classic intolerance and very costly to a non-profit Arts institution," the venue's president, Richard Grenell, wrote in a letter to musician Chuck Redd that was shared with The Associated Press.

In the letter, Grenell said he would seek \$1 million in damages "for this political stunt."

Redd did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

A drummer and vibraphone player, Redd has presided over holiday "Jazz Jams" at the Kennedy Center since 2006, succeeding bassist William "Keter" Betts. In an email Wednesday to The Associated Press, Redd said he pulled out of the concert in the wake of the renaming.

"When I saw the name change on the Kennedy Center website and then hours later on the building, I chose to cancel our concert," Redd said. He added Wednesday that the event has been a "very popular holiday tradition" and that he often featured at least one student musician.

"One of the many reasons that it was very sad to have had to cancel," he told the AP.

President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963, and Congress passed a law the following year naming the center as a living memorial to him.

Grenell is a Trump ally whom the president chose to head the Kennedy Center after he forced out the

previous leadership. According to the White House, Trump's handpicked board approved the renaming, which scholars have said violates the law. Kennedy niece Kerry Kennedy has vowed to remove Trump's name from the building once he leaves office, and former House historian Ray Smock is among those who say any changes would have to be approved by Congress.

The law explicitly prohibits the board of trustees from making the center into a memorial to anyone else, and from putting another person's name on the building's exterior.

Yemen separatists accuse Saudi Arabia of launching airstrikes against their forces

By JON GAMBRELL and AHMED AL-HAJ Associated Press

ADEN, Yemen (AP) — Separatists in southern Yemen accused Saudi Arabia on Friday of targeting their forces with airstrikes, something not formally acknowledged by the kingdom after it warned the forces to withdraw from governorates they recently took over.

The Southern Transitional Council, backed by the United Arab Emirates, said the strikes happened in Yemen's Hadramout governorate. It wasn't immediately clear if there were any casualties from the strikes that further raise tensions in the war-torn nation and put at risk a fragile Saudi-led coalition that has been battling the Iran-backed Houthi rebels in the country's north for a decade.

Amr Al Bidh, a foreign affairs special representative for the Council, said in a statement to The Associated Press that its fighters had been operating in eastern Hadramout on Friday after facing "multiple ambushes" from gunmen. Those attacks killed two fighters with the Council and wounded 12 others, Al Bidh said.

The Saudi airstrikes happened after that, he added.

The Council later described their operations in the area as seeking a wanted man and trying to cut off smuggling through the area.

Saudi warnings precede strikes

Faez bin Omar, a leading member in a coalition of tribes in Hadramout, told the AP that he believed the strikes served as a warning to the Council to withdraw its fighters from the area. An eyewitness to the strikes, Ahmed al-Khed, said he saw destroyed military vehicles afterward, believed to belong to forces allied to the Council.

The Council's satellite channel AIC aired what appeared to be mobile phone footage it described as showing the strikes. In one video, a man speaking could be heard blaming the strike on Saudi aircraft.

Officials in Saudi Arabia did not respond to a request for comment from the AP. However, the Saudi-owned, London-based newspaper Asharq Al-Awsat, quoting "informed sources," reported late Friday that the kingdom carried out the strikes "to send a message" to the Council.

"Any further escalation would be met with stricter measures," the paper said.

On Thursday, the kingdom called on the Emirati-backed separatists in southern Yemen to withdraw.

The Council moved earlier this month into Yemen's governorates of Hadramout and Mahra. That had pushed out forces affiliated with the Saudi-backed National Shield Forces, another group in the coalition fighting the Houthis.

Those aligned with the Council have increasingly flown the flag of South Yemen, which was a separate country from 1967-1990. Demonstrators rallied on Thursday in the southern port city of Aden to support political forces calling for South Yemen to secede again from Yemen.

Saudis, Emiratis back different Yemen forces

Following the capture of Yemen's capital, Sanaa, and much of the country's north by the Houthis in 2014, Aden has been the seat of power for the internationally recognized government and forces aligned against the rebels.

The actions by the separatists have put pressure on the relationship between Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which maintain close relations and are members of the OPEC oil cartel, but also have competed for influence and international business in recent years.

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The UAE said in a statement Friday that it "welcomed the efforts undertaken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to support security and stability" in Yemen.

"The UAE reaffirmed its steadfast commitment to supporting all endeavors aimed at strengthening stability and development in Yemen, contributing positively to regional security and prosperity," it added.

There has also been an escalation of violence in Sudan, another nation on the Red Sea, where the kingdom and the Emirates support opposing forces in that country's ongoing war.

The war in Yemen

The Iranian-backed Houthis seized Sanaa in September 2014 and forced the internationally recognized government into exile. Iran denies arming the rebels, although Iranian-manufactured weaponry has been found on the battlefield and in sea shipments heading to Yemen despite a U.N. arms embargo.

A Saudi-led coalition armed with U.S. weaponry and intelligence entered the war on the side of Yemen's exiled government in March 2015. Years of inconclusive fighting have pushed the Arab world's poorest nation to the brink of famine.

The war has killed more than 150,000 people, including fighters and civilians, and created one of the globe's worst humanitarian disasters, killing tens of thousands more.

The Houthis, meanwhile, have launched attacks on hundreds of ships in the Red Sea corridor over the Israel-Hamas war, greatly disrupting regional shipping.

Further chaos in Yemen could again draw in the United States.

Washington launched an intense bombing campaign targeting the rebels earlier this year that U.S. President Donald Trump halted just before his trip to the Middle East in October. The Biden administration also conducted strikes against the Houthis, including using B-2 bombers to target what it described as underground bunkers used by the Houthis.

In a statement early Saturday, the U.S. State Department said it was "grateful for the diplomatic leadership of our partners, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates," in the crisis in Yemen.

"The United States is concerned by recent events in southeastern Yemen," it said. "We urge restraint and continued diplomacy, with a view to reaching a lasting solution."

California's intense winter storms turned some roads into rivers of mud

By TY ONEIL and JAIMIE DING Associated Press

WRIGHTWOOD, Calif. (AP) — Powerful winter storms brought the wettest Christmas season to Southern California in years, sending mud and debris sliding and half-filling homes with mud.

There was still a risk of more flash flooding and mudslides Friday despite slackening rain around Los Angeles, the National Weather Service warned.

"Still not quite out of the woods, but for the most part, the worst is over," said Mike Wofford, a National Weather Service meteorologist in Los Angeles.

Firefighters rescued over 100 people Thursday in Los Angeles County, with one helicopter pulling 21 people from stranded cars, officials said. LA police also responded to more than 350 traffic collisions, the mayor's office said.

In Wrightwood, a 5,000-resident mountain town about 80 miles (130 kilometers) northeast of Los Angeles, relentless rain this week turned the roads to rivers and buried cars up to their windows in rocks, debris and mud.

Sherry Tocco's neighborhood was devastated, she said Friday. Several homes were destroyed, but her house was spared from mud and debris.

The river was raging and "then it just came through and destroyed, took everything with it," she said.

A shed was washed down the road, and several others were strewn about. Firefighters helped her evacuate earlier this week and she slept in her car on Christmas Eve.

Most of the town lost power and many were buying fire starters, logs and propane, said Eric Faulkner, manager of Mountain Hardware.

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"My phone's been nonstop of, 'do you have this?' or 'can you help me with that?'" Faulkner said outside the store while it rained Friday.

Manny Simpson, a Wrightwood resident of 14 years, said the storms were the worst he's seen. His basement was flooded, but he was still counting himself lucky.

"I've seen some other houses and I feel good about what happened to me," he said.

Fire officials rescued several people from trapped cars earlier this week when mud and debris cascaded down a road into town. There was one injury reported.

In the nearby mountain town of Lytle Creek, raging waters destroyed a bridge Wednesday, cutting off a neighborhood, resident Travis Guenther said. By Friday morning, he said, water subsided enough for people to walk across the debris.

One home had as much as 4 feet (122 centimeters) of debris piled up inside after mud blew through the front door earlier this week, Guenther said.

"The guys are still trying to stay there but they can't shut their doors," he said. "They were stuck inside because there was a raging river on either side of them."

Meanwhile, forecasters say a weekend storm could bring New York City's biggest snowfall in three years. Freezing rain was falling Friday in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and in New York, an emergency was declared for much of the state ahead of widespread snowfall expected Friday night into Saturday morning.

In Connecticut, people were encouraged to avoid travel as a winter storm approached the Northeast on Friday.

The California storms brought the wettest Christmas season to downtown Los Angeles in 54 years, the National Weather Service said. The area recorded 3 inches (7.6 centimeters) of rain in three days, while areas in Ventura County saw up to 17 inches (43 centimeters).

Forecasters expected a dry weekend before more rain around New Year's Eve.

At Mammoth Mountain Ski Area, a resort southeast of Yosemite National Park, two ski patrollers were injured Friday morning in an avalanche and taken to a hospital, a resort official said. The resort has seen more than 5 feet (1.5 meters) of snow since Tuesday.

High waves were forecast and flood watches in place for parts of Northern California through Friday. Roughly 44% of flights at San Francisco airport were delayed Friday during strong winds, the airport said.

More wind and as much as 2 inches (5 centimeters) of snowfall an hour was expected in the Sierra Nevada, making mountain pass travel treacherous. Local officials rescued a backcountry skier who was buried in an avalanche Thursday near the Mount Rose ski resort on the edge of Reno.

A falling tree killed a San Diego man Wednesday, news outlets reported. Farther north, a Sacramento sheriff's deputy died in what appeared to be a weather-related crash. Heavy rain and flash flooding earlier this week in Northern California also caused at least one death, officials said.

Stocks close slightly lower in quiet post-Christmas trading

NEW YORK (AP) — Stocks closed slightly lower on Friday in a quiet day of trading as investors returned from the Christmas holiday.

The S&P 500 index fell 2.11 points, less than 0.1%, to close at 6,929.94, the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 20.19 points, also less than 0.1%, to 48,710.97 and the Nasdaq composite fell 20.21 points, or 0.1%, to 23,593.10.

Institutional investors are largely closed out of their positions for the year, so trading was extremely light. Trading on the New York Stock Exchange was roughly half what an average day.

With three trading days left in 2025, the S&P 500 has climbed nearly 18% this year, helped by the deregulatory policies of the Trump administration as well as investor optimism about the future of artificial intelligence.

Gold and silver prices continued to climb, with silver rising nearly 8% to \$77.20 an ounce. Gold rose 1.1%. Both precious metals have risen this year as investors have looked for safe havens outside of stocks and bonds, and silver has also risen sharply due supply constraints. Miners posted solid gains Friday. Freeport-

McMoRan climbed 2.2%.

Earlier surges in gold prices partly reflected worries during the U.S. government shutdown. Expectations that the U.S. Federal Reserve will cut interest rates further in the new year, weakening the dollar against other currencies, have also fueled buying of gold.

Shares of Target rose 3.1% after The Financial Times reported that an activist investor is taking a stake in the retail giant.

U.S. crude oil fell 2.8% and Brent crude fell 2.6%.

Treasury yields held relatively steady in the bond market. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note edged down to 4.13%.

Markets in Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand and Indonesia were closed. Most European markets remained closed Friday.

A Palestinian man kills 2 in car-ramming and stabbing attack in northern Israel and injures 2 others

By JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — A Palestinian attacker rammed his car into a man and then stabbed a young woman in northern Israel on Friday afternoon, killing both, police said. The Israeli military swiftly launched an operation in the assailant's hometown in the occupied West Bank.

The attack started in the northern city of Beit Shean when the Palestinian man rammed his vehicle into people, killing one man and injuring a teenage boy. He then drove off onto a highway, where he fatally stabbed the woman, and injured another person near the entrance to the city of Afula.

Authorities say the attacker was shot and injured in Afula. He was then taken to hospital; his condition was not immediately known.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu identified the victims as Aviv Maor, a teenager, and Shimshon Mordechai, 68. Paramedics pronounced both dead at the scene.

Israeli President Isaac Herzog said that he was shocked by the "horrific killing spree." He said that Israel was "committed to reinforcing and strengthening this challenging border and, of course, to bolstering the security response in the area for the full safety of the residents."

The military enters attacker's hometown

Israel's military soon began amassing troops near the Palestinian town of Qabatiya, where Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz said that the assailant was from. Later Friday, the military said that it conducted a "precise operational search at the residence" of the attacker, together with intelligence forces, and was preparing to demolish the residence.

The operation was ongoing in the area, the military said later in the evening.

Israeli forces blocked several roads around the town, where they entered several houses and positioned themselves around the attacker's home, said the mayor, Ahmad Zakarneh. He added that residents had stocked up on supplies from bakeries and supermarkets after they were notified of the impending military operation.

Katz said that he'd ordered troops to "act forcefully and immediately" against what he called "terrorist infrastructure" in the town.

"Anyone who aids or sponsors terrorism will pay the full price," he said.

A history of raids

It's common practice for Israel to launch raids in the West Bank towns that attackers come from or demolish homes belonging to the assailants' families. Israel says that it helps to locate militant infrastructure and prevents future attacks. Rights watchdogs describe such actions as collective punishment.

Raids have been conducted in the area of Qabatiya, which is in the northern West Bank near the major city of Jenin, over the last few weeks.

On Dec. 20, Israel's military said that they killed a person in Qabatiya who "hurled a block toward the soldiers." It later said that the killing was under review, after Palestinian media aired brief security footage

in which the youth appears to emerge from an alley and is shot by troops as he approaches them without throwing anything.

The Israel-Hamas war, which began with the Hamas-led attack in southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023 that killed about 1,200 people and saw 251 taken hostage, has killed tens of thousands of Palestinians in Gaza. It has also sparked a surge of violence in Israel and the West Bank, with a rise in attacks by Palestinian militants as well as Israeli settler violence against Palestinians.

In September, Palestinian attackers opened fire at a bus stop during the morning rush hour in Jerusalem, killing six people and wounding another 12, according to Israeli officials.

Recognizing Somaliland

In a separate development, Israel on Friday became the first country to recognize Somaliland, the break-away region of Somalia in East Africa.

It wasn't known why Israel made the declaration now or whether it was expecting something in return.

Earlier this year, U.S. and Israeli officials told The Associated Press that Israel had approached Somaliland about taking in Palestinians from Gaza as part of U.S. President Donald Trump's plan at the time to resettle that territory's population. The United States has since abandoned that plan.

Netanyahu's office said on Friday that he, Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar, and Somaliland's president, Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi, signed a joint and mutual declaration "in the spirit of the Abraham Accords."

That's the project that, starting in 2020, established commercial and diplomatic ties between Israel and several Arab and Muslim-majority countries — and that Trump sees as key to his plan for bringing long-term stability to the Middle East.

Somaliland, a territory of more than 3 million people in the Horn of Africa, seceded from Somalia more than three decades ago, but it has not been internationally recognized as an independent state by any country until now.

The foreign ministry of Egypt — a major mediator in the Israel-Hamas war — said on social media that it rejects Israel's recognition of Somaliland and stressed full support for Somalia's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity.

The U.S.-brokered ceasefire agreement in the Israel-Hamas war specifies that Palestinians won't be expelled from Gaza.

What to know about the militants targeted by US airstrikes in northwest Nigeria

By CHINEDU ASADU Associated Press

ABUJA, Nigeria (AP) — The United States airstrikes that targeted Islamic State group militants in northwestern Nigeria on Thursday marked a major escalation in an offensive that the West African's overstretched military has struggled with for years.

U.S. President Donald Trump said on social media that the "powerful and deadly" strikes in the state of Sokoto were carried out against IS gunmen who were "targeting and viciously killing, primarily, innocent Christians." Residents and security analysts have said Nigeria's security crisis affects both Christians, predominant in the south, and Muslims, who are the majority in the north.

In an interview Friday with Politico, Trump said he decided on the timing of the strikes. "They were going to do it earlier," he said. "And I said, 'Nope, let's give a Christmas present.'"

Nigeria, which is battling multiple armed groups, said the U.S. strikes were part of an exchange of intelligence and strategic coordination between the two countries.

The Associated Press could not confirm the extent of the strikes' impact. U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, in a post on X about the airstrikes, said, "More to come..."

The militants targeted by US airstrikes

The armed groups in Africa's most populous country include at least two affiliated with IS, an offshoot

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of the Boko Haram extremist group known as the Islamic State West Africa Province in the northeast, and the lesser-known Islamic State Sahel Province (ISSP), known locally as Lakurawa, and prominent in the northwest.

Although officials did not say exactly which group was targeted, security analysts said the target, if indeed against IS militants, was likely members of Lakurawa, which became more lethal in border states like Sokoto and Kebbi in the last year, often targeting remote communities and security forces.

The Nigerian military has said in the past that the group has roots in neighboring Niger and that it became more active in Nigeria's border communities following a 2023 military coup. That coup resulted in fractured relations between Nigeria and Niger, and affected their multinational military operations along the porous border.

Militants torment villagers

Multiple analysts have said Lakurawa has been active in northwest Nigeria since around 2017, when it was invited by traditional authorities in Sokoto to protect their communities from bandit groups.

The militants, however, "overstayed their welcome, clashing with some of the community leaders ... and enforcing a harsh interpretation of Sharia law that alienated much of the rural population," according to James Barnett, an Africa researcher with the Washington-based Hudson Institute.

"Communities now openly say that Lakurawa are more oppressive and dangerous than the bandits they claim to protect them from," according to Malik Samuel, a Nigerian security researcher with Good Governance Africa.

Lakurawa controls territories in Sokoto and Kebbi states, and has become known for killings, kidnapping, rape and armed robbery, Samuel said.

But some of the attacks blamed on Lakurawa are by the Islamic State Sahel Province, which has expanded from Niger's Dosso region to northwestern Nigeria, according to the U.S.-based Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project.

"ISSP has maintained a low profile, operating covertly to infiltrate and entrench itself along the Niger-Nigeria border, and is now also expanding its operations toward the Beninese border," the project said in a recent report.

Security threats are deep-rooted in social issues

The security woes are more of a governance problem than a military one.

Motives for attacks differ, but the gangs are often driven by the near absence of a state and security presence in conflict hot spots, making recruitment easy. Those hot spots, data show, have some of the country's highest levels of poverty, hunger and lack of jobs.

Nigeria's Minister of Defense Christopher Musa once said that military action is only 30% of what is needed to fix the country's security crisis, while the remaining 70% depends on good governance.

"The absence of the state in remote communities is making it easy for non-state actors to come in and present themselves to the people as the best alternative government," said Samuel.

US strikes seen as crucial support for Nigeria's military

Thursday's U.S. strikes are widely seen by experts as crucial help for Nigeria's security forces, which are often overstretched and outgunned as they fight multiple security crises across different regions.

In states like Sokoto, the military often carries out airstrikes targeting militant hideouts and Nigeria has embarked on mass recruitment of security forces. But analysts say military operations targeting the gangs are not usually sustained and the militants easily move on motorcycles to new locations through vast forests that connect several states in the north.

They also often use hostages — including schoolchildren — as cover, making airstrikes difficult.

US launches strikes against Islamic State group in Nigeria after attacks target Christians

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — President Donald Trump said the United States launched a “powerful and deadly” strike against forces of the Islamic State group in Nigeria, after spending weeks accusing the West African country’s government of failing to rein in the targeting of Christians.

In a Christmas evening post on his social media site Thursday, Trump did not provide details or mention the extent of the damage caused by the strikes in the northwestern state of Sokoto.

A Defense Department official, who insisted on anonymity to discuss details not made public, said the U.S. worked with Nigeria to carry out the strikes and that they’d been approved by Abuja.

Nigeria’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the cooperation included exchange of intelligence and strategic coordination in ways “consistent with international law, mutual respect for sovereignty and shared commitments to regional and global security.”

The Associated Press could not confirm the extent of the strikes’ impact.

Nigeria fights several armed groups

Nigeria is battling multiple armed groups, including at least two affiliated with IS, an offshoot of the Boko Haram extremist group known as the Islamic State West Africa Province in the northeast, and the less-known Lakurawa group prominent in the northwestern states, where the gangs use large swathes of forests as hideouts.

Security analysts said the target of the U.S. strikes could be the Lakurawa group, which in the last year has increasingly become lethal in the region, often targeting remote communities and security forces.

“Lakurawa is a group that is actually controlling territories in Nigeria, in Sokoto state and in other states like Kebbi,” said Malik Samuel, a Nigerian security researcher at Good Governance Africa. “In the northwest, there has been the incursion of violent extremist groups that are ideologically driven,” he said, blaming the incursion on the near absence of the state and security forces in hot spots.

Violence affecting Nigerians

Trump said the airstrikes were launched against IS militants “who have been targeting and viciously killing, primarily, innocent Christians.” Residents and security analysts have said Nigeria’s security crisis affects both Christians, predominant in the south, and Muslims, who are the majority in the north.

“Terrorist violence in any form, whether directed at Christians, Muslims or other communities, remains an affront to Nigeria’s values and to international peace and security,” the Nigerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said.

Nigeria’s government has previously said in response to Trump’s criticisms that people of many faiths, not just Christians, have suffered attacks at the hands of extremist groups.

US measures affecting Nigeria

Trump ordered the Pentagon last month to begin planning for potential military action in Nigeria to try and curb what he called Christian persecution. The State Department recently announced it would restrict visas for Nigerians and their family members involved in killing Christians there.

And the U.S. recently designated Nigeria a “country of particular concern” under the International Religious Freedom Act.

Trump said U.S. defense officials had “executed numerous perfect strikes, as only the United States is capable of doing” and added that “our Country will not allow Radical Islamic Terrorism to prosper.”

Nigeria’s population of 220 million is split almost equally between Christians and Muslims. The country has long faced insecurity from various fronts, including Boko Haram, which seeks to establish its radical interpretation of Islamic law and has also targeted Muslims it deems not Muslim enough.

But attacks in Nigeria often have varying motives. There are religiously motivated ones targeting both Christians and Muslims, clashes between farmers and herders over dwindling resources, communal rivalries, secessionist groups and ethnic clashes.

The U.S. security footprint has diminished in Africa, where military partnerships have either been scaled down or canceled. U.S. forces likely would have to be drawn from other parts of the world for any larger-scale military intervention in Nigeria.

Trump has nonetheless kept up the pressure as Nigeria faced a series of attacks on schools and churches in violence that experts and residents say targets both Christians and Muslims.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth posted Thursday night on X: "The President was clear last month: the killing of innocent Christians in Nigeria (and elsewhere) must end."

Hegseth said that U.S. military forces are "always ready, so ISIS found out tonight — on Christmas" and added, "More to come...Grateful for Nigerian government support & cooperation" before signing off, "Merry Christmas!"

Trump-Zelenskyy talks will address security guarantees and reconstruction, Ukraine leader says

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Friday that he will meet with U.S. President Donald Trump in Florida over the weekend.

Zelenskyy told journalists that the two leaders will discuss security guarantees for Ukraine during Sunday's talks, and that the 20-point plan under discussion "is about 90% ready."

An "economic agreement" also will be discussed, Zelenskyy said, but added that he was unable to confirm "whether anything will be finalized by the end."

The Ukrainian side will also raise "territorial issues", he said. Moscow has insisted that Ukraine relinquish the remaining territory it still holds in the Donbas — an ultimatum that Ukraine has rejected. Russia has captured most of Luhansk and about 70% of Donetsk — the two areas that make up the Donbas.

Zelenskyy said that Ukraine "would like the Europeans to be involved," but doubted whether it would be possible at short notice.

"We must, without doubt, find some format in the near future in which not only Ukraine and the U.S. are present, but Europe is represented as well," he said.

The announced meeting is the latest development in an extensive U.S.-led diplomatic push to end the nearly four-year Russia-Ukraine war, but efforts have run into sharply conflicting demands by Moscow and Kyiv.

Zelenskyy's comments came after he said Thursday that he had a "good conversation" with U.S. special envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Friday that the Kremlin had already been in contact with U.S. representatives since Russian presidential envoy Kirill Dmitriev recently met with U.S. envoys in Florida.

"It was agreed upon to continue the dialogue," he said.

Trump is engaged in a diplomatic push to end Russia's all-out war, which began on Feb. 24, 2022, but his efforts have run into sharply conflicting demands by Moscow and Kyiv.

Zelenskyy said Tuesday that he would be willing to withdraw troops from Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland as part of a plan to end the war, if Russia also pulls back and the area becomes a demilitarized zone monitored by international forces.

Though Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said Thursday that there had been "slow but steady progress" in the peace talks, Russia has given no indication that it will agree to any kind of withdrawal from land it has seized.

On the ground, two people were killed and six more wounded Friday when a guided aerial bomb hit a busy road and set cars aflame in Ukraine's second biggest city, Kharkiv, mayor Ihor Terekhov wrote on Telegram.

One person was killed and three others were wounded when a guided aerial bomb hit a house in Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia region, while six people were wounded in a missile strike on the city of Uman, local officials

said Friday.

Russian drone attacks on the city of Mykolaiv and its suburbs overnight into Friday left part of the city without power. Energy and port infrastructure were damaged by drones in the city of Odesa on the Black Sea.

Meanwhile, Ukraine said that it struck a major Russian oil refinery on Thursday using U.K.-supplied Storm Shadow missiles.

Ukraine's General Staff said that its forces hit the Novoshakhtinsk refinery in Russia's Rostov region.

"Multiple explosions were recorded. The target was hit," it wrote on Telegram.

Rostov regional Gov. Yuri Slyusar said that a firefighter was wounded when extinguishing the fire.

Ukraine's long-range drone strikes on Russian refineries aim to deprive Moscow of the oil export revenue it needs to pursue its full-scale invasion. Russia wants to cripple the Ukraine's power grid, seeking to deny civilians access to heat, light and running water in what Ukrainian officials say is an attempt to "weaponize winter."

Former Malaysian leader Najib Razak sentenced to 15 years and hefty fine in 1MDB corruption trial

By EILEEN NG Associated Press

PUTRAJAYA, Malaysia (AP) — Imprisoned former Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak was sentenced to 15 years and a hefty 13.5 billion ringgit (\$3.3 billion) in fines and assets after being convicted Friday in his biggest corruption trial tied to the multibillion-dollar looting of the 1MDB state investment fund.

The nation's High Court found Najib, 72, guilty on four counts of abuse of power and 21 charges of money laundering related to more than \$700 million channeled into his personal bank accounts from the 1MDB fund.

Justice Collin Lawrence Sequerah sentenced Najib to 15 years in prison for each charge of abuse of power, and five years for each of the money laundering charges. The sentences are to run concurrently which means he will face another 15 years in prison. The new sentence will run after his current term for an earlier 1MDB case ends, the judge said.

He imposed a total fine of 11.4 billion ringgit (\$2.8 billion) for the abuse of power charges. In addition, he also ordered another 2.08 billion ringgit (514 million) in assets to be recovered from Najib under money laundering laws. If Najib fails to pay, he faces more years in prison.

Najib's lawyer Mohamed Shafee Abdullah said the judge "made so many blunders" and that they would appeal the verdict. Dressed in blue suit, Najib stood up and was calm when the sentencing was announced, slumping later back in his chair in the dock.

Najib denied wrongdoing

The ruling marked a major milestone in one of the world's largest financial scandals, which rippled across global markets and triggered investigations in the United States and other nations.

Najib denied any wrongdoing and maintained the funds were a political donation from Saudi Arabia and that he had been misled by rogue financiers led by Low Taek Jho. Low, thought to be the scandal's mastermind, remains at large.

Sequerah said Najib's claim of a Saudi donation was "incapable of belief." Four letters purportedly from the Saudi donor were forged and evidence clearly showed the funds originated from 1MDB, he said.

He rejected defense arguments that Najib was an unwitting victim, duped by former 1MDB officials and Low. Witness testimonies had pointed to an "unmistakable bond" between Najib and Low, who had played a pivotal role in the scandal and operated as "the proxy, the conduit, the intermediary and the facilitator" for Najib in 1MDB, the judge said.

The judge noted that Najib failed to take steps to verify the origin of the massive funds nor took action against Low. Instead, Najib used the money despite its suspicious origins and took steps to protect his position, including by removing the then-attorney general and anti-corruption chief investigating the case,

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he said.

While Najib returned most of the funds to an offshore account where they came from, he said this was clearly staged to conceal the illicit origin of the funds.

"The accused was no country bumpkin," said Sequerah, who took five hours to read the ruling. "Any attempt to paint the accused as an ignoramus who was hopelessly unaware of the misdeeds going around him must therefore, fail miserably."

Najib, who served as prime minister from 2009 to 2018, currently is serving a prison sentence after being convicted in an earlier case linked to the 1MDB scandal, which led to his government's defeat in 2018.

He was sentenced to 12 years in prison in 2020 for abuse of power, criminal breach of trust and money laundering involving 42 million ringgit (\$10.3 million) channeled into his accounts from SRC International, a former unit of 1MDB.

He began his sentence in August 2022 after losing a final appeal, becoming Malaysia's first former leader to be imprisoned. The Pardons Board, a body that advises rulers on granting clemency, halved his sentence and sharply reduced his fine in 2024.

Billions looted from 1MDB

Najib set up the 1MDB development fund shortly after taking office in 2009. He chaired 1MDB's advisory board and held veto power as finance minister while serving as prime minister.

Between 2009 and 2014, top executives and associates of Najib looted over \$4.5 billion from the fund, laundering it through countries including the U.S., Singapore and Switzerland, according to the U.S. Justice Department. Authorities alleged the funds were used to finance Hollywood films and extravagant purchases including hotels, a luxury yacht, art and jewelry. Jeff Sessions, the U.S. attorney general at the time, called it "kleptocracy at its worst."

The scandal also hit Wall Street, with Goldman Sachs facing billions in fines for its role in raising money for 1MDB.

The scion of a prominent political family, Najib was long seen as untouchable until public anger over 1MDB led to the 2018 election defeat of his ruling party, which had governed Malaysia since the country gained independence from Britain in 1957.

Earlier this week, Najib failed in his bid to serve his graft sentence under house arrest. Malaysia's High Court ruled Monday that a rare royal order for home arrest issued by the nation's former king was invalid because it was not made in accordance with constitutional requirements. Najib's lawyer has said they plan to appeal.

Originally due for release in August 2028 after his sentence reduction, Najib now faces a longer stretch behind bars.

Najib's wife, Rosmah Mansor, also was sentenced to 10 years in prison and a massive fine in 2022 in a separate graft case. She has been released on bail pending an appeal.

Trump overturned decades of US trade policy in 2025.

See the impact of his tariffs, in four charts

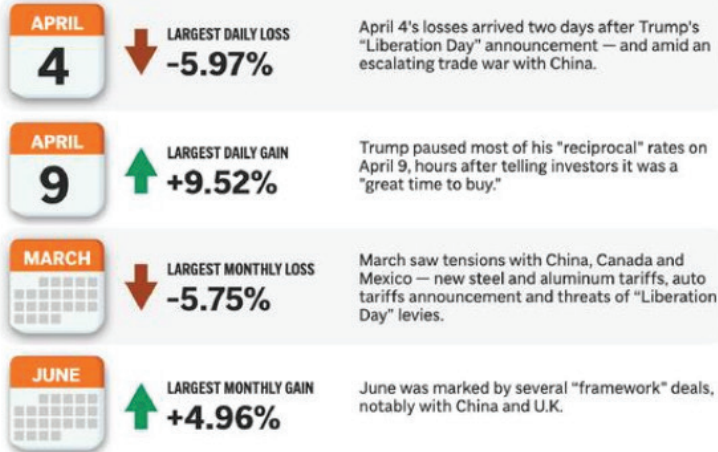
By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS and PAUL WISEMAN AP Business Writers

Since returning to the White House in January, President Donald Trump has overturned decades of U.S. trade policy — building a wall of tariffs around what used to be a wide open economy.

His double-digit taxes on imports from almost every country have disrupted global commerce and strained the budgets of consumers and businesses worldwide. They have also raised tens of billions of dollars for the U.S. Treasury.

Trump has argued that his steep new import taxes are necessary to bring back wealth that was "stolen" from the U.S. He says they will narrow America's decades-old trade deficit and bring manufacturing back to the country. But upending the global supply chain has proven costly for households facing rising prices. The taxes are paid by importers who typically attempt to pass along the higher costs to their customers.

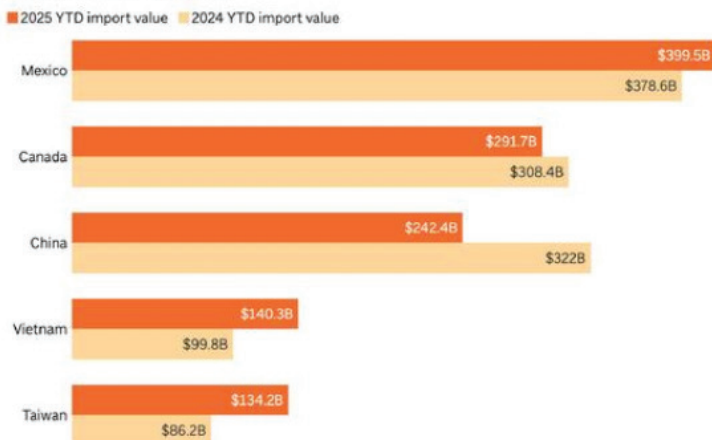
Biggest S&P 500 swings this year



Source: FactSet
Graphic: Phil Holm

China had largest drop of US imports in 2025

Year-to-date imports from 5 countries that supply the most goods to the U.S. Jan.-Sept., not seasonally adjusted

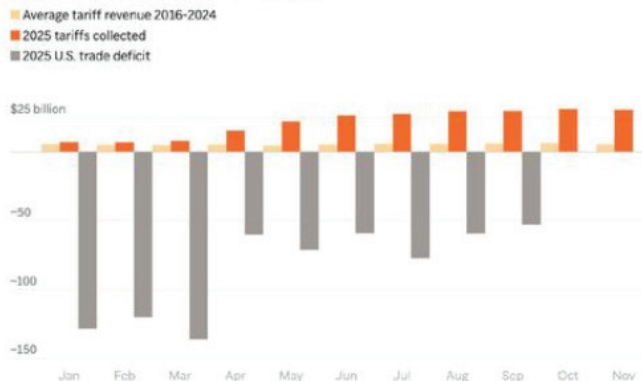


Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis / Graphic: Phil Holm & Paul Wiseman

US trade deficit eclipses tariff revenue

Increased tariff revenues imposed by the Trump administration have not offset the gap between what the U.S. imports and what it sells overseas.

Monthly tariff collections and trade imbalance



Deficit figures for Oct. and Nov. were not available at the time of this graphic's publication.

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis; Treasury Department

US tariff rates remain elevated throughout 2025 after peaking in April

Estimated pre-substitution effective tariff rate
Monthly averages



Source: The Budget Lab at Yale University

That includes businesses and ultimately, U.S. households.

And the erratic way the president rolled out his tariffs — announcing them, then suspending or altering them before conjuring up new ones — made 2025 one of the most turbulent economic years in recent memory.

Here's a look at the impact of Trump's tariffs over the last year, in four charts.

Effective US tariff rate

A key number for the overall impact of tariffs on U.S. consumers and businesses is the "effective" tariff rate — which, unlike headline figures imposed by Trump for specific trade actions, provides an average based on the actual imports coming into the country.

In 2025, per data from the Yale Budget Lab, the effective U.S. tariff rate peaked in April. But it's still far higher than the average seen at the start of the year. Before finalizing shifts in consumption, November's effective tariff rate was nearly 17% — seven times greater than January's average and the highest seen since 1935.

Tariff revenue vs America's trade deficit

Among selling points to justify his tariffs, Trump has repeatedly said they would reduce America's long-

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standing trade deficit and bring revenue into the Treasury.

Trump's higher tariffs are certainly raising money. They've raked in more than \$236 billion this year through November — much more than in years past. But they still account for just a fraction of the federal government's total revenue. And they haven't raised nearly enough to justify the president's claim that tariff revenue could replace federal income taxes — or allow for windfall dividend checks for Americans.

The U.S. trade deficit, meanwhile, has fallen significantly since the start of the year. The trade gap peaked to a monthly record of \$136.4 billion in March, as consumers and businesses hurried to import foreign products before Trump could impose his tariffs on them. The trade gap narrowed to \$52.8 billion in September, the latest month for which data is available. But the year-to-date deficit was still running 17% ahead of January-September 2024.

Import shifts with America's biggest trading partners

Trump's 2025 tariffs hit nearly every country in the world — including America's biggest trading partners. But his policies have had the biggest impact on U.S. trade with China, once the biggest source of American imports and now No. 3 behind Canada and Mexico. U.S. tariffs on Chinese imports now come to 47.5%, according to calculations by Chad Bown of the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

The value of goods coming into the U.S. from China fell nearly 25% during the first three-quarters of the year. Imports from Canada also dropped. But the value of products from Mexico, Vietnam and Taiwan grew year-to-date.

Market swings

For investors, the most volatile moments on the stock market this year arrived amid some of the most volatile moments for Trump's tariffs.

The S&P 500, an index for the biggest public companies in the U.S., saw its biggest daily and weekly swings in April — and largest monthly losses and gains in March and June, respectively.

Need a recap of how Trump's trade actions unfolded in 2025?

Japan's Cabinet OKs record defense budget that aims to deter China

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japan's Cabinet on Friday approved a record defense budget plan exceeding 9 trillion yen (\$58 billion) for the coming year, aiming to fortify its strike-back capability and coastal defense with cruise missiles and unmanned arsenals as tensions rise in the region.

The draft budget for fiscal 2026, beginning April, is up 9.4% from 2025 and marks the fourth year of Japan's ongoing five-year program to double annual arms spending to 2% of gross domestic product.

"It is the minimum needed as Japan faces the severest and most complex security environment in the postwar era," Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi said, stressing his country's determination to pursue military buildup and protect its people.

"It does not change our path as a peace-loving nation," he said.

The increase comes as Japan faces elevated tension from China. Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said in November that her country's military could get involved if China were to take action against Taiwan, the self-governing island that Beijing says must come under its rule.

Takaichi's government, under U.S. pressure for a military increase, pledged to achieve the 2% target by March, two years earlier than planned. Japan also plans to revise its ongoing security and defense policy by December 2026 to further strengthen its military.

Missiles and drones will add to southwestern island defense

Japan has been bolstering its offensive capability with long-range missiles to attack enemy targets from a distance, a major break from its post-World War II principle limiting the use of force to its own self-defense.

The current security strategy, adopted in 2022, names China as the country's biggest strategic challenge and calls for a more offensive role for Japan's Self-Defense Force under its security alliance with the U.S.

The new budget plan allocates more than 970 billion yen (\$6.2 billion) to bolster Japan's "standoff" mis-

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sile capability. It includes a 177 billion-yen (\$1.13 billion) purchase of domestically developed and upgraded Type-12 surface-to-ship missiles with a range of about 1,000 kilometers (620 miles).

The first batch of the Type-12 missiles will be deployed in Japan's southwestern Kumamoto prefecture by March, a year earlier than planned, as Japan accelerates its missile buildup in the region.

In part due to Japan's aging and declining population and its struggles with an understaffed military, the government believes unmanned weapons are essential.

To defend the coasts, Japan will spend 100 billion yen (\$640 million) to deploy "massive" unmanned air, sea-surface and underwater drones for surveillance and defense under a system called "SHIELD" planned for March 2028, defense ministry officials said.

For speedier deployment, Japan initially plans to rely mainly on imports, possibly from Turkey or Israel.

Tension with China grows

The budget announcement comes as Japan's row with China escalates following Takaichi's remark in November about Taiwan.

The disagreement escalated this month when Chinese aircraft carrier drills near southwestern Japan prompted Tokyo to protest when Chinese aircraft locked their radar on Japanese aircraft, which is considered possible preparation for firing missiles.

The Defense Ministry, already alarmed by China's rapid expansion of operations in the Pacific, will open a new office dedicated to studying operations, equipment and other necessities for Japan to deal with China's Pacific activity.

Two Chinese aircraft carriers were spotted in June almost simultaneously operating near the southern Japanese island of Iwo Jima for the first time, fueling Tokyo's concern about Beijing's rapidly expanding military activity far beyond its borders and areas around the disputed East China Sea islands.

In Beijing, China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said the Takaichi government has "noticeably accelerated its pace of military buildup and expansion" since taking office.

"Japan is deviating from the path of peaceful development it has long claimed to uphold and is moving further and further in a dangerous direction," Lin said.

Japan plans joint development of frigates and jets

Japan is pushing to strengthen its largely domestic defense industry by participating in joint development with friendly nations and promoting foreign sales after drastically easing arms export restrictions in recent years.

For 2026, Japan plans to spend more than 160 billion yen (\$1 billion) to jointly develop a next-generation fighter jet with Britain and Italy for deployment in 2035. There are also plans for research and development of Artificial Intelligence-operated drones designed to fly with the jet.

In a major boost to the country's defense industry, Australia selected Mitsubishi Heavy Industries in August to upgrade the Mogami-class frigate to replace its fleet of 11 ANZAC-class ships.

Japan's budget allocates nearly 10 billion yen (\$64 million) to support industry base and arms sales.

Meeting targets but future funding uncertain

The budget plan requires parliamentary approval by March to be implemented as part of a 122.3 trillion yen (\$784 billion) national budget bill.

The five-year defense buildup program would bring Japan's annual spending to around 10 trillion yen (\$64 billion), making it the world's third-largest spender after the U.S. and China. Japan will clear the 2% target by March as promised, the Finance Ministry said.

Takaichi's government plans to fund its growing military spending by raising corporate and tobacco taxes and recently adopted a plan for an income tax increase beginning 2027. Prospects for future growth at a higher percentage of GDP remain unclear.

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Today in History: December 27, Benazir Bhutto assassinated

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Saturday, Dec. 27, the 361st day of 2025. There are four days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Dec. 27, 2007, former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto was assassinated in a shooting and bomb attack that killed at least 20 people in the city of Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

Also on this date:

In 1831, naturalist Charles Darwin set out on a round-the-world voyage from Plymouth, England, aboard the HMS Beagle.

In 1904, James Barrie's play "Peter Pan: The Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up" opened at the Duke of York's Theatre in London.

In 1932, New York City's Radio City Music Hall opened to the public.

In 1945, the International Monetary Fund was formally established as its first 29 member countries ratified its Articles of Agreement; the IMF began operations in 1947.

In 1968, the Apollo 8 capsule splashed down safely in the Pacific, completing the first crewed mission to orbit the moon.

In 1979, Soviet forces seized control of Afghanistan. President Hafizullah Amin (hah-FEE'-zoo-lah ah-MEEN') was overthrown and executed and was replaced by Babrak Karmal.

In 1985, American naturalist and conservationist Dian Fossey, 53, who had studied mountain gorillas in Africa for nearly 20 years, was found murdered in her cabin in Rwanda. No one was arrested for the crime.

In 2022, Adam Fox, co-leader of a plot to kidnap Democratic Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, was sentenced to 16 years in prison after being convicted of conspiracy charges. Barry Croft Jr. would be sentenced to nearly 20 years in prison in the plot.

In 2022, state and military police were sent to keep people off Buffalo's snow-choked roads after western New York's deadliest storm in at least two generations; more than 30 people were reported to have died in the region.

Today's Birthdays: Basketball Hall of Fame coach Nolan Richardson is 84. Rock musician Mick Jones (Foreigner) is 81. Actor Gérard Depardieu is 77. Rock musician David Knopfler (Dire Straits) is 73. Basketball Hall of Fame coach Bill Self is 63. TV journalist Savannah Guthrie is 54. Actor Masi Oka is 51. Actor Aaron Stanford is 49. Actor Jay Ellis is 44. Olympic sprint gold medalist Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce is 39. Rock singer Hayley Williams (Paramore) is 37. Country singer Shay Mooney (Dan + Shay) is 34. Actor Timothée Chalamet is 30. NFL quarterback Brock Purdy is 26.