

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 1 of 64

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [3- Krueger takes first at Sioux Falls Tournament](#)
- [4- GDI Fitness Center Ad](#)
- [5- New home décor store 'Clovery' opens its doors in Groton](#)
- [6- Today on GDILIVE.Com](#)
- [7- SD SearchLight: Federal government awards \\$189 million to South Dakota from new rural health fund](#)
- [8- SD SearchLight: Alaska, Montana, Oklahoma crack top five in first rural health funding allocation](#)
- [8- SD SearchLight: Family hopes for return of Black civil rights activist who disappeared at Wounded Knee](#)
- [13- Weather Pages](#)
- [17- Daily Devotional](#)
- [18- Subscription Form](#)
- [19- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [20- News from the Associated Press](#)

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
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Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 2 of 64

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.

China's War Games

China's military deployed air, navy, and missile units yesterday in its largest-ever drills around Taiwan. Beijing said the operation—dubbed "Justice Mission 2025"—aims to deter Taipei's push for formal independence and discourage foreign involvement. The exercise follows a record US arms sale to Taiwan and remarks from Japanese leaders about potential defense commitments to the island.

Taiwan reported roughly 89 Chinese military aircraft and 28 naval and coast guard vessels were present, with live-fire drills simulating blockades and coordinated strikes. Taiwan mobilized rapid-response troops and said flights were canceled or diverted for more than 100,000 travelers. Taiwan condemned the exercise, saying it threatens regional stability. Drills continue today.

China and Taiwan have had strained relations since 1949; China views Taiwan as part of the mainland, while Taiwan maintains it is a sovereign nation. Taiwan sits on key trade routes in the Western Pacific and produces about 90% of the world's most advanced semiconductor chips (see visual deep dive).

When Life Gives You Lululemon

Lululemon Athletica founder Chip Wilson is launching a proxy fight with the company, revealing yesterday that he nominated three directors to the company's board. The decision comes weeks after the board announced CEO Calvin McDonald's exit without a successor.

McDonald ran the Vancouver-based company for over seven years, taking its stock to a height of over \$500 per share in 2023. The company's stock has since fallen, dropping 45% this year amid tariffs, reduced consumer spending, and increased competition. Wilson, Lululemon's second-largest shareholder, has criticized the board's lack of a succession plan. Now, he's nominating former executives from ESPN and Activision, as well as a former CEO from rival company On Running. The bid is separate from activist investor Elliott Investment Management's public campaign to see Lululemon hire former Ralph Lauren executive Jane Nielsen.

Wilson founded Lululemon in 1998 and led the company until 2005. Learn about its history here (w/video).

New Year's Countdown

More than 360 million glasses of sparkling wine are expected to be consumed in the US tomorrow, as over half of Americans gather with friends and family to ring in the new year. See more fast facts.

Roughly 1 million people historically pack into New York City's Times Square to watch a crystal ball drop from One Times Square as midnight approaches—a tradition that began on New Year's Eve 1907. This year marks the debut of the ninth and largest ball, adorned with 5,280 crystals and weighing about 12,350 pounds. For the first time, the ball will be relit and dropped again at approximately 12:04 am ET in anticipation of the US' 250th anniversary on July 4, 2026.

Elsewhere in the US, communities have put their own spins on the tradition, from a jumbo shrimp drop in Florida to a potato drop in Idaho. Celebrations vary widely around the world, too, with wave-jumping in Brazil and onion calendars in Romania.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 3 of 64

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Hollywood claims best Christmas Day box office since before the COVID-19 pandemic, propelled by "Avatar: Fire and Ash" and "Marty Supreme"; 2025 domestic ticket sales to date are over \$2.6B short of 2019 total.

Beyoncé becomes the fifth billionaire musician after her recent "Cowboy Carter" album and tour.

Boxer Anthony Joshua injured in car accident that killed two other passengers in Nigeria.

Hulu releases first "Malcolm in the Middle" reboot trailer, announces April 10 release date (More, w/trailer)

Science & Technology

Scientists find wildfires emit about 21% more airborne organic compounds than previously estimated, signaling a greater threat to air quality.

Gestational diabetes has risen every year in the US from 2016 to 2024, culminating in a 36% jump over the nine-year period; scientists call for further research.

OpenAI seeks head of preparedness to mitigate AI-related risks, including impacts on human health and cybersecurity; offering \$555K salary plus equity.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -0.4%, Dow -0.5%, Nasdaq -0.5%) as investors sell tech shares, including Tesla (-3.3%) and Nvidia (-1.2%).

SoftBank to buy data infrastructure firm DigitalBridge in \$4B deal as part of AI push.

Nvidia finalizes roughly 4%, \$5B stake in Intel.

US pending home sales index rises 3.3% month-over-month in November, the biggest increase in contract signings since February 2023.

Politics & World Affairs

President Donald Trump meets with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, says reconstruction of Gaza will begin soon.

Iran's biggest protests in three years erupt as the country's currency falls to a record low against the US dollar.

Bangladesh's first female prime minister, Khaleda Zia, dies at age 80.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says the US is offering Ukraine security guarantees for a period of 15 years.

Krueger takes first at Sioux Falls Tournament

Groton Area's Liza Krueger turned in a dominant performance on her way to a championship at 110 pounds, finishing the tournament unbeaten and leaving little doubt in each round she contested.

Krueger opened the day with a first-round bye, advancing directly into the quarterfinals. From there, she wasted no time, pinning Taya Stone of Wagner in just 41 seconds to move on.

The semifinals followed a similar script, as Krueger recorded another quick fall, this time over Payton Raastad of Sioux Falls Washington in 1 minute, 6 seconds.

In the championship match, Krueger capped off her impressive run with a convincing 7-0 decision over Bailey Tekrony of Brookings to claim first place at 110 pounds.

With two falls and a shutout decision in the finals, Krueger's championship run showcased both her explosiveness and control, highlighting a standout performance for Groton Area.

What can \$20 get you?



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a gym membership at

15 N Main - Ste. 101

Open 24/7

GDI Living Fitness

Call/Text Paul at 605/397-7460

Call/Text Tina at 605/397-7285

for details



Annual Membership Rates

Student is \$29.82 per month or \$255.60 per year
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!**

New home décor store 'Clovery' opens its doors in Groton

A longtime dream became reality earlier this month as Clovery, a new home décor store owned by Tanya Johnson, officially opened its doors in Groton on Dec. 13. It is located in the former Subway space at the mall along US 12.

Located in a newly renovated space, Clovery specializes in home décor with an emphasis on seasonal displays. While Christmas décor currently fills the store, Johnson said the inventory will rotate throughout the year, offering everyday décor alongside seasonal themes such as Valentine's Day, spring, fall and the holidays.

"This is something I've wanted for years," Johnson said. "Ever since I was a little girl, I've loved décor and decorating. Having a store like this has always been a dream."

Clovery is Johnson's first retail business, though she has previously done freelance interior decorating for clients. Without formal design training, Johnson said her work grew naturally as friends and acquaintances admired her home décor and asked for help designing their own spaces.

"I just started doing it for people because they liked what I did," she said. "Now I get to do that on a larger scale."

The store carries wholesale décor items, many of which are arranged or customized in-house. Johnson said she also creates wreaths, swags and ribbon accents to help customers personalize their purchases.



Tanya Johnson and Gracie Whitley will be greeting you at the store. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



The Clovery store is currently specializing in Christmas items. Soon, Valentine's will fill the store. (Photos by Paul Kosel)

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 6 of 64

The name "Clovery" has special meaning for Johnson and her family. She and her husband met on St. Patrick's Day, and clovers have long been a family symbol. With four sons, Johnson said the clover represents both luck and family, making it a fitting name for the store.



Renovations on the building began in late August and wrapped up in early December. Much of the work was completed with help from family members, including her father, Brian Olson of Britton, and Peyton, who assisted with much of the construction and finishing work.

Clovery currently employs Gracie Whitley, Peyton's girlfriend, who works alongside Johnson and helps customers find pieces that fit their homes and personal styles.

"It is a family business," Whitley said. "It's amazing to come to work every day and see people get excited about what they're buying. When customers leave happy and inspired, that's the best part."

Johnson said she enjoys working directly with customers and helping them visualize how décor items will look in their homes. She encourages shoppers to bring photos of their spaces, allowing her to offer personalized suggestions.

Business hours at Clovery are Tuesday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

While the store is still new, Johnson said the response so far has been positive, and she's focused on spreading the word.

"A lot of people don't even realize we're open yet," she said. "But it's been a great start."

Looking ahead, Johnson hopes Clovery will continue to grow, with plans to eventually expand into a larger space offering additional furniture and interior design services.

"For now, I'm just grateful," she said. "This really is a dream come true."

GT on **Boys Basketball**
Webster at Groton
Tues. Dec. 30
Varsity at 7:30 p.m.

Groton
Area
Tigers
Groton, SD

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SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Federal government awards \$189 million to South Dakota from new rural health fund

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

South Dakota received about \$11 million less than what it requested from a new federal rural health fund, and the amount is smaller than the awards for surrounding states.

"These resources will help us modernize rural health care, support the workforce that delivers it, and ensure that all South Dakotans have access to quality care – no matter where they live," South Dakota Gov. Larry Rhoden said in a news release.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid announced Monday that all 50 states received funding from the \$50 billion Rural Health Transformation Program. Congress included it in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, in response to concerns that the bill's Medicaid cuts will hurt rural health providers. Medicaid is a federal-state program that provides health insurance for people with disabilities or low incomes.

Half of the new program's funding is predicated on the number of rural residents and rural health facilities in a state, as well as the state's spending plans and policies, among other factors. The federal agency announced award amounts for 2026. Award amounts can change each year.

South Dakota requested \$200 million a year, or \$1 billion over five years. The state received about \$189 million for 2026.

Some states, including Nebraska, Montana and Iowa, received more funding than requested.

According to the health policy research group KFF, federal Medicaid spending in rural areas in South Dakota over the next decade will decrease by a projected \$487 million, due largely to new work requirements in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act that will cause some people to lose coverage.

A key component of South Dakota's application to the rural health fund was a \$500 million health infrastructure modernization proposal, which would include creation of a "South Dakota Health Data Atlas." It would allow health care systems throughout the state to access health data in one "single, accessible platform." The atlas would address telecommunications needs, equipment, emergency preparedness and cybersecurity concerns.

Other proposals ranged from \$3.5 million to support the growth of community health workers in the state to \$125 million to fund sustainability grants for South Dakota health care providers.

Josie Harms, spokeswoman for Gov. Rhoden, did not address South Dakota Searchlight questions about the gap between funding requested and awarded, or what impact that will have on programming.

Harms said the award is a "major win" for rural health care in the state, despite it being less than requested.

Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan who regularly reports on the intersection of politics and policy with health, education, social services and Indigenous affairs. Her work with South Dakota Searchlight earned her the title of South Dakota's Outstanding Young Journalist in 2024, and she was a 2024 finalist for the national Livingston Awards.

Alaska, Montana, Oklahoma crack top five in first rural health funding allocation

BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's administration unveiled Monday hundreds of millions of dollars each state will receive this fiscal year as part of a massive \$50 billion rural health fund baked into Republicans' "big, beautiful" law.

The five-year Rural Health Transformation Program — authorized under GOP lawmakers' mega tax and spending cut package Trump signed into law in July — is designed to offset the budget impacts on rural areas due to sweeping Medicaid cuts.

Half of the \$50 billion will be distributed equally among each state between fiscal years 2026 and 2030, according to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

The agency under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services said the remaining \$25 billion, doled out over the same time period, is being allocated to states based on several factors, such as steps states are taking to improve access to care in rural communities.

Texas will get the highest first-year award at \$281.3 million, followed by Alaska at \$272.2 million, California at \$233.6 million, Montana at \$233.5 million and Oklahoma, at \$223.5 million.

New Jersey is receiving the lowest first-year award, at \$147.2 million.

"Thanks to Congress establishing this investment and President Trump for his leadership, states are stepping forward with bold, creative plans to expand rural access, strengthen their workforces, modernize care, and support the communities that keep our nation running," CMS Administrator Dr. Mehmet Oz said in a statement alongside the announcement.

Oz added that "CMS is proud to partner with every state to turn their ideas into lasting improvements for rural families."

Meanwhile, the nonpartisan health research organization KFF found that the program would only offset a little more than one-third of the package's estimated \$137 billion cut to federal Medicaid spending in rural areas over the next decade.

Ashley Murray contributed to this report.

Shauneen Miranda is a reporter for States Newsroom's Washington bureau. An alumna of the University of Maryland, she previously covered breaking news for Axios.

Family hopes for return of Black civil rights activist who disappeared at Wounded Knee

Perry Ray Robinson, a Black activist from Alabama, is believed to be buried near the Wounded Knee Massacre site on the Pine Ridge Reservation where he participated in the 1973 Wounded Knee occupation

BY: AMELIA SCHAFER, ICT

RAPID CITY — After a half-century of uncertainty, all Cheryl Buswell-Robinson wants is the body of her husband, Perry Ray Robinson, to be returned.

In March 1973, Robinson called home to Alabama from a conference in Taos, New Mexico, to tell his wife he planned to join the American Indian Movement's takeover of Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge Reservation where tribal members were protesting then-tribal president Dick Wilson.

"He thought it was going to be the spark to light the prairie fire," Buswell-Robinson said. "I said, I didn't think that was going to happen and I wanted him to come home."

Being the 1970s, Buswell-Robinson didn't hear back from her husband for a while, and there wasn't an easy way to communicate with little access to landlines in an occupied space under near constant FBI surveillance. So that fall, when a caravan from Wounded Knee of Black civil rights activists pulled into the

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 9 of 64

driveway of the Robinson farm in Alabama, Buswell-Robinson expected her husband to be with them. He wasn't.

At first, Buswell-Robinson thought her husband may have been arrested by the FBI during the occupation, but soon she discovered in South Dakota the rumor was Robinson was killed in a bunker in Wounded Knee and buried somewhere nearby. When closing its investigation into Robinson's disappearance in 2014, the FBI confirmed to the family that Robinson was killed in Wounded Knee and buried in an unknown grave, she said.

For her, the situation feels like being stuck in a big, deep hole. Unable to do anything from over one 1,000 miles away, Buswell-Robinson has worked hard over the past five decades to raise the couple's three children alone with no answers about where her husband is buried.

"I can't do anything with my kids to make that hole better," she said. "It's just there, and it's impacted our family so badly."

Buwell-Robinson, now 82, recently survived a stroke and while her family reassured her she still has time, she isn't so sure. All she wants now is to be buried next to her husband. And if that isn't possible, she just wants a place for her children, now adults with families of their own, to mourn the civil rights activist who gave his life for what he believed in.

"We've never really mourned," she said. "The tears I cried, I cried in private. I didn't want the kids to see."

Nearing the end of 2025, with help from a group of Oceti Sakowin activists and descendants of the 1890 Wounded Knee Massacre survivors, the family may be closer than ever to finding where Robinson is buried.

Following the closure of the FBI's investigation into Robinson's death 11 years ago, documents released to the Robinson family and the public confirmed he had been killed and identified several spots in Wounded Knee where he is likely buried.

While no law enforcement agencies are currently investigating Robinson's death, a search for his body would be possible through an agreement between the Robinson family and Oglala Sioux Tribe.

A complicated search

Searching for Robinson's body is especially difficult due to its proximity to the mass graves of those slain at Wounded Knee. The Seventh Cavalry killed nearly 300 Mnicouju Lakota men, women and children from Si Tanka's band who had traveled south to Pine Ridge from what are now the Standing Rock and Cheyenne River reservations for relief. After the massacre, the military buried Lakotas in mass graves where they've remained ever since.

What happened to Ray Robinson in 1973 has weighed heavily on the mind of Justin Baker, a 41-year-old employee of Sinte Gleska University, a tribally controlled institution on the nearby Rosebud Reservation in south-central South Dakota directly east of Pine Ridge.

Baker said he's known about Robinson's death for roughly two decades, and joined the push to bring his body home in January after researching the circumstances surrounding his death and talking to Buswell-Robinson.

"They tried all these different routes with no success, but what I didn't see was anybody approaching the actual tribal government," Baker said. "So me living here in Rosebud, I drafted a resolution calling for a non-invasive search for Ray Robinson's remains."

Baker said after researching the case he's had several sleepless nights where he's dreamed of Robinson and his family.

"I didn't just wake up and choose to do it," he said. "There were mitigating factors that led me to doing this work. I believe it's very deeply spiritual work, it feels like a spiritual mission. I hope that if we get Ray home, that it'll create something good for the people, the Lakota people. I hope that if we get Ray home and we uncover these things, and we clear that then good spiritual energy will return to the people here."

Living in South Dakota, Baker said, it's been easy for him to help connect the family with various tribal and historical groups. The first group Baker reached out to on the family's behalf was the Rosebud-based Sicangu Treaty Council, a group of Sicangu descendants of the original signatories of the Fort Laramie

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 10 of 64

Treaties. The council passed legislation in support of the search on May 5 and referred the group to the Oglala Sioux Tribe, as the land Robinson is buried on is within the tribe's reservation boundaries.

Robinson is believed to be buried on the 40 acres of land involved in the Wounded Knee Sacred Sites Act which passed through the United States Senate in early December. The Act would return the land purchased by the Oglala Sioux Tribe and Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe back into tribal fee status land. It was previously privately owned by a non-Native family in Wounded Knee.

The act will not impact the search for Robinson's remains, advocates said.

From there, the issue was presented to various separate Oglala tribal legislative bodies until it was referred to the Si Tanka Oyate, a Pine Ridge-based group of descendants of the Wounded Knee Massacre.

Early talks with the group have gone well, Baker said.

Baker said he's also spoken with members of the Cheyenne River-based Wounded Knee survivor descendants group, HAWK 1890, who have expressed their support for a search. One of those descendants is Wendell Yellow Bull, the great-grandson of Wounded Knee survivor Joseph Horn Cloud.

Oglala groups, such as the tribe's legislatures and the Oglala Tribal Historic Preservation Office, still must approve the search, Baker said. He said the search would be as conservative and sensitive to the site as possible in order to not disrupt Wounded Knee burial sites, Baker said.

The search would occur in levels, Baker said. The first level includes ground-penetrating radar and cadaver dogs to identify potential sites, many of which have already been identified through the FBI's investigation.

In each spot, searchers would insert a piece of rebar between 6 and 8 feet into the ground and pull out a hole the size of a mole. Cadaver dogs trained in differentiating ancient and modern remains would smell the odor emanating from the holes and signal whether or not an area contains remains placed less than 100 years ago. After the dog's signal, searchers would use ground-penetrating radar to take an image of whatever is underground.

From the FBI documents, searchers know Robinson's body is buried in a very unique manner that will make identification of his burial site easier, Baker said.

Si Tanka Oyate members have been interested for some time in a comprehensive, non-intrusive search of the massacre site in order to identify where the mass graves of children, known as the "babies gravesite," would be. Some believe the gravesite is situated on top of a hill where most of the adult victims are buried.

Mapping also could reveal other historical sites, such as the AIM bunkers, foxholes and trenches from the 1973 occupation.

Identifying historical sites from the 1890 massacre and 1973 occupation also could open the door to potential programs for cultural preservation and aid efforts to have Wounded Knee formally designated as a national monument, said those advocating for the search for Robinson's remains. They said the search also could uncover other gravesites like that of Buddy Lamont, who died during the 1973 occupation.

Lamont, 31 and Oglala Lakota, died during a shootout with the FBI on April 27, 1973. His body is known to have been buried near the massacre gravesites. Additionally, Frank Clearwater, Cherokee, is thought to be buried on the Rosebud Reservation. However, some sources indicate he was buried in Wounded Knee. Clearwater, 47 and an AIM member, was shot by law enforcement while participating in an AIM road block on April, 13 1973, and died over 10 days later from his wounds.

In the late 1990s, the Oglala Sioux Tribe accused the FBI of being involved with roughly 57 deaths on the Pine Ridge Reservation in April 1973 during the Wounded Knee occupation. In July 2000, the FBI issued a now archived statement attempting to debunk rumors of its involvement with the deaths. Robinson's death is not included on the FBI list.

Search advocates said because of the unique positioning of Robinson's remains as described in FBI documents, it should be easy to determine if an uncovered body is Robinson's versus someone else's. Robinson is believed to be buried vertically.

Ray's life and legacy

Robinson and Buswell-Robinson met in the summer of 1965 in Madison, Wisconsin. Robinson, 31 at

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 11 of 64

the time, was in the area working for the National Committee to End the War in Vietnam, and Buswell-Robinson, who was 21 and born and raised in Wisconsin, decided she'd try her hand at volunteering with the movement at the state's capitol, Madison.

She said she remembers their first interaction, when Robinson handed her a packet of leaflets to run across town to promote an upcoming demonstration, which she did, and then the two continued talking. About a year later, they married. From there, they demonstrated and organized across the country in New York City and Washington D.C., and in 1968, they moved to Alabama and started a family farm.

As an interracial couple, the family faced intense threats of violence in Alabama, said Buswell-Robinson, who is White. The Ku Klux Klan fire-bombed their home, and crosses were burned in their front lawn. On one occasion, a local law enforcement officer threatened them. All of that racism and violence only pushed them to work harder and organize more, Buswell-Robinson said.

Robinson got his start in activism by joining the Committee for Non-Violent Action, she said. He participated in the 1963 March on Washington where he heard Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. deliver his "I Have a Dream" speech. Robinson continued his work through the southern United States for several anti-segregation demonstrations before coming back north where he met his wife.

Robinson and Buswell-Robinson decided to raise their family in Bogue Chitto, Alabama, where he had grown up and where he had experienced Jim Crow-era segregation as a child.

On their farm, they grew produce for the local Black Panthers Breakfast program for area schools and organized a clinic to help malnourished children.

Robinson's advocacy has been recognized by the state of Alabama, which will induct him into the National Voting Rights Museum and Institute in Selma sometime in 2026.

Coming to Wounded Knee

In March 1973, Robinson was invited to attend a conference in Taos, New Mexico, to share information about the family's work in Bogue Chitto. While attending, he learned about the American Indian Movement.

AIM and the Black Panthers have a long history of solidarity. AIM co-founder Dennis Banks credited the Black Panther Party as a direct inspiration for creating the AIM patrol in South Minneapolis in 1968. Banks also credited Black civil rights demonstrations in Alabama as an inspiration, and several Black activists attended AIM demonstrations, including Wounded Knee.

In Taos, an AIM member invited Robinson to go to Wounded Knee. The last time he and his wife spoke, Robinson called home to ask if she'd bring the family to help at Wounded Knee.

"I said, 'I've got the kids and I'm not going to let the kids go from the frying pan into the fire,'" Buswell-Robinson recounted. "I didn't want him to go, I wanted him to come home for the spring planting."

After the occupation ended, Jannie Waller and two other Black activists who had traveled with Robinson to Wounded Knee pulled back into the Robinson family farm. Waller said she arrived after Robinson to Wounded Knee and when she asked about Robinson he was already gone.

Buswell-Robinson said she initially assumed her husband had been arrested, but when she reached out to others who took part in the occupation, they told her he had been killed and buried somewhere in the area.

"What happened to Ray was common knowledge in that community," she said.

In October 1973, Buswell-Robinson traveled to South Dakota to ask Wounded Knee and Rapid City community members if they'd seen Robinson or knew where he was buried, but she never got any answers.

For a long time, she couldn't accept that her husband was gone, she said.

"I had all kinds of fantasies," she said. "Maybe he was kidnapped by the FBI or he lost his mind and was lost somewhere he couldn't reach me. I would see people on the street who looked like Ray, I'd go up to them and ... It's just really messed up.

"I had this fantasy he'd show up on my front door step one day," she said. "What we'd talk about, what had happened. It was all just a fantasy."

If Robinson's body were to be returned home, Buswell-Robinson said, her hope would be that it could

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 12 of 64

bring some relief to her family that's been "decimated" by his absence.

In 2014, the family was told by the FBI that Robinson had been killed at Wounded Knee, but other than that, the case is closed, leaving it up to the family and advocates to try and bring some sense of a closure.

Buswell-Robinson said she and many others involved aren't interested in pressing charges against anyone still alive who may have been involved in his death, they just want to bring him home. If that's not possible, she simply wants to know where he is buried.

"She (Buswell-Robinson) doesn't want retribution," Baker said. "She said that the people in this part of the country have already been through hell, and she doesn't want to bring anymore hardships on anybody. She just wants her husband home, even if they don't repatriate."

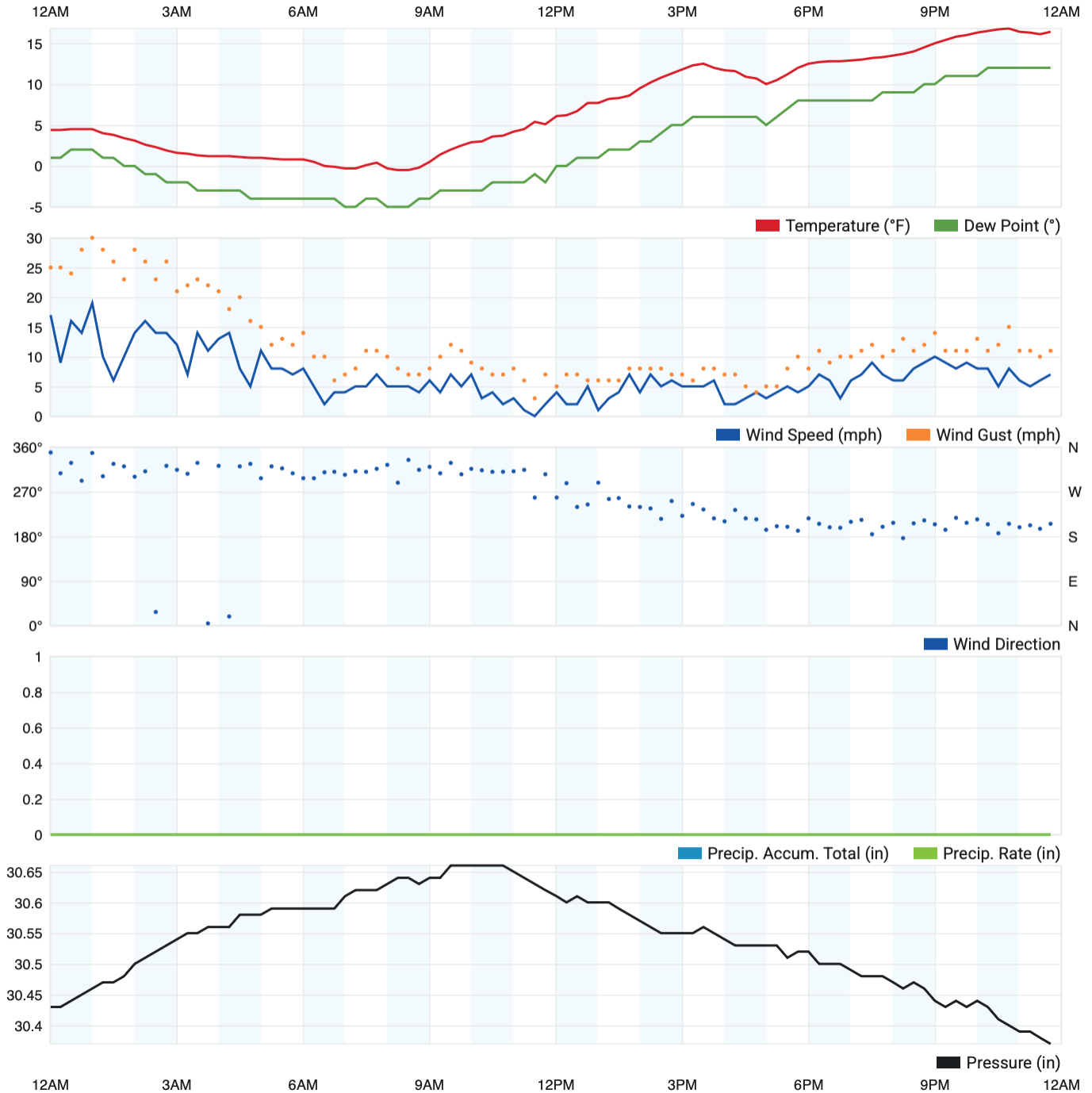
Amelia Schafer is the Indigenous Affairs reporter for ICT and is based in Rapid City. She is of Wampanoag and Montauk-Brothertown Indian Nation descent.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 13 of 64

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

December 29, 2025



Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 14 of 64

Today



High: 35 °F

Partly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 14 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Wednesday



High: 21 °F ↓↓

Mostly Cloudy

Wednesday
Night



Low: 1 °F

Mostly Cloudy

New Year's
Day



High: 20 °F

Mostly Sunny

WEATHER OUTLOOK

Today



This morning: 20% chance of light snow or freezing rain over mainly west central MN. *Little to no accumulation.*

30s, except in the low 40s over south central SD

Wednesday



20% chance of light morning snow over far northeastern SD & west central MN. *Less than 1" snow expected.*

20s, except teens in west central MN and 30s over south central SD

Thursday



20s, except teens in west central MN and 30s over south central SD



NWS Aberdeen, SD weather.gov/abr

Expect decreasing clouds over central South Dakota today with patchy drifting snow lingering over Leola Hills and near I-29 (eastern slopes of the Prairie Coteau). Otherwise, there is 20% chance of light snow or freezing rain over mainly west central Minnesota this morning, with little to no accumulation expected. Then Wednesday morning, there is a 20% chance of light snow over far northeastern South Dakota and west central Minnesota. Less than 1 inch of snow is expected.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 15 of 64

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 17 °F at 10:39 PM

Low Temp: -1 °F at 8:09 AM

Wind: 30 mph at 12:59 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 52 in 1980

Record Low:-34 in 1917

Average High: 24

Average Low: 4

Average Precip in Dec.: 0.59

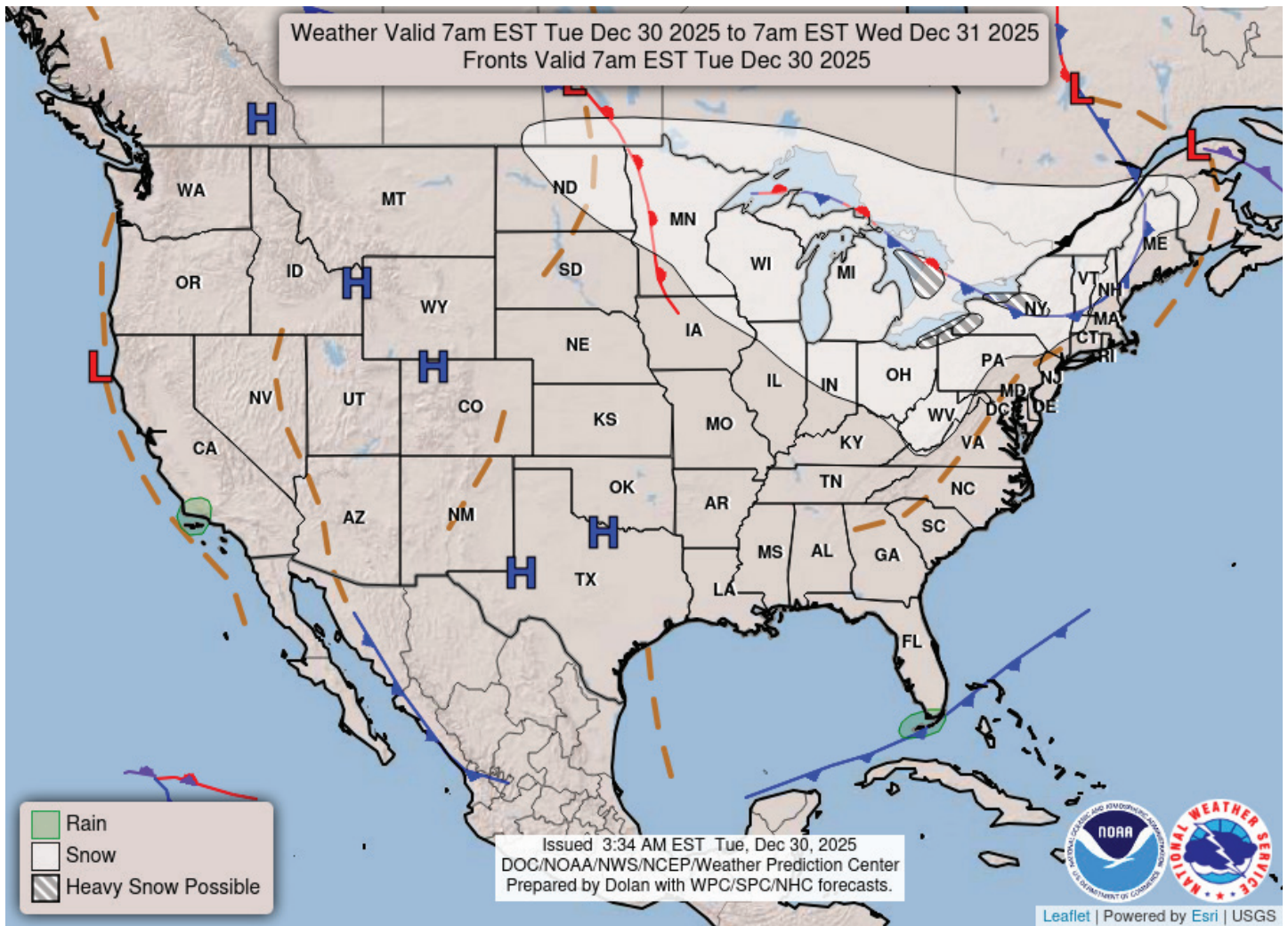
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.67

Average Precip to date: 21.80

Precip Year to Date: 25.48

Sunset Tonight: 4:57 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:12 am



Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 16 of 64

Today in Weather History

December 30, 1985: Winds gusted to 40 to 50 mph over northern South Dakota through the day and into the southern part of the state by late afternoon. The high winds lowered visibilities to near zero at times between Lemmon in Perkins County and Faith in Meade County. The strongest wind gusts were to 63 mph at Mitchell. At 9:33 pm CST, the strong winds blew a semi-tractor trailer off the highway one mile east of Aberdeen.

December 30, 2010: A strong upper-level low-pressure trough and associated surface low-pressure area moved across the region bringing the first of two consecutive blizzards to central and northeast South Dakota. Snowfall amounts of 3 to 6 inches combined with bitter cold north winds of 25 to 40 mph caused widespread blizzard conditions across central and northeast South Dakota from the late morning until the evening hours. Near zero visibilities caused dangerous travel conditions resulting in the closing of Interstates 29 and 90 along with several highways across the region. Several hundred people were stranded in the aftermath of the storm. A group of fishermen had to be rescued in Day County when they became stranded on the ice. The snowfall began across the area anywhere from 7 to 11 am CST and ended between 10 pm and 1 am CST.

1880 — The temperature at Charlotte, NC, plunged to an all-time record cold reading of 5 degrees below zero, a record which was equalled on the 21st of January in 1985. (The Weather Channel)

1917 — A great cold wave set many records in the northeastern U.S. The mercury plunged to 13 degrees below zero at New York City, and to 15 degrees below zero at Boston. Temperature readings dipped below zero at Boston five nights in a row. Berlin NH hit 44 degrees below zero in the "Great World War I Cold Wave," and Saint Johnsbury VT reached 43 degrees below zero. (David Ludlum)

1933 — The temperature reached 50 degrees below zero at Bloomfield, VT. It was the coldest reading in modern records for New England. The temperature at Pittsburgh NH reached 44 degrees below zero. (David Ludlum)

1955 — Anchorage, AK, reported an all-time record snow depth of 47 inches. (30th-1st) (The Weather Channel)

1960: A massive accumulation of snow, 68.2 inches to be exact, buries the Japanese city of Tsukayama in 24 hours. Tsukayama is located in the coastal mountains inland from the Sea of Japan along Honshu's west coast and subject to significant sea-effect snowfalls.

1987 — A storm in the western U.S. produced heavy snow in Utah, with 28 inches reported in the Mount Holly and Elk Meadows area. Strong winds prevailed ahead of a cold front in the central U.S. Winds gusted to 46 mph at Dodge City KS, and reached 80 mph at Ruidoso NM. Strong northerly winds, ushering arctic cold into the north central U.S., created blizzard conditions in western Minnesota and central and eastern South Dakota. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 — Unseasonably cold weather prevailed in the southwestern U.S. A week of subfreezing temperatures in southern California claimed the lives of five people. Redding CA was blanketed with four inches of snow. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Extreme cold continued across northern Maine. Milo ME was the cold spot in the nation with a morning low of 38 degrees below zero, and the low of 31 degrees below zero at Caribou ME was a December record for that location. Freezing rain spread across much of Lower Michigan, knocking out electrical power to 1.9 million customers in southeastern Lower Michigan. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2003 — The first time in five years, sections of Las Vegas receive an inch or two of snow on cars, roads, sidewalks, and trees, while snow flurries fell on downtown and the Strip.

2008 — Severe to extreme drought was observed across parts of the Hawaiian Islands, the western continental U.S., and parts of Georgia and South Carolina. Meanwhile, severe to exceptional drought conditions were present across southern Texas. (NCDC)

2014: Steam Devils were seen over Lake Superior near Saginaw, Minnesota. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the Minnesota Public Radio.

2017: Funnels/steam devils were observed on Lake McConaughy, Nebraska in the morning. A boundary moved over the lake's 'warmer' water (compared to the surrounding air). The combination of converging winds and energy added by the lake helped spin these up.



A Realistic View of Life

How can you best live so that you are ready when God decides your time on earth is complete?

2 Timothy 4:6-8: 6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.

7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;

8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Our culture tries to postpone death. Vitamins, exercise, and diet are ways we attempt to live as long as possible. Not that these things are bad! Motive, however, is key.

Take, for example, the fact that our bodies are God's temple (1 Corinthians 3:16). Not only should we take care of His dwelling, but also, since He has good works for us to do (Ephesians 2:10), we should do everything possible to make sure we can carry them out.

In contrast, prolonging life because we fear death isn't of God. Jesus died in our place, so everyone who trusts in Him as Lord and Savior need not worry. Once saved, we have assurance of a real place where we will live forever in His presence.

Our omniscient God already knows the duration of each person's life (Psalm 139:16). With this in mind, the best way to prepare for what's next is to receive Jesus as Savior through faith and then live a surrendered life, striving to walk according to His will.

Furthermore, it is vital that believers keep eternity in mind. This world is very beautiful, ours to enjoy and care for, but we have another home awaiting us in heaven. Both are blessings from our heavenly Father, but the latter is eternal.

How can you best live so that you are ready when God has determined your time on earth is complete?

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

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 18 of 64

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Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 19 of 64



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.26.25

9 19 31 63 64 7

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$138,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 21 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.29.25

1 5 24 35 51 4

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$11,130,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 15
Mins 21 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.29.25

1 8 16 17 26 12

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 30 Mins 21
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.27.25

8 14 15 20 30

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$156,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 30
Mins 21 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.29.25

5 9 38 62 64 4

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 59
Mins 21 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.29.25

11 19 34 48 53 21

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$45,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 59
Mins 21 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Roncalli 50, Webster 36
Chamberlain 44, Burke 35
Clark-Willow Lake 56, Kadoka 38
Colman-Egan 57, Wessington Springs 41
Faulkton 47, Jones County 38
Florence-Henry 53, Britton-Hecla 41
Howard 53, Lower Brule 32
James Valley Christian School 39, Kimball-White Lake 29
Lyman 60, Mitchell 52
McCook Central-Montrose 52, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 42
Miller 40, DeSmet 38
Sioux Falls Roosevelt 60, Sioux Falls Lincoln 16
Sioux Falls Washington 81, Sioux Falls Jefferson 72
Tiospa Zina 65, Tri-State, N.D. 43
Tripp-Delmont-Armour 39, Scotland/Menno 35
West Central 51, Hartington Cedar Catholic, Neb. 26

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

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Freeman 75, Lyman 57
Hanson 56, Kimball-White Lake 28
Little Wound 60, Hot Springs 43
McCook Central-Montrose 58, White River 49
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 67, Lower Brule 41
Parkston 38, Dupree 30
Scotland/Menno 54, Tripp-Delmont-Armour 52
Sioux Falls Jefferson 63, Sioux Falls Washington 48
Sioux Falls Lincoln 69, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 50
Timber Lake 60, Ethan 47
Tri-State, N.D. 52, Tiospa Zina 37
Viborg-Hurley 58, Pine Ridge 49

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

Peat scores 19 as No. 1 Arizona closes out nonconference with 99-71 win over South Dakota State

By BRIAN J. PEDERSEN Associated Press

TUCSON, Ariz. (AP) — Koa Peat, Jaden Bradley and Motiejus Krivas each had a double-double as No. 1 Arizona continued its string of blowout victories in a 99-71 win over South Dakota State on Monday night. The Wildcats (13-0) are off to their best start since 2013-14, when they began 21-0. It is the fourth time they've started a season with at least 13 consecutive victories.

Peat had 19 points and a career-high 14 rebounds, Bradley had 13 points and a career-best 10 assists and Krivas went for 13 points and 11 rebounds as Arizona won by at least 20 for the eighth consecutive

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 21 of 64

game, tying a school record set in 1928-29.

Arizona had six players in double figures for the third time this season.

Kalen Garry had 20 points and Jaden Jackson scored 18 for South Dakota State, which fell to 1-23 against ranked opponents. The Jackrabbits shot 40.6% and made 10 3-pointers, but their 14 turnovers led to 18 points for Arizona.

Arizona made 14 of its first 21 shots to build a 43-25 lead with 5:58 left in the first half but then missed 13 of 16. The Wildcats made up for the inconsistent shooting from the field by going 24 of 31 from the foul line.

It was the 125th win for Arizona coach Tommy Lloyd, reaching that mark in 158 games. The previous best at the school was 170 games, by Fred Enke in the 1930s.

Up next

South Dakota State opens Summit League play at home Thursday against Nebraska-Omaha.

Arizona begins Big 12 Conference play Saturday at Utah.

Some South Dakota tribes begin to embrace visitors as engine for economic development

By MOLLY WETSCH/South Dakota News Watch South Dakota News Watch

Some members of the state's tribal nations are beginning to slowly embrace visitors, as the South Dakota Native Tourism Alliance (SDNTA) works with tribal leaders and organizations to reframe tourism on the nine reservations as an engine for economic development.

Tourism and visitors haven't always been positive concepts in these communities, Sarah Kills In Water of SDNTA told News Watch. There has long existed on reservations a hesitation to allow outsiders into certain traditional spaces and a general fear of exploitation. That's especially true in South Dakota, where some Native lands are among the poorest regions in the country.

"When we first entered these spaces, they didn't want to know about tourism. They already had this idea that we were selling our culture. And so we had to do a lot of work in educating," Kills In Water said. "But once we did that, their little light bulb started to click on and you could see them starting to dream and starting to think, 'What can I do?'"

SDNTA was recently awarded the \$175,000 J.M. Kaplan Innovation Prize, one of 10 organizations of more than 3,500 applicants to receive ongoing funding, training and resources to grow their efforts.

Native tourism highlights cultural reconnection, historical conversation

Rhea Waldman, executive director of SDNTA, and Kills In Water envision a world in which reservations are crucial destinations for South Dakota visitors, as much as Mount Rushmore National Memorial, Badlands National Park and Crazy Horse Memorial.

"Tourism is, just in South Dakota, a big thing. And so what we're trying to do is highlight the gems that stand on every single reservation, and they're very different. Every reservation has their own cultural pieces, their own stories, they have their own museums," Waldman said.

Nationwide, tourism on reservations has quietly grown. The Navajo (Diné) nation's tribal lands are home to iconic natural landmarks like Monument Valley and Antelope Canyon — though hiccups like the COVID-19 pandemic and a drop in international visitors have inhibited some tour operators.

Kills in Water said that many of the possibilities tribal members find the most exciting are outdoor activities that they think travelers will enjoy, which also allows for connection to the land that Indigenous people have called home for thousands of years.

"There's a lot of ideas surrounding outdoor recreation on the Rosebud reservation. Our people want to take people out on hiking trips and look at our medicines and teach them about the flora and the fauna of our reservation," Kills in Water said.

Reconnecting Native Americans to their own culture

In addition to economic development, reconnecting with cultural traditions can be beneficial for tribal members as well, promoting greater community connection and leadership development.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 22 of 64

"I see this as the main opportunity to reconnect our people to our culture. Through learning about our culture and reconnecting, they're going to find ways that they can educate visitors about who we are today. Not in a way that's exploiting our culture, not selling our ceremonies. But educating our visitors about who we are today, about all of the things that we've been through and that we're still here. Yes, we still have struggles, we're still challenged. But we're still here to tell our story," Kills In Water said.

Several significant historical sites exist on those tribal lands, including the Wounded Knee Memorial on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, land which President Donald Trump recently signed legislation protecting.

Visitors interested in the history of the country would find trips to reservations in South Dakota especially insightful, Waldman said.

Tourism on tribal lands, though, will always look different from other trips across the country. The more rural nature of most reservations will change things as well as the inherent cultural conversations that occur when visiting historic sites or witnessing tribal traditions.

Sherry L. Rupert, CEO of the American Indigenous Tourism Association, said that the experiences tourists are not expecting, especially when it comes to Native culture, are often the most rewarding.

"Oftentimes people don't know it, but that's really what they're looking for — being outside and learning about people that have been here for thousands of years. It changes their perspective of the world. They go back and share that with their families, and it changes who they are as people," Rupert said.

Barriers to successful tribal tourism

Though the opportunities that a tourist economy holds are enticing to many, there are still barriers to many tribal nations' entry into the industry.

In South Dakota, where reservations and trust land comprise more than 12% of the land, population centers are few and far between, which can make travel difficult.

Support services may also not be sufficient to accommodate groups of tourists.

"It's really hard if you have a community that doesn't have the infrastructure to bring tourists there," Waldman said. "If the restaurant that we were planning on going to is closed and there aren't really a lot of other options, and then you're an hour and a half away from anything else, that is not necessarily helpful."

And then there's the challenge of basic economics.

"If you have a community that really wants to build tourism and you have artisans and artists and other people in the tourism industry that are trying to build their business," Waldman said, you also need an influx of tourists and their dollars in order to support those business owners.

"So that is really the big chicken-and-the-egg situation that we're in, where that is a real challenge. How do we make sure that we build demand and supply at the same time?"

The balance between allowing tourists into Native communities to learn more about the culture, while also protecting sacred spaces is also a challenge, Waldman said. Tribal members' level of comfort with tourist engagement varies greatly, so any ongoing work requires tailored plans for each tribe.

Bus tour company Trafalgar launched a "National Parks and Native Trails of the Dakotas" trip in 2022, which made stops on reservations in North Dakota and South Dakota, including the Pine Ridge, Rosebud and Standing Rock reservations.

Though Waldman said large tours can often be difficult to navigate when it comes to lodging, meals and other logistics, continued partnerships with tour companies like that allow for further visibility among potential visitors.

"We're trying to navigate this place and say, 'What are you looking for?' Because we don't want to create something that no one takes. And there are some that say, 'You create what you want to create. We will find the right people.' Those are exactly the partners and the partnerships that we need," Waldman said.

State support crucial for ongoing tourism efforts

In 2016, South Dakota Republican U.S. Sen. John Thune co-sponsored the bipartisan NATIVE Act — or the Native American Tourism and Improving Visitor Experience Act.

That legislation was unanimously approved by the Senate and ensures that tribal nations are represented among federal agencies working within the tourism industry, that continued infrastructure development

is supported and that data is collected and analyzed surrounding tribal tourism.

"South Dakota is rich in the culture and traditions of the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota nations," Thune said in a statement after the legislation passed. "We should do all we can to help celebrate and recognize the numerous and oftentimes invaluable contributions our tribal communities provide to our state."

Rupert told News Watch that ongoing collaboration with state and federal tourism agencies is crucial to ensuring ongoing exposure for tribal experiences.

Travel South Dakota, which promotes the state as a vacation destination, did not respond to requests for comment for this story. The agency hosts a list of ways to experience Native culture in South Dakota on its website, including several attractions on tribal lands.

"Support from the state destination marketing organization or the state tourism office is necessary. They're tasked with marketing all the destinations and experiences in your state, and that should include the Indigenous offerings as well," Rupert said.

Waldman said that working with the state's tourism office has allowed SDNTA to understand what visitors are looking to get out of experiences, how to market them and how to use data to their advantage.

"There's definitely places where working together is really important because they have a huge budget for marketing, for example. They have a lot of contacts. So they're helping us to get the word out and also make sure that we are at the table to make some of the bigger decisions," Waldman said.

South Dakota is well known for several attractions with connections to Native culture — especially in the Black Hills, the traditional sacred lands of the Lakota and other Native people. But Waldman and Kills In Water hope that visitors see the value in visiting tribes where they currently exist.

"What we hope to create are these powerful connections between our guests and who we are," Kills In Water said. "We want them to see us for who we are, not for what they think we are, not for what they've been told we are by somebody else. We want to share, authentically, our story with every person who comes, who has an interest to learn."

This story was originally published by South Dakota News Watch and distributed through a partnership with The Associated Press.

Saudi Arabia bombs Yemen port over weapons shipment from UAE, issues warning to Abu Dhabi

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Saudi Arabia bombed Yemen's port city of Mukalla on Tuesday after a weapons shipment from the United Arab Emirates arrived for separatist forces in the war-torn country, and starkly warned that it viewed Emirati actions as "extremely dangerous."

The bombing followed days of tensions over the advance of the separatist forces known as the Southern Transitional Council, which is backed by the Emirates. Despite the warning, the Council and its allies issued a statement supporting the UAE's presence, even as others allied with Saudi Arabia demanded Emirati forces withdraw from Yemen in 24 hours' time.

The confrontation threatened to open a new front in Yemen's decadelong war, with forces allied against the Iranian-backed Houthis possibly turning their sights on each other in the Arab world's poorest nation long stalked by famine and disease.

It also further strained ties between Saudi Arabia and the UAE, neighboring nations on the Arabian Peninsula that increasingly have competed with each other over economic issues and the region's politics, particularly in the wider Red Sea region.

"I expect a calibrated escalation from both sides. The UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council is likely to respond by consolidating control," said Mohammed al-Basha, a Yemen expert and the founder of the Basha Report, a risk advisory firm.

"At the same time, the flow of weapons from the UAE to the STC is set to be curtailed following the port attack, particularly as Saudi Arabia controls the airspace."

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 24 of 64

Airstrike hits Mukalla

A military statement carried by the state-run Saudi Press Agency announced the strikes, which it said came after ships arrived there from Fujairah, a port city on the UAE's eastern coast.

"The ships' crew had the disabled tracking devices aboard the vessels, and unloaded a large amount of weapons and combat vehicles in support of the Southern Transitional Council's forces," the statement said.

"Considering that the aforementioned weapons constitute an imminent threat, and an escalation that threatens peace and stability, the Coalition Air Force has conducted this morning a limited airstrike that targeted weapons and military vehicles offloaded from the two vessels in Mukalla," it added.

It wasn't clear if there were any casualties from the strike.

Yemen's anti-Houthi forces later declared a state of emergency Tuesday, ending its cooperation with the UAE and ordering all Emirati forces within its territory to evacuate within 24 hours. It issued a 72-hour ban on all border crossings in territory they hold, as well as entries to airports and seaports, except those allowed by Saudi Arabia.

The UAE did not respond to questions from the AP. Abu Dhabi's English-language state-linked newspaper The National reported on the strike.

The Council's AIC satellite news channel aired footage of the aftermath of the strike, but avoided showing damage to the armored vehicles near the port.

"This unjustified escalation against ports and civilian infrastructure will only strengthen popular demands for decisive action and the declaration of a South Arabian state," the channel said.

The attack likely targeted a ship identified as the Greenland, a roll-on, roll-off vessel flagged out of St. Kitts. Tracking data analyzed by the AP showed the vessel had been in Fujairah on Dec. 22 and arrived in Mukalla on Sunday. The second vessel could not be immediately identified.

Footage later aired by Saudi state television, which appeared to be filmed by a surveillance aircraft, purportedly showed the armored vehicles moving from the ship through Mukalla to a staging area. The types of vehicles corresponded to the social media footage.

Strike comes as separatists advance

Mukalla is in Yemen's Hadramout governorate, which the Council had seized in recent days. The port city is some 480 kilometers (300 miles) northeast of Aden, which has been the seat of power for anti-Houthi forces in Yemen after the rebels seized the capital, Sanaa, back in 2014.

Yemen, on the southern edge of the Arabian Peninsula off East Africa, borders the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, as well as Saudi Arabia and Yemen. The war there 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.

The strike Tuesday in Mukalla comes after Saudi Arabia targeted the Council in airstrikes Friday that analysts described as a warning for the separatists to halt their advance and leave the governorates of Hadramout and Mahra.

The Council had pushed out forces there 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 have been rallying for days to support political forces calling for South Yemen to secede again from Yemen.

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. Saudi Arabia in particular has sought to draw foreign firms from Dubai, home to the long-haul carrier Emirates and long a hub for expatriate workers.

The countries have had border disputes in the past, even before the UAE's founding in 1971. Tuesday's airstrikes and ultimatum appeared to be the most-serious confrontation between the nations in decades.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 25 of 64

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.

A statement Tuesday from Saudi Arabia's Foreign Ministry directly linked the Council's advance to the Emiratis for the first time.

"The kingdom notes that the steps taken by the sisterly United Arab Emirates are extremely dangerous," it said.

Allies of the Council issued a statement afterward in which they showed no signs of backing down.

Meanwhile, Israel has acknowledged Somalia's breakaway region of Somaliland as an independent nation, the first to do so in over 30 years. That's sparked concern from the Houthis, who have threatened to attack any Israeli presence in Somaliland.

Russia's nuclear-capable Oreshnik missiles have entered active service, Moscow says

By The Associated Press undefined

Russia's nuclear-capable Oreshnik missile system has entered active service, Russia's Ministry of Defense said Tuesday, as negotiators continue to search for a breakthrough in peace talks to end Moscow's war in Ukraine.

Troops held a brief ceremony to mark the occasion in neighboring Belarus where the missiles have been deployed, the ministry said. It did not say how many missiles had been deployed or give any other details.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said earlier in December that the Oreshnik would enter combat duty this month. He made the statement at a meeting with top Russian military officers, where he warned that Moscow will seek to extend its gains in Ukraine if Kyiv and its Western allies reject the Kremlin's demands in peace talks.

The announcement comes at a critical time for Russia-Ukraine peace talks. U.S. President Donald Trump hosted Zelenskyy at his Florida resort Sunday and insisted that Kyiv and Moscow were "closer than ever before" to a peace settlement.

However, negotiators are still searching for a breakthrough on key issues, including whose forces withdraw from where in Ukraine and the fate of Ukraine's Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, one of the 10 biggest in the world. Trump noted that the monthslong U.S.-led negotiations could still collapse.

Putin has sought to portray himself as negotiating from a position of strength as Ukrainian forces strain to keep back the bigger Russian army.

At a meeting with senior military officers Monday, Putin emphasized the need to create military buffer zones along the Russian border. He also claimed that Russian troops were advancing in the eastern Donetsk region of Ukraine and pressing their offensive in the southern Zaporizhzhia region.

Moscow first used the Oreshnik, which is Russian for "hazelnut tree," against Ukraine in November 2024, when it fired the experimental weapon at a factory in Dnipro that built missiles when Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union.

Putin has praised the Oreshnik's capabilities, saying that its multiple warheads, which plunge toward a target at speeds up to Mach 10, are immune to being intercepted.

He warned the West that Moscow could use it against Ukraine's NATO allies who've allowed Kyiv to use their longer-range missiles to strike inside Russia.

Russia's missile forces chief has also declared that the Oreshnik, which can carry conventional or nuclear warheads, has a range allowing it to reach all of Europe.

Intermediate-range missiles can fly between 500 to 5,500 kilometers (310 to 3,400 miles). Such weapons were banned under a Soviet-era treaty that Washington and Moscow abandoned in 2019.

Khaleda Zia, former Bangladeshi prime minister and archrival of a previous premier, dies at 80

By JULHAS ALAM Associated Press

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP) — Former Bangladeshi Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, whose archrivalry with another former premier defined the country's politics for a generation, has died, her Bangladesh Nationalist Party said in a statement Tuesday. She was 80.

Zia was the first woman elected prime minister of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh's interim government announced a three-day mourning period. A general holiday also was announced for Wednesday when Zia's funeral prayers are scheduled to be held in front of the country's national Parliament building in Dhaka.

Bangladesh's interim leader Muhammad Yunus issued a statement Tuesday citing Zia's contributions to the country.

"Her role in the struggle to establish democracy, a multi-party political culture, and the rights of the people in Bangladesh will be remembered forever," Yunus said.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi offered condolences in a statement Tuesday, noting that "as the first woman Prime Minister of Bangladesh, her important contributions toward the development of Bangladesh, as well as India-Bangladesh relations, will always be remembered."

Sajeeb Wazed, son of former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, said in a statement Tuesday that Zia's demise "will leave a deep impact on the country's (democratic) transition."

"She will be remembered for her contributions in nation building but her death is a blow to stabilize Bangladesh," said Wazed, whose mother was Zia's greatest political rival.

Hasina issued a statement from exile in India saying Zia's death was "an irreparable loss" for politics in Bangladesh and recalled her contributions in establishing the nation's democracy.

Zia had faced corruption cases she said were politically motivated, but in January 2025 the Supreme Court acquitted Zia in the last corruption case against her, which would have let her run in February's general election.

The BNP said that after she was released from prison due to illness in 2020, her family sought permission for treatment abroad at least 18 times from Hasina's administration, but the requests were rejected.

Following Hasina's ouster in 2024, the Yunus-led interim government finally allowed her to go. She went to London in January and returned to Bangladesh in May.

Zia fought military dictatorship

Bangladesh's early years of independence, gained in a bloody 1971 war against Pakistan, were marked by assassinations, coups and countercoups as military figures and secular and Islamic leaders jockeyed for power.

Zia's husband, President Ziaur Rahman, had grabbed power as a military chief in 1977 and a year later formed the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. He was credited with opening democracy in the country but was killed in a 1981 military coup. Zia's uncompromising stance against the military dictatorship helped build a mass movement against it, culminating with the ousting of dictator and former army chief H.M. Ershad in 1990.

Zia's opponent when she won her first term in 1991 and in several elections after that was Hasina, the daughter of independence leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who was assassinated in a 1975 coup.

Zia was criticized over an early 1996 election in which her party won 278 of the 300 parliamentary seats during a wide boycott by other leading parties including Hasina's Awami League, which demanded an election-time caretaker government. Zia's government lasted only 12 days before a nonpartisan caretaker government was installed and the new election was held that June.

Zia returned to power in 2001 in a government shared with the country's main Islamist party, Jamaat-e-Islami, which had a dark past involving Bangladesh's independence war.

Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party was previously closely allied with the party and her government maintained the confidence of the business community by following pro-investment, open market policies.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 27 of 64

Zia was known to have a soft spot for Pakistan and used to deliver anti-Indian political speeches. India alleged insurgents were allowed to use Bangladesh's soil to destabilize India's northeastern states under Zia, especially during her term from 2001-2006.

During that term, Zia also was tainted by allegations that her elder son, Tarique Rahman, was running a parallel government and was involved in widespread corruption.

Zia maintained a rivalry with Hasina

In 2004, Hasina blamed Zia's government and Rahman for grenade attacks in Dhaka that killed 24 members of her Awami League party and wounded hundreds of people. Hasina narrowly escaped the attack, which she characterized as an assassination attempt, and subsequently won the 2008 general election.

Zia's party and its partners boycotted the 2014 election in a dispute over a caretaker government, giving a one-sided victory to the increasingly authoritarian regime of Hasina. Her party joined the national elections in 2018 but boycotted again in 2024, allowing Hasina to return to power for a fourth consecutive time through controversial elections.

Zia was sentenced to 17 years in jail in two separate corruption cases for misuse of power in embezzling funds meant for a charity named after her late husband. Her party said the charges were politically motivated to weaken the opposition, but the Hasina government said it did not interfere and the case was a matter for the courts.

Hasina was bitterly criticized by both her opponents and independent critics for sending Zia to jail.

Health concerns placed over politics

Zia was released from jail by Hasina's government in 2020 and was moved to a rented home, from where she regularly visited a private hospital. Her family repeatedly requested Hasina's administration to allow Zia to travel abroad for medical treatment, but was refused.

After 15 years in power, Hasina was ousted in a mass uprising in August 2024 and fled the country. Zia was given permission to travel abroad by an interim government led by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus.

Zia was silent about politics for years and did not attend political rallies, but she remained the BNP chairperson until her death. Rahman has been the party's acting chair since 2018.

She was last seen at an annual function of the Bangladesh military in Dhaka Cantonment on Nov. 21, when Yunus and other political leaders met her. She was in a wheelchair and appeared pale and tired.

She is survived by Rahman, her elder son and heir apparent in the political dynasty. Her younger son, Arafat, died in 2015.

World shares are mixed in the final stretch of 2025

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — Shares opened mixed in Europe on Tuesday after slipping in Asia as some regional markets wrapped up trading for the year.

Crude oil prices edged higher and gold and silver resumed their ascent. U.S. futures were flat.

In Tokyo, Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi rang out the final session for 2025 in a traditional year-end ceremony.

"By realizing a Japanese economy that earns the trust of investors around the world, we will create a virtuous cycle in which global capital flows into Japan," Takaichi said.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 shed 0.4% to 50,339.48, its first year-end close above 50,000. It ended 2025 up nearly 25%.

With just two trading days left before the year ends, most big investors have closed out their positions and volume has been thin. Most global markets will be closed Thursday, New Year's day, and some will also be closed Wednesday and Friday.

In early European trading, Germany's DAX was nearly unchanged at 24,348.38. Britain's FTSE 100 edged up 0.1% to 9,876.73, while the CAC 40 in Paris had barely budged at 8,112.37.

Elsewhere in Asia, Hong Kong's Hang Seng index climbed 0.9% to 25,854.60, while the Shanghai Com-

posite index was virtually unchanged at 3,965.51.

In Australia, the S&P/ASX 200 edged 0.1% lower to 8,717.10.

South Korea's Kospi fell 0.2% to 4,214.17, while Taiwan's Taiex lost 0.4%.

India's Sensex was down less than 0.1%.

On Monday, stocks slipped in quiet trading on Wall Street. The S&P 500 fell 0.3%. It's still up more than 17% for the year and it remains on track for its eighth monthly gain in a row.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 0.5%, while the Nasdaq composite fell 0.5%.

Big technology stocks with outsized valuations were among the heaviest weights on the market. Nvidia and several other companies focusing on AI or benefiting heavily from the developing technology have become some of the most valuable in the world.

Nvidia fell 1.2% and Broadcom fell 0.8%.

Tech shares have wobbled recently as investors have grown skeptical over the whether the eventual payoff will justify hefty investments in artificial intelligence.

The price of gold gained 0.7% early Tuesday after falling 4.6% the day before. It's up about 64% for the year.

Silver prices gained 4.4% after slumping 8.7% on Monday. They have more than doubled in 2025.

The precious metals fell back on Monday when the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, one of the largest trading floors for commodities, asked traders to put up more cash to make bets on precious metals.

Treasury yields fell in the bond market. The yield on the 10-year Treasury fell to 4.11% from 4.13% late Friday.

Treasury yields have fallen significantly from the start of the year, after the Federal Reserve cut its benchmark rate to help counter a slowing jobs market. That risks heating up inflation that is already stubbornly above the central bank's target rate of 2%. Interest rate cuts could boost the economy by making loans less expensive, but that benefit could be nullified by rising inflation stunting economic growth.

In other dealings early Tuesday, U.S. crude oil gained 14 cents to \$58.22 per barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, picked up 12 cents to \$61.61 per barrel.

The U.S. dollar slipped to 156.00 Japanese yen from 156.05 yen. The euro fell to \$1.1769 from \$1.1774.

Escalation in Yemen threatens to reignite civil war and create wider tensions in Gulf region

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — Saudi Arabia bombed Yemen's port city of Mukalla on Tuesday, targeting a shipment of weapons from the United Arab Emirates for separatist forces — a significant move in a country located along a key international trade route that threatens to bring new risks to the Persian Gulf region.

The secessionist Southern Transitional Council, STC, a group backed by the United Arab Emirates, this month seized most of the the provinces of Hadramout and Mahra, including oil facilities.

Yemen has been mired for more than a decade in a civil war that involves a complex interplay of sectarian grievances and the involvement of regional powers.

The Iran-aligned Houthis control the most populous regions of the country, including the capital Sanaa. Meanwhile, a loose regional coalition of powers — including Saudi Arabia and the UAE — has backed the internationally recognized government in the south.

The war has created a humanitarian crisis and shattered the economy. Still, since 2022, violence had gradually declined as the sides reached something of a stalemate in the war.

The move by the UAE-backed separatists upends the political arrangement among the anti-Houthi partners.

The origins of the crisis

The war in Yemen began in 2014, when the Houthis marched from their northern stronghold of Saada. They took the capital, Sanaa, and forced the internationally recognized government into exile. Saudi Arabia

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 29 of 64

and the UAE entered the war the following year in an attempt to restore the government.

The new fighting pits the STC against the forces of the internationally recognized government and its allied tribes, even as they are both members of the camp fighting against the Houthi rebels in the country's broader civil war.

The STC is the most powerful group in southern Yemen, with crucial financial and military support from the UAE. It was established in April 2017 as an umbrella organization for groups that seek to restore South Yemen as an independent state, as it was between 1967 and 1990.

The latest moves reinforced the STC positions across southern Yemen, which could give them leverage in any future talks to settle the Yemen conflict. The STC has long demanded that any settlement should give southern Yemen the right of self-determination.

The STC enjoys loyalty through much of southern Yemen. It is chaired by Aidarous al-Zubaidi, who is also vice president of the country's Presidential Leadership Council, the ruling organ of the internationally recognized government.

The STC and other UAE-supported groups now control most of the southern half of Yemen, including crucial port cities and islands.

The other party in the latest fighting includes the Yemeni military, which reports to the internationally recognized government. They are allied with the Hadramout Tribal Alliance, a local tribal coalition supported by Saudi Arabia.

These forces are centered in Yemen's largest province of Hadramout, which stretches from the Gulf of Aden in the south to the border with Saudi Arabia in the north. The oil-rich province is a major source of fuel for the southern areas of Yemen.

Secessionists advance this month

Earlier this month, STC forces marched to Hadramout and took control of the province's major facilities, including PetroMasila, Yemen's largest oil company, after brief clashes with government forces and their tribal allies.

This took place after the Saudi-backed Hadramout Tribal Alliance seized the PetroMasila oil facility in late November to pressure the government to agree to its demands for a bigger share of oil revenues and the improvement of services for Hadramout's residents.

The STC apparently seized on this move as a pretext for wresting control of Hadramout and its oil facilities for itself and expanding areas under its control in Yemen.

STC forces then marched to the province of Mahra on the borders with Oman and took control of a border crossing between the two countries. In Aden, the UAE-backed force also seized the presidential palace, which serves as the seat of the ruling Presidential Council.

Saudi troops also withdrew earlier this month from bases in Aden, a Yemeni government official said. The withdrawal was part of a Saudi "repositioning strategy," said the official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the matter.

On Friday, Saudi Arabia targeted the Hadramout region in airstrikes that analysts described as a warning for the separatists to halt their advance and leave the governorates of Hadramout and Mahra.

A fragile situation has been shattered

The escalation shattered the relative quiet in Yemen's war, which has been stalemated in recent years after the Houthis reached a deal with Saudi Arabia that stopped their attacks on the kingdom in return for ceasing the Saudi-led strikes on their territories.

The escalation highlights strained ties between Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, which had been backing competing sides in Yemen's decade long war against the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels amid a moment of unease across the wider Red Sea region. The two nations, while closely aligned on many issues in the wider Mideast, increasingly have competed with each other over economic issues and the region's politics.

The United Arab Emirates said earlier this month that Yemen's governance and territorial integrity is "an issue that must be determined by the Yemeni parties themselves."

China flexes blockade capabilities near Taiwan on second day of military drills

By JOHNSON LAI and KANIS LEUNG Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — China's People's Liberation Army staged a second day of large-scale military drills around Taiwan on Tuesday, unleashing a live-fire show of force as part of what it called "Justice Mission 2025" to demonstrate its ability to deter any external armed support for the self-ruled island that it has long insisted is part of its sovereign territory.

The PLA's Eastern Theater Command sent destroyers, frigates, fighters and bombers to the waters to the north and south of the island to test its ability in sea-air coordination and blockading. Its ground forces carried out long-range, live-fire drills in the waters to the island's north and also organized live-fire training, alongside simulated long-range, joint strike with air, navy and missiles units, in the waters to Taiwan's south, achieving what command spokesperson Li Xi called "desired effects."

The maneuvers increased tension around the Taiwan Strait as 2025 drew to a close, but the impact extended beyond military pressure into everyday life. Taiwan's Civil Aviation Administration was notified that seven temporary "dangerous zones" had been set up around the strait. The schedules of Taiwan's four international airports on Tuesday afternoon showed over 100 international and domestic flights had revised times, delays or cancellations, according to their websites.

Xinhua, China's official news agency, posted a commentary late Monday saying the drills sent an unequivocal message: That Beijing is always ready to prevent anything that tries to split Taiwan from China. Each escalation, it said, would be met with stronger countermeasures.

"By currying favor with the United States through obsequious loyalty gestures and promoting arms purchases, the DPP is binding the entire island of Taiwan to its catastrophic secessionist chariot, disregarding public opinion," it wrote, referring to Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party.

130 aircraft and a Chinese balloon detected

Taiwan President Lai Ching-te said Tuesday his territory would act responsibly by neither escalating conflict nor provoking disputes.

"China has recently escalated military pressure in a frequent manner, this is not conduct expected of a responsible major nation," he wrote on Facebook.

Taiwan's Defense Ministry said it had detected 130 aircraft, including fighters and bombers, 14 military ships and eight other official ships around the island between 6 a.m. Monday and 6 a.m. Tuesday. Its forces kept monitoring the development and deployed aircraft, navy ships and coastal missile systems in response. Ninety of the Chinese aircraft crossed the median line of the strait. A Chinese military balloon was also spotted, it said.

It said the PLA long-range artillery unit in Fujian, a southeastern Chinese province, fired live rounds toward a target zone north of the island, with impact zones scattered around the line 44 kilometers (24 nautical miles) off its coast.

Taiwan's Defense Minister Wellington Koo said the Chinese troops' actions were highly provocative, undermined regional stability and posed security threats and disruptions to passing ships, trade activities and flight routes.

While Beijing sends warplanes and navy vessels toward the island on a near-daily basis, the scale of these exercises escalated tensions between both sides. China has vowed to seize the island, by force if necessary.

Chinese Defense Ministry spokesperson Zhang Xiaogang said the drills served as a stern warning to "Taiwan independence" separatist forces and external forces, without naming any countries.

He criticized Lai's administration for what it called pandering to external forces and pursuing independence, saying that was the root cause of disrupting the status quo in the strait and escalating tensions.

Last week, Beijing imposed sanctions against 20 defense-related U.S. companies and 10 executives, following a Washington announcement of large-scale arms sales to Taiwan valued at more than \$10 billion. Those sales still require approval by the U.S. Congress.

Under U.S. law, Washington is obligated to assist Taipei with its defense, a point that has become increasingly contentious with China over the years.

Beijing slams Japan

On Monday, U.S. President Donald Trump said that while he was not informed of the military exercise in advance, neither was he particularly worried about it. He touted his "great relationship" with Chinese President Xi Jinping and suggested he didn't think Xi was going to attack Taiwan.

The Taiwan issue also heightened China-Japan tensions. Beijing has expressed anger at a statement by Japan's prime minister, Sanae Takaichi, saying its military could get involved if China takes action against the democratically ruled island. There remains widespread overall suspicion in China about Japan that goes back generations to when imperial Japan brutally took over parts of China in the years before World War II.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi slammed both Japan and Taiwan's "pro-independence forces."

"Japan, which launched the war of aggression against China, not only fails to deeply reflect on the numerous crimes it committed, but its current leaders also openly challenge China's territorial sovereignty, the historical conclusions of World War II, and the post-war international order," he said Tuesday during an event in Beijing. China, Wang added, "must be highly vigilant against the resurgence of Japanese militarism."

China and Taiwan have been governed separately since 1949, when the Communist Party rose to power in Beijing following a civil war. Defeated Nationalist Party forces fled to Taiwan, which later transitioned from martial law to multiparty democracy.

Facing the drills, Taiwan on Monday called the Chinese government "the biggest destroyer of peace." It cautioned carrying live-fire exercises around the strait could bring more complex challenges to the international community and neighboring countries.

Stoking the tensions, China's Eastern Theater Command posted a series of online images and videos carrying provocative language throughout the exercises. It posted a video of live rounds being fired from ships and a ground-based launcher on Tuesday.

Chen Wen-chin, chairman of the Keelung District Fishermen's Association in Taiwan, said the group started radio broadcasting every hour from Monday to inform fishers about where China's exercises took place, urging them to avoid danger.

"The Chinese military exercises have prevented fishermen from fishing, which is their livelihood," Chen said. "The inability to fish has had a significant impact on them and caused economic losses."

China's top diplomat blasts US arms sale to Taiwan as military drills around the island unfold

By SIMINA MISTREANU Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China's foreign minister on Tuesday slammed a record U.S. arms sale to Taiwan as Beijing conducted the second day of military drills around the island it has long claimed as its own.

Wang Yi, the most senior Chinese official to comment on the sales so far, also blasted the "pro-independence forces in Taiwan" and Japan's leaders during an end-of-the-year diplomatic event in Beijing.

"In response to the continuous provocations by pro-independence forces in Taiwan and the large-scale U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, we must resolutely oppose and strongly counter them," Wang said while reviewing a year of diplomacy by Asia's largest and most influential nation.

He reiterated China's aim for a "complete reunification" with Taiwan, a self-ruled island that split from China during a civil war in 1949 and evolved into a multiparty democracy.

Taiwan's government argues the island was never part of China in its current form under the Communist Party and Beijing's sovereignty claims are illegitimate.

Military package rankles China

The package valued at more than \$11 billion that was announced earlier this month by the U.S. State Department amounts to the largest U.S. arms sale to Taiwan. It includes missiles, drones, artillery systems and military software.

The U.S. is obligated by its own laws to provide Taiwan with the means to defend itself. President Donald

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 32 of 64

Trump has ramped up pressure on the self-ruled island to buy more U.S. military equipment, even suggesting Taiwan should spend up to 10% of its GDP on defense.

China responded to the sale by launching two days of military drills around Taiwan on Monday. The exercises also are largely seen as a rebuke to Sanae Takaichi, the new Japanese prime minister, who inflamed Beijing last month by implying Japan could militarily intervene over Taiwan.

"Japan, which launched the war of aggression against China, not only fails to deeply reflect on the numerous crimes it committed, but its current leaders also openly challenge China's territorial sovereignty, the historical conclusions of World War II and the postwar international order," Wang said, adding that China "must be highly vigilant against the resurgence of Japanese militarism."

Other diplomatic initiatives reviewed

In his speech reviewing China's diplomatic highlights for the year, Wang also mentioned Israel's war in Gaza, welcoming international efforts to facilitate a ceasefire but insisting that more needs to be done.

"The world still owes Palestine justice," Wang said. "The Palestinian question cannot be marginalized again, and the Palestinian people's cause for democratic and legitimate rights cannot end in vain."

China maintains strong relations with Israel and the Palestinian Authority and backs the two-state solution, under which Israel and Palestine would exist as independent states.

Wang also emphasized China's aim to facilitate a peace agreement between Russia and Ukraine. Beijing says it is impartial in the war but in practice signals support for Moscow through frequent state visits and joint military drills.

Wang mediated talks between top diplomats from Thailand and Cambodia earlier this week, which the leaders said helped consolidate a ceasefire between the two neighbors after months of fighting.

The meetings represented China's latest efforts to strengthen its role as an international mediator and particularly its influence in Asian regional crises. As China grows into an economic and political force globally, Beijing has spent the past decade and more working in various ways to increase its voice as a third party in diplomatic matters.

Winter storm packing snow and strong winds to descend on Great Lakes and Northeast

By LEAH WILLINGHAM and JEFF MARTIN Associated Press

A wild winter storm was expected to bring strong winds, heavy snow and frigid temperatures to the Great Lakes and Northeast on Tuesday, a day after a bomb cyclone barreled across the northern U.S. and left tens thousands of customers without power.

The storm that hit parts of the Plains and Great Lakes on Monday brought sharply colder air, strong winds and a mix of snow, ice and rain that led to treacherous travel. Forecasters said it intensified quickly enough to meet the criteria of a bomb cyclone, a system that strengthens rapidly as pressure drops.

Nationwide, more than 153,000 customers were without power early Tuesday, more than a third of them in Michigan, according to Poweroutage.us.

As Monday's storm moved into Canada, the National Weather Service predicted more inclement weather conditions for the Eastern U.S., including quick bursts of heavy snow and gusty winds known as snow squalls.

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul warned that whiteout conditions were expected Tuesday in parts of the state, including the Syracuse-metro area.

"If you're in an impacted area, please avoid all unnecessary travel," she said in a post on the social media platform X,

Snow piled up quickly in Michigan's Upper Peninsula on Monday, where as much as 2 feet (60 centimeters) fell in some areas, according to the National Weather Service. Meteorologist Ryan Metzger said additional snow was expected in the coming days, although totals would be far lighter.

Waves on Lake Superior that were expected to reach 20 feet (6 meters) Monday sent all but one cargo ship into harbors for shelter, according to MarineTraffic.com. Weather forecasting on the lakes has improved

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 33 of 64

greatly since the Edmund Fitzgerald sank in 1975 after waves were predicted at up to 16 feet (4.8 meters). The fierce winds on Lake Erie sent water surging toward the basin's eastern end near Buffalo, New York, while lowering water on the western side in Michigan to expose normally submerged lakebed — even the wreck of a car and a snowmobile.

Kevin Aldrich, 33, a maintenance worker from Monroe, Michigan, said he has never seen the lake recede so much and was surprised on Monday to spot the remnants of old piers dating back to the 1830s. He posted photos on social media of wooden pilings sticking up several feet from the muck.

"Where those are at would typically be probably 12 feet deep," he said. "We can usually drive our boat over them."

Dangerous wind chills plunged as low as minus 30 F (minus 34 C) across parts of North Dakota and Minnesota on Monday. And in northeast West Virginia, rare, nearly hurricane-force winds were recorded on a mountain near Dolly Sods, according to the National Weather Service.

In Iowa, after blizzard conditions eased by Monday morning, high winds continued blowing fallen snow across roadways, keeping more than 200 miles (320 kilometers) of Interstate 35 closed. State troopers reported dozens of crashes during the storm, including one that killed a person.

On the West Coast, the National Weather Service warned that moderate to strong Santa Ana winds were expected in parts of Southern California through Tuesday, raising concerns about downed trees in areas where soils have been saturated by recent storms. Two more storms were forecast later this week, with rain on New Year's Day potentially soaking the Rose Parade in Pasadena for the first time in about two decades.

Christmas is over, but what to do with the tree? Here's some alternatives to the landfill

By JESSICA DAMIANO Associated Press

What to buy, what to serve, which events to attend — December is typically full of decisions. Here's one more for you to contemplate: What are you going to do with your Christmas tree?

According to the Nature Conservancy, some 10 million live Christmas trees end up in landfills every year. There, they are covered with soil, which results in anaerobic (oxygen-deprived) decomposition rather than the aerobic (oxygen-fueled) process by which they would break down in a natural setting, such as on the forest floor.

Anaerobic decomposition is not only very slow (a tree can take years to break down) but it also generates greenhouse gases like methane and carbon dioxide, which may contaminate groundwater.

If you'd like to avoid this, you have options that not only will avoid harming the environment but may also help improve your garden, and all of them begin with removing ornaments, tinsel or "flocking" (spray-on fake "snow") from the tree.

Firewood and mulch

At the end of every holiday season, my late husband, John, used to remove our Christmas trees' branches — one by one — using garden pruners right in the living room. As he cut each branch, he would drop it into a large trash bag at his feet.

When the bag was full, I would take it outdoors and distribute the branches throughout the garden to insulate the soil and protect bulbs and perennial root crowns from heaving out of the ground during the freeze-thaw cycles of winter.

Meanwhile, John would get to work sawing the trunk into segments, then would bring them outdoors, where they would cure over winter. After six months of drying, we'd burn the dried wood in our fire pit. Ashes to ashes, as they say.

In spring, I would revisit my garden mulch and cut the brittle branches and stems into smaller pieces, leaving them in place to further decompose without interfering with the emerging springtime garden. Pine needles don't significantly lower soil pH, despite what you might have heard, so they will not imperil

your plants.

The practice not only provides free winter mulch and firewood, but also allows you to remove the tree from the house without leaving a trail of needles from the living room to the door. Win-win!

Wildlife havens

If you have a large pond, consider sinking your tree to create shelter for fish. They'll appreciate their new hiding place.

Or leave the tree in its stand and set it out in the yard. Secure it, if necessary, to avoid tipping in strong winter winds. Then watch as nonmigratory birds make a home in it. A bird feeder hanging from a branch will help entice new residents even more.

If that's not possible, just drag the whole thing outside and lay it down in an out-of-the-way corner of the yard to provide shelter for birds and other wildlife.

Local programs

Some communities hold special tree collections after the holidays and use them to fortify sand dunes, counter erosion or provide shelter for wildlife. Some municipalities chip collected trees and then supply the resulting mulch free of charge to homeowners.

To find programs in your town, county, or state, call your local offices or search online.

You might even donate your tree to a local farm; many will welcome your contribution to their livestock's food supply.

Australian police find no evidence of 'broader terrorist cell' in Bondi Beach antisemitic shooting

By ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — An investigation that extended to the Philippines of two men accused of shooting dead 15 people at a Sydney Jewish festival has found no evidence that they were part of a "broader terrorist cell," police said on Tuesday.

Sydney residents Sajid Akram, 50, and his 24-year-old son Naveed Akram spent most of November in Davao City in the southern Philippines, Australian Federal Police Commissioner Krissy Barrett said.

They returned on a flight from Manila on Nov. 29. Two weeks later, they are accused of killing 15 and wounding another 40 in a mass shooting that targeted a Hannukah festival at Bondi Beach.

Philippine National Police determined the pair rarely left their hotel during the visit, Barrett said.

"There is no evidence to suggest they received training or underwent logistical preparation for their alleged attack," Barrett told reporters.

"These individuals are alleged to have acted alone. There is no evidence to suggest these alleged offenders were part of a broader terrorist cell, or were directed by others to carry out an attack. However, I want to be clear, I am not suggesting that they were there for tourism," Barrett added.

Barrett did not detail a motive for the visit, which began on Nov. 1.

Police allege the pair were inspired by the Islamic State group. The southern Philippines once drew small numbers of foreign militants aligned with the Islamic State group or al-Qaida to train in a secessionist conflict involving minority Muslims in the largely Catholic nation.

Barrett said she was limited in what she could disclose about the investigation in the Philippines because she did not want to prejudice Naveed Akram's trial.

He has yet to enter pleas to dozens of charges including 15 counts of murder and one of committing a terrorist act. Police shot him in the abdomen during a gunfight at Bondi on Dec. 14 and he spent a week in a hospital before he was transferred to a prison. Police shot his father dead at Bondi.

Authorities are promising the largest police presence ever at New Year's Eve festivities at Sydney Harbor on Wednesday. More than 2,500 officers will be on duty. Many will be openly carrying automatic rifles, a sight rarely seen on Sydney streets.

The first police responders to the Bondi massacre were armed with Glock pistols that lacked the lethal range of the Akrams' rifles and shotguns. Two police officers were among the wounded.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 35 of 64

New South Wales Premier Chris Minns said the state was not moving toward a more militarized police force in response to the attack.

"Given we've just had the worst terrorism event in Australia's history inside the last month, it would be self-evidently the case that things need to change and the security needs to change," Minns said.

"I understand that there'll be some people that oppose this or regard it as the militarization of the police. My sense is far more families would fully support that kind of police operation because they will feel far safer in that environment," Minns added.

More than 1 million revelers crowd the waterfront each year to see a world-famous fireworks display centered on the Sydney Harbor Bridge.

Minns said he was concerned that any reduction in crowd numbers would be interpreted by extremists as a victory.

"It's an opportunity to thumb our nose at the terrorists and their ideology that really would have us living in a ball and not celebrating this beautiful city. So this is an opportunity to live your life and show defiance to that kind of ideology," Minns said.

The Bondi victims will be commemorated with one minute of silence at 11 p.m. on Wednesday when four images of a Jewish candelabrum known as a menorah will be projected on the bridge's pylons, Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore said.

Local government authorities had planned to project images of a dove with the word "peace," but that was changed after consultation with Jewish representatives.

"I continue to listen to the community to ensure the acknowledgement of the horrific attack at Bondi Beach during New Year's Eve is appropriate," Moore said in statement.

A bomb cyclone brings blizzards to the Midwest before turning east

By LEAH WILLINGHAM and JEFF MARTIN Associated Press

A strengthening bomb cyclone barreled across the northern U.S. on Monday, unleashing severe winter weather in the Midwest as it took aim at the East Coast.

The storm brought blizzard conditions, treacherous travel and power outages to parts of the Plains and Great Lakes on Monday as sharply colder air, strong winds and a mix of snow, ice and rain swept through.

Forecasters said the storm intensified quickly enough to meet the criteria of a bomb cyclone, a system that strengthens rapidly as pressure drops. The sharp cold front left parts of the central U.S. waking up Monday to temperatures as much as 50 degrees Fahrenheit (28 degrees Celsius) colder than the day before.

All that wind and snow created "a pretty significant system for even this part of the country," said Cody Snell, a meteorologist with the Weather Prediction Center. Dangerous wind chills plunged as low as minus 30 F (minus 34 C) across parts of North Dakota and Minnesota.

Storm expected to strengthen

The National Weather Service had warned of whiteout conditions beginning Sunday that could make travel impossible in some places.

In Iowa, blizzard conditions eased by Monday morning but high winds were still blowing fallen snow across roadways, keeping more than 200 miles (320 kilometers) of Interstate 35 closed. State troopers reported dozens of crashes during the storm, including one that killed a person.

Forecasters expect the storm to intensify, fueled by a sharp clash between frigid Canadian air and lingering warmth across the southern United States.

Great Lakes region hit hard

Nationwide, nearly 220,000 customers were without power Monday night, more than a third of them in Michigan, according to Poweroutage.us. Airports reported over 9,000 flight delays and 889 cancellations within, into or out of the United States.

Snow piled up quickly in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, where as much as 2 feet (0.6 meters) fell in some areas, according to the National Weather Service. Meteorologist Ryan Metzger said additional snow was

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 36 of 64

expected in the coming days, although totals would be far lighter.

Waves on Lake Superior were expected to reach 20 feet (6 meters) Monday, sending all but one cargo ship into harbors for shelter, according to MarineTraffic.com. Weather forecasting on the lakes has improved greatly since the Edmund Fitzgerald sank in 1975 after waves were predicted at up to 16 feet (5 meters).

The fierce winds on Lake Erie sent water surging toward the basin's eastern end near Buffalo, New York, while lowering water on the western side in Michigan to expose normally submerged lakebed — even the wreck of a car and a snowmobile.

Kevin Aldrich, 33, a maintenance worker from Monroe, Michigan, said he has never seen the lake recede so much and was surprised on Monday to spot the remnants of old piers dating back to the 1830s. He posted photos on social media of wooden pilings sticking up several feet from the muck.

"Where those are at would typically be probably 12 feet (3.6 meters) deep," he said. "We can usually drive our boat over them."

On the New York side, the National Weather Service said lake levels had risen to just below 8 feet (2.4 meters), with the potential to reach 9 feet (2.7 meters) or more by late Monday, due to the strong southwest wind flow. The agency also predicted "significant lakeshore flooding" along the Lake Erie shoreline of Erie and Chautauqua counties as well as along the upper Niagara River.

Rain and a wintry mix fell farther east across parts of the Northeast. Freezing rain was reported in northern New York, with the threat extending into Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine.

Forecasters warned the ice and wind could strain power lines and trees. More than 57,000 power outages were reported across upstate New York on Monday afternoon, utility officials said. Heavy lake-effect snow and possible whiteouts were forecast Tuesday for the northwestern part of the state, the National Weather Service said.

Powerful weather hits other parts of US

On the West Coast, the National Weather Service warned that moderate to strong Santa Ana winds were expected in parts of Southern California through Tuesday, raising concerns about downed trees in areas where soils have been saturated by recent storms. Two more storms were forecast later this week, with rain on New Year's Day potentially soaking the Rose Parade in Pasadena for the first time in about two decades.

A weekend snowstorm hit Alaska's northern panhandle with 15 to 40 inches (38 to 102 centimeters), according to the National Weather Service, keeping the region under a winter storm warning Monday as Juneau braced for up to 9 more inches (23 centimeters) and possible freezing rain. City facilities were closed and road crews piled snow into towering berms, while communities farther south faced flood watches from snowmelt and heavy rain.

And in central and eastern Illinois, the National Weather Service confirmed three tornadoes on Sunday, including an EF1 tornado with peak winds of 98 mph (158 kph) that damaged buildings and snapped power poles.

Chinese military drills around Taiwan resume for a second day, aimed at warning 'external forces'

By KANIS LEUNG Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — For a second day, China's military on Tuesday dispatched air, navy and missile units to conduct joint live-fire drills around the island of Taiwan, which Beijing called a "stern warning" against separatist and "external interference" forces. Taiwan said it was placing forces on alert and called the Chinese government "the biggest destroyer of peace."

Taiwan's aviation authority said more than 100,000 international air travelers would be affected by flight cancellations or diversions.

The two days of drills — dubbed "Justice Mission 2025" — came after Beijing expressed outrage at what could be the largest-ever U.S. arms sale to the self-ruled territory, and at a statement by Japan's prime minister, Sanae Takaichi, saying its military could get involved if China takes action against Taiwan. China

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 37 of 64

says Taiwan must come under its rule.

China's military did not mention the United States and Japan in its statement on Monday, but Beijing's foreign ministry accused Taiwan's ruling party of trying to seek independence through requesting U.S. support. And on Tuesday morning, the official Xinhua News Agency quoted a government spokesperson saying that any efforts to that end would be "doomed."

"We urge relevant countries to abandon the illusion of using Taiwan to contain China, and to refrain from challenging China's resolve in safeguarding its core interests," said Zhang Xiaogang of China's Defense Ministry.

Taiwan's Defense Ministry said rapid response exercises were underway, with forces on high alert. "The Chinese Communist Party's targeted military exercises further confirm its nature as an aggressor and the biggest destroyer of peace," it said.

U.S. President Donald Trump said Monday that he was not informed of the military exercise in advance but that he was not worried because China has been "doing naval exercises for 20 years in that area." Touting his "great relationship" with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Trump suggested he didn't think Xi was going to attack Taiwan.

Drills are not uncommon

Beijing sends warplanes and navy vessels toward the island on a near-daily basis, and in recent years it has stepped up the scope and scale of the exercises.

Senior Col. Shi Yi, spokesperson of China's People's Liberation Army's Eastern Theater Command, said the drills would be conducted in the Taiwan Strait and areas to the north, southwest, southeast and east of the island.

Shi said activities would focus on sea-air combat readiness patrol, "joint seizure of comprehensive superiority" and blockades on key ports. It was the first large-scale military drill where the command publicly mentioned one goal was "all-dimensional deterrence outside the island chain."

"It is a stern warning against 'Taiwan independence' separatist forces and external interference forces, and it is a legitimate and necessary action to safeguard China's sovereignty and national unity," Shi said.

China and Taiwan have been governed separately since 1949, when a civil war brought the Communist Party to power in Beijing. Defeated Nationalist Party forces fled to Taiwan. The island has operated since then with its own government, though the mainland's government claims it as sovereign territory.

Capabilities are tested

China's command on Monday deployed destroyers, frigates, fighters, bombers and unmanned aerial vehicles, alongside long-range rockets, to the north and southwest of the Taiwan Strait. It carried out live-fire exercises against targets in the waters. Among other training, drills to test the capabilities of sea-air coordination and precise target hunting were conducted in the waters and airspace to the east of the strait.

Hsieh Jih-sheng, deputy chief of the general staff for intelligence of the Taiwanese Defense Ministry, said that as of 3 p.m. Monday, 89 aircraft and drones were operating around the strait, with 67 of them entering the "response zone" — airspace under the force's monitoring and response. The ministry detected 14 navy ships around the strait and four other warships in the Western Pacific, in addition to 14 coast guard vessels.

"Conducting live-fire exercises around the Taiwan Strait ... does not only mean military pressure on us. It may bring more complex impact and challenges to the international community and neighboring countries," Hsieh told reporters.

Taiwan's Civil Aviation Administration said Chinese authorities had issued a notice saying seven temporary dangerous zones would be set up around the strait to carry out rocket-firing exercises from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., barring aircraft from entering them.

The Taiwanese aviation authority said more than 850 international flights were initially scheduled during that period and the drills would affect over 100,000 travelers. Over 80 domestic flights, involving around 6,000 passengers, were also canceled, it added.

Commercial airlines began to announce dozens of cancellations and delays for domestic routes across Taiwan, particularly ones along islands near China.

The Chinese command released themed posters about the drills online accompanied by provocative

wording. One depicted two shields with the Great Wall alongside three military aircraft and two ships. Its social media post said the drills were about the "Shield of Justice, Smashing Illusion," adding that any foreign interlopers or separatists touching the shields would be eliminated.

Last week, Beijing imposed sanctions against 20 U.S. defense-related companies and 10 executives, a week after Washington announced large-scale arms sales to Taiwan valued at more than \$10 billion. It still requires approval by the U.S. Congress.

Under U.S. federal law in place for many years, Washington is obligated to assist Taipei with its defense, a point that has become increasingly contentious with China. The U.S. and Taiwan had formal diplomatic relations until 1979, when President Jimmy Carter's administration recognized and established relations with Beijing.

Taiwanese army on high alert

Karen Kuo, spokesperson for the Taiwanese president's office, said the drills were undermining the stability and security of the Taiwan Strait and Indo-Pacific region and openly challenging international law and order.

"Our country strongly condemns the Chinese authorities for disregarding international norms and using military intimidation to threaten neighboring countries," she said.

Taiwan's Defense Ministry released a video that featured its weapons and forces in a show of resilience. Multiple French Mirage-2000 aircraft conducted landings at an air force base.

In October, the Taiwanese government said it would accelerate the building of a "Taiwan Shield" or "T-Dome" air defense system in the face of the military threat from China.

The military tensions came a day after Taipei Mayor Chiang Wan-an said he hoped the Taiwan Strait would be associated with peace and prosperity, instead of "crashing waves and howling winds," during a trip to Shanghai.

Court releases transcript from closed hearing for man accused of killing Charlie Kirk

By MATTHEW BROWN and HANNAH SCHOENBAUM Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — A Utah judge on Monday ordered the release of a transcript from a closed-door hearing in October over whether the man charged with killing Charlie Kirk must be shackled during court proceedings.

State District Judge Tony Graf said public transparency was "foundational" to the judicial system before ordering the release of details from the Oct. 24 closed hearing. Attorneys for media outlets including The Associated Press had argued for access because they said it was also the first time defense attorneys suggested a ban on cameras in the courtroom.

Prosecutors have charged Tyler Robinson with aggravated murder in the Sept. 10 shooting of the conservative activist on the Utah Valley University campus in Orem. They plan to seek the death penalty. Robinson has not yet entered a plea.

In a 97-page transcript released later Monday, attorneys for Robinson argued that widespread videos and photos of him shackled and in jail clothing could create bias against him among potential jurors. Defense attorney Richard Novak said prohibiting cameras would be "very easy" for the court to enforce and could help curb visual prejudice.

"We're not litigating this case in the press," Novak said during the Oct. 24 hearing.

The transcript contained limited redactions to remove discussions of security protocols in the closely watched case. Graf also ordered the release of an audio recording of the hearing, again with redactions.

Robinson was not present in court Monday and appeared via audio feed from the Utah County Jail.

Graf has not ruled on the defense's suggestion to ban cameras, but he has implemented other limitations.

Days after the closed-door hearing, Graf ruled that Robinson could wear civilian clothes in pretrial hearings but must also wear restraints to ensure the safety of court staff and Robinson himself. Utah court rules require defendants who are in custody to be restrained or supervised at all times unless otherwise

ordered.

Graf also prohibited media outlets from publishing photos, videos and live broadcasts that show Robinson's restraints to help protect his presumption of innocence before a trial.

The judge briefly stopped a media livestream of a hearing earlier this month and ordered the camera be moved after Robinson's attorneys said the stream showed the defendant's shackles. Graf said he would terminate future broadcasts if there were further violations.

Lawyers for the media wrote in recent filings that an open court "safeguards the integrity of the fact-finding process" while fostering public confidence in judicial proceedings. Criminal cases in the U.S. have long been open to the public, which the attorneys argued is proof that trials can be conducted fairly without restricting reporters.

In a separate ruling Monday, Graf denied a request from attorneys for the media who sought to intervene in the case. The judge said members of the press do not need to be formal parties in the proceedings to access court records.

Still, Graf said the involved publications must be notified of future requests to close hearings or restrict access to court filings.

Prosecutors are expected to lay out their case against Robinson at a preliminary hearing scheduled to begin May 18.

Brown reported from Billings, Montana.

Trump says the US 'hit' a facility along shore where he says alleged drug boats 'load up'

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — President Donald Trump has indicated that the U.S. has "hit" a dock facility along a shore as he wages a pressure campaign on Venezuela, but the U.S. offered few details.

Trump initially seemed to confirm a strike in what appeared to be an impromptu radio interview Friday, and when questioned Monday by reporters about "an explosion in Venezuela," he said the U.S. struck a facility where boats accused of carrying drugs "load up."

"There was a major explosion in the dock area where they load the boats up with drugs," Trump said as he met in Florida with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. "They load the boats up with drugs, so we hit all the boats and now we hit the area. It's the implementation area. There's where they implement. And that is no longer around."

It is part of an escalating effort to target what the Trump administration says are boats smuggling drugs bound for the United States. It moves closer to shore strikes that so far have been carried out by the military in international waters in the Caribbean Sea and eastern Pacific Ocean.

The U.S. military said it conducted another strike on Monday against a boat accused of smuggling drugs in the eastern Pacific Ocean, killing two people. The attacks have killed at least 107 people in 30 strikes since early September, according to numbers announced by the Trump administration.

Trump declined to say if the U.S. military or the CIA carried out the strike on the dock or where it occurred. He did not confirm it happened in Venezuela.

"I know exactly who it was, but I don't want to say who it was. But you know it was along the shore," Trump said.

Trump first referenced the strike on Friday, when he called radio host John Catsimatidis during a program on WABC radio and discussed the U.S. strikes on alleged drug-carrying boats.

"I don't know if you read or saw, they have a big plant or a big facility where they send the, you know, where the ships come from," Trump said. "Two nights ago, we knocked that out. So, we hit them very hard."

Trump did not offer any additional details in the interview.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth or one of the U.S. military's social media accounts has in the past typically announced every boat strike in a post on X, but there has been no post of any strike on a facility.

The Pentagon on Monday referred questions to the White House, which did not immediately respond to a message seeking more details. The press office of Venezuela's government did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Trump's statement.

Trump for months has suggested he may conduct land strikes in South America, in Venezuela or possibly another country, and in recent weeks has been saying the U.S. would move beyond striking boats and would strike on land "soon."

In October, Trump confirmed he had authorized the CIA to conduct covert operations in Venezuela. The agency did not immediately respond to a message seeking comment Monday.

Along with the strikes, the U.S. has sent warships, built up military forces in the region, seized two oil tankers and pursued a third.

The Trump administration has said it is in "armed conflict" with drug cartels and seeking to stop the flow of narcotics into the United States.

Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro has insisted the real purpose of the U.S. military operations is to force him from power.

White House chief of staff Susie Wiles said in an interview with Vanity Fair published this month that Trump "wants to keep on blowing boats up until Maduro 'cries uncle.'"

Former world heavyweight champion Anthony Joshua is 'stable' after 2 die in car accident in Nigeria

By OPE ADETAYO Associated Press

LAGOS, Nigeria (AP) — Anthony Joshua, the two-time former world heavyweight champion from Britain, was in a stable condition in the hospital Monday after being involved in a car crash in Nigeria that killed two people who were close friends and team members, his promoter said.

Eddie Hearn's Matchroom Boxing said on X that Joshua "sustained injuries in the accident and was taken to hospital for checks and treatment" and he will "remain there for observation." It named Sina Ghami and Latif Ayodele as the two passengers who had "tragically passed away."

Photos on social media showed Joshua being extricated from a wrecked vehicle while he was wincing in pain.

"Following thorough clinical evaluations, medical professionals have confirmed that both patients (hospitalized after the accident) are stable and do not require any emergency medical intervention at this time," a joint statement by Lagos and Ogun state governments said.

The Lagos state commissioner for information, Gbenga Omotoso, confirmed the accident in a post on X, adding that the government had sent ambulances to the crash site.

The crash occurred on a major thoroughfare — the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway which links Ogun state to Lagos, the country's economic capital — at about 11 a.m. local time. Nigeria is the homeland of Joshua's parents.

Ogun State Police earlier said in a statement: "The vehicle conveying Mr. Joshua, a Lexus SUV, was involved in the accident under circumstances that are currently being investigated. Joshua, seated in the rear of the vehicle, sustained minor injuries and is receiving medical attention with another injured person."

According to Olusegun Ogungbemi, spokesperson for the Federal Road Safety Corps, preliminary investigations indicated the vehicle was "traveling beyond the legally prescribed speed limit on the corridor, lost control during an overtaking maneuver and crashed into a stationary truck," which was by the side of the road.

The Ogun state government said that "preliminary reports indicate that two male foreign nationals died on the spot."

'Life is much more important than boxing'

Joshua beat YouTuber-turned-boxer Jake Paul on Dec. 19 in a bout in Miami, which he was using to regain sharpness in the ring. He lost the world heavyweight title in 2021 to Oleksandr Usyk.

"Life is much more important than boxing. I am praying for the lost lives, AJ and anyone impacted by

today's unfortunate accident," Paul said Monday.

Nigeria's president calls Joshua

Nigeria's president, Bola Tinubu, called Joshua in hospital.

"I spoke with AJ on the phone to personally convey my condolences over the death of his two associates," the president said on X. "I wished him a full and speedy recovery, and prayed with him. AJ assured me he is receiving the best possible care. I also spoke with his mother and prayed for her. She was deeply appreciative of the call."

No further details on Joshua's condition were given.

"Anthony Joshua is in an undisclosed hospital being treated for his injuries," Lanre Ogunlowo, the commissioner of police for Ogun state, told the AP. He said he has no further information on the injuries.

Hearn had earlier told Daily Mail Sport that he was "away on a family holiday and awoke to the news of this incident.

"We are trying to contact Anthony and in the meantime we don't want to speculate on how he is but thankfully he appears OK from what I have seen in the images."

Joshua briefly went to boarding school in Nigeria at the age of 11. He returned there for the first time in 17 years in 2019, ahead of a fight against Andy Ruiz Jr.

Joshua has been in talks to fight fellow Briton Tyson Fury in 2026.

Foods with healthy-sounding buzzwords could be hiding added sugar in plain sight

By ALBERT STUMM Associated Press

Many consumers feel pride in avoiding the glazed pastries in the supermarket and instead opting for "all natural" granola that comes packed with extra protein. Same goes for low-fat yogurts "made with real fruit," organic plant-based milks and bottled "superfood" smoothies.

Buyer beware: Healthy grocery buzzwords like those often cover up an unhealthy amount of sugar.

Added sugars are difficult to quickly spot because many companies use clever marketing to distract consumers, said Nicole Avena, a professor of neuroscience and psychiatry at Mount Sinai Medical School and Princeton University who has studied added sugars.

Avena said while some health-forward brands know people are starting to become aware of the hazards of added sugars, "a lot of the bigger brands don't worry so much about people's health."

Here's how to spot hidden sugars and what to do about it.

What to look for

Along with saturated fat and salt, eating excess sugar is linked to heart disease, obesity, diabetes and other health risks.

The average American consumes 17 teaspoons of added sugar a day, which adds up to 57 pounds (26 kilograms) per year, according to the American Heart Association. About half of that comes from beverages, but much of the rest is sneaked into cereal, salsa, prepared sandwiches, dairy products, bottled sauces and baked goods, including many brands of whole-grain bread.

To help control sugar intake, start by checking the nutrition label. Since 2021, food companies have been required to list the quantity of added sugars separately from total sugar content. But the plan backfired, Avena said.

Companies reduced common sweeteners like refined beet sugar and high-fructose corn syrup but added alternatives, such as monk fruit and the sugar alcohol erythritol, which aren't considered "added sugars" under FDA regulations.

"Now our foods are even more sweet than they were back in 2020," Avena said.

What should you do?

Collin Popp, a dietitian and professor at NYU Langone Health, said the current FDA recommendation allows for some flexibility. People should get no more than 10% of their calories from added sugar, which amounts to about 50 grams per day if eating 2,000 calories, or a bit more than what's in a typical can of

soda.

But that might be too flexible, Popp said.

"I would actually like to see that be less than 5%, and closer to zero for some, if they have diabetes or prediabetes," he said.

The key is to be mindful of what you're eating, even if the product seems healthy or if the package is labeled organic, Popp said. Roasted nuts, plant-based milks and wasabi peas, for example, can include a surprising amount of added sugars. So can English muffins and Greek yogurt.

One Chobani black cherry yogurt, for example, has zero grams of fat but 9 grams of added sugar, or more than 2 teaspoons. Silk brand almond milk has 7 grams per cup.

Popp recommends taking control of how much sugar goes into your food. That could mean buying plain yogurt and adding honey or berries, or asking the barista if you can put your own oat milk into your coffee.

Taking from one column to add to another

Although they lower the calorie content of foods, artificial sweeteners like stevia and sugar alcohols may not be better because they can encourage people to overeat, Avena said. She said research shows that sweet flavors are what activate the reward center of the brain, not the sugar itself.

That's not to write off sugar alternatives, including allulose for people with Type 1 diabetes since it doesn't affect blood sugar.

But for the general public, minimizing dependence on the overall sweetness of food is key to improving health, she said.

"Don't let the food companies decide how much sugar you're eating," Avena said.

During Netanyahu visit, Trump warns Iran of further US strikes if it reconstitutes nuclear program

By WILL WEISSERT, SAM MEDNICK, SAMY MAGDY and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — President Donald Trump warned Iran on Monday that the U.S. could carry out further military strikes if the country attempts to reconstitute its nuclear program as he held wide-ranging talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at his home in Florida.

Trump had previously insisted that Tehran's nuclear capabilities were "completely and fully obliterated" by U.S. strikes on key nuclear enrichment sites in June. But with Netanyahu by his side, Trump raised the possibility that suspected activity could be taking place outside those sites. Israeli officials, meanwhile, have been quoted in local media expressing concern about Iran rebuilding its supply of long-range missiles capable of striking Israel.

"Now I hear that Iran is trying to build up again," Trump told reporters gathered at his Mar-a-Lago estate. "And if they are, we're going to have to knock them down. We'll knock them down. We'll knock the hell out of them. But hopefully that's not happening."

Trump's warning to Iran comes as his administration has committed significant resources to targeting drug trafficking in South America and the president looks to create fresh momentum for the U.S.-brokered Israel-Hamas ceasefire. The Gaza deal is in danger of stalling before reaching its complicated second phase that would involve naming an international governing body and rebuilding the devastated Palestinian territory.

At a news conference with Netanyahu after their meeting, Trump suggested that he could order another U.S. strike.

"If it's confirmed, they know the consequences, and the consequences will be very powerful, maybe more powerful than the last time," Trump said.

Iran has insisted that it is no longer enriching uranium at any site in the country, trying to signal to the West that it remains open to potential negotiations over its atomic program. The two leaders discussed the possibility of taking new military action against Tehran just months after June's 12-day war.

The Iranian mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Trump's warning.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 43 of 64

Gaza ceasefire progress has slowed

Trump, with Netanyahu by his side, said he wants to get to the second phase of the Gaza deal "as quickly as we can."

"But there has to be a disarming of Hamas," Trump added.

The ceasefire between Israel and Hamas that Trump championed has mostly held, but progress has slowed recently. Both sides accuse each other of violations, and divisions have emerged among the U.S., Israel and Arab countries about the path forward.

The truce's first phase began in October, days after the two-year anniversary of the initial Hamas-led attack on Israel that killed about 1,200 people. All but one of the 251 hostages taken then have been released, alive or dead.

The Israeli leader, who also met separately with Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, has signaled he is in no rush to move forward with the next phase as long as the remains of Ran Gvili are still in Gaza.

Gvili's parents met with Netanyahu as well as Rubio, U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff and the president's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, in Florida on Monday.

"They're waiting for their son to come home," Trump said of the family of the young police officer known affectionately as "Rani."

Next phase is complex

The path to implementing Trump's peace plan is certainly complicated.

If successful, the second phase would see the rebuilding of a demilitarized Gaza under international supervision by a group chaired by Trump and known as the Board of Peace. The Palestinians would form a "technocratic, apolitical" committee to run daily affairs in Gaza, under Board of Peace supervision.

It further calls for normalized relations between Israel and the Arab world and a possible pathway to Palestinian independence. Then there are thorny logistical and humanitarian questions, including rebuilding war-ravaged Gaza, disarming Hamas and creating a security apparatus called the International Stabilization Force.

Much remains unsettled

Two main challenges have complicated moving to the second phase, according to an official who was briefed on those meetings. Israeli officials have been taking a lot of time to vet and approve members of the Palestinian technocratic committee from a list given to them by the mediators, and Israel continues its military strikes.

Trump's plan also calls for the stabilization force, proposed as a multinational body, to maintain security. But it, too, has yet to be formed. Whether details will be forthcoming after Monday's meeting is unclear.

A Western diplomat said there is a "huge gulf" between the U.S.-Israeli understanding of the force's mandate and that of other major countries in the region, as well as European governments.

All spoke on the condition of anonymity to provide details that haven't been made public.

The U.S. and Israel want the force to have a "commanding role" in security duties, including disarming Hamas and other militant groups. But countries being courted to contribute troops fear that mandate will make it an "occupation force," the diplomat said.

Hamas has said it is ready to discuss "freezing or storing" its arsenal of weapons but insists it has a right to armed resistance as long as Israel occupies Palestinian territory. One U.S. official said a potential plan might be to offer cash incentives in exchange for weapons, echoing a "buyback" program Witkoff has previously floated.

Trump makes case once again for Netanyahu pardon

The two leaders, who have a long and close relationship, heaped praise on each other. Trump also tweaked the Israeli leader, who at moments during the war has raised Trump's ire, for being "very difficult on occasion."

Netanyahu said Trump during the lunch was formally told that his country's education ministry will award him the Israel Prize, breaking the long-held convention of bestowing the honor on an Israeli citizen or

resident.

"President Trump has broken so many conventions to the surprise of people," Netanyahu said. He added, "So we decided to break a convention too, or create a new one."

Trump also renewed his call on Israeli President Isaac Herzog to grant Netanyahu, who is in the midst of a corruption trial, a pardon.

Netanyahu is the only sitting prime minister in Israeli history to stand trial, after being charged with fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes in three separate cases accusing him of exchanging favors with wealthy political supporters.

Trump has previously written to Herzog to urge a pardon and advocated for one during his October speech before the Knesset. He said Monday that Herzog has told him "it's on its way" without offering further details.

"He's a wartime prime minister who's a hero. How do you not give a pardon?" Trump said.

Herzog's office said in a statement that the Israeli president and Trump have not spoken since the pardon request was submitted, but that Herzog has spoken with a Trump representative about the U.S. president's letter advocating for Netanyahu's pardon.

"During that conversation, an explanation was provided regarding the stage of the process in which the request currently stands, and that any decision on the matter will be made in accordance with the established procedures," the Israeli president's office said.

US pledges \$2 billion for UN humanitarian aid as Trump warns agencies must 'adapt or die'

By JAMEY KEATEN and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — The United States on Monday announced a \$2 billion pledge for U.N. humanitarian aid as President Donald Trump's administration slashes U.S. foreign assistance and warns United Nations agencies they must "adapt, shrink or die" in a time of new financial realities.

The money is a small fraction of what the U.S. has contributed in the past but reflects what the administration believes is still a generous amount that will maintain America's status as the world's largest humanitarian donor.

"This new model will better share the burden of U.N. humanitarian work with other developed countries and will require the U.N. to cut bloat, remove duplication, and commit to powerful new impact, accountability and oversight mechanisms," Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on social media.

The pledge creates an umbrella fund from which money will be doled out to agencies and priorities, a key part of U.S. demands for drastic changes across the U.N. that have alarmed many humanitarian workers and led to severe reductions in programs and services.

The \$2 billion is only a sliver of traditional U.S. humanitarian funding for U.N.-coordinated programs, which has run as high as \$17 billion annually in recent years, according to U.N. data. U.S. officials say only \$8 billion to \$10 billion of that has been in voluntary contributions. The United States also pays billions in annual dues related to its U.N. membership.

"The piggy bank is not open to organizations that just want to return to the old system," Jeremy Lewin, the State Department official in charge of foreign assistance, said at a press conference Monday in Geneva. "President Trump has made clear that the system is dead."

The State Department said "individual U.N. agencies will need to adapt, shrink, or die." Critics say the Western aid cutbacks have been shortsighted, driven millions toward hunger, displacement or disease, and harmed U.S. soft power around the world.

A year of crisis in aid

The move caps a crisis year for many U.N. organizations, including its refugee, migration and food aid agencies. The Trump administration has already cut billions in U.S. foreign aid, prompting the agencies to slash spending, aid projects and thousands of jobs. Other traditional Western donors have reduced outlays, too.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 45 of 64

The U.S. pledge for aid programs of the United Nations — the world's top provider of humanitarian assistance and biggest recipient of U.S. humanitarian aid money — takes shape in a preliminary deal with the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, or OCHA, run by Tom Fletcher, a former British diplomat and government official.

Fletcher, who has spent the past year lobbying U.S. officials not to abandon U.N. funding altogether, appeared optimistic at the deal's signing in Geneva.

"It's a very, very significant landmark contribution. And a month ago, I would have anticipated the number would have been zero," he told reporters. "And so I think, before worrying about what we haven't got, I'd like to look at the millions of people whose lives will be saved, whose lives will be better because of this contribution, and start there."

Even as the U.S. pulls back its aid contributions, needs have ballooned worldwide: Famine has been recorded this year in parts of conflict-ridden Sudan and Gaza, and floods, drought and natural disasters that many scientists attribute to climate change have taken many lives or driven thousands from their homes.

The cuts will have major implications for U.N. affiliates like the International Organization for Migration, the World Food Program and refugee agency UNHCR. They have already received billions less from the U.S. this year than under annual allocations from the Biden administration — or even during Trump's first term.

Now, the idea is that Fletcher's office — which has aimed to improve efficiency — will become a funnel for U.S. and other aid money that can be redirected to those agencies, rather than scattered U.S. contributions to a variety of individual appeals for aid.

Asked by reporters if the U.S. language of "adapt or die" worried him, Fletcher said, "If the choices are adapt or die, I choose adapt."

US seeks aid consolidation

U.S. officials say the \$2 billion is just a first outlay to help fund OCHA's annual appeal for money. Fletcher, noting the upended aid landscape, already slashed the request this year. Other traditional U.N. donors like Britain, France, Germany and Japan have reduced aid allocations and sought reforms this year.

"This humanitarian reset at the United Nations should deliver more aid with fewer tax dollars — providing more focused, results-driven assistance aligned with U.S. foreign policy," U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Mike Waltz said.

At its core, the changes will help establish pools of funding that can be directed either to specific crises or countries in need. A total of 17 countries will be initially targeted, including Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Syria and Ukraine.

U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres also welcomed the announcement, saying that "every dollar counts."

Two of the world's most desperate countries, Afghanistan and Yemen, are not included, with U.S. officials citing aid diversion to the Taliban and Houthi rebels as concerns over restarting contributions.

Also not mentioned on the list are the Palestinian territories, which officials say will be covered by money stemming from Trump's as-yet-incomplete Gaza peace plan.

The U.N. project, months in the making, stems from Trump's longtime view that the world body has great promise but has failed to live up to it and has — in his eyes — drifted too far from its original mandate to save lives while undermining American interests, promoting radical ideologies and encouraging wasteful, unaccountable spending.

"No one wants to be an aid recipient. No one wants to be living in a UNHCR camp because they've been displaced by conflict," Lewin said. "So the best thing that we can do to decrease costs, and President Trump recognizes this and that's why he's the president of peace, is by ending armed conflict and allowing communities to get back to peace and prosperity."

2 New Jersey pilots killed in a helicopter collision frequented a cafe together near the crash site

By DAVE COLLINS Associated Press

Two men who died after their helicopters collided midair in New Jersey over the weekend both earned their private pilot licenses over a decade ago and would often have breakfast together at a cafe near the crash site before taking to the skies from the local airport.

Authorities on Monday identified the two New Jersey men as Kenneth Kirsch, 65, and Michael Greenberg, 71. Witnesses told police that the two helicopters they were piloting Sunday were flying close together just before they crashed in a farm field near the airport in Hammonton, about 35 miles (56 kilometers) southeast of Philadelphia.

Hammonton Police Chief Kevin Friel said in a statement that Kirsch, of Carney's Point, was pronounced dead at an area hospital after being flown there, while Greenberg, of Sewell, died at the crash site.

Investigators with the National Transportation Safety Board were examining the accident site on Monday and determined the debris field is about 100 yards (91 meters) long and contains parts of the main rotors and tail rotors, a spokesperson said. Both helicopters are expected to be removed from the site Tuesday and taken to another location for further review.

A preliminary report is expected in about 30 days, the NTSB said.

Friel said rescuers responded to a report of an aviation crash at about 11:25 a.m. Sunday. Video from the scene shows a helicopter spinning rapidly to the ground. Police and fire crews subsequently extinguished flames that engulfed one of the helicopters.

The Federal Aviation Administration described the crash as a midair collision between an Enstrom F-28A helicopter and Enstrom 280C helicopter near Hammonton Municipal Airport. Only the pilots were on board.

Kirsch and Greenberg both received their private pilot licenses in 2014, FAA records show. They often stopped at the Apron Cafe next to the airport for breakfast before flying, said the restaurant's owner, Sal Silipino.

Silipino said Kirsch and Greenberg ate at the cafe shortly before the crash. Patrons watched the helicopters take off from the airport and were stunned when the aircraft fell from the sky, he said.

"It was shocking. Still shaking to see that happen," Silipino said. "They were just at our café having breakfast. They're regulars. They come in every week or every other week. They fly in together. They seem to be very nice people. They were also very kind to the workers and staff and all."

He said the helicopters' flights appeared to begin without incident.

"I saw one go down and then I saw the other one go down and there was little bit of disbelief. It's like, is that really happening?," Silipino said.

FAA records show Kirsch was the registered owner of one of the helicopters, while the other aircraft was registered to M&M Charter LLC of Mountville, Pennsylvania. Contact information for M&M Charter could not be immediately found Monday.

Hammonton resident Dan Dameshek told NBC10 that he was leaving a gym when he heard a loud snap and saw two helicopters spinning out of control.

"Immediately, the first helicopter went from right side up to upside down and started rapidly spinning, falling out of the air," Dameshek told the TV station. "And then it looked like the second helicopter was OK for a second, and then it sounded like another snap or something ... and then that helicopter started rapidly spinning out of the air."

Hammonton is a town of about 15,000 people located in Atlantic County in the southern part of New Jersey. The town has a history of agriculture and is located near the Pine Barrens, a forested wilderness area that covers more than 1 million acres (405,000 hectares).

Investigators will likely first look to review any communications between the two pilots and whether they were able to see each other, said Alan Diehl, a former crash investigator for the FAA and NTSB.

"Virtually all midair collisions are a failure to what they call 'see and avoid,'" Diehl said. "Clearly they'll be looking at the out-of-cockpit views of the two aircraft and seeing if one pilot was approaching from the

blind side.”

Although it was mostly cloudy at the time of the crash, winds were light and visibility was good, according to the weather forecasting company AccuWeather.

Victims’ families demand answers in deadly Mexico train crash as authorities promise to investigate

By RAMÓN BRAGAÑA and EDGAR CLEMENTE Associated Press

EL ESPINAL, Mexico (AP) — Survivors and families of the victims of a deadly train crash in southern Mexico demanded answers on Monday as the government vowed to investigate what caused a train to derail the day before on a rail line connecting the Pacific Ocean with the Gulf of Mexico.

Thirteen people, including a teenager, died when the Interoceanic Train linking the states of Oaxaca and Veracruz — with 250 people on board — went off the rails on Sunday as it passed by a curve in near a town in Oaxaca. Nearly 110 people were injured.

Videos from the scene show train cars that had fallen off the side of a steep hill into dense jungle below as other cars lay toppled on their side.

In 2023, Mexico’s then-President Andrés Manuel López Obrador inaugurated the train line as part of a government push to expand the railway and connectivity in rural swaths of Mexico. Hic critics noted that many of the president’s infrastructure projects were quickly constructed, often dodging regulatory bureaucracy and environmental impact studies.

López Obrador’s ally and successor, President Claudia Sheinbaum, told reporters on Monday she was heading to the region and that the train and the infrastructure had been working correctly.

“Our first priority is taking care of the victims,” she said. “The second is rigorously investigate what caused this accident.”

A family’s despair

Hector Serrano García, whose 15-year-old daughter Luisa was killed in the crash, was overcome with grief as he gathered with family members in a small funeral home in Oaxaca.

Carmen García, Luisa’s grandmother who was also on the train, begged on Sunday night on social media for help in finding her granddaughter.

“We haven’t been able to find her anywhere,” the grandmother said late Sunday night. “Please, everyone, touch your hearts, it’s my granddaughter.”

Serrano Garcia said the family received the tragic news that Luisa was killed on Monday.

“We’ve had very little information,” he said. “It’s been incredibly hard for all the families.”

‘It was going very fast’

Baldo Enríquez Antonio said his wife, Ana Guadalupe Fabre, and their 16-year-old son were both on the train, returning home to Veracruz after spending Christmas with relatives in Oaxaca.

They told him the train “was going very fast on the curves,” he said over the phone from a hospital in southern Oaxaca.

Fabre broke several ribs in the crash and their son hurt his leg and had a gash on his forehead where he suffered a bad cut, Enríquez Antonio told The Associated Press.

Despite his own injuries, their son pulled his mother out of their toppled train car.

When asked about the speed of the train, Sheinbaum said she had seen videos of survivors talking about the speed but warned that “we shouldn’t speculate” but let the “prosecutors do their job.”

Protests erupt in Iran over currency’s plunge to record low

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran’s largest protests in three years erupted Monday after the country’s currency plummeted to a record low against the U.S. dollar, and the head of the Central Bank resigned.

State TV reported the resignation of Mohammad Reza Farzin, while traders and shopkeepers rallied in Saadi Street in downtown Tehran as well as in the Shush neighborhood near Tehran’s main Grand Bazaar.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 48 of 64

Merchants at the market played a crucial role in the 1979 Islamic Revolution that ousted the monarchy and brought Islamists to power.

The official IRNA news agency confirmed the protests. Witnesses reported similar rallies in other major cities including Isfahan in central Iran, Shiraz in the south and Mashhad in the northeast. In some places in Tehran, police fired tear gas to disperse protesters.

Monday's protests were the biggest since 2022, when the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Jina Amini in police custody triggered nationwide demonstrations. She was arrested by the country's morality police for allegedly not wearing her hijab properly.

Witnesses told The Associated Press that traders shut their shops Monday and asked others to do the same. The semiofficial ILNA news agency said many businesses stopped trading even though some kept their shops open.

On Sunday, protests were limited to two major mobile markets in downtown Tehran, where the demonstrators chanted anti-government slogans.

Iran's rial on Sunday plunged to 1.42 million to the dollar. On Monday, it traded at 1.38 million to the dollar.

Reports about Farzin's possible resignation had been circulating over the past week. When he took office in 2022, the rial was trading at around 430,000 to the dollar.

The rapid depreciation is compounding inflationary pressure, pushing up prices of food and other daily necessities and further straining household budgets, a trend that could worsen with a gasoline price change introduced in recent days.

According to the state statistics center, the inflation rate in December rose to 42.2% from the same period last year and is 1.8% higher than in November. Food prices rose 72% and health and medical items were up 50% from December last year, according to the statistics center. Many critics see the rate as a sign of approaching hyperinflation.

Reports in official Iranian media that the government plans to increase taxes in the Iranian new year that begins March 21 have caused more concern.

Iran's currency was trading at 32,000 rials to the dollar at the time of the 2015 nuclear accord that lifted international sanctions in exchange for tight controls on the country's nuclear program. That deal unraveled after U.S. President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the United States in 2018.

There is also uncertainty over the risk of renewed conflict following June's 12-day war involving Iran and Israel. Many Iranians also fear the possibility of a broader confrontation that could draw in the United States, adding to market anxiety.

In September, the United Nations reimposed nuclear-related sanctions on Iran through what diplomats described as the "snapback" mechanism. Those measures once again froze Iranian assets abroad, halted arms transactions with Tehran and imposed penalties tied to Iran's ballistic missile program.

How to build an emergency fund, pay off debt and make a plan for your money in 2026

By ADRIANA MORGA Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The start of a new year usually brings new motivation to achieve goals like eating healthier or finally cleaning your basement. Many resolutions also focus on financial goals, such as paying off credit card debt, saving for a new house, or simply getting more educated about money.

"New Year's is a really good time to review and realign your financial goals overall," said Erica Grundza, certified financial planner at Betterment, an investing and savings app.

When building your goals for 2026, Grundza recommends focusing less on the past and more on an optimistic, yet realistic, vision for the future. She recommends that you focus on reestablishing the "why" behind your approach to money and how you want to make it work for your life. This can be as simple as saving \$10 each week in a savings account, or a bigger goal like saving to buy a house in the coming years. It's all about your own journey.

The Associated Press spoke with people who are making financial resolutions for 2026. Here's a look at

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 49 of 64

what they're planning and how you can draw inspiration for your own resolutions:

Making achievable plans

Resolutions can easily turn into unattainable goals that feel more like a dream, said MarieYolaine Toms, a coach and founder of Focused Fire, a financial coaching company. To avoid setting unrealistic expectations, Toms follows a "no resolutions" mindset and instead focuses on making an actionable plan.

"What I say every year is that I am not making resolutions, I'm making plans that can be tracked forward, traced back, and tweaked until completion," Toms said.

Recently, Toms encouraged her clients to check their credit report with the three credit bureaus and, based on their credit reports, make an attainable plan to start a savings account. For example, adding \$25 to their savings account every week.

Whether you're trying to pay off debt or save for a vacation abroad, the first step towards making a plan can be creating a budget. When making a budget, it's best to find a technique that works for you, whether it's the classic 50/30/20 plan or another budgeting style.

If you're building a budget for the first time, you can find some expert recommendations here.

Paying off debt

After losing her job as a magazine editor in September, Rachel Pelovitz, 33, had to take a closer look at her finances. Having acquired a significant amount of debt over the last few years due to her husband's year-and-a-half-long unemployment, Pelovitz explored several options to pay it off. Ultimately, Pelovitz and her husband chose to sell their house and work with a debt consolidation organization.

"Rather than rely on getting more debt, we are currently selling our house," Pelovitz said.

Pelovitz's main goal for 2026 is to pay off half of her credit card debt. And, with some of the money from selling the house, start investing moderately.

If you've also experienced a layoff, you can read expert recommendations to help you take care of your finances and your mental health here.

Building a savings account

For Jenni Lee, 27, this is going to be the year when she gets strict about building her savings account. While Lee considers herself generally good with money, over the last six months she has overspent and wants to rein it in. The long-term goal for her savings journey is for Lee to buy a house.

"I'm now in my late 20s, I'm starting to really think about where I pinch now so it won't hurt later when I finally decide to purchase and own a place," said Lee, a tech worker and lifestyle TikTok creator based in Chicago.

As she saves for her future home and possibly a trip to South Korea, Lee wants to cut unnecessary spending on clothing items and eating out.

Social media microtrends are a common influence on people's shopping decisions, and this can lead to overspending. If you're looking to avoid spending money on microtrends, you can find experts' recommendations here.

Building an emergency fund

If you are in a position to do so, having multiple financial goals you're working towards at the same time can be a great way to speed up your progress. For Worcester resident Melanie Duarte, 23, her New Year's money goals include paying off her student loans and credit card debt while building an emergency fund.

"I made sure to include it in my budget, even if it's something as small as like \$50. I just want to make sure I still put something in (my emergency fund) so that it eventually multiplies," said Duarte, who owns a marketing agency.

Duarte's family didn't speak openly about finances when she was growing up. But, since she opened her own business, Duarte has been slowly working on rewriting her relationship with money.

If you're looking to start an emergency fund or create better habits while you save, you can read some experts' recommendations here.

Finding balance

Finding a balance between saving for your long-term goals while also making sure you enjoy your money is important, but it can also be challenging. After the death of her grandfather just a few years after retire-

ment, Tiana Stewart, 26, felt that he didn't get to enjoy the fruits of his labor. So, this past year, Stewart decided to enjoy her life and travel.

"I do understand saving for retirement is important, but I also want to enjoy my life and the money that I work for at this time, especially being in my 20s," said Stewart, who lives in Maryland.

But now, as she reflects on her financial future, Stewart wants to focus on paying off debt, saving, and investing. Having a healthy balance between enjoying life and saving for the future is what she wants to work toward.

For some, participating in budgeting challenges such as the no-buy year can be a great way to set boundaries on your spending and set aside money towards your financial goals. Many people start such challenges at the beginning of the year and commit to keep going until the end, but others start with a no-buy month.

FACT FOCUS:

Trump says he's ended eight wars. His numbers are off

Associated Press undefined

U.S. President Donald Trump continues to claim he has ended eight wars this year, but that is exaggerated. His meeting this week with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu highlights that far more work remains before any declaration of an end to the war in Gaza.

Meanwhile, fresh fighting broke out in recent weeks between Thailand and Cambodia, and between Congolese forces and Rwanda-backed rebels. And one conflict that Trump has claimed to end has never been a war at all.

Here's a closer look:

Israel and Hamas

The current ceasefire and hostage deal is a major achievement, but Israel has said it won't move into the truce's more difficult second phase until the remains of the last hostage are released from Gaza. And Hamas has threatened to halt the agreement because it says Israel isn't allowing enough aid into Gaza and continues deadly strikes on Palestinians there.

The path to a permanent end to the war, let alone a two-state solution for the Palestinians, is long and complicated. Issues ahead include disarming Hamas, creating and deploying an international security force, determining Gaza's future governance and further withdrawing Israeli forces from the devastated territory.

With the Trump-Netanyahu meeting, Washington wants to create fresh momentum for next steps in the U.S.-brokered truce that took effect on Oct. 10 and is largely holding.

Israel and Iran

Trump is credited with ending the 12-day war. In June, Israel launched attacks on Iran's nuclear program and military leadership, saying it wanted to stop Tehran from building a nuclear weapon. Iran has denied it was trying to do that.

Trump negotiated a ceasefire after directing U.S. warplanes to strike Iran's Fordo, Isfahan and Natanz nuclear sites.

Evelyn Farkas, executive director of Arizona State University's McCain Institute, has said that Trump should get credit for ending the war, adding that "it didn't have any real end in sight before President Trump got involved and gave them an ultimatum."

Lawrence Haas, a senior fellow for U.S. foreign policy at the American Foreign Policy Council, agreed the U.S. was instrumental but characterized the ceasefire as a temporary respite from the ongoing "day-to-day cold war."

Egypt and Ethiopia

Mediation efforts, which do not directly involve the United States, have stalled in what is best described as heightened tensions, not war.

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on the Blue Nile has caused friction between Ethiopia and Egypt and Sudan since the project was announced more than a decade ago. The dam was inaugurated in Sep-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 51 of 64

tember.

Egypt and Sudan oppose the dam. Egyptian agriculture relies on the river almost entirely. Sudan fears flooding and wants to protect its own dams.

During his first term, Trump tried to broker a deal between Ethiopia and Egypt. He could not get the countries to agree.

India and Pakistan

The April killing of tourists in Indian-controlled Kashmir pushed India and Pakistan closer to war than they had been in years, but a ceasefire was reached.

Trump has claimed that the U.S. brokered the ceasefire, which he said came about in part because he offered trade concessions. Pakistan thanked Trump. India denied Trump's claims, saying there was no conversation between the U.S. and India on trade in regards to the ceasefire.

Haas and Farkas have said they believe the U.S. deserves some credit for helping stop the fighting. "Again, I'm not sure whether you would define that as a full-blown war," Farkas added.

Serbia and Kosovo

The White House lists the conflict between Serbia and Kosovo as one that Trump resolved. But there has been no threat of a war between the neighbors during Trump's second term or any significant contribution from him this year to improve relations.

Kosovo is a former Serbian province that declared independence in 2008. Tensions have persisted but never to the point of war, mostly because NATO-led peacekeepers have been deployed in Kosovo, which has been recognized by more than 100 countries.

During his first term, Trump negotiated a wide-ranging deal between the countries, but much of what was agreed on was never carried out.

Rwanda and Congo

Trump has played a key role in peace efforts between the African neighbors, but he is not alone and the conflict is far from over.

Eastern Congo, rich in minerals, this year saw the return of the M23 rebel group. It is backed by Rwanda, which claims it is protecting territorial interests and that some of those who participated in the 1994 Rwandan genocide are working with the Congolese army.

In June, the Congolese and Rwandan foreign ministers signed a peace deal at the White House. And in early December, the countries' presidents signed a peace deal as Trump looked on. But the M23 has said it would not abide by an agreement that did not directly involve it. Days after the latest signing, the rebels seized another eastern Congo city before claiming to withdraw.

There is also a separate Qatar-facilitated deal between Congo and M23, but the parties have accused each other of violating the ceasefire.

Armenia and Azerbaijan

In August, Trump hosted the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan at the White House, where they signed a deal aimed at ending a decades-long conflict. The countries signed agreements intended to reopen key transportation routes and reaffirm their commitment to signing a peace treaty. The text of the treaty was initialed by foreign ministers, which indicates preliminary approval. But the leaders have yet to sign the treaty and parliaments have yet to ratify it.

Armenia and Azerbaijan have fought over territory since the early 1990s, when ethnic Armenian forces took control of the Karabakh province, known internationally as Nagorno-Karabakh, and nearby territories. In 2020, Azerbaijan's military recaptured broad swaths of territory. Russia brokered a truce, but in September 2023, Azerbaijani forces launched a lightning blitz to retake remaining portions.

The two countries have worked toward normalizing ties ever since.

Cambodia and Thailand

Officials from Thailand and Cambodia credit Trump with pushing the Asian neighbors to agree to a ceasefire in this summer's brief border conflict. But fighting flared again in recent weeks.

Cambodia and Thailand have clashed over their shared border. Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim

pressed for an unconditional ceasefire, but there was little headway until Trump intervened. Trump said he warned the Thai and Cambodian leaders that the U.S. would not move forward with trade agreements if hostilities continued.

Ken Lohatepanont, a political analyst and University of Michigan doctoral candidate, has said that Trump's decision to "condition a successful conclusion to these talks on a ceasefire likely played a significant role in ensuring that both sides came to the negotiating table when they did."

A more detailed October agreement followed, also under Trump's pressure. But heavy fighting broke out in early December. A new ceasefire agreement was signed on Dec. 27.

Zohran Mamdani has bold promises.

Can he make them come true as New York City mayor?

By ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE Associated Press

Zohran Mamdani has promised to transform New York City government when he becomes mayor. Can he do it?

Mamdani, a 34-year-old democratic socialist, already faces intense scrutiny, even before taking office in one of the country's most scrutinized political jobs. Republicans have cast him as a liberal boogeyman. Some of his fellow Democrats have deemed him too far left. Progressives are closely watching for any signs of him shifting toward the center.

On Jan. 1, he will assume control of America's biggest city under that harsh spotlight, with the country watching to see if he can pull off the big promises that vaulted him to office and handle the everyday duties of the job. All while skeptics call out his every stumble.

For Mamdani, starting off strong is key, said George Arzt, a veteran Democratic political consultant in New York who worked for former Mayor Ed Koch.

"He's got to use the first 100 days of the administration to show people he can govern," he said. "You've got to set a mindset for people that's like, 'Hey, this guy's serious.'"

That push should begin with Mamdani's first speech as mayor, where Arzt said it will be important for the city's new leader to establish a clear blueprint of his agenda and tell New Yorkers what he plans to do and how he plans to do it.

Mamdani will be sworn-in around midnight during a private ceremony at a historic, out-of-use City Hall subway station. Then in the afternoon, he will be sworn-in a second time on the steps of City Hall, while his supporters are expected to crowd surrounding streets for an accompanying block party.

From there, Arzt said Mamdani will have to count on the seasoned hands he's hired to help him handle the concrete responsibilities of the job, while he and his team also pursue his ambitious affordability agenda.

Managing expectations as a movement candidate

Mamdani campaigned on a big idea: shifting the power of government toward helping working class New Yorkers, rather than the wealthy.

His platform — which includes free child care, free city bus service and a rent freeze for people living in rent stabilized apartments — excited voters in one of America's most expensive cities and made him a leading face of a Democratic Party searching for bright, new leaders during President Donald Trump's second term.

But Mamdani may find himself contending with the relentless responsibilities of running New York City. That includes making sure the trash is getting picked up, potholes are filled and snow plows go out on time. When there's a subway delay or flooding, or a high-profile crime or a police officer parks in a bicycle lane, it's not unusual for the city's mayor to catch some heat.

"He had a movement candidacy and that immediately raises expectations locally and nationally," said Basil Smikle, a Democratic political strategist and Columbia University professor, who added that it might be good for Mamdani to "Just focus on managing expectations and get a couple of good wins under your belt early on."

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 53 of 64

"There's a lot to keep you busy here," he said.

A large part of Mamdani's job will also be to sell his politics to the New Yorkers who remain skeptical of him, with Smikle saying "the biggest hurdle" is getting people comfortable with his policies and explaining how what he's pushing could help the city.

"It's difficult to have this all happen on day one," he said, "or even day 30 or even day 100."

Challenges and opportunities

Mamdani's universal free child care proposal — perhaps one of his more expensive plans — is also one that has attracted some of the strongest support from New York Gov. Kathy Hochul, a moderate from Buffalo who endorsed the mayor-elect.

Hochul is eager to work with Mamdani on the policy and both leaders consider the program a top priority, although it's not yet clear how exactly the plan could come to fruition. The governor, who is up for reelection next year, has repeatedly said she does not want to raise income taxes — something Mamdani supports for wealthy New Yorkers — however she has appeared open to raising corporate taxes.

"I think he has allies and supporters for his agenda, but the question is how far will the governor go," said state Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris, a Mamdani ally.

"There's an acknowledgement that the voters have spoken, and there's very clear policies that were associated with his successful campaign," he said, "so to not make progress on them would be us thumbing our noses at the voters."

Mamdani's pledge to freeze the rent for roughly 1 million rent stabilized apartments in the city would not require state cooperation.

But that proposal — perhaps the best known of his campaign — is already facing headwinds, after the city's departing mayor, Eric Adams, made a series of appointments in recent weeks to a local board that determines annual rent increases for the city's rent stabilized units.

The move could potentially complicate the mayor-elect's ability to follow through on the plan, at least in his first year, although Mamdani has said he remains confident in his ability to enact the freeze.

Other challenges await

His relationship with some of the city's Jewish community remains in tatters over his criticisms of Israel's government and support for Palestinian human rights.

The Anti-Defamation League, a prominent Jewish advocacy organization, plans to track Mamdani's policies and hires as it pledged to "protect Jewish residents across the five boroughs during a period of unprecedented antisemitism in New York City."

Earlier this month, a Mamdani appointee resigned over social media posts she made more than a decade ago that featured antisemitic tropes, after the Anti-Defamation League shared the posts online.

The group has since put out additional findings on others who are serving in committees that Mamdani set up as he transitions into his mayoral role. In response, Mamdani said the ADL often "ignores the distinction" between antisemitism and criticism of the Israeli government.

The mayor-elect's past call to defund the city's police department continue to be a vulnerability. His decision to retain Jessica Tisch, the city's current police commissioner, has eased some concerns about a radical shakeup at the top of the nation's largest police force.

And then there's Trump.

Tensions between Trump and Mamdani have appeared to cool — for now — after months of rancor led into a surprisingly friendly Oval Office meeting. Future clashes may emerge given the sharp political differences between them, particularly on immigration enforcement, along with anything else that could set off the mercurial president.

Tracking the retirement announcements of members of Congress

By MEG KINNARD and MAYA SWEEDLER Associated Press

A number of member of Congress from both major parties have announced they are heading for the exits, either because they are seeking higher office, are not running again or are leaving early before the

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 54 of 64

2026 elections.

Midterms are historically tough on the party of the sitting president. With Republicans holding a razor-thin margin in the House, tracking Republicans who are set to leave, including some of President Donald Trump's top Capitol Hill allies, can provide a window into what work the party has ahead of it in angling to maintain control.

For Democrats, retirement announcements by Republicans are a window of opportunity.

Congressional retirements can be a key barometer before the midterm elections, an indicator of how much churn could be coming to Capitol Hill in the coming cycle.

Here's where things stand in the House ahead of 2026, with the members who have announced they're not planning to return:

Rep. Harriet Hageman, R-Wyo.

Date of announcement: Dec. 23

Reason: Running for Senate

Wyoming's lone U.S. representative, Hageman became the first to announce to launch her Senate campaign after Republican Sen. Cynthia Lummis announced her retirement. Hageman — who within hours had Trump's endorsement — is best known for beating Republican Rep. Liz Cheney by a wide margin in 2022.

Rep. Dan Newhouse, R-Wash.

Date of announcement: Dec. 17.

Reason: Retiring

Among 10 House Republicans who voted to impeach Trump after the Capitol riot on Jan. 6, 2021, Newhouse withstood a challenge from a Trump-backed opponent last year en route to his sixth term. His departure now only leaves one House GOP backer of impeachment who could be returning after the 2026 midterms: Rep. David Valadao of California, who is running for reelection.

Rep. Marc Veasey, D-Texas

Date of announcement: Dec. 8.

Reason: Running for judicial seat

He was first elected to the House in 2012. His district is among those redrawn as more friendly to Republicans in a rare mid-decade effort recently upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court for use in the 2026 midterm elections. Veasey said he would pursue a judicial position in Tarrant County; he has since dropped out of that race.

Rep. Jasmine Crockett, D-Texas

Date of announcement: Dec. 8.

Reason: Running for Senate

Crockett, one of Congress' most outspoken Democrats, a frequent target of GOP attacks and a Trump target, jumped into the race on the final day of qualifying in Texas, hours after former Rep. Colin Allred ended his own campaign for the Democratic nomination in favor of attempting a House comeback bid. Crockett is seeking the Senate seat held by Republican John Cornyn, who is running for reelection in the GOP-dominated state.

Rep. Lloyd Doggett, D-Texas

Date of announcement: Dec. 5.

Reason: Retiring

Doggett, who has represented an Austin-based district for more than three decades, said that he would be departing the House after the end of his current term, citing the U.S. Supreme Court's decision upholding the state's new district map merging two Austin-area districts favorable to Democrats. In 2024, Doggett was the first sitting lawmaker in the party to publicly call for President Joe Biden to step down as the party's nominee for president, citing Biden's debate performance against Trump failing to "effectively defend his many accomplishments."

Rep. Troy Nehls, R-Texas

Date of announcement: Nov. 29.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 55 of 64

Reason: Retiring

In his announcement, Nehls shared he would be retiring from Congress after three terms and endorsed his twin brother Trever to succeed him. Nehls was first elected to represent the district southwest of Houston in 2020, and was a staunch ally of Trump's. He was tapped by then-House GOP leader Kevin McCarthy to sit on a select committee probing the Capitol riot, though McCarthy later pulled all his picks when Democrats refused to seat some of his choices.

Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga.

Date of announcement: Nov. 21.

Reason: Resigning

Greene's transformation from Trump loyalist to one of his harshest critics culminated in her surprise announcement that she would end her congressional career in January 2026. Greene's resignation followed a public falling-out with Trump in recent months, as the congresswoman criticized him for his stance on files related to Jeffrey Epstein, along with foreign policy and health care. First elected to represent a deeply conservative seat in northwest Georgia in 2020, she spent her first few terms closely tied to the "Make America Great Again" movement.

Rep. Eric Swalwell, D-Calif.

Date of announcement: Nov. 21.

Reason: Running for governor

A former presidential candidate, Swalwell joined a crowded race to succeed term-limited Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom. Swalwell, who also served as a House manager in Trump's second impeachment trial, has represented a northern district that falls east of San Francisco since 2013. His current district's boundary lines will change slightly due to mid cycle redistricting approved by voters last month, but remains heavily Democratic.

Rep. Nydia Velázquez, D-N.Y.

Date of announcement: Nov. 20.

Reason: Retiring

Velázquez is the second-longest serving member of the New York U.S. House delegation (and only by a technicality; fellow retiring representative Jerry Nadler was also first elected in 1992 but took his seat a few months early due to his predecessor's death). The first Puerto Rican woman to serve in Congress, Velázquez has represented a heavily Democratic district that includes northeast Brooklyn and western Queens. She has a reputation for mentoring progressive lawmakers, and most recently was among the early backers of New York City mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani, a democratic socialist. She cited the need for generational change in her announcement.

Rep. Jodey Arrington, R-Texas

Date of announcement: Nov. 11.

Reason: Retiring

Despite already receiving Trump's endorsement for his reelection campaign, Arrington announced shortly after the 2025 general election that he would be retiring from Congress. Arrington, a fiscal hawk, is the chair of the House Budget Committee and played a key role in passing Trump's One Big Beautiful Bill Act, a large-scale tax and spending bill. He was first elected to a sprawling conservative Texas district that contains Lubbock and Abilene in 2016.

Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman, D-N.J.

Date of announcement: Nov. 10.

Reason: Retiring

A fixture in New Jersey politics, Watson Coleman announced her sixth term would be her last. The first Black woman elected to represent New Jersey in the U.S. House, Watson Coleman has served the district around the state capital of Trenton and the tony college town of Princeton since 2014, after spending almost two decades representing part of the region in the state legislature. Her seat votes reliably Democratic.

Rep. Elise Stefanik, R-N.Y.

Dates of announcement: Nov. 7 and Dec. 19

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 56 of 64

Reason: Running for governor, then retiring

Stefanik made her challenge to Democratic Gov. Kathy Hochul official shortly after the 2025 general election but ultimately announced that she would neither run for governor nor return to the House, bowing out of what was expected to be a bruising Republican gubernatorial primary. Elected to represent a conservative upstate New York district in 2014, Stefanik rose to be the third-ranking House Republican, shedding her earlier reputation as a moderate as she embraced Trump. Nominated to serve as the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations in 2025, her nomination was withdrawn over concerns about Republicans' narrow House majority. Since then, she has more openly discussed her displeasure with the Republican conference, and specifically House Speaker Mike Johnson.

Rep. Jesús García, D-Ill.

Date of announcement: Nov. 6.

Reason: Running for governor

Garcia turned in nominating petitions for the 2026 primary in October but confirmed right when the filing period ended that he would not seek a fifth term in his western Chicago seat. His late announcement left only one other candidate who had submitted the necessary paperwork: his chief of staff. The eyebrow-raising maneuver led the House to reprimand Garcia last month. Garcia cited the health of himself and his wife, who has multiple sclerosis, as among the reasons for why he would not seek reelection.

Rep. Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif.

Date of announcement: Nov. 6.

Reason: Retiring

The first female House speaker said her career in Congress would come to an end after nearly 40 years in office. Pelosi represented San Francisco but made her mark on the national stage, ushering through impactful legislation like the Affordable Care Act and keeping an unruly Democratic caucus in line throughout the Obama, Trump and Biden administrations. She played key roles in both impeaching Trump and encouraging Biden to end his 2024 reelection campaign.

Rep. Jared Golden, D-Maine

Date of announcement: Nov. 5.

Reason: Retiring

After a half-decade of narrow reelections, Golden announced he would be stepping down from one of the most competitive districts in the country. He cited incivility in Congress and threats against his family in a story in the Bangor Daily News announcing his retirement. Golden, first elected in 2018, is one of the most moderate Democrats in Congress and has shown his willingness to break with his party on issues ranging from impeaching Trump to reopening the government during this fall's shutdown.

Rep. Randy Feenstra, R-Iowa

Date of announcement: Oct. 28.

Reason: Running for governor

Iowa's congressional delegation is reshuffling in light of surprise announcements from Gov. Kim Reynolds and Sen. Joni Ernst that neither was seeking reelection in 2026. Between Reynolds' April announcement and Feenstra's official announcement, the representative announced millions of dollars in fundraising. Feenstra has represented the state's northwest quadrant since 2021, after he toppled controversial incumbent Rep. Steve King in the primary. Feenstra's district is among the most conservative in the state, though Democrats have a few other races they're eyeing.

Rep. Seth. Moulton, D-Mass.

Date of announcement: Oct. 15.

Reason: Running for Senate

The six-term representative cited the need for generational change in announcing his challenge to Sen. Ed Markey. Moulton currently represents the northeastern corner of Massachusetts, and has drawn nominal opposition in his heavily Democratic district. Markey beat back a similar challenge from Rep. Joe Kennedy in 2020.

Rep. Wesley Hunt, R-Texas

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 57 of 64

Date of announcement: Oct. 6.

Reason: Running for Senate

Hunt drew ire from Senate Republican leadership for taking on Cornyn in what party leaders fear will become an expensive, messy primary. Cornyn's cool relationship with Trump has drawn another candidate beyond the two-term Houston-area congressman, controversial Texas attorney general Ken Paxton. Both are running on their relationship to Trump. Hunt's runs deep: He was the first Republican to endorse him after the former president's 2022 comeback campaign announcement, and he gave a prime-time speech on opening night of the 2024 Republican National Convention in Milwaukee. He also campaigned 17 times for Trump in 2024, more than any other Republican surrogate.

Rep. David Schweikert, R-Ariz.

Date of announcement: Sept. 30.

Reason: Running for governor

Schweikert cited the dysfunction in the Congress as motivation for seeking the governorship. First elected to the House in 2010, Schweikert has in recent years won incredibly narrow reelection campaigns in his suburban Phoenix district. Democrats are again targeting his seat in 2026. A budget hawk, Schweikert has consistently backed Trump's agenda. Still, according to his campaign consultant, he hopped into a Republican field against the White House's wishes that already included two Trump-backed candidates, housing developer Karrin Taylor Robson and House Freedom Caucus member U.S. Rep. Andy Biggs. The winner will take on Democratic Gov. Katie Hobbs.

Rep. Thomas Tiffany, R-Wis.

Date of announcement: Sept. 23.

Reason: Running for governor

Tiffany announced he would join one of the most competitive governor's races in the country after serving three terms in Congress. The office held by Democratic Gov. Tony Evers has been hotly contested in the last few cycles. The Trump loyalist received the president's endorsement in all of his previous campaigns for the House, but Trump has not yet made an endorsement in the Republican primary. Tiffany's district, which includes a large swath of the state's rural north, consistently supports Republicans.

Rep. Michael McCaul, R-Texas

Date of announcement: Sept. 14.

Reason: Retiring

McCaul offered an ominous warning about Russian aggression when he announced his retirement in an interview earlier this year. A former anti-terrorism prosecutor and past chairman of the House Homeland Security and Foreign Affairs committees, McCaul, is part of an older generation of foreign policy hawks who've tried to counter a younger crop of Republicans who are more skeptical about U.S. intervention elsewhere in the world. McCaul was first elected in 2004. His district, which stretches from Houston to Austin, consistently backs Republican candidates.

Rep. Morgan Luttrell, R-Texas

Date of announcement: Sept. 11.

Reason: Retiring

The Houston-area congressman announced his second term would be his last, marking yet another departure for the Texas GOP congressional delegation. Luttrell cited a desire to spend more time in Texas, describing this summer's deadly central Texas flooding as a "moment of clarity." His current district's boundary lines will change slightly due to mid cycle redistricting but remains heavily Republican.

Rep. Ashley Hinson, R-Iowa

Date of announcement: Sept. 3.

Reason: Running for Senate

Hinson is vacating a seat in Iowa's northeastern corner to seek the seat held by Sen. Joni Ernst. Ernst's surprise retirement came after she drew heavy criticism for her hesitation on one of Trump's cabinet picks; in a radio interview that served as her official campaign announcement, Hinson said she was running to be "President Trump's top ally in the United States Senate." Hinson flipped her district in 2020 and won

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 58 of 64

her relatively split district by larger margins in 2022 and 2024. Democrats had already indicated they put her district on its list of potential pickups.

Rep. Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y.

Date of announcement: Sept. 1.

Reason: Retiring

After more than two decades in Congress, the dean of New York's House delegation is hanging it up. Nadler announced his retirement in early September, describing how watching Biden's 2024 reelection campaign underscored the need for generational change. He had been a fixture in Manhattan for decades, representing multiple versions of a wealthy uptown district that is heavily Democratic. Nadler was chairman of the House Judiciary Committee from 2019 to 2023, then served as ranking member on the panel after Republicans won House leadership. He stepped down from that role late last year.

Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas

Date of announcement: Aug. 21.

Reason: Running for Texas attorney general

After four terms in the House, and years of challenging party leadership as a prominent member of the House Freedom Caucus, Roy announced he would run to succeed Paxton. Roy has represented a district just north of San Antonio since 2019. While he's known as a fiscal conservative, his relationship with Trump has been complicated at times as one of the few Republicans who initially pushed back against Trump's claims that the 2020 election was stolen.

Rep. Barry Moore, R-Ala.

Date of announcement: Aug. 12.

Reason: Running for Senate

Moore joined the small House Freedom Caucus exodus of retirements when he announced he would not seek a fourth term in the House and instead run to succeed Sen. Tommy Tuberville. Tuberville is running for governor of Alabama. Moore's campaign launch underscored his ties to Trump. In it, he promised to "defend the MAGA agenda in the Senate."

Rep. Nancy Mace, R-S.C.

Date of announcement: Aug. 4.

Reason: Running for governor

Mace represents South Carolina's 1st District, and with the exception of a single term, it's been in GOP hands for decades. And thanks to redistricting following the 2020 census, it's considered to be more friendly to Republicans. Mace, who worked for Trump's 2016 campaign, was first elected to the House in 2020. She has largely supported him, although her criticism against him following the Capitol riot spurred Trump to back a GOP challenger in her 2022 race. Mace defeated that opponent, won reelection and was endorsed by Trump in her 2024 campaign.

Rep. Danny Davis, D-Ill.

Date of announcement: July 31.

Reason: Retiring

After 15 terms, Davis became the second longtime Illinois representative to announce his retirement from office. At the time of his announcement, two others had also said they would seek an open Senate seat. Davis's district, a solidly Democratic piece of Chicago, includes large sections of the city's south and west sides. In recent years, he had fended off concerns over his age and closer primaries than in years prior.

Rep. Mike Collins, R-Ga.

Date of announcement: July 28.

Reason: Running for Senate

Collins joined fellow Georgia House delegation member Buddy Carter in seeking to challenge Democratic Sen. Jon Ossoff in what will become one of the most closely watched Senate contests of 2026. Collins will leave Congress after two terms representing a district east of Atlanta. He won his 2022 race in part by portraying himself as an everyman trucker and hard-core Donald Trump acolyte.

Rep. Ralph Norman, R-S.C.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 59 of 64

Date of announcement: July 25.

Reason: Running for governor

Norman announced he would join an already crowded race to replace term-limited Republican Gov. Henry McMaster. Known as one of the most conservative members of the House, and a member of the House Freedom Caucus, Norman has nevertheless had a strained relationship with Trump over the years as he endorsed longtime colleague and primary opponent Nikki Haley in 2024. Norman was elected to the House in 2017 in a special election to replace Trump's head of the Office of Management and Budget.

Rep. Dwight Evans, D-Pa.

Date of announcement: June 30.

Reason: Retiring

Evans announced in June he was vacating the district representing the heart of Philadelphia. He was first elected in 2016 after defeating then-incumbent Rep. Chaka Fattah, who was indicted on federal racketeering charges. He also spent more than three decades in the state legislature. His densely populated district consistently elects Democrats, by wide margins.

Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-S.D.

Date of announcement: June 30.

Reason: Running for governor

South Dakota's lone House representative will leave Congress after eight years to seek the governorship. Johnson succeeded current Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem in the House. Noem was the most recently elected governor of South Dakota, but after she was tapped for the Cabinet earlier this year, her lieutenant governor was elevated to the job. Johnson could face the incumbent, as well as other Republican hopefuls, in the gubernatorial primary. Johnson has a largely conservative voting record, but has sometimes joined a minority of Republicans in voting against Trump, including when he voted to override Trump's veto of a measure that revoked his declaration of an emergency at the southern border. He was later one of 35 House Republicans who voted to establish a commission to investigate the Capitol riot.

Rep. Don Bacon, R-Neb.

Date of announcement: June 30.

Reason: Retiring

Forced to navigate an ever-thinning line between staying in his party's and Trump's good graces without alienating his increasingly Democratic district, Bacon has said he is proud of his bipartisan approach in the face of bitter partisanship in Washington. First elected in 2016, Bacon has said he believes Republicans will have a good shot at keeping the seat in 2026, because he believes Democrats in the race so far appeal mainly to the hard left.

Rep. Buddy Carter, R-Ga.

Date of announcement: May 8.

Reason: Running for Senate

Among Georgia's House Republicans vying to challenge Ossoff, Carter has been returned to office by voters by double-digit margins since he was first elected to the chamber in 2014. More circumspect when Trump first entered the White House in 2017, Carter has grown to cast himself as a "MAGA Warrior," supporting Trump's false claims that he had won the 2020 presidential election and now among those vying for his endorsement in the Senate primary.

Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi, D-Ill.

Date of announcement: May 7.

Reason: Running for Senate

Krishnamoorthi is one of many Illinois Democrats seeking to succeed retiring Sen. Dick Durbin. His Chicago-area district is considered heavily Democratic, and Krishnamoorthi has been reelected by double digits since winning his first House race in 2016.

Rep. Robin Kelly, D-Ill.

Date of announcement: May 6.

Reason: Running for Senate

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 60 of 64

Kelly, among the Illinois Democrats vacating other offices to seek Durbin's Senate seat, was first elected to the House in a 2013 special election. In the years since, she's been easily reelected in the heavily Democratic district.

Rep. Jan Schakowsky, D-Ill.

Date of announcement: May 5.

Reason: Retiring

First winning the seat in 1998, Schakowsky has been easily reelected ever since. The heavily Democratic 9th District includes Chicago neighborhoods along Lake Michigan and a mix of wealthy and middle-class suburbs north and northwest of the city.

Rep. Angie Craig, D-Minn.

Date of announcement: April 29.

Reason: Running for Senate

Craig has represented the suburban-to-rural 2nd District south of Minneapolis and St. Paul since unseating Republican Jason Lewis in the 2018 election. While her territory was once considered a swing district, it has trended Democratic in recent years — running as a centrist, she won reelection by a 13 percentage point margin in 2024 — and could conceivably become competitive again with her out.

Rep. Haley Stevens, D-Mich.

Date of announcement: April 22.

Reason: Running for Senate

Stevens sailed to victory in her last election representing Michigan's Oakland County, a key voting block in the battleground state. After flipping what had been a reliably Republican seat in 2018 and narrowly defeating her 2020 opponent in 2020, she cruised to reelection in 2022 and 2024 after her district was redrawn and became more favorable to Democrats.

Rep. Andy Barr, R-Ky.

Date of announcement: April 22.

Reason: Running for Senate

Defeating a Democratic incumbent in 2012, Barr has — in all but one contest — been reelected by wide margins ever since. Now that he's entered the robust 2026 primary to succeed retiring Kentucky Sen. Mitch McConnell, Barr's decision not to return to the House sets up what Democrats see as a potential pick up opportunity. Democrats have signaled that they plan to target Barr's seat among others in trying to win back the House next year, drawing derision from Republicans, who say the Lexington-area district is more GOP-friendly following the last round of redistricting.

Rep. John James, R-Mich.

Date of announcement: April 7.

Reason: Running for governor

James' April 2025 announcement — just months into his second term — that he's running to replace term-limited Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer leaves open one of the nation's most competitive congressional seats. Democrats have aggressively targeted the 10th District, which covers parts of northern Detroit suburbs in Oakland and Macomb counties since James flipped it in 2022.

Rep. Chris Pappas, D-N.H.

Date of announcement: April 3.

Reason: Running for Senate

Pappas announced in April 2025 that he would run to replace retiring Sen. Jeanne Shaheen. Making history in 2018 by becoming New Hampshire's first openly gay member of Congress, Pappas in 2022 defeated GOP opponent Karoline Leavitt, who is now Trump's White House press secretary.

Rep. John Rose, R-Tenn.

Date of announcement: March 20.

Reason: Running for governor

Rose, who announced his bid for governor in March 2025, has voiced strong support for Trump in a state he's easily won in the past three presidential elections. The wealthy businessman, farmer and former state

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 61 of 64

agriculture commissioner is among those vying for Trump's backing in the GOP gubernatorial primary.

Rep. Byron Donalds, R-Fla.

Date of announcement: Feb. 25.

Reason: Running for governor

A staunch Trump ally since he was elected to the House in 2020. Donalds has been part of the conservative congressional Tea Party Caucus. A frequent surrogate for the president, Donalds was also on a short list of people considered to be Trump's vice presidential running mate last year and had Trump's backing immediately upon announcing his gubernatorial bid in February 2025.

Rep. Andy Biggs, R-Ariz.

Date of announcement: Jan. 22.

Reason: Running for governor

Biggs' departure from the House means the departure of one of Trump's top congressional defenders, but his deep red district is likely to stay in GOP hands. First elected to the House in 2016, the former chair of the House Freedom Caucus supported Trump's false claims about the 2020 presidential election being stolen, and he was among the Republicans who helped oust McCarthy as speaker in 2023. Announcing in January 2025 that he was pursuing the GOP nomination for governor, Biggs received backing from Trump — who had already officially endorsed another Republican in the race. Trump said he had a "problem" when Biggs jumped in, and now says both candidates have his "COMPLETE AND TOTAL ENDORSEMENT."

Rep. Mikie Sherrill, D-N.J.

Date of announcement: Nov. 28, 2024

Reason: Running for governor

Sherrill announced the impending end of her House career less than a month after winning her fourth term in November 2024, subsequently launching her bid for governor. She won last month as part of Democrats' successes across a handful of high-level, off-year elections and then resigned her seat Nov. 21. A special election has been set for early 2026.

Top diplomats of China, Cambodia and Thailand meet as Beijing seeks a stronger role in dispute

By KANIS LEUNG Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Foreign ministers from Cambodia and Thailand convened with their Chinese counterpart on Monday as the Beijing government, building on its expanding presence in global diplomacy, sought to play a stronger mediating role in the violent border dispute between the two Southeast Asian countries.

The trilateral meeting, held in a southwestern Chinese province north of the contested border, came two days after Thailand and Cambodia signed a fresh ceasefire agreement to end weeks of fighting that killed more than 100 people and forced the evacuation of hundreds of thousands on both sides of the border.

"We haven't resolved everything, but I think we are making progress in the right direction and we have to keep up the momentum," Thai Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuanketkeow told reporters after the meeting in Yunnan province. He said chief priorities are to ensure a sustained ceasefire and continue rebuilding trust.

It was noteworthy that the meeting was held in Yunnan, nearer to the dispute and to Southeast Asia, rather than in Beijing, the Chinese capital and seat of government about 2,500 kilometers (1,300 miles) northeast.

The meetings represented China's latest efforts to strengthen its role as an international mediator and, in particular, its influence in Asian regional crises. As China grows into an economic and political force globally, Beijing has spent the past decade and more working in various ways to increase its voice as a third party in diplomatic matters.

Hopes for peace expressed

During the meeting Monday, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi called for joint efforts to promote regional peace, stability and development — language typical for China in such situations.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 62 of 64

"Allowing the flames of war to be reignited is absolutely not what the people of the two countries want and not what China, as your friend, wants to see. Therefore, we should resolutely look ahead and move forward," Wang said.

Cambodian Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn said he believed the latest ceasefire would last and would create an environment for both nations to resume previously agreed-upon ways to settle differences, according to a Chinese interpreter.

"We don't want to return to the past, which means that no one wants to see this fighting happening again. Therefore, what is important is that this ceasefire is to be permanent and must be firmly respected and implemented," Prak Sokhonn said after the talks, speaking to Cambodian state media TVK.

Sihesak also expressed hopes for peace with neighboring countries.

After the meeting, Chinese official news agency Xinhua quoted Wang as saying the three nations reached a consensus to move forward with the ceasefire without reversal, maintain dialogue and restore ties between the two Southeast Asian countries step by step.

A statement released by Xinhua, the Cambodian state news agency Agence Kampuchea Presse and the Thai Foreign Ministry said the three sides had in-depth exchanges on maintaining the ceasefire. The next key step was to work toward resuming normal exchanges, it said. China said it was ready to provide immediate humanitarian assistance for displaced residents, the statement said.

The countries also agreed to take more robust measures to combat transnational crimes, including telecom and online scams, the statement said.

Sihesak and Prak Sokhonn had also held separate meetings with Wang on Sunday, the first day of the two-day gathering.

Disputes persist

The two Southeast Asian countries originally reached a ceasefire in July. It was brokered by Malaysia and pushed through under pressure from U.S. President Donald Trump, who threatened to withhold trade privileges unless Thailand and Cambodia agreed. The preliminary pact was followed by a more detailed October agreement.

But Thailand and Cambodia carried on a bitter propaganda war, with minor, cross-border violence continuing. The tensions erupted into heavy fighting in early December.

The Saturday agreement calls for Thailand, after the ceasefire has held for 72 hours, to repatriate 18 Cambodian soldiers who have been held prisoner since the earlier fighting in July. Their release has been a major demand of the Cambodian side.

The agreement also calls on both sides to adhere to international agreements against deploying land mines, a major concern of Thailand.

Sihesak said Thailand would start repatriating the 18 Cambodian soldiers if the ceasefire could be maintained for 72 hours with no additional incidents. Thailand would also ask Cambodia to facilitate the return of remaining Thais in the Cambodian border city of Poipet, he said.

Also Monday, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet issued a statement to all Cambodian combatants along the Thai border. "Even though we can still fight," he said, "as a small country we still have nothing to gain from prolonging the fighting for a long time."

Official says 6 Islamic State militants and 3 police officers killed in clash in northwest Turkey

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — Islamic State militants clashed with police in northwest Turkey on Monday, leaving three police officers and six militants dead, Turkey's interior minister said. At least eight other police officers and a night guard were wounded.

The shooting occurred in Elmali district in Yalova province, south of Istanbul, as police stormed a house where the militants were hiding.

Special forces from neighboring Bursa province were dispatched to reinforce the operation.

Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said the operation in Yalova was one out of more than 100 simultaneous

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 63 of 64

raids carried out against IS suspects in 15 provinces across the country.

The operation in Yalova was carried out with "great care" because women and children were inside the house where the militants were located, Yerlikaya said. All five women and six children were safely evacuated from the house, he said.

All of the militants were Turkish nationals, the minister told reporters.

The operation began at around 2 a.m. local time and was officially completed at 9:40 a.m, he added.

Meanwhile, the Yalova Chief Public Prosecutor's Office launched an investigation, assigning five prosecutors to lead the probe, Justice Minister Yilmaz Tunc said on the X social media platform.

He said five people have been taken into custody as part of the investigation, without providing further information on the suspects.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan offered his condolences for the police officers who were killed and vowed to press ahead with the fight against extremist groups.

"We will continue our fight against the blood-stained killers who threaten our nation's peace and our state's security both within our borders and beyond, with determination, comprehensively and without compromise," he said in a statement posted on X.

As the confrontation spread into the streets, five schools in the area were closed for the day, private news channel NTV reported earlier.

Authorities also cut off natural gas and electricity supplies as a precaution while civilians and vehicles were barred from entering the neighborhood, the report said.

Last week, police launched scores of simultaneous raids, detaining 115 militants of the extremist group who were allegedly planning attacks targeting Christmas and New Year's celebrations. Officials said the group had called for action, particularly against non-Muslims, during the celebrations.

IS has carried out a series of deadly attacks in Turkey in recent years, including a shooting at an Istanbul nightclub during New Year celebrations on Jan. 1, 2017, which killed 39 people.

Today in History: December 30, Saddam Hussein executed

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Tuesday, Dec. 30, the 364th day of 2025. There is one day left in the year.

Today in history:

On Dec. 30, 2006, former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was executed by hanging after being convicted of crimes against humanity by the Iraqi High Tribunal. Hussein was captured in 2003 by U.S. forces while hiding near his hometown of Tikrit.

Also on this date:

In 1860, 10 days after South Carolina seceded from the Union, the state militia seized the United States Army arsenal in Charleston.

In 1896, José Rizal, whose writings inspired the Philippine Revolution, was executed by Spanish army troops after being convicted of rebellion, sedition and conspiracy.

In 1903, more than 600 people died when fire broke out at the recently opened Iroquois Theater in Chicago.

In 1922, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) officially came into existence.

In 2009, seven CIA employees and a Jordanian intelligence officer were killed by a suicide bomber at a U.S. base in Khost (hohst), Afghanistan.

In 2015, actor and comedian Bill Cosby was charged with drugging and sexually assaulting a woman at his suburban Philadelphia home in 2004. (Cosby's first trial ended in a mistrial after jurors deadlocked; he was convicted on three charges at his retrial in April 2018 and sentenced to three to 10 years in prison, but the Pennsylvania Supreme Court overturned the conviction in June 2021, setting Cosby free.)

In 2020, a large explosion rocked the airport in the southern Yemeni city of Aden soon after a plane carrying the government's newly formed Cabinet landed there. At least 25 people were killed and 110 wounded, and a later report to the U.N. Security Council attributed the blast to Houthi rebels.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, December 30, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 209 ~ 64 of 64

Today's Birthdays: Baseball Hall of Famer Sandy Koufax is 90. TV director James Burrows is 85. Singer-author Patti Smith is 79. Musician Jeff Lynne is 78. Actor Sheryl Lee Ralph is 69. Country singer Suzy Bogguss is 69. Actor-comedian Tracey Ullman is 66. TV commentator Sean Hannity is 64. Golfer Tiger Woods is 50. TV personality and retired pro boxer Laila Ali is 48. Singer-actor Tyrese Gibson is 47. Actor Eliza Dushku is 45. Actor Kristin Kreuk is 43. NBA star LeBron James is 41. Singer-actress Andra Day is 41. Pop-rock singer Ellie Goulding is 39.