

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 02, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 212 ~ 1 of 46

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [3- Coming up today on GDILIVE.COM](#)
- [4- GDI Fitness Center Ad](#)
- [5- January Groton Community Calendar of Events](#)
- [9- No. 15 Black Hills State Pulls Away Late to Top Northern State](#)
- [10- SDDVA January Column](#)
- [11- Travel South Dakota's Rose Parade Float Wins Americana Award](#)
- [12- Weather Pages](#)
- [14- Guinness World Record set in Mandan on New Year's Eve!](#)
- [17- Daily Devotional](#)
- [18- Subscription Form](#)
- [19- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [20- News from the Associated Press](#)

January Groton Community Calendar of Events

Friday, Jan. 2, 2026

No School
Girls Wrestling at McCook Central Invitational, 11 a.m.
Basketball: Vermillion at Groton: (Gym: BC-2, GC-3:15, Arena: JVGBB-2, JVBBB-3:15, VGBB-4:30, VBBB-6:00)

Saturday, Jan. 3, 2026

4th Grade Boys Basketball Doubleheader: Clark at Groton, 8 a.m.

Sunday, Jan. 4, 2026

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship 9 a.m.; League Movie Night, 6 p.m.

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

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

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

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

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



4th Grade BBB Practice, 2 p.m.
6th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.

Monday, Jan. 5, 2026

No School
Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.
Boys Wrestling at Oakes, 4:30 p.m.
1st Grade BBB Practice, 4:30 p.m.
MS Boys Wrestling Jamboree at Milbank, 5 p.m.
5th/6th Grade Volleyball Practice, 6 p.m.
5th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.
Kindergarten BBB Practice, 6 p.m.

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

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 02, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 212 ~ 2 of 46

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.

Swiss Resort Fire

Around 40 people have died, and more than 115 others were injured, when a fire tore through a crowded bar during New Year's celebrations at the Crans-Montana ski resort in Valais, Switzerland, early yesterday.

Authorities said the blaze began around 1:30 am local time at Le Constellation, a bar popular with teens located near the base of the resort's ski runs. The venue, which has a capacity of 300 people, includes a ground-floor lounge and a speakeasy in the basement. Witnesses said a candle lit in a bottle may have triggered the flames, which spread to the wooden ceiling before a "flashover"—when all the combustible material in a room ignites and can sound like an explosion. Officials said the cause was still under investigation but ruled out terrorism.

Crans-Montana, a century-old resort, is known for hosting World Cup ski events and the European Masters golf tournament and for catering to wealthy international visitors.

Public Domain Day

Every year on Jan. 1, a new batch of copyrighted works and intellectual property enters the public domain. This year, Betty Boop became available for use, joining the ranks of Mickey Mouse and Winnie the Pooh.

Betty Boop first appeared in an August 1930 cartoon series, "Dizzy Dishes". She started off as an anthropomorphic poodle, styled to approximate contemporary flappers and jazz singers. Over time, animator Max Fleischer and his studio swapped the dog ears for earrings and made a series for the breakout star, naming her Betty Boop after the scattling sounds her character made. Boop went on to appear in dozens of theatrical cartoons, including a version of "Snow White" preceding Disney's version by four years.

US law protects many copyrighted works for up to 95 years.

Buffett Steps Down

Berkshire Hathaway CEO Warren Buffett officially retired from his role at the start of the new year, ending a seven-decade career in which he became regarded as the most prolific investor in history. Vice Chair Greg Abel will succeed Buffett.

Born in (and still a resident of) Omaha, Nebraska, the 95-year-old Buffett made his first real estate investment at age 14 using money saved from paper routes. In 1962, he began acquiring shares of Berkshire, then a declining textile manufacturer, taking over in 1965. Known for his adherence to "value investing"—finding underpriced companies with strong fundamentals and holding onto them long term—Berkshire is now worth roughly \$1.1T, owning companies including GEICO and BNSF Railway and holding major positions in Apple, Chevron, and more. Cofounder of The Giving Pledge, Buffett has committed 99% of his wealth to charity.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 02, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 212 ~ 3 of 46

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

"Zootopia 2" becomes Disney's highest-grossing animated movie, earning \$1.46B at the global box office and beating "Frozen 2," which earned \$1.45B in 2019.

College Football Playoff semifinal matchups set, with No. 5 Oregon taking on No. 1 Indiana and No. 10 Miami taking on No. 6 Ole Miss next week; see bracket and schedule.

Isiah Whitlock Jr., character actor known for roles in "The Wire," "Veep," and a number of Spike Lee films, dies at age 71.

Richard Smallwood, Grammy-nominated gospel singer, dies at age 77 from complications of kidney failure.

Science & Technology

Scientists create first 3D map of the inside of Mexico's Popocatepetl volcano; country's most active volcano, roughly 40 miles from Mexico City, has had 15 major eruptions since 1519.

National Institutes of Health begins reviewing previously awarded grants paused over anti-DEI policies following legal settlement; 135 renewals approved on first day, agreement reportedly covers around 5,000 grants.

Engineers develop artificial skin, meant to simulate the sense of touch and central nervous system for robotic applications.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close down Wednesday (S&P 500 -0.7%, Dow -0.6%, Nasdaq -0.8%), but overall advance in 2025; Nasdaq rises roughly 20% on the year, driven by AI boom, followed by S&P 500 (+16%) and the Dow (+13%).

Meta acquires AI startup Manus for more than \$2B; company focuses on developing AI agents for small- and medium-sized businesses.

China tells chipmakers they must use domestically sourced tools for 50% of production.

Saks Global, owner of Saks Fifth Avenue, reportedly preparing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

Politics & World Affairs

Zohran Mamdani (D) is sworn in as New York City's 112th mayor and first Muslim mayor.

Enhanced, COVID-19-era tax subsidies expire for Affordable Care Act enrollees.

At least six people are reportedly killed in Iran on fifth day of nationwide protests after currency falls to a record low of 1.4 million rials to the US dollar.

Coming up today on GDILIVE.COM



Varsity Girls Basketball
Vermillion at Groton
Fri. Jan. 2, 4:30 p.m.

Groton Area Tigers
Groton, SD

GDILIVE
YouTube
A production of the
Groton Daily Independent
For more info: GDILIVE.COM



Varsity Boys Basketball
Vermillion at Groton
Fri. Jan. 2, 6:00 p.m.

Groton Area Tigers
Groton, SD

GDILIVE
YouTube
A production of the
Groton Daily Independent
For more info: GDILIVE.COM

What can \$20 get you?



for
Senior Citizens

or anyone using physical therapy
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!**

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 02, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 212 ~ 5 of 46



January Groton Community Calendar of Events

Friday, Jan. 2, 2026

No School
Girls Wrestling at McCook Central Invitational, 11 a.m.
Basketball: Vermillion at Groton: (Gym: BC-2, GC-3:15, Arena: JVGBB-2, JVBBB-3:15, VGBB-4:30, VBBB-6:00)

Saturday, Jan. 3, 2026

4th Grade Boys Basketball Doubleheader: Clark at Groton, 8 a.m.

Sunday, Jan. 4, 2026

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship 9 a.m.; League Movie Night, 6 p.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion at St. John's, 9 a.m.; and at Zion, 11 a.m.
United Methodist: Worship with communion at Conde, 8:15 a.m.; at Groton, 9:30 a.m.; at Britton, 11:15 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 10:30 a.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.
First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.
Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.
4th Grade BBB Practice, 2 p.m.
6th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.

Monday, Jan. 5, 2026

No School
Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.
Boys Wrestling at Oakes, 4:30 p.m.
1st Grade BBB Practice, 4:30 p.m.
MS Boys Wrestling Jamboree at Milbank, 5 p.m.
5th/6th Grade Volleyball Practice, 6 p.m.
5th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.
Kindergarten BBB Practice, 6 p.m.

Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2026

School Breakfast: Muffins.
School Lunch: Chicken nuggets, mashed potatoes.
City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.
4th Grade GBB Practice, 5 p.m.
Basketball at Warner: (Welke: BJV-5, Arena: GJV-5, VGBB-6:30, VBBB-8:00)

Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2026

School Breakfast: Oatmeal.
School Lunch: Pizza crunchers, green beans.
Groton Chamber meeting at City Hall, Noon
Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.; Sarah Circle, 5 p.m.; League, 6:30 p.m.
United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.
Groton C&MA: Kid's Club, Youth Group, Adult Bible Study, 7 p.m.
6th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.
3rd/4th Grade Volleyball Practice, 6 p.m.
5th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.

Thursday, Jan. 8, 2026

School Breakfast: Maple French toast.
School Lunch: Chicken patty, sweet potato puffs.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.
Carnival of Silver Skates costume hand-out at Emmanuel Lutheran
Groton Lions Club Meeting at 104 N Main, 6 p.m.
Basketball at Clark: (GJV/BC-4, BJV/GC-5, GV-6:30, BV-7:45)
2nd Grade BBB Practice, 5 p.m.
4th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.

Friday, Jan. 9, 2026

School Breakfast: Breakfast Boats.
School Lunch: Chicken Fajitas, refried beans.
Carnival of Silver Skates costume hand-out at Emmanuel Lutheran
Girls Wrestling at Miller/Highmore-Harrold Tourney, 4 p.m.
Robotics Set-up in the GHS Gym, 6 p.m.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 02, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 212 ~ 6 of 46



New Construction
Remodeling
Hoop Barns
Shops

13379 Sperry Ln, Bath
605/216-2677
Perry Blocker
prblocker@hotmail.com

Saturday, Jan. 10, 2026

Mixed Doubles Bowling Tournament at the Jungle, 1 p.m.

Groton Robotics Tourney, 8 a.m.

Boys Wrestling at Jesse James (Garretson) Tournament, 9:30 a.m.

Girls Wrestling at Mid-Dakota Monster (Lyman High School) Tournament, 10 a.m.

Basketball at Lennox: (Gym: BC-1, GC-2:15, Main Gym: JVGBB-1, JVBBB-2:15, VGBB-3:30, VBBB-5:00)

Sunday, Jan. 11, 2026

St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's, 9 a.m.; and at Zion, 11 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.

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

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

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

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

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

Groton Soccer Association Clinics, GHS Arena, 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

4th Grade BBB Practice, 1 p.m.

6th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.

Dance Team Practice, 5 p.m.

Monday, Jan. 12, 2026

School Breakfast: Eggs.

School Lunch: Buffalo Chicken bake, cooked broccoli.

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

Groton Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center, 1 p.m.

1st Grade BBB Practice, 4:30 p.m.

Groton JV Wrestling Jamboree, 5 p.m.

Girls Basketball at Northwestern: (C at 5 p.m.; JV at 6 p.m.; Varsity to follow)

DID YOU KNOW . . .

You can use the GDI Fitness Center by paying by the month and you can cancel any time without penalty. Call/Text Paul at 605-397-7460 for details!

5th/6th Grade Volleyball Practice, 6 p.m.
Kindergarten BBB Practice, 6 p.m.

Tuesday, Jan. 13, 2026

School Breakfast: Scones.

School Lunch: Chicken breast, cooked broccoli.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Council, 6 p.m.

Groton United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

MS BBB at Roncalli, 4 p.m.

4th Grade BBB Practice, 5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, Jan. 14, 2026

School Breakfast: Breakfast pizza.

School Lunch: Cheese quesadilla, black beans.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.

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

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

2nd Grade BBB Practice, 5 p.m.

6th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.

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

5th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.

Thursday, Jan. 15, 2026

School Breakfast: Egg wraps.

School Lunch: Lasagna bake, green beans.

Little Leaders Cheer Clinic, 3:30 p.m.

Basketball: Tiospa Zina at Groton: (JVBBB-4, JVGBB-5, VBBB-6:15, VGBB-7:30)

4th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.

Boys Wrestling Triangular with Webster at Redfield, 6 p.m.

Friday, Jan. 16, 2026

School Breakfast: Cereal.

School Lunch: French bread pizza, corn.

Boys Wrestling at Philip Invitational, 10 a.m.

Girls Wrestling at Harrisburg Invitational, 4 p.m.

JH BBB at Milbank (7th at 4 p.m., 8th at 5 p.m.)

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 02, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 212 ~ 7 of 46

Saturday, Jan. 17, 2026

Boys Wrestling at Battler Invitational (Gettysburg), 10 a.m.

Boys Basketball: Dakota Valley at Groton: (BC-2, JVB-3:15, VB-4:30)

Sunday, Jan. 18, 2026

St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion at St. John's, 9 a.m.; and at Zion, 11 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.

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

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

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

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

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

Groton Soccer Association Clinics, GHS Arena, 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

4th Grade BBB Practice, 1 p.m.

6th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.

Dance Team Practice, 5 p.m.

Monday, Jan. 19, 2026

School Breakfast: Stuffed bagels.

School Lunch: Oriental chicken, egg rolls.

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

Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center, 1 p.m.

1st Grade BBB Practice, 4:30 p.m.

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

5th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.

Kindergarten BBB Practice, 6 p.m.

MS Boys Wrestling at Redfield Invitational, 5:30 p.m.

Tuesday, Jan. 20, 2026

School Breakfast: Breakfast slider.

School Lunch: Tater hot hot dish, cooked broccoli.

City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.; League, 6:30 p.m.

Groton United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

MS Boys Wrestling at Simmons Middle School, 4 p.m.

Boys Wrestling Triangular with Clark/Willow Lake at Hamlin, 6 p.m.

JH BBB at Northwestern, 6 p.m.

Wednesday, Jan. 21, 2026

School Breakfast: Omelets.

School Lunch: Pasta primavera.

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton Ad Council, 7 p.m.

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

6th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.

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

5th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.

Thursday, Jan. 22, 2026

School Breakfast: Biscuits.

School Lunch: Sloppy joes, tri taters.

Basketball: Milbank at Groton: (Gym: BC-4, GC-5, Arena: JVGBB-4, JVBBB-5, VGBB-6:15, VBBB-7:30)

2nd Grade BBB Practice, 5 p.m.

4th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.

Friday, Jan. 23, 2026

School Breakfast: Doughnuts.

School Lunch: Chicken ala king, biscuit.

Girls Wrestling at Pierre Invitational, 4 p.m.

Boys Wrestling vs. Deuel/Deubrook Area at Deuel, 6 p.m.

MS BBB at Redfield, 6 p.m.

Saturday, Jan. 24, 2026

Groton Ford "C" Team Classic at Groton with Warner, Mobridge-Pollock and Sisseton, 10 a.m.

Boys Wrestling at Kingsbury County Invitational (Arlington), 10 a.m.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 02, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 212 ~ 8 of 46

Sunday, Jan. 25, 2026

St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's, 9 a.m.; and at Zion, 11 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship at 9 a.m. with congregational meeting to follow; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 6 p.m.

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

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

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

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

Carnival of Silver Skates, 2 p.m. and 6 p.m.

Groton Soccer Association Clinics, GHS Arena, 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

4th Grade BBB Practice, 2 p.m.

6th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.

Dance Team Practice, 5 p.m.

Monday, Jan. 26, 2026

School Breakfast: Egg bake.

School Lunch: Corn dogs, baked beans.

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

Groton Senior Citizens meet with potluck dinner at the Groton Community Center, noon.

1st Grade BBB Practice, 4:30 p.m.

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

5th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.

Kindergarten BBB Practice, 6 p.m.

Boys MS Wrestling at Ipswich, 6 p.m.

JH BBB at Britton-Hecla (7th at 4 p.m., 8th at 5 p.m.)

Tuesday, Jan. 27, 2026

School Breakfast: Muffins.

School Lunch: Pasta bake, green beans.

Groton United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

JH BBB: Sisseton at Groton (7th at 4 p.m., 8th at 5 p.m.)

GBB at Aberdeen Roncalli: (GC-5, JVGBB-6, VGBB-7:30)

Girls and Boys Wrestling at Garretson, 5 p.m.

Wednesday, Jan. 28, 2026

School Breakfast: Oatmeal.

School Lunch: Soup and (tbd), sandwich.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.

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

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

6th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.

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

5th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.

Thursday, Jan. 29, 2026

School Breakfast: Maple French toast bake.

School Lunch: Chicken tacos, refried beans.

JH BBB at Webster (7th at 4 p.m., 8th at 5 p.m.)

GBB at Webster (JV at 6 p.m., Varsity to follow)

2nd Grade BBB Practice, 5 p.m.

4th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.

Friday, Jan. 30, 2026

School Breakfast: Breakfast boats.

School Lunch: Garlic Cheese Bread, Cooked carrots.

Girls Wrestling at Aberdeen Central Invitational, 3:30 p.m.

Boys Wrestling hosts Britton-Hecla, 6 p.m.

Saturday, Jan. 31, 2026

Groton Invitational Wrestling Tournament, 10 a.m.
Boys DakXII/NEC Basketball Clash at Madison

No. 15 Black Hills State Pulls Away Late to Top Northern State

Aberdeen, S.D. — A second-half surge by No. 15 Black Hills State proved to be the difference as the Yellow Jackets defeated Northern State University 77–70 in a non-conference men’s basketball matchup at Wachs Arena.

Playing their first game of the 2026 season, the Wolves battled back from a double-digit deficit to tie the contest early in the second half, but Black Hills State capitalized on key possessions down the stretch to pull away for the seven-point victory.

Northern scored 41 points in the opening half and 29 after the break, while the Yellow Jackets posted 45 first-half points and followed with 32 in the second. The Wolves finished the night shooting 45.8% from the field, but struggled from long range, hitting a season-low 15.0% from three-point territory. Northern also went 68.4% from the free-throw line.

Despite the loss, the Wolves controlled the interior, outscoring Black Hills State 44— in the paint. Northern also generated 18 points off turnovers and received 15 points from its bench unit. However, the Yellow Jackets won the rebounding battle 38–28 and turned eight offensive rebounds into second-chance points.

Northern recorded 17 assists and six steals while committing just 11 turnovers and forcing 14 by Black Hills State.

Joshua Book led all scorers with 22 points and added a team-high five assists and four rebounds. James Glenn and Tobi Obiora each finished with 13 points, with Obiora shooting 55.6% from the floor while pulling down a team-best eight rebounds. Benjamin Bowen provided a spark off the bench with seven points, three rebounds, and two assists.

The game drew an announced attendance of 1,555.

Northern State (4–9) will return to action Saturday, Jan. 3, when the Wolves travel to Jamestown for a 1 p.m. non-conference matchup against the Jamestown Jimmies.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 02, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 212 ~ 10 of 46

January Column - A New Year

Each January, as a new year begins, we're reminded that hope and renewal are powerful forces. The turning of the calendar brings reflection, gratitude, and purpose. For those who have served, supported a service member, or simply honor our nation's heroes, January is a time of remembrance and resolve.

This month also holds deep meaning in our nation's military history. On January 8, 1815, General Andrew Jackson led American forces to victory at the Battle of New Orleans during the War of 1812, a triumph that showed the courage and perseverance of the American spirit. On January 16, 1991, Operation Desert Storm began, reminding us that freedom must always be defended with resolve and unity. And on January 24, 1961, the U.S. Strategic Air Command strengthened its readiness during the Cold War.



Jeremiah Schneider,
Secretary
South Dakota
Department of
Veterans Affairs

To start the year, the Department and our partners have several key events planned to support veterans and strengthen advocacy efforts:

- January 1: State Offices Closed for New Year's Day
- January 10-11: Yellow Ribbon – HHC 109th Engineer Battalion, Camp Rapid
- January 13: South Dakota Legislative Session Opens – SD State Capitol
- January 13: Governor's State of the State Address – SD State Capitol, 1:00 p.m. (CT)
- January 14: South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting - The American Legion, Post #8, Pierre, 2:00 p.m. (CT)
- January 14: South Dakota Veterans Council Legislative Reception – The American Legion, Post #8, Pierre, 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. (CT)
- January 19: State Offices Closed for Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- January 25-26: VFW Legislative Conference, Fort Pierre

As winter settles in, take care when going outdoors. South Dakota's cold can be tough. Dress warm, protect exposed skin, and check on neighbors. A small act of kindness can mean a lot. As we welcome the new year, let's be grateful and keep our service members, veterans, and their families in our thoughts and prayers.

Our hearts are especially heavy this January as we honor the two Iowa National Guard Soldiers who were killed in action on December 13, 2025. Their courage and sacrifice remind us of the true cost of freedom. We extend our condolences to their families and comrades. Their legacy lives on in our continued pursuit of peace.

A new year brings new opportunities to serve, connect, grow, and honor those who make our freedoms possible. May we enter 2026 with renewed faith, kindness, and commitment to one another.

From all of us at the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, we wish you a safe and meaningful start to the new year. May God bless our troops, our veterans, their families, and the great state of South Dakota.

Travel South Dakota's Rose Parade Float Wins Americana Award



Photo Courtesy KIRK HULSTEIN (Travel South Dakota)

Pasadena, Calif. – Travel South Dakota's Carved in Stone; A Legacy of Teamwork float in the 2026 Rose Parade® presented by Honda, has been awarded the "Americana Award." The award recognizes the "most outstanding depiction of national treasures and traditions," honoring the artistry and collaboration behind South Dakota's most spectacular float yet at the 137th Rose Parade.

"As we kick off a new year and our nation's 250th birthday, our goal is to share the bold spirit that defines South Dakota with millions of viewers around the world," said James Hagen, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Tourism.

"This award is a testament to the incredible teamwork behind the float and to the iconic landmarks and cultural treasures that make South Dakota an unforgettable destination."

Travel South Dakota's award-winning float showcased Mount Rushmore National Memorial alongside the signature experiences that draw nearly 15 million visitors to the state each year. Parade viewers saw South Dakota's famous faces rise above a vibrant landscape of adventure — from thundering bison to the cultural reverence of the Dignity: Of Earth & Sky sculpture. The state's natural beauty and heritage were brought to life through more than 40,000 floral elements, including corn, wheat, sunflowers, light blue iris petals, and palm bark that formed a bison's coat.

South Dakota's presence in Southern California extended beyond parade day. During Decorator's Week in Pasadena, Travel South Dakota hosted immersive experiences featuring locally inspired treats, interactive moments, and social media-friendly activations that allowed visitors to interact directly with the state's culture and creativity.

"It feels incredibly meaningful to engage with people who have yet to discover that South Dakota is their favorite road-trip getaway," said Hagen. "We hope that this time next year, Californians and those who may be viewing the Rose Parade are reminiscing about their own experiences in South Dakota."

The 2026 parade marked Travel South Dakota's second appearance in the Rose Parade, following its first entry in 2016, and served as a national kickoff to America's 250th anniversary celebration.

Travel South Dakota's Carved in Stone; A Legacy of Teamwork float was designed and built by Artistic Entertainment Services.

The South Dakota Department of Tourism is comprised of Travel South Dakota and the South Dakota Arts Council and is led by Secretary James D. Hagen.



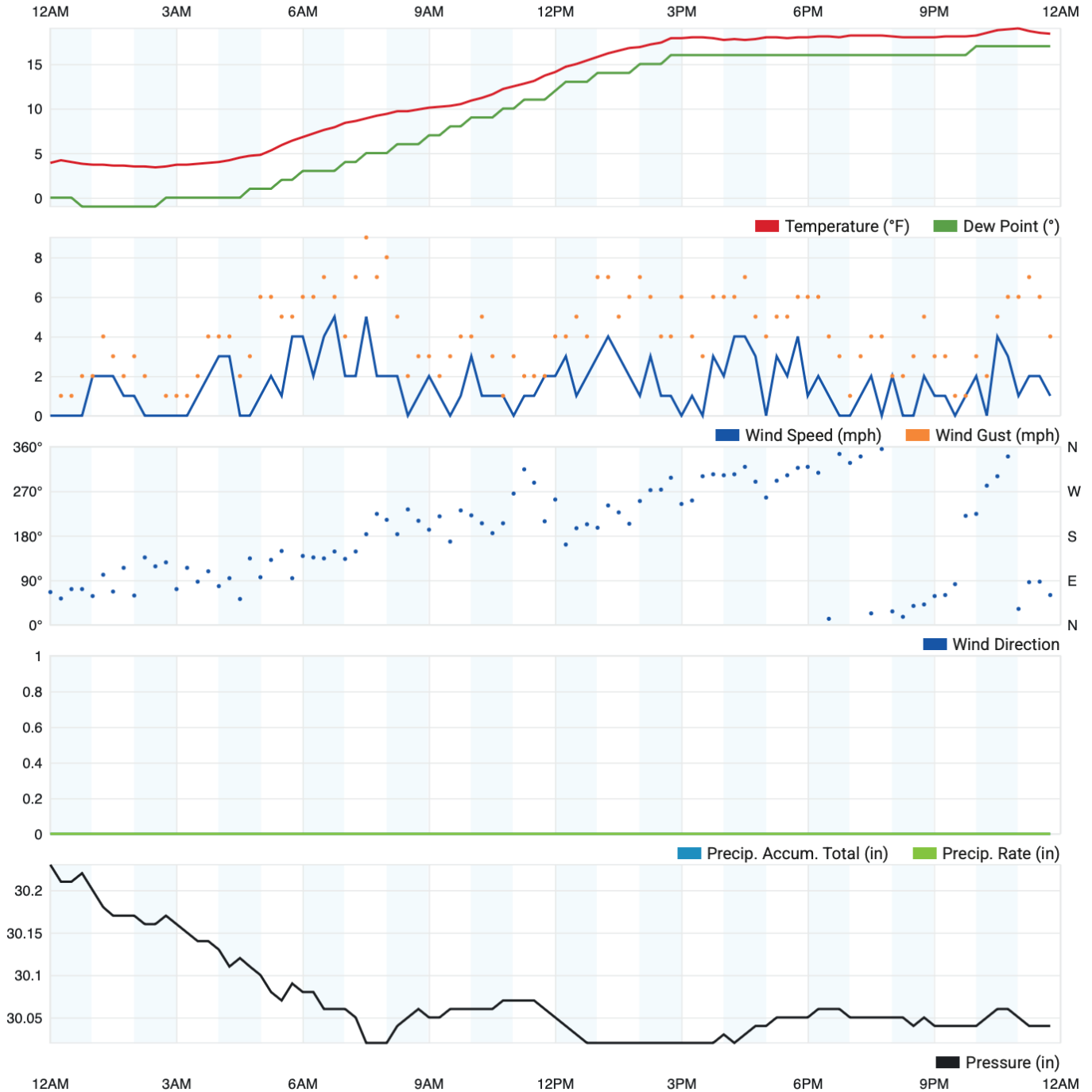
Photo Courtesy KIRK HULSTEIN (Travel South Dakota)

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 02, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 212 ~ 12 of 46

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

January 1, 2026



Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 02, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 212 ~ 13 of 46

Today

Tonight

Saturday

Saturday Night

Sunday



High: 16 °F

Cloudy



Low: 15 °F

Cloudy



High: 21 °F

Partly Sunny



Low: 10 °F

Mostly Cloudy



High: 34 °F

Mostly Cloudy

DENSE FOG IS A ROAD HAZARD



Turn on your low-beam headlights when approaching fog



Drive slowly, and keep your distance from other vehicles



Consider delaying travel when a Dense Fog Advisory is issued



Today



Highs: 13 to 27 °F

Winds: E 5-10 mph

Saturday



Highs: 16 to 38 °F

Winds: N 5-15 mph

Pockets of dense fog can be expected as you head out the door across portions of central, north central and northeast South Dakota. While improvement in visibility is expected through the day, it will also remain mostly cloudy and cold. A warming trend is on the way however.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 02, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 212 ~ 14 of 46





2025 Precipitation Amounts

January 1, 2026

3:38 PM

Above normal precipitation (liquid equivalent) and below normal snowfall

	Aberdeen	Pierre	Mobridge	Watertown	Sisseton	
	Precip	25.56"	23.34"	24.34"	29.09"	24.99"
	Departure	+3.74	+3.14"	+6.35"	+6.38"	+2.05"
	Average	21.82"	20.20"	17.99"	22.71"	22.94"
	Snowfall	39.9"	21.5"	14.3"	37.4"	28.4"
	Departure	-2.8"	-15.7"	-16.7"	-3.7"	-7.9"
	Average	42.7"	37.2"	31.0"	41.1"	36.3"

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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Now that we are officially in 2026, here is a look back at precipitation and snow totals of 2025 for our five automated surface observing system (ASOS) sites. Across the region, we were above normal for rainfall and below normal for snowfall (sorry snow lovers)!

Guinness World Record set in Mandan on New Year's Eve!

MANDAN, N.D. (KFYR) - A world record was set in Mandan Wednesday night, ringing in the New Year with a bang.

Pegasus Illuminations, the Mandan Progress Organization and its partners set the record by successfully launching the most firework stars launched from Roman candles in one minute.

Roughly 2.5 million Roman candle shots filled the night sky during the "New Year, New Light" pyromusical show to celebrate veterans, mental health and patriotism. All of the money raised from the event will directly benefit the Wounded Warrior Project, the Western North Dakota Honor Flight and the Mandan High School Marching Band on their New Year's trip to London in 2027.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 02, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 212 ~ 15 of 46

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 19 °F at 10:55 PM

Low Temp: 3 °F at 2:12 AM

Wind: 10 mph at 7:36 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 5350 in 1963

Record Low: -30 in 2010

Average High: 24

Average Low: 3

Average Precip in Jan.: 0.04

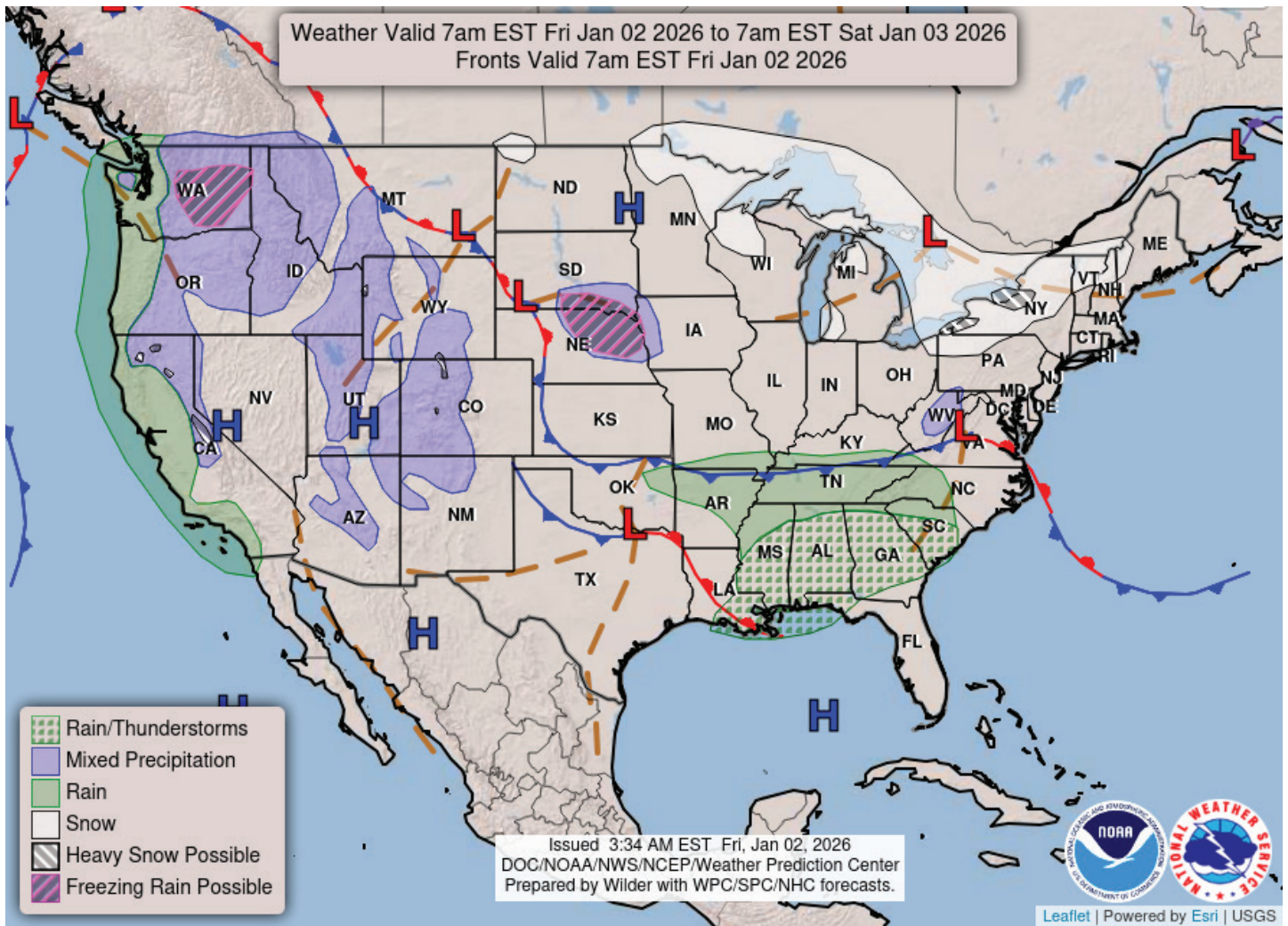
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.04

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 5:00 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:12 am



Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 02, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 212 ~ 16 of 46

Today in Weather History

January 2, 1999: Heavy snow of 6 to 8 inches fell across part of northeast South Dakota from the late afternoon hours of the 1st to the early morning hours of the 2nd. Strong north winds of 15 to 30 mph combined with temperatures in the single digits generated wind chills from 25 to 40 below and visibilities below 1/4 of a mile at times. Holiday travel along Interstate-29 and Highway 12 was most affected by this winter storm. There were some travel delays and some stranded motorists as a result. Some snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Kidder, Victor, Sisseton, Webster, Waubay, Wilmot, and 8 inches at Britton and near Peever.

1839: It is believed Louis Daguerre took the first daguerreotype of the moon. Unfortunately, in March of that same year, his entire laboratory burnt to the ground, destroying all his written records and much of his early experimental work—and that historical image of the moon. A year later, John William Draper, an American doctor, and chemist took his own daguerreotype of the moon.

1897: Tornadoes in January? Two tornadoes touched down on this day. The first tornado touched down in Mooringsport, Louisiana, killing five people and injuring 21 others. The second tornado occurred at Benton, Arkansas. Although this tornado was more destructive in regards to property damage, it caused one death.

1949: A blizzard raged and brought heavy snow, strong winds, and cold temperatures to South Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado, and Nebraska.

1955: Hurricane Alice passed through the Islands of Saint Martin and Saba in the Caribbean Sea on this day. Alice, which developed on December 30, 1954, is the only known Atlantic hurricane to span two calendar years.

1999: A powerful winter storm developed over the Texas panhandle and moved northeast through the Missouri bootheel and then north northeast through eastern Illinois and into Michigan. Snow began accumulating in east-central Illinois and areas south of Chicago during the early evening hours of New Year's Day and overspread the city and north suburbs by midnight. Snow continued through the night and much of the day Saturday, January 2. The heaviest snow fell during the daytime hours Saturday and tapered off by late afternoon or early evening and ended by late evening. Northeast winds were 20 to 30 mph with a few higher gusts during the day Saturday. Winds gusted to over 50 mph along the Lake Michigan shoreline. The strong wind coming off the lake enhanced snowfall totals within about 10 miles of the lake. Snowfall was generally 9 to 15 inches over north central and east central Illinois and in the Chicago suburbs. Snowfall in Chicago and the north suburbs in Lake County was 18 to 22 inches. Winds subsided Saturday evening as the storm center passed over southern Lake Michigan. Then strong northwest winds developed Sunday, causing considerable blowing and drifting and hampering clean-up efforts.

The 21.6 inches at O'hare, the official observing site for Chicago, was the second greatest storm total snowfall. The record was 23.0 inches January 26-27, 1967. Of the 21.6 inches, 18.6 fell on January 2, setting a record for the most snowfall on a calendar day. Other snowfall amounts included; Algonquin 14.0, Aurora 14.4, Barrington 18.0, Brookfield 15.1, Bourbonnais 14.0, Channahon 13.0, Chatsworth 17.0, Coal City 13.0, Compton 9.7, Crestwood 14.2, DeKalb 12.4, Dixon 16.4, Earlville 11.3, Fairbury 13.0, Geneva 13.0, Glenwood 16.0, Harvard 9.0, Lake Villa 17.9, LaGrange Park 15.0, Midway Airport 20.6, Mundelein 10.0, Naperville 11.0, Olympia Fields 15.8, Orland Park 13.8, Rochelle 9.6, Rockford 9.0, Streamwood 14.0, Willow Springs 12.0. The heavy snow and blowing snow caused hazardous travel. Lake Shore Drive was closed down for the first time ever. State, county, and local road crews worked around the clock. The City of Chicago Department of Streets and Sanitation spent 12 million dollars on snow removal efforts. Three hundred flights were canceled at O'Hare and Midway airports.

2006: Six tornadoes impacted central and northern Georgia. The tornadoes were rated from F0 to F3.

2017: 36 confirmed tornadoes impacted the Deep South from Louisiana to Georgia. Many of the tornadoes came from line segments of storms known as quasi-linear convective systems. A larger convective system also created numerous wind damage reports, and in Alabama, four people died from straight-line winds.

Setting Goals for Fruitful Living

Spend time alone with God in His Word, wait in silence for His guidance, and He will speak to your heart.

2 Samuel 7:18-22: 18 Then David the king went in and sat before the LORD, and he said, ``Who am I, O Lord GOD, and what is my house, that You have brought me this far?

19 ``And yet this was insignificant in Your eyes, O Lord GOD, for You have spoken also of the house of Your servant concerning the distant future. And this is the custom of man, O Lord GOD.

20 ``Again what more can David say to You? For You know Your servant, O Lord GOD!

21 ``For the sake of Your word, and according to Your own heart, You have done all this greatness to let Your servant know.

22 ``For this reason You are great, O Lord GOD; for there is none like You, and there is no God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears.

Second Samuel 7 tells us that David spent time alone with God, offering praise and thanksgiving. He also listened as the Lord revealed truth and offered insight about the future. Because of the things he learned, David was able to set goals and stay aligned with them.

When was the last time you spent time in solitude with the Lord, remaining silent and listening intently for His guidance (Psalm 46:10)? Ask Him to speak to you about His plans, and He will answer.

Are you unsure of how to begin? First, come before the throne of almighty God in prayer with a repentant heart, and express your praise and thanksgiving. Second, spend time each day in His Word, letting Him refine your spiritual eyes. Finally, ask Him for direction in any area of your life. Wait patiently and attentively, knowing that He will give you His wisdom. Most often His guidance is experienced as a prodding or conviction in the heart—it's a truly priceless experience.

In order to stay on the right path, we should stop, ask, and listen for guidance. And to avoid confusion, we need to check our course frequently. These conversations with the Lord are vital for a thriving and impactful life.

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

Friday, January 02, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 212 ~ 18 of 46

The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.2% Sales Tax

- Black & White \$48.99/year
- Colored \$79.88/year
- Colored \$42.60/6 months
- E-Weekly* \$31.95/year

* The E-Weekly is a PDF file emailed to you each week. It does not grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

E-mail _____

Phone Number _____

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent
P.O. Box 34
Groton, SD 57445-0034
or scan and email to paperpaul@grotonsd.net

Groton Daily Independent

www.397news.com

Subscription Form

This option will grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

- 1 Month \$15.98
- 3 Months \$26.63
- 6 Months \$31.95
- 9 Months \$42.60
- 12 Months \$53.25

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____

The following will be used for your log-in information.

E-mail _____

Password _____

Pay with Paypal. Type the following into your browser window:

paypal.me/paperpaul

Pay with Venmo: @paperpaul Phone Number to Confirm: 7460

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 02, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 212 ~ 19 of 46



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

12.30.25

18 43 49 63 69 6

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$157,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 23 Mins 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

12.31.25

12 13 37 43 51 8

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$11,350,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 38 Mins 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.01.26

2 8 17 32 45 15

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 53 Mins 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

12.31.25

19 20 24 32 33

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$165,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 53 Mins 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

12.31.25

24 35 42 46 68 14

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 22 Mins 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

12.31.25

11 18 21 24 38 26

Power Play: 10x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$64,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 22 Mins 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Wilkinson puts up 24 as South Dakota State takes down Omaha 84-69

By The Associated Press undefined
BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — Damon Wilkinson scored 24 points as South Dakota State beat Omaha 84-69 on Thursday.

Wilkinson also contributed 19 rebounds and three blocks for the Jackrabbits (8-8, 1-0 Summit League). Matthew Mors went 7 of 11 from the field to add 16 points. Joe Sayler shot 5 for 12, including 3 for 5 from beyond the arc, to finish with 14 points.

Paul Djobet led the way for the Mavericks (7-9, 0-1) with 22 points and three steals. Omaha also got 14 points from Julian Margrave.

The Associated Press created this story using technology provided by Data Skrive and data from Sportradar.

Russia puts death toll from Ukrainian strike on occupied village at 27. Kyiv rejects accusation

By The Associated Press undefined
Russian authorities said Friday that the death toll from a Ukrainian drone strike they said struck a café in a Russian-occupied village in Ukraine's Kherson region rose to 27 people. Kyiv denied attacking civilian targets.

Svetlana Petrenko, spokeswoman of Russia's main criminal investigation agency, the Investigative Committee, said in a statement that a Ukrainian drone strike on a café and hotel in the village of Khorly, where at least 100 civilians were celebrating New Year's Eve overnight into Thursday, killed 27 people, including two minors. A total of 31, including five minors, were hospitalized with injuries.

A criminal probe on the charges of carrying out an act of terrorism has been opened, Petrenko said. Kyiv denied attacking civilians. Spokesman of Ukraine's General Staff, Dmytro Lykhovii, told Ukraine's public broadcaster Suspilne on Thursday that Ukrainian forces "adhere to the norms of international humanitarian law" and "carry out strikes exclusively against Russian military targets, facilities of the Russian fuel and energy sector, and other lawful targets."

Lykhovii said that General Staff has published an explicit list of targets that the Ukrainian army struck on the night of New Year's Eve. The list did not include strikes on occupied parts of the Kherson region.

Lykhovii noted that Russia has repeatedly used disinformation and false statements to disrupt the ongoing peace negotiations.

The Associated Press could not independently verify claims made about the attack.

Russia's accusations against Ukraine come amid a U.S.-led diplomatic push to end the nearly four-year war in Ukraine. Earlier this week, Moscow alleged that Kyiv launched a long-range drone attack against a residence of Russian President Vladimir Putin in northwestern Russia overnight from Sunday to Monday.

Kyiv has called the allegations of an attack on Putin's residence a ruse to derail ongoing peace negotiations, which have ramped up in recent weeks on both sides of the Atlantic.

In his New Year's address, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that a peace deal was "90% ready" but warned that the remaining 10%, believed to include key sticking points such as territory, would "determine the fate of peace, the fate of Ukraine and Europe, how people will live."

Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff said Wednesday that he, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Trump's son-in-law and adviser Jared Kushner had a "productive call" with the national security advisers of Britain, France, Germany and Ukraine "to discuss advancing the next steps in the European peace process."

Elsewhere in Ukraine, Russia conducted what local authorities called "one of the most massive" drone attacks at Zaporizhzhia overnight.

At least nine Russian drones struck the city, damaging dozens of residential buildings and other civilian infrastructure, head of the regional administration, Ivan Fedorov, wrote on Telegram on Friday. There were no casualties, the official said.

Overall, Russia fired 116 long-range drones at Ukraine last night, according to Ukraine's Air Force, which said that 86 drones were intercepted, while 27 more have reached their targets.

The Russian Defense Ministry reported Friday that its air defenses intercepted 64 Ukrainian drones overnight over multiple Russian regions.

Vyacheslav Gladkov, governor of Russia's Belgorod region on the border with Ukraine, on Friday also accused Ukrainian forces of carrying out a missile strike on the city of Belgorod. Two women were hospitalized with injuries, Gladkov said. The strike shattered windows in multiple residential buildings and damaged an unspecified "commercial" facility and a number of cars, according to the official.

Here's what to know about a deadly fire at a Swiss Alpine bar's New Year celebration

By JAMEY KEATEN, STEFANIE DAZIO and JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

CRANS-MONTANA, Switzerland (AP) — Swiss investigators are probing what caused a fire in a bar at an Alpine ski resort that left around 40 people dead and another 115 injured during a New Year's celebration.

Most injuries, many of them serious, occurred when the blaze swept through the crowded bar less than two hours after midnight Thursday in southwestern Switzerland.

The Crans-Montana resort is best known as an international ski and golf venue. Overnight, its crowded Le Constellation bar morphed from a scene of revelry into the site of one of Switzerland's worst tragedies.

Crans-Montana is less than 5 kilometers (3 miles) from Sierre, Switzerland, where 28 people, including many children, were killed when a bus from Belgium crashed inside a Swiss tunnel in 2012.

Here's what we know about the deadly fire:

A frantic attempt to escape

The blaze broke out around 1:30 a.m. Thursday during a holiday celebration inside the Le Constellation bar.

Two women told French broadcaster BFMTV they were inside when they saw a male bartender lifting a female bartender on his shoulders as she held a lit candle in a bottle. The flames spread, collapsing the wooden ceiling, they told the broadcaster.

People frantically tried to escape from the basement nightclub up a narrow flight of stairs and through a narrow door, causing a crowd surge, one of the women said.

A young man at the scene said people smashed windows to escape the fire, some gravely injured, reported BFMTV. He said he saw about 20 people scrambling to get out of the smoke and flames, likening what happened to a horror movie.

Officials rule out possible attack

While officials said Thursday it was too early to determine the fire's cause, investigators have already ruled out the possibility of an attack.

Work is underway to identify the dead and inform their families, according to Valais Canton police commander Frédéric Gisler.

The blaze triggered a flashover or backdraft

The Swiss officials called the blaze an "embrasement généralisé," a French firefighting term describing how a blaze can trigger the release of combustible gases that can then ignite violently and cause what English-speaking firefighters would call a flashover or a backdraft.

The injured suffered from serious burns and smoke inhalation. Some were flown to specialist hospitals across the country.

Authorities urged people to show caution in the coming days to avoid any accidents that could require the already overwhelmed medical resources.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 02, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 212 ~ 22 of 46

Italian and French nationals are among the missing

Thirteen of the wounded were Italian citizens, and another six Italians are unaccounted for, Italy's ambassador to Switzerland, Gian Lorenzo Cornado, told state-run RAI television.

One of the people missing was Giovanni Tamburi, whose mother Carla Masielli issued an appeal for any news about her son and asked the media to show his photo in hopes of identifying him.

"We have called all the hospitals but they don't give me any news. We don't know if he's among the dead. We don't know if he's among the missing," she wailed. "They don't tell us anything!"

Three of the wounded were being transported from Switzerland to a Milan hospital, the Italian civil protection agency said.

France's foreign ministry said eight French people are missing and another nine are among the injured. Top-flight French soccer team FC Metz said one of its trainee players, 19-year-old Tahirys Dos Santos, was badly burned and has been transferred by plane to Germany for treatment.

A top venue for the world's best athletes

With high-altitude ski runs rising around 3,000 meters (nearly 9,850 feet) in the heart of the Valais region's snowy peaks and pine forests, Crans-Montana is one of the top venues on the World Cup circuit.

The resort will host the best men's and women's downhill racers, including Lindsey Vonn, for their final events before the Milan Cortina Olympics in February.

The town's Crans-sur-Sierre golf club, down the street from the bar, stages the European Masters each August on a picturesque course.

A fire in a Swiss ski resort bar has left about 40 people dead

By JAMEY KEATEN, STEFANIE DAZIO and JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

CRANS-MONTANA, Switzerland (AP) — Axel Clavier felt like he was suffocating inside the Swiss Alpine bar where moments before he'd been ringing in the new year with friends and dozens of other revelers.

The 16-year-old from Paris escaped the inferno, which broke out after midnight Thursday, by forcing a window open with a table. But about 40 other partygoers died, including one of Clavier's friends, falling victim to one of the worst tragedies in Switzerland's history.

The blaze also injured about 115 people, many of them in their teens to mid-20s, as it ripped through the crowded Le Constellation bar at the ski resort of Crans-Montana, police said.

Clavier told The Associated Press that "two or three" of his friends remained missing hours after the disaster.

Late Thursday, mourners left candles and flowers in an impromptu memorial near the bar. Hundreds of others prayed for the victims at the nearby Church of Montana-Station.

Representatives from France and Italy said their nationals are among the missing.

Fire's cause remains under investigation

Valais Canton police commander Frédéric Gisler said during a news conference that work is underway to identify the dead and inform their families, adding that the community is "devastated."

"We have numerous accounts of heroic actions, one could say, of very strong solidarity in the moment," Valais regional government head Mathias Reynard told RTS radio Friday. He lauded the work of emergency officials on the day after the fire but added "in the first minutes it was citizens — and in large part young people — who saved lives with their courage."

Authorities did not immediately have an exact count of the deceased.

Beatrice Pilloud, Valais Canton attorney general, said it was too early to determine the cause of the fire.

"At no moment is there a question of any kind of attack," Pilloud said.

She later said the number of people who were in the bar is "unknown," and its maximum capacity will be part of the investigation.

"For the time being, we don't have any suspects," she added, when asked if anyone had been arrested over the fire. "An investigation has been opened, not against anyone, but to better understand the circumstances of this dramatic fire."

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 02, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 212 ~ 23 of 46

An evening of celebration turns tragic

Clavier, the Parisian teenager, said he didn't see the fire start, but did see waitresses arrive with Champagne bottles with burning sparklers.

Two women told French broadcaster BFMTV they were inside when they saw a male bartender lifting a female bartender on his shoulders as she held a lit candle in a bottle. The flames spread, collapsing the wooden ceiling, they told the broadcaster.

One of the women described a crowd surge as people frantically tried to escape from a basement nightclub up a narrow flight of stairs and through a narrow door.

Another witness speaking to BFMTV described people smashing windows to escape the blaze, some gravely injured, and panicked parents rushing to the scene in cars to see whether their children were trapped inside. The young man said he saw about 20 people scrambling to get out of the smoke and flames and likened what he saw to a horror movie as he watched from across the street.

Crans-Montana is less than 5 kilometers (3 miles) from Sierre, where 28 people, including many children, were killed when a bus from Belgium crashed inside a Swiss tunnel in 2012.

Resort town sits in the heart of the Alps

In a region busy with tourists skiing on the slopes, the authorities have called on the local population to show caution in the coming days to avoid accidents that could further strain the area's already overwhelmed medical resources.

With high-altitude ski runs rising around 3,000 meters (nearly 9,850 feet) in the heart of the Valais region's snowy peaks and pine forests, Crans-Montana is one of the top venues on the World Cup circuit. The resort will host the best men's and women's downhill racers, including Lindsey Vonn, for their final events before the Milan-Cortina Olympics in February. The town's Crans-sur-Sierre golf club stages the European Masters each August on a picturesque course.

Swiss President Guy Parmelin, speaking on his first day in the largely ceremonial job, said many emergency staff had been "confronted by scenes of indescribable violence and distress."

"Switzerland is a strong country not because it is sheltered from drama, but because it knows how to face them with courage and a spirit of mutual help."

Trump and top Iranian officials exchange threats over protests roiling Iran

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — U.S. President Donald Trump and top Iranian officials exchanged dueling threats Friday as widening economic protests swept across parts of the Islamic Republic, further escalating tensions between the countries after America bombed Iranian nuclear sites in June.

Trump initially wrote on his Truth Social platform, warning Iran that if it "violently kills peaceful protesters," the United States "will come to their rescue." At least seven people have been killed so far in violence surrounding the demonstrations, sparked in part by the collapse of Iran's rial currency.

"We are locked and loaded and ready to go," Trump wrote, without elaborating.

Shortly after, Ali Larijani, a former parliament speaker who serves as the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, alleged on the social platform X that Israel and the U.S. were stoking the demonstrations. He offered no evidence to support the allegation, which Iranian officials have repeatedly made during years of protests sweeping the country.

"Trump should know that intervention by the U.S. in the domestic problem corresponds to chaos in the entire region and the destruction of the U.S. interests," Larijani wrote on X, which the Iranian government blocks. "The people of the U.S. should know that Trump began the adventurism. They should take care of their own soldiers."

Larijani's remarks likely referenced America's wide military footprint in the region. Iran in June attacked Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar after the U.S. strikes on three nuclear sites during Israel's 12-day war on the Islamic Republic.

Ali Shamkhani, an adviser to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei who previously was the council's secretary for years, warned that "any interventionist hand that gets too close to the security of Iran will be cut."

"The people of Iran properly know the experience of 'being rescued' by Americans: from Iraq and Afghanistan to Gaza," he added on X.

The current protests, now in their sixth day, have become the biggest in Iran since 2022, when the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini in police custody triggered nationwide demonstrations. However, the demonstrations have yet to be countrywide and have not been as intense as those surrounding the death of Amini, who was detained over not wearing her hijab, or headscarf, to the liking of authorities.

Iran's civilian government under reformist President Masoud Pezeshkian has been trying to signal it wants to negotiate with protesters. However, Pezeshkian has acknowledged there is not much he can do as Iran's rial has rapidly depreciated, with \$1 now costing some 1.4 million rials. That sparked the initial protests.

The protests, taking root in economic issues, have heard demonstrators chant against Iran's theocracy as well.

Months after the war, Iran said it was 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 to ease sanctions. However, those talks have yet to happen as Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have warned Tehran against reconstituting its atomic program.

Kim's daughter visits family mausoleum, promoting her potential status as heir in North Korea

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The teenage daughter of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un made her first known visit to a sacred family mausoleum, a step that experts say bolstered her status as her father's potential heir.

The visit, which occurred on New Year's Day on Thursday, even sparked speculation that the girl, reportedly named Kim Ju Ae and aged about 13, could be named a high-level official at the upcoming ruling Workers' Party congress.

Images carried by North Korea's state media on Friday showed Kim Ju Ae standing in the front row with her parents and deeply bowing at Pyongyang's Kumsusan Palace of the Sun in Pyongyang, where the embalmed bodies of her late grandfather and great-grandfather are on display.

The palace is "a place that symbolizes legitimacy of the North Korean regime" and her visit there ahead of the Workers' Party congress is a politically orchestrated move, said Cheong Seong-Chang, deputy head of the private Sejong Institute in South Korea.

Kim Jong Un, 41, is the third generation of his family to rule North Korea since the country's foundation in 1948. He often marks key state anniversaries by visiting the Kumsusan palace and paying respect to his father Kim Jong Il and grandfather Kim Il Sung.

Cheong predicted that Kim Jong Un could give his daughter the first secretary post at the Workers' Party, the party's No. 2 job, at the congress. Other experts say she is too young to accept such a high-profile post and might be provided with lower-level jobs.

The congress, the first of its kind in five years, is meant to establish new priorities in state policies and reshuffle officials. North Korea hasn't said when it will hold it, but the National Intelligence Service, South Korea's spy agency, said it likely will be held either in January or February.

Since first appearing in state media in November 2022, Kim Ju Ae has accompanied her father at a slew of events including military parades and missile launches. In September, Kim Jong Un brought her on his trip to Beijing. During New Year's Day celebrations this week, she kissed her father on the cheek, showing their closeness. I'm

In January 2024, the NIS said it viewed Kim Ju Ae as her father's likely heir. Some outside experts dis-

agree with that assessment, citing Kim Jong Un's relatively young age and the extremely male-dominated nature of North Korea's power hierarchy. The NIS told lawmakers in November that Kim appeared to have no major health problems.

Revealing the young Kim Ju Ae was a surprise to foreign experts because neither Kim Jong Un nor Kim Jong Il were mentioned in North Korean state media before they became adults. Some observers say Kim Jong Un likely aimed to shore up public support for his plan to extend the family's rule by repeatedly disclosing Kim Ju Ae in public events.

A look at some of the worst fires in bars, nightclubs and music venues

By The Associated Press undefined

A fire at a bar in the Swiss ski resort of Crans-Montana in the early hours of New Year's Day has left about 40 people dead and over 100 injured, according to authorities.

Here is a look at some other nightclub, bar and music venue fires that have led to significant death tolls:

— December 2025: A fire ripped through a popular nightclub in Arpora village, in India's Goa state, killing 25 people, including kitchen workers and tourists.

— March 2025: A fire and ensuing stampede at the crowded Pulse club in Kocani, North Macedonia, killed 63 people, most of them young revelers, and injured more than 200. It was set off by a pyrotechnic flame that engulfed the roof of the club.

— April 2024: A blaze at the Masquerade nightclub in Istanbul, Turkey, trapped workers and employees while the venue was closed for renovations, leaving 29 people dead. It was located on the ground and basement floors of a 16-story residential building.

— October 2023: A fire that started at a nightclub in the southeastern Spanish city of Murcia and spread to two other clubs left 13 people dead.

— January 2022: A nightclub in Sorong, in Indonesia's West Papua province, burned after two groups attacked each other inside the building. Nineteen people were killed.

— January 2022: A blaze at Liv's Nightclub Yaouba in Yaounde, the capital of Cameroon, set off explosions that killed 17 people. The government suggested that fireworks set the roof alight and the fire then spread to areas where cooking gas was stored.

— December 2016: Thirty-six people died in a fire at a warehouse in Oakland, California that had been converted into a residence and event space for artists dubbed the "Ghost Ship." The blaze, which broke out during an electronic music and dance party, moved so quickly that victims were trapped on the illegally constructed second floor.

— October 2015: A blaze that broke out during a rock band's pyrotechnics display at the Colectiv nightclub in the Romanian capital, Bucharest, killed 64 people and left some 190 injured.

— January 2013: A fire killed more than 200 people at the Kiss nightclub in the city of Santa Maria in southern Brazil. Investigators said soundproofing foam on the ceiling caught fire and released poisonous gases that quickly killed those attending a university party.

— December 2009: Some 152 people died when a blaze broke out at the Lame Horse nightclub in Perm, Russia. It started when an indoor fireworks display ignited a plastic ceiling decorated with branches.

— January 2009: An indoor fireworks display after a New Year's countdown ignited a blaze in the Santika club in Bangkok, Thailand, killing 67 people and injuring many more. Victims died from burns, smoke inhalation, and from being crushed.

— September 2008: A fire killed 44 people at the jammed King of Dancers nightclub in Shenzhen, China, when a stampede broke out after a fireworks show ignited the ceiling.

— December 2004: In Buenos Aires, Argentina, a fire killed 194 people at the crowded Cromagnon Republic club after a flare ignited ceiling foam. Club owner Omar Chaban was sentenced to 20 years in prison for causing the deadly fire and for bribery. Others received lighter sentences.

— February 2003: A fire at the Station nightclub in West Warwick, Rhode Island, in the United States,

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 02, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 212 ~ 26 of 46

killed 100 people and injured more than 200 others. Fireworks being used by the band set fire to flammable foam inside the club.

— January 2001: A fire at a cafe in the Dutch town of Volendam where people were celebrating the New Year killed 14 people and injured more than 200.

— December 2000: A fire that was blamed on a welding accident killed 309 people at a disco in the central Chinese city of Luoyang.

— October 1998: An arson attack against an overcrowded youth disco in the Swedish city of Goteborg killed 63 people and left around 200 injured. Four people were later convicted for starting the fire.

— March 1996: A fire at the Ozone Disco Pub in Quezon City, Philippines, killed 162 people. A large proportion of the victims were students partying to mark the end of the academic year.

— March 1990: An arson attack at the Happy Land nightclub in the Bronx borough of New York City killed 87 people. It started when a man angry with his girlfriend threw gasoline on the club's only exit and set it on fire, then jammed down the metal front gate so people were trapped.

— December 1983: A fire at the Alcala dance hall in Madrid, Spain, left 78 people dead and more than 20 injured.

— May 1977: A fire at the Beverly Hills Supper Club in Southgate, Kentucky, killed 165 people and injured more than 200.

— November 1942: The deadliest nightclub fire in U.S. history killed 492 people at Boston's Coconut Grove club. The fire at what had been one of Boston's foremost nightspots led to new requirements for sprinkler systems and accessible exits.

— April 1940: A fire ignited the decorative Spanish moss draping the ceiling of the Rhythm Night Club in Natchez, Mississippi, killing 209 people. The windows had been boarded up to prevent people from sneaking in.

Israeli hostage released from 2 years of captivity in Gaza struggles to rebuild his life

By MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

DIMONA, Israel (AP) — During the two years he was held captive in Gaza, Segev Kalfon had a recurring dream: slowly walking through a supermarket, browsing each aisle for his favorite foods, taking in the brightly colored packages and smells.

Since being released on Oct. 13, his dreams have flipped: Most nights when he closes his eyes, he is back on a dirty piece of foam mattress in the 2-square-meter (22-square-foot) room in a Hamas tunnel where he was kept with five other hostages, counting each tile and crack in the cement to distract himself from severe hunger and near-daily physical torture.

"I was in the lowest place a person can be before death, the lowest. I had no control over anything, when to eat, when to shower, how much I want to eat," said Kalfon, 27. During the worst parts of captivity, he was so skinny he could count the individual vertebrae jutting from his spine.

Now that he's back home in Dimona in southern Israel, Kalfon is trying to piece together a post-captivity life. He spends much of his time juggling appointments with an array of doctors and psychologists.

One of the strangest aspects of his release, Kalfon said, is that for two years, his entire life revolved around trying to please his captors, so they might share more food or spare a beating. Now that he's out, "everyone is trying to please me," he said.

From a family bakery to a Hamas tunnel

Before being taken hostage at the Nova music festival, Kalfon worked at his family's bakery in the town of Arad and was studying finance and investments.

When rockets started flying at the start of the Hamas attack on Oct. 7, 2023, Kalfon said he and his closest friend tried to help others at the festival escape. Kalfon remembers pleading with a group of people who had taken cover in a yellow dumpster, telling them to come with him, that they were in a death trap. For two years, Kalfon wondered what happened to them. After his release, he learned they were all killed.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 02, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 212 ~ 27 of 46

Hamas-led militants killed some 1,200 people and took about 250 hostages during their cross-border assault that day. Israel's ensuing offensive has killed more than 71,000 Palestinians in Gaza, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not differentiate between civilians and combatants in its count. The ministry is part of the Hamas-run government and maintains detailed casualty records that are seen as generally reliable by U.N. agencies and independent experts.

While in captivity, every moment "felt like an eternity," Kalfon said. The only thing that broke up the monotony was a meager portion of food and water once a day.

There were so many times he felt close to death: during frequent bombardment by the Israeli military, going through COVID and other illnesses with no medicine, enduring starvation and frequent physical torture. He said his captors used bicycle chains as whips and pummeled the hostages while wearing large rings to leave painful welts.

"We didn't even have energy to yell out, because no one hears you," he said. "You're in a tunnel 30 meters underground; no one knows what's going on."

The worst part was the last three months of his captivity, Kalfon said, when he was kept in isolation and felt like he was losing his sanity.

In the darkest places, faith brings a ray of light

Both Kalfon and his family, advocating in Israel for his release, further turned to their Jewish faith to get through the dark times. Kalfon's family filled their homes with additional Jewish books, ritual objects and prayers from senior rabbis.

Kalfon and the other five hostages made a tradition of marking the start of Jewish holidays or the Sabbath by saying prayers over a bit of water and moldy pita.

The hostages used a square of precious toilet paper, where one roll had to last six people for two months, for the ritual skullcap that Jewish men traditionally wear during prayers.

A radio the captors had given to the hostages in hopes of converting them to Islam through recordings of the Quran sometimes allowed them to capture signals from Israeli news.

Once, when Kalfon was at his lowest and considering an escape attempt, which likely would have led to his death, he turned on the radio and heard his mother's voice. He said it felt like a divine message to hold on for a little longer.

"I was living in the body of a dead person, living in a grave," Kalfon said. "To get out of this grave, it's nothing else if not a miracle."

Kalfon was released along with 19 other living hostages as part of the U.S.-brokered ceasefire. He considers U.S. President Donald Trump a "messenger from God," sure that no one else could have halted the fighting. His family has hung nearly a dozen American flags around the house in recognition of the U.S. contribution to his return.

'War is starting with my soul'

Since his return, Kalfon is getting used to a new life, one where he is famous after his name and face were broadcast across Israel during the fight to release the hostages.

"Everyone wants to support me and say, 'You're such a hero,'" Kalfon said. "I don't feel like a hero. Every person would want to survive."

Kalfon knows he has a long journey to recovery after his years in captivity and a post-traumatic stress disorder diagnosis from before he was taken hostage.

"Although the war in Gaza is over, now my war is starting with my soul, to try to deal with thoughts that are very difficult," he said.

He tries to keep his schedule busy to distract himself.

"But every night when I'm alone, it comes up," Kalfon said. Even a small noise can startle him awake and thrust him into a terrifying flashback, so he barely sleeps.

For the immediate future, he wants to share his story more widely. He said he has been shocked by the rise in global antisemitism and anti-Israel fervor since he was captured and wants to make sure people hear his story, especially those who tore down posters of the hostages or accuse Israel of lying.

"I'm proof that it happened," he said. "I felt it with my body. I saw it with my own eyes."

Woman killed in suspected mountain lion attack while hiking in northern Colorado

By MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

A woman was killed in a suspected mountain lion attack while she was hiking alone in the mountains of northern Colorado on Thursday, in what would be the first fatal attack by one of the predators in the state in more than 25 years, authorities said.

Wildlife officers later in the day located two mountain lions in the area and fatally shot the animals, said Kara Van Hoose with Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

The attack occurred in the mountains south of the small community of Glen Haven, about 7 miles north-east of Estes Park and considered the gateway to the eastern entrance of Rocky Mountain National Park.

Shortly before noon, two hikers encountered a mountain lion near the woman's body along a remote section of the Crosier Mountain trail, which is on a national forest.

The hikers threw rocks at the animal to scare it from the immediate area so they could try to help the woman, Van Hoose said. One of the hikers was a physician who attended to the victim and did not find a pulse, she said.

Details on the woman's injuries and cause of death were not immediately released.

Van Hoose said the search for other mountain lions in the area was ongoing. She said circumstances would dictate whether any additional lions that are found are killed.

Sightings of mountain lions are common in the forested area where the suspected attack occurred, but there have not been any recent documented attacks on humans, Van Hoose said.

"This is a very common time of year to take mountain lion sightings and reports and especially in Larimer County, where this is very good mountain lion habitat," she said. "Trails in this area are in pretty remote land, so it's wooded, it's rocky, there's elevation gains and dips."

Mountain lion attacks are rare and Colorado's last suspected fatal attack was in 1999, when a 3-year-old was killed. Two years before that, a 10-year-old boy was killed by a lion and dragged away while hiking with family members in Rocky Mountain National Park.

Last year in Northern California two brothers were stalked and then attacked by a lion that they tried to fight off. One of the brothers was killed.

The animals, also known as cougars, catamounts and other names, can weigh 130 pounds (60 kilograms) and grow to more than six feet (1.8 meters) long. They eat primarily deer.

Colorado has an estimated 3,800-4,400 of the animals, which are classified as a big game species in the state and can be hunted.

Top-seeded Indiana routs Alabama 38-3 for its first Rose Bowl victory, roaring into CFP semifinals

By GREG BEACHAM AP Sports Writer

PASADENA, Calif. (AP) — Fernando Mendoza literally jumped for joy when the Heisman Trophy winner learned he was not the offensive MVP of Indiana's dominant victory over Alabama in the Rose Bowl.

The quarterback and his teammates ran across the celebration stage to mob 311-pound center Pat Coogan, who was visibly shocked to be the center of attention at another landmark moment for these incredible, unbeaten Hoosiers.

"It's probably the first, if I had to guess, offensive lineman MVP award," Coogan said with a grin. "These guys are unbelievable. The belief that we have in each other ... it's just been never-ending growth, never-ending improvement."

Coogan's improbable honor was a beautiful bit of symbolism that recognized the manner in which these hard-nosed Hoosiers physically manhandled the Crimson Tide to reach the College Football Playoff semifinals with their 38-3 victory Thursday.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 02, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 212 ~ 29 of 46

Just two years into one of the most incredible team turnarounds in recent sports history, Indiana was simply tougher, meaner and more precise on both sides of the ball than blue-blooded Bama — and now the Hoosiers (14-0, No. 1 CFP seed) are headed to the Peach Bowl on Jan. 9 for a CFP semifinal rematch with fifth-seeded Oregon.

Mendoza passed for 192 yards and three touchdowns in his first game since winning his school's first Heisman, but the Hoosiers won the Rose Bowl for the first time in school history by dominating the Crimson Tide (11-4, No. 9 CFP seed) at the line of scrimmage.

Indiana scored the game's first 24 points before pouring it on with fourth-quarter rushing TDs from Kaelon Black and Roman Hemby, wrapping up a jubilant afternoon in the 112th edition of the Granddaddy of Them All.

"I thought our mindset was really good," Indiana coach Curt Cignetti said. "It was a hard-fought game early. Alabama made some plays. They had us off balance offensively. But we were able to make the plays when we needed to and take over in the second half. It's a big win against a team that's got a lot of tradition like that."

Charlie Becker, Omar Cooper Jr. and Elijah Sarratt caught TD passes, while Black rushed for 99 yards. Indiana outgained Alabama 407-193, delighting a decidedly pro-Indiana crowd that celebrated its long-struggling team's first Rose Bowl game appearance since 1968 with chants of "Hoosier Daddy?" in the final minutes.

Indiana had not won any bowl game since the Copper Bowl in 1991, but history has been no match for Cignetti and his Hoosiers during the coach's two transcendent seasons.

The next challenge is even bigger: Oregon routed Texas Tech 23-0 earlier Thursday in the Orange Bowl. Indiana beat the then-No. 3 Ducks 30-20 in Eugene last October in one of Cignetti's most impressive Big Ten victories.

Indiana is two wins away from the first national championship in school history after becoming the first team to advance following a first-round bye in the current 12-team playoff format. The first six bye teams — including the first two this season — couldn't come back strong from an extra-long layoff, but the Hoosiers took care of business while improving to 25-2 under Cignetti.

The Crimson Tide's second season under Kalen DeBoer ended in the same venue as their final season under Nick Saban two years ago. Alabama was outclassed one week after an impressive road win over Oklahoma, managing just 151 yards before the meaningless final minutes of the Tide's biggest blowout loss since September 1998.

"We can be upset, because losing doesn't sit well for us, and we can be frustrated about it," DeBoer said.

Ty Simpson passed for 67 yards before he cracked a rib late in the first half, and backup Austin Mack replaced him in the third quarter. Mack immediately got the Tide rolling on a 65-yard drive leading to a short field goal, but the Hoosiers responded with two unstoppable TD drives.

Indiana controlled the famous Rose Bowl turf, which stayed pristine despite nearly 24 hours of steady rain before kickoff. The storms dissipated while the Hoosiers took their first-half lead, and blue skies appeared early in the second half while the Hoosiers closed in on history.

The physical domination began when Indiana's second drive stretched 84 yards and 16 plays over nearly nine minutes before Nicolas Radacic's 31-yard field goal on the first snap of the second quarter.

Indiana's defense then stopped Alabama on fourth and 1 at the Tide 34, and Mendoza fired a long, high pass to the leaping Becker four plays later for a 21-yard touchdown.

Simpson got hurt when he fumbled in Indiana territory after a courageous first-down scramble, and the Hoosiers methodically drove for Mendoza's 1-yard TD pass with 17 seconds left to Cooper, the hero of Indiana's dramatic victory over Penn State.

The victory is the latest step in the monumental two-season turnaround of what was the losingest program in college football when Cignetti took charge. After winning 11 games and reaching the CFP last season, the Hoosiers steamrolled through their schedule this fall before beating defending national champion Ohio State for the Big Ten title and ascending to the No. 1 spot in the AP Top 25 for the first time.

Takeaways

Alabama: It was remarkable to see the most successful program of the 21st century get dominated up front. The Tide's inability to run the ball was a season-long problem, but it was particularly painful in Pasadena. Whether through personnel or scheme, DeBoer's offense must take a step forward next year to reach the standard expected at Bama.

Indiana: The Hoosiers acted like they've been here before, even though they haven't. Cignetti's group has a businesslike demeanor that wasn't remotely altered by Alabama's reputation and history. They're the obvious favorites to win it all.

Up next

Alabama: Host East Carolina on Sept. 5.

Indiana: A trip to Atlanta to face the powerhouse Ducks, who lost last season's Rose Bowl to Ohio State as the No. 1 seed.

Maduro open to US talks on drug trafficking, but silent on CIA strike

By REGINA GARCIA CANO Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Venezuela is open to negotiating an agreement with the United States to combat drug trafficking, the South American country's President Nicolás Maduro said in a pretaped interview aired Thursday on state television, but he declined to comment on a CIA-led strike last week at a Venezuelan docking area that the Trump administration believed was used by cartels.

Maduro, in an interview with Spanish journalist Ignacio Ramonet, reiterated that the U.S. wants to force a government change in Venezuela and gain access to its vast oil reserves through the monthslong pressure campaign that began with a massive military deployment to the Caribbean Sea in August.

"What are they seeking? It is clear that they seek to impose themselves through threats, intimidation and force," Maduro said, later adding that it is time for both nations to "start talking seriously, with data in hand."

"The U.S. government knows, because we've told many of their spokespeople, that if they want to seriously discuss an agreement to combat drug trafficking, we're ready," he said. "If they want oil, Venezuela is ready for U.S. investment, like with Chevron, whenever they want it, wherever they want it and however they want it."

Chevron Corp. is the only major oil company exporting Venezuelan crude to the U.S. Venezuela has the world's largest proven oil reserves.

The interview was taped on New Year's Eve, the same day the U.S. military announced strikes against five alleged drug-smuggling boats. The latest attacks bring the total number of known boat strikes to 35 and the number of people killed to at least 115, according to numbers announced by the Trump administration. Venezuelans are among the victims.

President Donald Trump has justified the attacks as a necessary escalation to stem the flow of drugs into the United States and asserted that the U.S. is engaged in an "armed conflict" with drug cartels. The strikes began off Venezuela's Caribbean coast and later expanded to the eastern Pacific Ocean.

Meanwhile, the CIA was behind a drone strike last week at a docking area believed to have been used by Venezuelan drug cartels, according to two people familiar with details of the operation who requested anonymity to discuss the classified matter. It was the first known direct operation on Venezuelan soil since the boat strikes began, a significant escalation in the administration's pressure campaign on Maduro, who has been charged with narco-terrorism in the U.S.

Asked about the operation on Venezuelan soil, Maduro said he could "talk about it in a few days."

Zohran Mamdani promises to govern 'expansively and audaciously' in inaugural speech as NYC mayor

By ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Zohran Mamdani became mayor of New York City on Thursday, taking over one of the most unrelenting jobs in American politics with a promise to transform government on behalf of the city's striving, struggling working class.

Mamdani, a Democrat, was sworn in at a decommissioned subway station below City Hall just after midnight, placing his hand on a Quran as he took his oath as the city's first Muslim mayor.

After working part of the night in his new office, Mamdani returned to City Hall in a taxi cab around midday Thursday for a grander public inauguration where U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders, one of the mayor's political heroes, administered the oath for a second time.

"Beginning today, we will govern expansively and audaciously. We may not always succeed, but never will we be accused of lacking the courage to try," Mamdani told a cheering crowd.

"To those who insist that the era of big government is over, hear me when I say this: No longer will City Hall hesitate to use its power to improve New Yorkers' lives," he said.

Thronged turned out in the frigid cold for an inauguration viewing party just south of City Hall on a stretch of Broadway known as the "Canyon of Heroes," famous for its ticker-tape parades.

Mamdani wasted little time getting to work after the event.

He revoked multiple executive orders issued by the previous administration since Sept. 26, 2024, the date federal authorities announced former Mayor Eric Adams had been indicted on corruption charges, which were later dismissed following intervention by the Trump administration.

Then he visited an apartment building in Brooklyn to announce he is revitalizing a city office dedicated to protecting tenants and creating two task forces focused on housing construction.

'I will govern as a democratic socialist'

Throughout the daytime ceremony, Mamdani and other speakers hit on the theme that carried him to victory in the election: Using government power to lift up the millions of people who struggle with the city's high cost of living.

Mamdani peppered his remarks with references to those New Yorkers, citing workers in steel-toed boots, halal cart vendors "whose knees ache from working all day" and cooks "wielding a thousand spices."

"I was elected as a democratic socialist and I will govern as a democratic socialist," Mamdani said. "I will not abandon my principles for fear of being deemed 'radical.'"

Before administering the oath, Sanders told the crowd that most of the things Mamdani wants to do — including raising taxes on the rich — aren't radical at all.

"In the richest country in the history of the world, making sure that people can live in affordable housing is not radical," he told the crowd. "It is the right and decent thing to do."

Mamdani was accompanied on stage by his wife, Rama Duwaji. Adams was also in attendance, sitting near another former mayor, Bill de Blasio.

Actor Mandy Patinkin, who recently hosted Mamdani to celebrate Hannukah, sang "Over the Rainbow" with children from an elementary school chorus. The invocation was given by Imam Khalid Latif, the director of the Islamic Center of New York City. Poet Cornelius Eady read an original poem called "Proof."

In addition to being the city's first Muslim mayor, Mamdani is also its first of South Asian descent and the first to be born in Africa. At 34, Mamdani is also the city's youngest mayor in generations.

Free child care and bus rides

At the watch party on Broadway, onlookers stood shoulder to shoulder gazing up at several jumbotrons and singing and dancing to stave off the cold, with some passing out hot cocoa and hand warmers. Many described feeling as though they were witnessing history.

Among them was Ariel Segura, a 16-year-old Bronx resident, who had arrived five hours earlier to secure a place near the front of the crowd.

"I'm out here fan-girling a politician, it's kind of crazy," he said, wiping away tears as Mamdani concluded

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 02, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 212 ~ 32 of 46

his speech. "Now it's time to hold him accountable."

In a campaign that helped make "affordability" a buzzword across the political spectrum, Mamdani ran on a focused platform that included promises of free child care, free buses, a rent freeze for about 1 million households and a pilot of city-run grocery stores.

Mamdani insisted in his inaugural address that he will not squander his opportunity to implement those policies.

"A moment like this comes rarely. Seldom do we hold such an opportunity to transform and reinvent. Rarer still is it the people themselves whose hands are on the levers of change. And yet we know that too often in our past, moments of great possibility have been promptly surrendered to small imagination and smaller ambition," he said.

But he will also have to face the everyday responsibilities of running America's largest city: handling trash and snow and rats, while getting blamed for subway delays and potholes.

In his speech, Mamdani acknowledged the task ahead, saying he knows many will be watching to see whether he can succeed.

"They want to know if the left can govern. They want to know if the struggles that afflict them can be solved. They want to know if it is right to hope again," he said. "So, standing together with the wind of purpose at our backs, we will do something that New Yorkers do better than anyone else: We will set an example for the world."

Quick rise to power

Mamdani was born in Kampala, Uganda, the son of filmmaker Mira Nair and Mahmood Mamdani, an academic and author. His family moved to New York City when he was 7, with Mamdani growing up in a post-9/11 city where Muslims didn't always feel welcome. He became an American citizen in 2018.

He worked on political campaigns for Democratic candidates in the city before he sought public office himself, winning a state Assembly seat in 2020 to represent a section of Queens.

Now that he has taken office, Mamdani and his wife will depart their one-bedroom, rent stabilized apartment in the outer-borough to take up residence in the stately mayoral residence in Manhattan.

The new mayor inherits a city on the upswing, after years of slow recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Violent crime has dropped to pre-pandemic lows. Tourists are back. Unemployment, which soared during the pandemic years, is also back to pre-COVID levels.

Yet deep concerns remain about high prices and rising rents.

In opening remarks to the crowd, U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez praised New Yorkers for choosing "courage over fear."

"We have chosen prosperity for the many over spoils for the few," she said.

Dealing with Trump

During the mayoral race, President Donald Trump threatened to withhold federal funding from the city if Mamdani won and mused about sending National Guard troops to the city.

But Trump surprised supporters and foes alike by inviting the Democrat to the White House for what ended up being a cordial meeting in November.

"I want him to do a great job and will help him do a great job," Trump said.

Still, tensions between the two leaders are almost certain to resurface, given their deep policy disagreements, particularly over immigration.

Several speakers at Thursday's inauguration criticized the Trump administration's move to deport more immigrants and expressed hope that Mamdani's City Hall would be an ally to those the president has targeted.

Mamdani also faces skepticism and opposition from some members of the city's Jewish community over his criticisms of Israel's government.

Still, Mamdani supporters in Thursday's crowd expressed optimism he'd be a unifying force.

"There are moments where everyone in New York comes together, like when the Mets won the World Series in '86," said Mary Hammann, 64, a musician with the Metropolitan Opera. "This feels like that — just colder."

At least 7 reported killed during widening protests in Iran sparked by ailing economy

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Widening demonstrations sparked by Iran's ailing economy spread Thursday into the Islamic Republic's rural provinces, with at least seven people being killed in the first fatalities reported among security forces and protesters, authorities said.

The deaths may mark the start of a heavier-handed response by Iran's theocracy over the demonstrations, which have slowed in the capital, Tehran, but expanded elsewhere. The fatalities, two on Wednesday and five on Thursday, occurred in four cities, largely home to Iran's Lur ethnic group.

The protests have become the biggest in Iran since 2022, when the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini in police custody triggered nationwide demonstrations. However, the demonstrations have yet to be countrywide and have not been as intense as those surrounding the death of Amini, who was detained over not wearing her hijab, or headscarf, to the liking of authorities.

The most-intense violence appeared to strike Azna, a city in Iran's Lorestan province, some 300 kilometers (185 miles) southwest of Tehran. There, online videos purported to show objects in the street ablaze and gunfire echoing as people shouted: "Shameless! Shameless!"

The semiofficial Fars news agency reported three people had been killed. Other media, including reform outlets, cited Fars for the report while state-run media did not fully acknowledge the violence there or elsewhere. It wasn't clear why there wasn't more reporting over the unrest, but journalists had faced arrest over their reporting in 2022.

In Lordegan, a city in Iran's Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province, online videos showed demonstrators gathered on a street, with the sound of gunfire in the background. The footage matched known features of Lordegan, some 470 kilometers (290 miles) south of Tehran.

Fars, citing an anonymous official, said two people had been killed during the protests Thursday.

The Washington-based Abdorrahman Boroumand Center for Human Rights in Iran said two people had been killed there, identifying the dead as demonstrators. It also shared a still image of what appeared to be an Iranian police officer, wearing body armor and wielding a shotgun.

In 2019, the area around Lordegan saw widespread protests and demonstrators reportedly damaged government buildings after a report said people there had been infected with HIV by contaminated needles used at a local health care clinic.

In Fuladshahr in Iran's Isfahan province, state media reported on the death of a man there Thursday that activist groups attributed to the police opening fire on demonstrators.

'Protests due to economic pressures'

A separate demonstration Wednesday night reportedly led to the 21-year-old volunteer in the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard's Basij force.

The state-run IRNA news agency reported on the Guard member's death but did not elaborate. An Iranian news agency called the Student News Network, which is believed to be close to the Basij, directly blamed demonstrators for the Guard member's death, citing comments from Saeed Pourali, a deputy governor in Lorestan province.

The Guard member "was martyred ... at the hands of rioters during protests in this city in defense of public order," he reportedly said. Another 13 Basij members and police officers suffered injuries, he added.

"The protests that have occurred are due to economic pressures, inflation and currency fluctuations, and are an expression of livelihood concerns," Pourali said. "The voices of citizens must be heard carefully and tactfully, but people must not allow their demands to be strained by profit-seeking individuals."

The protests took place in the city of Kouhdasht, over 400 kilometers (250 miles) southwest of Tehran. Local prosecutor Kazem Nazari said 20 people had been arrested after the protests and that calm had returned to the city, the judiciary's Mizan news agency reported.

Currency fall sparks protests

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 02, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 212 ~ 34 of 46

Iran's civilian government under reformist President Masoud Pezeshkian has been trying to signal it wants to negotiate with protesters. However, Pezeshkian has acknowledged there is not much he can do as Iran's rial currency has rapidly depreciated, with \$1 now costing some 1.4 million rials.

Meanwhile, state television separately reported on the arrests of seven people, including five it described as monarchists and two others it said had linked to European-based groups. State TV also said another operation saw security forces confiscate 100 smuggled pistols, without elaborating.

Iran's theocracy had declared Wednesday a public holiday across much of the country, citing cold weather, likely as a bid to get people out of the capital for a long weekend. The Iranian weekend is Thursday and Friday, while Saturday marks Imam Ali's birthday, another holiday for many.

The protests, taking root in economic issues, have heard demonstrators chant against Iran's theocracy as well. The country's leaders are still reeling after Israel launched a 12-day war against the country in June. The U.S. also bombed Iranian nuclear sites during the war.

Iran has said 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 to ease sanctions. However, those talks have yet to happen as U.S. President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have warned Tehran against reconstituting its atomic program.

Defense carries the day for Oregon, as Ducks move into CFP semifinals by topping Texas Tech 23-0

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Sports Writer

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla. (AP) — The first thing that Oregon quarterback Dante Moore did after winning the Orange Bowl was salute the thousands of fans who made the cross-country trip to South Florida.

If the Ducks' defense keeps playing like this, those fans might be back in Miami before long.

Matayo Uiagalelei caused a fumble to set up an Oregon touchdown, freshman Brandon Finney Jr. had three takeaways — two interceptions and a fumble recovery — and the fifth-seeded Ducks silenced No. 4 Texas Tech's offense for a 23-0 win in the College Football Playoff quarterfinal at the Orange Bowl on Thursday.

"They've earned this opportunity," Oregon coach Dan Lanning said. "I told them go get their pound of flesh today. They did that today."

Jordan Davison rushed for two scores, Moore threw for 234 yards and Atticus Sappington kicked three field goals for Oregon (13-1), which will play No. 1 Indiana (14-0) in the Peach Bowl — a CFP semifinal — on Jan. 9. It's a rematch of a game from Oct. 11, when the Hoosiers beat Oregon 30-20.

The Oregon-Indiana winner will be in Miami Gardens for the national title game on Jan. 19.

"I believe we have the best defense in the country," Finney said.

Texas Tech probably wouldn't argue with that.

Texas Tech — which finished at 12-2 — came into the day second nationally in points per game (42.5) and fifth nationally in yards per game (480.3) but got absolutely nothing going. The Red Raiders turned the ball over four times, were stopped on fourth downs three other times and had four three-and-outs.

"Texas Tech fans, I'm sorry that we let you down," coach Joey McGuire said. "I hope you've enjoyed every second of this year. Man, this was such a special team and I'm so proud of them. Hats off to Dan Lanning. Hats off to the Oregon Ducks. Just an incredible football team ... and I told Dan after the game I hope he wins the whole damn thing."

Tech quarterback Behren Morton — who finished 18 of 32 passing for just 137 yards — was stripped by Uiagalelei early in the third quarter in Red Raider territory. Uiagalelei rumbled deep into the red zone and Davison scored one play later to make it 13-0.

Morton threw a red-zone interception early in the fourth quarter and a fourth-down stop from their own 30 midway through the fourth quarter doomed whatever comeback chances existed for the Red Raiders. Davison plunged in from the 1 with 16 seconds left to cap the scoring.

"We had a great game plan," Morton said. "We just didn't execute base plays."

And once again, a CFP bye meant a team went bye-bye.

It was the sixth quarterfinal under this 12-team tournament format that started last year and the sixth time that the team coming off an extended break lost to a team that played a first-round game. That odd streak ended later Thursday, when Indiana — which had a first-round bye — rolled past Alabama 38-3 in another quarterfinal at the Rose Bowl.

In 2024, Boise State (against Penn State), Arizona State (against Texas), Georgia (against Notre Dame) and Oregon (against Ohio State) all went out in the quarterfinals after first-round byes. Miami added to that list Wednesday night, beating Ohio State in a quarterfinal at the Cotton Bowl. In those six games, including Thursday, the team with the bye has held the lead for less than five minutes — combined — of regulation.

Texas Tech thought it could avoid that fate. It could not, and Oregon finished off its first shutout of an AP-ranked opponent since 2012. Oregon was playing a top-10 team for the 113th time — and for the first time, allowed zero points.

“In this program you don’t make excuses,” McGuire said, “and you don’t let anybody make them for you.”

Oregon played James Madison in Round 1 this year, winning 51-34, and generally was unhappy afterward with how it played defensively.

There wasn’t anything to not like from that side of the ball on Thursday.

“Last week a lot of people talked about our defense,” Lanning said. “They showed up today.”

The takeaway

Oregon: The Ducks are flying home to Eugene, instead of staying in the Eastern time zone to prepare for the Peach Bowl in Atlanta next week. It was a decision the Ducks made not long after seeing how the CFP bracket could shake out.

Texas Tech: It simply was an uncharacteristic offensive showing from the Red Raiders, who had scored at least 10 points before halftime in 26 of their last 27 games going back to 2023. “That was the best defense we have faced this year,” McGuire said.

Up next

Oregon: The Ducks, who have tied the school record for wins in a season, get a rematch with Indiana.

Texas Tech: The Red Raiders are scheduled to open the 2026 season at home against Abilene Christian on Sept. 5.

Trump, in interview, defends his energy and health, offers new details on screening he underwent

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump defended his energy and health in an interview with The Wall Street Journal and disclosed that he had a CT scan, not an MRI scan, during an October examination about which he and the White House delayed offering details.

Trump, in the interview published Thursday, said he regretted undergoing the advanced imaging on his heart and abdomen during an October visit to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center because it raised public questions about his health. His physician said in a memo the White House released in December that he had “advanced imaging” as a preventative screening for a man his age.

Trump had initially described it as an MRI but said he didn’t know what part of his body he had scanned. A CT scan is a quicker form of diagnostic imaging than an MRI but offers less detail about differences in tissue.

The president’s doctor, Navy Capt. Sean Barbabella, said in a statement released Thursday by the White House that Trump underwent the exam in October because he planned to be at Walter Reed to meet people working there. Trump had already undergone an annual physical in April.

“President Trump agreed to meet with the staff and soldiers at Walter Reed Medical Hospital in October. In order to make the most of the President’s time at the hospital, we recommended he undergo another routine physical evaluation to ensure continued optimal health,” Barbabella said.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 02, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 212 ~ 36 of 46

Barbabella said he asked the president to undergo either a CT scan or MRI "to definitively rule out any cardiovascular issues" and the results were "perfectly normal and revealed absolutely no abnormalities."

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said in a statement Thursday that the president's doctors and the White House have "always maintained the President received advanced imaging" but said that "additional details on the imaging have been disclosed by the President himself" because he "has nothing to hide."

"In retrospect, it's too bad I took it because it gave them a little ammunition," Trump said in the interview with The Wall Street Journal. "I would have been a lot better off if they didn't, because the fact that I took it said, 'Oh gee, is something wrong?' Well, nothing's wrong."

The 79-year-old became the oldest person to take the oath of office when he was sworn in as president last year and has been sensitive to questions about his health, particularly as he has repeatedly questioned his predecessor Joe Biden's fitness for office.

Biden, who turned 82 in the last year of his presidency, was dogged by scrutiny of his age and mental acuity at the end of his tenure and during his abandoned attempt to seek reelection.

But questions have also swirled around Trump's health this year as he's been seen with bruising on the back of his right hand that has been conspicuous despite a slathering of makeup on top, along with noticeable swelling at his ankles.

The White House this summer said the president had been diagnosed with chronic venous insufficiency, a common condition among older adults. The condition happens when veins in the legs can't properly carry blood back to the heart and it pools in the lower legs.

In the interview, Trump said he briefly tried wearing compression socks to address the swelling but stopped because he didn't like them.

The bruising on Trump's hand, according to Leavitt, is from "frequent handshaking and the use of aspirin," which Trump takes regularly to reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke.

He said he takes more aspirin than his doctors recommend but said he has resisted taking less because he's been taking it for 25 years and said he is "a little superstitious." Trump takes 325 milligrams of aspirin daily, according to Barbabella.

"They say aspirin is good for thinning out the blood, and I don't want thick blood pouring through my heart," Trump said. "I want nice, thin blood pouring through my heart. Does that make sense?"

Trump, in the interview, denied he has fallen asleep during White House meetings when cameras have caught him with his eyes closed, instead insisting he was resting his eyes or blinking.

"I'll just close. It's very relaxing to me," he said. "Sometimes they'll take a picture of me blinking, blinking, and they'll catch me with the blink."

He said that he's never slept much at night, a habit he also described during his first term, and said he starts his day early in the White House residence before moving to the Oval Office around 10 a.m. and working until 7 p.m. or 8 p.m.

The president dismissed questions about his hearing, saying he only struggled to hear "when there's a lot of people talking," and said he has plenty of energy, which he credited to his genes.

"Genetics are very important," he said. "And I have very good genetics."

About 40 people dead and 115 injured in fire at Swiss Alpine bar during New Year's celebration

By JAMEY KEATEN, STEFANIE DAZIO and JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

CRANS-MONTANA, Switzerland (AP) — About 40 people were killed and another 115 injured, most of them seriously, after a fire ripped through a bar's New Year celebration in a Swiss Alpine resort less than two hours after midnight Thursday, police said.

Authorities did not immediately have an exact count of the deceased.

The Crans-Montana resort is best known as an international ski and golf venue, and overnight, its crowded Le Constellation bar morphed from a scene of revelry into the site of one of Switzerland's worst tragedies.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 02, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 212 ~ 37 of 46

The country will hold five days of mourning.

Valais Canton police commander Frédéric Gisler said during a news conference that work is underway to identify the victims and inform their families, adding that the community is "devastated."

Thirteen of the wounded were Italian citizens, and another six Italians are unaccounted for, Italy's ambassador to Switzerland, Gian Lorenzo Cornado, told state-run RAI television.

Beatrice Pilloud, Valais Canton attorney general, said it was too early to determine the cause of the fire. Experts have not yet been able to go inside the wreckage.

"At no moment is there a question of any kind of attack," Pilloud said.

She later said the number of people who were in the bar is "currently totally unknown," adding that its maximum capacity will be part of the investigation.

"For the time being, we don't have any suspect," she added, when asked if anyone had been arrested over the fire. "An investigation has been opened, not against anyone, but to illuminate the circumstances of this dramatic fire."

Gisler said the priority until further notice would be identifying the victims, and added that "this work will have to take several days."

An evening of celebration turns tragic

Axel Clavier, a 16-year-old from Paris who survived the blaze, described "total chaos" inside the bar. One of his friends died and "two or three" were missing, he told The Associated Press.

He said he hadn't seen the fire start, but did see waitresses arrive with Champagne bottles with sparklers, he said.

Clavier said he felt like he was suffocating and initially hid behind a table, then ran upstairs and tried to use a table to break a Plexiglas window. It fell out of its casing, allowing him to escape.

He lost his jacket, shoes, phone and bank card while fleeing, but "I am still alive and it's just stuff."

"I'm still in shock," he added.

Two women told French broadcaster BFMTV they were inside when they saw a male bartender lifting a female bartender on his shoulders as she held a lit candle in a bottle. The flames spread, collapsing the wooden ceiling, they told the broadcaster.

One of the women described a crowd surge as people frantically tried to escape from a basement nightclub up a narrow flight of stairs and through a narrow door.

Another witness speaking to BFMTV described people smashing windows to escape the blaze, some gravely injured, and panicked parents rushing to the scene in cars to see whether their children were trapped inside. The young man said he saw about 20 people scrambling to get out of the smoke and flames and likened what he saw to a horror movie as he watched from across the street.

One of the people unaccounted for was an Italian, Giovanni Tamburi, whose mother Carla Masielli issued an appeal for any news about her son and asked the media to show his photo in hopes of identifying him, according to RAI.

"We have called all the hospitals but they don't give me any news. We don't know if he's among the dead. We don't know if he's among the missing," she wailed. "They don't tell us anything!"

The injured were so numerous that the intensive care unit and operating theater at the regional hospital quickly hit full capacity, said Mathias Reynard, head of the regional government of the Valais Canton.

"This evening should have been a moment of celebration and coming together, but it turned into a nightmare," said Reynard.

Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani was planning to go to the site on Friday given the significant number of Italians involved.

Three of the wounded were being transported from the Sion hospital in Switzerland to Milan's Niguarda, the Italian civil protection agency said.

Resort town sits in the heart of the Alps

In a region busy with tourists skiing on the slopes, the authorities have called on the local population to show caution in the coming days to avoid any accidents that could require medical resources that are already overwhelmed.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 02, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 212 ~ 38 of 46

With high-altitude ski runs rising around 3,000 meters (nearly 9,850 feet) in the heart of the Valais region's snowy peaks and pine forests, Crans-Montana is one of the top venues on the World Cup circuit. The resort will host the best men's and women's downhill racers, including Lindsey Vonn, for their final events before the Milan-Cortina Olympics in February. The town's Crans-sur-Sierre golf club stages the European Masters each August on a picturesque course.

The Swiss blaze on Thursday came 25 years after an inferno in the Dutch fishing town of Volendam on New Year's Eve, which killed 14 people and injured more than 200 as they celebrated in a cafe.

Swiss President Guy Parmelin, speaking on his first day in office, said many emergency staff had been "confronted by scenes of indescribable violence and distress."

"This Thursday must be the time of prayer, unity and dignity," he said. "Switzerland is a strong country not because it is sheltered from drama, but because it knows how to face them with courage and a spirit of mutual help."

Trump delays increased tariffs on upholstered furniture, kitchen cabinets and vanities for a year

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump signed a New Year's Eve proclamation delaying increased tariffs on upholstered furniture, kitchen cabinets and vanities for a year, citing ongoing trade talks.

Trump's order signed Wednesday keeps in place a 25% tariff he imposed in September on those goods, but delays for another year a 30% tariff on upholstered furniture and 50% tariff on kitchen cabinets and vanities.

The increases, which were set to take effect Jan. 1, come as the Republican president instituted a broad swath of taxes on imported goods to address trade imbalances and other issues.

The president has said the tariffs on furniture are needed to "bolster American industry and protect national security."

The delay is the latest in the roller coaster of Trump's tariff wars since he returned to office last year, with the president announcing levies at times without warning and then delaying or pulling back from them just as abruptly.

The Trump administration on Wednesday also signaled it may back away from a steep tariff proposed on Italian pasta that would have put the rate at 107%. The U.S. had threatened to add a heavy tariff on Italian pasta makers after the U.S. Commerce Department launched what it said was a routine antidumping review based on allegations that the pasta makers sold product into the US at below-market prices and undercut local competitors.

A final decision on the sanctions was scheduled for Jan. 2, with the option of extending it.

The Commerce Department said Wednesday that based on a new review, the rates would be lowered to between 2.26% and 13.89% for the pasta makers because they had addressed many of the department's concerns. A final decision is now set for March 12.

Italian farm lobby Coldiretti and another food industry association, Filiera Italia, welcomed the development. The two lobby groups had strongly objected to the original tariffs and urged the Italian government to intervene.

The two associations said the original proposed tariffs would have doubled the cost of a plate of pasta for American families, "opening the door to Italian-sounding products and penalizing the authentic quality of Made in Italy."

They reported that in 2024, Italian pasta exports to the U.S. amounted to €671 million (\$787 million).

"Coldiretti and Filiera Italia will continue to defend our premium pasta exported to the U.S. market, which we have also supported with a strong campaign in the international media," the associations said in a statement.

Young Palestinian boy drowns in muddy water flooding his Gaza tent camp, UN says

By JULIA FRANKEL and TOQA EZZIDIN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — The U.N. said Thursday that a Palestinian boy in the Gaza Strip drowned in floods that engulfed his tent camp, with videos showing rescuers trying to pry his body out of muddy waters by pulling him by the ankle. It was the latest sign of the miseries that winter is inflicting on the territory's population, with many left homeless by the devastation from two years of war.

Health officials also reported the death of another 9 year-old boy in Gaza Thursday, but the circumstances were not clear.

Meanwhile, in the West Bank, Israeli forces carried out a sweep of arrests, seizing around 50 Palestinians, many from their homes, a Palestinian group representing prisoners said.

As 2026 begins, the shaky 12-week-old ceasefire between Israel and Hamas has largely ended large-scale Israeli bombardment of Gaza. But Palestinians are still being killed almost daily by Israeli fire, and the humanitarian crisis shows no signs of abating. At least three Israeli soldiers have died in Gaza since the ceasefire came down, killed by militant attacks or explosive detonations.

Young boy drowned from flooding

UNICEF said Thursday that 7-year-old Ata Mai had drowned Saturday in severe flooding that engulfed his tent camp in Gaza City. Mai's was the latest child death reported in Gaza as storms, cold weather and flooding worsen already brutal living conditions. Almost the entire population of more than 2 million people have lost their homes, and most are living in squalid tent camps with little protection from the weather.

UNICEF said Mai had been living with his younger siblings and family in a camp of around 40 tents. They lost their mother earlier in the war.

Video from Civil Defense teams, shown on Al Jazeera, showed rescue workers trying to get Mai's body out of what appeared to be a pit filled with muddy water surrounded by wreckage of bombed buildings. The men waded into the water, pulling at the boy's ankle, the only part of his body visible. Later, the body is shown wrapped in a muddy cloth being loaded into an ambulance.

Over past weeks, cold winter rains have repeatedly lashed the sprawling tent cities, causing flooding, turning Gaza's dirt roads into mud and causing buildings damaged in Israeli bombardment to collapse. UNICEF says at least six children, including Mai, have now died of weather-related causes, including a 4-year-old who died in a building collapse.

The Gaza Ministry of Health says three children have died of hypothermia.

"Teams visiting displacement camps reported appalling conditions that no child should endure, with many tents blown away or collapsing entirely," said Edouard Beigbeder, regional director for UNICEF's Middle East and North Africa division.

West Bank arrest raid

The Palestinian Prisoner's Society said Israeli troops had arrested at least 50 Palestinians across the West Bank and interrogated many of them overnight. Most of the arrests occurred in the Ramallah area, said the group, which is an official body within the Palestinian Authority.

"These operations were accompanied by widespread raids, abuse and assault against detainees and their families, in addition to extensive acts of vandalism and destruction inside citizens' homes," the group alleged.

Israel's military did not immediately comment on the raid.

The society says that Israel has arrested 7,000 Palestinians in the West Bank and Jerusalem this year, and 21,000 since the war began Oct. 7, 2023. The number arrested from Gaza is not made public by Israel.

Violence in the West Bank has surged during the war in Gaza, with the Israeli military carrying out large-scale operations targeting militants that have killed hundreds of Palestinians and displaced tens of thousands. There has also been a rise in Israeli settler violence and Palestinian attacks on Israelis.

Boy in Gaza dies

A nine-year-old boy, Youssef Shandaghi, died in Jabaliya in northern Gaza, not far from the so-called

"Yellow Line," the ceasefire demarcation between the more than half of the Gaza Strip still held by the Israeli military and the rest of the territory, where most of the population lives.

Two officials from Gaza's Shifa Hospital, Director Mohammed Abu Selmiya and Managing Director Rami Mhanna, said the boy was killed by Israeli gunfire coming from across the Yellow Line. Abu Selmiya cited the report from the doctor who received Shandaghi's body. Israel's military said it had no knowledge of the incident.

But an uncle of the boy said he was killed by unexploded ordnance he had come across while playing. It was not immediately possible to reconcile the conflicting accounts.

Israeli troops almost daily open fire on Palestinians who come too close to the Yellow Line, often killing or wounding some, according to medical personnel and witnesses. The Israeli military says it fires warning shots if someone crosses the line and fires at anyone judged to be posing a threat to troops. It has acknowledged some civilians have been killed, including young children.

Since the ceasefire began, 416 Palestinians have been killed and 1,142 wounded in Gaza, according to the Health Ministry. The overall Palestinian death toll from the war is at least 71,271. The ministry, which does not distinguish between militants and civilians in its count, is staffed by medical professionals and maintains detailed records viewed as generally reliable by the international community.

Federal employees file complaint against Trump administration's ban on gender-affirming care

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration is facing a new legal complaint from a group of government employees who are affected by a new policy going into effect Thursday that eliminates coverage for gender-affirming care in federal health insurance programs.

The complaint, filed Thursday on the employees' behalf by the Human Rights Campaign, is in response to an August announcement from the Office of Personnel Management that it would no longer cover "chemical and surgical modification of an individual's sex traits through medical interventions" in health insurance programs for federal employees and U.S. Postal Service workers.

The complaint argues that denying coverage of gender-affirming care is sex-based discrimination and asks the personnel office to rescind the policy.

"This policy is not about cost or care — it is about driving transgender people and people with transgender spouses, children, and dependents out of the federal workforce," Human Rights Campaign Foundation President Kelley Robinson said in a statement announcing the move.

The complaint, filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, includes testimonies from four current federal workers at the State Department, Health and Human Services and the Postal Service who would be directly affected by the elimination of coverage.

For instance, the Postal Service employee has a daughter whose doctors recommended that she get puberty blockers and potentially hormone replacement therapy for her diagnosed gender dysphoria, which would not be covered under the new OPM policy, according to the complaint.

The complaint notes that the workers are making the claim on behalf of themselves and a "class of similarly situated federal employees."

The Trump administration has taken other steps to restrict care for transgender Americans, particularly minors. In December, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services released proposals that would block gender-affirming care to minors, including a policy that would bar Medicare and Medicaid dollars to hospitals that provide such care to children.

Senior Trump officials, such as Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., call gender-affirming care "malpractice" for minors. But such restrictions go against recommendations from major medical groups such as the American Medical Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Russia says Ukrainian drone strike kills 24 in occupied Ukraine as tensions grow amid peace talks

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A Ukrainian drone strike killed 24 people and wounded at least 50 more as they celebrated the New Year in a Russian-occupied village in Ukraine's Kherson region, Russian officials said Thursday, as tensions between the two nations continue to spike despite diplomats hailing productive peace talks.

Three drones struck a cafe and hotel in the resort town of Khorly on the Black Sea coast, the region's Moscow-installed leader Vladimir Saldo said in a statement on Telegram. He said that one of the drones carried an incendiary mixture, sparking a blaze.

Ukrainian officials did not immediately comment on the claim of a strike. The attack could not be independently verified by The Associated Press.

The attack was condemned by a number of Russian officials. Valentina Matviyenko, the chair of Russia's upper house of parliament, the Federation Council, said that the strike "strengthened" Russia's resolve to quickly achieve its goals in its almost four-year invasion of Ukraine.

The strike "once again demonstrates the validity of our initial demands," Matviyenko said.

The statement follows claims from Moscow that Ukraine launched a long-range drone attack against one of Russian President Vladimir Putin's official residences in northwestern Russia on Tuesday. Kyiv has denounced the claims as a "lie."

Russia's Ministry of Defense said Thursday that its specialists had accessed the navigation system in one of the drones it claimed was used in the attack and used its data to confirm that Putin's residence was the drone's final destination. The claim could not be verified as the ministry did not share evidence on the findings, but officials said that it would transfer the data to U.S. officials "through established channels."

On Wednesday, Russia's Defense Ministry also released a video on Wednesday of a downed drone it said was involved in the attack.

The nighttime clip showed a man in camouflage, a helmet and a Kevlar vest standing near a damaged drone lying in snow. The man, his face covered, talks about the drone. Neither the man nor the Defense Ministry provided any location or date and neither the video nor its claims could be independently verified.

Kyiv has called the allegations of an attack on Putin's residence a ruse to derail ongoing peace negotiations, which have ramped up in recent weeks on both sides of the Atlantic.

In his New Year's address, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that a peace deal was "90% ready" but warned that the remaining 10%, believed to include key sticking points such as territory, would "determine the fate of peace, the fate of Ukraine and Europe, how people will live."

Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff said Wednesday that he, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Trump's son-in-law and adviser Jared Kushner had a "productive call" with the national security advisers of Britain, France, Germany and Ukraine "to discuss advancing the next steps in the European peace process."

"We focused on how to move the discussions forward in a practical way on behalf of (Trump's) peace process, including strengthening security guarantees and developing effective deconfliction mechanisms to help end the war and ensure it does not restart," Witkoff said in a post on X.

Lead Ukrainian negotiator Rustem Umerov also reaffirmed that European and Ukrainian officials plan to meet Saturday, while Zelenskyy is due to hold talks next week with European leaders.

In the diplomatic sphere, Kyiv has also continued to push the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to take action against Russia for alleged attacks on electricity infrastructure deemed "critical for nuclear safety and security" at Ukraine's nuclear power stations.

The IAEA on Tuesday published a Note Verbale sent by Kyiv to the agency, saying that a Russian drone and missile attack on Dec. 23 had caused certain Ukrainian nuclear power plants to lose a "significant part of their off-site power connections."

Elsewhere in Ukraine, Russia attacked the Odesa region overnight, targeting civilian infrastructure in several waves of drone attacks, according to regional head Oleh Kiper.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 02, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 212 ~ 42 of 46

In a post on Telegram, Kiper said a two-story residential building was damaged and that a drone hit an apartment on the 17th floor of a high-rise building without detonating. There were no casualties reported.

In its daily report, Ukraine's air force said air defense forces had downed or suppressed 176 of 205 drones targeting the country overnight. It said hits by 24 strike drones were recorded at 15 locations and the attack was still ongoing.

Cities around the world welcome 2026 with thunderous fireworks and heightened security

By TED SHAFFREY and HALLIE GOLDEN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — From Sydney to Paris to New York City, crowds rang in the new year with exuberant celebrations filled with thunderous fireworks or light shows, while others took a more subdued approach.

As the clock struck midnight in Japan, temple bells rang and some climbed mountains to see the year's first sunrise, while a light show with somersaulting jet skis twinkled in Dubai. The countdown to 2026 was projected onto the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, while in Moscow people celebrated in the snow.

In New York City's Times Square, revelers braved frigid temperatures to celebrate with the famed New Year's Eve ball drop.

In Rio de Janeiro, crowds packed more than 4 kilometers (2 1/2 miles) of the city's Copacabana Beach for concerts and a 12-minute fireworks show, despite high tides and large waves that rocked barges carrying fireworks.

Other events were more subdued. Hong Kong held limited celebrations following a recent fire at an apartment complex that killed 161 people. Australia saluted the new year with defiance less than a month after its worst mass shooting in almost 30 years.

There was disaster in the Swiss resort town of Crans-Montana, where a fire at a bar in the early hours of the new year was presumed to have killed dozens of people.

Ball drop in New York City

Crowds bundled up against the chilly temperatures cheered and embraced as the New Year's Eve ball covered in more than 5,000 crystals descended down a pole and confetti fell in Times Square.

Revelers wearing tall celebratory hats and light-up necklaces had waited for hours to see the 12,350-pound (5,602-kilograms) ball drop. The festivities also included Tones and I performing John Lennon's "Imagine" just before midnight.

The television hosts interviewed visitors who were attending from such places as Florida, Mexico and South Korea, and read people's wishes for the new year. A sixth grader from Dallas, Texas, told one of the hosts that he wants to get good grades in 2026 and have a better year.

Police in the city had planned additional anti-terrorism measures at the ball drop, with "mobile screening teams." It was not in response to a specific threat, according to NYPD Commissioner Jessica Tisch.

Moments after the ball dropped it rose again, sparkling in red, white and blue, to mark the country's upcoming 250th birthday.

A few miles away in a decommissioned subway station, Zohran Mamdani was sworn in as mayor during a private event just after midnight Thursday.

More security in Sydney

A heavy police presence monitored crowds watching fireworks in Sydney. Many officers openly carried rapid-fire rifles, a first for the event, after two gunmen targeted a Hannukah celebration at Bondi Beach on Dec. 14, killing 15.

An hour before midnight, victims were commemorated with a minute of silence, and the crowd was invited to show solidarity with Australia's Jewish community.

New South Wales Premier Chris Minns had urged residents not to stay away from festivities, saying extremists would interpret smaller crowds as a victory: "We have to show defiance in the face of this terrible crime."

Shadows of war and disasters

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 02, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 212 ~ 43 of 46

Indonesia scaled back festivities in solidarity with communities devastated by floods and landslides in parts of Sumatra a month ago that killed over 1,100. Fireworks on the tourist island of Bali were replaced with traditional dances.

Hong Kong rang in 2026 without fireworks over Victoria Harbor after the massive fire in November. Facades of landmarks were turned into countdown clocks and a light show at midnight.

And in Gaza, Palestinians said they hope the new year brings an end to the conflict between Israel and Hamas.

"The war humiliated us," said Mirvat Abed Al-Aal, displaced from the southern city of Rafah.

Around Europe

Pope Leo XIV closed out the year with a plea for the city of Rome to welcome foreigners and the fragile. Fireworks erupted over European landmarks, from the Colosseum in Rome to the London Eye.

In Paris, revelers converged around the glittering Champs-Élysées avenue. Taissiya Girda, a 27-year-old tourist from Kazakhstan, expressed hope for a calmer 2026.

"I would like to see happy people around me, no war anywhere," she said. "Russia, Ukraine, Palestine, Israel, I want everybody to be happy and in peace."

In Scotland, where New Year's is known as Hogmanay, First Minister John Swinney urged Scots to follow the message of "Auld Lang Syne" by national poet Robert Burns and show small acts of kindness.

Greece and Cyprus turned down the volume, replacing traditional fireworks with low-noise pyrotechnics in capitals. Officials said the change was intended to make celebrations more welcoming for children and pets.

In Crans-Montana, Switzerland, dozens of people are feared dead and about 100 others injured, most seriously, after a fire swept through a bar in the Alpine ski resort during a New Year's celebration less than two hours after midnight, police said.

Miami beats defending national champ Ohio State 24-14 in the CFP quarterfinal at Cotton Bowl

By STEPHEN HAWKINS AP Sports Writer

ARLINGTON, Texas (AP) — Keionte Scott peeked over at the Miami sideline to see the reaction of his teammates as he sprinted 72 yards untouched for a touchdown returning an interception against defending national champion Ohio State.

They certainly were excited, as were a Pro Football Hall of Fame receiver and a former coach who won national championships with the Hurricanes.

Scott picked off a screen pass by Heisman Trophy finalist Julian Sayin, Carson Beck threw a touchdown pass and 10th-ranked Miami shocked the Buckeyes 24-14 on Wednesday night at the Cotton Bowl in the first College Football Playoff quarterfinal.

"I was full of emotions. ... That was a pretty cool moment," said Scott, who has TD returns on both of his interceptions this season. "Just having fun. ... That's what this team relies on, man, just going out there playing free and just having fun."

The Hurricanes (12-2, CFP No. 10 seed) have won two playoff games to get into football's final four after needing an at-large berth to make the 12-team field, after not even playing in the Atlantic Coast Conference championship game. One more win and they will get to play for a national championship in their home stadium.

Next for Miami in coach Mario Cristobal's fourth season is a CFP semifinal at the Fiesta Bowl on Jan. 8 against No. 3 seed Georgia or No. 6 seed Ole Miss, the SEC teams in the Sugar Bowl on Thursday night.

There hasn't been a national title for "The U" since 2001, which was their fifth; Cristobal was a standout offensive tackle for the Hurricanes in their 1989 and 1991 championship seasons. The Hurricanes were denied a repeat championship in 2002 with a double-overtime loss in the Fiesta Bowl to Ohio State, the only other time the teams met in a bowl — and the last Miami played in that game.

"It is 100% not about me. I'm part of their team, I'm a part of that family," Cristobal said. "It is my ob-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 02, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 212 ~ 44 of 46

ligation as a former Miami Hurricane player and all the things that Miami did for my brother and I to do my best to try to provide these guys with even better opportunities so they can fulfill all the great things they are destined for.”

Before receiver Michael Irvin and coach Jimmy Johnson were Super Bowl champions with the Dallas Cowboys, they were part of the Hurricanes’ 1987 national championship. Irvin excitedly ran down the sideline while Scott was scoring for a 14-0 lead, and Johnson was nearby when acknowledged by Cristobal during the on-field trophy presentation.

Now it’s third-ranked Ohio State (12-2, CFP No. 2 seed), which went into the game as a 9 1/2-point favorite according to BetMGM Sportsbook, that can’t win back-to-back national titles for the first time in program history.

The Buckeyes hadn’t played since a 13-10 loss to now-No. 1 Indiana in a Big Ten championship game matchup of undefeated teams on Dec. 6. They still got a first-round bye, then lost just like all four teams that went directly to the quarterfinal round in the inaugural 12-team playoff last season.

“We worked really hard during the last three weeks leading up to this game to come out of the gates and win the first quarter, win the first half, be ready to go,” Buckeyes coach Ryan Day said. “I think the guys bought into it. But at the end of the day, we didn’t get it done.”

Scott’s interception return came only 1:42 after Beck’s quick pass to Mark Fletcher Jr. out of the backfield for a 9-yard score.

Beck, who was part of Georgia’s national titles in 2021 and 2022 when Stetson Bennett was the starter, completed 19 of 26 passes for 138 yards.

When asked what stood out to him about these Hurricanes, Beck said, “Just the way that this team has responded to adversity. We knew coming into today that it wasn’t going to be easy.”

The TD throw to Fletcher, who also ran 19 times for 90 yards and was the game’s offensive MVP, was the seventh of 13 consecutive completions for Beck. That set a record in the Cotton Bowl, which was played for the 90th time.

Sayin, a freshman backup behind Will Howard for Ohio State’s championship run last season, was 22 of 35 for 287 yards with two interceptions and a TD to Jeremiah Smith. Sayin was sacked five times.

AP All-America receiver Smith, the Miami native, caught seven of those passes for 157 yards, including a 14-yard TD on a fourth down in the fourth quarter.

Carter Davis added a 49-yard field goal in the third quarter and ChaMar Brown ran for a 5-yard TD in the game’s final minute for the Hurricanes, whose 24 points were the most Ohio State gave up this season.

The takeaway

Miami: The Hurricanes have won six games in a row since an overtime loss Nov. 1 at SMU, less than 25 miles from AT&T Stadium, where the Cotton Bowl is played. They also made their CFP debut in the Lone Star State, winning 10-3 at No. 7 Texas A&M in the first round on Dec. 20.

Ohio State: All-America safety Caleb Downs, who started in the CFP for the third season in a row, became the first player to force two fumbles in a CFP game. ... The Buckeyes had gone four consecutive quarters — the equivalent of a full game — until Bo Jackson’s 1-yard TD run to cap its opening drive of the second half.

Up next

Miami waits to see who it will play in the Fiesta Bowl. Ohio State is scheduled to open the the 2026 season at home against Ball State on Sept. 5.

Health subsidies expire, launching millions of Americans into 2026 with steep insurance hikes

By ALI SWENSON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Enhanced tax credits that have helped reduce the cost of health insurance for the vast majority of Affordable Care Act enrollees expired overnight, cementing higher health costs for millions of Americans at the start of the new year.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 02, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 212 ~ 45 of 46

Democrats forced a 43-day government shutdown over the issue. Moderate Republicans called for a solution to save their 2026 political aspirations. President Donald Trump floated a way out, only to back off after conservative backlash.

In the end, no one's efforts were enough to save the subsidies before their expiration date. A House vote expected in January could offer another chance, but success is far from guaranteed.

The change affects a diverse cross-section of Americans who don't get their health insurance from an employer and don't qualify for Medicaid or Medicare — a group that includes many self-employed workers, small business owners, farmers and ranchers.

It comes at the start of a high-stakes midterm election year, with affordability — including the cost of health care — topping the list of voters' concerns.

"It really bothers me that the middle class has moved from a squeeze to a full suffocation, and they continue to just pile on and leave it up to us," said 37-year-old single mom Katelin Provost, whose health care costs are set to jump. "I'm incredibly disappointed that there hasn't been more action."

Some families grapple with insurance costs that are doubling, tripling or more

The expired subsidies were first given to Affordable Care Act enrollees in 2021 as a temporary measure to help Americans get through the COVID-19 pandemic. Democrats in power at the time extended them, moving the expiration date to the start of 2026.

With the expanded subsidies, some lower-income enrollees received health care with no premiums, and high earners paid no more than 8.5% of their income. Eligibility for middle-class earners was also expanded.

On average, the more than 20 million subsidized enrollees in the Affordable Care Act program are seeing their premium costs rise by 114% in 2026, according to an analysis by the health care research nonprofit KFF.

Those surging prices come alongside an overall increase in health costs in the U.S., which are further driving up out-of-pocket costs in many plans.

Some enrollees, like Salt Lake City freelance filmmaker and adjunct professor Stan Clawson, have absorbed the extra expense. Clawson said he was paying just under \$350 a month for his premiums last year, a number that will jump to nearly \$500 a month this year. It's a strain for the 49-year-old but one he's willing to take on because he needs health insurance as someone who lives with paralysis from a spinal cord injury.

Others, like Provost, are dealing with steeper hikes. The social worker's monthly premium payment is increasing from \$85 a month to nearly \$750.

Effects on enrollment remain to be seen

Health analysts have predicted the expiration of the subsidies will drive many of the 24 million total Affordable Care Act enrollees — especially younger and healthier Americans — to forgo health insurance coverage altogether.

Over time, that could make the program more expensive for the older, sicker population that remains.

An analysis conducted last September by the Urban Institute and Commonwealth Fund projected the higher premiums from expiring subsidies would prompt some 4.8 million Americans to drop coverage in 2026.

But with the window to select and change plans still ongoing until Jan. 15 in most states, the final effect on enrollment is yet to be determined.

Provost, the single mother, said she is holding out hope that Congress finds a way to revive the subsidies early in the year — but if not, she'll drop herself off the insurance and keep it only for her four-year-old daughter. She can't afford to pay for both of their coverage at the current price.

Months of discussion, but no relief yet

Last year, after Republicans cut more than \$1 trillion in federal health care and food assistance with Trump's big tax and spending cuts bill, Democrats repeatedly called for the subsidies to be extended. But while some Republicans in power acknowledged the issue needed to be addressed, they refused to put it to a vote until late in the year.

In December, the Senate rejected two partisan health care bills — a Democratic pitch to extend the

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 02, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 212 ~ 46 of 46

subsidies for three more years and a Republican alternative that would instead provide Americans with health savings accounts.

In the House, four centrist Republicans broke with GOP leadership and joined forces with Democrats to force a vote that could come as soon as January on a three-year extension of the tax credits. But with the Senate already having rejected such a plan, it's unclear whether it could get enough momentum to pass.

Meanwhile, Americans whose premiums are skyrocketing say lawmakers don't understand what it's really like to struggle to get by as health costs ratchet up with no relief.

Many say they want the subsidies restored alongside broader reforms to make health care more affordable for all Americans.

"Both Republicans and Democrats have been saying for years, oh, we need to fix it. Then do it," said Chad Bruns, a 58-year-old Affordable Care Act enrollee in Wisconsin. "They need to get to the root cause, and no political party ever does that."

Today in History: January 2, Armed militia occupies Malheur refuge in Oregon

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Friday, Jan. 2, the second day of 2026. There are 363 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Jan. 2, 2016, a heavily armed group led by brothers Ammon and Ryan Bundy seized the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon, beginning a 41-day standoff to protest the imprisonment of two ranchers convicted of setting fires on public land and to demand the federal government turn over public lands to local control.

Also on this date:

In 1890, President Benjamin Harrison appointed Alice Sanger as the first female White House staffer at a time of a growing movement for women's rights.

In 1942, the Philippine capital of Manila was captured by Japanese forces during World War II.

In 1959, the Soviet spacecraft Luna 1 launched, becoming the first spacecraft to escape Earth's gravity.

In 1971, 66 people were killed in a crush of spectators leaving a soccer match at Ibrox Stadium in Glasgow, Scotland.

In 1974, President Richard Nixon signed legislation requiring states to limit highway speeds to 55 mph as a way of conserving gasoline during an OPEC oil embargo. (The 55 mph limit was effectively phased out in 1987; federal speed limits were abolished in 1995.)

In 1981, British serial killer Peter Sutcliffe, aka the "Yorkshire Ripper," was captured after a series of killings bred fear across northwest England between 1975 and 1980. Subsequently convicted and sentenced to life in prison for the killings of 13 women, he died in 2020 at the age of 74.

In 2023, Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin suffered cardiac arrest after making a tackle during the first quarter of an NFL game against the Cincinnati Bengals, requiring life-saving treatment on the field. The game was canceled; Hamlin would recover fully and return to play the following season.

In 2024, Harvard University President Claudine Gay resigned amid plagiarism accusations and a backlash over her congressional testimony about antisemitism on campus. She was the Ivy League institution's first Black president.

Today's Birthdays: Filmmaker Todd Haynes is 65. Baseball Hall of Famer Edgar Martínez is 63. Actor-singer Tia Carrere is 59. Actor Cuba Gooding Jr. is 58. Model Christy Turlington is 57. Actor Taye Diggs is 55. Actor Renée Elise Goldsberry is 55. Actor-comedian Dax Shepard is 51. Actor Kate Bosworth is 43. Musician Trombone Shorty is 40. Singer-rapper Bryson Tiller is 33.