

Groton Daily Independent

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Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2026

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

Thursday, Jan. 8, 2026

School Breakfast: Maple French toast.
School Lunch: Chicken patty, sweet potato puffs.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.
Carnival of Silver Skates costume hand-out at Emmanuel Lutheran
Groton Lions Club Meeting at 104 N Main, 6 p.m.



Basketball at Clark: (GJV/BC-4, BJV/GC-5, GV-6:30, BV-7:45)
2nd Grade BBB Practice, 5 p.m.
4th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.

Friday, Jan. 9, 2026

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

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1440

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

Iranian Protests Expand

The death toll from clashes between Iranian security forces and protesters reportedly rose to at least 36 people yesterday, as antigovernment demonstrations expanded to include a sit-in at Tehran's Grand Bazaar. More than 1,200 people have been detained across more than 50 towns and cities.

The unrest began Dec. 28 as Iran's currency fell to a record low of over 1.44 million to the US dollar. The rial has since plunged further, reaching another record low yesterday. Inflation reached 52.6% last month, according to official figures. The economic crisis comes after the UN reimposed sanctions in September following alleged Iranian violations of a 2015 nuclear deal, including an illegal ballistic missile test. The sanctions include restricting Iran's oil sales and access to global finance. Amid the currency free fall, the country's central bank last week ended exchange-rate subsidies for importers, a cost that will likely soon be passed on to consumers.

Sleeping with the Jellyfish

Jellyfish and sea anemones' sleep patterns are remarkably similar to humans', according to a study published yesterday. The finding suggests sleep evolved far earlier than previously assumed, in part to protect DNA and repair damage incurred while awake.

Although their evolutionary lineages diverged from human ancestors roughly a billion years ago, jellyfish and sea anemones spend about one-third of the day sleeping, similar to humans. When exposed to radiation that induced DNA damage, both species slept more; when deprived of sleep, they suffered greater DNA damage. The creatures also slept more when given melatonin, suggesting the hormone regulates their sleep cycles, as it does in humans (w/video). Together, the similarities between humans and these brainless invertebrates suggest sleep evolved before centralized nervous systems to support basic neural functions.

Sleep's origins have long puzzled scientists, given its costly trade-offs, including increased vulnerability to predators.

Leo XIV Ends Jubilee

Pope Leo XIV formally closed the Vatican's 2025 Holy Year yesterday, sealing the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica during an Epiphany Mass that capped a Jubilee drawing more than 33 million pilgrims from 185 countries—led by Italy, the US, Spain, Brazil, and Poland.

It marked only the second time in history that one pope opened a Holy Year and another closed it, following the death of Francis in April. In his homily, Leo criticized what he called a distorted consumer economy and growing hostility toward migrants, urging Catholics to welcome strangers and warning against the seductions of political power. Leo will now host the world's cardinals at the Vatican for a two-day meeting on governing the 1.4 billion-member church.

Holy Years are typically held every 25 years, though Leo has announced a special Jubilee for 2033 to mark 2,000 years since the death of Jesus Christ and his resurrection, as described in the Christian faith.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

NASCAR Commissioner Steve Phelps resigns after federal antitrust trial exposes inflammatory texts.
Montana State wins first Football Championship Subdivision title game since 1984, with 35-34 overtime win over Illinois State.

Hungarian filmmaker Béla Tarr, who pioneered slow cinema, dies at age 70; he made nine features from 1979 to 2011, notably "Damnation" and "Sátántangó".

EDM festival Tomorrowland to host first-ever Asian edition in Thailand, Dec. 11-13; the music festival was founded in Belgium in 2005.

Science & Technology

Microsoft partners with US Midwest electric grid operator to modernize power system serving 42 million people.

Meta delays international rollout of Ray-Ban display glasses, citing inventory constraints and high demand in the US.

Researchers develop AI-generated sensors with potential to detect cancer in early stages via at-home urine tests.

Astronomers learn galaxies mature faster than previously believed after analyzing detailed images of 18 galaxies located 12.5 billion light-years away.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close up (S&P 500 +0.6%, Dow +1.0%, Nasdaq +0.7%); S&P 500 and the Dow hit record highs.

Elon Musk's xAI raises \$20B in new funding from investors including Nvidia, Cisco Investments, and Fidelity; figure exceeds \$15B target and reportedly pushes xAI's valuation above \$230B.

Ford Motor reports US sales in 2025 increased 6% amid demand for hybrids and lower-priced trucks, marking the automaker's best annual sales since 2019.

Politics & World Affairs

Rep. Doug LaMalfa (R, CA-1), a seven-term congressman known to advocate for farming communities and lower taxes, dies at age 65 in emergency surgery; Gov. Gavin Newsom (D) must schedule a special election within the next two weeks, likely to occur in June.

Wyoming's top court strikes down state's 2022 abortion pill ban—the country's first following the reversal of Roe v. Wade.

Trump administration freezes \$10B in federal funds for social services programs in California, Colorado, Illinois, Minnesota, and New York over fraud allegations.

Dozens of Jan. 6 defendants march in Washington, DC, on fifth anniversary of the storming of US Capitol.

Groton City Council talks park restroom fixes, recognizes city employee's 46-year career

By Elizabeth Varin

City council members tackled both a look to the future and a nod to the past during their meeting Tuesday night.

The council discussed long-needed improvements to the city park bathrooms while also honoring Public Works Coordinator and Street/Wastewater Superintendent Terry Herron for more than four decades of service to the community.

Herron, who is officially retiring Friday, was recognized for his 46 years and five months of work for the city. Council members thanked him for his dedication and commitment. Councilman Brian Bahr remembered seeing Herron working around town when he was a kid, even cleaning gutters on city buildings.

"Thank you for your service," he said. "It's a lot of years in one place."

Mayor Scott Hanlon shared similar sentiments, saying they really appreciate all he has done for the city.

"It's pretty hard to quit, but it's nice to slow down," he said. "A lot of guys say they're busier after they retire than before."

After an executive session, the employee salary list was amended to combine Terry Herron's and Dwight Zerr's positions into one to accommodate Herron's retirement and Zerr's promotion. Zerr will roll into Herron's role on Monday and Zerr's wage will increase to \$39.85 an hour.

In other business, the council revisited the ongoing discussion surrounding the condition of the city park bathrooms.

While the city is still waiting to hear from the Federal Emergency Management Agency about a possible grant and loan to rebuild the facilities and convert them into combined bathrooms and emergency shelters, the timeline for that project remains uncertain. The idea has been under discussion for years, and in the meantime, some community members have voiced growing frustration over the current state of the restrooms.

Councilman Kevin Nehls suggested making some immediate, smaller-scale improvements.

"Even if we don't get it funded, we're going to need to do something," he said. "We're just not doing the park any justice. Doing nothing is not a fix."

Nehls suggested making some smaller fixes to make the facility appear nicer until a long-term solution is put in place.

"It's not going to make it all better, but make it usable, maybe like new lighting."

The council discussed having the bathrooms as a community cleanup project this spring, though no definitive fixes were identified. Instead, the council indicated they would keep it on their radar as spring approaches.

- The council authorized going out to bid on a project to paint the exterior of City Hall/Wage Memorial Library. Sealed bids will be opened at 7 p.m. February 3.
- Applications are now being accepted for summer recreation positions, including baseball coordinator, softball coordinator, junior legion coach, junior teenager coach, girls' softball coaches (U8/U10/U12/U14/U18), day baseball/softball coach, concession manager and swimming pool manager.

Lady Tigers Lock Down Warner, Win Fourth Straight

WARNER, S.D. — Defense, perimeter shooting, and growing confidence continued to define the Groton Area Tigers on Tuesday night as the Lady Tigers pulled away for a 54-42 road victory over the Warner Monarchs, improving to 5-2 on the season.

Groton Area jumped out quickly, building a 7-1 lead and holding a 12-9 advantage after the first quarter. Warner tied the game at 14 early in the second quarter and briefly took an 18-14 lead, but the Tigers responded with an 11-0 run over the next three minutes to regain control. Groton carried a 27-20 lead into halftime.

"We gave up some points early at the line," head coach Matt Locke said. "Their first six points were free throws. But holding a team to 42, we'll take that."

The Tigers put the game away in the third quarter, closing the period on a 6-0 run to stretch the lead to 44-28. Groton maintained its composure in the fourth to secure its fourth consecutive victory.

Taryn Traphagen led all scorers with 20 points, knocking down 5-of-7 from three-point range. Locke said her offensive rhythm continues to improve.

"She's starting to find her stride," Locke said. "She took the ball to the hole way better tonight than she has all season. When she gets the ball in rhythm and her feet set, she's a really good shooter."

Rylee Dunker followed with 14 points, seven rebounds, three steals, and a block.

"Rylee has been consistent," Locke said. "She's been really good on the boards and finished strong on put-backs and with her back to the basket."

Jerica Locke added 11 points, seven assists, and a steal while drawing the defensive assignment on Warner's Kaydee Mackner.

"She's kind of a gnat," Locke said. "She's got a motor and was giving it 90 feet. That's not an easy night for anyone."

Also scoring for Groton Area were McKenna Tietz with five points; Jayden Penning with two points; and Talli Wright with two points. Kella Tracy grabbed two rebounds and added an assist and two steals. Mia Crank recorded three rebounds, an assist, and two steals, while Sidney Locke finished with one assist.

Groton Area shot 44% on two-point attempts, 50% from beyond the arc, and 56% at the free-throw line. The Tigers totaled 17 rebounds, 13 assists, nine steals, two blocks, and committed 13 turnovers.

For Warner, Courtney Leidholt led the Monarchs with 14 points. Kaydee Mackner scored 10 points, Tatum Hansen added nine, McKenna Leidholt had five, and Jaycee Jung finished with four. Warner shot 39% from the field and 82% from the free-throw line but committed 24 turnovers.

Junior Varsity

Groton Area also earned a 34-19 junior varsity victory.

Tevan Hansen led the Tigers with 12 points, including two three-pointers. Kella Tracy and Ashlyn Warrington each scored six points, Makenna Krause added four, and Sydney Locke, Kinsley Rowen, and Brynlee Dunker each finished with two points.

Warner was led by Janessa Carda with nine points. Olivia Markinson scored six, while Brynn Hill and Presley Volk added two points apiece.

Groton Area, winners of four straight, will travel to Clark on Thursday night for a doubleheader.

Both varsity games were broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Avantara - Groton, Agtegra, Bierman Farm Service, Bary Keith at Harr Motors, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Full Circle Ag, Groton Ag Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Ford, John Sieh Agency, Heartland Energy and The MeatHouse in Andover. Rich Bosma and Mike Imrie did the commentary, Jeslyn Kosel ran the camera and Paul Kosel did the stats and technology. The girls junior varsity game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM sponsored by grandparents.

Tigers Settle In, Surge Past Warner 66-45

WARNER, S.D. — After a shaky start and a back-and-forth first half, the Groton Area boys basketball team found its rhythm Tuesday night, pulling away in the second half for a 66-45 win over Warner. The victory moves the Tigers to 5-2 on the season, while the Monarchs fall to 2-3.

Warner came out aggressive, scoring the game's first five points and extending the lead to 9-2 early in the opening quarter. Groton Area head coach Greg Kjellsen said early turnovers fueled the Monarchs' fast start.

"They hit a couple baskets right off the bat and got excited," Kjellsen said. "I think we had four or five turnovers in the first quarter that led to eight points. We got them going, and then we had to work our butts off to stop it."

Following a timeout, the Tigers steadied themselves and closed the quarter on an 8-0 run to take a 15-14 lead at the end of the first.

The second quarter continued to swing back and forth. Warner reclaimed the lead at 18-15, while Groton answered to tie the game at 21, 22, and 23 as the lead changed hands three times in a short stretch. Warner then put together a five-point run to go up 28-24 before taking a 28-26 advantage into halftime.

Kjellsen said the Tigers were pressing mentally rather than defensively in the opening half, contributing to their inconsistency.

"We were pressing amongst ourselves," he said. "We were shorthanded, and it threw off our motion. When we try to run sets and guys are in the wrong spots, it just gets discombobulated."

Groton Area opened the second half by scoring first to retake the lead, but Warner briefly answered to go back on top at 30-29. That would be the Monarchs' final lead of the night.

The Tigers responded with their best stretch of basketball, ripping off a 12-point run in under three minutes to seize control at 41-30. Groton Area closed the third quarter ahead 45-35 and never allowed Warner to close the gap.

"I thought we relaxed a little bit in the second half," Kjellsen said. "Defensively, I thought our kids played hard, especially there in that third quarter. We stopped fouling and stopped giving them easy things."

Groton Area's improved ball movement also showed after halftime. The Tigers finished 5-of-22 from three-point range, but Kjellsen was pleased with the shot selection.

"We were 1-for-10 from three in the first half," he said. "We've been preaching that the ball has to go inside — whether it's to Gage or on penetration — before we start chucking up early threes. I thought we did a pretty good job of that."

Groton Area went on to secure the 66-45 win behind strong rebounding and defensive pressure. The Tigers shot 18-of-31 on two-pointers (58%), 15-of-26 from the free-throw line (58%), and finished with 36 rebounds, including 15 offensive boards. Groton also tallied 10 assists, 12 steals, and one blocked shot, while committing 15 turnovers and 20 team fouls. Easton Weber fouled out with 1:30 remaining.

Ryder Johnson led the Tigers with a double-double, scoring 18 points and pulling down 15 rebounds. He went 4-of-4 at the free-throw line and added four assists and two steals.

Karson Zak posted his highest scoring output of the season with 14 points, along with three rebounds, one assist, and two steals. Gage Sippel added 13 points, six rebounds, and one steal.

Easton Weber finished with nine points, five rebounds, one assist, two steals, and one steal. Keegen Tracy scored eight points with one rebound, one assist, and one steal. Ethan Kroll contributed two points, five rebounds, one assist, and two steals — earning praise from his coach.

"I thought Ethan Kroll came in and did a great job defensively," Kjellsen said. "We got good minutes from a lot of guys."

Jayden Schwann added two points, one assist, and one steal, while Logan Warrington recorded one rebound and two steals. Asher Johnson finished with one blocked shot.

Warner was led by Braydon Kroll with 13 points, followed by Jesiah Baum with 12 and Brennan Wolf-Donat with 11. Lincoln Kroll scored four points, Noah Bakeberg and Easton Bruns each had two, and Lincoln Buisker added one.

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The Monarchs shot 16-of-40 from the field (40%) and 9-of-15 from the free-throw line (60%), committing 16 turnovers and 20 team fouls.

Groton Area also picked up a 28-15 win in the junior varsity contest.

The Tigers now face the back half of a demanding stretch, traveling to Clark on Thursday as part of a doubleheader.

"Clark's a lot like us," Kjellsen said. "They've got size on the perimeter and defend very well. If we can keep them off the boards and contain a couple of their key kids, I think we'll be fine."

Groton Area will look to carry its second-half momentum into Thursday night's road matchup.



Coming Up on GDILIVE.COM

Groton
Area
Tigers
Groton, SD

GDILIVE



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For more info: GDILIVE.COM

Thurs., Jan. 8, 2026

Rich Bosma and Mike Imrie
Paul Kosel and Jeslyn Kosel

Doubleheader at Clark/Willow Lake

Girls JV at 4 p.m.

Girls Varsity 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.



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Secretary of state announces legislation for the 2026 legislative session

(Pierre, S.D.) – Secretary of State Monae L. Johnson announces that the Secretary of State’s office has proposed a package of legislation for the 2026 Legislative Session that includes bills to introduce new systems, improve transparency, clean up election statutes, and streamline the election process. “This legislation demonstrates my office’s commitment to improving elections in South Dakota by introducing new systems, addressing concerns brought forward by election officials, and cleaning up the state’s election laws,” said Secretary Johnson.

SB 28: An Act to permit the use of a ballot on demand system and to declare an emergency. Due to the extremely short turnaround time between when nominating petitions must be submitted and primary election ballots must be in the possession of election officials prior to the beginning of absentee voting, many election officials have expressed an interest in using ballot on demand systems to ensure that absentee voting can begin on time. This bill will allow these election officials to authorize the use of ballot on demand systems within their respective jurisdictions.

SB 29: An Act to amend provisions pertaining to the tabulation of ballots and permit the release of any cast vote record and collection of ballot images produced by automatic tabulating equipment and to declare an emergency. There is growing interest in allowing county auditors to release cast vote records (CVRs) and ballot images to the public; however, the Office of Hearing Examiners has ruled that CVRs and ballot images are not public records. This bill will provide a new pathway for CVRs and ballot images to be released by county auditors while still protecting voter privacy.

SB 30: An Act to amend the reasons for challenging an individual’s eligibility to vote. While non-citizen voting is not an issue in South Dakota, there is still interest in having a process in place to ensure that non-citizens can be removed from the voter rolls if they are ever found to be registered. This bill will allow a new process to be established for the registration of any non-citizen to be challenged and for the challenged voter to be removed from the voter rolls.

SB 31: An Act to permit the use of a confirmation letter to verify a voter’s registration. Under current voter registration list maintenance statutes, county auditors are required to use a double-sided postcard when trying to confirm a voter’s registration information and/or address. A number of county auditors have expressed an interest in using letters, rather than postcards, when performing voter registration list maintenance in order to save money and simplify the process for their offices. This bill will allow county auditors to use confirmation letters instead of postcards as they see fit.

SB 32: An Act to amend and repeal provisions pertaining to the ballot requirements for certain elections and to declare an emergency. There are a few sections within Title 12 that require a separate ballot to be used for certain election contests at a primary or general election; however, the practice since the 1990s has been to have all contests on the same ballot. This bill will clean up Title 12 to align with the practice that has been in place for decades.

HB 33: An Act to modify the number of signatures required on certain election-related petitions. Currently, the number of signatures required for candidates, political parties, and ballot questions to receive ballot access is based on the number of votes cast for Governor, which is difficult to calculate in many jurisdictions. This bill will simplify signature requirements and make them easier to determine by basing them on the number of registered voters, rather than the number of votes cast in a specific contest.

HB 34: An Act to amend provisions pertaining to conducting a municipal or school district election and to declare an emergency. HB 1130 (2025) modified provisions related to municipal and school district elections, requiring that they be held on the same day as the June primary election or the November general election. This bill addresses issues that have been raised by local election officials as they work to implement the provisions of HB 1130 (2025), which will help this year's local elections go smoothly.

The full text of each bill proposed by the Secretary of State's office can be found on the Legislative Research Council's website at <https://sdlegislature.gov/Session/Bills/71>.



Fact brief: Does SD have one of the shortest legislative sessions?

Yes.

South Dakota's maximum legislative session length of 40 days is among the shortest in the United States.

The state's constitution mandates that the legislative session start on the second Tuesday in January with a maximum of 40 working legislative days, though some sessions have fewer days. This year's session, which starts Jan. 13 and is the 101st overall, is scheduled to last 38 days.

Wyoming's session is also among the shortest – 40 days in odd years and 20 in even years for the budget. North Dakota meets for 80 days every other year, and Alabama convenes for 30 days.

Fourteen states, including South Dakota, have part-time legislatures, where members spend less than half of a full-time job in session. North Dakota, Wyoming and Montana are among these states. Ten states, including Wisconsin, have full-time legislatures.

After two consecutive sessions in 1890, South Dakota's Legislature met every other year until 1964.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Q&A: Nonprofit hopes to give tourists more of the Native American experiences they want in South Dakota

New support will expand reach, impact of South Dakota Native Tourism Alliance, its leaders say

BY: JOHN HULT

Few states can boast of a culture and history as closely tied to its Native American heritage as South Dakota.

The state has the nation's fourth-highest per capita population of Native Americans, and about one in ten of the residents in its second-largest city — Rapid City, gateway to Mount Rushmore and the Black Hills for millions of annual visitors — are Native American.

The state can claim historical Native American luminaries like Crazy Horse and Sitting Bill and modern ones like the late activist Russell Means, Olympian Billy Mills, author Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve and Mato Wayuhi, an actor, composer and performer who wrote the score for Hulu's "Reservation Dogs."

It's the site of the Wounded Knee Massacre, but also the American Indian Movement of the 1970s and its occupation of Wounded Knee. More recently, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe drew international attention to protests over the Dakota Access Pipeline just north of the South Dakota border and etched the phrase "Water is Life" into the cultural lexicon.

Those tribal ties help draw tourists. A survey from South Dakota Tourism in 2018 found that around 80% of visitors want a Native American "experience" during their stay. Yet the state's nine tribal nations typically don't see much from the billions in economic impact that tourism delivers to the state.

The South Dakota Native Tourism Alliance formed in 2019 to help bridge that divide. The nonprofit organization trains tour guides, plans tribal tour itineraries and works to develop tourism infrastructure in tribal communities.

Recently, it secured one of 10 J.M. Kaplan Innovation Prize awards, earning it \$175,000 and connecting it with other early stage nonprofits across the U.S. for collaboration and guidance.

South Dakota Searchlight recently spoke with Rhea Waldman, South Dakota Native Tourism Alliance's executive director, and Sarah Kills In Water, a Rosebud Sioux tribal member and member of the group's board of directors.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

What can you tell us about what you've done so far? Can you give us an update on your economic catalyst tours?

Kills in Water: We worked with Destination America and developed multi-reservation tours, a multi-day tour that started in the Black Hills. They came through Pine Ridge, spent two days on Rosebud and went up to Standing Rock. They ended up marketing that itinerary to a company called Trafalgar, which operates heavily in South Dakota. So that was one major win.

Our tour guide training came up out of a need for another initiative that we worked on, helping the Sicangu Oyate Treaty Council and the Wild Foundation host the Wild 12 conference last year. They brought in people from all over the world, and they wanted to hear from our youth on questions like "How is the mining in the Black Hills going to impact your youth for the next seven generations, for the foreseeable future?"

So we went to engage with the Sicangu Youth Council, and they jumped on the opportunity. They pro-

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vided a tour experience for a group of 50 international visitors at Bear Butte State Park. The kids were excited, and they were wanting to expand and do more, and so I brought them into my Trafalgar itinerary this year. They actually do the tours on Rosebud when Trafalgar comes through.

What's lacking in the tourism landscape today that your organization aims to improve upon?

Kills In Water: The cultural piece is so important. Having these experiences with us, provided by us, told in our voices, our stories, everything, it makes it more personal, and I think it brings the realization to our visitors that these people are still here. After all the years of government oppression and everything that's been done to them, they're still here, and they're still vibrant.

Tribal people sometimes have a really bad idea when they think about tourism. They think we're selling our culture, but that's not what we're doing. All we're here to do is help tribal nations define what stories they want to tell. What do you want to share with your visitors?

Waldman: South Dakota Tourism has been a great partner for us, and really helped us, because obviously they have a lot of data. One of those data points is that over 80% of people want to have a Native American experience when they visit South Dakota. Not even half of them actually do, though. So why don't they do that? It's because people don't know where to go, where to find information.

What are the hidden gems that are already there that you point people to?

Waldman: Every tribal nation has their own gems. The tribes along the river have some of the most beautiful scenery you can imagine. Cheyenne River has one of the biggest buffalo herds in North America. There are cultural centers that have phenomenal art, that are showcasing local artists and the breadth of the history that Native Americans have experienced.

One of the challenges comes when you think about the great American road trip. When you're on Interstate 90 between Sioux Falls and Rapid City, none of the reservations really are right there. I live in Pierre, and even though we're the state capital, it is actually hard to get people out here. It's because we are 35 miles from the interstate, so it takes you at least an hour and a half to travel there and back. So how much can you see here in order for people to come? That's even worse for the reservations, because they are not the capital, and people don't necessarily know all the things they can do.

What is it that this grant in particular might help you do?

Kills in Water: The nine tribal nations in our state are so geographically spread out. We don't always have the resources to get out and go to these tribal nations ourselves. I live in Rosebud, and unless there's gas money or something tied to it, sometimes I can't just go to Flandreau. Pine Ridge is close enough where I can volunteer my time, because they're only an hour and a half from us. With these funds, I see us increasing our partnerships with each tribal nation and really strengthening our efforts that way at the grassroots level.

Waldman: The grant is unrestricted, and that is huge. We're all aware of travel reimbursement after the fact, but if you're living in a place where you're maybe living paycheck to paycheck and you don't have a thriving business yet, waiting for travel reimbursement can take a while. If you do something like gift cards for gas, that is definitely not something that you can reimburse with federal grants.

And we're not only getting money. There are 10 different organizations that receive this innovation grant, and we are meeting with them frequently. We can learn from those other amazing entrepreneurs. In addition, the entire team at the JM Kaplan Fund are there to help us succeed, because they know they are funding early stage nonprofits. They're there with us every step of the way. Yes, money is great and we still need more, but having people that rally for you, that are there for you, that are your family and want to see you succeed, that is really special.

John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.

COMMENTARY

We need transparency about data centers to weigh their economic and environmental impacts

by Brooke Manca

Would you be surprised to learn that using ChatGPT, artificial intelligence photo editing, or even asking your Alexa/Siri a question contributes to significant water and electricity consumption?

While it may seem like this information is simply lost in the ether, it is actually stored in data centers, which have been popping up across the United States. And we are now starting to see them in our own backyards. Data centers are being proposed in places such as Sioux Falls, Toronto (Deuel County), and even at the gate of the sacred Black Hills, in Rapid City's new industrial complex.

AI developers state that they are targeting colder climate areas to reduce the amount of energy needed to operate these data centers. Addressing the energy needs, employment promises and overall environmental impact of data centers will allow South Dakotans to decide whether we really want this infrastructure to be developed in our state. We live here, and our voices matter.

Politicians and data center developers are downplaying the massive energy requirements that the proposed data centers will demand. Approximately 400 megawatts of power from our electric grids could be needed for one data center, consuming half of the energy that South Dakota has spent over 75 years sizing up to sustain the expanding population and economic growth we are seeing today.

These massive data centers are filled with computers to store AI and cryptocurrency data, and computers generate a lot of heat. To avoid overheating and ensure proper functioning, large amounts of water are needed to cool the systems down. Some data center developers claim that water usage for the proposed data centers here will be no more than that of the average U.S. household. However, our cold season does come to an end, and as temperatures continue to rise and display record summer highs year after year, these claims will become less valid. There is already a strain on our water resources here in South Dakota, so potential water shortages could result if the issue is aggravated.

Furthermore, claims that the demand on our energy grid will not increase our already rising energy bills are sugarcoated at best. Americans have seen about a 13% national increase in electricity prices since the beginning of 2025, and this trend is expected to continue.

Transparency is a must when it comes to grandiose promises, such as the statements that data centers will create substantial job growth for South Dakotans. While the construction of these large buildings will bring temporary employment, once construction ends, so will most of these jobs. Also, the construction of a data center requires highly skilled workers. We can't be sure that out-of-state companies won't be brought in for the construction.

On average, an operating data center needs between 30 and 100 full-time employees. There is currently no data to show how the hundreds of jobs promised compare to the jobs that are actually created, or what kind of jobs those even are.

Data centers also bring a slew of environmental problems in their wake. As stated previously, they will consume a large amount of water. We're talking hundreds of thousands to millions of gallons of water per day for an evaporative-cooled system in the data center. On the low end, this water usage is equivalent to the needs of a city the size of Pierre. On the high end of consumption, it would be more comparable to the water needs of Sioux Falls. There is technology that operates on a closed-loop system where the water is cooled and recycled. However, this could increase the electricity demand by more than 20% and further burden our fragile energy grid, contributing to ratepayers' increased energy costs.

The message is clear — communities need to have transparency around proposed data centers so they can weigh the economic and environmental impacts in order to protect hardworking South Dakotans and our beautiful lands. These impacts must be weighed against proposals to bestow tax rebates on the billion-dollar companies building these data centers (Google, Meta, Amazon).

More factual information regarding the jobs promised, the electrical and water usage, and environmental

risks needs to be brought forward and discussed before any construction begins. Finding ways to mitigate the environmental and economic effects that are correlated with data centers should be a top priority for South Dakotans as we take a stand to protect our communities.

Brooke Manca is a lifelong South Dakotan currently residing in Spearfish. She is a member of Dakota Rural Action and has a bachelor's degree in environmental science from Southern New Hampshire University.

Inside and outside the U.S. Capitol, the fifth anniversary of Jan. 6 reverberates

BY: JACOB FISCHLER AND ASHLEY MURRAY

WASHINGTON — Five years after a pro-Trump mob stormed the U.S. Capitol, the struggle to define the event and assign blame carried on in events across the city Tuesday that remained nonviolent, though still disturbing.

A crowd of no more than a few hundred of President Donald Trump's supporters commemorated the deadly attack with a somewhat subdued march from the Ellipse to the Capitol that was in stark contrast to the riot five years ago.

Inside the Capitol, U.S. House Democrats gathered in a small meeting room, apparently unable to secure larger accommodations for an unofficial hearing that largely rehashed the findings of a House committee that spent 2022 investigating the attack.

Trump, meanwhile, addressed House Republicans three miles west at the Kennedy Center. In an hour-plus address, he blamed then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi for the violence on Jan. 6, 2021 and recommended the GOP lawmakers pass laws to make election fraud more difficult. Trump's claim that his 2020 election loss was due to fraud sparked the 2021 attack.

"Our elections are crooked as hell," he said, without citing evidence.

House Dems blast pardons

Inside the Capitol, at a morning event that U.S. House Democrats organized and in which Republicans didn't take part, lawmakers and experts criticized Trump's pardons of people involved in the 2021 attack, one of his first acts after returning to office last year.

They also decried his continued recasting of the events of the day.

White House officials launched a webpage Tuesday that blamed the attack on Democrats, again including Pelosi, and restated the lie that initiated the attack: The 2020 election that Trump lost was marred by fraud and should not have been certified.

"Democrats masterfully reversed reality after January 6," the page reads. "...In truth, it was the Democrats who staged the real insurrection by certifying a fraud-ridden election, ignoring widespread irregularities, and weaponizing federal agencies to hunt down dissenters."

Pelosi at the hearing on Tuesday condemned Trump's version of the attack.

"Today, that president who incited that insurrection continues to lie about what happened that day," the California Democrat said.

Other Democrats and their invited witnesses also described the pardons as signaling that the president accepted — and even encouraged — his supporters to pursue illegal means of keeping him in power.

Brendan Ballou, a former U.S. Justice Department prosecutor who resigned shortly after Trump's 2025 pardons, told the panel the executive action sent Trump supporters the "clear message" they were above the law.

"The January 6 pardons also fit into a broader narrative of what's going on with this administration, that if people are sufficiently loyal and willing to support the president, either in words or financially, they will be put beyond the reach of the law," he added. "It means that quite literally for a certain group of people right now in America, the law does not apply to them."

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Former 'MAGA granny' testifies

Homeland Security Committee ranking Democrat Bennie Thompson of Mississippi led the panel discussion, with Judiciary Committee ranking member Jamie Raskin of Maryland and several others also sitting in on it.

The first panel of witnesses included Ballou, other experts and Pamela Hemphill, a former Trump supporter from Idaho who traveled to the nation's capital five years ago to "be part of the mob" in support of the president before becoming an advocate for reckoning with the day's violence.

An emotional Hemphill, 72 and once known as "MAGA granny," apologized to U.S. Capitol police officers. "Once I got away from the MAGA cult and started educating myself about January the 6th, I knew what I did was wrong," Hemphill told the panel. "I pleaded guilty to my crimes because I did the crime. I received due process and the DOJ was not weaponized against me.

"Accepting that pardon would be lying about what happened on January the 6th," she added.

She explained her decision to decline Trump's blanket pardon of offenders convicted of crimes related to the attack, saying it papered over the misdeeds of people involved in the riot. She implored others not to accept revisions of the narrative about what happened in the attack.

Subsequent panels included current and former House members, including two, Republican Adam Kitzinger of Illinois and Democrat Elaine Luria of Virginia, who sat on the committee tasked with investigating the attack.

Flowers for Ashli Babbitt

The crowd of marchers, which included pardoned Jan. 6 attack participants, gathered in the late morning to retrace their path to the U.S. Capitol five years ago.

Organizers billed the march as a memorial event to honor Ashli Babbitt, who was killed by U.S. Capitol Police during the riot in 2021 as she attempted to break into the House Speaker's lobby.

The crowd of roughly a couple hundred walked from the Ellipse, where Trump spoke to rallygoers in 2021, to just outside the Capitol grounds, where police contained the small crowd on the lawn north of the Reflecting Pool.

Law enforcement officers permitted Babbitt's mother, Michelle Witthoef, and a few others to walk closer to the Capitol to lay flowers at roughly 2:44 p.m. Eastern, the time they say Babbitt died.

A group of counterprotesters briefly approached the demonstration, yelling "traitors." Police quickly formed two lines between the groups, heading off any clashes.

Proud Boys former leader on-site

Among the crowd was former Proud Boys national leader Enrique Tarrío, who was sentenced to 22 years in federal prison for seditious conspiracy and other charges related to the Jan. 6, 2021, attack. Trump commuted Tarrío's sentence upon taking office for his second term.

While looking on at marchers, Tarrío told States Newsroom he was "just supporting."

"It's not my event. I'm just trying to help them with organizing and marching people down the street, I guess. But we're here for one purpose, and that's to honor the lives of Ashli Babbitt and those who passed away that day."

When asked if marchers were also honoring the police officers who died in the days and months after the attack, Tarrío said he mourned "any loss of life" but added "I heard some suicides happened. I don't know. I haven't really looked into that. I've been in prison."

U.S. Capitol Police officer Brian Sicknick suffered injuries during the riot, according to the Capitol Police. He died the following day from natural causes, according to the District of Columbia Office of the Medical Examiner.

Four responding police officers died by suicide in the following days and months.

As the march continued, a group of Capitol Police and Metropolitan Police officers on bicycles stopped Tarrío and asked him to confirm the march route to avoid any "confusion."

When counterprotesters began to heckle the Jan. 6 attack supporters, Tarrío waved the marchers forward, "C'mon, c'mon, keep moving."

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Jan. 6 rioter Rasha Abual-Ragheb, 45, of New Jersey, addressed the crowd earlier and thanked "Daddy Trump" for her pardon. Abual-Ragheb, who pleaded guilty to parading, demonstrating and picketing in the U.S. Capitol, showed off a tattoo on her arm reading "MAGA 1776."

Willie Connors, 57, of Bayonne, New Jersey, stood on the edge of the crowd with a yellow "J6" flag tied around his neck. Connors said he didn't enter the Capitol during the 2021 attack, but said he was in the district that day to protest the 2020 presidential election, which he falsely claimed was "robbed" from Trump. "Donald Trump, I'll take the bullet for that man. He's my president," Connors said.

Jacob covers federal policy and helps direct national coverage as deputy Washington bureau chief for States Newsroom. Based in Oregon, he focuses on Western issues. His coverage areas include climate, energy development, public lands and infrastructure.

Ashley Murray covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include domestic policy and appropriations.

White House floats military action to take Greenland

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump is considering options to acquire Greenland, including possible military operations, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said Tuesday, renewing a push for the Danish territory that follows the stunning U.S. capture of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro without congressional approval over the weekend.

Trump and his top officials have professed a need for the United States to take Greenland, which is a self-governing territory of Denmark that, like the U.S., is a member of NATO.

"President Trump has made it well known that acquiring Greenland is a national security priority of the United States, and it's vital to deter our adversaries in the Arctic region," Leavitt said in a statement to States Newsroom. "The President and his team are discussing a range of options to pursue this important foreign policy goal, and of course, utilizing the U.S. Military is always an option at the Commander in Chief's disposal."

Greenland Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen in a Tuesday statement stressed to President Donald Trump that his country is "not something that can be annexed or taken over simply because someone feels like it."

Leaders of Denmark and the heads of NATO countries Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Poland and the United Kingdom, issued a joint statement in support of Greenland's sovereignty.

Leavitt's comments came after the NATO allies' statement.

Greenland's government did not immediately respond to States Newsroom's request for comment on Leavitt's Tuesday statement.

New questions after Venezuela

The Jan. 3 military operation in Venezuela to capture Maduro and his wife to be brought to face a trial in New York opened fresh doubt about the Trump administration's foreign policy goals.

Following the operation, Trump held a press conference during which he said other countries could face the same fate.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer issued a statement after senators were briefed by Trump officials Monday saying he could not get a clear answer that officials would not do the same thing to Columbia, Greenland or Iran.

"Are we going to invade a NATO ally like Greenland? Where does this belligerence stop?" the New York Democrat said.

Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include immigration, congressional policy and legal challenges with a focus on how those policies impact the lives of immigrants and migrants coming to the U.S.

Death of US House member from California narrows already slim GOP majority

South Dakota congressman says LaMalfa spent time in state, 'cared about forest management in the Black Hills'

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT

WASHINGTON — U.S. California Republican Rep. Doug LaMalfa has died and Indiana Republican Rep. Jim Baird was injured in a car accident, President Donald Trump said Tuesday.

Speaking to a meeting of House Republicans at the Kennedy Center, Trump said he wanted to express "our tremendous sorrow" following LaMalfa's death and said the congressman was "a fierce champion on California water issues."

"I also want to send our best wishes to Congressman Jim Baird and his wife, who are recovering from a car accident. They're going to be okay. But they had a pretty bad accident," Trump said. "And we're praying they get out of that hospital very quickly. He's going to be fine. She's going to be fine. But it was a bad accident."

The cause of LaMalfa's death was not immediately clear on Tuesday morning. The Butte County Sheriff's Office wrote in a statement that they received a 911 call on Monday evening from LaMalfa's house about a medical emergency.

The congressman was taken to Enloe Hospital, where he died during an emergency surgery, according to the sheriff's office.

"In accordance with standard protocols, the Coroner's Unit of the Butte County Sheriff's Office is conducting an investigation to determine the cause of death," the statement said. "A forensic pathologist is scheduled to conduct an autopsy as part of this investigation."

LaMalfa's death will reduce Republicans' already slim House majority, making it more complicated for leadership in that chamber to pass legislation that's not bipartisan.

Georgia Republican Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene's resignation earlier this week, combined with LaMalfa's death, decreases the GOP majority to 218 seats.

Baird's absence until he recovers and can vote in person further erodes that to 217. And it could be narrowed even more by GOP lawmakers missing votes for other reasons.

Democrats control 213 House seats, giving Republican leaders next to no margin for defections on partisan bills.

LaMalfa, 65, was first sworn in as a member of Congress in January 2013 and represented California's 1st Congressional District, which covers a large section of the northeastern corner of the state.

Baird, 80, has been a member of Congress for seven years, representing Indiana's 4th Congressional District constituents in the central and northwestern parts of the state.

Baird's office released a statement shortly after Trump's announcement, saying the congressman "is in the hospital and is expected to make a full recovery, and he is extraordinarily grateful for everyone's prayers during this time.

"Congressman Baird looks forward to continuing his work on behalf of Hoosiers. The Office of Congressman Baird will continue to provide services and support for those who need it. Congressman Baird and his office remain steadfast in their commitment to serving constituents and focused on advocating for Hoosiers at the highest levels of government."

Johnson, Jeffries mourn LaMalfa

Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., released a statement saying that "Congress is devastated to learn this morning about the passing of our dear friend and colleague, Doug LaMalfa."

"Doug was a lifelong resident of northern California and deeply loved its people. He was as fierce of a fighter for his state's vast natural resources and beauty as we have ever known," Johnson wrote. "We are mourning the loss of our friend and brother today and we send our respects for his life and work to his

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wife Jill and the LaMalfa family during this difficult time.”

House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York wrote in a statement that he joined “people across Northern California in mourning the untimely passing of Congressman Doug LaMalfa.

“Doug and I joined the Congress as classmates in 2013, and it was an honor to witness firsthand his passion and personal resolve for more than a decade,” Jeffries wrote.

House Majority Leader Steve Scalise, R-La., released a written statement that he was “devastated to hear of the passing of my dear friend and colleague, Doug LaMalfa.”

“A fourth generation rice farmer, he fought passionately for the region’s agricultural community and small businesses, and in 2024 was elected Chairman of the Congressional Western Caucus, which focuses on the priorities of Western and rural America,” Scalise wrote. “He also worked to bolster disaster recovery efforts and funding for rural schools.”

National Republican Congressional Committee Chairman Richard Hudson of North Carolina wrote in a statement that he was “deeply saddened by the passing of my colleague and close friend, Congressman Doug LaMalfa.”

“I cherished our time serving together on the Agriculture Committee and discussing NASCAR; he was a real gearhead and motorsports fan,” Hudson wrote. “I will deeply miss my ‘amigo.’ Renee and I are praying for his beloved wife Jill, as well as Kyle, Allison, Sophia, Natalie, and all his loved ones, friends, and staff during this incredibly difficult time.”

Jennifer covers the nation’s capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

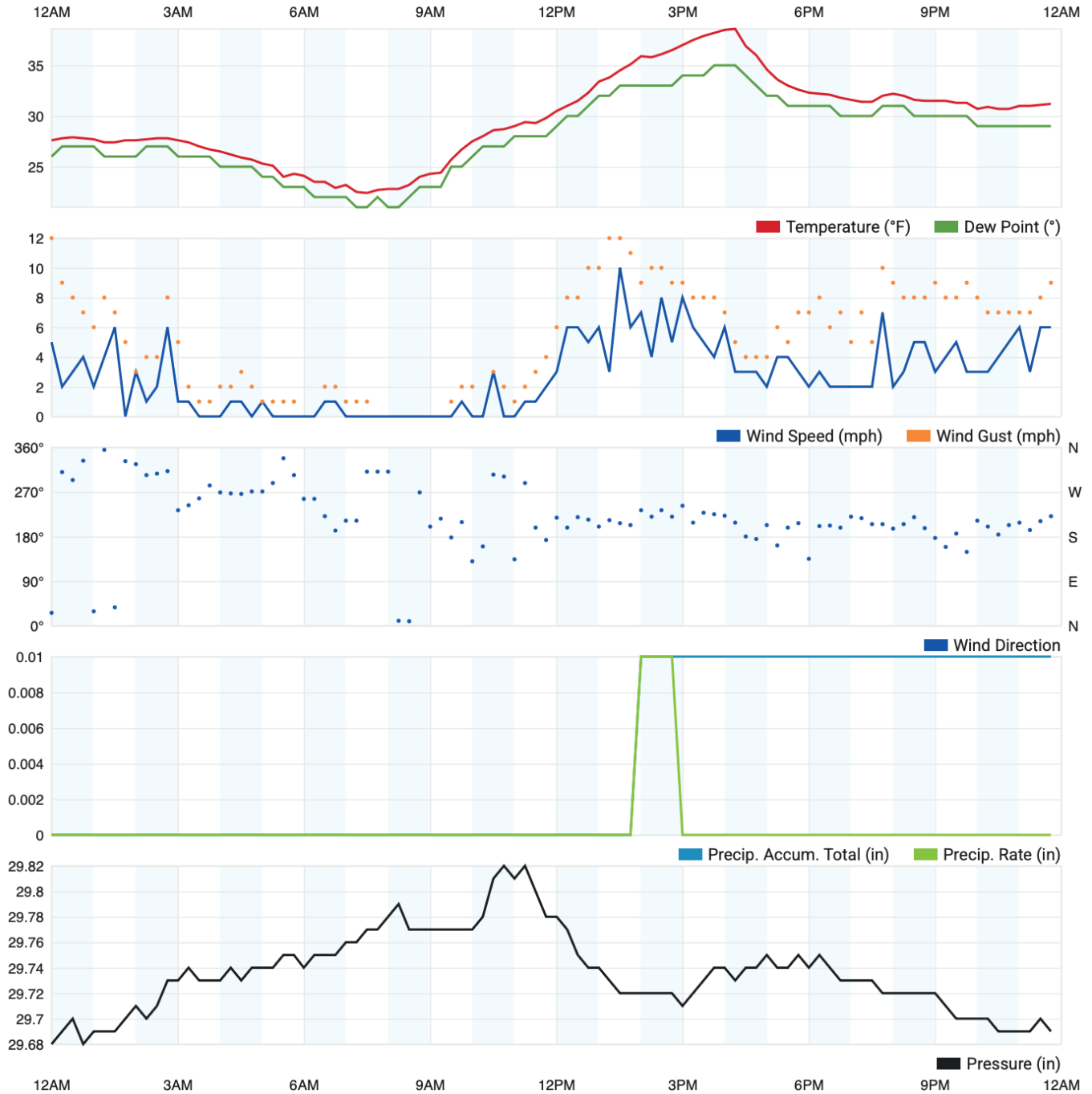
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

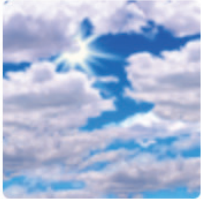
January 6, 2026



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Today



High: 42 °F

Decreasing
Clouds

Tonight



Low: 25 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Thursday



High: 33 °F

Mostly Cloudy

**Thursday
Night**



Low: 17 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Friday



High: 33 °F

Mostly Cloudy



Upcoming Max Temperatures

Wednesday Evening, Jan 7 - Tuesday Evening, Jan 13

	Wed 1/7	Thu 1/8	Fri 1/9	Sat 1/10	Sun 1/11	Mon 1/12	Tue 1/13
Aberdeen	39	35	33	21	38	39	37
Mobridge	47	35	34	25	45	43	43
Pierre	49	38	36	28	46	45	45
Sisseton	42	34	33	20	37	39	37
Watertown	44	35	33	21	37	40	37

Max Temperature (°F)

Additional Details



Upcoming
Temperatures:

- Afternoon high temperatures are expected to be 10 to 20 degrees above normal through Tuesday.
- The exception will be on Saturday, when high temperatures will be near normal.
- Overnight lows are expected to be in the teens to 20s through Tuesday.

Valid: Wed 06 pm CST - Tue 06 pm CST

Issued: Tue, Jan 6, 2026, 1 pm CST



Through the start of next week, temperatures are expected to reach the 40s, about 10 to 20 degrees above normal. The exception to this will be Saturday, when temperatures will be near normal.

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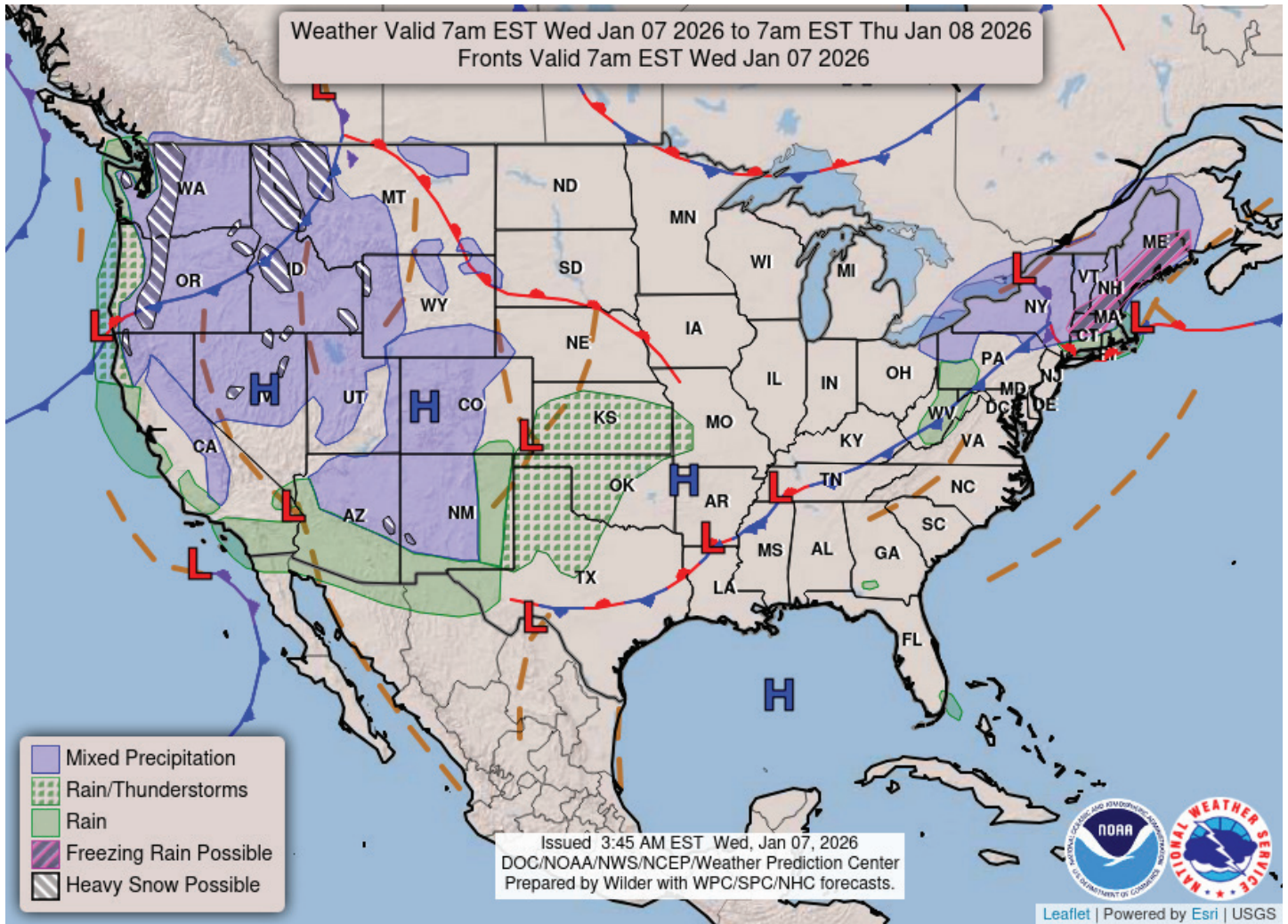
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 39 °F at 4:12 PM
Low Temp: 22 °F at 7:25 AM
Wind: 12 mph at 1:10 PM
Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 54 in 1963
Record Low: -39 in 1912
Average High: 23
Average Low: 2
Average Precip in Jan.: 0.15
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.15
Precip Year to Date: 0.00
Sunset Tonight: 5:05 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:11 am



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Today in Weather History

January 7, 1873: A blizzard raged across the Great Plains. Many pioneers, unprepared for the cold and snow, perished in the tristate region of southwest Minnesota, northwestern Iowa, and southeastern South Dakota. Visibility was down to three feet. Cows suffocated in the deep drifts, and trains were stuck for days. More than 70 people died; some bodies were not found until spring.

The following appears on pages 260-261 in the "History of Dakota Territory" by George Kingsbury. "On the 7th of January, 1873, a brother and sister of "John Foster," aged respectively fourteen and twelve years, went a short distance from home and soon afterward a blizzard came up suddenly. The children wandered in the storm to an old sod house that stood out on the prairie and there sought shelter from the driving snow. However, as the house was roofless, it afforded but poor protection against the blizzard, and the children perished, their bodies being buried in the snow. Our subject and the father were absent from home at the time. Weeks passed, and despite continued searching, the bodies of the children were not found, but in March, a neighbor dreamed that the children were in the old house, and on the 16th of that month, their bodies were found there."

January 7, 1980: A strong area of low pressure moved out of the northern Rockies across South Dakota and central Minnesota on January 6th and 7th. Heavy snow, along with very high winds, caused widespread blowing and drifting snow with low visibilities. Many roads were closed, and many motorists were stranded. Snowfall amounts across western and northern Minnesota were from 7 to 12 inches.

January 7, 1989: Heavy snowfall of 5 to 19 inches fell in the north and east-central South Dakota on the 6th and 7th. Snow and blowing snow reduced visibilities to near zero in many locations as winds gusted to near 50 mph. Part of Interstate 29 north of Sisseton closed the night of the 7th. Icy roads contributed to a school bus accident that injured eight boys. Extreme wind chills of 30 to 60 below also occurred. Snowfall amounts included 8 inches in Sisseton, with 12 to 19 inches across Marshall and Roberts counties.

This storm also affected northern Minnesota from the 6th through the 8th with heavy snowfall of 8 to 12 inches with local amounts of 24 to 26 inches. The heavy snow was followed by an Arctic intrusion, which brought in 35 to 50 mph winds. Snowdrifts were from 5 to 10 feet in some areas. The strong winds caused near-blizzard conditions along with extremely low wind chills.

1966: Tropical Cyclone Denise dropped 45 inches of rain on La Reunion Island in the Indian Ocean in 12 hours and 71.80 inches of rain in 48 hours through the 8th.

1873 — A blizzard raged across the Great Plains. Many pioneers, unprepared for the cold and snow, perished in southwest Minnesota and northwestern Iowa. (David Ludlum)

1971 — The temperature at Hawley Lake, located southeast of McNary, AZ, plunged to 40 degrees below zero to establish a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1987 — A storm in the southwestern U.S. produced 30 inches of snow north of Zion National Park in southern Utah, with 18 inches reported at Cedar Canyon UT. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — A winter storm in the southeastern U.S. produced 27 inches of snow in the Bad Creek area of South Carolina, and claimed the lives of two million chickens in Alabama. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — A tornado in southern Illinois obliterated half the community of Allendale, injuring fifty persons and causing more than five million dollars damage, while thunderstorm winds gusting higher than 100 mph caused ten million dollars damage at Franklin KY. Twenty-five cities, from the Gulf coast to Michigan, reported record high temperatures for the date. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 — A rapidly intensifying low pressure system and a vigorous cold front brought heavy rain and high winds to the Pacific Northwest. Two to five inches rains soaked western Washington and western Oregon, and winds gusting above 70 mph caused extensive damage. Wind gusts on Rattlesnake Ridge in Washington State reached 130 mph. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2008: A rare, EF3 tornado tracked across southeastern Wisconsin. Experiencing a tornado in Wisconsin in January is extremely rare. In fact, it had only happened once between 1950 and 2007, when an F3 tornado affected parts of Green and Rock Counties on January 24, 1967. That tornado in South Central Wisconsin was part of a much larger outbreak of 30 tornadoes across mostly Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri. Wisconsin ended up with 30 tornadoes in 1967.

Moving Mountains

Jesus prayed, "Not my will, but Yours be done"—and we should too.

Mark 11:20-26: 20 As they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots up.

21 Being reminded, Peter said to Him, "Rabbi, look, the fig tree which You cursed has withered."

22 And Jesus answered saying to them, "Have faith in God.

23 "Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him.

24 "Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you.

25 "Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions.

26 [" But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions."]

Facing obstacles is a given in this life. Jesus said we would have trouble; it's simply unavoidable. However, there is hope because He has overcome the world (John 16:33).

Jesus tells us that when problems seem overwhelming, we're to have faith in God and pray. A lot of people love Mark 11:24 because it seems like a blanket promise for whatever we want. However, the verse can't stand alone and shouldn't be taken out of context. Let's consider two qualifications for the promise in it.

God is committed to removing only those obstacles that are hindrances to His will. Jesus is our primary example for this truth. When He faced the prospect of dying on a cross as the sin-bearer for mankind, it must have seemed like a daunting challenge that needed to be removed. But His prayers were governed by these words: "Yet not My will, but Yours be done" (Luke 22:42).

We must make sure that we are not the obstacle. For instance, Jesus points out in Mark 11:25-26 that an unforgiving spirit breaks our fellowship with God and hinders our prayers.

Our first reaction to obstacles should be self-examination. Ask God, "Is there something I need to address? Do my requests align with Your will?" Only then can we confidently ask Him to move in our life as only He can.

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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.06.26

9 39 47 58 68 24

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$199,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 24 Mins 9 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.05.26

12 19 21 30 47 5

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$12,100,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 39 Mins 9 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.06.26

10 13 24 27 31 8

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 54 Mins 9 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.03.26

7 13 17 28 30

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$172,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 54 Mins 9 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.05.26

15 22 39 41 62 9

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 23 Mins 9 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.05.26

4 18 24 51 56 14

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$105,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 23 Mins 9 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Arlington 50, Madison 41
Avon 57, Alcester-Hudson 19
Brandon Valley 74, Watertown 28
Chadron, Neb. 70, Hot Springs 38
Clark-Willow Lake 53, De Smet 41
Corsica/Stickney 35, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 15
Dell Rapids St Mary's 54, Garretson 27
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Some high school basketball scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

The coolest technology from Day 2 of CES 2026

By SHAWN CHEN and RIO YAMAT Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Crowds flooded the freshly opened showroom floors on Day 2 of the CES and were met by thousands of robots, AI companions, assistants, health longevity tech, wearables and more.

Siemens President and CEO Roland Busch kicked off the day with a keynote detailing how its customers are harnessing artificial intelligence to transform their businesses. He was joined onstage by Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang to announce an expanded partnership, saying they are launching a new AI-driven industrial revolution to reinvent all aspects of manufacturing, production and supply chain management.

Lenovo ended the day with a guest star-rich visual banquet dedicated to spotlighting how its AI platforms can help people personally (wearables), with their businesses (enterprise platforms) and the world around them. To strike home his points, its CEO Yang Yuanqing was joined by tech superstars like Nvidia's Huang, AMD CEO Lisa Su and Intel CEO Lip-Bu Tan.

The CES is a huge opportunity annually for companies large and small to parade products they plan to put on shelves this year. Here are the highlights from Day 2:

Razer leans into AI

Gaming tech company Razer is well known for bringing buzz-worthy hardware to CES, like haptic, or tactile, seat cushions and tri-screen laptops.

This year, it's reaching beyond its standard gaming base and demonstrating two AI-powered prototypes — an over-ear gaming headset that doubles as a general-purpose assistant, and an AI desk companion that can provide gaming advice and also organize a user's life.

The holographic companion, based on a Razor on-screen AI assistant launched last year (Project Ava), has transitioned off-screen into a small glass tube that sits near your computer. The animated sprite has built-in speakers and a camera so it can see the world around it.

Both devices are AI agnostic, so you can use your preferred model. For the demo, the headset — Project Motoko — ran on OpenAI's ChatGPT. Project Ava worked off xAI's Grok. Although still in development, Razer said it expects both to be released commercially later this year.

Robots on the tarmac

Imagine your plane lands and, when you look out the window you see autonomous robots guiding it to the gate and then unloading the luggage. Oshkosh Corporation is pitching that future for airports big and small.

At CES, it debuted a fleet of autonomous airport robots designed to help airlines pull off what it calls

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“the perfect turn” — a tightly timed process that happens after a plane lands, including fueling, cleaning, handling cargo and getting passengers off and back on.

For travelers, CEO John Pfeifer says the goal is fewer delays without compromising safety. The technology is also designed to keep those tarmac tasks moving even during severe weather, like winter storms or extreme heat, when conditions are daunting for human crews, Pfeifer said. Testing with major airlines is already underway, and the robots would likely debut at large hub airports like Atlanta or Dallas, with a goal of rolling them out over the next few years.

The vacuum that can climb stairs

Chinese robovac maker Roborock has introduced a vacuum that literally sprouts chicken-like legs to navigate stairs and clean steps along the way.

The newly introduced Saros Rover was a tad slow in its ascent and descent (but it was cleaning each step) during the demo, but Roborock says it will be able to traverse almost any style of stairwell, including spiraled. No release date was given for the Rover, which the company says is still in development.

The Body Scan scale gets an upgrade

While it may look like a typical scale you'd buy for your bathroom, Withings' new Body Scan 2 measures much more than weight. Taking off their shoes and socks, people lined up to try out the “smart scale” that in 90 seconds measures 60 different biomarkers, including their heart age, vascular age and their metabolism using the pads of their feet and hands.

The \$600 scale, which will be available for purchase in the spring, also provides a nerve health score and measures changes in someone's electrodermal activity, or the skin's electrical properties due to sweat gland activity. The smart scale and a corresponding app, which costs \$10 a month or \$100 a year, provide personalized advice and a health trajectory for its users. The French company's goals are to help people monitor their health and reverse bad habits to promote longevity.

Fusion energy research gets a little support from Nvidia, Siemens

Commonwealth Fusion Systems, NVIDIA and Siemens announced Tuesday that they are working together to use AI to hasten making nuclear fusion a new source of carbon-free energy.

In Massachusetts, Commonwealth Fusion Systems is building a prototype fusion power plant called SPARC, which is about 70% complete. Through the new partnership, it will create a “digital twin,” or online simulation, of the physical machine.

CFS CEO Bob Mumgaard said it will ask questions of the simulation to speed up progress on the physical machine and rapidly analyze data, compressing years of manual experimentation into weeks of understanding.

SPARC is a prototype for the company's first planned power plant, called ARC, that is meant to connect to the grid in the early 2030s. The device will use very strong magnets to create conditions for fusion to happen. Mumgaard also said CFS's first high-temperature superconducting magnet has been installed in SPARC.

Shooter who killed Brown students and MIT professor planned attack for years, DOJ says

By LEAH WILLINGHAM and MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — The man identified as the shooter who killed two Brown University students and an MIT professor planned the attack for years and left behind videos in which he confessed to the murders but gave no motive, according to information released Tuesday by the U.S. Department of Justice.

Claudio Neves Valente, 48, a former Brown student and Portuguese national, was found dead in a New Hampshire storage facility after he killed two students and wounded nine others in an engineering building on Dec. 13. Two days later he killed MIT professor Nuno F.G. Loureiro in his home in the Boston suburb of Brookline.

Justice Department officials said Tuesday that during the search of the storage facility where Neves Valente's body was found on Dec. 18, the FBI recovered an electronic device containing a series of short

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videos made by Neves Valente after the shootings.

In the recordings, the shooter admitted in Portuguese that he had been working out details for at least six semesters. He did not give a motive for targeting Brown or the professor, with whom he attended school in Portugal decades ago.

Videos don't provide motive, but do address misinformation

In an English-translated transcript provided by the Justice Department, Neves Valente said he felt he had nothing to apologize for. He also complained in the videos about injuring his eye in the shootings.

"I'm not going to apologize because during my lifetime no one sincerely apologized to me," he said.

He explicitly addressed baseless claims spread by conservative influencer Laura Loomer after the attack that the Brown shooter had spoken in Arabic, saying something like "Allahu akbar" upon entering the auditorium.

Neves Valente said he did not speak a word of Arabic or intend to make any kind of statement. If he said anything, he "must have made an exclamation like, 'Oh no!' or something like that," to express disappointment that the auditorium appeared to be empty when he entered, he said. Students were hiding under desks, but Neves Valente thought they'd already escaped through an emergency exit.

"I never wanted to do it in an auditorium. I wanted to do it in a regular room," he said. "I had plenty of opportunities. Especially this semester, I had plenty of opportunities, but I always chickened out."

Students were shot at random

He insisted he was not mentally ill. He said he did not want to be famous and the video was not a manifesto.

Neves Valente said his "only objective was to leave more or less" on his "own terms" and to ensure he "wouldn't be the one who ended up suffering the most from all this."

"No, that cannot happen. So if you don't like it, tough luck," he said. Neves Valente called his execution of the murders "a little incompetent."

"But at least something was done," he said.

Neves Valente wounded nine people and killed two students: Sophomore Ella Cook, 19, and 18-year-old freshman MukhammadAziz Umurzokov.

Two days later, authorities say, Neves Valente fatally shot Loureiro. Valente and Loureiro attended the same academic program at a university in Portugal between 1995 and 2000. Loureiro graduated from the physics program at Instituto Superior Técnico, that country's premier engineering school, in 2000, according to his MIT faculty page. The same year Neves Valente was let go from a position at the Lisbon university, according to an archive of a termination notice from the school's then-president in February 2000.

In the recording he said he had the storage space where his body was found for about three years.

Brown University said in a statement Tuesday that "the gravity of this tragedy continues to weigh heavily on the full Brown University community" and that they continue to mourn the deaths of the two students and pray for the full recovery of those who were injured.

Shooter describes witness encounter

Neves Valente mentioned his confrontation with a witness at Brown that ultimately led to his identification days later.

According to police, the witness had several encounters with Neves Valente before the attack. As police posted images of the person of interest, the witness began posting on the social media forum Reddit that he recognized the person and theorized that police should look into "possibly a rental" gray Nissan. Reddit users urged him to inform the FBI, and the witness said he did.

Until that point, the police affidavit says, officials had not connected a vehicle to the possible shooter.

"I actually was confronted," Neves Valente said about the Brown shooting, adding that the witness saw his license plate.

"I honestly never thought it would take them so long to find me," he said.

He said he had no hatred or love for the United States, where he first arrived around 25 years ago to study physics at Brown's graduate program before leaving in the spring of 2001.

Neves Valente studied at Brown on a student visa. He eventually obtained legal permanent residence in September 2017. His last known residence was in Miami.

"It's the same thing with Portugal, and most of the places where I have been," he said, adding later that "I've been here without caring for a very long time now."

Israel clears final hurdle to start settlement construction that would cut the West Bank in two

By JULIA FRANKEL and ABBY SEWELL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel has cleared the final hurdle before starting construction on a contentious settlement project near Jerusalem that would effectively cut the West Bank in two, according to a government tender.

The tender, which seeks bids from developers, would clear the way to begin construction of the E1 project.

The anti-settlement monitoring group Peace Now first reported the tender. Yoni Mizrahi, who runs the group's settlement watch division, said initial work could begin within the month.

Settlement development in E1, an open tract of land east of Jerusalem, has been under consideration for more than two decades, but was frozen due to U.S. pressure during previous administrations.

The international community overwhelmingly considers Israeli settlement construction in the West Bank to be illegal and an obstacle to peace.

A controversial project

The E1 project is especially contentious because it runs from the outskirts of Jerusalem deep into the occupied West Bank. Critics say it would prevent the establishment of a contiguous Palestinian state in the territory.

Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, a far-right politician who oversees settlement policy, has long pushed for the plan to become a reality.

"The Palestinian state is being erased from the table not with slogans but with actions," he said in August, when Israel gave final approval to the plan. "Every settlement, every neighborhood, every housing unit is another nail in the coffin of this dangerous idea."

The tender, publicly accessible on the website for Israel's Land Authority, calls for proposals to develop 3,401 housing units. Peace Now says the publication of the tender "reflects an accelerated effort to advance construction in E1.

Israel and Syria resume U.S.-brokered talks in Paris

Syrian and Israeli officials met Tuesday in Paris for U.S.-mediated talks intended to broker a security agreement to defuse tensions between the two countries. A joint statement issued after the meeting said it "centered on respect for Syria's sovereignty and stability, Israel's security, and prosperity for both countries."

It said the two sides have agreed to establish a joint communication cell "to facilitate immediate and ongoing coordination on their intelligence sharing, military de-escalation, diplomatic engagement, and commercial opportunities under the supervision of the United States." The cell would serve as a platform to address disputes and "prevent misunderstandings," it said.

In December 2024, insurgents led by Syria's now interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa ousted the country's longtime autocratic leader, Bashar Assad, in a lightning offensive.

Al-Sharaa said that he has no desire for a conflict with Israel. But Israel was suspicious of the new Islamist-led leadership and quickly moved to seize control of a formerly U.N.-patrolled buffer zone in southern Syria set up under a 1974 disengagement agreement. Israel has also launched hundreds of airstrikes on Syrian military facilities and periodic incursions into villages outside the buffer zone, which have sometimes led to violent confrontations with residents.

Syrian officials have said their priority in the talks is the withdrawal of Israeli forces and a return to the 1974 agreement. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said in a statement Tuesday that Israel

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"stressed the importance of ensuring security for its citizens and preventing threats on its border" and of protecting the Druze minority in Syria, which also comprises a substantial minority in Israel.

U.N. says aid groups have enough food for Gazans for the first time in two years

The United Nations said that aid groups have enough food on hand to sustain people in Gaza for the first time since the war began more than two years ago.

"The January round is the first since October 2023 in which partners had sufficient stock to meet 100% of the minimum caloric standard," U.N. spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric said Monday.

More aid has been reaching Gaza since the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas took effect on Oct. 10.

However, the flow of humanitarian aid remains challenging amid Israel's recent decision to revoke the licenses of more than three dozen organizations, including such prominent groups as Doctors Without Borders, the Norwegian Refugee Council and Oxfam.

The European Union's foreign policy chief on Tuesday called on Israel to lift the restrictions to avert deaths from exposure, hunger and a lack of medicines, as thousands of displaced Palestinians return to what is left of their homes.

"To deliver aid rapidly, safely and at the scale required, international NGOs must be able to operate in a sustained and predictable way," Kaja Kallas, the EU's top diplomat, said in a statement from the 27-nation bloc, referring to non-governmental organizations.

Israeli troops fire at university protesters in West Bank

The Palestinian Red Crescent said Tuesday that 11 people were injured during an Israeli raid at a university in the West Bank.

The president of Birzeit University, speaking at a press conference, said a group of about 20 Israeli military vehicles had stormed the gate and entered the campus. Video obtained by The Associated Press confirmed their presence on campus.

"Unfortunately, targeting the university is a recurring event," said Talal Shahwan, the school's president, who said the forces displayed "clear brutality."

Israeli officials said military and border troops were sent to break up an anticipated gathering and soon found themselves facing a crowd of hundreds of people, some allegedly throwing rocks at them from rooftops.

They said they used targeted fire toward the "main violent individuals."

Foreign journalists press Israel for entry into Gaza

A group representing major international media organizations on Tuesday criticized the Israeli government's latest refusal to allow foreign journalists into Gaza, despite a three-month ceasefire.

Israel has barred the foreign media from entering Gaza since the war erupted on Oct. 7, 2023.

The Foreign Press Association has asked Israel's Supreme Court to end the ban. After months of delays, the Israeli government this week told the court that it remains opposed to allowing international journalists into Gaza, citing security reasons.

The FPA, which represents dozens of major media organizations, including The Associated Press, expressed "its profound disappointment" with the government's position and said it hoped judges would soon end the ban.

Trump says US to get 30 million to 50 million barrels of oil from Venezuela at market price

By REGINA GARCIA CANO, AAMER MADHANI and MEGAN JANETSKY Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — President Donald Trump said Tuesday that Venezuela would be providing 30 million to 50 million barrels of oil to the U.S., and he pledged to use proceeds from the sale of this oil "to benefit the people" of both countries.

The White House is organizing a meeting Friday with U.S. oil company executives to discuss Venezuela, which the Trump administration has been pressuring to open its vast-but-struggling oil industry more widely to American investment and know-how. Representatives of Exxon, Chevron and ConocoPhillips are

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expected to attend the White House meeting, according to a person familiar with the matter who requested anonymity to discuss the plans.

Earlier Tuesday, officials in Caracas announced that at least 24 Venezuelan security officers were killed in the dead-of-night U.S. military operation to capture Nicolás Maduro and spirit him to the United States to face drug charges. And the country's acting president, Delcy Rodríguez, pushed back on Trump, who earlier this week warned she'd face an outcome worse than Maduro's if she does not "do what's right" and overhaul Venezuela into a country that aligns with U.S. interests, including by granting access to American energy companies.

Rodríguez, delivering an address Tuesday before government agricultural and industrial sector officials, said, "Personally, to those who threaten me: My destiny is not determined by them, but by God."

Venezuela's Attorney General Tarek William Saab said overall "dozens" of officers and civilians were killed in the weekend strike in Caracas and said prosecutors would investigate the deaths in what he described as a "war crime." He didn't specify if the estimate was specifically referring to Venezuelans.

In addition to the Venezuelan security officials, Cuba's government had previously confirmed that 32 Cuban military and police officers working in Venezuela were killed in the raid. The Cuban government says the personnel killed belonged to the Revolutionary Armed Forces and the Ministry of the Interior, the country's two main security agencies.

Seven U.S. service members were also injured in the raid, according to the Pentagon. Five have already returned to duty, while two are still recovering from their injuries. The injuries included gunshot wounds and shrapnel injuries, according to a U.S. official who was not authorized to comment on the matter publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

A video tribute to the slain Venezuelan security officials posted to the military's Instagram account features faces of the fallen over black-and-white videos of soldiers, American aircraft flying over Caracas and armored vehicles destroyed by the blasts. Meanwhile, the streets of Caracas, deserted for days following Maduro's capture, briefly filled with masses of people waving Venezuelan flags and bouncing to patriotic music at a state-organized display of support for the government.

"Their spilled blood does not cry out for vengeance, but for justice and strength," the military wrote in an Instagram post. "It reaffirms our unwavering oath not to rest until we rescue our legitimate President, completely dismantle the terrorist groups operating from abroad, and ensure that events such as these never again sully our sovereign soil."

Questions about the future of Venezuelan oil

With oil trading at roughly \$56 a barrel, the transaction Trump announced late Tuesday could be worth as much as \$2.8 billion. The U.S. goes through an average of roughly 20 million barrels a day of oil and related products, so Venezuela's transfer would be the equivalent of as much as two and a half days of supply, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

Despite Venezuela having the world's largest proven crude oil reserves, it only produces on average about one million barrels day, significantly below the U.S. average daily production of 13.9 million barrels a day during October.

The press office for Venezuela's government did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Trump's announcement.

ExxonMobil is developing a mammoth offshore oil deposit in the waters off Guyana, Venezuela's neighbor to the east. The company's major oil discovery in 2015 prompted Venezuela to revive a century-old territorial dispute with Guyana and take steps to annex the remote region known as Essequibo, which comprises about two-thirds of Guyana's land mass.

The development has also led to wide-ranging accusations from Venezuela's government, including Rodríguez, against Guyana's leaders and ExxonMobil. Two years ago, Venezuelan lawmakers even considered banning any future operation in Venezuela of oil companies working in Guyana.

Earlier Tuesday, Trump pushed back against Democratic criticism of this weekend's military operation, noting that his Democratic predecessor Joe Biden had also called for the arrest of the Venezuelan leader

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on drug trafficking charges.

Trump in remarks before a House Republican retreat in Washington grumbled that Democrats were not giving him credit for a successful military operation, even though there was bipartisan agreement that Maduro was not the rightful president of Venezuela.

In 2020, Maduro was indicted in the United States, accused in a decades-long narco-terrorism and international cocaine trafficking conspiracy. White House officials have noted that Biden's administration in his final days in office last year raised the award for information leading to Maduro's arrest after he assumed a third term in office despite evidence suggesting that he lost Venezuela's most recent election. The Trump administration doubled the award to \$50 million in August.

"You know, at some point, they should say, 'You know, you did a great job. Thank you. Congratulations.' Wouldn't it be good?" Trump said. "I would say that if they did a good job, their philosophies are so different. But if they did a good job, I'd be happy for the country. They've been after this guy for years and years and years."

What US opinion polls show

Americans are split about the capture of Maduro — with many still forming opinions — according to a poll conducted by The Washington Post and SSRS using text messages over the weekend. About 4 in 10 approved of the U.S. military being sent to capture Maduro, while roughly the same share were opposed. About 2 in 10 were unsure.

Nearly half of Americans, 45%, were opposed to the U.S. taking control of Venezuela and choosing a new government for the country. About 9 in 10 Americans said the Venezuelan people should be the ones to decide the future leadership of their country.

Maduro pleaded not guilty to federal drug trafficking charges in a U.S. courtroom on Monday. U.S. forces captured Maduro and his wife early Saturday in a raid on a compound where they were surrounded by Cuban guards.

In the days since Maduro's ouster, Trump and top administration officials have raised anxiety around the globe that the operation could mark the beginning of a more expansionist U.S. foreign policy in the Western Hemisphere. The president in recent days has 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."

Colombia responds to Trump

Colombia's Foreign Affairs Minister Rosa Villavicencio said Tuesday she'll meet with the U.S. Embassy's charge d'affaires in Bogota to present him with a formal complaint over the recent threats issued by the United States.

On Sunday, Trump said he wasn't ruling out an attack on Colombia and described its president, who's been an outspoken critic of the U.S. pressure campaign on Venezuela, as a "sick man who likes making cocaine and selling it to the United States."

Villavicencio said she's hoping to strengthen relations with the United States and improve cooperation in the fight against drug trafficking.

"It is necessary for the Trump administration to know in more detail about all that we are doing in the fight against drug trafficking," she said.

Meanwhile, the leaders of France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom on Tuesday joined Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen in defending Greenland's sovereignty. The island is a self-governing territory of the kingdom of Denmark and thus part of the NATO military alliance.

"Greenland belongs to its people," the statement said. "It is for Denmark and Greenland, and them only, to decide on matters concerning Denmark and Greenland."

Homeland Security plans 2,000 officers in Minnesota for its 'largest immigration operation ever'

By REBECCA SANTANA and MIKE BALSAMO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Department of Homeland Security said Tuesday that it launched what it described as the largest immigration enforcement operation ever carried out by the agency — with 2,000 federal agents and officers expected in the Minneapolis area for a crackdown tied in part to allegations of fraud involving Somali residents.

"The largest DHS operation ever is happening right now in Minnesota," the department said in a post on X, dramatically expanding the federal law enforcement footprint in the state amid heightened political and community tensions.

The government planned to send about 2,000 Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents and officers to Minnesota, according to a U.S. official and a person briefed on the matter. The agents are expected to be dispatched in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, the person said. The people were not authorized to publicly discuss operational details and spoke with The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity.

Immigrant rights groups and elected officials in the Twin Cities reported a sharp increase Tuesday in sightings of federal agents, notably around St. Paul. Numerous agents' vehicles were reported making traffic stops, outside area businesses and apartment buildings.

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem was also present and accompanied U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers during at least one arrest. A video posted on X showed Noem wearing a tactical vest and knit cap as agents arrested a man in St. Paul. In the video, she tells the handcuffed man: "You will be held accountable for your crimes."

DHS said in a news release that the man was from Ecuador and was wanted in his homeland and Connecticut on charges including murder and sexual assault. It said agents arrested 150 people Monday in enforcement actions in Minneapolis.

Minnesota governor blasts surge

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, a Democrat, criticized the federal enforcement surge as "a war that's being waged against Minnesota."

"You're seeing that we have a ridiculous surge of apparently 2,000 people not coordinating with us, that are for a show of cameras," Walz told reporters in Minneapolis on Tuesday, a day after announcing he was ending his campaign for a third term.

Many residents were already on edge. The Trump administration has singled out the area's Somali community, the largest in the U.S. Last month, Minneapolis Police Chief Brian O'Hara criticized federal agents for using "questionable methods" following a confrontation between agents and protesters.

Molly Coleman, a St. Paul City Council member whose district includes a manufacturing plant where agents arrested more than a dozen people in November, said Tuesday was "unlike any other day we've experienced."

"It's incredibly distressing," Coleman said. "What we know happens when ICE comes into a city, it's an enforcement in which every single person is on guard and afraid."

Julia Decker, policy director at the Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota, said there had been an increase in sightings of federal agents and enforcement vehicles in locations like parking lots.

"We can definitely feel a heavier presence," said Dieu Do, an organizer with the Minnesota Immigrant Rights Action Committee, which dispatches response teams to reports of agents.

Surge includes investigators focused on fraud allegations

Roughly three-quarters of the enforcement personnel are expected to come from ICE's Enforcement and Removal Operations, which carries out immigration arrests and deportations, said the person with knowledge of the operation. The force also includes agents from Homeland Security Investigations, ICE's investigative arm, which typically focuses on fraud and cross-border criminal networks.

HSI agents were going door-to-door in the Twin Cities area investigating allegations of fraud, human

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smuggling and unlawful employment practices, Lyons said.

The HSI agents are largely expected to concentrate on identifying suspected fraud, while deportation officers will conduct arrests of immigrants accused of violating immigration law, according to the person briefed on the operation. Specialized tactical units are also expected to be involved.

The operation also includes personnel from U.S. Customs and Border Protection, including Cmdr. Gregory Bovino, the person familiar with the deployment said. Bovino's tactics during previous federal operations in other cities have drawn scrutiny from local officials and civil rights advocates.

Hilton drops Minnesota hotel that canceled agents' reservations

Hilton said in a statement Tuesday that it was removing a Minnesota hotel from its systems for "not meeting our standards and values" when it denied service to federal agents.

The Hampton Inn Lakeville hotel, about 20 miles (32 kilometers) outside Minneapolis, apologized Monday for canceling the reservations of federal agents, saying it would work to accommodate them. The hotel, like the majority of Hampton Inns, is owned and operated by a franchisee.

The Hampton Inn Lakeville did not respond to requests for comment.

Federal authorities began increasing immigration arrests in the Minneapolis area late last year. Noem and FBI Director Kash Patel announced last week that federal agencies were intensifying operations in Minnesota, with an emphasis on fraud investigations.

President Donald Trump has repeatedly linked his administration's immigration crackdown in Minnesota to fraud cases involving federal nutrition and pandemic aid programs, many of which have involved defendants with roots in Somalia.

The person with information about the current operation cautioned that its scope and duration could shift in the coming days as it develops.

How Delcy Rodríguez courted Donald Trump and rose to power in Venezuela

By JOSHUA GOODMAN Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — In 2017, as political outsider Donald Trump headed to Washington, Delcy Rodríguez spotted an opening.

Then Venezuela's foreign minister, Rodríguez directed Citgo — a subsidiary of the state oil company — to make a \$500,000 donation to the president's inauguration. With the socialist administration of Nicolas Maduro struggling to feed Venezuela, Rodríguez gambled on a deal that would have opened the door to American investment. Around the same time, she saw that Trump's ex-campaign manager was hired as a lobbyist for Citgo, courted Republicans in Congress and tried to secure a meeting with the head of Exxon.

The charm offensive flopped. Within weeks of taking office, Trump, urged by then-Sen. Marco Rubio, made restoring Venezuela's democracy his driving focus in response to Maduro's crackdown on opponents. But the outreach did bear fruit for Rodríguez, making her a prominent face in U.S. business and political circles and paving the way for her own rise.

"She's an ideologue, but a practical one," said Lee McClenny, a retired foreign service officer who was the top U.S. diplomat in Caracas during the period of Rodríguez's outreach. "She knew that Venezuela needed to find a way to resuscitate a moribund oil economy and seemed willing to work with the Trump administration to do that."

Nearly a decade later, as Venezuela's interim president, Rodríguez's message — that Venezuela is open for business — seems to have persuaded Trump. In the days since Maduro's stunning capture Saturday, he's alternately praised Rodríguez as a "gracious" American partner while threatening a similar fate as her former boss if she doesn't keep the ruling party in check and provide the U.S. with "total access" to the country's vast oil reserves. One thing neither has mentioned is elections, something the constitution mandates must take place within 30 days of the presidency being permanently vacated.

This account of Rodríguez's political rise is drawn from interviews with 10 former U.S. and Venezuelan officials as well as businessmen from both countries who've had extensive dealings with Rodríguez and in

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some cases have known her since childhood. Most spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation from someone who they almost universally described as bookishly smart, sometimes charming but above all a cutthroat operator who doesn't tolerate dissent. Rodríguez didn't respond to AP requests for an interview.

Father's murder hardens leftist outlook

Rodríguez entered the leftist movement started by Hugo Chávez late — and on the coattails of her older brother, Jorge Rodríguez, who as head of the National Assembly swore her in as interim president Monday.

Tragedy during their childhood fed a hardened leftist outlook that would stick with the siblings throughout their lives. In 1976 — when, amid the Cold War, U.S. oil companies, American political spin doctors and Pentagon advisers exerted great influence in Venezuela — a little-known urban guerrilla group kidnapped a Midwestern businessman. Rodríguez's father, a socialist leader, was picked up for questioning and died in custody.

McClenny remembers Rodríguez bringing up the murder in their meetings and bitterly blaming the U.S. for being left fatherless at the age of 7. The crime would radicalize another leftist of the era: Maduro.

Years later, while Jorge Rodríguez was a top electoral official under Chávez, he secured for his sister a position in the president's office.

But she advanced slowly at first and clashed with colleagues who viewed her as a haughty know-it-all.

In 2006, on a whirlwind international tour, Chávez booted her from the presidential plane and ordered her to fly home from Moscow on her own, according to two former officials who were on the trip. Chávez was upset because the delegation's schedule of meetings had fallen apart and that triggered a feud with Rodríguez, who was responsible for the agenda.

"It was painful to watch how Chávez talked about her," said one of the former officials. "He would never say a bad thing about women but the whole flight home he kept saying she was conceited, arrogant, incompetent."

Days later, she was fired and never occupied another high-profile role with Chávez.

Political revival and soaring power under Maduro

Years later, in 2013, Maduro revived Rodríguez's career after Chávez died of cancer and he took over.

A lawyer educated in Britain and France, Rodríguez speaks English and spent large amounts of time in the United States. That gave her an edge in the internal power struggles among Chavismo — the movement started by Chávez, whose many factions include democratic socialists, military hardliners who Chávez led in a 1992 coup attempt and corrupt actors, some with ties to drug trafficking.

Her more worldly outlook, and refined tastes, also made Rodríguez a favorite of the so-called "boligarchs" — a new elite that made fortunes during Chávez's Bolivarian revolution. One of those insiders, media tycoon Raul Gorrín, worked hand-in-glove with Rodríguez's back-channel efforts to mend relations with the first Trump administration and helped organize a secret visit by Rep. Pete Sessions, a Texas Republican, to Caracas in April 2018 for a meeting with Maduro. A few months later, U.S. federal prosecutors unsealed the first of two money laundering indictments against Gorrín.

After Maduro promoted Rodríguez to vice president in 2018, she gained control over large swaths of Venezuela's oil economy. To help manage the petro-state, she brought in foreign advisers with experience in global markets. Among them were two former finance ministers in Ecuador who helped run a dollarized, export-driven economy under fellow leftist Rafael Correa. Another key associate is French lawyer David Syed, who for years has been trying to renegotiate Venezuela's foreign debt in the face of crippling U.S. sanctions that make it impossible for Wall Street investors to get repaid.

"She sacrificed her personal life for her political career," said one former friend.

As she amassed more power, she crushed internal rivals. Among them: once powerful Oil Minister Tarek El Aissami, who was jailed in 2024 as part of an anti-corruption crackdown spearheaded by Rodríguez.

In her de-facto role as Venezuela's chief operating officer, Rodríguez proved a more flexible, trustworthy partner than Maduro. Some have likened her to a sort of Venezuelan Deng Xiaoping — the architect of modern China.

Hans Humes, chief executive of Greylock Capital Management, said that experience will serve her well as she tries to jump-start the economy, unite Chavismo and shield Venezuela from stricter terms dictated by Trump. Imposing an opposition-led government right now, he said, could trigger bloodshed of the sort that ripped apart Iraq after U.S. forces toppled Saddam Hussein and formed a provisional government including many leaders who had been exiled for years.

"We've seen how expats who have been outside of the country for too long think things should be the way it was before they left," said Humes, who has met with Maduro as well as Rodríguez on several occasions. "You need people who know how to work with how things are not how they were."

Democracy deferred?

Where Rodríguez's more pragmatic leadership style leaves Venezuela's democracy is uncertain.

Trump, in remarks after Maduro's capture, said Nobel Peace Prize winner Maria Corina Machado lacks the "respect" to govern Venezuela despite her handpicked candidate winning what the U.S. and other governments consider a landslide victory in 2024 presidential elections stolen by Maduro.

Elliott Abrams, who served as special envoy to Venezuela during the first Trump administration, said it is impossible for the president to fulfill his goal of banishing criminal gangs, drug traffickers and Middle Eastern terrorists from the Western Hemisphere with the various factions of Chavismo sharing power.

"Nothing that Trump has said suggests his administration is contemplating a quick transition away from Delcy. No one is talking about elections," said Abrams. "If they think Delcy is running things, they are completely wrong."

White House says military 'always an option' in Greenland as European leaders reject US takeover

By CLAUDIA CIOBANU and STEFANIE DAZIO Associated Press

The White House said Tuesday that "U.S. military is always an option," even as a series of European leaders rejected President Donald Trump's comments about seeking an American takeover of the world's largest island.

Trump has floated since his first term the idea of purchasing Greenland, which is part of the kingdom of Denmark. But, after this weekend's U.S. military action in Venezuela, he's renewed calls for the U.S. to take over Greenland, citing strategic reasons.

"President Trump has made it well known that acquiring Greenland is a national security priority of the United States, and it's vital to deter our adversaries in the Arctic region," White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said in a statement. "The president and his team are discussing a range of options to pursue this important foreign policy goal, and of course, utilizing the U.S. military is always an option at the commander in chief's disposal."

That's notable since Trump's newly appointed special envoy to Greenland, as well as deputy White House chief of staff Stephen Miller, had suggested that military action wouldn't be necessary. And asked Tuesday if he felt comfortable taking military action in Greenland, Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson said, "No. I don't think it's appropriate."

Leavitt's comments also followed the leaders of France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom joining Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen in issuing a statement reaffirming that the strategic, mineral-rich Arctic island "belongs to its people."

Their statement defended the sovereignty of Greenland, which is a self-governing territory of Denmark and thus part of the NATO military alliance.

"Greenland belongs to its people," it said. "It is for Denmark and Greenland, and them only, to decide on matters concerning Denmark and Greenland."

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney also expressed his support, and announced a visit to Greenland early next month by Canada's Governor General Mary Simon, who is of Inuit descent, and Foreign Minister Anita Anand.

"The future of Greenland and Denmark are decided solely by the people of Denmark," Carney said,

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standing next to Frederiksen at the Canadian Embassy in Paris.

Also Tuesday, Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry, who Trump appointed last month as U.S. special envoy to Greenland, said when it comes to making a deal with Greenland, he isn't interested in talking to people in Denmark who "absolutely have made their position clear."

Nor does Landry want to talk to European diplomats. Instead, he said, he wants to have conversations directly with residents of Greenland.

"I want to talk to people who want an opportunity to improve the quality of life in Greenland," the Republican said on a Fox News radio show.

Landry said he has already exchanged emails with Greenlanders who had reached out to him.

"They tell me they like to hunt, they like to fish, they like to have a good time. I'm like, y'all belong in Louisiana. I'm gonna call it culinary diplomacy," Landry quipped.

White House doesn't budge

Stephen Miller, the White House deputy chief of staff, said Monday that Greenland should be part of the United States in spite of a warning by Frederiksen that a U.S. takeover would amount to the end of NATO.

"The president has been clear for months now that the United States should be the nation that has Greenland as part of our overall security apparatus," Miller said during an interview with CNN on Monday.

The Danish leader, together with Greenland's prime minister, has firmly rejected Trump's renewed call for the island to come under U.S. control. Trump has argued the U.S. needs to control Greenland to ensure it security in the face of rising threats from China and Russia in the Arctic.

"It's so strategic right now," he told reporters Sunday.

"Greenland is covered with Russian and Chinese ships all over the place," Trump said. "We need Greenland from the standpoint of national security, and Denmark is not going to be able to do it."

Miller wondered during his interview on Monday whether Denmark can assert control over Greenland. "What is the basis of their territorial claim," Miller said. "What is their basis of having Greenland as a colony of Denmark?"

But he also said it wasn't necessary to consider whether the U.S. administration was contemplating an armed intervention. "There is no need to even think or talk about this in the context that you are asking, of a military operation. Nobody is going to fight the U.S. militarily over the future of Greenland," Miller said.

Greenland holds strategic importance

Greenland had been a colony of the Danish kingdom for hundreds of years, becoming an integral part in 1953. The U.S. government recognized Denmark's right to the whole of Greenland at the beginning of the 20th century.

Legislation in 2009 that extended self-government to Greenland also recognized a right to independence under international law, an option favored by a majority of Greenlanders.

Greenland sits off the northeastern coast of Canada, with more than two-thirds of its territory lying within the Arctic Circle. That location has made it crucial to the defense of North America since World War II.

The U.S. Department of Defense operates the remote Pituffik Space Base in northwestern Greenland. Constructed after a 1951 defense agreement between Denmark and the U.S., the base supports missile warning, missile defense and space surveillance operations for the U.S. and NATO.

Greenland also guards part of the GIUK Gap, named for the initials of Greenland, Iceland and the United Kingdom, where NATO monitors Russian naval movements in the North Atlantic.

Greenland has large deposits of rare earth minerals needed to make everything from computers and smartphones to the batteries, solar and wind technologies that will power a transition away from fossil fuels. The U.S. Geological Survey also has identified potential offshore deposits of oil and natural gas.

Dispute creates major anxiety

What started out as a social media post on Saturday by Miller's wife over the weekend quickly turned into something that Denmark now perceives as a real threat.

Katie Miller, a former Trump administration official turned podcaster, posted an illustrated map of Greenland in the colors of the U.S. flag, accompanied by the caption: "SOON."

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Trump's comments Sunday, including telling reporters "let's talk about Greenland in 20 days," deepened fears that the U.S. was planning a Greenland intervention in the near future.

Frederiksen said Monday that Trump's comments about Greenland "should be taken seriously."

"If the United States chooses to attack another NATO country militarily, then everything stops," Frederiksen told Danish broadcaster TV2. "That is, including our NATO and thus the security that has been provided since the end of the Second World War."

Greenland Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen insisted on the need for good relations with the U.S. "We are not in a situation where we think that there might be a takeover of the country overnight and that is why we are insisting that we want good cooperation," he said Monday night.

U.S. Reps. Steny H. Hoyer and Blake Moore, co-chairs of the bipartisan Congressional Friends of Denmark Caucus, issued a joint statement Monday urging calm.

"Sabre-rattling about annexing Greenland is needlessly dangerous," they said. "An attack on Greenland — a crucial part of that alliance — would tragically be an attack on NATO."

"We already have access to everything we could need from Greenland," the congressmen said, noting Denmark has previously given the U.S. a green light to deploy more forces or build additional missile defense infrastructure in Greenland.

Ulrik Pram Gad, a global security expert at the Danish Institute for International Studies, questioned Trump's characterization of the Russian and Chinese presence in the region.

"There are indeed Russian and Chinese ships in the Arctic, but these vessels are too far away to see from Greenland with or without binoculars," he wrote.

Fifth anniversary of the Jan. 6 attack brings fresh division to the US Capitol

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Five years ago outside the White House, outgoing President Donald Trump told a crowd of supporters to head to the Capitol — "and I'll be there with you" — in protest as Congress was affirming the 2020 election victory for Democrat Joe Biden.

A short time later, the world watched as the seat of U.S. power descended into chaos, and democracy hung in the balance.

On the fifth anniversary of Jan. 6, 2021, there is no official event to memorialize what happened that day, when the mob made its way down Pennsylvania Avenue, battled police at the Capitol barricades and stormed inside, as lawmakers fled. The political parties refuse to agree on a shared history of the events, which were broadcast around the globe. And the official plaque honoring the police who defended the Capitol has never been hung.

Instead, the day displayed the divisions that still define Washington, and the country, and the White House itself issued a glossy new report with its own revised history of what happened.

Trump, during a lengthy morning speech to House Republicans away from the Capitol at the rebranded Kennedy Center now carrying his own name, shifted blame for Jan. 6 onto the rioters themselves.

The president said he had intended only for his supporters to go "peacefully and patriotically" to confront Congress as it certified Biden's win. He blamed the media for focusing on other parts of his speech that day.

At the same time, Democrats held their own morning meeting at the Capitol, reconvening members of the House committee that investigated the Jan. 6, 2021, attack for a panel discussion. Recalling the history of the day is important, they said, in order to prevent what Rep. Jamie Raskin, D-Md., warned was the GOP's "Orwellian project of forgetting."

And the former leader of the militant Proud Boys, Enrique Tarrio, summoned people for a midday march retracing the rioters' steps from the White House to the Capitol, this time to honor Trump supporter Ashli Babbitt and those who died in the Jan. 6 siege and its aftermath. More than 100 people gathered, including Babbitt's mother.

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Tarrio and others are putting pressure on the Trump administration to punish officials who investigated and prosecuted the Jan. 6 rioters. He was sentenced to 22 years in prison for seditious conspiracy for orchestrating the Jan. 6 attack, and he is among more than 1,500 defendants who saw their charges dropped when Trump issued a sweeping pardon on his return to the White House last year.

"They should be fired and prosecuted," Tarrio told the crowd before they arrived at the Capitol, confronted along the way by counter-protesters, and sang the National Anthem.

The White House, in its new report, highlighted the work the president has already done to free those charged and turned the blame on Democrats for certifying Biden's election victory.

Echoes of 5 years ago

This milestone anniversary carried echoes of the deep differences that erupted that day.

But it unfolds while attention is focused elsewhere, particularly after the U.S. military's stunning capture of Venezuela's president, Nicolás Maduro, and Trump's plans to take over the country and prop up its vast oil industry, a striking new era of American expansionism.

"These people in the administration, they want to lecture the world about democracy when they're undermining the rule of law at home, as we all will be powerfully reminded," House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York said on the eve of the anniversary.

Jeffries and Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer held a candlelight vigil outside the Capitol with lawmakers and family members of police officers to mark the anniversary.

Few Republicans joined in the day's remembrances, and the Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson of Louisiana, responding to requests for comment about the delay in hanging the plaque honoring the police at the Capitol, as required by law, said in a statement on the eve of the anniversary that the statute "is not implementable," and proposed alternatives "also do not comply with the statute."

Democrats revive an old committee, Republicans lead a new one

At the morning hearing at the Capitol, lawmakers heard from a range of witnesses and others — including former U.S. Capitol Police officer Winston Pigeon, who said as a kid he always dreamed of being a cop. But on that day, he thought he was going to die in the mayhem on the steps of the Capitol.

"I implore America to not forget what happened," he said, urging the country to find common ground. "I believe the vast majority of Americans have so much more in common than what separates us."

Also testifying was Pamela Hemphill, a rioter who refused Trump's pardon, blamed the president for the violence and silenced the room as she apologized to the officer sitting alongside her at the witness table, stifling tears.

"I can't allow them not be recognized, to be lied about," Hemphill said about the police who she said also saved her life as she fell and was trampled on by the mob. "Until I can see that plaque get up there, I'm not done."

Among those testifying was former Rep. Adam Kinzinger of Illinois, who was one of two Republicans on the panel that investigated Trump's efforts to overturn Biden's win. The other, Liz Cheney, who lost her own reelection bid to a Trump-backed challenger, did not appear. Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi urged the country to turn away from persistent lies and violence that she said sends the wrong message about democracy.

Republican Rep. Barry Loudermilk of Georgia, who has been tapped by Johnson to lead a new committee to probe other theories about what happened on Jan. 6, rejected Tuesday's session as a "partisan exercise" designed to hurt Trump and his allies.

Many Republicans reject the narrative that Trump sparked the Jan. 6 attack, and Johnson, before he became the House speaker, had led challenges to the 2020 election. He was among some 130 GOP lawmakers voting that day to reject the presidential results from some states.

Instead, they have focused on security lapses at the Capitol — from the time it took for the National Guard to arrive on the scene to the failure of the police canine units to discover the pipe bombs found that day outside Republican and Democratic party headquarters. The FBI arrested a Virginia man suspected of placing the pipe bombs, and he told investigators last month he believed someone needed to speak up for those who believed the 2020 election was stolen, authorities say.

"The Capitol Complex is no more secure today than it was on January 6," Loudermilk said in a social media post. "My Select Subcommittee remains committed to transparency and accountability and ensuring the security failures that occurred on January 6 and the partisan investigation that followed never happens again."

In the Senate, one Republican Sen. Thom Tillis displayed a replica plaque behind him and said he would try later this week to push a vote ensuring it complies with the law so it can be displayed as intended. Another Republican, Sen. Tommy Tuberville, objected to a separate resolution condemning the Capitol attack.

The aftermath of Jan. 6

At least five people died in the Capitol siege and its aftermath, including Babbitt, who was shot and killed by police while trying to climb through the window of a door near the House chamber, and Capitol Police Officer Brian Sicknick died later after battling the mob. Several law enforcement personnel died later, some by suicide.

The Justice Department indicted Trump on four counts in a conspiracy to defraud voters with his claims of a rigged election in the run-up to the Jan. 6 attack.

Former Justice Department special counsel Jack Smith told lawmakers last month that the riot at the Capitol "does not happen" without Trump. He ended up abandoning the case once Trump was reelected president, adhering to department guidelines against prosecuting a sitting president.

Trump, who never made it to the Capitol that day as he hunkered down at the White House, was impeached by the House on the sole charge of having incited the insurrection. The Senate acquitted him after top GOP senators said they believed the matter was best left to the courts.

Ahead of the 2024 election, the Supreme Court ruled ex-presidents have broad immunity from prosecution.

Musk's AI chatbot faces global backlash over sexualized images of women and children

By KELVIN CHAN AP Business Writer

LONDON (AP) — Elon Musk's AI chatbot Grok is facing a backlash from governments around the world after a recent surge in sexualized images of women and children generated without consent by the artificial intelligence-powered tool.

On Tuesday, Britain's top technology official demanded that Musk's social media platform X take urgent action while a Polish lawmaker cited it as a reason to enact digital safety laws.

The European Union's executive arm has denounced Grok while officials and regulators in France, India, Malaysia and Brazil have condemned the platform and called for investigations.

Rising alarm from disparate nations points to the nightmarish potential of nudification apps that use artificial intelligence to generate sexually explicit deepfake images.

Here's a closer look:

Image generation

The problem emerged after the launch last year of Grok Imagine, an AI image generator that allows users to create videos and pictures by typing in text prompts. It includes a so-called "spicy mode" that can generate adult content.

It snowballed late last month when Grok, which is hosted on X, apparently began granting a large number of user requests to modify images posted by others. As of Tuesday, Grok users could still generate images of women using requests such as, "put her in a transparent bikini."

The problem is amplified both because Musk pitches his chatbot as an edgier alternative to rivals with more safeguards, and because Grok's images are publicly visible, and can therefore be easily spread.

Nonprofit group AI Forensics said in a report that it analyzed 20,000 images generated by Grok between Dec. 25 and Jan. 1 and found that 2% depicted a person who appeared to be 18 or younger, including 30 of young or very young women or girls, in bikinis or transparent clothes.

Musk response

Musk's artificial intelligence company, xAI, responded to a request for comment with the automated

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response, "Legacy Media Lies".

However, X did not deny that the troublesome content generated through Grok exists. Yet it still claimed in a post on its Safety account, that it takes action against illegal content, including child sexual abuse material, "by removing it, permanently suspending accounts, and working with local governments and law enforcement as necessary."

The platform also repeated a comment from Musk, who said, "Anyone using Grok to make illegal content will suffer the same consequences as if they upload illegal content."

A growing list of countries are demanding that Musk does more to rein in explicit or abusive content.

Britain

X must "urgently" deal with the problem, Technology Secretary Liz Kendall said Tuesday, adding that she supported additional scrutiny from the U.K.'s communications regulator, Ofcom.

Kendall said the content is "absolutely appalling, and unacceptable in decent society."

"We cannot and will not allow the proliferation of these demeaning and degrading images, which are disproportionately aimed at women and girls."

Ofcom said Monday it has made "urgent contact" with X.

"We are aware of serious concerns raised about a feature on Grok on X that produces undressed images of people and sexualised images of children," the watchdog said.

The watchdog said it contacted both X and xAI to understand what steps it has taken to comply with British regulations.

Under the U.K.'s Online Safety Act, social media platforms must prevent and remove child sexual abuse material when they become aware of it.

Poland

A Polish lawmaker used Grok on Tuesday as a reason for national digital safety legislation that would beef up protections for minors and make it easier for authorities to remove content.

In an online video, Wlodzimierz Czarzasty, speaker of the parliament, said he wanted to make himself a target of Grok to highlight the problem, as well as appeal to Poland's president for support of the legislation.

"Grok lately is stripping people. It is undressing women, men and children. We feel bad about it. I would, honestly, almost want this Grok to also undress me," he said.

European Union

The bloc's executive arm is "well aware" that Grok is being used to for "explicit sexual content with some output generated with child-like images," European Commission spokesman Thomas Regnier said

"This is not spicy. This is illegal. This is appalling. This is disgusting. This is how we see it, and this has no place in Europe. This is not the first time that Grok is generating such output," he told reporters Monday.

After Grok spread Holocaust-denial content last year, according to Regnier, the Commission sought more information from Musk's social media platform X. The response from X is currently being analyzed, he said.

France

The Paris prosecutor's office said it's widening an ongoing investigation of X to include sexually explicit deepfakes after officials received complaints from lawmakers.

Three government ministers alerted prosecutors to "manifestly illegal content" generated by Grok and posted on X, according to a government statement last week.

The government also flagged problems with country's communications regulator over possible breaches of the EU's Digital Services Act.

"The internet is neither a lawless zone nor a zone of impunity: sexual offenses committed online constitute criminal offenses in their own right and fall fully under the law, just as those committed offline," the government said.

India

The Indian government on Friday issued an ultimatum to X, demanding that it take down all "unlawful content" and take action against offending users. The country's Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology also ordered the company to review Grok's "technical and governance framework" and file a

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report on actions taken.

The ministry accused Grok of "gross misuse" of AI and serious failures of its safeguards and enforcement by allowing the generation and sharing of "obscene images or videos of women in derogatory or vulgar manner in order to indecently denigrate them."

The ministry warned failure to comply by the 72-hour deadline would expose the company to bigger legal problems, but the deadline passed with no public update from India.

Malaysia

The Malaysian communications watchdog said Saturday it was investigating X users who violated laws prohibiting spreading "grossly offensive, obscene or indecent content."

The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission said it's also investigating online harms on X, and would summon a company representative.

The watchdog said it took note of public complaints about X's AI tools being used to digitally manipulate "images of women and minors to produce indecent, grossly offensive, or otherwise harmful content."

Brazil

Lawmaker Erika Hilton said she reported Grok and X to the Brazilian federal public prosecutor's office and the country's data protection watchdog.

In a social media post, she accused both of generating, then publishing sexualized images of women and children without consent.

She said X's AI functions should be disabled until an investigation has been carried out.

Hilton, one of Brazil's first transgender lawmakers, decried how users could get Grok to digitally alter any published photo, including "swapping the clothes of women and girls for bikinis or making them suggestive and erotic."

"The right to one's image is individual; it cannot be transferred through the 'terms of use' of a social network, and the mass distribution of child porn(asterisk)gr(asterisk)phy by an artificial intelligence integrated into a social network crosses all boundaries," she said.

Wall Street reaches more records on gains by Big Tech

By DAMIAN J. TROISE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Broad gains led by technology stocks pushed Wall Street to more records on Tuesday.

The gains mirror much of the action from the previous year, when big technology stocks often drove the market to a series of records.

Technology stocks led the gains, but several other sectors assisted in the broader market's advance. Health care companies, retailers and industrial firms broadly gained ground. Roughly three out of every four stocks in the benchmark S&P 500 index rose.

The S&P 500 rose 42.77 points, or 0.6%, to 6,944.82, setting a record on just the third trading day of the year. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 484.90 points, or 1%, to 49,462.08, hitting a record for a second-straight day. The Nasdaq composite rose 151.35 points, or 0.6%, to 23,547.17.

Small company stocks outpaced their larger counterparts. The Russell 2000 jumped 1.4% and is now just below its record set in December.

The most notable action remained in the tech sector. Amazon, which has reach into both retail and technology, surged 3.4%. It is one of the most valuable companies in the world and its outsized stock valuation helped counter losses elsewhere in the market, including a 1.8% loss from Apple.

Micron Technology surged 10%, also helping to lift the market. Microsoft rose 1.2%

Nvidia, which is often the biggest force behind the market's direction, wavered throughout the day and finished 0.5% lower.

Sandisk surged 27.6% for the market's biggest gain. The stock's value has jumped more than 800% since spinning off from Western Digital last February. The gains have been driven by artificial intelligence and the resulting demand for data-storage hardware. Western Digital rose 16.8%.

Technology companies, especially those focused on artificial intelligence, are being closely watched this week during the industry's annual CES trade show in Las Vegas.

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AI advances helped propel the broader market to a series of records in 2025. Investors will be watching companies for any updates that could shed more light on the big corporate investments in AI technology.

The price of benchmark U.S. crude oil fell 2% to \$57.13 per barrel, pulling back from sharp gains a day prior when the market reacted to U.S. forces capturing Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro in a weekend raid. The price of Brent crude, the international standard, fell 1.7% to \$60.70 per barrel.

Treasury yields rose in the bond market. The yield on the 10-year Treasury climbed to 4.16% from 4.15% late Monday. The yield on the two-year Treasury, which moves more closely with expectations for what the Federal Reserve will do, rose to 3.46% from 3.45% late Monday.

Gold prices rose 1% and silver prices rose 5.7%. Such assets are often considered safe havens in times of geopolitical turmoil. The metals have notched record prices over the last year amid lingering economic concerns brought on by conflicts and trade wars.

Markets in Europe gained ground.

Outside of company announcements, Wall Street is preparing for several updates on the U.S. labor market this week, along with reports on the services sector and consumer sentiment. They will help paint a clearer picture of how vital parts of the economy closed out 2025 and the direction they could take in 2026.

On Wednesday, the U.S. government will release its report on job openings for November. The October report showed that U.S. job openings had barely budged. Weekly unemployment data will be released on Thursday and the broader monthly employment report, for December, will be released on Friday.

The Institute for Supply Management will also release its latest services sector update on Wednesday, while the University of Michigan will release its latest consumer sentiment survey Friday. They are both widely monitored because the services sector makes up the bulk of the U.S. economy, and consumer sentiment has been shaky under the weight of higher prices and economic uncertainty.

The Fed will be analyzing all of that data and more ahead of its next meeting in late January. The central bank cut its benchmark interest rate three times late in 2025 to try and counter the economic impact of a softer jobs market. Lower interest rates on loans can help bolster economic activity.

Cutting rates also risks fueling inflation at a time when it remains stubbornly above the Fed's 2% target and could potentially reheat. Rising inflation could counter any benefit from lower interest rates and weigh more heavily on the economy.

Wall Street expects the Fed to hold interest rates steady at its January meeting.

Ukraine's allies praise major progress on defense guarantees if a peace deal is struck with Russia

By SYLVIE CORBET and JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Ukraine's allies said they made major progress Tuesday toward agreeing on how to defend the country if a peace deal is struck with Russia, saying they were ready to provide international guarantees to deter Moscow from attacking its neighbor again.

Plans discussed at a key meeting in Paris included having the U.S. lead an effort to monitor any cease-fire — which could give Washington a direct role in keeping any peace with Russia.

Leaders from 27 European countries and Canada, as well as U.S. representatives and top officials from the European Union and NATO, said they would provide Kyiv's front-line forces with equipment and training and back them up with air, land and sea support to deter any future Russian attack.

This was the 15th and largest meeting of the so-called "coalition of the willing" — involving more heads of state and governments than ever and U.S. envoys in person for the first time.

The post-ceasefire architecture would also include beefing up Ukraine's war-battered army, including by replenishing its weapons stocks, so it could act as the country's front-line deterrence against a resumption of fighting.

There was no immediate comment from officials in Russia on Tuesday, which was the eve of Orthodox Christmas.

Details of the plan were not disclosed

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The size of the supporting forces was not made public, and many of the details of the plan — which would only apply if a ceasefire enters into force — remain unclear.

U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer said the meeting made “excellent progress” but cautioned that “the hardest yards are still ahead,” noting that Russian attacks on Ukraine continue.

Moscow has revealed few details of its stance in the U.S.-led peace negotiations. Officials have reaffirmed Russia’s demands and have insisted there can be no ceasefire until a comprehensive settlement is agreed. Russian President Vladimir Putin has ruled out any deployment of troops from NATO countries on Ukrainian soil.

Starmer added that there can only be peace if Russia compromises, and added: “Putin is not showing that he is ready for peace.”

Zelenskyy agreed progress was made

In the event of a ceasefire, Starmer said the U.K. and France “will establish military hubs across Ukraine and build protected facilities for weapons and military equipment to support Ukraine’s defensive needs.”

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy agreed progress was made in the talks, although commitments need to be ratified by each country so that they can be put in place after any settlement.

“We determined what countries are ready to take leadership in the elements of security guarantees on the ground, in the air, and at sea, and in restoration,” Zelenskyy told a news conference in Paris. “We determined what forces are needed. We determined, how these forces will be operated and at what levels of command.”

U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff said the U.S. “strongly stands behind” security guarantees. Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner, who also participated in the meeting, called the Paris meeting “a very, very, big milestone.”

“This does not mean we will make peace, but peace would not be possible without the progress that we have made today,” Kushner said.

French President Emmanuel Macron said the security statement endorsed by Ukraine’s allies is a “significant step” toward ending Russia’s invasion. The coalition plans also envisage a Ukrainian army with 800,000 troops, he said.

Commitments still need to be finalized

A joint statement issued following the meeting said the allies also agreed to continue long-term military assistance and armament to Ukraine’s armed forces, which “will remain the first line of defense and deterrence” after any peace deal is signed.

The allies still must finalize “binding commitments” setting out what they will do to support Ukraine, the statement said.

The outcome of the meeting had been uncertain as the Trump administration’s focus is shifting to Venezuela, while U.S. suggestions of a Greenland takeover caused tension with Europe, and Moscow shows no signs of compromise.

A series of meetings on the summit’s sidelines illustrated the intensity of the diplomatic effort and the complexity of its moving parts.

Zelenskyy met with Macron ahead of the summit. French, British and Ukrainian military chiefs also met, with NATO’s top commander, U.S. Gen. Alexis G. Grynkewich, participating in talks that France’s army chief said focused on implementing security guarantees. Army chiefs from other coalition nations joined by video.

Macron’s office said the U.S. delegation was initially set to be led by Secretary of State Marco Rubio, but he changed his plans after the U.S. military intervention in Venezuela.

Tension rises over Greenland comments

Trump on Sunday renewed his call for the U.S. to take control of Greenland, a strategic, mineral-rich Arctic island.

The leaders of France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain and the U.K. on Tuesday joined Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen in defending Greenland’s sovereignty in the wake of Trump’s comments about the self-governing territory of the kingdom of Denmark.

Macron on Tuesday declined answering a question on Greenland as he was speaking about Ukraine alongside U.S. envoys Kushner and Witkoff.

In fighting Tuesday, Ukraine's Security Service carried out drone strikes on a military arsenal and an oil depot deep inside Russia, according to a security official who was not authorized to comment publicly and thus spoke on condition of anonymity.

The long-range drones hit the arsenal in Russia's Kostroma region, triggering explosions that lasted for hours and forced the evacuation of nearby settlements, the official said. The site was described as a key logistics hub supplying ammunition in western and central Russia.

In a separate strike, Ukraine Security Service drones hit an oil depot in Russia's Lipetsk region, causing a huge fire, the official said.

FACT FOCUS: Trump sows confusion on number of childhood vaccinations

By The Associated Press undefined

President Donald Trump spread some confusion about childhood vaccinations in social media posts about changes to U.S. vaccine recommendations.

Trump's administration on Monday took the unprecedented step of cutting the number of vaccines the government has long routinely recommended for all children. On that list are vaccines against 11 diseases. Additional vaccines that were once broadly recommended now are separately categorized for at-risk children or as available through "shared decision-making" with their doctor.

Leading medical groups are sticking with prior vaccine recommendations, saying there's no new science to warrant a change — and they worry the conflicting advice will leave more children vulnerable to preventable illness or death.

On social media, Trump wrote that "America will no longer require 72 'jabs'" for children, and shared a misleading graphic comparing the U.S. to a "European country" that administered 11 "injections."

Here's a closer look at the facts.

CLAIM: In a social media post about changes to federal childhood vaccination recommendations, Trump shared a misleading graphic about vaccinations abroad and misstated vaccine requirements in the U.S.

THE FACTS: A year ago, the government's childhood vaccination schedule recommended routine protection against 18 diseases. Doses were spread across different ages, based on carefully vetted scientific research about disease risk and vaccine protection.

How many separate injections that added up to between birth and age 18 varied. It depended on things like the brand used, the availability of combination shots and the child's starting age. But unless you counted once-a-year flu vaccines (which some kids can get as a nasal spray) or COVID-19 shots, the number of injections was closer to three dozen.

That would drop to about 23 injections if children received only the recommended-for-all vaccinations on the administration's new schedule. They include vaccines against diseases such as measles, whooping cough, polio, chickenpox and HPV, or the human papilloma virus.

Contrary to Trump's claim, 72 injections were never "required," as families could opt out. States do require children to get certain vaccines before enrolling in school. But the state lists' of school shots were narrower than the prior U.S. vaccine schedule, and many states offer different types of exemptions.

President Trump says his voters loved the Venezuela attack — here's what they think

By JESSE BEDAYN, MIKE CATALINI, MIKE HOUSEHOLDER, SOPHIE BATES, OBED LAMY and CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

It's only been days since an audacious U.S. raid snatched Nicolás Maduro from a Venezuelan military base and sped him to a Brooklyn prison, yet Detroit-area Trump supporter Aaron Tobin can already see it

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all playing out on the big screen.

It'll be the subject of movies for years to come, he predicts. "I am thrilled." Plenty of others who voted for President Donald Trump and spoke to The Associated Press about the raid are applauding, too — at least for now.

The seizure of Venezuela's authoritarian leader and his wife has forced another reckoning on the "Make America Great Again" coalition, already rocked by the Trump administration's handling of the Jeffrey Epstein files and strained by rising health insurance premiums and living costs.

Trump promised his voters that "America First" would stand against more foreign entanglements. Instead, he intervened with force and without congressional approval in a new frontier, a South American capital so far from Washington that Google Maps says it "can't seem to find a way there."

The geopolitical action film that Tobin sees in his mind is only at its opening scene, before all the complexities of uprooting a foreign government by a U.S. president's fiat come rushing in. U.S. forces entered and exited swiftly. But what happens next?

Trump finds early but not endless support

Early on, the pushback from congressional Republicans and Trump's core constituencies has been guarded, in contrast to their uproar over the Epstein episode or the tensions coursing through Republican politics over the now-expired health insurance subsidies.

Against that backdrop, Trump voters interviewed by AP journalists around the country praised the operation and expressed faith in Trump's course. But not always limitless faith. They did not all back up Trump's claim that those who "voted for me are thrilled. They said, 'This is what we voted for.'"

"I support him so far," Paul Bonner, 67, told AP while browsing at a Trump merchandise store in Bensalem, Pennsylvania. "Until he messes up, I support him."

Trump's apparent willingness to stay involved in Venezuela and his intensifying rhetoric about expanding U.S. power elsewhere in the hemisphere are making some of his die-hard supporters nervous.

Not all of them are reaching for the popcorn yet.

In Mississippi, a conflicted Trump voter

Chase Lewis, 24, of Philadelphia, Mississippi, said the move caught him off guard and he still isn't sure whether he supports it. "It's good that they're finally freed from that dictatorship," he said of Venezuelans, "but I don't know what it's going to cost us."

He added: "I don't want my friends that are serving right now to be dragged into a war because we went and stuck our nose in Venezuela's business." He noted that Trump had campaigned against starting new wars. "Depending on how you look at it," he said, "this was an act of war."

An electrician apprentice who gave up his delivery job because he needed to make more money, Lewis said he wants to see the Trump administration focus on bringing down costs for young people like himself. He also wants the president to make life better for veterans and worries about plunging the country into more conflicts.

In Colorado, cheers and caution from Trump voters

To Trump voter Travis Garcia, leaning against his red pickup truck on a chilly evening in Castle Rock, Colorado, it's a slam-dunk. "Of course I'm going to be happy that they captured a dictator that's constantly sending drugs our way," he said, "If we're not gonna do it, who's gonna do it?"

The 45-year-old, who works in remodeling, said the operation reinforces Trump's stature as "a powerful man who follows through on his word and isn't going to be shy and timid and let other countries run the rules."

Mary Lussier, 48, a flight attendant from the town of Larkspur, was so amazed by the success of the mission in Venezuela that she would be OK with more such operations. She recalled videos of Venezuelans tearfully celebrating Maduro's removal and said fewer bad leaders "would make the world a little bit lesser of a bad place."

Still, Lussier wouldn't want U.S. soldiers stuck in a prolonged conflict, and much of her admiration for the operation hinged less on the possible benefits to the U.S. than on the smooth efficiency and bravado

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of the raiders.

Outside a Safeway grocery store in Castle Rock, Patrick McCans, 66, said delicately that Trump's intervention was "a little contrary to what he campaigned on."

"I would like to see more of a diplomatic way of making change," said the retired engineer. Still, he said, pondering for a moment, "I think in this case it might have been warranted."

Instead of playing ball, Maduro was "playing chicken with Trump, and Trump doesn't like chicken," he said, chuckling from beneath a Baltimore Ravens baseball cap.

The Colorado Trump supporters interviewed by AP all applauded the military operation's smoothness and "class," as one described it. But that support could waver if the U.S. is drawn into a longer conflict, which none of them would support.

Few mentioned Trump's plans for Venezuela's oil, but thought Maduro's removal would benefit citizens and slow the drug trade and immigration to the U.S.

From Pennsylvania: Good riddance to Maduro

At the Golden Dawn Diner in Levittown, Pennsylvania, Ron Soto, 88, expressed unreserved faith in the president's ability to manage what comes next. The retired tractor-trailer driver regularly visits the diner to meet friends, drink coffee and catch up.

Maduro is an "awful man," he said. But should U.S. forces go into other countries, like Cuba, as it did in Venezuela? "I don't think they'll have to," he said. "Because he (Trump) put the fear in them."

As for Trump's comment at one point that his administration would "run" Venezuela, Soto said the president will "straighten that country out and make it into a democracy if he can. I don't know if he can."

At the Neshaminy Mall, in Bensalem, retired firefighter Kevin Carey, 62, pronounced himself supportive of what Trump did but aware of the risks.

"I wouldn't say thrilled but I'm cautiously optimistic," he said. Carey recalled the seizing of U.S. hostages by Iranian revolutionaries in 1979 as an indication of what might happen if the conflict escalates. But "he'll take all actions to avoid that, I believe," he said of Trump.

On any further foreign intervention, Carey broke out laughing when he said: "He wants Greenland to be part of America!"

At the Trump merchandise store where Bonner shopped, banners and other items proclaiming "Trump 2028" are on display. Trump is constitutionally prohibited from running in 2028.

"I know he can't run for president" in 2028, said Bonner, a propane company worker. Still, he wanted a lawn sign "just to irritate people" but didn't find one.

The crisp military operation plainly left him impressed. "They got in and they got out, did what they had to do," he said. Of Maduro, he said: "He's an enemy of the United States so I support Trump 100%."

Affirmation from the Midwest

Exiting a Walmart in Martinsville, Indiana, Mark Edward Miller, 75, from nearby Mooresville, said the only thing that surprised him about Trump's intervention was that word of it did not leak in advance. The consistent Trump voter was an aircraft maintenance specialist in the Air Force before his retirement.

"I don't feel like he's actually taken over a country," Miller said. "I believe that he's doing exactly what our country should be doing — supporting, especially in our hemisphere, governments that are friendly with us" and challenging those that are hostile.

Tobin, the man in Michigan who sees a cinematic future for the raid, not only approved of the operation but wants more of them.

"Especially if they were as successful as this last one where we didn't lose any troops, we didn't lose any planes or ships," Tobin said during a visit to the Oakland County Republican Party headquarters, where he was surrounded by Trump and GOP memorabilia. "I am thrilled and surprised" by what happened.

"Cuba's very nervous right now," he said. "And the Cuban people are suffering immensely from their horrible situation and their economy. Iran might be next."

The three-time Trump voter is an active member of the local Republican Party, a certified firearms instructor and head of a bicycling group in his hometown of Oak Park, Michigan.

His takeaway: "President Trump does not speak idly. If he says he's going to do something, he does

something.”

Trump tries to rally House GOP but meanders along the way as the party’s majority narrows

By SEUNG MIN KIM and DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump insisted Tuesday that Republicans have “so many good nuggets” to campaign on this year as they try to hold onto their razor-thin margin in the House.

But the president’s nearly 90-minute speech before House Republicans had little in the way of a fresh policy agenda or a cohesive new message to guide the year. Instead, he meandered from defending his actions during the Capitol riot five years ago to joking about being liberal-minded to win the votes of transgender people to making head-scratching references to Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s use of a wheelchair.

As he promised political “ammunition” to help Republicans, Trump emphasized the success of his 2024 presidential campaign, reminding the audience that he carried every swing state as he pondered why voters tend to turn against the party in power during midterm elections.

“They say that when you win the presidency, you lose the midterms,” Trump said in remarks at the Kennedy Center, the performing arts venue that his allies recently renamed for him. “I wish you could explain to me what the hell is going on with the mind of the public.”

He warned that if Democrats regain control of Congress, “they’ll find a way to impeach me.”

Trump’s appearance at the GOP’s policy forum was meant to ensure House Republicans and the White House were aligned on their agenda ahead of the November midterms that will determine control of Congress and the course of Trump’s final two years in office. Rising health care costs, Trump’s expansive foreign policy pursuits and other issues are dramatically splitting the GOP, as some Republicans become more comfortable crossing party lines to bypass House Speaker Mike Johnson and join proposals from Democrats.

It all points to a difficult year ahead for the president and his party, especially as the House’s slim majority narrowed Tuesday with the sudden death of California Rep. Doug LaMalfa, which was announced to lawmakers as they traveled to the performing arts center, and the resignation of former Georgia Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, which took effect at midnight.

But Trump spent more time rehashing past grievances during the appearance than articulating a broad election-year strategy or offering specifics on how he’s addressing affordability concerns of voters.

“We won every swing state. We won the popular vote by millions. We won everything,” Trump said, recounting the 2024 presidential election.

Trump mused about unconstitutionally seeking a third term as president and claimed it was never reported that he urged his supporters to walk “peacefully and patriotically” on Jan. 6, 2021, to the Capitol, where they rioted to try to overturn his election loss. He used his wife, first lady Melania Trump, to poke at Roosevelt, the former Democratic president who used a wheelchair.

According to the president, Melania Trump thinks the dancing he does at his rallies is not presidential.

“She actually said, ‘Could you imagine FDR dancing?’ She actually said that to me,” Trump said. “And I said there’s a long history that perhaps she doesn’t know.”

Trump did try to rally the conference at times, asserting that his first year back in office was so successful that Republicans should win in November on that basis alone. He briefly touched on Venezuela and the dramatic capture of deposed president Nicolás Maduro — calling it “brilliant, tactically.” He talked about money coming into the U.S. through tariffs and direct investment, and negotiations to bring down drug prices.

“You have so many good nuggets. You have to use them. If you can sell them, we’re going to win,” Trump said. He claimed that “we’ve had the most successful first year of any president in history and it should be a positive.”

House Republicans convened as they launch their new year agenda, with health care issues in particular dogging the GOP heading into the midterm elections. Trump declined to publicly counsel GOP lawmakers

on how they should handle this week's vote — pushed by Democrats and a handful of Republicans who broke from their party -- to extend insurance subsidies that expired at year's end, or on how to deal with the next potential government shutdown just weeks away, all with a narrower majority.

"You can't be tough when you have a majority of three, and now, sadly, a little bit less than that," Trump said after paying tribute to LaMalfa, noting the challenges House Speaker Mike Johnson faces in keeping their ranks unified.

The president also noted that Rep. Jim Baird, R-Ind., was recovering after a "bad" car accident, further slimming Johnson's vote margins.

Votes on extending expired health insurance subsidies are expected as soon as this week, and it's unclear whether the president and the party will try to block passage. Trump urged Republicans to own the issue of health care, a policy that Republicans have long struggled on, and said the party should be "flexible" on abortion restrictions that have been well-established federal policy.

"You have to be a little flexible" on the Hyde Amendment, Trump told House Republicans. "You gotta be a little flexible. You gotta work something. You gotta use ingenuity." The Hyde Amendment is a decades-old policy that bars federal money from being spent on abortion services.

GOP lawmakers were hosting a daylong policy forum at the Kennedy Center, where the board, stocked by Trump with loyalists, recently voted to rename it the Trump Kennedy Center. The move is being challenged in court. Trump and Johnson are trying to corral Republican lawmakers at a time when rank-and-file lawmakers have felt increasingly emboldened enough to buck Trump and the leadership's wishes on issues such as the release of the Jeffrey Epstein files.

What's next in deposed Venezuela leader Nicolás Maduro's criminal case

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Nicolás Maduro's first court hearing in the U.S. — a spectacle where he proclaimed he is still Venezuela's president — was merely the beginning of a legal odyssey that could keep him locked up and out of power for years, maybe even the rest of his life.

The deposed South American leader and his wife, Cilia Flores, were arraigned Monday on drug trafficking charges, days after U.S. forces seized them from their Caracas home in a stunning middle-of-the-night raid. Both pleaded not guilty.

President Donald Trump's administration has defended the military action as a "surgical law enforcement operation" to apprehend Maduro in a criminal case that U.S. prosecutors first brought six years ago. In court, Maduro called it a kidnapping and declared himself a prisoner of war.

While Venezuela reckons with the geopolitical fallout, Maduro and Flores are locked up in New York City, about 2,100 miles (3,400 kilometers) away. Their next court appearance is scheduled for March 17.

Here's what's likely to happen next in their legal case:

Requesting bail

It is a long shot, but Maduro, 63, and Flores, 69, can ask the judge to release them on bail, which would allow them to await trial at a location other than jail. Neither defendant made that request on Monday, but their lawyers suggested they might in the future.

The judge, Alvin Hellerstein, told the lawyers he will welcome requests for bail "whenever, and as often you think it appropriate." But that doesn't mean he would agree to let Maduro and Flores out.

Both are charged with serious offenses that could carry life sentences, and prosecutors could argue they are flight risks — meaning they may try to leave the country to avoid prosecution if they are freed. Maduro is accused of narco-terrorism conspiracy. He and his wife are accused of being part of a conspiracy to import cocaine into the U.S. and possessing machine guns.

Judges rarely grant bail in such cases. Manuel Noriega was not granted bail after the U.S. accused him of drug trafficking, invaded Panama and removed him as that country's leader in 1989. Sometimes defendants don't even ask. Lawyers for the recently pardoned former president of Honduras, Juan Orlando

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Hernandez, never sought bail when he was charged in the U.S. with drug trafficking. Nor did lawyers for Joaquín Guzmán, the drug lord known as “El Chapo,” when he was brought to the U.S. from Mexico.

Getting Flores treated for ‘significant injuries’

Flores’ lawyer, Mark Donnelly, said she sustained “significant injuries” during her capture and needs an X-ray and medical evaluation because she may have a fracture or severe bruising on her ribs. She appeared in court with bandages on her forehead and over her temple and eyelid.

Maduro’s lawyer, Barry Pollack, told the judge Maduro has “health and medical issues that will require attention” while he is detained. He did not specify what those issues are. The judge told both lawyers to work with prosecutors to ensure Flores and Maduro receive the proper care.

The federal jail where Flores and Maduro are being held, the Metropolitan Detention Center, has a medical unit with examination rooms and a dental suite. But the jail has also been accused of botching treatment, including missed cancer diagnoses.

A consular visit

Non-citizens charged with crimes in the U.S. are legally entitled to get a visit from consular officials from their home country.

Speaking in Spanish through an interpreter, Maduro told the judge he and Flores would like such a visit.

But it is unclear exactly what that will entail or what will be available to Maduro after he ordered the closure of the Venezuelan embassy and consulates in the U.S. in early 2019. A message seeking comment was left by The Associated Press for Venezuela’s still-open mission to the United Nations.

Maduro may need the meetings, though, in part to ensure that his legal bills can be paid. Maduro and Flores have been under U.S. sanctions for years, making it illegal for any American to take money from them without securing a license from the Treasury Department.

Hellerstein instructed prosecutors to work with Maduro and Flores’ lawyers to assure they “can represent their clients zealously and fully.”

On Tuesday, Maduro expanded his legal team, adding Bruce Fein, a constitutional and international law specialist who served as the assistant deputy U.S. attorney general under President Ronald Reagan.

‘Substantial’ challenges to the legality of the case

Pollack promised “substantial” challenges to the validity of Maduro’s indictment and noted there were complicated legal issues to confront.

“Mr. Maduro is the head of a sovereign state and is entitled to the privileges and immunities that go with that office,” Pollack told Hellerstein on Monday. “In addition, there are issues about the legality of his military abduction.”

After Noriega’s capture by the U.S. military in 1989, his lawyers argued that he was immune from prosecution as a sovereign head of a foreign state. That argument ultimately failed, however, in part because Noriega never held the title of president during his six-year de facto rule.

Maduro claims to have won three popular elections, but the U.S. hasn’t recognized him as Venezuela’s legitimate leader for years, and thus not entitled to sovereign immunity.

It is possible that a legal battle over the legality of the U.S. prosecution will stretch on for some time, eventually landing with appeals courts.

Farm champion Rep. Doug LaMalfa of California dies, reducing GOP’s narrow control of the House

By TRÂN NGUYỄN, MIKE CATALINI and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Republican Doug LaMalfa, a California rice farmer who served seven terms in the U.S. House and was a reliable vote on President Donald Trump’s agenda, has died at age 65.

His death trims the Republicans’ narrow margin of control of the House to 218 seats to Democrats’ 213.

The congressman experienced a medical emergency Monday night and was taken to a local hospital, where he died during a surgical procedure, the Butte County sheriff’s office said Tuesday. Officials haven’t disclosed the cause of his death.

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Trump expressed "tremendous sorrow" over LaMalfa's death as he addressed a meeting of House Republicans on Tuesday, lamenting the loss of a lawmaker he championed as an ally for his agenda. He said the late congressman "wasn't a 3 o'clock in the morning person" like other lawmakers he would call in the wee hours to lobby for their votes.

"He voted with me 100% of the time," Trump said. "With Doug, I never had to call."

Longtime public servant

LaMalfa, a fourth-generation rice farmer, was elected to Congress in 2012 after serving in the state Legislature. He represented California's 1st District, which covered a vast portion of the state's rural North, spanning from the Oregon border down to just north of the capital, Sacramento.

He was a regular presence on the House floor, helping GOP leadership open the chamber and frequently offering his view on local and national affairs. He served on the House Agriculture Committee and as the chairman of a subcommittee with jurisdiction over forestry issues. He also served on committees dealing with transportation and natural resource issues.

LaMalfa had planned to run for reelection despite his district being dramatically redrawn under a ballot measure passed by California voters in November. The measure, backed by Democrats, was designed to make it harder for LaMalfa and four other Republicans to win reelection.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom, a Democrat, must call a special election to replace LaMalfa, his office said. The election could happen as late as June, when California will hold its primary for the 2026 midterm.

A focus on rural issues, wildfire prevention

LaMalfa's colleagues, staff members and friends said he cared deeply about his district, often driving far distances to check in with constituents and working on key local issues such as wildfire prevention and water storage.

"He would show up at the smallest events that were important in people's lives in this district," recalled David Reade, a former chief of staff of LaMalfa's from the state legislature. "He would drive literally hundreds and hundreds of miles to be there."

His current chief of staff, Mark Spannagel, who started working for him in 2002, said the congressman was a "deeply funny guy." He was obsessed with cars, often showing up at events with grease under his fingernails, and he loved classic rock and the "Austin Powers" movies, Spannagel said.

"He's probably one of the most normal people in Congress, down to earth," he said in a phone interview. "You want to sit there and have an iced tea with him."

LaMalfa once traveled to multiple Veterans Affairs offices in Washington to advocate for a constituent, Spannagel said. He also would host town halls and political events in small towns in his district to meet more constituents.

"Just because, 'Why not? We're gonna go do them. We're gonna be there. Let those people be heard, too,'" he said. "It's not all about the biggest city or the biggest town."

One of his priorities in Congress was advocating for wildfire mitigation and protecting victims, said state Assembly member James Gallagher, who called LaMalfa his "big brother."

LaMalfa successfully passed legislation in 2024 to exempt wildfire relief payments from federal income taxes. It came after parts of his district were ravaged by the deadliest wildfire in state history in 2018. President Joe Biden signed it into law. LaMalfa also called for increased water storage and for more forest management to reduce the threat of wildfires.

But LaMalfa's unwavering support of Trump has prompted frustration for some voters in recent years. Some were hoping to oust him during the midterm election because of his vote for Trump's plan to overhaul health care, food assistance and other rural resources. LaMalfa was met with yelling and booing at several town halls last year.

National Republican Congressional Committee Chairman Richard Hudson called LaMalfa "a principled conservative and a tireless advocate for the people of Northern California."

"He was never afraid to fight for rural communities, farmers, and working families," Hudson said. "Doug brought grit, authenticity, and conviction to everything he did in public service."

C-SPAN in a recent compilation said LaMalfa gave at least one set of remarks for the record on 81 days in 2025. Only two other lawmakers spoke on the House floor more frequently.

House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York called for a moment of silence in honor of LaMalfa at the start of a panel at the Capitol commemorating the fifth anniversary of the Jan. 6, 2021, attack.

Trump voters weigh in on the US seizure of Venezuela's Maduro, another reckoning for MAGA

By JESSE BEDAYN, MIKE CATALINI, MIKE HOUSEHOLDER, SOPHIE BATES, OBED LAMY, and CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

It's only been days since an audacious U.S. raid snatched Nicolás Maduro from a Venezuelan military base and sped him to a Brooklyn prison, yet Detroit-area Trump supporter Aaron Tobin can already see it all playing out on the big screen.

It'll be the subject of movies for years to come, he predicts. "I am thrilled." Plenty of others who voted for President Donald Trump and spoke to The Associated Press about the raid are applauding, too — at least for now.

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Trump promised his voters that "America First" would stand against more foreign entanglements. Instead, he intervened with force and without congressional approval in a new frontier, a South American capital so far from Washington that Google Maps says it "can't seem to find a way there."

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In Colorado, cheers and caution from Trump voters

To Trump voter Travis Garcia, leaning against his red pickup truck on a chilly evening in Castle Rock, Colorado, it's a slam-dunk. "Of course I'm going to be happy that they captured a dictator that's constantly sending drugs our way," he said, "If we're not gonna do it, who's gonna do it?"

The 45-year-old, who works in remodeling, said the operation reinforces Trump's stature as "a powerful man who follows through on his word and isn't going to be shy and timid and let other countries run the rules."

Mary Lussier, 48, a flight attendant from Larkspur, was so amazed by the success of the mission in Venezuela that she would be OK with more such operations. Fewer bad leaders "would make the world

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a little bit lesser of a bad place.”

Still, Lussier wouldn't want U.S. soldiers stuck in a prolonged conflict, and much of her admiration for the operation hinged less on the possible benefits to the U.S. than on the efficiency and bravado of the raiders.

Outside a Safeway grocery store in Castle Rock, Patrick McCans, 66, said delicately that Trump's intervention was “a little contrary to what he campaigned on.”

“I would like to see more of a diplomatic way of making change,” said the retired engineer. Still, he said, pondering for a moment, “I think in this case it might have been warranted.”

The Colorado Trump supporters interviewed by AP all applauded the military operation's smoothness and “class,” as one described it. But that support could waver if the U.S. gets into a longer conflict, which none of them would support.

From Pennsylvania: Good riddance to Maduro

At the Golden Dawn Diner in Levittown, Pennsylvania, Ron Soto, 88, expressed unreserved faith in the president's ability to manage what comes next.

Maduro is an “awful man,” said the retired tractor-trailer driver. But should U.S. forces go into other countries, too, like Cuba? “I don't think they'll have to,” he said. “Because he (Trump) put the fear in them.”

In Bensalem, retired firefighter Kevin Carey, 62, pronounced himself supportive of what Trump did but aware of the risks.

“I wouldn't say thrilled but I'm cautiously optimistic,” he said. Carey recalled the seizing of U.S. hostages by Iranian revolutionaries in 1979 as an indication of what might happen if the conflict escalates. But “he'll take all actions to avoid that, I believe,” he said of Trump.

On any further foreign intervention, Carey broke out laughing when he said: “He wants Greenland to be part of America!”

Affirmation from the Midwest

Exiting a Walmart in Martinsville, Indiana, Mark Edward Miller, 75, from nearby Mooresville, said the only thing that surprised him about Trump's intervention was that word of it did not leak in advance. The consistent Trump voter is a retired aircraft maintenance specialist in the Air Force.

“I don't feel like he's actually taken over a country,” Miller said. “I believe that he's doing exactly what our country should be doing — supporting, especially in our hemisphere, governments that are friendly with us” and challenging those that are hostile.

Tobin, the man in Michigan who sees a cinematic future for the raid, not only approved of the operation but wants more.

“Especially if they were as successful as this last one where we didn't lose any troops, we didn't lose any planes or ships,” he said.

His takeaway: “President Trump does not speak idly. If he says he's going to do something, he does something.”

Trump tells Republicans to be ‘flexible’ on abortion restrictions to get a health care deal

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

President Donald Trump said Tuesday he wants Republicans to reach a deal on health care insurance assistance by being willing to bend on a 50-year-old budget policy that bars federal money from being spent on abortion services.

“You have to be a little flexible” on the Hyde Amendment, Trump told House Republicans as they gathered in Washington for a caucus retreat to open the midterm election year. “You gotta be a little flexible. You gotta work something. You gotta use ingenuity.”

With his suggestion, Trump, who supported abortion rights before he entered politics in 2015, is asking conservatives to abandon or at least ease up on decades of Republican orthodoxy on abortion and spending policy — something lawmakers and conservatives pushed back on immediately.

At the same time, he is demonstrating his long-standing malleability on abortion and acknowledging that

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Democrats have the political upper hand on health care after Republicans, who control the White House, the Senate and the House, allowed the expiration of premium subsidies for people buying Affordable Care Act insurance policies. As negotiations on Capitol Hill continue on the matter, some Democrats are pushing to end the Hyde restrictions as part of any new agreements on health care subsidies.

Trump's road map on the Hyde Amendment came more than an hour into a stem-winding speech intended as a part strategy session and part pep rally as Republicans attempt to maintain their threadbare House majority in the November midterms.

The president touted the GOP proposal to replace ACA subsidies — which taxpayers typically steer directly to insurance companies after selecting their policies — with direct payments that taxpayers could use for a range of health care expenses, including insurance. The expanded ACA subsidies expired on Dec. 31, 2025, hitting millions of policy holders with steep premium increases.

"Let the money go directly to the people," Trump said, before casually slipping in a reference to the Hyde Amendment.

"We're all big fans of everything," he said. "But you have to have flexibility."

Turning directly to GOP leaders, including Speaker Mike Johnson, Trump added, "If you can do that, you're going to have — this is going to be your issue."

House Republicans did not visibly react to Trump's argument. But Senate Republicans appeared unlikely to back off their demands that any new health care legislation maintain existing restrictions on government funding for abortion services.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune reiterated his stance Tuesday afternoon that any legislation must ensure "that those dollars aren't being used to go against the practice that has been in place for the last 50 years."

Beyond Capitol Hill, Trump drew swift condemnation from parts of the GOP coalition that want absolute opposition to any policy that might ease abortion restrictions.

Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America, said it would sour core conservative voters and make Republicans "sure to lose this November."

"To suggest Republicans should be 'flexible' is an abandonment of this decades-long commitment," she said in a statement. "The voters sent a GOP trifecta to Washington and they expect it to govern like one. Giving in to Democrat demands that our tax dollars are used to fund plans that cover abortion on demand until birth would be a massive betrayal."

Even before Trump's speech, activists were ramping up pressure on Republicans in their talks with Democrats.

At Americans United for Life, a leading advocacy group that opposes abortion rights, Gavin Oxley penned an op-ed this week for "The Hill" titled, "Republicans must hold the line: No Hyde Amendment, no deal on health care."

"If they play their cards right," Oxley wrote, "Republicans just might earn back enough of their base's trust to sustain them through the 2026 midterms."

The Hyde Amendment, named for the late Rep. Henry Hyde, originally applied to Medicaid, the joint federal-state insurance program for poor and disabled Americans, and barred it from paying for abortions unless the woman's life is in danger or the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest. Hyde first introduced it in 1976, shortly after the Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision, which legalized abortion nationwide.

Over the years, Congress reauthorized Hyde policy as part of spending bills that fund the government. Democrats who support abortion access often joined Republicans who opposed abortion rights as a bipartisan compromise to pass larger spending deals. But as the two parties hardened their respective positions on abortion, Democrats became more uniform opponents of the ban, most famously when presidential candidate Joe Biden reversed his long-standing support for Hyde on his way to winning the 2020 Democratic nomination and general election.

Republicans have maintained their near-absolute support for the amendment.

The anti-abortion movement was initially skeptical of Trump as a presidential candidate in 2015 and 2016. But he has mostly aligned with the key faction of the Republican coalition, especially on Supreme Court

appointments that led to the 2022 decision overturning Roe.

The coolest technology from Day 1 of CES 2026

By SHAWN CHEN and RIO YAMAT Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Nvidia, AMD and Intel all had important chip and AI platform announcements on the first day of CES 2026, but all audiences wanted to see more of was Star Wars and Jensen Huang's little robot buddies.

CES is a huge opportunity annually for companies both large and small to parade products they plan to put on shelves this year. As predicted, artificial intelligence was anchored in nearly everything as tech firms continue to look for AI products that will attract customers.

Here are the highlights from Day 1:

Nvidia gets physical

The biggest buzzword in the air at CES is "physical AI," Nvidia's term for AI models that are trained in a virtual environment using computer generated, "synthetic" data, then deployed as physical machines once they've mastered their purpose.

CEO Jensen Huang showed off Cosmos, an AI foundation model trained on massive datasets, capable of simulating environments governed by actual physics. He also announced Alpamayo, an AI model specifically designed for autonomous driving. Huang revealed that Nvidia's next generation AI superchip platform, dubbed Vera Rubin, is in full production, and that Nvidia has a new partnership with Siemens. All of this shows Nvidia is going to fight increased competition to retain its reputation as the backbone of the AI industry.

But once Huang called for two little, waddling, chirping robots to join him on stage, that's all the audience wanted to see more of.

The chips are back in town

AMD CEO Lisa Su announced a new line of its famed Ryzen AI processors as the company continues to expand its footprint in the world of AI-powered personal computers.

For gamers, AMD also showed off the latest version of its gaming-focused processor, the AMD Ryzen 7 9850X3D.

Meanwhile, Intel announced its new AI chip for laptops, Panther Lake (also known as the Intel Core Ultra Series 3), and said the company has plans to launch a new platform to address a growing market for handheld video gaming machines.

Intel, a Silicon Valley pioneer that enjoyed decades of growth as its processors powered the personal computer boom, fell into a slump after missing the shift to the mobile computing era unleashed by the iPhone. It fell further behind after the AI boom propelled Nvidia into the spotlight.

President Donald Trump's administration stepped in recently to secure a 10% stake in the company, making the government one of Intel's biggest shareholders. Federal officials said they invested in Intel to support U.S. technology and domestic manufacturing.

Uber dives back into the robotaxi game

Uber is giving the public a first look at their robotaxi at CES this week. Uber, along with luxury electric vehicle manufacturer Lucid Motors and vehicle tech company Nuro, introduced an autonomous vehicle with an Uber-designed in-cabin experience.

Uber calls it the most luxurious robotaxi yet. It features cameras, sensors and radars that provide 360-degree perception and a low-profile roof "halo" with integrated LEDs that will display riders' initials to help them spot their car and track their ride status. Inside, riders can personalize everything from climate and seat heating to music, while real-time visuals show exactly what the vehicle is seeing on the road and the route it plans to take.

Autonomous on-road testing began last month in San Francisco, led by Nuro, marking a major step toward what the companies said is a planned launch before the end of the year.

Star Wars and Lego announce a new partnership

When Lucasfilm chief creative officer David Filoni brought out an array of X-Wing pilots, Chewbacca, R2D2 and C-3PO, he won the Star Wars fandom for Lego.

Lego announced its Lego Smart Play platform on Monday, which introduces new smart bricks, tags and special minifigs for your collection. The new bricks contain sensors that enable them to sense light and distance, and to provide an array of responses, essentially lights and sounds, when they are used in unison.

Combine this with a newly announced partnership with the Star Wars franchise and now you can create your own interactive space battles and light-saber duels.

LG reveals a new robot to help around the home

File this one under intrigued, for now.

The Korean tech giant gave the media a glimpse Monday of its humanoid robot that is designed to handle household chores such as folding laundry and fetching food. Although many companies have robots on display at CES, LG certainly is one of the biggest tech companies to promise to put a service robot in homes.

It will be on display beginning Tuesday, so we'll have more to report soon.

What's new with lollipops?

Music you can taste was on display Monday at CES: Lollipop Star unveiled a candy that plays music while you eat it. The company says it uses something called "bone induction technology," which lets you hear songs — like tracks from Ice Spice and Akon — through the lollipop as you lick it or bite it in the back of your mouth, according to spokesperson Cassie Lawrence.

The musical lollipops will go on sale after CES on Lollipop Star's website for \$8.99 each. And if that wasn't enough star power, Akon was expected to visit the company's booth Tuesday when CES opens to the public.

Atlas holds up Hyundai's (manufacturing) world

Hyundai-owned Boston Dynamics publicly demonstrated its humanoid robot Atlas for the first time at the CES tech showcase, ratcheting up a competition with Tesla and other rivals to build robots that look like people and do things that people do.

The company said a version of the robot that will help assemble cars is already in production and will be deployed by 2028 at Hyundai's electric vehicle manufacturing facility near Savannah, Georgia.

Delta gets spherical

Delta Air Lines is taking entertainment to new heights as the "official airline" of the Sphere in Las Vegas. The airline announced a new multiyear partnership with Sphere Entertainment Co. that it says will deliver premium experiences to the venue, including a Delta SKY360° Club lounge.

The carrier said SkyMiles members can unlock exclusive access to other experiences at the Sphere, starting during the final weekend of the Backstreet Boys' residency in February with features including private suite seating, food and beverages. The partnership brings Delta branding to the Sphere's massive exterior LED screen. Delta says more exclusive SkyMiles experiences will roll out in 2026 and beyond.

Trump's vague claims of the US running Venezuela raise questions about planning for what comes next

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump has made broad but vague assertions that the United States is going to "run" Venezuela after the ouster of Nicolás Maduro but has offered almost no details about how it will do so, raising questions among some lawmakers and former officials about the administration's level of planning for the country after Maduro was gone.

Seemingly contradictory statements from Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio have suggested at once that the U.S. now controls the levers of Venezuelan power or that the U.S. has no intention of assuming day-to-day governance and will allow Maduro's subordinates to remain in leadership positions for now.

Rubio said the U.S. would rely on existing sanctions on Venezuela's oil sector and criminal gangs to wield leverage with Maduro's successors.

The uncertainty on definitive next steps in Venezuela contrasts with the years of discussions and plan-

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ning that went into U.S. military interventions that deposed other autocratic leaders, notably in Iraq in 2003, which still did not often lead to the hoped-for outcomes.

'Disagreement about how to proceed'

The discrepancy between what Trump and Rubio have said publicly has not sat well with some former diplomats.

"It strikes me that we have no idea whatsoever as to what's next," said Dan Fried, a retired career diplomat, former assistant secretary of state and sanctions coordinator who served under both Democratic and Republican administrations.

"For good operational reasons, there were very few people who knew about the raid, but Trump's remarks about running the country and Rubio's uncomfortable walk back suggests that even within that small group of people, there is disagreement about how to proceed," said Fried who is now with the Atlantic Council think tank.

Supporters of the operation, meanwhile, believe there is little confusion over the U.S. goal.

"The president speaks in big headlines and euphemisms," said Rich Goldberg, a sanctions proponent who worked in the National Energy Dominance Council at the White House until last year and is now a senior adviser to the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a hawkish think tank.

Goldberg does not see Rubio becoming "the superintendent of schools" but "effectively, the U.S. will be calling the shots."

"There are people at the top who can make what we want happen or not, and we right now control their purse strings and their lives," he said. "The president thinks it's enough and the secretary thinks it's enough, and if it's not enough, we'll know very soon and we'll deal with it."

If planning for the U.S. "to run" Venezuela existed prior to Maduro's arrest and extradition to face federal drug charges, it was confined to a small group of Trump political allies, according to current U.S. officials, who note that Trump relies on a very small circle of advisers and has tossed aside much of the traditional decision-making apparatus.

These officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss their understanding of internal deliberations, said they were not aware of any preparations for either a military occupation or an interim civilian governing authority, which has been a priority for previous administrations when they contemplated going to war to oust a specific leader or government. The White House and the State Department's press office did not return messages seeking comment.

Long discussion among agencies in previous interventions

Previous military actions that deposed autocratic leaders, notably in Panama in 1989 and Iraq in 2003, were preceded by months, if not years, of interagency discussion and debate over how best to deal with power vacuums caused by the ousters of their leaders. The State Department, White House National Security Council, the Pentagon and the intelligence community all participated in that planning.

In Panama, the George H.W. Bush administration had nearly a full year of preparations to launch the invasion that ousted Panama's leader Manuel Noriega. Panama, however, is exponentially smaller than Venezuela, it had long experience as a de facto American territory, and the U.S. occupation was never intended to retake territory or natural resources.

By contrast, Venezuela is vastly larger in size and population and has a decadeslong history of animosity toward the United States.

"Panama was not successful because it was supported internationally because it wasn't," Fried said. "It was a success because it led to a quick, smooth transfer to a democratic government. That would be a success here, but on the first day out, we trashed someone who had those credentials, and that strikes me as daft."

He was referring to Trump's apparent dismissal of opposition leader Maria Corina Machado, whose party is widely believed to have won elections in 2024, results that Maduro refused to accept. Trump said Saturday that Machado "doesn't have the support within or the respect within the country" to be a credible leader and suggested he would be OK with Maduro's No. 2, Delcy Rodríguez, remaining in power as long

as she works with the U.S.

Hoped-for outcomes didn't happen in Iraq and Afghanistan

Meanwhile, best-case scenarios like those predicted by the George W. Bush administration for a post-Saddam Hussein Iraq that it would be a beacon of democracy in the Middle East and hopes for a democratic and stable Afghanistan following the ouster of the Taliban died painfully slow deaths at the tremendous expense of American money and lives after initial euphoria over military victories.

"Venezuela looks nothing like Libya, it looks nothing like Iraq, it looks nothing like Afghanistan. It looks nothing like the Middle East," Rubio said this weekend of Venezuela and its neighbors. "These are Western countries with long traditions at a people-to-people and cultural level, and ties to the United States, so it's nothing like that."

The lack of clarity on Venezuela has been even more pronounced because Trump campaigned on a platform of extricating the U.S. from foreign wars and entanglements, a position backed by his "Make America Great Again" supporters, many of whom are seeking explanations about what the president has in mind for Venezuela.

"Wake up MAGA," Republican Rep. Thomas Massie of Kentucky, who has bucked much of his party's lockstep agreement with Trump, posted on X after the operation. "VENEZUELA is not about drugs; it's about OIL and REGIME CHANGE. This is not what we voted for."

Sen. Rand Paul, also a Kentucky Republican, who often criticizes military interventions, said "time will tell if regime change in Venezuela is successful without significant monetary or human cost."

"Easy enough to argue such policy when the action is short, swift and effective but glaringly less so when that unitary power drains of us trillions of dollars and thousands of lives, such as occurred in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Vietnam," he wrote on social media.

In addition to the Venezuela operation, Trump is preparing to take the helm of an as-yet unformed Board of Peace to run postwar Gaza, involving the United States in yet another Mideast engagement for possibly decades to come.

And yet, as both the Iraq and Afghanistan experiences ultimately proved, no amount of planning guarantees success.

Trump says the US 'needs' Greenland for Arctic security. Here's why

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

Location, location, location: Greenland's position above the Arctic Circle makes the world's largest island a key part of security strategy. But for whom?

Increasing international tensions, global warming and the changing world economy have put Greenland at the heart of the debate over global trade and security, and U.S. President Donald Trump wants to make sure his country controls this mineral-rich island that guards the Arctic and North Atlantic approaches to North America.

Greenland is a self-governing territory of Denmark, a longtime U.S. ally that has rejected Trump's overtures. Greenland's own government also opposes U.S. designs on the island, saying the people of Greenland will decide their own future.

The island, 80% of which lies above the Arctic Circle, is home to about 56,000 mostly Inuit people who until now have been largely ignored by the rest of the world.

Here's why Greenland is strategically important to Arctic security:

Greenland's location is key

Greenland sits off the northeastern coast of Canada, with more than two-thirds of its territory lying within the Arctic Circle. That has made it crucial to the defense of North America since World War II, when the U.S. occupied Greenland to ensure it didn't fall into the hands of Nazi Germany and to protect crucial North Atlantic shipping lanes.

Following the Cold War, the Arctic was largely an area of international cooperation. But climate change

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is thinning the Arctic ice, promising to create a northwest passage for international trade and reigniting competition with Russia, China and other countries over access to the region's mineral resources.

Security threats to the Arctic

In 2018, China declared itself a "near-Arctic state" in an effort to gain more influence in the region. China has also announced plans to build a "Polar Silk Road" as part of its global Belt and Road Initiative, which has created economic links with countries around the world.

Then-U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo rejected China's move, saying: "Do we want the Arctic Ocean to transform into a new South China Sea, fraught with militarization and competing territorial claims?"

Meanwhile, Russia has sought to assert its influence over wide areas of the Arctic in competition with the U.S., Canada, Denmark and Norway. Moscow has also sought to boost its military presence in the polar region, home to its Northern Fleet and a site where the Soviet Union tested nuclear weapons. Russian military officials have said that the site is ready for resuming the tests, if necessary.

The Russian military in recent years has been restoring old Soviet infrastructure in the Arctic and building new facilities. Since 2014, the Russian military has opened several military bases in the Arctic and worked on reconstructing airfields.

European leaders' concerns were heightened following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Last year, Russian President Vladimir Putin noted that Russia is worried about NATO's activities in the Arctic and will respond by strengthening the capability of its armed forces there.

"Russia has never threatened anyone in the Arctic, but we will closely follow the developments and mount an appropriate response by increasing our military capability and modernizing military infrastructure," Putin said in March at a policy forum in the Arctic port of Murmansk.

He added, however, that Moscow was holding the door open to broader international cooperation in the region.

U.S. military presence in Greenland

The U.S. Department of Defense operates the remote Pituffik Space Base in northwestern Greenland, which was built after the U.S. and Denmark signed the Defense of Greenland Treaty in 1951. It supports missile warning, missile defense and space surveillance operations for the U.S. and NATO.

Greenland also guards part of what is known as the GIUK (Greenland, Iceland, United Kingdom) Gap, where NATO monitors Russian naval movements in the North Atlantic.

Danish armed forces in Greenland

Denmark is moving to strengthen its military presence around Greenland and in the wider North Atlantic. Last year, the government announced a roughly 14.6 billion-kroner (\$2.3 billion) agreement with parties including the governments of Greenland and the Faroe Islands, another self-governing territory of Denmark, to "improve capabilities for surveillance and maintaining sovereignty in the region."

The plan includes three new Arctic naval vessels, two additional long-range surveillance drones and satellite capacity.

Denmark's Joint Arctic Command is headquartered in Greenland's capital, Nuuk, and tasked with the "surveillance, assertion of sovereignty and military defense of Greenland and the Faroe Islands," according to its website. It has smaller satellite stations across the island.

The Sirius Dog Sled Patrol, an elite Danish naval unit that conducts long-range reconnaissance and enforces Danish sovereignty in the Arctic wilderness, is also stationed in Greenland.

Rich source of rare earth minerals

Greenland is also a rich source of the so-called rare earth minerals that are a key component of mobile phones, computers, batteries and other hi-tech gadgets that are expected to power the world's economy in the coming decades.

That has attracted the interest of the U.S. and other Western powers as they try to ease China's dominance of the market for these critical minerals.

Development of Greenland's mineral resources is challenging because of the island's harsh climate, while strict environmental controls have proved an additional hurdle for potential investors.

Fire safety inspections lapsed for years at Swiss bar where 40 died in New Year's blaze

By GEIR MOULSON Associated Press

Fire safety inspections hadn't been carried out since 2019 at the Swiss bar where a fire at a New Year's party left 40 people dead and over 100 injured, local authorities said Tuesday.

Investigators have said they believe sparkling candles atop Champagne bottles ignited the fire at Le Constellation in the resort town of Crans-Montana when they came too close to the ceiling. Authorities are looking into whether soundproofing material on the ceiling conformed with regulations and whether the candles were permitted for use in the bar.

Swiss authorities have opened a criminal investigation into the bar managers. The two are suspected of involuntary homicide, involuntary bodily harm and involuntarily causing a fire, according to the Valais region's chief prosecutor.

The regulations in Valais call for annual fire safety inspections of buildings that are "accessible to the public," and regional authorities say they are the responsibility of the municipality. On Tuesday, the Crans-Montana municipality said that inspections of Le Constellation that included fire safety checks had been carried out in 2016, 2018 and 2019, and that modifications had been requested — but no issues with soundproofing measures had been raised.

The local council discovered after consulting documents after the fire that "periodic checks were not carried out between 2020 and 2025," the head of Crans-Montana's municipal government, Nicolas Féraud, told a news conference.

"We regret this bitterly," he said, adding that it will be up to judicial authorities to determine what influence that may have had on the events that led to the fire.

Féraud said he couldn't immediately explain why safety inspections hadn't been conducted for such a long time.

Féraud said that, in September last year, an external expert had been asked to carry out a soundproofing analysis and had concluded that the bar complied with anti-noise rules, without making further remarks.

The severity of burns made it difficult to identify some victims of the fire that broke out at about 1:30 a.m. on New Year's Day, requiring families to supply authorities with DNA samples.

Investigators finished identifying the 40 dead on Sunday and said on Monday that they had identified all 116 people who were injured, from several countries.

On Monday, the Paris prosecutor's office announced that it was opening a probe to assist the Swiss investigation and make it easier for families of French victims to communicate with Swiss investigators. Nine French citizens were killed, the youngest 14, and 23 were injured.

Féraud said reports from the inspections that were carried out mentioned a maximum capacity of 100 people on the bar's ground floor and 100 in its basement. It's unclear how many people were in Le Constellation when the blaze broke out and investigators have said that may never be known.

The municipality said the bar's owner obtained a permit to build a veranda in 2015 and also carried out interior work at the bar that did not require a permit.

It said it has now decided to ban the use of fireworks indoors and commission an external agency to carry out inspections of such establishments.

New report shows a 25% drop in deaths of on-duty law enforcement officers

By CLAUDIA LAUER Associated Press

Deaths of on-duty law enforcement officers in the U.S. decreased by nearly 25% in 2025, according to an annual report.

The report from the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, shared with The Associated

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Press ahead of its release Tuesday, shows a drop in all categories of fatalities, from 148 total deaths in 2024 to 111 last year.

Officer firearm fatalities dropped to 44, a 15% decrease from 52 in 2024 and the lowest number in at least a decade, according to the Fund's previous annual officer fatality reports.

"I always like to see that firearms deaths are down. They are the tip of the spear for egregious acts," said Bill Alexander, the chief executive officer of the Fund, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit that works to memorialize fallen officers, educate the public about the profession and improve officer safety.

Traffic-related deaths also decreased nearly 23% between 2024 and 2025, including both fatal traffic accidents and officers killed after being struck by a vehicle — usually during traffic stops.

"Even one officer fatality is too many, and our ultimate goal is to have none. But we're heartened by any decrease in those numbers," Alexander said.

Alexander said the reduction in traffic-related officer deaths likely can be attributed to an increase in the national conversation around officer safety on the road. More states around the country have passed "move-over" laws requiring drivers to move out of the lane closest to traffic stops or accidents while passing them. There have been increased efforts to direct officers to approach the passenger side of cars during traffic stops, removing them from travel lanes, Alexander said.

The reason behind the decrease in firearm fatalities is harder to define. While many departments have offered increased safety training and have better equipment for firearm injuries, Alexander said luck and other unquantifiable factors also play a role.

"Some of it could come down to an officer being shot close to a hospital or maybe the officers had a tactical emergency kit or better blood stopping equipment," he said.

Fewer fatalities also doesn't mean fewer instances of officers being shot or being shot at, he said.

The National Fraternal Order of Police tracks the number of officer shootings, both fatal and non-fatal. That report does not include incidents where officers were shot at and not struck by gunfire.

The 2025 FOP report, released this week, showed there was a small increase in officers shot while on-duty last year — increasing from 342 in 2024 to 347 in 2025.

Among the high-profile shooting deaths in 2025 was Andrew Duarte, a West York Borough Police Department officer who was shot and killed in February while responding to a man who had taken several people hostage in a York, Pennsylvania hospital. And law enforcement officers from around the country attended funeral services Monday for Delaware State Trooper Matthew "Ty" Snook, who was shot and killed while he was working an overtime shift at a DMV office on Dec. 23, after pushing a DMV employee out of the way of the gunman.

The National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund's fatality report also showed no on-duty officer fatalities in 17 states and Washington D.C., and none at the nation's federal and tribal law enforcement agencies last year.

It also showed a 37% drop in the "other" fatalities category that includes physical or medical issues from on-duty incidents and most other fatalities like stabbings, drownings or plane crashes. The number dropped from 52 in 2024 to 33 in 2025, and includes 14 officers who died last year from illnesses related to responding to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Previous annual reports included COVID-19 deaths, which increased fatality numbers significantly in 2020 and 2021, but Alexander said COVID deaths have not been included as on-duty fatalities in the last two years. The report also does not include officers who committed suicide, though Alexander said the group is having conversations about how to honor and include those officers.

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Today in History: January 7

Gunmen kill 12 at Charlie Hebdo newspaper in Paris

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Wednesday, Jan. 7, the seventh day of 2026. There are 358 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Jan. 7, 2015, masked gunmen stormed the Paris offices of Charlie Hebdo, a French newspaper that had caricatured the Prophet Muhammad, methodically killing 12 people, including the editor, before escaping. (Two suspects were killed two days later.)

Also on this date:

In 1610, astronomer Galileo Galilei observed three of Jupiter's moons for the first time and a fourth days later.

In 1955, Marian Anderson became the first African American to sing with the Metropolitan Opera in New York, in Verdi's "Un Ballo in Maschera."

In 1979, Vietnamese forces captured the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh, overthrowing the communist Khmer Rouge government whose brutal policies are blamed for the deaths of 1.7 million people, including the killing of thousands of Vietnamese villagers in cross-border raids.

In 1999, President Bill Clinton's Senate impeachment trial began on grounds of perjury to a grand jury and obstruction of justice. The Republican-controlled House voted in October 1998 to start proceedings after months of controversy over Clinton's relationship with White House intern Monica Lewinsky, with whom he denied having a sexual relationship. The Senate acquitted Clinton on Feb. 12, falling far short of the 67 votes needed to convict on each charge.

In 2022, three white men convicted of murder after Ahmaud Arbery was chased and killed while jogging in a south Georgia community were sentenced to life in prison. The judge denied any chance of parole for the father and son who armed themselves and initiated the deadly pursuit of the 25-year-old Black man in 2020 after spotting him running in their neighborhood in Brunswick.

In 2023, Republican Kevin McCarthy was elected speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives in a historic post-midnight 15th ballot, overcoming holdouts from his own ranks after a chaotic week that tested the new GOP majority's ability to govern.

Today's Birthdays: Musician Kenny Loggins is 78. Actor David Caruso is 70. TV journalist Katie Couric is 69. Republican Sen. John Thune of South Dakota is 65. Republican Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky is 63. Actor Nicolas Cage is 62. Actor Jeremy Renner is 55. Country singer-musician John Rich is 52. Formula 1 driver Lewis Hamilton is 41. NFL quarterback Lamar Jackson is 29. Actor Marcus Scribner is 26. Jay-Z and Beyoncé's daughter Blue Ivy Carter is 14.