

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 1 of 51

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [4- NFL Scores & Highlights — Jan. 4, 2026](#)
- [5- 2026 NFL Playoff Bracket](#)
- [6- Coming up this week on GDILIVE.COM](#)
- [7- GDI Fitness Center Ad](#)
- [8- Weekly Vikings Roundup](#)
- [9- Prairie Doc: "Beyond Memory Loss: The Human Side of Dementia"](#)
- [10- This Week in Tiger Sports](#)
- [11- SD SearchLight: Refugee arrivals in SD decline after last year's spike, expected to stay low](#)
- [12- Weather Pages](#)
- [16- Daily Devotional](#)
- [17- Subscription Form](#)
- [18- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [19- News from the Associated Press](#)

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.

Groton Daily Independent
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Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 2 of 51

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.

US Captures Maduro

US special forces conducted an early morning raid in the Venezuelan capital of Caracas Saturday, striking military facilities and capturing President Nicolás Maduro and his wife. The pair was transported to New York City to face federal drug- and terrorism-related charges, with their first court appearance expected this morning.

President Donald Trump suggested the US would oversee the country until open elections could be held. As of this writing, reports say Maduro allies led by Vice President Delcy Rodríguez remain in charge but have been in contact with US officials. Rodríguez condemned the strike and called for Maduro's release.

The operation began around 1:30 am local time, with roughly 150 aircraft providing air cover while extraction teams entered Maduro's compound, intervening before the Maduros could enter a safe room. The effort took about two hours, with no Americans killed.

Maduro assumed power in 2013 following the death of Hugo Chávez. He was indicted by the US in 2020—which eventually offered \$50M for aiding in his arrest—on narcoterrorism charges spanning 25 years. Maduro claimed victory in the 2024 election despite evidence that he lost by a wide margin.

The administration framed the operation as a federal law enforcement action that did not require congressional approval, while some critics argued it violated international law previously ratified by the US. Legal precedent suggests the circumstances of the capture won't preclude prosecution.

Earliest Human Ancestor?

Fresh analysis of a fossil discovered in the early 2000s appears to strengthen the claim that the earliest known human ancestor walked upright 7 million years ago.

Paleontologists discovered the ape-like species, *Sahelanthropus tchadensis*, in Chad's Djurab desert in 2001. Early research focused on the fossil's skull, with the lead researcher suggesting the creature walked upright based on how it carried its head. Later analysis—of the fossil's ulnae (forearms) and femur (thigh bone)—left unresolved the question of whether the species walked on two legs, and could therefore be classified as a human ancestor.

Now, a detailed 3D analysis of the femur and thigh bone confirmed two elements pointing to bipedalism and revealed a third: the presence of a femoral tubercle, which has so far been identified only in hominins.

NYC Transit Hike

New York City's subway and bus fares rose to \$3 yesterday, up 10 cents for most rides. The planned hike, along with increases in other Metropolitan Transportation Authority services, is expected to raise \$350M annually. It goes into effect days after Mayor Zohran Mamdani (D) took office after running in part on a pledge to make NYC buses free.

New York City's transit system is run by the MTA, a state agency with a roughly \$21B annual operating budget. To make buses free, Mamdani will need the support of MTA leadership, which approved the latest hike in September. Mamdani has proposed making up lost money to the state—bus fare is expected to raise over \$1B annually by 2028—in part by raising the corporate tax rate to 11.5%, the same rate as New Jersey (the highest in the country).

The NYC subway system carries over 4 million passengers daily; the bus carries over 1 million people daily. An estimated one in five New Yorkers struggles to pay for public transit, according to findings from an antipoverty group.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 3 of 51

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

"Avatar: Fire and Ash" crosses \$1B at the global box office after 18 days—director James Cameron's fourth movie to reach the milestone.

NFL playoff bracket set with first matchup kicking off Saturday, Jan. 10 at 4:30 pm ET; see bracket and schedule.

Cleveland Browns defensive end Myles Garrett gets sack No. 23, breaking the NFL's single-season record.

"One Battle After Another" sweeps top prizes at the Critics Choice Awards, earning best picture, best director, and best adapted screenplay awards.

Science & Technology

CES 2026, the largest annual consumer electronics show, gets underway in Las Vegas with major keynotes tonight and the exhibition opening tomorrow; see updates and expected announcements.

Anthropologists uncover earliest known evidence of intentional cremation in ancient Africa, dating to roughly 9,500 years ago in northern Malawi.

Scientists map genomes of human betaherpesviruses for first time; discovered in the 1980s, analysis reveals the viruses have been evolving with humans since at least the Iron Age.

Business & Markets

US stock markets end the first trading day of the new year mixed (S&P 500 +0.2%, Dow +0.7%, Nasdaq 0.0%); analysts project around 11% growth for the S&P 500 in 2026.

President Donald Trump says US oil companies will be involved in expanding Venezuela's oil infrastructure following capture of President Nicolás Maduro; oil prices stable, remain at five-year lows at \$58 per barrel.

Saks Global Enterprises CEO Marc Metrick steps down as the company faces bankruptcy; Saks struggled with debt assumed during the 2024 acquisition of rival Neiman Marcus.

Politics & World Affairs

Death toll in Iranian anti-government protests rises to at least 16 people; President Donald Trump threatens to intervene if more protesters are killed.

British and French warplanes bomb an alleged underground ISIS weapons facility north of Palmyra, Syria.

North Korea test fires ballistic missiles into Sea of Japan as South Korean President Lee Jae Myung heads to Beijing to meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 4 of 51

NFL Scores & Highlights — Jan. 4, 2026

Green Bay Packers 3, Minnesota Vikings 16

Vikings controlled the game with a strong defensive effort, limiting Green Bay's offense..

Tennessee Titans 7, Jacksonville Jaguars 41

Jaguars clinched the AFC South in dominating fashion, with a balanced attack putting up a big early lead.

Indianapolis Colts 30, Houston Texans 38

Houston sealed a playoff berth with a late field goal and opportunistic scoring in a back-and-forth affair.

Dallas Cowboys 17, New York Giants 34

The Giants finished strong, handing Dallas a loss and impacting draft position while showing improved play on both sides of the ball.

Cleveland Browns 20, Cincinnati Bengals 18

Cleveland's defense made big plays, including scoring turnovers that decided a tight AFC North battle.

New Orleans Saints 17, Atlanta Falcons 19

Atlanta pulled out a close divisional game with a late defensive stand to keep New Orleans off the board.

Miami Dolphins 10, New England Patriots 38

New England rolled with a balanced offense and swarming defense to secure a high playoff seed.

Arizona Cardinals 20, Los Angeles Rams 37

The Rams surged in the second half with explosive offense to secure a playoff spot.

Detroit Lions 19, Chicago Bears 16

A tight matchup saw Detroit hold on late with key stops, finishing strong in the NFC North.

Washington Commanders 24, Philadelphia Eagles 17

Washington finished with a statement win on the road behind a clutch fourth-quarter drive.

New York Jets 8, Buffalo Bills 35

Buffalo dominated from the start with a powerful offensive and defensive showing.

Kansas City Chiefs 12, Las Vegas Raiders 14

Raiders earned a win with a late defensive stand and timely scoring to edge the Chiefs.

Los Angeles Chargers 3, Denver Broncos 19

Denver's stout defense led the way, holding L.A. to just a field goal while controlling field position.

Baltimore Ravens 24, Pittsburgh Steelers 26

In a classic rivalry finish, Pittsburgh pulled ahead late and held off a Baltimore rally for the AFC North crown.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 5 of 51

2026 NFL Playoff Bracket — Wild Card Round

AFC Playoffs

- (1) Denver Broncos — bye (top seed)
- (2) New England Patriots vs (7) Los Angeles Chargers — Sunday, Jan. 11
- (3) Jacksonville Jaguars vs (6) Buffalo Bills — Sunday, Jan. 11
- (4) Pittsburgh Steelers vs (5) Houston Texans — Monday, Jan. 12 (Prime-time on ESPN/ABC)

NFC Playoffs

- (1) Seattle Seahawks — bye (top seed)
- (2) Chicago Bears vs (7) Green Bay Packers — Saturday, Jan. 10
- (3) Philadelphia Eagles vs (6) San Francisco 49ers — Sunday, Jan. 11
- (4) Carolina Panthers vs (5) Los Angeles Rams — Saturday, Jan. 10

Wild Card Weekend Schedule

Saturday, January 10, 2026

Los Angeles Rams at Carolina Panthers (NFC)
Green Bay Packers at Chicago Bears (NFC)

Sunday, January 11, 2026

Buffalo Bills at Jacksonville Jaguars (AFC)
San Francisco 49ers at Philadelphia Eagles (NFC)
Los Angeles Chargers at New England Patriots (AFC)

Monday, January 12, 2026

Houston Texans at Pittsburgh Steelers (AFC)

Notes: Only the Broncos and Seahawks earn first-round byes as the No. 1 seeds in their conferences.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 6 of 51



Coming Up on
GDILIVE.COM

Groton
Area
Tigers
Groton, SD

GDILIVE



A production of the
Groton Daily Independent



For more info: GDILIVE.COM



Tues., Jan. 6, 2026

Rich Bosma and Mike Imrie
Paul Kosel and Jeslyn Kosel

**Doubleheader at Warner
Girls at 6:30 p.m., Boys at 8 p.m.**



Thurs., Jan. 8, 2026

Rich Bosma and Mike Imrie
Paul Kosel and Jeslyn Kosel

**Doubleheader at Clark/Willow Lake
Girls at 6:30 p.m., Boys at 8 p.m.**



Sat., Jan. 10, 2026

Rich Bosma and
Jeslyn Kosel

**Doubleheader at Lennox
Girls at 3:30 p.m., Boys at 5 p.m.**

What can \$20 get you?



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GDI Living Fitness

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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

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 8 of 51



I would imagine that when the NFL schedule makers paired the Vikings and Packers in a week 18 matchup, they envisioned two playoff teams battling it out for the NFC North and a better postseason position. Instead, the Vikings have been eliminated for weeks, and the Packers were locked into the 7th seed whether they win or lose, which led to a lackluster game with zero stakes. The Packers sat most of their starters, treating this game almost like a preseason game. The Vikings, meanwhile, were playing for pride and to build momentum with their young QB that'll hopefully carry over into next season. The ending was never in doubt, with the Vikings taking the 16-3 win to finish the 2025 season with a 9-8 record.

The Vikings got the ball first and were moving down the field with ease – three of their first four plays resulted in a first down – but a taunting penalty on J.J. McCarthy set them back 15 yards and stalled the drive, forcing a field goal attempt to take a 3-0 lead. As bad as the penalty was, I can't blame the kid – he had a great stiff arm on a Packers' defender before lowering his shoulder and bowling over another defender on his way out of bounds.

After the solid opening drive, the game slowed down considerably, with both teams combining for seven straight punts.

Halfway through the second quarter, the Vikings put together a 14-play, 86-yard drive, but three straight incompletions from the seven-yard line led to another Will Reichard field goal. A Packers three-and-out on their next drive gave the ball back to Minnesota with almost two minutes left in the half, and nine plays later, C.J. Ham plunged into the endzone for the first touchdown of the game, making the score 13-0 heading into halftime. There are rumors that this will be Ham's last game in the NFL, so it was nice to see him get one more touchdown to cap off his impressive career.

After halftime, you could tell both teams just wanted to get out of this game with no injuries, resulting in a lot of handoffs and clock management. Unfortunately for Minnesota, quarterback J.J. McCarthy left early in the second half after reinjuring his hand. It's unclear if it was a serious injury or if they held him out the remainder of the game as a precaution, but what IS clear is that the Vikings need to bring in a veteran backup because the likelihood of McCarthy playing a full season is slim to none.

The fourth quarter was a continuation of the third, with both teams running out the clock. The Vikings managed to add another field goal to extend their lead to 16-0, and Green Bay got the ball back with four minutes left on the clock. The Packers could have let the clock run out, but this is a divisional matchup, so with one second left on the clock, they called a timeout and marched their field goal unit on the field to add three points as time expired to avoid a shutout.

J.J. McCarthy completed 14 of 23 passes for 182 yards. He didn't have a touchdown, but he also didn't throw an interception or take a sack, which is certainly an improvement. Brosmer took over after halftime and completed 7 of 8 passes for 57 yards.

Jordan Mason got the majority of the carries with Aaron Jones injured and finished with 94 yards on 14 carries. Ty Chandler got 10 carries in the game but could only manage 23 yards. Justin Jefferson had 8 catches for 101 yards, and is only the third player in NFL history to have over 1,000 yards in their first six seasons. Jalen Nailor had 3 catches for 49 yards.

Defensively, the Vikings had four sacks, eight tackles for a loss, three pass deflections, and five QB hits.

The player of the game was Dallas Turner. The 2024 first-round pick has certainly started to come into his own, and he had two sacks, two tackles for a loss, and two QB hits on Sunday. His progression this season was one of the few bright spots, and he's poised to take a leap in year three.

Looking ahead, the Vikings are out of the playoffs, so we'll be breaking down the other matchups next weekend as 14 teams try to bring home a Super Bowl victory.

“Beyond Memory Loss: The Human Side of Dementia”

First, you notice the small changes. It may be challenging to find the right word or remember the name of someone you just met. You may forget where you placed your keys when you came home from the grocery store. Overall, you feel healthy, and these instances are easily brushed off as a normal part of aging or the result of poor sleep the night before. However, over time, these instances become more frequent, and you start to miss appointments or struggle to organize your shopping list. If this sounds like you or someone you know, it is time to seek medical help to get screened for dementia.

Dementia is an umbrella term for diseases, such as Alzheimer’s, that cause abnormal brain changes. Over six million adults in the U.S. are living with dementia. There is no clearly identified cause for dementia, but risk factors include age, genetics, family history and lifestyle choices.

The cognitive decline associated with dementia may impact a person’s memory, thinking, mood, behavior and functioning. As the disease progresses, the person will need greater assistance with everyday tasks, such as balancing their checkbook, driving, preparing meals and grocery shopping, and eventually with personal care, such as dressing, bathing and toileting. Though new research has identified promising medications to treat the symptoms and slow the disease progression, there is no cure for dementia.

As the disease progresses, its effects reach beyond the individual who has received the diagnosis. The person living with dementia will require increasing levels of support, which is frequently provided by unpaid family members or friends, referred to as care partners or caregivers. These care partners dedicate significant time and financial resources to assist the person with dementia as their needs intensify. Often, they assume responsibilities around the clock and may feel isolated.

If you or someone you love is in this situation, the first step is to seek a diagnosis. Schedule an appointment with your primary care doctor to discuss your concerns. They might refer you to a specialist for further evaluation. Once diagnosed, reach out to the support services available in your community and online. Resources are available through organizations such as the Alzheimer’s Association and the Veterans Affairs, as well as state agencies such as the Department of Human Services. No one needs to face this journey alone. These organizations provide education, respite care, meal preparation, light housekeeping, personal care and support groups. Check with your state to see what resources may be available to you.

In addition to seeking support, it is important to remember that maintaining a sense of purpose and connection can make a meaningful difference for both the person living with dementia and their care partners. Engaging in familiar routines, enjoying favorite activities, and nurturing relationships with family and friends provide comfort and help preserve quality of life. Simple adaptations—like labeling cabinets, organizing daily schedules or using reminder notes—can promote independence and reduce frustration in the early stages. Open communication among loved ones, health professionals and support networks is key to adapting to changing needs. While the journey with dementia brings many challenges, focusing on strengths, celebrating small victories and accessing available resources can help foster resilience and hope for everyone involved.

Ranelle Nissen, Ph.D., OTR/L, serves as an associate dean and associate professor in the School of Health Sciences at the University of South Dakota. Dr. Nissen is a licensed occupational therapist in South Dakota and has helped families and individuals affected by dementia through both her professional work and her volunteer work with the South Dakota Alzheimer’s Association. Allison Naber, Ph.D., OTD, OTR/L, is the academic fieldwork coordinator and an associate professor in occupational therapy at the University of South Dakota. Dr. Naber is a licensed occupational therapist in Minnesota and South Dakota. She volunteers for the South Dakota Alzheimer’s Association as a support group facilitator and community educator. Follow The Prairie Doc® at www.prairiedoc.org, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Tik Tok. Prairie Doc Programming includes On Call with the Prairie Doc®, a medical Q&A show (most Thursdays at 7pm on SDPB, YouTube and streaming on Facebook), 2 podcasts, and a Radio program (on SDPB, Sundays at 6am and 1pm).



Allison Naber, Ph.D., OTD, OTR/L
Ranelle Nissen, Ph.D., OTR/L

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 10 of 51

Monday, the 5th:

- JH/JV Wrestling @ Oakes (4:30pm)

Tuesday, the 6th:

- Doubleheader @ Warner (Boys & Girls JV @ 5pm, Girls Varsity @ 6:15pm, Boys Varsity to follow)

Thursday, the 8th:

- Doubleheader @ Clark/Willow Lake (Clark - C Boys/JV Girls @ 4pm, C Girls/JV Boys @ 5pm, Girls Varsity @ 6:15pm, Boys Varsity to follow)

Friday, the 9th:

- Girls Wrestling @ Miller (4pm)

Saturday, the 10th:

- Robotics in Groton
- Girls Wrestling @ Lyman (10am)
- JV & Varsity Wrestling @ Garretson (9:30am)
- Doubleheader @ Lennox (C Boys/JV Girls @ 1pm, C Girls/JV Boys @ 2pm, Girls Varsity @ 3:30pm, Boys Varsity to follow)





SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Refugee arrivals in SD decline after last year's spike, expected to stay low

Resettlement organization leader says there hasn't been a new case in months

BY: MEGHAN O'BRIEN

Refugee resettlement fell sharply in South Dakota during the last federal fiscal year, and no refugees have arrived in the state during the past 11 months, according to the agency that manages the program.

A new report from Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota says 149 refugees resettled in the state during the 2025 fiscal year that ended in September, down from 391 in 2024. Nationally, refugee arrivals fell from 100,034 to 38,102.

Lutheran Social Services has overseen refugee resettlement in the state for the past 25 years and works alongside the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and Department of State. Rebecca Kiesow-Knudsen is the group's president and CEO.

"We work with those federal partners to provide assistance to arrivals," she said. "From the day the door to the plane opens, we are trying to work with that individual or that family to make sure that they are successful in their new community."

Lutheran Social Services helps refugees find employment, housing and education. It also provides cultural education programming, English language training and legal services.

Refugees are people who flee their country to escape war, natural disaster, or persecution.

"Those refugee populations, if you look over the course of history, are always based on where the conflicts are in the international community," Kiesow-Knudsen said. "It always shifts based on global conflict."

The president decides how many refugees the nation accepts. President Joe Biden established the admissions cap for fiscal year 2025 at 125,000 refugees.

President Donald Trump set the lowest admissions cap in U.S. history for the current fiscal year at 7,500, and said those admission will be allocated primarily to white South Africans of European descent, who are known as Afrikaners.

That's why Kiesow-Knudsen doesn't expect to see many new refugee arrivals to the state any time soon.

"If there's a case that is approved that has a connection to South Dakota, we might see an arrival," she said.

Many of the new arrivals to South Dakota between October 2024 and September 2025 are Somalian or Congolese. Millions of people from countries in central and east Africa have been displaced due to conflict, violence and environmental disasters.

Those displacement factors are just one part of how different populations come to resettle in South Dakota. The resettlement program has historically been a family reunification effort. The first piece of information the federal government looks for is family ties, according to Kiesow-Knudsen.

"They're always looking for ways that they can help people be the most successful in integrating into the country," she said. "What we know is that people are more successful if they're close in proximity to your family members."

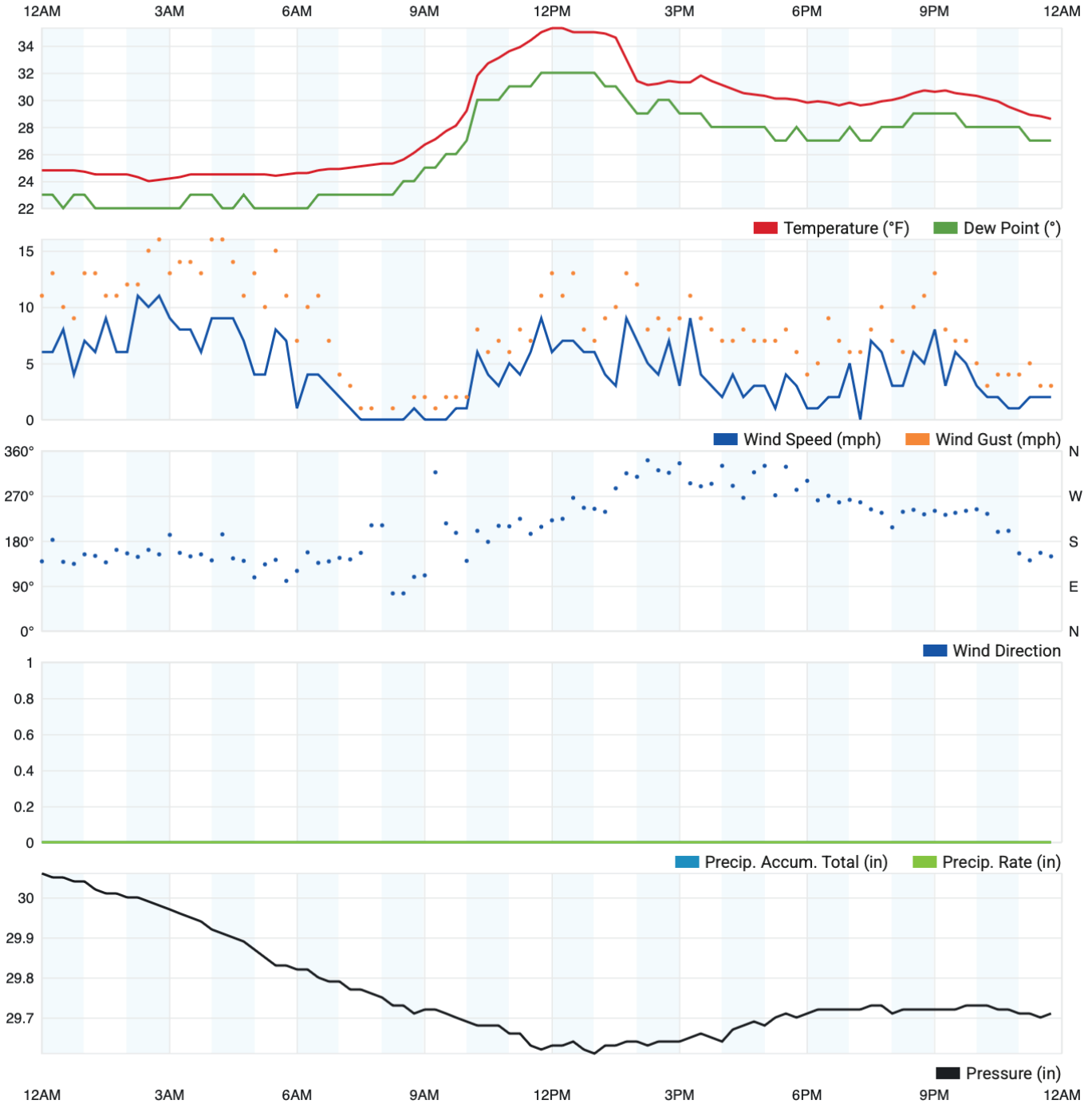
Meghan O'Brien is the audio reporter for South Dakota Searchlight where she covers the state government and its impact on South Dakotans. She's previously reported in Nebraska with a focus on health care and rural communities across the state.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 12 of 51

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

January 4, 2026



Broton Daily Independent

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 13 of 51

Today

Tonight

Tuesday

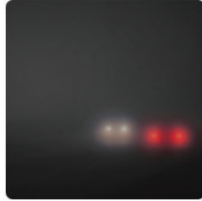
Tuesday Night

Wednesday



High: 35 °F

Areas
Freezing Fog
and Patchy
Fog then
Mostly Cloudy



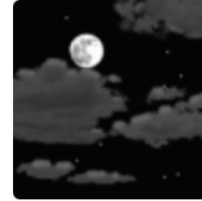
Low: 21 °F

Areas
Freezing Fog
and Areas Fog



High: 33 °F

Partly Sunny



Low: 24 °F

Partly Cloudy



High: 38 °F

Partly Sunny



Mild Temperatures Today

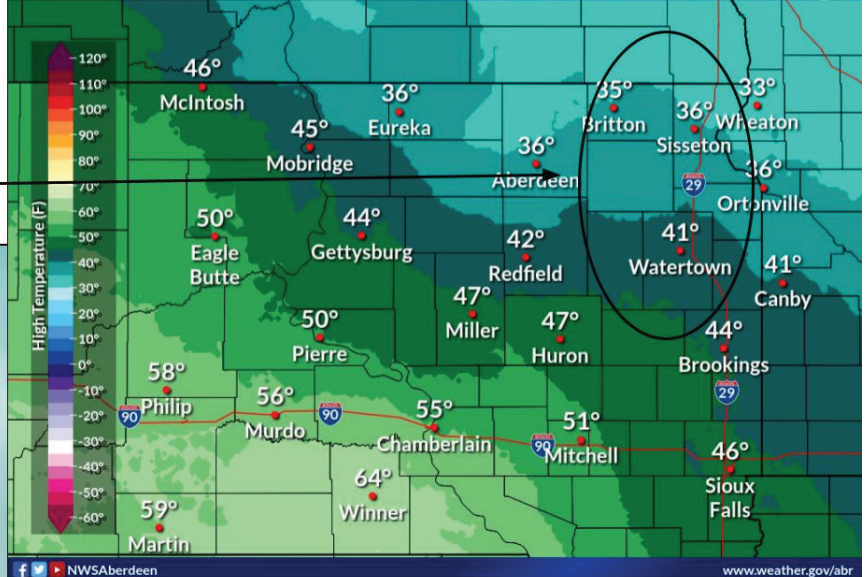
January 5, 2026
3:44 AM

- Above normal temperatures in the 30s, 40s, and 50s today.
 - Scattered sprinkles or a very light shower possible over the region.
- **Areas of fog (possibly dense) over northeast SD this morning. Fog possible tonight again for same area.**

Today's High Temperatures

Above normal temperatures

Weather Forecast Office
Aberdeen/Rapid City/Sioux Falls, SD
Issued Jan 05, 2026 3:26 AM CST



Be ready for sudden changes in visibility



Turn on your low-beam headlights when approaching fog



Drive slowly, and keep your distance from other vehicles



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Above normal temperatures over the region today, with 30s, 40s, and 50s for highs. There may be a few sprinkles across portions of the region today, but little, if any precipitation expected. Areas of fog are possible across northeast SD this morning as well.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 14 of 51

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 35 °F at 11:53 AM

Low Temp: 24 °F at 2:23 AM

Wind: 16 mph at 2:15 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 63 in 2012

Record Low: -32 in 1924

Average High: 24

Average Low: 3

Average Precip in Jan.: 0.10

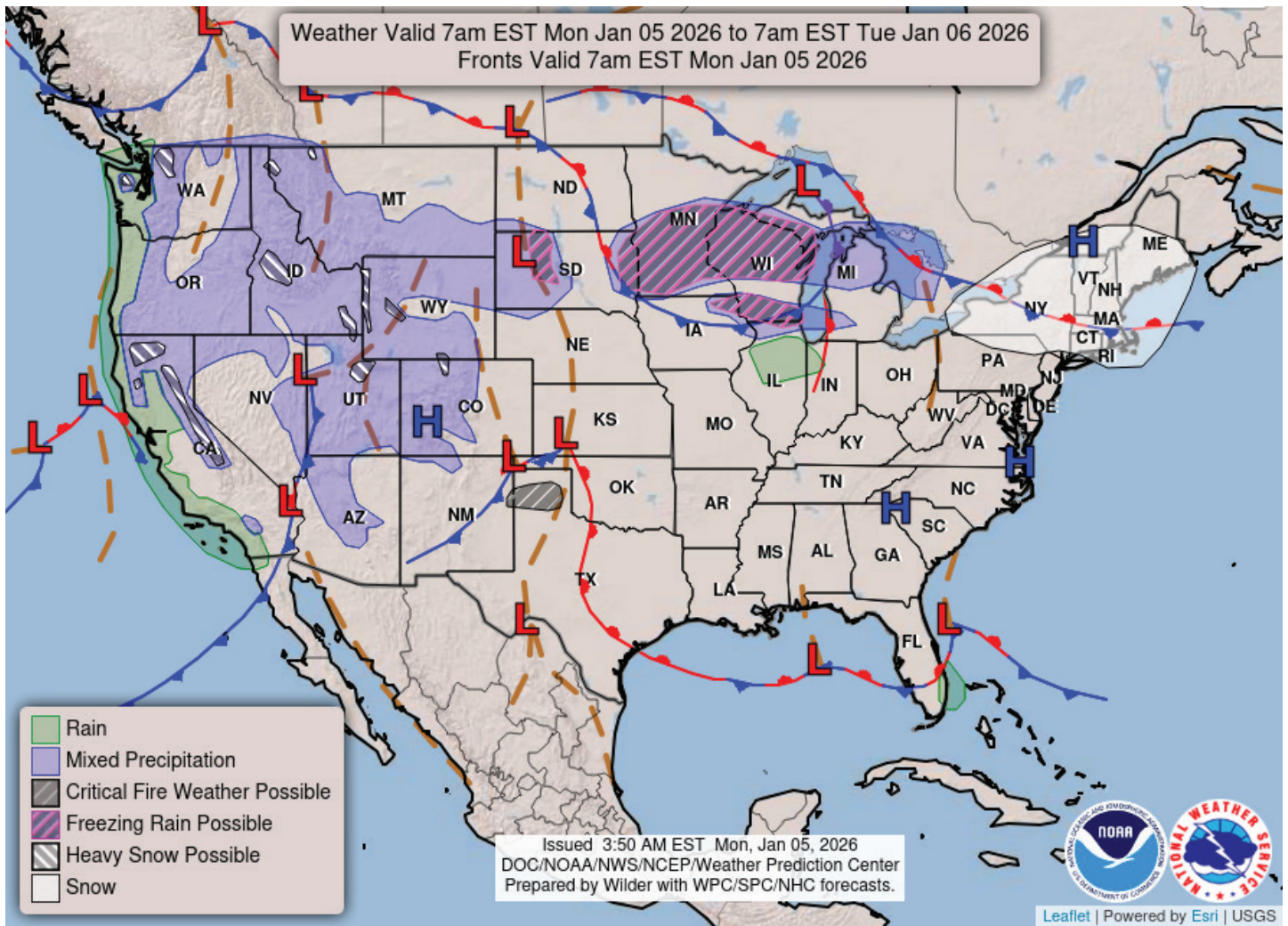
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.10

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 5:03 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:11 am



Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 15 of 51

Today in Weather History

January 5, 1994: A low-pressure system traveled from the Dakotas, across southern Minnesota, and to the Great Lakes Region, from the late morning of the 5th, through the early evening of the 7th. By the early evening hours on the 7th, up to three and one-half feet of snow had fallen along the higher terrain of Lake Superior. The storm also produced heavy snow across parts of central Minnesota. Six inches or more occurred across much of central Minnesota. In west-central Minnesota, Wheaton and Artichoke Lake received 5 inches, with 6 inches at Browns Valley.

January 5, 2012: Numerous record high temperatures were broken across central and northeast South Dakota and west-central Minnesota throughout the week. Some of the records were broken by as much as 12 to 17 degrees and held 80 to 90 years. Aberdeen surpassed their record high for January by 3 degrees with 63 degrees on Thursday, January 5th. Kennebec tied their all-time record high for January with 70 degrees on January 5th.

1835 — It was a record cold morning in the eastern U.S. The mercury at the Yale Campus in New Haven CT plunged to 23 degrees below zero, and reached 40 below in the Berkshire Hills of Connecticut. (David Ludlum)

1880: Snow began falling in Seattle, Washington, and would continue for much of the week. When it was over, more than 5 feet of snow was recorded.

1884: One of only two days in history during which the temperature at Louisville, Kentucky, never rose above zero. The low was 20 degrees below, with a high of 1 below zero.

1892: From the History of Fayetteville, Georgia, "Another traumatic event occurred in Fayetteville on the evening of January 5, 1892, about six o'clock in the evening. A terrible tornado or cyclone struck the town of Fayetteville just as many had sat down for dinner. The storm killed three people and injured many more as its raging force destroyed numerous residences, outbuildings, and structures, including the academy, as well as killing abundant livestock. The event was written about as far away as Savannah."

1904 — Bitterly cold air gripped the northeastern U.S. Morning lows of -42 degrees at Smethport PA and -34 at River Vale NJ established state records. (The Weather Channel)

1913 — The temperature at the east portal to Strawberry Tunnel reached 50 degrees below zero to tie the record established at Woodruff on February 6, 1899. (David Ludlum)

1962: Two tornadoes, about 100 yards apart and each making paths about 100 yards wide, followed parallel paths from southeast to northwest through the edge of the Crestview, Florida's residential area. These tornadoes killed one and injured 30 others.

1982 — A three day rainstorm in the San Francisco area finally came to an end. Marin County and Cruz County were drenched with up to 25 inches of rain, and the Sierra Nevada Range was buried under four to eight feet of snow. The storm claimed at least 36 lives, and caused more than 300 million dollars damage. (Storm Data)

1987 — A massive winter storm spread heavy snow from the southwestern U.S. into the Rockies. In Utah, the Alta ski resort reported a storm total of 42 inches of snow. Winds gusted to 64 mph at Albuquerque NM. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — Thunderstorms helped produce heavy snow in the Lower Great Lakes Region. Snow fell at the rate of four to five inches per hour, and snowfall totals ranged up to 69 inches at Highmarket NY. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — A strong Pacific cold front produced heavy snow and high winds in Nevada. Winds gusted to 80 mph north of Reno, while up to two feet of snow blanketed the Lake Tahoe ski area. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 — Thunderstorms produced heavy rain in the Central Gulf Coast Region. New Orleans, LA, was drenched with 4.05 inches of rain in 24 hours. An overnight storm blanketed the mountains of northern Utah with up to eleven inches of snow. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

When It's Wise to Wait

During seasons of waiting, remember that the Lord often uses them for our good and His glory.

Psalms 130:1-8: 1 Out of the depths I have cried to You, O LORD.
2 Lord, hear my voice! Let Your ears be attentive To the voice of my supplications.
3 If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?
4 But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared.
5 I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, And in His word do I hope.
6 My soul waits for the Lord More than the watchmen for the morning; Indeed, more than the watchmen for the morning.
7 O Israel, hope in the LORD; For with the LORD there is lovingkindness, And with Him is abundant redemption.
8 And He will redeem Israel From all his iniquities.

In order to keep in step with the Lord, we need to carry out His instructions in accordance with His timetable. In God's kingdom, waiting means seeking further direction from Him while remaining in our present circumstances. It encompasses both an attitude of expectancy (God, what would You like me to do?) and one of readiness (God, I am willing to do as You direct.) It is our wisest course of action because we will ...

Receive direction. When faced with a decision, we too often let ourselves be influenced by pressures or preferences. But God is the only source of true wisdom. He is omniscient and answers us on the basis of His complete understanding. He is willing to give us clear instructions for any decisions we are trying to make (Psalm 32:8). Why? Because He wants the very best for us.

Get onto His timetable. God will also use the waiting period to bring us in line with His perfect timing. Knowing we are walking in concert with God will bring His divine peace to our heart.

Be prepared for His answer and course of action. God may use a season of waiting to help us recognize unrighteous motives and sin or to strengthen our faith.

Acting wisely begins with hearing from the Lord. So make it a goal to listen closely, and remain ready to do as He asks.

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

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 17 of 51

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Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 18 of 51



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.02.26

6 13 34 43 52 4

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$180,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 26 Mins 54 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.03.26

3 4 5 25 42 3

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$11,830,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 41 Mins 54 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.04.26

3 8 13 38 47 2

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 56 Mins 54 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.03.26

7 13 17 28 30

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$172,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 56 Mins 55 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.03.26

28 40 52 53 54 12

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 25 Mins 55 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.03.26

18 21 40 53 60 23

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$86,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 25 Mins 55 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

A Paris court finds 10 people guilty of cyberbullying France's first lady Brigitte Macron

By SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — A Paris court found Monday 10 people guilty of cyberbullying France's first lady Brigitte Macron by spreading false online claims about her gender and sexuality, including allegations she was born a man.

The court convicted all defendants to sentences ranging from a cyberbullying awareness training to 8-month suspended prison sentences.

The court pointed to "particularly degrading, insulting, and malicious" comments referring to false claims regarding alleged trans identity and alleged pedo criminality targeting Brigitte Macron.

The defendants, eight men and two women aged 41 to 65, are accused of having posted "numerous malicious comments" falsely claiming that President Emmanuel Macron's wife was born a man and linking their 24-year age gap to pedophilia. Some of the posts were viewed tens of thousands of times.

Brigitte Macron did not attend the two-day trial in October. Speaking on TF1 national television Sunday, she said she launched legal proceedings to "set an example" in the fight against harassment.

Her daughter, Tiphaine Auzière, testified about what she described as the "deterioration" of her mother's life since the online harassment intensified. "She cannot ignore the horrible things said about her," Auzière told the court. She said the impact has extended to the entire family, including Macron's grandchildren.

Defendant Delphine Jegousse, 51, who is known as Amandine Roy and describes herself as a medium and an author, is considered to have played a major role in spreading the rumor after she released a four-hour video on her YouTube channel in 2021. She was given a 6-month prison sentence.

The X account of Aurélien Poirson-Atlas, 41, known as Zoé Sagan on social media, was suspended in 2024 after his name was cited in several judicial investigations. Poirson-Atlas was given an 8-month prison sentence.

Other defendants include an elected official, a teacher and a computer scientist. Several told the court their comments were intended as humor or satire and said they did not understand why they were being prosecuted.

The case follows years of conspiracy theories falsely alleging that Brigitte Macron was born under the name Jean-Michel Trogneux, which is actually the name of her brother. The Macrons have also filed a defamation suit in the United States against conservative influencer Candace Owens.

The Macrons, who have been married since 2007, first met at the high school where he was a student and she was a teacher. Brigitte Macron, 24 years her husband's senior, was then called Brigitte Auzière, a married mother of three.

Emmanuel Macron, 48, has been France's president since 2017.

Holocaust survivor Eva Schloss, stepsister of Anne Frank, dies at 96

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Auschwitz survivor Eva Schloss, the stepsister of teenage diarist Anne Frank and a tireless educator about the horrors of the Holocaust, has died. She was 96.

The Anne Frank Trust UK, of which Schloss was honorary president, said she died Saturday in London, where she lived.

Britain's King Charles III said he was "privileged and proud" to have known Schloss, who co-founded the charitable trust to help young people challenge prejudice.

"The horrors that she endured as a young woman are impossible to comprehend and yet she devoted

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 20 of 51

the rest of her life to overcoming hatred and prejudice, promoting kindness, courage, understanding and resilience through her tireless work for the Anne Frank Trust UK and for Holocaust education across the world," the king said.

Born Eva Geiringer in Vienna in 1929, Schloss fled with her family to Amsterdam after Nazi Germany annexed Austria. She became friends with another Jewish girl of the same age, Anne Frank, whose diary would become one of the most famous chronicles of the Holocaust.

Like the Franks, Eva's family spent two years in hiding to avoid capture after the Nazis occupied the Netherlands. They were eventually betrayed, arrested and sent to the Auschwitz death camp.

Schloss and her mother Fritzi survived until the camp was liberated by Soviet troops in 1945. Her father Erich and brother Heinz died in Auschwitz.

After the war, Eva moved to Britain, married German Jewish refugee Zvi Schloss and settled in London.

In 1953, her mother married Frank's father, Otto, the only member of his immediate family to survive. Anne Frank died of typhus in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp at the age of 15, months before the end of the war.

Schloss did not speak publicly about her experiences for decades, later saying that wartime trauma had made her withdrawn and unable to connect with others.

"I was silent for years, first because I wasn't allowed to speak. Then I repressed it. I was angry with the world," she told The Associated Press in 2004.

But after she addressed the opening of an Anne Frank exhibition in London in 1986, Schloss made it her mission to educate younger generations about the Nazi genocide. Over the following decades she spoke in schools and prisons, at international conferences and told her story in books including "Eva's Story: A Survivor's Tale by the Stepsister of Anne Frank."

She kept campaigning into her 90s. In 2019, she traveled to Newport Beach, California to meet teenagers who were photographed making Nazi salutes at a high school party. The following year she was part of a campaign urging Facebook to remove Holocaust-denying material from the social networking site.

"We must never forget the terrible consequences of treating people as 'other,'" Schloss said in 2024. "We need to respect everybody's races and religions. We need to live together with our differences. The only way to achieve this is through education, and the younger we start the better."

Schloss' family remembered her as "a remarkable woman: an Auschwitz survivor, a devoted Holocaust educator, tireless in her work for remembrance, understanding and peace."

"We hope her legacy will continue to inspire through the books, films and resources she leaves behind," the family said in a statement.

Zvi Schloss died in 2016. Eva Schloss is survived by their three daughters, as well as grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Maduro is set to make his first appearance in a US courtroom on drug trafficking charges

By MICHAEL R. SISAK, LARRY NEUMEISTER and JOHN HANNA Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Deposed Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro is set to make his first appearance Monday in an American courtroom on the narco-terrorism charges the Trump administration used to justify capturing him and bringing him to New York.

Maduro and his wife are expected to appear at noon before a judge for a brief, but required, legal proceeding that will likely kick off a prolonged legal fight over whether he can be put on trial in the U.S.

The couple will be brought from a Brooklyn jail to a Manhattan courthouse just around the corner from the one where President Donald Trump was convicted in 2024 of falsifying business records.

As a criminal defendant in the U.S. legal system, Maduro will have the same rights as any other person accused of a crime — including the right to a trial by a jury of regular New Yorkers. But he'll also be nearly — but not quite — unique.

Maduro's lawyers are expected to contest the legality of his arrest, arguing that he is immune from

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 21 of 51

prosecution as a sovereign head of state.

Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega unsuccessfully tried the same defense after the U.S. captured him in a similar military invasion in 1990. But the U.S. doesn't recognize Maduro as Venezuela's legitimate head of state — particularly after a much-disputed 2024 reelection.

Venezuela's new interim president, Delcy Rodríguez, has demanded that the U.S. return Maduro, who long denied any involvement in drug trafficking — although late Sunday she also struck a more conciliatory tone in a social media post, inviting collaboration with Trump and "respectful relations" with the U.S.

Before his capture, Maduro and his allies claimed U.S. hostility was motivated by lust for Venezuela's rich oil and mineral resources.

The U.S. seized Maduro and his wife in a military operation Saturday, capturing them in their home on a military base. Trump said the U.S. would "run" Venezuela temporarily, but Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Sunday that it would not govern the country day-to-day other than enforcing an existing "oil quarantine."

Trump suggested Sunday that he wants to extend American power further in the western hemisphere.

Speaking aboard Air Force One, he called Colombia's president, Gustavo Petro, "a sick man who likes making cocaine and selling it to the United States. And he's not going to be doing it very long."

He called on Venezuela's Rodríguez to provide "total access" to her country, or else face consequences.

A 25-page indictment made public Saturday accuses Maduro and others of working with drug cartels to facilitate the shipment of thousands of tons of cocaine into the U.S. They could face life in prison if convicted.

It wasn't clear as of Sunday whether Maduro had hired a U.S. lawyer yet.

He and his wife, Cilia Flores, have been under U.S. sanctions for years, making it illegal for any American to take money from them without first securing a license from the Treasury Department.

While the indictment against Maduro says Venezuelan officials worked directly with the Tren de Aragua gang, a U.S. intelligence assessment published in April, drawing on input from the intelligence community's 18 agencies, found no coordination between Tren de Aragua and the Venezuelan government.

Maduro, his wife and his son — who remains free — are charged along with Venezuela's interior and justice minister, a former interior and justice minister and Hector Rusthenford Guerrero Flores, an alleged Tren de Aragua leader who has been criminally charged in another case and remains at large.

Among other things, the indictment accuses Maduro and his wife of ordering kidnappings, beatings and murders of those who owed them drug money or undermined their drug trafficking operation. That included a local drug boss' killing in Caracas, the indictment said.

Maduro's wife is also accused of accepting hundreds of thousands of dollars in bribes in 2007 to arrange a meeting between "a large-scale drug trafficker" and the director of Venezuela's National Anti-Drug Office, resulting in additional monthly bribes, with some of the money going to Maduro's wife, according to the indictment.

What to expect from CES 2026, the annual show of all things tech

By SHAWN CHEN AP Technology Editor

LAS VEGAS (AP) — With the start of the New Year squarely behind us, it's once again time for the annual CES trade show to shine a spotlight on the latest tech that companies plan to offer in 2026.

The multiday event, organized by the Consumer Technology Association, kicks off this week in Las Vegas, where advances across industries like robotics, healthcare, vehicles, wearables, gaming and more are set to be on display.

Artificial intelligence will be anchored in nearly everything, again, as the tech industry explores offerings consumers will want to buy. AI industry heavyweight Jensen Huang will be taking the stage to showcase Nvidia's latest productivity solutions, and AMD CEO Lisa Su will keynote to "share her vision for delivering future AI solutions." Expect AI to come up in other keynotes, like from Lenovo's CEO, Yuanqing Yang.

The AI industry is tackling issues in healthcare, with a particular emphasis on changing individual health habits to treat conditions — such as Beyond Medicine's prescription app focused on a particular jaw dis-

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 22 of 51

order — or addressing data shortages in subjects such as breast milk production.

Expect more unveils around domestic robots too. Korean tech giant LG already has announced it will show off a helper bot named "CLOiD," to handle a range of household tasks. Hyundai also is announcing a major push on robotics and manufacturing advancements. Extended reality, basically a virtual training ground for robots and other physical AI, is also in the buzz around CES.

In 2025, more than 141,000 attendees from over 150 countries, regions, and territories attended CES. Organizers expect around the same numbers for this year's show, with more than 3,500 exhibitors across the floor space this week.

The AP spoke with CTA Executive Chair and CEO Gary Shapiro about what to expect for CES 2026. The conversation has been edited for clarity and length.

What are the main themes we can expect this week?

Well, we have a lot at this year's show.

Obviously, using AI in a way that makes sense for people. We're seeing a lot in robotics. More robots and humanoid-looking robots than we've ever had before.

We also see longevity in health, there's a lot of focus on that. All sorts of wearable devices for almost every part of the body. Technology is answering healthcare's gaps very quickly and that's great for everyone.

Mobility is big with not only self-driving vehicles but also with boats and drones and all sorts of other ways of getting around. That's very important.

And of course, content creation is always very big.

Is 2026 the year we finally see humanoid robots in people's homes?

You are seeing humanoid robots right now. It sometimes works, sometimes doesn't.

But yes, there are more and more humanoid robots. And when we talk about CES five, 10, 15, 20 years now, we're going to see an even larger range of humanoid robots.

Obviously, last year we saw a great interest in them. The number one product of the show was a little robotic dog that seems so life-like and fun, and affectionate for people that need that type of affection.

But of course, the humanoid robots are just one aspect of that industry. There's a lot of specialization in robot creation, depending on what you want the robot to do. And robots can do many things that humans can't.

Will we start seeing more innovative use of AI tools in entertainment?

AI is the future of creativity.

Certainly AI itself may be arguably creative, but the human mind is so unique that you definitely get new ideas that way. So I think the future is more of a hybrid approach, where content creators are working with AI to craft variations on a theme or to better monetize what they have to a broader audience.

Any interesting AI-powered devices or services that consumers will want to buy?

We're seeing all sorts of different devices that are implementing AI. But we have a special focus at this show, for the first time, on the disability community. Verizon set this whole stage up where we have all different ways of taking this technology and having it help people with disabilities and older people.

Are you concerned about a potential AI bubble?

Well, there's definitely no bubble when it comes to what AI can do. And what AI can do is perform miracles and solve fundamental human problems in food production and clean air and clean water. Obviously in healthcare, it's gonna be overwhelming.

But this was like the internet itself. There was a lot of talk about a bubble, and there actually was a bubble. The difference is that in late 1990s there were basically were no revenue models. Companies were raising a lot of money with no plans for revenue.

These AI companies have significant revenues today, and companies are investing in it.

What I'm more concerned about, honestly, is not Wall Street and a bubble. Others can be concerned about that. I'm concerned about getting enough energy to process all that AI. And at this show, for the first time, we have a Korean company showing the first ever small-scale nuclear-powered energy creation device. We expect more and more of these people rushing to fill this gap because we need the energy,

we need it clean and we need a kind of all-of-the-above solution.

What to know about the protests now shaking Iran as tensions remain high over its nuclear program

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Widening protests in Iran sparked by the Islamic Republic's ailing economy are putting new pressure on its theocracy.

Tehran is still reeling from a 12-day war launched by Israel in June that saw the United States bomb nuclear sites in Iran. Economic pressure, which has intensified since September when the United Nations reimposed sanctions on the country over its atomic program, has put Iran's rial currency into a free fall, now trading at some 1.4 million to \$1.

Meanwhile, Iran's self-described "Axis of Resistance" — a coalition of countries and militant groups backed by Tehran — has been decimated in the years since the start of the Israel-Hamas war in 2023.

A threat by U.S. President Donald Trump warning Iran that if Tehran "violently kills peaceful protesters" the U.S. "will come to their rescue," has taken on new meaning after American troops captured Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, a longtime ally of Tehran.

"We're watching it very closely," Trump told journalists aboard Air Force One late Sunday. "If they start killing people like they have in the past, I think they're going to get hit very hard by the United States."

Here's what to know about the protests and the challenges facing Iran's government.

How widespread the protests are

Demonstrations have reached over 220 locations in 26 of Iran's 31 provinces, the U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency reported early Monday. The death toll had reached at least 20 killed, it added, with more than 990 arrests. The group, which relies on an activist network inside of Iran for its reporting, has been accurate in past unrest.

Understanding the scale of the protests has been difficult. Iranian state media has provided little information about the demonstrations. Online videos offer only brief, shaky glimpses of people in the streets or the sound of gunfire. Journalists in general in Iran also face limits on reporting such as requiring permission to travel around the country, as well as the threat of harassment or arrest by authorities.

But the protests do not appear to be stopping, even after Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Saturday said "rioters must be put in their place."

Why the demonstrations started

The collapse of the rial has led to a widening economic crisis in Iran. Prices are up on meat, rice and other staples of the Iranian dinner table. The nation has been struggling with an annual inflation rate of some 40%.

In December, Iran introduced a new pricing tier for its nationally subsidized gasoline, raising the price of some of the world's cheapest gas and further pressuring the population. Tehran may seek steeper price increases in the future, as the government now will review prices every three months.

The protests began first with merchants in Tehran before spreading. While initially focused on economic issues, the demonstrations soon saw protesters chanting anti-government statements as well. Anger has been simmering over the years, particularly after the 2022 death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini in police custody that triggered nationwide demonstrations.

Iran's alliances are weakened

Iran's "Axis of Resistance," which grew in prominence in the years after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq, is reeling.

Israel has crushed Hamas in the devastating war in the Gaza Strip. Hezbollah, the Shiite militant group in Lebanon, has seen its top leadership killed by Israel and has been struggling since. A lightning offensive in December 2024 overthrew Iran's longtime stalwart ally and client in Syria, President Bashar Assad, after years of war there. Yemen's Iranian-backed Houthi rebels also have been pounded by Israeli and

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 24 of 51

U.S. airstrikes.

China meanwhile has remained a major buyer of Iranian crude oil, but hasn't provided overt military support. Neither has Russia, which has relied on Iranian drones in its war on Ukraine.

The West worries about Iran's nuclear program

Iran has insisted for decades that its nuclear program is peaceful. However, its officials have increasingly threatened to pursue a nuclear weapon. Iran had been enriching uranium to near weapons-grade levels prior to the U.S. attack in June, making it the only country in the world without a nuclear weapons program to do so.

Tehran also increasingly cut back its cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog, as tensions increased over its nuclear program in recent years. The IAEA's director-general has warned Iran could build as many as 10 nuclear bombs, should it decide to weaponize its program.

U.S. intelligence agencies have assessed that Iran has yet to begin a weapons program, but has "undertaken activities that better position it to produce a nuclear device, if it chooses to do so."

Iran recently 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. But there's been no significant talks in the months since the June war.

Why relations between Iran and the US are so tense

Iran decades ago was one of the United States' top allies in the Mideast under Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who purchased American military weapons and allowed CIA technicians to run secret listening posts monitoring the neighboring Soviet Union. The CIA fomented a 1953 coup that cemented the shah's rule.

But in January 1979, the shah, fatally ill with cancer, fled Iran as mass demonstrations swelled against his rule. Then came the Islamic Revolution led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, which created Iran's theocratic government.

Later that year, university students overran the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, seeking the shah's extradition and sparking the 444-day hostage crisis that saw diplomatic relations between Iran and the U.S. severed.

During the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s, the U.S. backed Saddam Hussein. During that conflict, the U.S. launched a one-day assault that crippled Iran at sea as part of the so-called "Tanker War," and later shot down an Iranian commercial airliner that the U.S. military said it mistook for a warplane.

Iran and the U.S. have seesawed between enmity and grudging diplomacy in the years since, and relations peaked with the 2015 nuclear deal, which saw Iran greatly limit its program in exchange for the lifting of sanctions. But Trump unilaterally withdrew America from the accord in 2018, sparking tensions in the Mideast that intensified after Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel.

Guinea's junta leader is confirmed president-elect after first vote since a 2021 coup

CONAKRY, Guinea (AP) — The Supreme Court in Guinea on Sunday upheld the election victory of Gen. Mamadi Doumbouya, cementing the junta leader's transition to a democratically elected president four years after staging a coup in the West African nation.

Doumbouya won the country's first election since the 2021 coup after polling 86.7% of the votes, according to the General Directorate of Elections. His victory, which had been predicted by analysts, was confirmed by the Supreme Court in the capital Conakry.

"Today, there are neither winners nor losers. There is only one Guinea, united and indivisible," Doumbouya said in a broadcast late Sunday, calling on citizens to "build a new Guinea, a Guinea of peace, justice, shared prosperity, and fully assumed political and economic sovereignty."

Yero Baldé, the runner-up who won 6.59% of the vote, had filed a petition accusing the electoral body of manipulating the results in Doumbouya's favor. But authorities said he withdrew the petition a day before the Supreme Court verdict.

The Dec. 28 election was held under a new constitution that revoked a ban on military leaders running for office and extended the presidential mandate from five years to seven years.

Critics say Doumbouya has clamped down on political opponents and dissent since the 2021 coup, leaving him with no major opposition among the eight other candidates in the race.

The weakened opposition "focused attention on Mamadi Doumbouya as the only key figure capable of ensuring the continuity of the state," said N'Faly Guilavogui, a Guinean political analyst. "Guineans are waiting to see what efforts he will make to ensure political stability and reconciliation," Guilavogui added.

Despite the country's rich mineral resources including the world's biggest exporter of bauxite, which is used to make aluminum, more than half of its 15 million people are experiencing record levels of poverty and food insecurity, according to the World Food Program.

The junta's most important initiative has been a mega-mining project at Simandou, the world's largest iron ore deposit. The 75% Chinese-owned project began production in December after decades of delays.

Rubio says US will press change in Venezuela with oil embargo, while Trump insists 'we're in charge'

By REGINA GARCIA CANO, MATTHEW LEE, WILL WEISSERT and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Secretary of State Marco Rubio suggested Sunday that the United States would not govern Venezuela day-to-day other than enforcing an existing "oil quarantine" on the country, even as President Donald Trump again insisted that the U.S. would be in control following its ouster of leader Nicolás Maduro.

Rubio's statements seemed designed to temper concerns that the assertive action to achieve regime change in Venezuela might lead the U.S. into another prolonged foreign intervention or failed attempt at nation-building.

They stood in contrast to Trump's broad but vague claims that the U.S. would at least temporarily "run" the oil-rich nation, comments that suggested some sort of governing structure under which Caracas would be controlled by Washington.

Still, Trump reiterated Sunday night that "we're in charge," while interim Venezuelan leader Delcy Rodríguez invited the Republican president "to collaborate" in a newly conciliatory stance.

"We're going to run it, fix it," he said of Venezuela while aboard Air Force One en route to Washington from his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida.

Hours earlier, Rubio offered a more nuanced take, saying the U.S. would enforce an oil quarantine that was already in place on sanctioned tankers before Maduro was removed from power early Saturday and use that leverage to press policy changes in Venezuela.

"And so that's the sort of control the president is pointing to when he says that," Rubio said on CBS' "Face the Nation." "We continue with that quarantine, and we expect to see that there will be changes, not just in the way the oil industry is run for the benefit of the people, but also so that they stop the drug trafficking."

Rodríguez changes her tone

Venezuela's interim president said she seeks "respectful relations" with the U.S., in a shift from a previously defiant tone.

"We invite the US government to collaborate with us on an agenda of cooperation oriented towards shared development within the framework of international law to strengthen lasting community coexistence," Rodríguez wrote in an online post.

After the U.S. operation, she called Maduro the country's rightful leader and urged the U.S. to release him, declaring the actions an "atrocious" and saying "history and justice will make the extremists who promoted this armed aggression pay."

Her conciliatory message came after Trump threatened that she could "pay a very big price" if she didn't fall in line with U.S. demands.

Trump told reporters Sunday night that Rodríguez is "cooperating" but reiterated the threat from an earlier interview with The Atlantic.

He told reporters on Air Force One that he wanted her to provide "total access" to aspects of the country

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 26 of 51

large and small — from major oil operations to basic infrastructure.

"We need access to the oil and to other things in their country that allow us to rebuild their country," Trump said.

Venezuela's Supreme Court ruled Rodríguez would be acting president earlier Sunday.

Cuba, meanwhile, announced that 32 Cuban security officers were killed in the U.S. operation in Venezuela, which Trump acknowledged: "You know, a lot of Cubans were killed yesterday."

"There was a lot of death on the other side," Trump said. "No death on our side."

Trump still says US will 'run' Venezuela

Trump's vowing that the U.S. will run Venezuela has sparked concerns among some Democrats and drawn unease from parts of his own Republican coalition, including an "America First" base that is opposed to foreign interventions, and from observers who recalled past nation-building efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Rubio dismissed such criticism, saying Trump's intent had been misunderstood.

"The whole foreign policy apparatus thinks everything is Libya, everything is Iraq, everything is Afghanistan," Rubio said. "This is not the Middle East. And our mission here is very different. This is the Western Hemisphere."

He also suggested the U.S. would give Maduro's subordinates now in charge time to govern, saying, "We're going to judge everything by what they do."

Though he did not rule out boots on the ground in Venezuela, Rubio said the U.S., which has built up its presence in the region, was already capable of stopping alleged drug boats and sanctioned oil tankers.

The blockade on sanctioned oil tankers — some of which have been seized by the U.S. — "remains in place, and that's a tremendous amount of leverage that will continue to be in place until we see changes that not just further the national interest of the United States, which is number one, but also that lead to a better future for the people of Venezuela," he added.

Even before the operation that nabbed Maduro, experts questioned the legality of aspects of the Trump administration's pressure campaign on his government, including the deadly bombing of boats accused of trafficking drugs that some scholars said stretched the boundaries of international law.

Maduro due in court Monday

A middle-of-the-night operation extracted Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, from their home in a military base in the capital city of Caracas — an act Maduro's government called "imperialist." The couple faces U.S. charges of participating in a narco-terrorism conspiracy.

The dramatic seizure capped an intensive Trump administration pressure campaign on Venezuela's autocratic leader and months of secret planning, resulting in the most assertive American action to achieve regime change since the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Legal experts raised questions about the lawfulness of the operation, which was done without congressional approval.

Maduro is due to make his first appearance Monday in Manhattan's federal court.

He and other Venezuelan officials were indicted in 2020 on narco-terrorism conspiracy charges, and the Justice Department released a new indictment Saturday of Maduro and his wife that painted his administration as a "corrupt, illegitimate government" fueled by a drug-trafficking operation that flooded the U.S. with cocaine. The U.S. government does not recognize Maduro as the country's leader.

Quiet falls in Venezuela

Venezuela's government kept operating as usual over the weekend as ministers remained in their posts.

The capital was unusually quiet Sunday with few vehicles moving around and convenience stores, gas stations and other businesses closed.

Maduro's son, lawmaker Nicolás Ernesto Guerra, has not appeared in public since the attack. On Saturday, he posted on Instagram a government statement repudiating the capture of his father and stepmother.

The country's incoming National Assembly is set to be sworn in at the legislative palace in Caracas. The unicameral assembly will remain under control of the ruling party.

After Maduro, who's next? Trump spurs speculation about his plans for Greenland, Cuba and Colombia

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A day after the audacious U.S. military operation in Venezuela, President Donald Trump on Sunday renewed his calls for an American takeover of the Danish territory of Greenland for the sake of U.S. security interests and threatened military action on Colombia for facilitating the global sale of cocaine, while his top diplomat declared the communist government in Cuba is "in a lot of trouble."

The comments from Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio after the ouster of Venezuela's Nicolás Maduro underscore that the U.S. administration is serious about taking a more expansive role in the Western Hemisphere.

With thinly veiled threats, Trump is rattling hemispheric friends and foes alike, spurring a pointed question around the globe: Who's next?

"It's so strategic right now. Greenland is covered with Russian and Chinese ships all over the place," Trump told reporters as he flew back to Washington from his home in Florida. "We need Greenland from the standpoint of national security, and Denmark is not going to be able to do it."

Asked during an interview with *The Atlantic* earlier on Sunday what the U.S.-military action in Venezuela could portend for Greenland, Trump replied: "They are going to have to view it themselves. I really don't know."

Trump, in his administration's National Security Strategy published last month, laid out restoring "American preeminence in the Western Hemisphere" as a central guidepost for his second go-around in the White House.

Trump has also pointed to the 19th century Monroe Doctrine, which rejects European colonialism, as well as the Roosevelt Corollary — a justification invoked by the U.S. in supporting Panama's secession from Colombia, which helped secure the Panama Canal Zone for the U.S. — as he's made his case for an assertive approach to American neighbors and beyond.

Trump has even quipped that some now refer to the fifth U.S. president's foundational document as the "Don-roe Doctrine."

Causing unease in Denmark

Saturday's dead-of-night operation by U.S. forces in Caracas and Trump's comments on Sunday heightened concerns in Denmark, which has jurisdiction over the vast mineral-rich island of Greenland.

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen in a statement that Trump has "no right to annex" the territory. She also reminded Trump that Denmark already provides the United States, a fellow member of NATO, broad access to Greenland through existing security agreements.

"I would therefore strongly urge the U.S. to stop threatening a historically close ally and another country and people who have made it very clear that they are not for sale," Frederiksen said.

Denmark on Sunday also signed onto a European Union statement underscoring that "the right of the Venezuelan people to determine their future must be respected" as Trump has vowed to "run" Venezuela and pressed the acting president, Delcy Rodríguez, to get in line.

Social media posting angers Danes

Trump on Sunday mocked Denmark's efforts at boosting Greenland's national security posture, saying the Danes have added "one more dog sled" to the Arctic territory's arsenal.

Greenlanders and Danes were further rankled by a social media post following the raid by a former Trump administration official turned podcaster, Katie Miller. The post shows an illustrated map of Greenland in the colors of the Stars and Stripes accompanied by the caption: "SOON."

"And yes, we expect full respect for the territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Denmark," Amb. Jesper Møller Sørensen, Denmark's chief envoy to Washington, said in a post responding to Miller, who is married to Trump's influential deputy chief of staff Stephen Miller.

During his presidential transition and in the early months of his return to the White House, Trump re-

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 28 of 51

peatedly called for U.S. jurisdiction over Greenland, and has pointedly not ruled out military force to take control of the mineral-rich, strategically located Arctic island that belongs to an ally.

The issue had largely drifted out of the headlines in recent months. Then Trump put the spotlight back on Greenland less than two weeks ago when he said he would appoint Republican Gov. Jeff Landry as his special envoy to Greenland.

The Louisiana governor said in his volunteer position he would help Trump "make Greenland a part of the U.S."

A stern warning to Cuba

Meanwhile, concern is simmering in Cuba, one of Venezuela's most important allies and trading partners, as Rubio issued a new stern warning to the Cuban government. U.S.-Cuba relations have been hostile since the 1959 Cuban revolution.

Rubio, in an appearance on NBC's "Meet the Press," said Cuban officials were with Maduro in Venezuela ahead of his capture.

"It was Cubans that guarded Maduro," Rubio said. "He was not guarded by Venezuelan bodyguards. He had Cuban bodyguards." The secretary of state added that Cuban bodyguards were also in charge of "internal intelligence" in Maduro's government, including "who spies on who inside, to make sure there are no traitors."

The Cuban government said in a statement read on state television on Sunday evening that 32 officers were killed in the U.S. military operation.

Trump said that the Cuban economy, battered by years of a U.S. embargo, is in tatters and will slide further now with the ouster of Maduro, who provided the Caribbean island subsidized oil.

"It's going down," Trump said of Cuba. "It's going down for the count."

Warning delivered to Colombia

Trump, as he made his way back to Washington on Sunday evening, also put Venezuela's neighbor, Colombia, and its leftist president, Gustavo Petro, on notice.

Trump in a back-and-forth with reporters said Colombia is "run by a sick man who likes making cocaine and selling it to the United States."

The Trump administration imposed sanctions in October on Petro, his family and a member of his government over accusations of involvement in the global drug trade. Colombia is considered the epicenter of the world's cocaine trade.

Trump began his monthslong pressure campaign on Maduro by ordering dozens of lethal strikes on alleged drug smuggling boats launched from Venezuela in the Caribbean. He eventually expanded the operations to also target suspected vessels in the eastern Pacific that came from Colombia.

The U.S. in September also added Colombia, the top recipient of American assistance in the region, to a list of nations failing to cooperate in the drug war for the first time in almost 30 years. The designation led to a slashing of U.S. assistance to the country.

"He's not going to be doing it for very long," Trump said of Petro on Sunday. "He has cocaine mills and cocaine factories. He's not going to be doing it."

Asked whether he might order the U.S. to conduct an operation against Colombia, Trump replied, "It sounds good to me."

Delcy Rodríguez becomes Venezuela's interim president after Maduro's ouster

By MEGAN JANETSKY and ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — As uncertainty simmers in Venezuela, interim President Delcy Rodríguez has taken the place of her ally President Nicolás Maduro, captured by the United States in a nighttime military operation, and offered "to collaborate" with the Trump administration in what could be a seismic shift in relations between the adversary governments.

Rodríguez served as Maduro's vice president since 2018, overseeing much of Venezuela's oil-dependent

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 29 of 51

economy and its feared intelligence service, and was next in the presidential line of succession.

She's part of a band of senior officials in Maduro's administration that now appears to control Venezuela, even as U.S. President Donald Trump and other officials say they will pressure the government to fall in line with its vision for the oil-rich nation.

On Saturday, Venezuela's high court ordered her to assume the role of interim president, and the leader was backed by Venezuela's military.

Ally or adversary

Rodríguez, a 56-year-old lawyer and politician has had a lengthy career representing the revolution started by the late Hugo Chávez on the world stage. It's been unclear if the leader would warm up to the Trump administration or follow the same adversarial line as her predecessor.

Her rise to become interim leader of the South American country came as a surprise on Saturday morning, when Trump announced that Secretary of State Marco Rubio had been in communication with Rodríguez and that the Venezuelan leader was "gracious" and would work with the American government. Rubio said Rodríguez was someone the administration could work with, unlike Maduro.

But in a televised address, Rodríguez gave no indication that she would cooperate with Trump, referring to his government as "extremists" and maintaining that Maduro was Venezuela's rightful leader.

"What is being done to Venezuela is an atrocity that violates international law," Rodríguez said, surrounded by high-ranking civilian officials and military leaders.

Trump warned on Sunday, if Rodríguez didn't fall in line, "she is going to pay a very big price, probably bigger than Maduro." He added that he wanted her to provide "total access," from oil facilities to basic infrastructure like roads, so they can be rebuilt.

Trump's comments also followed Rubio having asserted in TV interviews on Sunday that he didn't see Rodríguez and her government as "legitimate" because he said the country never held free and fair elections.

On Sunday, in statements posted to her Instagram, she took a major shift in tone in a conciliatory message where she said she hoped to build "respectful relations" with Trump.

"We invite the US government to collaborate with us on an agenda of cooperation oriented towards shared development within the framework of international law to strengthen lasting community coexistence," she wrote.

Rise to interim president

A lawyer educated in Britain and France, the interim president and her brother, Jorge Rodríguez, head of the Maduro-controlled National Assembly, have sterling leftist credentials born from tragedy. Their father was a socialist leader who was arrested for his involvement in the kidnapping of American business owner William Niehaus in 1976, and later died in police custody.

Unlike many in Maduro's inner circle, the Rodríguez siblings have avoided criminal indictment in the U.S., though the interim president did face U.S. sanctions during Trump's first term for her role in undermining Venezuelan democracy.

Rodríguez held a number of lower-level positions under Chávez's government, but gained prominence working under Maduro to the point of being seen as his successor. She served the economic minister, foreign affairs minister, petroleum minister and others help stabilize Venezuela's endemically crisis-stricken economy after years of rampant inflation and turmoil.

Rodríguez developed strong ties with Republicans in the oil industry and on Wall Street who balked at the notion of U.S.-led regime change. The interim president also presided over an assembly promoted by Maduro in response to street protests in 2017 meant to neutralize the opposition-majority legislature.

She enjoys a close relationship with the military, which has long acted as the arbiter of political disputes in Venezuela, said Ronal Rodríguez, a spokesperson for the Venezuela Observatory of Rosario University in Bogota, Colombia.

"She has a very particular relationship with power," he said. "She has developed very strong ties with elements of the armed forces and has managed to establish lines of dialogue with them, largely on a transactional basis."

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 30 of 51

Future in power

It's unclear how long Rodríguez will hold power, or how closely she will work with the Trump administration.

Geoff Ramsey, a senior nonresident fellow at the Atlantic Council, a Washington research institute, said Rodríguez's initially firm tone with the Trump administration may have been an attempt to "save face." Others have noted that Maduro's capture required some level of collaboration within the Venezuelan government.

"She can't exactly expect to score points with her revolutionary peers if she presents herself as a patsy for U.S. interests," Ramsey said.

Venezuela's constitution requires an election within 30 days whenever the president becomes "permanently unavailable" to serve. Reasons listed include death, resignation, removal from office or "abandonment" of duties as declared by the National Assembly.

That electoral timeline was rigorously followed when Maduro's predecessor, Chavez, died of cancer in 2013. However, the loyalist Supreme Court, in its decision Saturday, cited another provision of the charter in declaring Maduro's absence a "temporary" one.

In such a scenario, there is no election requirement. Instead, the vice president, an unelected position, takes over for up to 90 days — a period that can be extended to six months with a vote of the National Assembly.

In handing temporary power to Rodríguez, the Supreme Court made no mention of the 180-day time limit, leading some to speculate she could try to remain in power even longer as she seeks to unite the disparate factions of the ruling socialist party while shielding it from what would certainly be a stiff electoral challenge.

Falcons beat Saints 19-17 to hand division title to Panthers. Atlanta fires coach and GM hours later

By CHARLES ODUM AP Sports Writer

ATLANTA (AP) — A fourth straight win by the Atlanta Falcons and a season sweep of their biggest rival were not enough to save the jobs of coach Raheem Morris and general manager Terry Fontenot.

Hours after Dee Alford's red-zone interception stopped a potential go-ahead drive by New Orleans on Sunday and the Falcons beat the Saints 19-17 to give the NFC South title to Carolina, Atlanta fired Morris and Fontenot.

The Falcons (8-9) finished in a three-way tie with Carolina and Tampa Bay for first place in the NFC South. The Panthers won the tiebreaker with the best record within the division.

The Falcons completed a season sweep of the Saints (6-11), who had their four-game winning streak end.

Saints first-year coach Kellen Moore said he was "really proud of this group, the way they stuck together and battled each and every way, all the way down to the very end of this game."

Tampa Bay stayed alive with a 16-14 home win over Carolina on Saturday. The Buccaneers needed a win or tie by the Saints on Sunday to win the division. The Panthers made the playoffs for the first time since 2017 and won the division for the first time in a decade.

Trailing 16-10, the Saints drove from their 25 to the Atlanta 20 before Alford returned his interception of Tyler Shough's pass intended for Dante Pettis 59 yards to the Saints 27 with 3:14 remaining. The play set up Zane Gonzalez's fourth field goal, a 38-yarder, to extend Atlanta's lead to nine points.

Slough said Alford's interception "was just an unbelievable play. ... Alford knew exactly what (the receivers) were doing in quarters. Just a great job by him ... Credit to their defense, credit to him, great play in that crucial moment."

Shough answered with a 16-yard touchdown pass to Ronnie Bell with 1:11 remaining, but Atlanta's Kyle Pitts recovered an onside kick.

While the NFC South winner had the most to gain from the result, the Saints and Falcons played the opening quarter as if determined to show why they had long been eliminated from postseason contention.

On the Saints' first play from scrimmage, tight end Juwan Johnson fumbled after a 26-yard reception and Xavier Watts recovered for Atlanta.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 31 of 51

The Falcons then gave the ball back when defensive end Carl Granderson, who already had a sack, intercepted a pass from Kirk Cousins. Later in the opening quarter, Falcons safety Jammie Robinson blocked a punt by Kai Kroeger, and Feleipe Franks recovered to set up Cousins' 15-yard touchdown pass to Drake London.

Gonzalez's 40-yard field goal increased Atlanta's lead before Shough's 1-yard scoring run in the second quarter.

Shough completed 22 of 35 passes for 259 yards with one touchdown and one interception. He also ran for a score.

Penalty costs the Saints a TD

The Saints were denied a touchdown on an apparent 1-yard scoring pass from Shough to Kevin Austin Jr. in the third quarter when Austin was called for offensive pass interference. The Saints settled for Charlie Smyth's 29-yard field goal.

Morris gets a hug from Blank, then gets fired

Falcons owner Arthur Blank attended Morris' postgame news conference and gave the second-year coach a hug following the session. Blank listened when Morris was asked if he expects to return after his second straight 8-9 finish.

"You know, my expectation is always to be back, right?" Morris said before looking at Blank and adding, "I'm going to coach this football team as long as he allows it."

Blank showed no emotion when Morris spoke. The owner and coach embraced, and a few hours later, Morris was out of a job.

Rookie edge rusher Jalon Walker said Morris did "a great job of keeping the culture here strong. I commend him. All of our trials and tribulations this season, we've found a way, we've made a way."

Falcons hit by the flu

Cousins played after testing positive for the flu this week and acknowledged he was "a little weaker than normal."

"I walked in today with a briefcase, my suitcase, and a Kleenex box," Cousins said. "So I knew what kind of day it was going to be, but adrenaline takes over and you feel pretty good."

Inside linebacker Ronnie Harrison did not play due to the flu. Defensive tackle David Onyemata played after testing positive for the virus.

Sacks record

Rookie James Pearce Jr. sacked Shough on back-to-back plays in the third quarter. It gave the Falcons four sacks in the game and a team-record 57 for the season. The Falcons entered the weekend second in the league with 53 after finishing next-to-last with 31 last season.

Pearce finished with 10 1/2 sacks to lead NFL rookies.

Injury report

Saints: LT Kelvin Banks Jr. (left ankle) was ruled out after he was carted to the locker room in the second quarter. QB/TE Taysom Hill left with a right shoulder injury.

Falcons: CB Cobee Bryant (concussion) was knocked out of the game late in the first quarter. ... DL Brandon Dorlus (hamstring) and CB Clark Phillips (triceps, illness) were held out.

Up next

Saints: New Orleans looks forward to the NFL draft, in which it holds the No. 8 overall pick.

Falcons: Atlanta said its searches for a new coach and GM would be conducted concurrently and begin right away.

US intervention in Venezuela could test Trump's ability to hold GOP together in an election year

By STEVEN SLOAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's military intervention in Venezuela will pose a fresh test of his ability to hold together a restive Republican coalition during a challenging election year that could be defined by domestic concerns like health care and affordability.

While most Republicans lined up behind the president in the immediate aftermath of the stunning U.S. mission to capture Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro and bring him to New York to face criminal charges, there were signs of unease across the spectrum within the party. In particular, Trump's comments about the U.S. positioning itself to "run" Venezuela have raised concerns that he is abandoning the "America First" philosophy that has long distinguished him from more traditional Republicans and helped fuel his political rise.

"This is the same Washington playbook that we are so sick and tired of that doesn't serve the American people, but actually serves the big corporations, the banks and the oil executives," said Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia, a former Trump ally who is resigning on Monday, in an interview with NBC's "Meet the Press" on Sunday.

Those concerns were shared by some who are not associated with the party's far-right flank.

Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick of Pennsylvania, a moderate who is one of the most vulnerable Republicans in the November midterms, said in a statement that "the only country that the United States of America should be 'running' is the United States of America."

Those comments reflect the sensitive dynamics between Trump and his fellow Republicans at the outset of an election year in which their party risks losing control of Congress. While the president's dominance remains undisputed, the ironclad grip that he has held over the party has faced unusual challenges in recent months. Blocs of Republicans have banded together to pressure Trump to release the Jeffrey Epstein files. Others have been vocal in encouraging Trump to take concerns about affordability more seriously.

Trump's aggressive vision of US dominance

Few issues are as central to Trump's political brand as ensuring that the U.S. does not get entangled in seemingly endless foreign conflicts at the expense of domestic goals. During a 2016 Republican presidential debate, for instance, he described the war in Iraq as a "big, fat mistake."

But on Saturday, Trump said he was "not afraid of boots on the ground" in Venezuela if that was deemed necessary, and he framed his actions as prioritizing the safety and security of Americans. He articulated an aggressive vision of U.S. dominance in the Western Hemisphere, and said it was important to "surround ourselves with good neighbors."

He remained confident on Sunday, telling reporters aboard Air Force One that his supporters are "thrilled."

"They said this is what we voted for," Trump said.

However, much like the Iraq War, a president's early optimism after a dramatic military action can sometimes meet more sobering realities that drain domestic political support.

In Venezuela, U.S. troops could be placed in harm's way again as Trump warns that more military operations may be in the works. An ongoing conflict could worsen the hemisphere's refugee crisis, something the White House has tried to tamp down with stricter border controls. In addition, there are questions about how much cooperation the U.S. will receive from officials still in Venezuela or how easily the country's oil reserves could be tapped to fulfill Trump's goal of extracting more energy with Maduro out of the picture.

Trump's comments this weekend about revitalizing the oil industry in Venezuela are in line with some of the earliest critiques he made of the handling of the Iraq War. During a 2013 speech before the Conservative Political Action Conference, Trump said the U.S. should "take" oil from Iraq and "pay ourselves back."

Frustration with the handling of the Iraq War contributed to major gains for Democrats in the 2006 election and helped create the conditions for Barack Obama to be elected to the presidency two years later. Given the baggage surrounding those wars, Trump allies insist that the actions this weekend in Venezuela

are different.

"Venezuela looks nothing like Libya," Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on "Meet the Press." "It looks nothing like Iraq. It looks nothing like Afghanistan. It looks nothing like the Middle East other than the Iranian agents that are running through there plotting against America, okay?"

Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Tom Cotton argued that the 1989 ouster of Manuel Noriega in Panama is a better comparison.

"That was a successful operation," Cotton said on CNN's "State of the Union." "I believe, in the long run, this will be too."

Still, amid some of the pushback about the U.S. taking expansive responsibility for managing Venezuela, Rubio suggested a more limited role. He said that Washington would not handle day-to-day governance of the South American country other than enforcing an existing "oil quarantine" on Venezuela.

There's not much organized GOP opposition to the strikes

It is not clear that any forceful, organized opposition to Trump's Venezuela policy is emerging within the GOP. Instead, many lawmakers appear to be giving the Republican administration some room and, at most, offer some warnings.

Sen. Susan Collins of Maine, who faces a potentially challenging reelection campaign this year, called Maduro a "narco-terrorist and international drug trafficker" who should stand trial even, as she said "Congress should have been informed about the operation earlier and needs to be involved as this situation evolves."

Even Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky, who often criticizes military interventions, did not specifically oppose Trump's actions. He wrote on social media that "time will tell if regime change in Venezuela is successful without significant monetary or human cost."

Many Democrats denounced Trump's actions in Venezuela and the Democratic National Committee quickly sought to raise money by blasting "another unconstitutional war from Trump."

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio Cortez, D-N.Y., rejected the administration's argument that it was combating drug crimes, saying on X that the White House is instead focused on "oil and regime change" while seeking to "to distract from Epstein + skyrocketing healthcare costs." Former Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said the strike was part of an "old and obvious pattern" where an "unpopular president — failing on the economy and losing his grip on power at home — decides to launch a war for regime change abroad."

Maduro's case will revive a legal debate over immunity for foreign leaders tested in Noriega trial

By JOSHUA GOODMAN and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — When deposed Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro makes his first appearance in a New York courtroom Monday to face U.S. drug charges, he will likely follow the path taken by another Latin American strongman toppled by U.S. forces: Panama's Manuel Noriega.

Maduro was captured Saturday, 36 years to the day after Noriega was removed by American forces. And as was the case with the Panamanian leader, lawyers for Maduro are expected to contest the legality of his arrest, arguing that he is immune from prosecution as a sovereign head of foreign state, which is a bedrock principle of international and U.S. law.

It's an argument that is unlikely to succeed and was largely settled as a matter of law in Noriega's trial, legal experts said. Although Trump's ordering of the operation in Venezuela raises constitutional concerns because it wasn't authorized by Congress, now that Maduro is in the U.S., courts will likely bless his prosecution because, like Noriega, the U.S. doesn't recognize him as Venezuela's legitimate leader.

"There's no claim to sovereign immunity if we don't recognize him as head of state," said Dick Gregorie, a retired federal prosecutor who indicted Noriega and later went on to investigate corruption inside Maduro's government. "Several U.S. administrations, both Republican and Democrat, have called his election fraudulent and withheld U.S. recognition. Sadly, for Maduro, it means he's stuck with it."

Noriega died in 2017 after nearly three decades in prison, first in the U.S., then France and finally Panama.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 34 of 51

In his first trial, his lawyers argued that his arrest as a result of a U.S. invasion was so “shocking to the conscience” that it rendered the government’s case an illegal violation of his due process rights.

Justice Department opinion allows ‘forcible abductions’ abroad

In ordering Noriega’s removal, the White House relied on a 1989 legal opinion by then-Assistant Attorney General Bill Barr, issued six months before the invasion. That opinion said the U.N. Charter’s prohibition on the use of force in international relations does not bar the U.S. from carrying out “forcible abductions” abroad to enforce domestic laws.

Supreme Court decisions dating to the 1800s also have upheld America’s jurisdiction to prosecute foreigners regardless of whether their presence in the United States was lawfully secured.

Barr’s opinion is likely to feature in Maduro’s prosecution as well, experts said.

Drawing parallels to the Noriega case, Barr on Sunday pushed aside criticisms that the U.S. was pursuing a change of government in Venezuela instead of enforcing domestic laws. As attorney general during the first Trump administration, Barr oversaw Maduro’s indictment.

“Going after them and dismantling them inherently involves regime change,” Barr said in a “Fox News Sunday” interview. “The object here is not just to get Maduro. We indicted a whole slew of his lieutenants. It’s to clean that place out of this criminal organization.”

Key differences between Noriega and Maduro in court

There are differences between the two cases.

Noriega never held the title of president during his six-year de facto rule, leaving a string of puppets to fill that role. By contrast, Maduro claims to have won a popular mandate three times. Although the results of his 2024 reelection are disputed, a number of governments — China, Russia and Egypt among them — recognized his victory.

“Before you ever get to guilt or innocence, there are serious questions about whether a U.S. court can proceed at all,” said David Oscar Markus, a defense lawyer in Miami who has handled several high-profile criminal cases, including some involving Venezuela. “Maduro has a much stronger sovereign immunity defense than did Noriega, who was not actually the sitting president of Panama at the time.”

For U.S. courts, however, the only opinion that matters is that of the State Department, which considers Maduro a fugitive and has for months been offering a \$50 million reward for his arrest.

The first Trump administration closed the U.S. Embassy in Caracas, the capital of Venezuela, and broke diplomatic relations with Maduro’s government in 2019 after he cruised to reelection by outlawing most rival candidates. The administration then recognized the opposition head of the National Assembly as the country’s legitimate leader.

The Biden administration mostly stuck to that policy, allowing an opposition-appointed board to run Citgo, a subsidiary of Venezuela’s state-owned oil company, even as the U.S. engaged in direct talks with Maduro’s government that were aimed at paving the way for free elections.

“Courts are so deferential to the executive in matters of foreign policy that I find it difficult for the judiciary to engage in this sort of hairsplitting,” said Clark Neily, a senior vice president for criminal justice at the Cato Institute in Washington.

US sanctions are a hurdle for Maduro’s defense

Another challenge that Maduro faces is hiring a lawyer. He and his wife, Cilia Flores, who also was captured, have been under U.S. sanctions for years, making it illegal for any American to take money from them without first securing a license from the Treasury Department.

The government in Caracas now led by Maduro’s vice president, Delcy Rodríguez, may want to foot the bill, but it is similarly restricted from doing business in the United States.

The U.S. has indicted other foreign leaders on corruption and drug trafficking charges allegedly committed while in office. Among the most noteworthy is Juan Orlando Hernández, former president of Honduras, who was convicted in 2024 for drug trafficking and weapons charges and sentenced to 45 years in prison.

Trump in November announced plans to pardon Hernández, a move that drew criticism from even some Republicans who viewed it as undercutting the White House’s aggressive counternarcotics strategy centered against Maduro.

The U.S. had requested Hernández's extradition from Honduras a few weeks after he left office. After the arrest of Noriega, who had been a CIA asset before becoming a drug-running dictator, the Justice Department implemented a new policy requiring the attorney general to personally sign off on charging of any sitting foreign president, due to its implications for U.S. foreign policy.

Maduro may have a slightly stronger argument that he is entitled to a more limited form of immunity for official acts he undertook as at least a de facto leader since that question would not turn on whether he is a recognized head of state by the U.S.

But even that defense faces significant challenges, said Curtis Bradley, a University of Chicago Law School professor who previously served as a counselor of international law at the State Department.

The indictment accuses Maduro of facilitating the shipment of thousands of tons of cocaine into the U.S. by providing law enforcement cover, logistical support and partnering with "some of the most violent and prolific drug traffickers and narco-terrorists in the world."

"The government will argue that running a big narco-trafficking operation ... should not count as an official act," Bradley said.

International aid groups grapple with what Israel's ban will mean for their work in Gaza

By SAM MEDNICK and JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Israel's decision to revoke the licenses of more than three dozen humanitarian organizations this week has aid groups scrambling to grapple with what this means for their operations in Gaza and their ability to help tens of thousands of struggling Palestinians.

The 37 groups represent some of the most prominent of the more than 100 independent nongovernmental organizations working in Gaza, alongside United Nations agencies. Those banned include Doctors Without Borders, the Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam and Medical Aid for Palestinians.

The groups do everything from providing tents and water to supporting clinics and medical facilities. The overall impact, however, remains unclear.

The most immediate impact of the license revocation is that Israel will no longer allow the groups to bring supplies into the Gaza Strip or send international staffers into the territory. Israel says all suspended groups have to halt their operations by March 1.

Some groups have already been barred from bringing in aid. The Norwegian Refugee Council, for example, said it has not been allowed to bring in supplies in 10 months, leaving it distributing tents and aid brought in by other groups.

Israel says the banned groups make up only a small part of aid operations in Gaza.

But aid officials say they fulfill crucial specific functions. In a joint statement Tuesday, the U.N. and leading NGOs said the organizations that are still licensed by Israel "are nowhere near the number required just to meet immediate and basic needs" in Gaza.

The ban further strains aid operations even as Gaza's over 2 million Palestinians still face a humanitarian crisis more than 12 weeks into a ceasefire. The U.N. says that although famine has been staved off, more than a quarter of families still eat only one meal a day and food prices remain out of reach for many; more than 1 million people need better tents as winter storms lash the territory.

Why were their licenses revoked?

Earlier this year, Israel introduced strict new registration requirements for aid agencies working in Gaza. Most notably, it required groups to provide the names and personal details of local and international staff and said it would ban groups for a long list of criticisms of Israel.

The registration process is overseen by Israel's Ministry for Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism, led by a far-right member of the ruling Likud party.

Israel says the rules aim to prevent Hamas and other militants from infiltrating the groups, something it has said was happening throughout the 2-year-old war. The U.N., which leads the massive aid program in Gaza, and independent groups deny the allegations and Israeli claims of major diversion of aid supplies

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 36 of 51

by Hamas.

Aid organizations say they did not comply, in part, because they feared that handing over staff information could endanger them. More than 500 aid workers have been killed in Gaza during the war, according to the United Nations.

Israel denies targeting aid workers. But the group say Israel has been vague about how it would use the data.

The groups also said Israel was vague about how it would use the data.

"Demanding staff lists as a condition for access to territory is an outrageous overreach," Doctors Without Borders, known by its French acronym MSF, said Friday. It said Israeli officials had refused its attempts to find alternatives.

A December report on MSF issued by an Israeli government team recommended rejection of the group's license. It pointed primarily to statements by the group criticizing Israel, including referring to its campaign in Gaza as genocide and calling its monthslong ban on food entering the territory earlier this year as "a starvation tactic." It said the statements violated neutrality and constituted "delegitimization of Israel."

The report also repeated claims that an MSF employee killed in by an Israeli airstrike in 2024 was an operative with the Islamic Jihad militant group. That, it said, suggested MSF "maintains connections with a terrorist group."

MSF on Friday denied the allegations, saying it would "never knowingly employ anyone involved in military activities." It said that its statements cited by Israel simply described the destruction its teams witnessed in Gaza.

"The fault lies with those committing these atrocities, not with those who speak of them," it said.

Aid groups have a week from Dec. 31 to appeal the process.

Medical services could see biggest impact

Independent NGOs play a major role in propping up Gaza's health sector, devastated by two years of Israeli bombardment and restrictions on supplies.

MSF said Israel's decision would have a catastrophic impact on its work in Gaza, where it provides funding and international staff for six hospitals as well as running two field hospitals and eight primary health centers, clinics and medical points. It also runs two of Gaza's five stabilization centers helping children with severe malnutrition.

Its teams treated 100,000 trauma cases, performed surgeries on 10,000 patients and handled a third of Gaza's births, the group says. It has 60 international staffers in the West Bank and Gaza and more than 1,200 local staff — most medical professionals.

Since the ceasefire began in early October, MSF has brought in about 7% of the 2,239 tons (2,032 metric tonnes) of medical supplies that Israel has allowed into Gaza, according to a U.N. tracking dashboard. That makes it the largest provider of medical supplies after U.N. agencies and the Red Cross, according to the dashboard.

Medecins du Monde, another group whose license is being halted, runs another four primary health clinics.

Overburdened Palestinian staff

Aid groups say the most immediate impact will likely be the inability to send international staff into Gaza.

Foreign staff provide key technical expertise and emotional support for their Palestinian colleagues.

"Having international presence in Gaza is a morale booster for our staff who are already feeling isolated," said Shaina Low, communications adviser for the Norwegian Refugee Council, which is one of the main NGOs providing shelter supplies and fresh water to displaced people.

NRC has roughly 30 international staff who rotate in and out of Gaza working alongside some 70 Palestinians.

While any operations by the 37 groups in the West Bank will likely remain open, those with offices in east Jerusalem, which Israel considers its territory, might have to close.

Halt on supplies

Many of the 37 groups already had been blocked from bringing supplies into Gaza since March, said Bushra Khalidi, Oxfam's policy lead for Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 37 of 51

What changes with the formal license revocation is "that these practices are now formalized, giving Israel full impunity to restrict operations and shut out organizations it disagrees with," she said.

Some of the groups have turned to buying supplies within Gaza rather than bringing them in, but that is slower and more expensive, she said. Other groups dug into reserve stocks, pared down distribution and had to work with broken or heavily repaired equipment because they couldn't bring in new ones.

Amed Khan, an American humanitarian philanthropist who has been privately donating medicine and emergency nutrition for children to Gaza, said the impact extends beyond the aid groups.

He relies on NGOs to receive and distribute the supplies, but the fewer groups that Israel approves, the harder it is to find one.

"It's death by bureaucracy," he said.

'Still shaken': Trepidation in Venezuela after US captures Maduro

By REGINA GARCIA CANO, MEGAN JANETSKY and JUAN ARRAEZ Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — An anxious quiet fell over Venezuela's capital on Sunday as trepidation mixed with joy while a nation waited to see what comes next.

People were slow to resume routines in Caracas after President Nicolás Maduro was deposed and captured in a dramatic U.S. military operation. Dozens of stores, restaurants and churches remained closed. Those on the streets looked shell-shocked, staring at their phones or into the distance.

"People are still shaken," said 77-year-old David Leal, who arrived to work as a parking attendant but realized he likely would not have customers. He pointed to the deserted street, a few blocks from Venezuela's presidential palace, which was guarded by armed civilians and military personnel.

'May God give us strength'

Venezuela is no stranger to political tumult, but the dead-of-night U.S. military operation early Saturday marked a new chapter with no ready script.

U.S. President Donald Trump initially said the U.S. would "run" the country until there was stability, a remark that Secretary of State Marco Rubio seemed to walk back on Sunday.

Rubio insisted in interviews that Washington will use control of Venezuela's oil industry to force policy changes, and called the government currently in place illegitimate. The country is home to the world's largest proven crude oil reserves.

"We want to see Venezuela transition to be a place completely different than what it looks like today. But obviously, we don't have the expectation that's going to happen in the next 15 hours," Rubio said.

Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino López, flanked by the high military command, told Venezuelans that Maduro was still the rightful leader. Presidential duties, however, now belong to Vice President Delcy Rodríguez, whom the high court ordered to assume the role of interim president.

Rodríguez made no public comment Sunday.

Maduro's cadre of government officials demanded his release from custody in New York, where his first court appearance is set for Monday. State-controlled media did not air the images of him handcuffed on U.S. soil.

Venezuelans instead saw them on social media, and many could not believe their eyes.

"May God give us strength for what we are experiencing. I'm sad. He is a human being," said Nely Gutiérrez, a retiree, as her eyes welled with tears. "They have him handcuffed, and if he is in the hands of the empire, no one can save him from there, only God, not even God. He will die there."

Gutiérrez had walked to church only to find it closed. She said she would have prayed for peace in Venezuela and for Maduro. She declined to say whether she ever voted for him but said, "The word of God says love your enemy."

Fear of celebrating

In the U.S. and some Latin American countries, Maduro's ouster was celebrated.

In Venezuela, the scene was different, with some supporters burning U.S. flags and holding signs reading "Gringo go home."

Others muted any anti-Maduro feelings for now. Construction worker Daniel Medalla said people did not

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 38 of 51

dare celebrate out of fear of government repression.

"We were longing for it," Medalla, 66, said of Maduro's exit.

Memories remain fresh of the government crackdown following the 2024 presidential election, which Maduro claimed to have won despite credible evidence that he lost by a more than 2-to-1 margin. Protests left 28 people dead, 220 injured and at least 2,000 detained, according to official figures.

The presence of police and military personnel across Caracas on Sunday was notable for its smaller size compared with an average day. Soldiers attempted to clear an area of an air base that burned along with at least three passenger buses during the U.S. attack.

Rubio in interviews said no U.S. forces were on the ground in Venezuela but didn't rule out further strikes there.

'This is it, what we are left with: ruins.'

Wilman González picked through rubble and broken furniture coating the floor of his home in the coastal state of La Guaira on Sunday.

He was quiet, mourning everything he'd unexpectedly lost early Saturday morning when an American strike blew apart the wall of his apartment. The blast killed his sleeping 80-year-old aunt Rosa Elena González.

The family rushed her to the hospital, where medical staff scrambled to give her oxygen, but González said there was nothing they could do.

Venezuelan officials have said Saturday's operation killed civilians and military personnel. But they have not given a toll, and the government's press office has not responded to multiple requests.

Now, with stitches lining the corner of his blackened eye, González was left staring at the gaping hole in his wall.

"This is it, what we are left with: ruins," he said.

González spoke with anger not just at all he'd lost, but also the compounding economic and political crises that Venezuela has endured for years, and a government that he said has stopped working for the people.

The government "can throw me in jail if they want, but I'm talking about the reality of the country we live in," González said. "What we want is a government that is good for all Venezuelans, not just a few."

Rain continues in parts of California reeling from flooding and high tides

CORTE MADERA, Calif. (AP) — Crews cleared mud from key California highways as forecasters warned Sunday that more thunderstorms were on the way after downpours and high tides caused flooding, road closures and rescues of people trapped in cars.

Five northern counties remained under a flood watch, with up to three inches (7.6 cm) of rain possible through Monday night in areas that have been drenched off and on since around Christmas, said the National Weather Service office in Eureka. At least a foot (.3 meters) of snow was likely in the mountains.

To the south near the San Francisco Bay Area, waters were slowly receding after roadways from Sausalito to San Rafael were flooded during heavy rain that coincided with record-breaking "King Tides." Such tides occur when the moon is in its closest position to the Earth, creating a stronger gravitational pull.

Some people kayaked along swamped streets, while others waded through water above their knees. Authorities were called to assist when cars got stuck in water as high as 3 and 4 feet (1.1 and 1.2 meters), Marin County Sheriff's Sgt. Michael Dobbins said Saturday.

"I've been around here for the King Tides and I've never seen it this high. Never," Jeremy Hager of San Rafael told KTVU-TV.

Flooding was reported across Marin, Sonoma, Alameda, San Mateo and San Francisco counties.

While the tides were waning, lingering thunderstorms on Sunday could cause additional problems throughout low-lying areas, forecasters said. "For anyone driving, slow down and allow extra time to reach your destination," the Bay Area office of the weather service warned on social media.

Farther south in Santa Barbara County, a key highway was reopened Sunday after it was blocked for

most of the weekend near Goleta due to a series of mudslides. A man died after he was swept into a creek during the storm, the sheriff's office said Saturday.

Parts of Santa Barbara County received more than four inches (10 cm) of rain over two days, the weather service said Sunday.

After a mostly dry autumn, California has been hit by a series of powerful winter storms that brought the wettest holiday season to the state in years.

How cocaine and corruption led to the indictment of Maduro

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A newly unsealed U.S. Justice Department indictment accuses captured Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro of running a "corrupt, illegitimate government" fueled by an extensive drug-trafficking operation that flooded the U.S. with thousands of tons of cocaine.

The arrest of Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, in a stunning military operation early Saturday in Venezuela sets the stage for a major test for U.S. prosecutors as they seek to secure a conviction in a New York courtroom against the longtime leader of the oil-rich South American nation.

Attorney General Pam Bondi said in a post on X that Maduro and Flores "will soon face the full wrath of American justice on American soil in American courts."

Here's a look at the accusations against Maduro and the charges he faces:

Drug and weapons charges

Maduro is charged alongside his wife, his son and three others. Maduro is indicted on four counts: narco-terrorism conspiracy, cocaine importation conspiracy, possession of machine guns and destructive devices and conspiracy to possess machine guns and destructive devices.

Maduro is facing the same charges as in an earlier indictment brought against him in Manhattan federal court in 2020, during the first Trump presidency. The new indictment unsealed Saturday, which adds charges against Flores, was filed under seal in the Southern District of New York just before Christmas.

Maduro is due to make his first appearance Monday in federal court in Manhattan. A video posted Saturday night on social media by a White House account showed Maduro, smiling, as he was escorted through a U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration office in New York by two federal agents grasping his arms. He was expected to be detained while awaiting trial at a federal jail in Brooklyn.

'Cocaine-fueled corruption' flourished

The indictment accuses Maduro of partnering with "some of the most violent and prolific drug traffickers and narco-terrorists in the world" to allow for the shipment of thousands of tons of cocaine into the U.S.

Authorities allege powerful and violent drug-trafficking organizations, such as the Sinaloa Cartel and Tren de Aragua gang, worked directly with the Venezuelan government and then sent profits to high-ranking officials who helped and protected them in exchange.

But a U.S. intelligence assessment published in April, which drew on input from the 18 agencies that comprise the intelligence community, found no coordination between Tren de Aragua and the Venezuelan government.

Maduro allowed "cocaine-fueled corruption to flourish for his own benefit, for the benefit of members of his ruling regime, and for the benefit of his family members," the indictment alleges.

U.S. authorities allege that Maduro and his family "provided law enforcement cover and logistical support" to cartels moving drugs throughout the region, resulting in as much as 250 tons of cocaine trafficked through Venezuela annually by 2020, according to the indictment.

Drugs were moved on go-fast vessels, fishing boats and container ships or on planes from clandestine airstrips, the indictment says.

"This cycle of narcotics-based corruption lines the pockets of Venezuelan officials and their families while also benefiting violent narco-terrorists who operate with impunity on Venezuelan soil and who help produce, protect, and transport tons of cocaine to the United States," the indictment says.

Successive U.S. administrations have warned about Venezuela's role as a transit point for cocaine and a

haven for criminal gangs, terrorist groups and drug-smuggling leftist rebels from neighboring Colombia. While reliable data is hard to ascertain, the vast majority of cocaine departs South America from Colombia and Ecuador, making its way northward through the eastern Pacific Ocean, not the Caribbean.

Allegations of kidnappings and murders ordered

The U.S. accuses Maduro and his wife of ordering kidnappings, beatings and murders "against those who owed them drug money or otherwise undermined their drug trafficking operation." That includes the killing of a local drug boss in Caracas, according to the indictment.

Maduro's wife is also accused of accepting hundreds of thousands of dollars in bribes in 2007 to arrange a meeting between "a large-scale drug trafficker" and the director of Venezuela's National Anti-Drug Office. In a corrupt deal, the drug trafficker then agreed to pay a monthly bribe to the director of the anti-drug office as well as about \$100,000 for each cocaine-carrying flight "to ensure the flight's safe passage." Some of that money then went to Maduro's wife, the indictment says.

Nephews of Maduro's wife were heard during recorded meetings with confidential U.S. government sources in 2015 agreeing to send "multi-hundred-kilogram cocaine shipments" from Maduro's "presidential hanger" at a Venezuelan airport. The nephews during the recorded meetings explained "that they were at 'war' with the United States," the indictment alleges. They were both sentenced in 2017 to 18 years in prison for conspiring to send tons of cocaine into the U.S. before being released in 2022 as part of a prisoner swap in exchange for seven imprisoned Americans.

Rubio calls operation a 'law enforcement function'

During a news conference, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Dan Caine, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, cast the military raid that captured Maduro and his wife as an action carried out on behalf of the Department of Justice. Caine said the operation was made "at the request of the Justice Department."

Rubio, as he responded to a question about whether Congress had been notified, said the U.S. raid to get the couple was "basically a law enforcement function," adding that it was an instance in which the "Department of War supported the Department of Justice." He called Maduro "a fugitive of American justice with a \$50 million reward" over his head.

Hundreds march in silence to honor victims of Swiss bar fire that left 40 dead

By JOHN LEICESTER and JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

CRANS-MONTANA, Switzerland (AP) — Hundreds marched in silence Sunday to honor the victims of the New Year's Eve fire at a bar in the Swiss Alpine resort of Crans-Montana, which left 40 dead and many severely injured.

Somber mourners, many with reddened eyes, filed silently out of the chapel to organ music after the hourlong Mass at the Chapelle Saint-Christophe in Crans-Montana. Some exchanged hugs before marching up a hill to Le Constellation bar.

Many hundreds of people walked in the dense snaking procession in the bright sunlight past shuttered stores. Up on the mountain overlooking the town, snow machines sent plumes of white flakes into the air.

At the top of the street, in front of Le Constellation — which is still largely shielded from view by white screens — the swelling crowd stood in near total silence, some weeping.

Then they broke out into sustained applause for the rescue teams and police who rushed to the scene of horror, their hands in gloves and mittens against the cold. Mourners and well-wishers deposited bouquets at a makeshift memorial piled with flowers, cuddly toys and other tributes. Some firefighters wiped their eyes too.

'They went there to party'

"Through this tragic event, I believe we must all remember that we are all brothers and sisters in humanity," Véronique Barras, a local resident who knows grieving families, said. "It's important to support each other, to hug each other, and to move forward towards light."

Cathy Premer said her daughter was out celebrating her 17th birthday on New Year's Eve when she

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 41 of 51

called in the early hours of the morning to say she was stuck because Le Constellation was cordoned off.

"For the young — but even for adults — it's hard to understand things that seem inexplicable," she said. "They went there to party, it's a destination for Dec. 31, it's very festive, there were people of many nationalities ... and it all turned into a tragedy."

In the crowd, Paola Ponti Greppi, an 80-year-old Italian who has a house in Crans-Montana, called for safety checks in bars. "We need more safety in these places because it's not the only place like this. Why didn't the town do the proper checks? For me that's terrible."

A Mass for the victims

During the Mass, the Rev. Gilles Cavin spoke of the "terrible uncertainty" for families unsure if their loved ones are among the dead or still alive among the injured.

"There are no words strong enough to express the dismay, anguish, and anger of those who are affected in their lives today. And yet, we are here, gathered because silence alone is not enough," he said.

In the crowded pews, a grieving woman listened intently, her hands clasped tightly and sometimes clasping rosary beads, as speakers delivered readings in German, French and Italian.

Forty people died and 119 were injured in the blaze that broke out around 1:30 a.m. on Thursday at Le Constellation bar. Police have said many of the victims were in their teens to mid-20s.

By Sunday evening, Swiss authorities had identified all of the 40 fatalities.

A grieving mother

One of the victims was 16-year-old Arthur Brodard, whose mother had been frantically searching for him.

"Our Arthur has now left to party in paradise," a visibly shaken Laetitia Brodard said in a Facebook story posted on Saturday night, speaking to a camera. "We can start our mourning, knowing that he is in peace and in the light."

Brodard's frenzied search for her son reflected the desperation of families of the young people disappeared during the fire, who did not know whether their loved ones were dead or in the hospital.

Swiss authorities said the process of identifying victims was particularly hard because of the advanced degree of the burns, requiring the use of DNA samples. Brodard also had given her DNA sample to help in the identification process.

In her Facebook post, she thanked those who "testified their compassion, their love" and to those who shared information as she anxiously searched and waited for news of her son. Other parents and siblings are still waiting in anguish.

Bar managers face a criminal investigation

Swiss authorities have opened a criminal investigation of the bar managers.

The two are suspected of involuntary homicide, involuntary bodily harm and involuntarily causing a fire, the Valais region's chief prosecutor, Beatrice Pilloud, told reporters Saturday. The announcement of the investigation did not name the managers.

Regional police said Sunday there were no legal grounds so far that would require the managers to be held pending the legal process. They have not been deemed to be a flight risk.

Investigators have said they believe festive sparkling candles atop Champagne bottles ignited the fire when they came too close to the ceiling of the crowded bar.

Authorities are looking into whether sound-dampening material on the ceiling conformed with regulations and whether the candles were permitted for use in the bar. The investigation also centers on other safety measures on the premises, including fire extinguishers and escape routes, and whether previous work at the site was up to code.

"Initial witness accounts cited a fire that spread quickly, generating a lot of smoke and a huge wave of heat," the police statement Sunday said. "Everything happened very fast."

Swiss President Guy Parmelin announced a national day of mourning for the victims on Jan. 9.

France's Health Minister Stéphanie Rist said 17 patients have received care in France, out of a total of 35 transferred from Switzerland to five European countries. Other patients were planned to be transferred to Germany, Italy and Belgium.

Gunmen kill at least 30 villagers and abduct others during raid in northern Nigeria

MINNA, Nigeria (AP) — At least 30 villagers have been killed and several others are missing after gunmen raided a village in northern Nigeria's Niger state, police said Sunday, the latest in a cycle of deadly violence in the conflict-hit region.

The gunmen stormed the Kasuwan-Daji village in the Borgu local government area on Saturday evening and opened fire on residents. They also razed down the local market and several houses, state police spokesman Wasiu Abiodun said in a statement.

At least two residents put the death toll at 37 and said it could be much higher as some people remained missing as of Sunday. Locals also said the security forces are yet to arrive in the area, contradicting a police claim that they have deployed officers to search for those kidnapped.

Rev. Fr. Stephen Kabirat, a spokesman for the Catholic Church of Kontagora Diocese where the attack happened, told local media that the gunmen killed more than 40 people and abducted several others, including children.

Nigeria's President Bola Tinubu condemned the attack and said he has directed security officials to hunt down the gunmen and rescue the hostages.

"These terrorists have tested the resolve of our country and its people," Tinubu said in a statement. "They must face the full consequences of their criminal actions. No matter who they are or what their intent is, they must be hunted down. In addition, those who aid, abet, or enable them will also be brought to justice."

The gunmen had been lurking around nearby communities for about a week before the attack, according to one resident who asked not to be named for fear of his safety. Now survivors are too afraid to go recover the bodies.

"The bodies are there (in Kasuwan-Daji village). If we don't see any security, how can we go there?" the resident said, adding that the attack lasted for up to three hours.

Such attacks are common in Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, where dozens of rogue gangs seeking control often target remote communities with limited security and government presence.

The attack on Kasuwan-Daji village happened near the Papiri community, where more than 300 schoolchildren and their teachers were kidnapped from a Catholic school in November.

The attackers who raided Kasuwan-Daji arrived from the National Park Forest along Kabe district, according to the police, pointing to a usual trend where abandoned expansive forest reserves act as hideouts for armed gangs.

Marjorie Taylor Greene made waves. Her constituents don't agree on whether it was worth it

By BILL BARROW and EMILIE MEGNIEN Associated Press

DALTON, Ga. (AP) — President Donald Trump says Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene is a traitor. But for Jackie Harling, who chairs the local Republican Party in Greene's northwestern corner of Georgia, she's still "mama bear."

"Every thought that we had in our minds, she seemed to be very good at verbalizing," Harling said.

Saying things that no one else would say may be Greene's most durable legacy as she steps down on Monday, resigning halfway through her third term in Congress. First, it was her embrace of conspiracy theories and incendiary rhetoric, turning her into a national symbol of a political culture without guardrails. Then it was her willingness to criticize Trump, a schism that made her position in Washington untenable.

In interviews in Greene's district, constituents described her over and over as a "fighter." For Republicans like Harling, that was enough.

"We got a lot of satisfaction," Harling said. "She was our voice."

It was less satisfying for an independent like Heath Patterson, who struggled to think of ways that

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 43 of 51

Greene's fame and notoriety made a difference for her district during her time in the U.S. Capitol.

"I don't know of anything that she did do here except, certainly, got her voice heard. But where did we, how did we benefit from that?" he said. "I don't think we did."

From MAGA warrior to exile

Greene began clashing with Trump last year, criticizing his focus on foreign policy and his reluctance to release documents involving the Jeffrey Epstein case. The president eventually had enough, saying he would support a primary challenge against her. Greene announced a week later that she would resign.

She has kept up the criticism since then, including over Trump's decision to strike Venezuela this weekend.

"This is the same Washington playbook that we are so sick and tired of that doesn't serve the American people, but actually serves the big corporations, the banks and the oil executives," she told NBC's "Meet the Press" on Sunday.

The split was surprising because, until that point, Greene's trajectory had mirrored Trump's own rise to power. She didn't become politically involved until his presidential campaign in 2016 and first ran for Congress in 2020. Greene considered trying to represent Georgia's 6th Congressional District, which includes the Atlanta suburbs, before relocating to the 14th District, where the Republican incumbent was retiring.

She remained loyal to Trump after he lost to Democrat Joe Biden, promoting Trump's falsehoods about a stolen election. When Trump ran again in 2024, she toured the country with him and spoke at his rallies while wearing a red "Make America Great Again" hat.

Her Georgia district is one of the most Republican-leaning in the state, although it wasn't always that way. The region once backed Democrats like Zell Miller, a governor and U.S. senator who spearheaded Georgia's lottery program that still bankrolls college scholarships and early childhood education programs.

But residents have felt left behind by years of change, said Jan Pourquoi, a Belgian native who emigrated in 1987, became a U.S. citizen and later won local office in Whitfield County.

His county's population has grown by roughly by 32% since 1990, which pales in comparison with statewide growth of 74%. As the U.S. becomes more urban, secular, and diverse, Pourquoi said residents believe they're "culturally oppressed."

"They see themselves as great Americans, proud Americans, Christian Americans, and that doesn't fit the American model anymore as they see it," said Pourquoi, who said he left the Republican Party because of Trump. Greene exemplified the political backlash, which he summarized as "stick it to them — any possible way you can."

Georgia leaders, like those in many other states, have spent years drawing congressional districts to pack like-minded voters together. That means in red areas, whoever wins the Republican primary is virtually guaranteed to come out on top in the general election, incentivizing candidates like Greene with more hard-line views.

The political landscape means former Republicans such as Pourquoi or independents like Patterson say they have no shot at helping a centrist win.

"I'm kind of square in the middle," said Patterson, adding that it sometimes feels like he's "the only one around here who's that way."

Republicans plan their path forward

Whitfield County Republicans gathered at a local restaurant last month for their annual Christmas party, where seasonal decor and a visit from Santa Claus were intermingled with the red, white and blue regalia and a smattering of MAGA paraphernalia.

There was still deep affection for Greene and plenty of talk about the cultural issues she championed.

"I think it's just the fact that she was unwavering in 'America First,'" said Gavin Swafford, who worked on Greene's initial campaign.

Swafford called her "an accountability representative" because of her clashes with Republican leaders.

Lisa Adams, a party volunteer, called Greene "our stand-up person."

"Look at her stance on transgenderism. That's a big one," she said. "Abortion. That's a big one."

None of Greene's inconsistencies — real or perceived — were a problem, they said.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 44 of 51

For example, Greene has praised the Korean-owned solar panel factories in the district even after voting against Biden-era policies intended to boost production. She broke with Republicans, Trump included, and sided with Democrats who wanted to extend premium subsidies for Affordable Care Act health insurance customers.

None of the Republicans at the Christmas party expressed any interest in taking sides between Trump and Greene.

"I think it's inevitable when you have two firebrands that are both stubborn," Swafford said.

Asked whether the district missed having a more traditional lawmaker, the kind who might cut bipartisan deals and bring as much federal money as possible back home, Swafford was unconcerned.

"The biggest thing that Marjorie contributed wasn't even in legislation," he said.

Still, there was also a sense among some that Greene, for all her bareknuckle politics, could have gone further.

Star Black, a Republican who is running to replace Greene, was already planning a primary challenge before she announced her resignation.

"You had a great representative who was a fighter. Well, you know what? I want to take it one step further," Black said.

"Not only do you need a fighter," Black said, "you need someone who is going to listen. You need someone who is going to represent you."

Drone strikes kill 2 in Russian border regions ahead of Ukraine peace talks

By The Associated Press undefined

Two people were killed in Ukrainian drone strikes in Russian border regions, local officials said Sunday, ahead of peace talks to end the nearly 4-year-old war in Paris this week.

Belgorod regional Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov said one person died and two others, including a young child, were wounded when a Ukrainian drone struck a car.

Another person was killed in a drone strike on a village in the Kursk region, regional Gov. Alexander Khinshtein said Sunday.

In Ukraine, three people were wounded in the Kharkiv region in drone strikes overnight into Sunday, the country's State Emergency Service said.

Meanwhile, the death toll from a Russian missile attack on the city of Kharkiv on Friday increased to five when body parts were found under the rubble of a building, Kharkiv Mayor Ihor Terekhov said Sunday.

The latest attacks came after national security advisers from Europe and other allies visited Kyiv on Saturday to discuss security guarantees and economic support, as a U.S.-led diplomatic push to end the war in Ukraine intensifies.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, preparing to travel to Paris for a meeting with partners, said Saturday that work on the peace proposals could now accelerate as Ukraine has shared all documents under discussion with the 18 national security advisers, including those on security guarantees.

He said representatives from Ukraine's General Staff and military sector would meet on Monday in Paris, followed by a meeting Tuesday of European leaders, where he said he hoped documents on security guarantees would be finalized. He said there also would be meetings with U.S. representatives in Paris.

North Korea launches ballistic missiles toward sea ahead of South Korean leader's visit to China

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea launched multiple ballistic missiles toward its eastern waters Sunday, its neighbors said, just hours before South Korea's president left for China for talks expected to cover North Korea's nuclear program.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 45 of 51

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement it detected several ballistic missile launches from North Korea's capital region around 7:50 a.m. It said the missiles flew about 900 kilometers (560 miles) and that South Korea and U.S. authorities were analyzing details of the launches.

South Korea's Defense Ministry noted the launches violated U.N. Security Council resolutions that ban any ballistic activities by North Korea. It urged North Korea to cease provocative actions immediately and respond to South Korea's push to restart talks and restore peace on the Korean Peninsula.

Japanese Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi said that at least two missile launches by North Korea have been confirmed. "They are a serious problem, threatening the peace and security of our nation, the region and the world," Koizumi told reporters.

The U.S. military said in a statement on social media that the missile launches did not "pose an immediate threat to U.S. personnel or territory, or to our allies."

"The United States remains committed to the defense of the U.S. homeland and our allies in the region," the military said.

North Korea ramps up weapons display ahead of political meet

The launches were the latest weapons demonstration by North Korea in recent weeks. Experts say North Korea is aiming to show off or review its achievements in the defense sector ahead of its upcoming ruling party congress, the first of its kind in five years. Observers are watching the Workers Party congress to see whether North Korea will set a new policy on the U.S. and resume long-stalled talks between the two countries.

North Korea has been focusing on testing activities to enlarge its nuclear arsenal since its leader Kim Jong Un's summitry with U.S. President Donald Trump fell apart in 2019. Kim has also boosted his diplomatic credentials by aligning with Russia over its war in Ukraine and tightening relations with China. Observers say Kim would believe his leverage has sharply increased to wrest concessions from Trump if they sit down for talks again.

North Korea hasn't announced when it will hold the congress, but South Korea's spy service said it will likely occur in January or February.

Launches comes before South Korean leader's trip to China

Sunday's launches also came hours before South Korean President Lee Jae Myung departed for China for a summit with President Xi Jinping. During the four-day trip, Lee's office said he would request China, North Korea's major ally and biggest trading partner, to take "a constructive role" in efforts to promote peace on the Korean Peninsula.

South Korea and the U.S. have long asked China to exercise its influence on North Korea to persuade it to return to talks or give up its nuclear program. But there are questions on how big of a leverage China has on its socialist neighbor. China, together with Russia, has also repeatedly blocked the U.S. and others' attempts to toughen economic sanctions on North Korea in recent years.

Later Sunday, South Korea convened an emergency national security council meeting to discuss the North Korean missile launches. The council reported details of the launches and unspecified South Korean steps to Lee, according to the presidential office.

North Korea condemns US operation in Venezuela

The launches followed Saturday's dramatic U.S. military operation that ousted Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro from power and brought him to the U.S. to face narco-terrorism conspiracy charges. It represented America's most assertive action to achieve regime change in a country since the nation's 2003 invasion of Iraq.

North Korea's Foreign Ministry on Sunday slammed the U.S. operation, saying it again shows "the rogue and brutal nature of the U.S." A ministry statement said it denounces the U.S. act as "the most serious form of encroachment of sovereignty."

"Kim Jong Un may feel vindicated about his efforts to build a nuclear deterrent, as he likely did after Trump's strikes on Iran," said Leif-Eric Easley, professor of international studies at Ewha Womans University in Seoul. "However, leaders of hostile regimes will probably live with greater paranoia after seeing how

quickly Maduro was extracted from his country to stand trial in the United States.”

The official Korean Central News Agency said Sunday Kim visited a weapons factory on Saturday to review multipurpose precision guided weapons produced there. KCNA cited Kim as ordering officials to expand the current production capacity by about 2.5 times.

Last Sunday, North Korea test-fired what it called long-range strategic cruise missiles. On Dec. 25, North Korea released photos showing apparent progress in the construction of its first nuclear-powered submarine.

How the Monroe Doctrine factors into US arrest of Venezuela’s Nicolás Maduro

By MEG KINNARD Associated Press

In detailing the U.S. military action that led to the arrest of Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro, President Donald Trump referenced the Monroe Doctrine, a maxim that has shaped American foreign policy for two centuries.

The doctrine formulated by President James Monroe was originally aimed at opposing European meddling in the Western Hemisphere. It has since been invoked repeatedly by subsequent presidents angling to justify U.S. intervention in the region.

On Saturday, the consequential doctrine of America’s fifth president was cited by the 47th president as partial justification for the capture of a foreign leader to face criminal charges in the United States. Trump even quipped that some now called it “the Don-roe Doctrine.”

Political scientists are now looking back on the use of the Monroe Doctrine through history and drawing connections to how the Trump administration is seeking to apply it to current foreign policy, including the Republican president’s assertion that Washington would “run” Venezuela until a suitable replacement for Maduro was in place,

Here’s a look at the Monroe Doctrine, how it has been invoked over time and how it has informed Trump’s decision making:

What is the Monroe Doctrine?

Articulated in Monroe’s 1823 address to Congress, it was intended to ward off European colonization or other interference in independent nations of the Western Hemisphere. In return, the U.S. also agreed to stay out of European wars and internal affairs.

At the time, many Latin American countries had just gained independence from European empires. Monroe wanted both to prevent Europe from reclaiming control and to assert U.S. influence in the hemisphere.

Through the centuries, much of that has included Venezuela, according to Jay Sexton, a history professor at the University of Missouri.

“Historically, Venezuela has been the pretext or the trigger for a lot of corollaries to the Monroe Doctrine,” said Sexton, author of “The Monroe Doctrine: Empire and Nation in Nineteenth-Century America,” citing instances from the late 1800s, all the way through Trump’s first administration.

“And going back to the 19th century, this has been a divided, fractious country that’s had difficult relations with foreign powers and is also courted, relationships with rivals of the United States.”

The Roosevelt Corollary and ‘Big Stick’ diplomacy

European leaders initially paid little attention to the proclamation, but the Monroe Doctrine has been invoked in the two centuries since to justify U.S. military interventions in Latin America.

The first direct challenge came after France installed Emperor Maximilian in Mexico in the 1860s. After the end of the Civil War, France relented under U.S. pressure and withdrew.

In 1904, President Theodore Roosevelt’s argument that the U.S. should be allowed to intervene in unstable Latin American countries became known as the Roosevelt Corollary, a justification invoked in a number of places, including supporting Panama’s secession from Colombia, which helped secure the Panama Canal Zone for the U.S.

The Cold War era saw the Monroe Doctrine invoked as a defense against communism, such as the U.S. demand in 1962 that Soviet missiles be withdrawn from Cuba, as well as the Reagan administration’s op-

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 47 of 51

position of the leftist Sandinista government in Nicaragua.

Gretchen Murphy, a professor at the University of Texas, described Trump's reference to the doctrine as in line with how it had been used by his predecessors, including Roosevelt, who she said "claimed that the Monroe Doctrine could be extended to justify interventions that instead of defending Latin American nations from European intervention, policed them to make sure their governments acted in U.S. commercial and strategic interests."

"I think Trump is jumping on this familiar pattern -- citing the Monroe Doctrine to legitimate interventions that undermine real democracy, and ones where various kinds of interests are served, including commercial interests," said Murphy, author of "Hemispheric Imaginings: The Monroe Doctrine and Narratives of U.S. Empire."

What has Trump said about the Monroe Doctrine?

Trump said that Venezuela, under Maduro's rule, had been "increasingly hosting foreign adversaries in our region and acquiring menacing offensive weapons that could threaten U.S. interests." Trump called those actions "in gross violation of the core principles of American foreign policy dating back more than two centuries."

But, Trump added, "under our new national security strategy, American dominance in the Western Hemisphere will never be questioned again."

"We want to surround ourselves with good neighbors, we want to surround ourselves with stability, and we want to surround ourselves with energy," Trump said. "We have tremendous energy in that country. It's very important that we protect it. We need that for ourselves. We need that for the world."

The Trump Corollary?

Asked Saturday how the U.S. running a country represented his "America First" mentality, Trump defended the move as one that, similarly to the Monroe Doctrine's origin story, was aimed at strengthening America itself.

The administration's national security strategy references "a 'Trump Corollary' to the Monroe Doctrine," intended to "restore American preeminence in the Western Hemisphere."

"Under our new national security strategy, American dominance in the Western Hemisphere will never be questioned again, won't happen," Trump said. "For decades, other administrations have neglected or even contributed to these growing security threats in the Western Hemisphere. Under the Trump administration, we are reasserting American power in a very powerful way in our home region."

"What presidents used to do is they would cloak whatever their agenda was in the Monroe Doctrine by issuing corollaries," Sexton said.

After World War II, Sexton said, rather than devising corollaries to the Monroe Doctrine, presidents started issuing their own, citing Harry S. Truman and Richard Nixon. He Sexton said he assumed Trump might take similar action.

"When you're talking about a Trump Corollary, I just knew Trump wouldn't want to be a corollary to another president's doctrine, that somehow this would evolve into a Trump doctrine," he said.

The national security strategy released by the White House in December portrayed European allies as weak and aimed to reassert America's dominance in the Western Hemisphere.

Laying out a series of military strikes on alleged drug trafficking boats in the Caribbean Sea and the eastern Pacific Ocean as "a 'Trump Corollary' to the Monroe Doctrine" to "restore American preeminence in the Western Hemisphere," the document said it aimed to combat the flow of narcotics and control migration. The strategy marked a reimagining of the U.S. military footprint in the region even after building up the largest military presence there in generations.

Sexton said the military operation to capture Maduro — and a possible protracted U.S. involvement in Venezuela — could cause another split among supporters of Trump's "Make America Great Again" movement, similar to the one after the administration's strikes last year on Iran's nuclear facilities.

"This is not just the sort of hit-and-run kind of job where, like in Iran a couple months ago, we dropped the missiles, and then you can then you can go on and carry on as normal," Sexton said. "This is going

to be potentially quite a mess and contradict the administration's policies on withdrawing from forever wars — and there's a lot of isolationists, within the MAGA coalition."

Last year's odd economy in five charts, and what to watch for in 2026

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The economy in 2025 was filled with contradictions, as growth was healthy while hiring slowed, inflation stayed elevated and unemployment rose.

Last year's odd outcomes raise a host of questions for the upcoming year: Will a growing economy eventually boost the sluggish job market? Or are last year's weak job gains a sign of a stumbling economy that could get worse?

There is another uncomfortable possibility: The economy could keep growing without much hiring, as technology — particularly artificial intelligence — enables more companies to step up their production of goods and services without adding more workers, leading to a "jobless expansion."

Adding to the complications, the six-week government shutdown last fall disrupted the collection and publication of economic data, leaving policymakers at the Federal Reserve with a cloudier view of the economy that will only slowly clear up this year.

"2026 begins at a time when it is hard to say how 2025 ended," Stephen Stanley, chief economist at Santander, an investment bank, said in a note to clients.

Sharp inequality has also meant that wealthier U.S. households account for a rising share of spending, so that even healthy growth figures mask underlying weaknesses among lower-income families — what many economists refer to as the "K-shaped" economy.

Still, Stanley, like many economists, is somewhat optimistic: He expects that hiring will pick up on the back of stronger growth fueled by large tax refunds early this year, a result of President Donald Trump's tax cut legislation. Companies may also step up hiring because they face much less uncertainty this year from tariffs.

This year "could turn out to be a better year," said Federal Reserve governor Christopher Waller last month. "Now whether that pulls the labor market along with it, I certainly hope it does."

Here are five charts that illustrate the economy in 2025, and where it may be headed.

Growth accelerated after a weak start

Surveys suggest Americans have a gloomy outlook on the economy, but that hasn't kept many of them from spending at a healthy clip. Solid consumer spending — likely fueled mostly by higher-income Americans — boosted growth to a 4.3% annual pace in the July-September quarter, a much better than expected showing and the biggest increase in two years.

The healthy gain followed two quarters where Trump's tariffs distorted the economy. A surge in imports in the first three months of the year caused the economy to shrink as businesses sought to bring in products from overseas ahead of the duties.

Growth likely continued in the final three months of the year, but the government shutdown almost certainly weighed on output, reducing growth by one percentage point, economists forecast.

Hiring stayed weak and unemployment rose

Even as the economy picked up, hiring did not — in fact job gains weakened after Trump's announcement of sweeping tariffs in early April, which he dubbed "Liberation Day."

The economy even shed jobs in June, August, and October. The unemployment rate, meanwhile, rose from 4% in January to 4.6% in November, highest in four years. December's figures will be released Jan. 9.

There were several reasons hiring likely slowed: The uncertainty around tariffs, which Trump imposed, then in some cases lowered or removed, or delayed, led many companies to put hiring on hold. Still, layoffs remain low, in what has been a "low-hire, low-fire" job market.

At the same time, the ongoing adoption of artificial intelligence may have led many firms to hold off on adding workers, as they sort out what the new technology can do for them.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 49 of 51

"AI, AI, AI, AI -- that is all I have heard since this summer," Waller said last month, referring to comments he has heard from business executives explaining why they are reluctant to add jobs.

Still, there are signs of improvement: Employers cut 105,000 jobs in October, but that was mostly because of a large drop in federal government jobs stemming from the Trump administration's purge of government workers, which didn't formally take effect until that month.

Excluding government, businesses added an average of 75,000 jobs a month in the three months ended in November, a significant increase from just 13,000 in the three months ending in August.

However, most of the hiring this year has been heavily concentrated in just a few sectors — health care, restaurants and hotels, and government (outside of October). Most large private industries have shed jobs.

Inflation remained stubbornly high

Even though inflation fell sharply in 2023 and 2024 from a four-decade high, there was little improvement last year. Annual inflation, according to the Federal Reserve's preferred measure, actually ticked higher to 2.8% in September — the latest data available — from 2.7% in December 2024.

Elevated costs became a potent political issue in races as diverse as governors' contests in Virginia and New Jersey and New York City's mayoral race. All were won by Democrats as Trump found himself grappling with issues of "affordability," which he referred to as a "hoax."

Inflation cooled in November, according to the more widely-followed consumer price index, though economists said the figures were distorted by the government shutdown. Prices were mostly collected in the second half of November, after the shutdown ended, when holiday discounts were more likely to be in effect.

Some economists worry inflation will worsen in early 2026, as companies implement annual price changes and pass through more tariff costs. But most expect inflation will continue to slowly cool in 2026 and move closer to the Fed's 2% target.

Officers who defended the Capitol on Jan. 6 say their struggles linger, 5 years after the riot

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As Donald Trump was inaugurated for the second time on Jan. 20, 2025, former Capitol Police Sgt. Aquilino Gonell put his phone on "do not disturb" and left it on his nightstand to take a break from the news.

That evening, after Gonell spent time with family and took his dog on a long walk, his phone started to blow up with calls. He had messages from federal prosecutors, FBI agents and the federal Bureau of Prisons — all letting him know that the new president had just pardoned about 1,500 people who had been convicted for their actions at the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. The pardons included rioters who had injured Gonell as he and other officers tried to protect the building.

"They told me that people I testified against were being released from prison," Gonell said. "And to be mindful."

Gonell was one of the officers who defended the central West Front entrance to the Capitol that day as Congress was certifying Democrat Joe Biden's victory and hundreds of Trump's supporters broke into the building, echoing his false claims of a stolen election. Gonell was dragged into the crowd by his shoulder straps as he tried to fight people off. He almost suffocated. In court, he testified about injuries to his shoulder and foot that still bother him to this day.

"They have tried to erase what I did" with the pardons and other attempts to play down the violent attack, Gonell said. "I lost my career, my health, and I've been trying to get my life back."

Five years since the siege, Gonell and some of the other police officers who fought off the rioters are still coming to terms with what happened, especially after Trump was decisively elected to a second term last year and granted those pardons. Their struggle has been compounded by statements from the Republican president and some GOP lawmakers in Congress minimizing the violence that the officers encountered.

"It's been a difficult year," said Officer Daniel Hodges, a Metropolitan Police Department officer who was

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 50 of 51

also injured as he fought near Gonell in a tunnel on the West Front. Hodges was attacked several times, crushed by the rioters between heavy doors and beaten in the head as he screamed for help.

"A lot of things are getting worse," Hodges said.

An evolving narrative

More than 140 police officers were injured during the fighting on Jan. 6, which turned increasingly brutal as the hours wore on.

Former Capitol Police Chief Thomas Manger took over the department six months after the riot. He said in a recent interview that many of his officers were angry when he first arrived, not only because of injuries they suffered but also "they resented the fact that they didn't have the equipment they needed, the training they needed" to deal with the unexpectedly violent crowd.

Several officers who fought the rioters told The Associated Press that the hardest thing to deal with has been the effort by many to play down the violence, despite a massive trove of video and photographic evidence documenting the carnage.

Trump has called the rioters he pardoned, including those who were most violent toward the police, "patriots" and "hostages." He called their convictions for harming the officers and breaking into the building "a grave national injustice."

"I think that was wrong," Adam Eveland, a former District of Columbia police officer, said of Trump's pardons. If there were to be pardons, Eveland said, Trump's administration should have reviewed every case.

"I've had a hard time processing that," said Eveland, who fought the rioters and helped to push them off the Capitol grounds.

The pardons "erased what little justice there was," said former Capitol Police Officer Winston Pigeon, who was part of the force's Civil Disturbance Unit on Jan. 6. He left the force several months afterward.

Pushback from lawmakers and the public

Hodges and Gonell have been speaking out about their experiences since July 2021, when they testified before the Democratic-led House committee that investigated Jan 6. Since then, they have received support but also backlash.

At a Republican-led Senate hearing in October on political violence, Hodges testified again as a witness called by Democrats. After Hodges spoke about his experience on Jan. 6, Sen. Peter Welch, D-Vt., asked the other witnesses whether they supported Trump's pardons of the rioters, including for those who injured Hodges. Three of the witnesses, all called by Republicans, raised their hands.

"I don't know how you would say it wasn't violent," says Hodges, who is still a Washington police officer.

It has not just been politicians or the rioters who have doubted the police. It also is friends and family.

"My biggest struggle through the years has been the public perception of it," Eveland said, and navigating conversations with people close to him, including some fellow police officers, who do not think it was a big deal.

"It's hard for me to wrap my head around that, but ideology is a pretty powerful thing," he said.

Improvements in safety and support

As police officers struggled in the aftermath, Manger, the former Capitol Police chief, said the department had to figure out how to better support them. There were no wellness or counseling services when he arrived, he said, and they were put in to place.

"The officers who were there and were in the fight — we needed to make sure that they got the help that they needed," Manger said.

Manger, who retired in May, also oversaw major improvements to the department's training, equipment, operational planning and intelligence. He said the Capitol is now "a great deal safer" than it was when he arrived.

"If that exact same thing happened again, they would have never breached the building, they would have never gotten inside, they would have never disrupted the electoral count," Manger said.

Pigeon, the former Capitol Police officer, said he believes the department is in many ways "unrecognizable" from what it was on Jan. 6 and when he left several months later.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 05, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 215 ~ 51 of 51

"It was a wake-up call," he said.

Pressing on

Pingeon, who was attacked and knocked to the ground as he tried to prevent people from entering the Capitol, said Jan. 6 was part of the reason he left the department and moved home to Massachusetts. He has dealt with his experience by painting images of the Capitol and his time there, as well as advocating for nonviolence. He said he now feels ready to forgive.

"The real trauma and heartache and everything I endured because of these events, I want to move past it," he said.

Gonell left the Capitol Police because of his injuries. He has not returned to service, though he hopes to work again. He wrote a book about his experience, and he said he still has post-traumatic stress disorder related to the attack.

While many of the officers who were there have stayed quiet about their experiences, Eveland said he decided that it was important to talk publicly about Jan. 6 to try to reach people and "come at it from a logical standpoint."

Still, he said, "I've had to come to terms with the fact that just because something happened to me and was a major part of my world doesn't mean that everyone else has to understand that or even be sympathetic to that."

He added: "The only thing I can do is tell my story, and hopefully the people who respect me will eventually listen."

Today in History: January 5 Construction begins on Golden Gate Bridge

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Monday, Jan. 5, the fifth day of 2026. There are 360 days left in the year.

On Jan. 5, 1933, construction began on the Golden Gate Bridge; the bridge was completed in May 1937.

In 1896, an Austrian newspaper reported the discovery by German physicist Wilhelm Röntgen (RENT'-gun) of a new type of radiation that came to be called "X-ray."

In 1925, Democrat Nellie Tayloe Ross of Wyoming took office as America's first female governor.

In 1953, Samuel Beckett's two-act tragicomedy "Waiting for Godot," considered a classic of the Theater of the Absurd, premiered in Paris.

In 1957, President Dwight D. Eisenhower proposed assistance to countries to help them resist communist aggression in what became known as the Eisenhower Doctrine.

In 1972, President Richard Nixon announced the Space Shuttle program, directing NASA to produce a reusable vehicle that would boost manned space exploration while bringing down its costs. (The first shuttle launched in 1981 and the last in 2011.)

In 1980, "Rapper's Delight," by The Sugarhill Gang, became the first hip-hop song to reach the Billboard Top 40, helping to popularize the emerging musical genre.

In 2022, Australia denied entry to tennis star Novak Djokovic, who was seeking to play for a 10th Australian Open title later in the month; authorities canceled his visa upon his arrival in Melbourne because he failed to meet the requirements for an exemption to COVID-19 vaccination rules.

In 2024, a door plug on Alaska Airlines jetliner blew out shortly after takeoff from Portland, Oregon, forcing the 171 passengers and six crew to don oxygen masks before the pilots made an emergency landing. No one was seriously hurt, but the sudden depressurization left a gaping hole in the Boeing 737 Max 9 aircraft.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Robert Duvall is 95. Filmmaker Hayao Miyazaki is 85. Actor Vinnie Jones is 61. TV personality Carrie Ann Inaba is 58. Rock singer Marilyn Manson is 57. Actor-filmmaker Bradley Cooper is 51. Actor January Jones is 48. Actor Brooklyn Sudano is 45. Actor Mike Faist is 34. Actor and model Suki Waterhouse is 34. Actor Walker Scobell is 17.