

Groton Daily Independent

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Monday, Jan. 12, 2026

School Breakfast: Eggs.
School Lunch: Buffalo Chicken bake, cooked broccoli.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.
Groton Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center, 1 p.m.
1st Grade BBB Practice, 4:30 p.m.
Groton JV Wrestling Jamboree, 5 p.m.
Girls Basketball at Northwestern: (C at 5 p.m.; JV at 6 p.m.; Varsity to follow)
5th/6th Grade Volleyball Practice, 6 p.m.
Kindergarten BBB Practice, 6 p.m.

Tuesday, Jan. 13, 2026

School Breakfast: Scones.
School Lunch: Chicken breast, cooked broccoli.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Council, 6 p.m.
Groton United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.
MS BBB at Roncalli, 4 p.m.
4th Grade BBB Practice, 5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, Jan. 14, 2026

School Breakfast: Breakfast pizza.
School Lunch: Cheese quesadilla, black beans.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.
United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.
Groton C&MA: Kid's Club, Youth Group, Adult Bible Study, 7 p.m.
2nd Grade BBB Practice, 5 p.m.



6th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.
3rd/4th Grade Volleyball Practice, 6 p.m.
5th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.

Thursday, Jan. 15, 2026

School Breakfast: Egg wraps.
School Lunch: Lasagna bake, green beans.
Little Leaders Cheer Clinic, 3:30 p.m.
Basketball: Tiospa Zina at Groton: (JVBBB-4, JGBBB-5, VBBB-6:15, VGBBB-7:30)
4th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.
Boys Wrestling Triangular with Webster at Redfield, 6 p.m.

Friday, Jan. 16, 2026

School Breakfast: Cereal.
School Lunch: French bread pizza, corn.
Boys Wrestling at Philip Invitational, 10 a.m.
Girls Wrestling at Harrisburg Invitational, 4 p.m.
JH BBB at Milbank (7th at 4 p.m., 8th at 5 p.m.)

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

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1440

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

Trump Weighs Iran

Widespread protests across Iran entered their third week yesterday, a continuation of the largest anti-government demonstrations in the country since 2022. Human rights groups relying on activist networks estimate roughly 540 people have been killed and at least 10,000 others arrested amid an intensifying crackdown by the government (48 of those killed were said to be security forces).

The unrest began Dec. 28, sparked by a plunge in the value of the Iranian rial and surging prices for food and goods. Accurate reports of the scale of protests have been limited by a near-total internet shutdown by the government, though hundreds of demonstrations have been held across all 31 provinces. Notably, footage shared on social media showed cars and buildings burning in the capital of Tehran.

President Donald Trump suggested US military strikes were possible if violence against protesters continued.

Record Flu Activity

There have been at least 15 million flu cases this season, according to the latest estimates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This year, outpatient visits for flu-like symptoms reached the highest recorded level since the agency began tracking cases more than 30 years ago.

The US flu season typically begins in October, peaks between December and February and extends as late as May. This season has seen at least 180,000 hospitalizations and 7,400 deaths, with 26 states reporting "very high" levels of flu-like illness and 16 seeing "high" levels. Epidemiologists have blamed a new strain of influenza A H3N2—called subclade K—for the uptick. The mutation began spreading after strains were chosen for this year's vaccine, but research shows promise it still offers protection against severe illness.

Last year, a record 289 children died from the flu—the highest number since the agency began tracking cases in 2004. Roughly 90% were not fully vaccinated, and over 50% had an underlying medical condition, according to a CDC report.

CES Wraps Up

This year's Consumer Electronics Show wrapped up this weekend in Las Vegas. The trade show included a wave of product announcements, with many focused on physical artificial intelligence, including humanoid robots.

The world's most valuable company, Nvidia, unveiled new chip models and software platforms and was one of 40 companies highlighting humanoid robots on the trade show's website. Competitor AMD revealed a robot from a company it backs set to be deployed in shipyards later this year. Robots at CES this year shadowboxed, folded laundry, played blackjack, and danced, though speed and safety remain a concern. McKinsey estimates that the market for general-purpose robotics could reach \$370B by 2040.

Founded in 1967, CES focuses on emerging technologies and long-term industry direction.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

NFL playoff divisional round is set, kicks off this Saturday, Jan. 17; see schedule.

College Football Playoff National Championship game is set, with No. 10 Miami playing No. 1 Indiana on Monday, Jan. 19.

Bob Weir, guitarist and founding member of the Grateful Dead, dies at age 78 after being diagnosed with cancer.

"One Battle After Another" and "Hamnet" win top prizes at this year's Golden Globes; see highlights and winners.

Science & Technology

NASA orders first-ever medical evacuation of an astronaut on the International Space Station due to unspecified medical emergency involving current astronaut.

What we learned researching the ISS (1440 Topics)

New study suggests the "Age of Fishes"—a period around 445 million years ago when jawed marine vertebrates became dominant—was enabled by the Late Ordovician mass extinction.

Chinese researchers achieve new experimental fusion record, holding a high-energy plasma stable at densities 30%-65% greater than standard operation; the demonstration did not achieve net power production, the long-term goal.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close up Friday (S&P 500 +0.7%, Dow +0.5%, Nasdaq +0.8%), with S&P 500 finishing at record high despite weaker-than-expected December jobs report.

President Donald Trump directs federally backed housing giants Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to buy \$200B in mortgage-backed securities from the public market.

... and suggests capping credit card interest rates at 10% for one year.

Listen to our editor-in-chief interview a credit card expert.

Mining giant Rio Tinto restarts talks for \$260B merger with rival Glencore; Glencore stock rises 10%, potential deal would create world's largest mining company.

Politics & World Affairs

Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell says the Justice Department is investigating him over comments he made in a June 2025 congressional testimony related to a Federal Reserve renovation project; DOJ issued grand jury subpoenas Friday.

Tens of thousands of people protest immigration enforcement in cities across the US after ICE agent killed driver during an enforcement operation last week in Minnesota; see photos.

US military strikes dozens of ISIS targets in Syria as part of Operation Hawkeye Strike; the attacks were ordered by President Donald Trump last month after ISIS killed two US soldiers and one interpreter on Dec. 13.

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Coming Up on
GDILIVE.COM

Groton
Area
Tigers
Groton, SD

GDILIVE



A production of the
Groton Daily Independent



For more info: GDILIVE.COM



Mon., Jan. 12, 2026

**Girls Basketball at Northwestern
JV at 6 p.m., Varsity to follow**



**Thurs., Jan. 15, 2026 - Tiospa Zina
Basketball Doubleheader in Groton
Boys Varsity 6:15, Girls Varsity 7:30**



**Sat., Jan. 17, 2026 - Dakota Valley
Boys Basketball in Groton
C at 2:00, JV at 3:15, Varsity at 4:30**

“Accidents Happen, but Being Prepared Saves Lives”

Many of us have been there before—near the top of a ladder, stretching just a little farther to finish the job. Maybe we are cleaning a gutter, hanging Christmas lights, or rescuing a cat from a tree. There is always the temptation to climb one rung higher to reach that final spot.

According to CDC data from 2022, accidents are the third leading cause of death in the United States, behind heart disease and cancer. For those ages 1–44, accidents are the leading cause of death. These unintentional injuries include poisonings and overdoses, falls, and motor vehicle crashes. The leading causes vary by age. Motor vehicle crashes have historically been the most common cause for teenagers and young adults, though firearms became the leading cause of death for children and teens ages 1–19 in 2020. Poisonings are a major cause of death in both very young children and middle-aged adults.

For adults over age 65, falls are the leading cause of fatal injury. A common and devastating scenario occurs when an older adult falls and breaks a hip, setting off a cascade of complications that can lead to hospitalization, loss of independence, nursing home placement, and even death.

So what can we do to reduce the risk of accidents? Some of the advice may sound like common sense—or like something a responsible parent would say—but it matters. To prevent motor vehicle crashes, avoid driving while impaired, overly tired, or distracted by your phone. Always wear a seatbelt. Drive defensively, obey traffic laws, and adjust your speed for weather and road conditions. If conditions are poor, the safest choice may be to stay home.

Firearms should be locked securely, stored separately from ammunition, and kept out of reach of children and individuals at risk of harming themselves. Education, proper training, and safety courses are essential.

To reduce poisonings, store medications, cleaning products, and chemicals in their original containers and out of sight and reach. Dispose of expired medications properly, and always read and follow labels carefully. Avoid illegal substances altogether.

Finally, falls can sometimes be prevented. Avoid ladders if you have balance issues, and never stand on the top steps. Make sure ladders are secure and have someone assist when possible. To prevent ground-level falls, especially in older adults, remove clutter, improve lighting, install grab bars and handrails, use non-slip mats, wear proper footwear, and address vision, hearing, and balance issues.

Accidents are not always random. Many are preventable with awareness, preparation, and a willingness to slow down. The lesson is simple: don't take the extra step on the ladder, but do take the extra step to prepare and protect yourself and others from injury

Dr. Andrew Ellsworth is a Family Medicine Physician at Avera Medical Group Brookings in Brookings, SD. He serves as one of the Prairie Doc Volunteer Hosts during its 24th Season providing Health Education Based on Science, Built on Trust. Follow The Prairie Doc® at www.prairiedoc.org, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. Prairie Doc Programming includes On Call with the Prairie Doc®, a medical Q&A show (most Thursdays at 7pm on SDPB, YouTube and streaming on Facebook), 2 podcasts, and a Radio program (on SDPB, Sundays at 6am and 1pm).



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Playoffs Edition

The Vikings won't be playing this weekend, but the NFL season rolls on regardless. Wild Card Weekend is here, and while Minnesota is on the outside looking in, the slate of postseason games still gives us plenty to chew on. Some teams are trying to prove they belong, others are trying to avoid an early exit, and a few fanbases are already bracing for heartbreak. Even without the Vikings involved, this is the most chaotic and entertaining weekend of the NFL calendar, and it sets the tone for everything that follows.

Los Angeles Rams (12-5) @ Carolina Panthers (8-9)

The Rams got off to a hot start, taking a 14-0 lead, but Carolina regrouped and was able to go into intermission only down by three points. Both teams kicked field goals in the third quarter, and we went into the fourth quarter with LA holding a slim 20-17 lead. The final 15 minutes were wild, with four touchdowns scored and four lead changes. Ultimately, the Rams were able to hold on and leave Charlotte with a 34-31 win.

Green Bay Packers (9-7-1) @ Chicago Bears (11-6)

Green Bay started strong, holding Chicago to only three points in the first half while also finding the endzone three times, and went into halftime with a 21-3 lead. The third quarter was quiet, with the only scoring coming from a Chicago field goal. The Bears started to heat up in the fourth quarter, with a field goal and a touchdown sandwiched around a Green Bay three-and-out to cut the Packers' lead to only five points. A Green Bay touchdown with only six and a half minutes left in the game extended their lead to two scores, and they likely thought they had this one in the bag. But Caleb Williams and the Bears responded with a 10-play, 76-yard touchdown drive to make it a three-point game again. The Packers got the ball back with the lead and only four minutes left on the clock, but their drive stalled, and their field goal attempt was no good, giving the ball back to the Bears with plenty of time left on the clock. Six plays and 66 yards later, Chicago found the end zone to win the game 31-27.

Buffalo Bills (12-5) @ Jacksonville Jaguars (13-4)

The first half of the game started slowly. The only points in the first quarter were a Buffalo field goal, and then both teams found the end zone in the second quarter, making the score 10-7 heading into halftime. Buffalo got the ball to begin the second half and added another field goal, which the Jaguars matched on the ensuing possession. Those were the only points scored in the third quarter, so the Bills took a narrow three-point lead into the fourth. The final fifteen minutes turned into the final round of a heavyweight title fight, with both teams throwing haymakers as four straight touchdown drives caused the lead to change hands again and again. When the dust settled, Buffalo was standing victoriously and escaped Jacksonville with a 27-24 win.

San Francisco 49ers (12-5) @ Philadelphia Eagles (11-6)

The San Francisco 49ers traveled to Philadelphia for a matchup against the Eagles. The weather was cold and windy, but both teams came out hot, scoring touchdowns on their opening drives. The next score came off a 16-play, 94-yard drive by Philadelphia, but a missed extra point kept the score 13-7. A 49ers field goal made the score 13-10 heading into halftime. The only points in the third quarter came from a Philly field goal, making it a one-score game at the beginning of the fourth. Philadelphia came apart at the end of the game while San Francisco found the end zone two more times, securing a 23-19 victory.

Los Angeles Chargers (11-6) @ New England Patriots (14-3)

Unlike the previous playoff games, this matchup was a dud. The Chargers' defense did an admirable job of containing Patriots' QB (and MVP candidate) Drake Mayo, holding the second-best offense in the NFL to only 16 points. Unfortunately for Chargers' fans, their offensive line couldn't keep QB Justin Herbert upright, and as a result, Los Angeles could only muster three points.

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Monday, the 12th:

- GBB @ Northwestern (C @ 5pm, JV @ 6pm, Varsity to follow)

- JH/JV Wrestling Jamboree in Groton (5pm)

Tuesday, the 13th:

- JH BB @ Roncalli (7th grade @ 4pm, 8th grade @ 5pm - elementary)

Thursday, the 15th:

- Wrestling Triangular @ Redfield (6pm w/ Webster)

- Doubleheader vs. Tiospa Zina (BJV @ 4pm, GJV @ 5pm, Boys Varsity @ 6:15pm, Girls Varsity @ 7:30pm)

Friday, the 16th:

- Boys Wrestling @ Philip (10am)

- Girls Wrestling @ Harrisburg (4pm)

- JH BB @ Milbank (7th grade @ 4pm, 8th grade @ 5pm)

Saturday, the 17th:

- Boys Basketball vs. Dakota Valley (C @ 2pm, JV @ 3:15pm, Varsity to follow)



Pennington County Fatal Crash

What: Single vehicle fatal crash

Where: US Highway 385, mile marker 92, 10 miles north of Hill City, SD

When: 10:12 p.m., Saturday, January 10, 2026

Vehicle 1: 2003 Toyota 4Runner

Occupant 1: 22-year-old female from Sturgis, SD, fatal injuries

Seat belt Used: No

Occupant 2: 22-year-old male from Deadwood, SD, fatal injuries

Seat belt Used: No

Pennington County, S.D.- Two people died in a single vehicle crash Saturday evening 10 miles north of Hill City, SD.

The names of the persons involved have not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2003 Toyota 4Runner was traveling southbound near mile marker 92 on US 385. The vehicle went off the road to the right, tripped and rolled several times, coming to rest in the east ditch. Both occupants were ejected from the vehicle and sustained fatal injuries. It is unknown who was driving the vehicle.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol is investigating the crash. All information released so far is only preliminary.

The Highway Patrol is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

What can \$20 get you?



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Call/Text Tina at 605/397-7285

for details



Annual Membership Rates

Student is \$29.82 per month or \$255.60 per year
Single is \$35.15 per month or \$319.50 per year
2-Person is \$55.45 per month or \$575.10 per year
Family is \$67.10 per month or \$702.26 per year

Month-to-Month Rates

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

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

EARTHTALK

Dear EarthTalk: Is it true that plants communicate by sending chemical signals through the air?
-- Melissa Hart, via email

Recent research reveals that plants, despite lacking brains or nervous systems, possess a surprising ability to “talk” via chemical signals. This fascinating discovery sheds light on a hidden world of plant communication with profound implications for agriculture, ecology and climate resilience. Plants communicate mainly through volatile organic compounds (VOCs)—chemical signals they release into the air—which serve as a sophisticated alarm system, warning other plants about potential threats like herbivores, pathogens or environmental stressors. When a plant detects an attack, it can alert other plants, enabling them to ready defensive chemicals or close their stomata to conserve water and nutrients.



It turns out plants can talk, at least if you mean send out chemical signals to each other.

According to National Geographic, this signaling system operates like an “early warning network,” letting plants prepare themselves and the surrounding community for incoming dangers. This highlights the intricate interdependence within plant ecosystems. One well-documented example involves tomato plants. When attacked by pests, tomato plants release VOCs that signal neighboring plants to ramp up their production of defensive chemicals, effectively creating a shared defense strategy. This phenomenon isn’t limited to a single plant species—“eavesdropping” plants in the vicinity can also benefit from these warnings, adapting their defenses even if they aren’t directly under attack. In addition to defensive strategies, plants use VOCs for environmental adaptation. Certain plants release VOCs to attract the predators of their attackers. A classic example is caterpillar-infested plants emitting signals to draw in parasitic wasps, which lay eggs in the caterpillars and effectively neutralize the threat.

Understanding plant communication could revolutionize agriculture. Farmers could enhance crop resistance to pests and reduce reliance on chemical pesticides. This would contribute to ecological balance by preserving biodiversity and reducing environmental impact. Moreover, plant communication plays a crucial role in maintaining ecosystem health. As Wired notes, this “language of chemical signals” isn’t just about individual survival—it’s about fostering community resilience in the face of challenges.

Plant communication does have skeptics. Some scientists believe it is simply a passive chemical response and not “communication.” Nonetheless, the discovery of chemical signaling in plants highlights the complexity and interconnectedness of ecosystems. As SciTechDaily notes, understanding these signals could revolutionize how we protect crops and manage natural ecosystems. By unraveling the secrets of plant communication, we gain not only insights into the hidden lives of plants but also tools to build a more sustainable and resilient future.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Prison drugs, deepfakes, DNA data-sharing among topics for attorney general's legislative package

BY: JOHN HULT

South Dakota's top law enforcement official wants lawmakers to stiffen penalties for selling drugs in prison and making deepfake pornography, to create consumer protections for DNA data, and to give internet crime investigators swifter access to suspects' user data.

Those bills are among the 10 proposed by Attorney General Marty Jackley for the 2026 legislative session that begins Tuesday at the Capitol in Pierre.

In a news release Wednesday, Jackley said the package "focuses on many issues this office has dealt with in the past year" and that he looks forward to "working with the governor and legislators during the session on these important opportunities to protect South Dakota."

Lawmakers have endorsed most of Jackley's proposals during each legislative session since his ascent to a second stint as attorney general in the 2022 general election.

Some proposals have seen tweaks, however, including one in 2025 that attempted to affix felony penalties for the failure of state employee supervisors to report employee misconduct. Lawmakers passed that bill, but ultimately opted for misdemeanor penalties.

Here are summaries of this year's proposals.

Senate Bill 17: Foreign political donations

This bill would bar political candidates in South Dakota from accepting donations from foreign nationals. It aims to amend an existing law that prohibits campaign contributions from states, state agencies, foreign governments, federal agencies or the federal government. One violation could net a year in jail and a \$2,000 fine. Two or more violations in a single year could draw up to two years in prison.

Senate Bill 41: Deepfakes

This bill targets "deepfake" pornography, created with digital technology to resemble a real person without that person's consent. The bill would amend an existing law, adding a definition of "digitally fabricated material" and making it a crime to "create, disclose, disseminate, distribute, or sell" such material when it depicts a nonconsenting person in a "state of nudity," or engaged in any manner of sexual act.

Senate Bill 42: Prison drugs

Currently, possession of controlled substances in prison — by inmates or staff members — is punishable by up to 10 years in prison. This bill would up the penalty to a maximum of 15 years. The bill would also update the state's drug ingestion statutes to make it a felony, punishable by up to five years in prison, for an inmate or parolee to fail a drug test for controlled substances. Ingestion of a controlled substance was a felony for everyone until last year, when lawmakers voted to make first- and second-offense ingestion a misdemeanor. Jackley opposed that move.

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Senate Bill 43: Digital currency seizures

Currently, law enforcement is empowered to seize money and property with suspected ties to felony crimes during criminal investigations. This bill would add "digital currency" like Bitcoin to law enforcement's list of assets seizable during criminal investigations.

Senate Bill 44: Internet crimes

This bill would let the attorney general or a designee ask a Hughes County judge to subpoena information on internet users suspected of crimes against children or human trafficking. Hughes County judges would be able to issue those subpoenas regardless of where a crime took place, where the suspect's internet service provider might be located, or where the subpoena would be enforced. The multi-agency Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force is headquartered in Pierre, which is in Hughes County.

Senate Bill 45: Marijuana-like intoxicants

Selling products made with the marijuana-like intoxicant known as delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinolic acid (Delta-9 THC-A on product labels) to anyone younger than 21 could draw up to two years in prison under the terms of this bill. Buying THC-A products for or sharing them with a person under 21 would also be forbidden. Other products containing pot-like compounds, including Delta-8 THC or THC-O, are already covered by the provisions of the law SB 45 seeks to amend.

Senate Bill 46: Public meeting agendas

This bill would require agendas for open public meetings to list every item to be discussed. Each agenda item would also need to be "described in sufficient detail to reasonably inform the public of any official business or public policy intended to be considered at the meeting." Violations would be punishable by up to 30 days in jail and a \$500 fine.

Senate Bill 47: Closed sessions of public meetings

This bill would revise the rules for closed-door executive sessions during public meetings. It would add a handful of items, such as discussions of cybersecurity and talk of ammunition locations, to the list of acceptable reasons to go into executive session. The bill would also require that votes to enter an executive session and the section of law justifying the session be logged in the meeting minutes. Violations could draw up to 30 days in jail and a \$500 fine.

Senate Bill 48: Advance meeting notices

This bill would "clarify" that agendas for public meetings of state agencies or commissions must be posted online 72 hours in advance of a meeting, not counting Saturdays, Sundays or legal holidays. Current law requires a 72-hour notice at the "principal office of the board, commission, or department holding the meeting" but doesn't specify the timing for posting an online agenda. Violations of the law could draw up to 30 days in jail and a \$500 fine.

Senate Bill 49: DNA data

This one is designed to protect consumer privacy as it relates to DNA data. It says that any person or organization that collects DNA has to spell out privacy policies and tell consumers upfront if their DNA will be shared with any partner organization. It would be illegal to share or sell DNA data to others without the express consent of the person who provided it, unless the data is "de-identified" and shared for research purposes alone. DNA collectors would also be required to let people access their own data and delete it upon request. Violations could draw civil penalties of up to \$5,000 per violation. The rules wouldn't apply for colleges, research institutions or forensic laboratories, or to data collected for medical purposes.

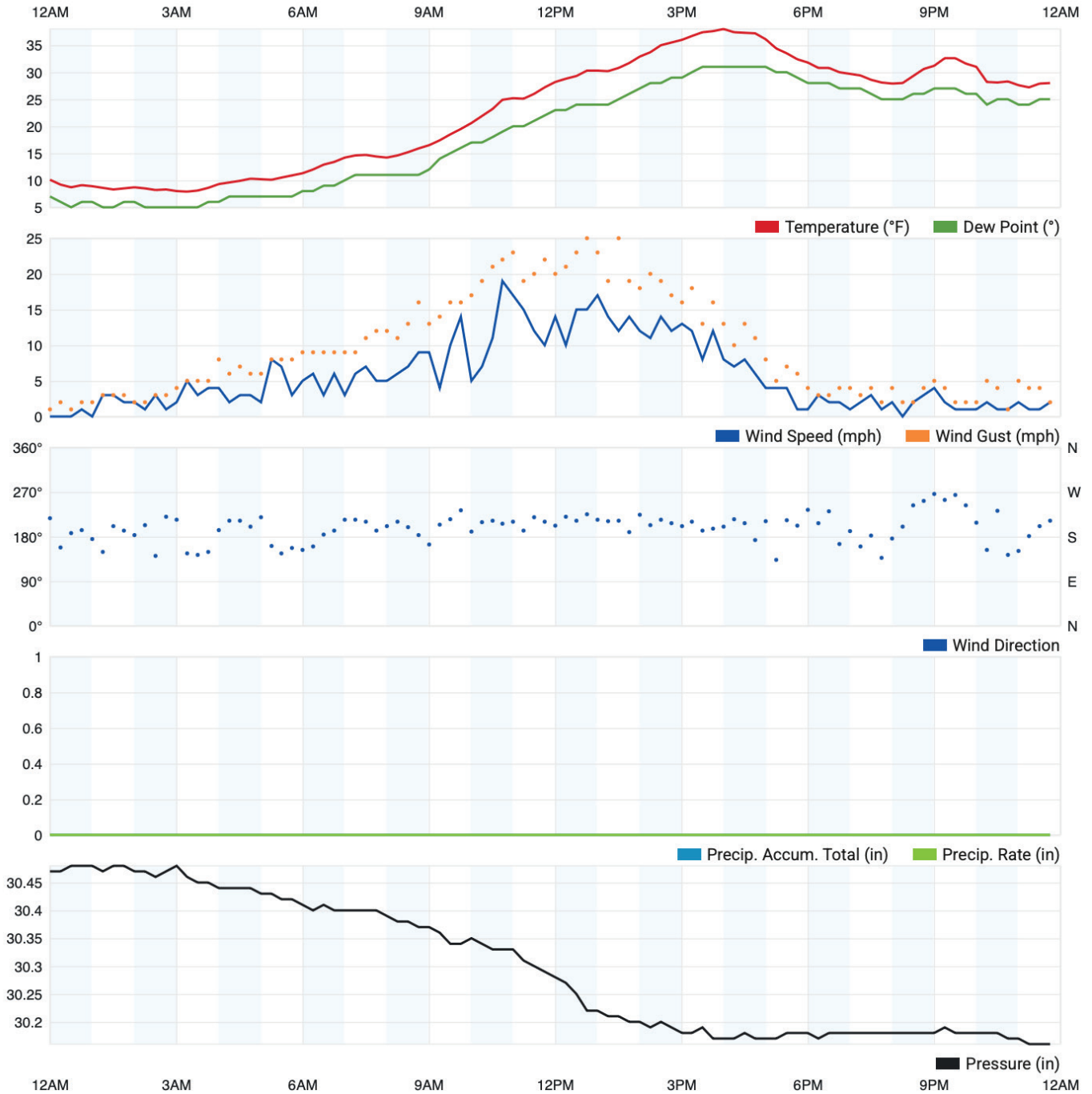
John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

January 11, 2026



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Today



High: 45 °F

Mostly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 35 °F

Mostly Cloudy

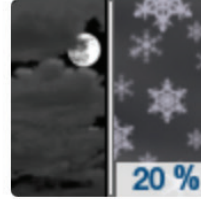
Tuesday



High: 43 °F

Partly Sunny
and Breezy

Tuesday Night



Low: 16 °F

Mostly Cloudy
then Slight
Chance Snow

Wednesday



High: 24 °F

Mostly Sunny



Temperature and Wind Outlook

January 11, 2026
3:03 PM CST

Strongest winds will be Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday

Maximum Temperature Forecast					
	1/12 Mon	1/13 Tue	1/14 Wed	1/15 Thu	1/16 Fri
Aberdeen	44	46	33	41	29
Britton	39	41	30	38	30
Chamberlain	53	54	39	49	33
Clark	41	44	32	37	30
Eagle Butte	51	49	35	43	31
Eureka	42	44	29	40	30
Gettysburg	47	48	35	42	31
McIntosh	49	48	35	42	27
Milbank	44	45	30	38	28
Miller	49	52	37	44	30
Mobridge	46	47	32	41	30
Murdo	54	53	37	47	30
Pierre	53	52	37	46	31
Redfield	48	50	35	44	29
Sisseton	42	43	30	38	32
Watertown	41	44	31	36	30
Webster	39	41	30	36	30
Wheaton	38	40	27	36	30

- **Above average temperatures** through much of the week.
 - Warmest Monday and Tuesday.
- **Strong winds** Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday.
 - Gusts of 40 to 50 mph Thursday and Friday, strongest over central SD.
- 40 to 70% chance of mainly **light snow** Thursday night and Friday.
 - Gusty winds **may** lead to areas of drifting/blowing snow while snow is falling that could reduce visibility at times.
 - As of now, mainly along and east of the Sisseton Hills.
 - Low confidence on exact timing and details.

Maximum Wind Gust Forecast & Direction					
	1/12 Mon	1/13 Tue	1/14 Wed	1/15 Thu	1/16 Fri
Aberdeen	23↘	39↘	31↓	37↘	41↘
Britton	22↘	38↘	33↓	36↘	40↘
Chamberlain	23↘	37↘	25↓	43↘	44↘
Clark	23↘	40↘	36↓	36↘	41↘
Eagle Butte	33↘	45↘	36↓	49↘	48↘
Eureka	28↘	44↘	33↓	45↘	44↘
Gettysburg	28↘	44↘	33↓	45↘	46↘
McIntosh	32↘	48↘	33↓	54↘	49↘
Milbank	23↘	38↘	35↓	30↘	37↘
Miller	29↘	44↘	33↓	40↘	44↘
Mobridge	26↘	40↘	31↓	43↘	44↘
Murdo	29↘	45↘	35↓	47↘	49↘
Pierre	24↘	39↘	28↓	43↘	44↘
Redfield	24↘	43↘	35↓	38↘	45↘
Sisseton	26↘	38↘	36↓	32↘	37↘
Watertown	24↘	40↘	36↓	33↘	38↘
Webster	24↘	38↘	35↓	35↘	39↘
Wheaton	20↘	36↘	36↓	28↘	35↘



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Highs for Monday and Tuesday will run about 20 to 25 degrees above average in the 40s and 50s! Winds will increase Tuesday and again for the end of the week with gusts of 40-50 mph. A late week system could bring some light snow to the area. Strong winds and light snow may lead to areas of drifting and blowing snow over portions of northeastern SD, however, confidence is low on exact details at this time.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 38 °F at 4:06 PM

Low Temp: 8 °F at 3:13 AM

Wind: 25 mph at 12:34 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 58 in 1987

Record Low: -46 in 1912

Average High: 23

Average Low: 2

Average Precip in Jan.: 0.25

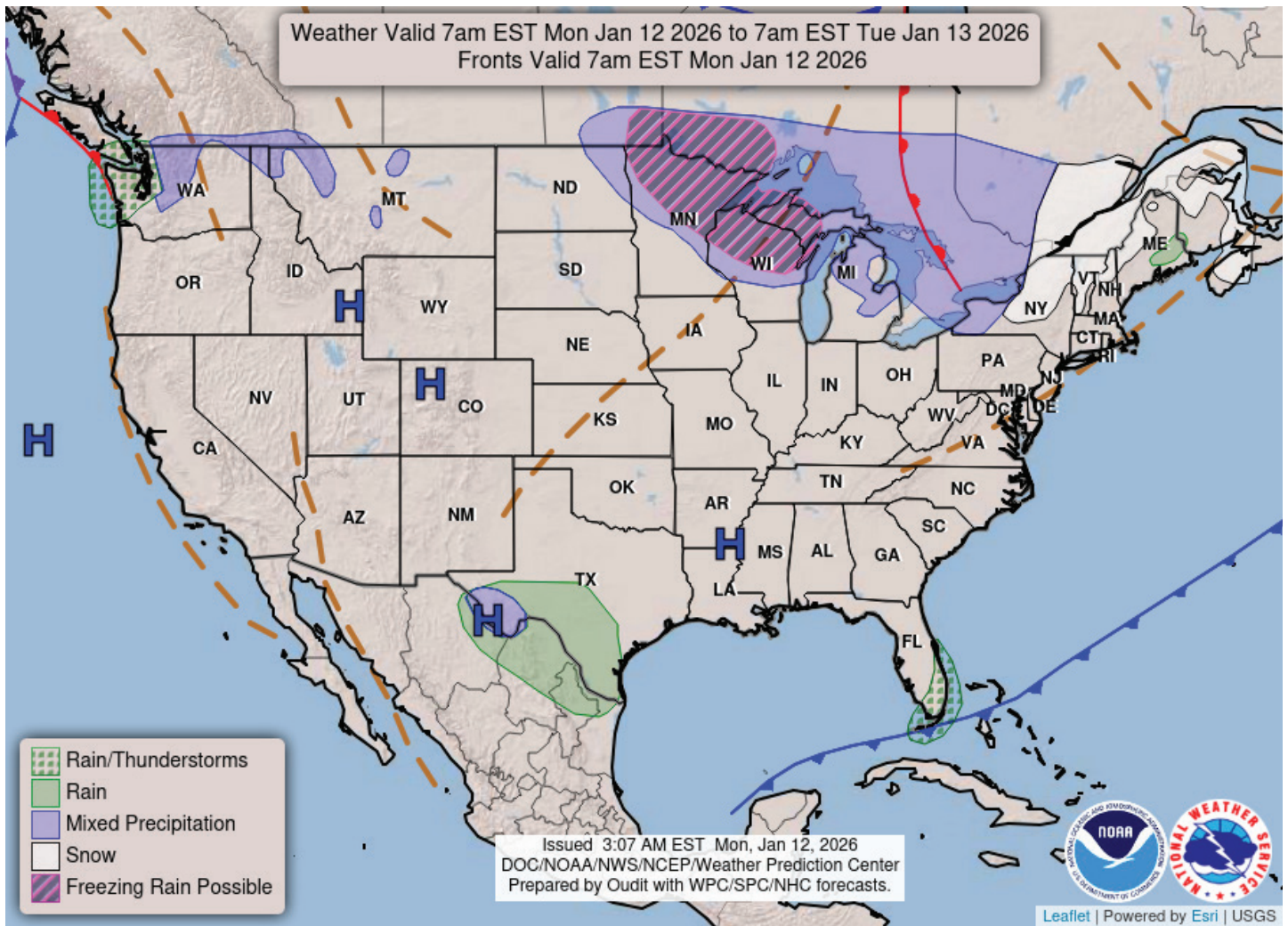
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.25

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 5:09 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:09 am



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Today in Weather History

January 12, 1912: The all-time coldest temperature ever recorded at Aberdeen and Timber Lake, South Dakota, was 46 degrees below zero on this date in 1912. On February 8th, 1895, 46 degrees below zero was also recorded in Aberdeen. The record low for this date was also set at Watertown, with 38 degrees below zero.

January 12, 1997: On January 12th, 1997, some of the greatest snow depths were recorded across central and northeast South Dakota. Ipswich had 29 inches on the ground, Aberdeen had 30 inches, Timber Lake had 31 inches, Mobridge had 34 inches, and Waubay had 38 inches. Some of the highest snow depths were recorded at Summit, Sand Lake, and Eureka. Summit had 42 inches of snow on the ground on January 12th, Sand Lake had 47 inches, and Eureka had a snow depth of 50 inches. The snow depth at Aberdeen was the all-time record, and Mobridge was just an inch shy of their 35-inch record snow depth.

1886: With a reading of 26 degrees below zero, Bowling Green, Kentucky, recorded its coldest temperature on record.

1888: Children's or Schoolhouse Blizzard occurred on this day. The blizzard killed 235 people, many of whom were children on their way home from school, across the Northern Plains. The Story Map will guide you through events, personal stories, and the significance of the blizzard that ravaged the Northern Plains on January 12, 1888.

1890: A tornado touched down at St. Louis, Missouri, and crossed the Mississippi River, ending just south of Venice. The worst damage from this tornado occurred in St. Louis. Further east and northeast, one tornado in McLean County passed through downtown Cooksville, destroying at least a dozen buildings, while a tornado in Richland County destroyed four homes northeast of Olney. In all, over 100 homes and other buildings were unroofed or damaged. The storm caused four deaths and 15 injuries.

1912 — The morning low of 47 degrees below zero at Washta IA established a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1985 — A record snowstorm struck portions of western and south central Texas. The palm trees of San Antonio were blanketed with up to thirteen and a half inches of snow, more snow than was ever previously received in an entire winter season. (Weather Channel) (Storm Data)

1987 — Twenty-seven cities in the Upper Midwest reported new record high temperatures for the date. Afternoon highs of 72 degrees at Valentine NE and 76 degrees at Rapid City SD set records for the month of January. (National Weather Summary)

1988 — Parts of North Dakota finally got their first snow of the winter season, and it came with a fury as a blizzard raged across the north central U.S. Snowfall totals ranged up to 14 inches at Fargo ND, winds gusted to 65 mph at Windom MN, and wind chill readings in North Dakota reached 60 degrees below zero. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — A dozen cities in the southeastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date as readings warmed into the 70s and 80s. Fort Myers FL reported a record high of 86 degrees. (National Weather Summary)

1990 — Gale force winds produce squalls with heavy snow in the Great Lakes Region. Totals in northwest Pennsylvania ranged up to eleven inches at Conneautville and Meadville. Barnes Corners, in western New York State, was buried under 27 inches of snow in two days. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2010: A magnitude 7.0 earthquake devastated Haiti, leaving over 200,000 people dead.

Help for Our Healing

In sickness, we should trust God—even when the path is difficult.

James 5:13-20: 13 Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises.

14 Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord;

15 and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.

16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.

18 Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.

19 My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back,

20 let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

God cares about our physical well-being. After all, He created our body to be a temple for His Spirit.

Ungodly choices can lead to illness (John 5:14). So when we're afflicted, it's wise to ask God to search our heart and reveal anything He wants us to address (Psalms 139:23-24). Most of the time, though, health problems are simply part of our human condition—a symptom of mankind's fallen state rather than evidence of personal sin. The truth is, disease and sickness affect just about everyone at some point. So what response does God desire from us?

Our heavenly Father wants us to be aware of His presence and to stay in communication with Him (1 Thessalonians 5:17), leaning on Him as we receive medical treatment. Developing a pattern of prayerfulness is the best way to prepare for the unexpected.

God's Word also calls us to intercede for one another. Its instructions include calling the elders of the church to pray and anoint the afflicted person with oil in Jesus' name (James 5:14).

Our Father is able to heal, but He sometimes allows the condition to remain. When requesting restored health, we should ask with faith in God's ability and confidence in His perfect will.

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:
01.09.26

12 30 36 42 47 16

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$215,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 30
Mins 2 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.10.26

6 15 20 22 25 10

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$12,510,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 45 Mins 2
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 01.11.26

5 6 12 14 24 12

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 2 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.10.26

1 8 23 24 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$188,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 2
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.10.26

10 19 39 47 67 18

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 29 Mins 2
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.10.26

5 19 21 28 64 14

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$137,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 29 Mins 2
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Malaysia, Indonesia become first to block Musk's Grok over sexualised AI images

By EILEEN NG and EDNA TARIGAN Associated Press

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Malaysia and Indonesia have become the first countries to block Grok, the artificial intelligence chatbot developed by Elon Musk's xAI, after authorities said it was being misused to generate sexually explicit and non-consensual images.

The moves reflect growing global concern over generative AI tools that can produce realistic images, sound and text, while existing safeguards fail to prevent their abuse. The Grok chatbot, which is accessed through Musk's social media platform X, has been criticized for generating manipulated images, including depictions of women in bikinis or sexually explicit poses, as well as images involving children.

Regulators in the two Southeast Asian nations said existing controls were not preventing the creation and spread of fake pornographic content, particularly involving women and minors. Indonesia's government temporarily blocked access to Grok on Saturday, followed by Malaysia on Sunday.

"The government sees non-consensual sexual deepfakes as a serious violation of human rights, dignity and the safety of citizens in the digital space," Indonesia's Communication and Digital Affairs Minister Meutya Hafid said in a statement Saturday.

The ministry said the measure was intended to protect women, children and the broader community from fake pornographic content generated using AI.

Initial findings showed that Grok lacks effective safeguards to stop users from creating and distributing pornographic content based on real photos of Indonesian residents, Alexander Sabar, director general of digital space supervision, said in a separate statement. He said such practices risk violating privacy and image rights when photos are manipulated or shared without consent, causing psychological, social and reputational harm.

In Kuala Lumpur, the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission ordered a temporary restriction on Grok on Sunday after what it said was "repeated misuse" of the tool to generate obscene, sexually explicit and non-consensual manipulated images, including content involving women and minors.

The regulator said notices issued this month to X Corp. and xAI demanding stronger safeguards drew responses that relied mainly on user reporting mechanisms.

"The restriction is imposed as a preventive and proportionate measure while legal and regulatory processes are ongoing," it said, adding that access will remain blocked until effective safeguards are put in place.

Launched in 2023, Grok is free to use on X. Users can ask it questions on the social media platform and tag posts they've directly created or replies to posts from other users. Last summer the company added an image generator feature, Grok Imagine, that included a so-called "spicy mode" that can generate adult content.

The Southeast Asian restrictions come amid mounting scrutiny of Grok elsewhere, including in the European Union, Britain, India and France. Grok last week limited image generation and editing to paying users following a global backlash over sexualized deepfakes of people, but critics say it did not fully address the problem.

An attempt by The Associated Press to request a comment through email to xAI resulted in an automated reply from the media support email address which stated, "Legacy Media Lies." This was the same message received from a different email when asked for comment regarding the global backlash.

Trump says Iran wants to negotiate as the death toll in protests rises to at least 544

By JON GAMBRELL and JULIA NIKHINSON Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — U.S. President Donald Trump said Iran wants to negotiate with Washington after his threat to strike the Islamic Republic over its bloody crackdown on protesters, a move coming as activists said Monday the death toll in the nationwide demonstrations rose to at least 544.

Iran had no immediate reaction to the comments, which came after the foreign minister of Oman — long an interlocutor between Washington and Tehran — traveled to Iran this weekend. It also remains unclear just what Iran could promise, particularly as Trump has set strict demands over its nuclear program and its ballistic missile arsenal, which Tehran insists is crucial for its national defense.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, speaking to foreign diplomats in Tehran, insisted “the situation has come under total control” in fiery remarks that blamed Israel and the U.S. for the violence, without offering evidence.

“That’s why the demonstrations turned violent and bloody to give an excuse to the American president to intervene,” Araghchi said, in comments carried by the Qatar-funded Al Jazeera satellite news network. Al Jazeera has been allowed to report from inside the country live despite the internet being shut off.

However, Araghchi said Iran was “open to diplomacy.” Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei said a channel to the U.S. remained open, but talks needed to be “based on the acceptance of mutual interests and concerns, not a negotiation that is one-sided, unilateral and based on dictation.”

Meanwhile Monday, Iran called for pro-government demonstrators to head to the streets in support of the theocracy, a show of force after days of protests directly challenging the rule of 86-year-old Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Iranian state television aired chants from the crowd, which appeared to number in the tens of thousands, who shouted “Death to America!” and “Death to Israel!”

Trump acknowledges proposal for talks

Trump and his national security team have been weighing a range of potential responses against Iran, including cyberattacks and direct strikes by the U.S. or Israel, according to two people familiar with internal White House discussions who were not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

“The military is looking at it, and we’re looking at some very strong options,” Trump told reporters on Air Force One on Sunday night. Asked about Iran’s threats of retaliation, he said: “If they do that, we will hit them at levels that they’ve never been hit before.”

Trump said that his administration was in talks to set up a meeting with Tehran, but cautioned that he may have to act first as reports of the death toll in Iran mount and the government continues to arrest protesters.

“I think they’re tired of being beat up by the United States,” Trump said. “Iran wants to negotiate.”

He added: “The meeting is being set up, but we may have to act because of what’s happening before the meeting. But a meeting is being set up. Iran called, they want to negotiate.”

Iran, through the country’s parliamentary speaker, warned Sunday that the U.S. military and Israel would be “legitimate targets” if America uses force to protect demonstrators.

More than 10,600 people also have been detained over the two weeks of protests, said the U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency, which has been accurate in previous unrest in recent years and gave the death toll. It relies on supporters in Iran crosschecking information. It said 496 of the dead were protesters and 48 were with security forces.

With the internet down in Iran and phone lines cut off, gauging the demonstrations from abroad has grown more difficult. The Associated Press has been unable to independently assess the toll. Iran’s government has not offered overall casualty figures.

Those abroad fear the information blackout is emboldening hard-liners within Iran’s security services to launch a bloody crackdown. Protesters flooded the streets in the country’s capital and its second-largest city on Saturday night into Sunday morning. Online videos purported to show more demonstrations Sunday

night into Monday, with a Tehran official acknowledging them in state media.

Fear pervades Iran's capital

In Tehran, a witness told the AP that the streets of the capital empty at the sunset call to prayers each night. By the Isha, or nighttime prayer, the streets are deserted.

Part of that stems from the fear of getting caught in the crackdown. Police sent the public a text message that warned: "Given the presence of terrorist groups and armed individuals in some gatherings last night and their plans to cause death, and the firm decision to not tolerate any appeasement and to deal decisively with the rioters, families are strongly advised to take care of their youth and teenagers."

Another text, which claimed to come from the intelligence arm of the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, also directly warned people not to take part in demonstrations.

"Dear parents, in view of the enemy's plan to increase the level of naked violence and the decision to kill people, ... refrain from being on the streets and gathering in places involved in violence, and inform your children about the consequences of cooperating with terrorist mercenaries, which is an example of treason against the country," the text warned.

The witness spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity due to the ongoing crackdown.

The demonstrations began Dec. 28 over the collapse of the Iranian rial currency, which trades at over 1.4 million to \$1, as the country's economy is squeezed by international sanctions in part levied over its nuclear program. The protests intensified and grew into calls directly challenging Iran's theocracy.

What to know about the protests shaking Iran as government shuts down internet and phone networks

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Nationwide protests in Iran sparked by the Islamic Republic's ailing economy are putting new pressure on its theocracy as it has shut down the internet and telephone networks.

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

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

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

"We're watching it very closely," Trump has warned. "If they start killing people like they have in the past, I think they're going to get hit very hard by the United States."

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

How widespread the protests are

More than 500 protests have taken place across all of Iran's 31 provinces, the U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency reported early Monday. The death toll had reached at least 544, it said, with more than 10,600 arrests. The group relies on an activist network inside of Iran for its reporting and has been accurate in past unrest.

The Iranian government has not offered overall casualty figures for the demonstrations. The Associated Press has been unable to independently assess the toll, given that internet and international phone calls are now blocked in Iran.

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

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shutdown has further complicated the situation.

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

Why the demonstrations started

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

In December, Iran introduced a new pricing tier for its nationally subsidized gasoline, raising the price of some of the world's cheapest gas and further pressuring the population. Tehran may seek steeper price increases in the future, as the government now will review prices every three months. Meanwhile, food prizes are expected to spike after Iran's Central Bank in recent days ended a preferential, subsidized dollar-rial exchange rate for all products except medicine and wheat.

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

Some have chanted in support of Iran's exiled Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi, who called for protests Thursday and Friday night.

Iran's alliances are weakened

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

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

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

The West worries about Iran's nuclear program

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

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

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

Iran recently said it was no longer enriching uranium at any site in the country, trying to signal to the West that it remains open to potential negotiations over its atomic program to ease sanctions. But there's been no significant talks in the months since the June war.

Why relations between Iran and the US are so tense

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

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

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

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

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

'Hamnet' and 'One Battle After Another' take top honors at Golden Globes

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

Paul Thomas Anderson's ragtag revolutionary saga "One Battle After Another" took top honors at Sunday's 83rd Golden Globes in the comedy category, while Chloé Zhao's Shakespeare drama "Hamnet" pulled off an upset over "Sinners" to win best film, drama.

"One Battle After Another" won best film, comedy, supporting female actor for Teyana Taylor and best director and best screenplay for Anderson. He became just the second filmmaker to sweep director, screenplay and film, as a producer, at the Globes. Only Oliver Stone, for "Born on the Fourth of July," managed the same feat.

In an awards ceremony that went almost entirely as expected, the night's final award was the most surprising. While "One Battle After Another" has been the clear front-runner this awards season, most have pegged Ryan Coogler's Jim Crow-era vampire thriller as its closest competition.

But "Hamnet," a speculative drama about William and Agnes Shakespeare based on Maggie O'Farrell's bestseller, won in the dramatic category shortly after its star, Jessie Buckley, won best female actor in a drama.

It was a banner night for Warner Bros., the studio behind "One Battle After Another" and "Sinners." Warner Bros. Discovery has agreed to be sold to Netflix in an \$83 billion deal. Paramount Skydance has appealed to shareholders with its own rival offer.

In his speech after winning best director, Anderson praised Warner co-chief Michael DeLuca.

"He said he wanted to run a studio one day and let filmmakers make whatever they want," said Anderson. "That's how you get 'Sinners.' That's how you get a 'Weapons.' That's how you get 'One Battle After Another.'"

The final awards brought to, or near, the stage a handful of the most talented filmmakers together in Anderson, Zhao and Coogler — plus Steven Spielberg, a producer of "Hamnet." Regardless of who won what, it was a heartening moment of solidarity between them, with a shared sense of purpose. Zhao fondly recalled being at Sundance Labs with Coogler when they were each starting out.

"As students, let's keep our hearts open and let's keep seeing each other and allowing each other to be seen," said Zhao, while Coogler smiled from the front row.

"Sinners" won for best score and cinematic and box-office achievement. The win for box office and cinematic achievement, over franchise films like "Avatar: Fire and Ash," was notable for Coogler's film, a movie that some reports labeled a qualified success on its release.

Yet "Sinners" ultimately grossed \$278 million domestically and \$368 million worldwide, making it highest grossing original film in 15 years.

"I just want to thank the audience for showing up," said Coogler. "It's means the world."

Coming off years of scandal and subsequent rehabilitation, the Globes and host Nikki Glaser put on a star-studded ceremony that saw wins for the streaming sensation "KPop Demon Hunters" (best animated film, song), a meta triumph for Seth Rogen's "The Studio" and an inaugural award for podcasting that went to Amy Poehler's "Good Hang."

Many of the Oscar favorites won. Timothee Chalamet won his first Golden Globe, for "Marty Supreme,"

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after four previous nominations. The 30-year-old is poised to win his first Oscar. Fellow nominees like Leonardo DiCaprio and George Clooney stood to applaud his win.

"My dad instilled in me a spirit of gratitude growing up: Always be grateful for what you have," said Chalamet. "It's allowed me to leave this ceremony in the past empty handed, my head held high, grateful just to be here. I'd be lying if I didn't say those moments didn't make this moment that much sweeter."

Glaser comes out swinging

The Globes, held at the Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, California, got underway with a pointedly political opening from host Nikki Glaser and an early award for the night's favorite, "One Battle After Another." Emceeding the show for the second straight year, Glaser kicked off the show with self-aware satire.

"Yes, the Golden Globes, without a doubt the most important thing happening in the world right now," she said.

In a winning, rapid-fire opening monologue that landed some punch lines on the usual subjects — the age of Leonardo DiCaprio's dates, Kevin Hart's height — Glaser also dove right into some of her most topical material.

For the on-the-block Warner Bros., Glaser started the bidding at \$5. Referencing the Epstein files, she suggested best editing should go to the Justice Dept. The "most editing," however, she suggested deserved to go to Bari Weiss' new CBS News — a dig at the Paramount Skydance-owned network airing the Globes.

Globes mix glitz and gloom

Political tension and industrywide uncertainty were the prevailing moods heading into Sunday's awards. Hollywood is coming off a disappointing box-office year and now anxiously awaits the fate of one of its most storied studios, Warner Bros. Following the fatal shooting of Renee Good in Minneapolis by a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer, several attendees wore pins reading "Be Good."

The Globes, formerly presented by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, have no overlap or direct correlation with the Academy Awards. After being sold in 2023 to Todd Boehly's Eldridge Industries and Dick Clark Productions, a part of Penske Media, the Globes are voted on by around 400 people. The Oscars are voted on by more than 10,500 professionals.

But in the fluctuating undulations of awards season, a good speech at the Globes can boost an Oscar campaign. Winners Sunday included Rose Byrne ("If I Had Legs I'd Kick You") for best female actor in a comedy or musical, and Wagner Moura, the Brazilian star of "The Secret Agent," for best male actor in a drama. Kleber Mendonça Filho's period political thriller also won best international film.

"I think if trauma can be passed along generations, values can do," Moura said. "So this to the ones who are sticking with their values in difficult moments."

Other winners Sunday included the supporting actor front-runner, Stellan Skarsgård who won for the Norwegian family drama "Sentimental Value." It was the first major Hollywood movie award for the 74-year-old, a respected veteran actor who drew a standing ovation.

"I was not prepared for this because I, of course, thought I was too old," said Skarsgård.

'The Studio' and 'Adolescence' win

In the television awards, "The Pitt" took best drama series, while Noah Wyle won, too, brushing past his former "ER"-star Clooney on the way to the stage. Netflix's "Adolescence" won four awards: best limited series, and acting awards for Erin Doherty, Stephen Graham and 16-year-old Owen Cooper.

Other winners included Rhea Seehorn for "Pluribus" and Jean Smart for "Hacks."

But the most comically poignant award of the night went to "The Studio," the best comedy series winner. Seth Rogen's Hollywood satire memorably included an episode devoted to drama around a night at the Globes. (Sample line: "I remember when the red carpet of the Golden Globes actually stood for something.") Rogen also won best male actor in a comedy.

"This is so weird," Rogen said, chuckling. "We just pretended to do this. And now it's happening."

Hong Kong court hearing arguments on sentencing in former publisher Jimmy Lai's case

By KANIS LEUNG Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — A Hong Kong court began hearing arguments Monday about the sentencing of democracy advocate and onetime-media magnate Jimmy Lai and his co-defendants, whose convictions under a national security law could land them in prison for life.

Lai, 78, is the founder of the now-defunct Apple Daily newspaper and an outspoken critic of China's ruling Communist Party. He was arrested in 2020 under the law imposed by Beijing following massive anti-government protests that rocked Hong Kong the year before.

In December, he was found guilty of conspiring with others to collude with foreign forces and conspiracy to publish seditious articles.

His conviction raised concerns about the curtailing of press freedom in the former British colony, which returned to Chinese rule in 1997.

His case could also be a test for Beijing's diplomatic ties. The verdict drew criticism from foreign governments, including the U.S. and Britain. After the verdict, U.S. President Donald Trump, who had raised Lai's case with China, said he felt "so badly."

Lai, alongside other co-defendants involved in the case, appeared in court for the four-day mitigation hearings. The maximum penalty for their convictions is life imprisonment. Sentencing will come later.

The court Monday morning heard arguments concerning two activists' sentences. Lawyers representing them suggested the starting points of their clients' sentences should be 10 years and 10 to 15 years respectively, but they should receive reductions in part due to their assistance in the case.

Lai's lawyer Robert Pang will deliver his arguments in the afternoon.

Lai's physical condition discussed in court

When Lai entered the courtroom, he pressed his palms together, an apparent gesture to express gratitude, and smiled at those sitting in the gallery. The media tycoon appeared to be in good spirits and greeted a convicted Apple Daily editor who was also sitting in the dock.

In August, his lawyers told the court that he suffered from heart palpitations. Hong Kong's government said no abnormalities were found in a subsequent medical exam.

Prosecutor Anthony Chau said Lai's health was stable. Chau said Lai had lost just 0.8 kg (about 1.8 pounds) over five years of detention, weighing 79.2 kg (about 175 pounds) when it was last measured this month. Lai is still considered obese as an Asian adult, Chau said. The obesity comment drew chuckling from some members sitting in the public gallery, and Lai also smiled in the dock.

Before sunrise, dozens of people had already lined up outside the court building to secure a seat in the public gallery. Retiree Simon Ng, a former Apple Daily reader, said he arrived and waited in line since Friday morning, hoping to see Lai.

"I want to let him know that he's not alone," Ng said. "Many people support him."

Judges ruled Lai was the mastermind

Lai was convicted of two counts of conspiracy to commit collusion with foreign forces to endanger national security, in addition to one count of conspiracy to distribute seditious publications. Lai pleaded not guilty to all charges.

A conviction on the collusion charge under the security law results in a sentence ranging from three years in jail to life, depending on the offense's nature and his role in it. The sedition charge under a separate, colonial-era law carries a maximum of two years' imprisonment.

Three government-vetted judges wrote in their December verdict that Lai spearheaded the conspiracies and took issue with what they called his "constant invitation" to the United States to bring down the Chinese government with the excuse of helping Hong Kongers.

Lai's lawyers admitted during the trial that he had called for foreign sanctions before the national security law took effect, but insisted he dropped these calls to comply with the law. They also argued on freedom of expression grounds.

But the judges said that Lai had never wavered in his intention to destabilize the ruling Chinese Communist Party. After the enactment of the law, he intended to continue, though less explicitly, they said. They emphasized that Lai was not on trial for his political views.

Beijing has opposed what it called the smearing of Hong Kong's judiciary "by certain countries," saying the judicial authorities perform duties according to the law.

Others have a chance of lighter sentences

Six ex-Apple Daily senior executives and two activists involved in Lai's case had entered guilty pleas, admitting that they had conspired with Lai and others to request foreign forces to impose sanctions, blockades or engage in other hostile activities.

The executives were publisher Cheung Kim-hung, associate publisher Chan Pui-man, editor-in-chief Ryan Law, executive editor-in-chief Lam Man-chung and editorial writers Fung Wai-kong and Yeung Ching-kee. Some of them, alongside the two activists Andy Li and Chan Tsz-wah, served as prosecution witnesses during the 156-day trial.

A guilty plea usually can lead to a sentence reduction. Under the security law, a reduced penalty may be granted to those who report on the offense committed by others.

Chan Pui man's husband, Chung Pui-kuen, a former top editor of Stand News who had been sentenced to 21 months in jail in a separate sedition case, was among those sitting in the public gallery.

After the verdict, Lai's daughter, Claire, said Lai would devote himself to God and his family rather than political activism if he were released.

Trump said after the verdict that he spoke to Chinese President Xi Jinping about Lai and "asked to consider his release." British Prime Minister Keir Starmer has said his government has made it a priority to secure the release of Lai, a British citizen.

George Floyd and Renee Good: 5 years between Minneapolis videos, and confusion has increased

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

Five years ago, video images from a Minneapolis street showing a police officer kneeling on the neck of George Floyd as his life slipped away ignited a social movement.

Now, videos from another Minneapolis street showing the last moments of Renee Good's life are central to another debate about law enforcement in America. They've slipped out day by day since ICE agent Jonathan Ross shot Good last Wednesday in her maroon SUV. Yet compared to 2020, the story these pictures tell is murkier, subject to manipulation both within the image itself and the way it is interpreted.

This time, too, the Trump administration and its supporters went to work establishing their own public view of the event before the inevitable imagery appeared.

But half a decade later, so many things are not the same — from cultural attitudes to rapidly evolving technology around all kinds of imagery.

"We are in a different time," said Francesca Dillman Carpentier, a University of North Carolina journalism professor and expert on the media's impact on audiences.

Imagery can change attitudes

No one who saw the searing video of Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin with his knee on Floyd's neck for more than nine minutes on May 25, 2020, is likely to forget it — and Chauvin's impassive face Floyd insisted he couldn't breathe. United in revulsion, demonstrators began one of the nation's largest-ever social movements. Chauvin was convicted of murder.

The footage "caused many individuals to experience an epiphany about racism, specifically cultural racism, in the United States," legal scholar Angela Onwuachi-Willig wrote in a Houston Law Review study that examined whether white Americans experienced a collective cultural trauma.

She eventually concluded that didn't happen and that the impact diminished with time. The rollback of diversity programs with the second Trump administration offers evidence for her argument.

"The people who are writing the cultural narrative of the Good shooting took notes from the Floyd killing

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and are managing this narrative differently," said Kelly McBride, an expert on media ethics for the Poynter Institute.

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem labeled Good, who was demonstrating in opposition to ICE enforcement of immigration laws, a domestic terrorist — an interpretation that Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey dismissed with an expletive. Both President Donald Trump and Vice President JD Vance suggested the shooting was justified because Good was trying to run Ross down with her vehicle.

On the night of the killing, White House border czar Tom Homan was cautious in an interview with the "CBS Evening News" when anchor Tony Dokoupil showed him the most widely distributed video of the incident, taken by a bystander and posted by a reporter for the Minnesota Reformer. The veteran law enforcement official said it would be unprofessional for him to prejudge before an investigation.

Later that evening, Homan issued a statement calling the shooting "another example of the results of the hateful rhetoric and violent attacks" against U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Border Patrol officers.

Video allows both sides to interpret

Video of the incident has been generally inconclusive about whether Good's vehicle actually hit Ross before he opened fire. Even if she did, many experts question whether that represented grounds for firing his weapon. Clearly, however, that would bolster public sympathy for the officer.

"These ICE videos do present irrefutable facts — a woman drove her car and then she was shot dead by an ICE agent," said Duy Linh Tu, a documentarian and professor at the Columbia University journalism school. "What the videos can't show is the intent of the woman or the officer. And that's the tricky part."

Good, obviously, can't speak to what motivated her to put her SUV in drive and move on Portland Avenue South.

Several news organizations have carefully examined the forensic evidence that has emerged. The Associated Press wrote that it was unclear if Good's car made contact with Ross. The Washington Post wrote that "videos examined by The Post, including one shared on Truth Social by Trump, do not clearly show whether the agent is struck or how close the front of the vehicle comes to striking him."

The New York Times said that "in one video, it looks like the agent is being struck by the SUV. But when we synchronize it with the first clip, we can see the agent is not being run over."

Video that emerged Friday from the Minnesota site Alpha News showed the incident from Ross' perspective. It, too, left many questions and no shortage of people willing to answer them.

Vance linked to the video online and wrote: "Many of you have been told this law enforcement officer wasn't hit by a car, wasn't being harassed and murdered an innocent woman. The reality is that his life was endangered and he fired in self-defense."

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer wrote online that "how could anyone on the planet watch this video and conclude what JD Vance says?" Schumer said the administration "is lying to you."

Do more angles provide more clarity?

When one online commentator wrote that Good did not deserve to be shot in the face, conservative media figure Megyn Kelly responded, "Yes, she did. She hit and almost ran over a cop."

Poynter's McBride said the media has generally done a good and careful job outlining the evidence that is circulating around in the public. But the administration has also been effective in spreading its interpretation, she said.

There are more camera angles available now than there was with Floyd, but "I don't know if that adds clarity or more fog to this case," Tu said. "I think that people will see what they want to see. Or, rather, they'll pick the angle that aligns with what they already believe."

That nagging sense of uncertainty left by the videos leaves experts like Tu and Carpentier to conclude they will pale in impact compared to the Floyd case. With each passing year, the public is becoming more desensitized to images of violence — as the online spread of footage showing Republican activist Charlie Kirk illustrated, she said.

The spread of AI-enhanced fake images is also teaching the public to question what it sees, she said.

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Before Ross was identified, BBC Verify said false images were being spread online speculating about what the masked agent looked like, and fake video of a Minneapolis demonstration spread.

"Now you can't believe what you're seeing," Carpentier said. "You don't know if what you're seeing is the real video or if it has been doctored. I don't think AI is being a friend in this case at all."

Golden Globe highlights: Brazil on a streak, Amy Poehler's pod wins and Seth Rogen comes full-circle

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

The Golden Globes had some predictable stuff, like "One Battle After Another" and "Adolescence" cleaning up and host Nikki Glaser making fun of the age of Leonardo DiCaprio's partners.

But there were also some sweet moments, like when "Adolescence" star Erin Doherty, who played a child therapist, won the trophy for best female actor in a supporting role on television — and thanked therapists.

Or when George Clooney, who was sitting at the lip of the stage, gallantly helped Jean Smart up to the podium and later hugged his former "ER" co-star Noah Wyle on his way to accepting best TV drama for "The Pitt."

There were some weird moments, too, like when Rose Byrne explained why her partner and fellow actor Bobby Cannavale wasn't there to see her win: He was at a reptile expo in New Jersey because the family was getting a bearded dragon.

A sweet occasion was when "Pluribus" star Rhea Seehorn, onstage to accept her acting award for a TV drama, first told presenter Queen Latifah that she met her 20 years ago while she was between jobs and the rapper-actor was "so nice."

Other moments included a Golden embrace of Brazilian filmmaking, Seth Rogen having déjà vu, Amy Poehler dunking on NPR and "KPop Demon Hunters" singer-songwriter Ejae encouraging viewers to keep striving.

Brazil coming in hot

Wagner Moura won the Golden Globe for lead actor in a movie drama, becoming the second Brazilian to take home a Globes acting prize after Fernanda Torres' win last year for "I'm Still Here."

Moura in "The Secret Agent" plays a former professor forced into hiding while trying to protect his young son during Brazil's military dictatorship of the 1970s. The movie also won the Globe for best non-English film.

"'The Secret Agent' is a film about memory — or the lack of memory — and generational trauma," Moura said in his acceptance speech. "I think that if trauma can be passed along generations, values can too. So this is to the ones that are sticking with their values in difficult moments."

Moura is perhaps best known for his portrayal of Colombian drug lord Pablo Escobar in Netflix's "Narcos," which ran from 2015 to 2017 and earned him a Golden Globe nomination in 2016. He was also in 2024's "Civil War."

On Sunday, he brushed aside competition from Joel Edgerton in "Train Dreams," Oscar Isaac from "Frankenstein," Dwayne Johnson in "The Smashing Machine," Michael B. Jordan in "Sinners" and Jeremy Allen White from "Springsteen: Deliver Me from Nowhere."

Last year, Brazil earned its first Oscar win in the international film category for "I'm Still Here."

Life imitates art for Seth Rogen

Seth Rogen won his first Golden Globe only months after his showbiz satire "The Studio" set an entire episode at the same awards ceremony.

"This is so weird! We just pretended to do this and now it is happening!" Rogen said, cradling his trophy. "I thought the only way I would get to hold one is to create a whole show to give myself a fake one."

The Golden Globe episode of "The Studio" follows Rogen's studio executive, Matt, as he attends the Globes, where he's obsessed with the idea that his name gets mentioned in an acceptance speech.

In his actual winning speech, Rogen thanked his fellow nominees, calling out "Only Murders in the Building" duo Steve Martin and Martin Short. "I remember growing up watching you guys, my whole life thinking, 'One day I'm going to beat them.'" He then laughed, adding "I did not think that."

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Amy Poehler wins first podcast Globe

"Good Hang with Amy Poehler" won the inaugural best podcast award and the host had a joke about her rivals at National Public Radio.

"I know that I am new to this game. I have great respect for this form," Poehler said. "I have great respect for everyone I am nominated with. I am big fans of all of you — except for NPR: just a bunch of celebs phoning it in. Try harder."

Poehler's show beat out "Armchair Expert with Dax Shepard," "Call Her Daddy," "The Mel Robbins Podcast," "SmartLess" and "Up First," from NPR. (She also beat her ex-husband Will Arnett, part of "SmartLess.")

It is Poehler's second Globe, having won one in 2014 for "Parks and Recreation." She said her podcast is an attempt to make a "rough and unkind world filled with a little bit more love and laughter."

The podcast nominations avoided politics or controversy by passing on popular podcasts from conservative-leaning programs like "The Megyn Kelly Show," "The Tucker Carlson Show," "The Ben Shapiro Show," Candace Owen's "Candace" and "The Joe Rogan Experience."

'Golden,' appropriately, wins at Golden Globes

"Golden" from "KPop Demon Hunters" won the Globe for best original song and one of its songwriters had a lesson to others struggling to be heard.

"When I was a little girl, I worked tirelessly for 10 years to fill one dream — to become a K-pop idol. I was rejected, and disappointed that my voice wasn't good enough," said co-singer Ejae, who also co-wrote the track with Mark Sonnenblick and Lee Hee-joon. "Now I'm here as a singer and a songwriter."

"So it's a dream come true to be part of a song that is helping other girls, other boys and everyone of all ages to get through their hardship and to accept themselves," Ejae added.

The "KPop Demon Hunters" soundtrack has topped the charts — debuting at No. 1 on Billboard's Soundtracks chart and No. 8 on the all-genre Billboard 200. The movie also won the Globe for best animated film.

"Golden" contains the lyrics: "Waited so long to break these walls down/To wake up and feel like me/ Put these patterns all in the past now/And finally live like the girl they all see."

'Adolescence' and the hope of 'removing hate'

"Adolescence" won four Golden Globes and writer Jack Thorne highlighted the young people in the show's cast, saying, "You are proof the world can be better."

"Removing hate is our generation's responsibility. It requires thought from the top down. The possibility seems remote right now, but hope is a beautiful thing," he added.

The Netflix four-part series, which traces the emotional fallout after a U.K. teenager's stabbing, has become a sensation. It won eight Emmy Awards last year, including outstanding limited or anthology series.

On Sunday, "Adolescence" won Globes for best limited series, anthology series, or motion picture made for television; TV male supporting actor for Owen Cooper; TV female supporting actor for Erin Doherty; and TV lead male actor for Stephen Graham.

Venezuelans in the US are torn between joy and worry after ousting of Maduro

By MICHAEL WEISSENSTEIN and ADAM GELLER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — In the days since the Trump administration ousted Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro in a late-night military raid, Alejandra Salima has spoken to fellow Venezuelan migrants in her role as an advocate. Like her, most voice feelings that seesaw between joy and trepidation, she said.

The removal of Maduro is "a first step, but we're nervous," said Salima, who fled to the U.S. three years ago with her 7-year-old son and assists other Venezuelans at the Miami office of the National TPS Alliance. With the regime that Maduro led still in place, "at this moment, returning would put me and my son at risk," she said.

For more than 770,000 Venezuelans living in the U.S., reactions to Trump's forceful moves in the country

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they left behind — and the one that has taken them in — are as intense as they are complicated.

Many are thrilled by the removal of Maduro, who harassed and jailed political opponents while presiding over an economic collapse, driving millions of Venezuelans from the country. But as they try to figure out what's next for them and for families and friends still in Venezuela, many share Salima's conflicted feelings.

The Trump administration's move to deport Venezuelans without permanent residency has increased worry. Many were allowed to stay in the U.S. after they were granted Temporary Protected Status, or TPS, a designation Trump revoked after taking office. At the same time, the fear instilled by the government Maduro left behind makes many wary of returning.

"First, they grabbed Maduro, and I feel happy, happy, happy, grateful to the Trump administration," said Manuel Coronel, a lawyer who left Venezuela in 2017 and now lives just north of Salt Lake City. But he worries the change will be too limited.

"They got him, but the criminals are still there," said Coronel, who is 54 and works at an immigration law practice. "There's no new government. Everything's exactly the same."

No rush to return

The tensions belie assurances by Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, who asserted that "overwhelmingly the Venezuelans that I've heard from or talked to are excited about the changes."

"They have more opportunities to go back to their country and have it be more successful and provide for their families today than they did a week ago when Maduro was still in charge," Noem said last week.

But in interviews with Venezuelans who live in communities around the U.S. there was little indication of a rush to return.

"Thank God we're here," said José Luis Rojas, who ended up in New York City after fleeing the Venezuela capital of Caracas in 2018.

Rojas, 31, recounted how Venezuela's hyperinflation, which topped 1 million percent the year he fled, made it impossible to buy essentials like diapers after his partner became pregnant. They went first to Ecuador then Peru, but left to escape crime, joining thousands of Venezuelans who migrated on foot through the jungle of Panama's Darién Gap.

Since the couple and their son arrived in the U.S., Rojas has obtained political asylum, a work permit and a driver's license.

In an interview this week at a Venezuelan restaurant on a New York City street lined with immigrant-run businesses, Rojas welcomed the toppling of Maduro "so there can be change in Venezuela, because many people are struggling."

But he expressed doubt about the Trump administration's tightened policies on Venezuelans in the U.S. that have already pushed a number of his friends to leave for countries in South America and elsewhere.

For Venezuelans in the U.S., Trump has "done good things and he's done bad things," said Rojas as he and his wife tucked into the restaurant's \$30 special: a heaping platter of fried potatoes, cassava, corn cakes, sausages, beef, chicken, plantains, fried pork rinds and cheese.

"It all depends on your point of view."

New lives in the US

About 8 million Venezuelans have fled the country over the past decade, with the great majority landing elsewhere in Latin America. Hundreds of thousands have made their way to the U.S., with large numbers settling in suburban communities like Kissimmee, Florida, outside Orlando, and Herriman, Utah, outside Salt Lake City.

Venezuelans quickly became among the largest nationalities to immigrate to the U.S. after COVID-19, lured in part by job prospects. The Biden administration offered new or expanded temporary legal protections, largely ended by Trump after he took office. Hundreds of thousands more were released in the United States after entering illegally from Mexico to pursue asylum or other forms of relief in immigration court.

For people like Jesus Martinez, who fled to the U.S. in 2021 after facing physical threats and persecution, "life in Venezuela is behind us."

Martinez, who now lives with his wife and children in Orem, Utah, and has applied for political asylum, recalled how life in Venezuela had become intolerable. While it is a relief that Maduro has been removed,

he said, the Trump administration's push to send Venezuelans back to a country whose government they still deeply distrust presents a paradox.

"It's obviously a contradictory situation," said Martinez, 50. He noted that it will take considerable time before loyalists to Maduro are rooted out and Venezuela can make a transition to a stable democracy.

Reservations about going back

Salima, 48, who works in the Miami advocacy office, was active in opposition politics in Venezuela, where she trained as a lawyer and marched in peaceful protests. She came to the U.S. legally with her son, who is now 10 years old, on a temporary permit for humanitarian reasons, which Trump has revoked. She is elated by Maduro's ouster.

But those feelings are tempered by her unease over Venezuela's future while his allies are still in power. Her mother remains in Venezuela and, even with Maduro gone, she refuses to discuss politics during chats on an encrypted app, fearful that government authorities who remain in power will find out, Salima said.

With that reality still in place, the pending end of Temporary Protected Status for Venezuelans makes her feel "very unstable," Salima said.

Asking for a choice

Rallying with other Venezuelans this week in Doral, Florida, to celebrate Maduro's ouster, Jorge Galicia recounted fleeing in 2018 after a fellow student activist was arrested during a wave of demonstrations against the regime.

After settling in the Miami area, Galicia said he joined Charlie Kirk's conservative Turning Point USA movement, whose politics closely align with Trump's. But Galicia, 30, said his support for the Trump administration began to waver as the White House's crackdown on immigrants intensified, breaking up families.

Now, with Maduro gone, he expects many of the Venezuelans who fled to neighboring countries and the U.S. to start returning home. But he hopes Trump will reconsider his decision to deport Venezuelans like himself who have built new lives in the U.S. but still lack permanent status.

"The reason we're here is because there was a horrible regime that forced millions of us to leave," said Galicia, wrapped in a Venezuelan flag. But, he said, "everyone deserves to have the choice of returning home."

Purdy, 49ers eliminate defending Super Bowl champion Eagles with 23-19 win in wild-card game

By DAN GELSTON AP Sports Writer

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Jauan Jennings hid his eyes behind sunglasses, but could not hide his emotions with the San Francisco 49ers set to play an NFC postseason rubber match in Seattle.

The 49ers wideout-turned-backup quarterback slammed his fists on the table and essentially told the Seahawks to bring it on. He leaned into the microphone and yelled, "CAN'T WAIT!" before he walked off with a knowing smile that perhaps the best in San Francisco was yet to come.

The 49ers are in for a playoff treat, thanks in large part to a pretty neat trick pulled off by Jennings.

Brock Purdy threw a go-ahead 4-yard touchdown pass to Christian McCaffrey late in the fourth quarter, San Francisco used a trick play on a TD toss from Jennings to McCaffrey, and the 49ers eliminated the defending Super Bowl champion Philadelphia Eagles with a 23-19 wild-card victory Sunday.

"We went to the Super Bowl," Jennings said. "So, we've got to top that."

Maybe if the Eagles watched that 49ers' Super Bowl loss to Kansas City after the 2023 season, they wouldn't have been so caught by surprise by the play. A former high school quarterback, Jennings threw a TD pass on a similar play in the Super Bowl and this one to McCaffrey put him on a list with Purdy, Joe Montana and Steve Young as 49ers QBs who have thrown for multiple career touchdowns in the postseason.

How's that for heady company?

The play was called "Skyy Bang reverse pass" — in honor of wide receiver Skyy Moore — and the double reverse was suggested by offensive coordinator Klay Kubiak.

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"It was a hell of suggestion," coach Kyle Shanahan said.

The not-so Philly special was quite a way to put a dagger in the Super Bowl champs' season.

The 49ers head to top-seeded Seattle next weekend for an NFC divisional playoff game. The NFC West rivals split the season series. BetMGM put the Seahawks as early 6 1/2-point favorites.

Purdy threw for 262 yards and got the road win in Philadelphia he failed to get three seasons ago when he was injured in a dismal outing in Philadelphia in a loss in the NFC title game.

Purdy had two passes intercepted in this one by All-Pro cornerback Quinyon Mitchell, but the Eagles scored just three points off the turnovers.

The 49ers could head to Seattle without star tight end George Kittle, who was carted off the field with a right Achilles tendon injury late in the first half.

The Eagles — who won a Super Bowl on a trick play — were foiled by one when Jennings was pitched the ball and rolled right and hit McCaffrey for an over-the-shoulder catch and a 29-yard touchdown. The score on the first play of the fourth quarter gave the 49ers a 17-16 lead.

"I looked up, the ball's in the air and Christian tracked it," Purdy said. "It was wobbling in the wind. The fact that Christian caught it over his shoulder, dude, I was like, 'Oh my gosh.'"

Jennings had 66 yards receiving and 48 rushing in addition to his TD pass.

"JJ thinks he can make every play known to man," Shanahan said.

The Eagles would only get Jake Elliott's 33-yard field goal in the quarter for a brief 19-17 lead.

Philadelphia was again doomed by a lethargic offensive effort under embattled offensive coordinator Kevin Patullo that cost it a shot at a repeat championship. Super Bowl MVP Jalen Hurts threw for only 168 yards and a touchdown and the Eagles failed to build off a 13-10 halftime lead by totaling only 36 total yards in the third quarter on 16 plays.

Hurts was incomplete on a last-gasp fourth-and-11 attempt with 43 seconds left that ended their final drive.

"I just didn't make the play," Hurts said. "I own it. I own it all."

The game never reached its offensive slugfest potential after the teams traded touchdowns on their opening drives.

Purdy, rendered ineffective by a torn ligament in his right elbow on the opening drive against the Eagles in a disastrous NFC title game loss three seasons ago, completed all three passes for 74 yards and capped the drive with a 2-yard touchdown pass to Demarcus Robinson.

The Eagles tied it on a 1-yard sweep by Dallas Goedert, their red zone go-to ace with 11 TD receptions who became the first tight end to rush for a score in NFL postseason history.

The Eagles turned again to Goedert on fourth down when Hurts hit him for a 9-yard TD that made it 13-7. Eddy Pineiro kicked a 36-yarder for the 49ers that cut it to 13-10 at halftime.

The 49ers took it from there and hope to pull off their second road win of the season in Seattle.

"It's just cool for everybody across the board to be able to have this kind of win and celebrate all the stuff that we've been through," Purdy said.

Heat of the moment

Eagles wide receiver A.J. Brown had to be separated from coach Nick Sirianni by chief security officer Dom DiSandro during a sideline blowup late in the first half. Brown ripped off his helmet in frustration and yelled more in Sirianni's direction after the Eagles punted to end a drive.

Injuries

Kittle was pushed out of bounds on a 6-yard reception and grabbed the back of his lower right leg. He was ruled out for the rest of the game.

Eagles running back Saquon Barkley ran for 106 yards, but was slow to get up on a run in the fourth quarter. He used the stationary bike on the sideline to stay loose.

Up next

49ers: The 49ers won 17-13 in Seattle in the season opener only for the Seahawks to return the favor with a 13-3 win in the season finale.

Eagles: Could make yet another change at offensive coordinator as they try not to waste more prime years from Hurts, Barkley and the receivers.

Death toll from protests in Iran hits at least 544, activists say, as Trump says Iran wants to talk

By JON GAMBRELL and JULIA NIKHINSON Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — U.S. President Donald Trump said Sunday that Iran proposed negotiations after his threat to strike the Islamic Republic over its bloody crackdown targeting demonstrators there, a move coming as activists said the death toll in protests rose to at least 544.

Trump and his national security team have been weighing a range of potential responses against Iran including cyberattacks and direct strikes by the U.S. or Israel, according to two people familiar with internal White House discussions who were not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

"The military is looking at it, and we're looking at some very strong options," Trump told reporters on Air Force One on Sunday night. Asked about Iran's threats of retaliation, he said: "If they do that, we will hit them at levels that they've never been hit before."

Trump said that his administration was in talks to set up a meeting with Tehran, but cautioned that he may have to act first as reports of the death toll in Iran mount and the government continues to arrest protesters.

"I think they're tired of being beat up by the United States," Trump said. "Iran wants to negotiate."

He added: "The meeting is being set up, but we may have to act because of what's happening before the meeting. But a meeting is being set up. Iran called, they want to negotiate."

There was no immediate acknowledgment from Iran of the offering for a meeting. The massive ongoing U.S. military deployment to the Caribbean is a factor that the Pentagon and Trump's national security planners must consider. Tehran also warned that the U.S. military and Israel would be "legitimate targets" if America uses force to protect demonstrators. Trump meanwhile said the Islamic Republic reached out and proposed negotiations.

More than 10,600 people also have been detained over the two weeks of protests, said the U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency, which has been accurate in previous unrest in recent years and gave the death toll. It relies on supporters in Iran crosschecking information. It said 496 of the dead were protesters and 48 were with security forces.

With the internet down in Iran and phone lines cut off, gauging the demonstrations from abroad has grown more difficult. The Associated Press has been unable to independently assess the toll. Iran's government has not offered overall casualty figures.

Those abroad fear the information blackout is emboldening hard-liners within Iran's security services to launch a bloody crackdown. Protesters flooded the streets in the country's capital and its second-largest city on Saturday night into Sunday morning. Online videos purported to show more demonstrations Sunday night into Monday, with a Tehran official acknowledging them in state media.

Defiance in parliament

The threat to strike the U.S. military and Israel came during a parliamentary speech by Mohammad Baagher Qalibaf, the hard-liner speaker of the body who has run for the presidency in the past.

He directly threatened Israel, calling it "the occupied territory."

"In the event of an attack on Iran, both the occupied territory and all American military centers, bases and ships in the region will be our legitimate targets," Qalibaf said. "We do not consider ourselves limited to reacting after the action and will act based on any objective signs of a threat."

Lawmakers rushed the dais in parliament, shouting: "Death to America!"

It remains unclear how serious Iran is about launching a strike, particularly after its air defenses were destroyed during the 12-day war in June with Israel. Any decision to go to war would rest with Iran's 86-year-old Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

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The U.S. military has said in the Mideast it is "postured with forces that span the full range of combat capability to defend our forces, our partners and allies and U.S. interests." Iran targeted U.S. forces at Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar in June, while the U.S. Navy's Mideast-based 5th Fleet is stationed in the island kingdom of Bahrain.

Israel, meanwhile, is "watching closely" the situation between the U.S. and Iran, said an Israeli official, who spoke on condition of anonymity due to not being authorized to speak to journalists. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio overnight on topics including Iran, the official added.

"The people of Israel, the entire world, are in awe of the tremendous heroism of the citizens of Iran," said Netanyahu, a longtime Iran hawk.

At the Vatican, Pope Leo XIV mentioned Iran as a place "where ongoing tensions continue to claim many lives," adding that "I hope and pray that dialogue and peace may be patiently nurtured in pursuit of the common good of the whole of society."

Demonstrations were held in some international capitals in support of the protesters. A spokesperson said United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was "shocked" by reports of violence against protesters resulting in "scores of deaths" and called on Iranian authorities to use maximum restraint and restore communications.

Protests in Tehran and Mashhad

Online videos sent out of Iran, likely using Starlink satellite transmitters, purportedly showed demonstrators gathering in northern Tehran's Punak neighborhood. There, it appeared authorities shut off streets, with protesters waving their lit mobile phones. Others banged metal while fireworks went off.

In Mashhad, Iran's second-largest city some 725 kilometers (450 miles) northeast of Tehran, footage purported to show protesters confronting security forces. Protests also appeared to happen in Kerman, 800 kilometers (500 miles) southeast of Tehran.

Iranian state television on Sunday morning had correspondents appear on the streets in several cities to show calm areas, with a date stamp shown on screen. Tehran and Mashhad were not included.

The demonstrations began Dec. 28 over the collapse of the Iranian rial currency, which trades at over 1.4 million to \$1, as the country's economy is squeezed by international sanctions in part levied over its nuclear program. The protests intensified and grew into calls directly challenging Iran's theocracy.

Federal Reserve Chair Powell says DOJ has subpoenaed central bank, threatens criminal indictment

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said Sunday the Department of Justice has served the central bank with subpoenas and threatened it with a criminal indictment over his testimony this summer about the Fed's building renovations.

The move represents an unprecedented escalation in President Donald Trump's battle with the Fed, an independent agency he has repeatedly attacked for not cutting its key interest rate as sharply as he prefers. The renewed fight will likely rattle financial markets Monday and could over time escalate borrowing costs for mortgages and other loans.

The subpoenas relate to Powell's testimony before the Senate Banking Committee in June, the Fed chair said, regarding the Fed's \$2.5 billion renovation of two office buildings, a project that Trump has criticized as excessive.

Powell on Sunday cast off what has up to this point been a restrained approach to Trump's criticisms and personal insults, which he has mostly ignored. Instead, Powell issued a video statement in which he bluntly characterized the threat of criminal charges as simple "pretexts" to undermine the Fed's independence when it comes to setting interest rates.

"The threat of criminal charges is a consequence of the Federal Reserve setting interest rates based on our best assessment of what will serve the public, rather than following the preferences of the President,"

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Powell said. "This is about whether the Fed will be able to continue to set interest rates based on evidence and economic conditions — or whether instead monetary policy will be directed by political pressure or intimidation."

It's a sharp departure from the Fed's understated response to Trump this year. The central bank has attempted to placate the administration by dialing back some policies, such as efforts to consider the impact of climate change on the banking system, that the administration clearly opposed.

The renewed attacks on the Fed's independence, and Powell's full-throated defense, reignite what had appeared to be a dormant battle between Trump and the chair he appointed in 2017. The subpoenas will renew fears that the Fed's independence from day-to-day politics will be compromised, which could undermine global investors' confidence in U.S. Treasury securities.

"We expect the dollar, bonds and stocks to all fall in Monday trading in a sell-America trade similar to that in April last year at the peak of the tariff shock and earlier threat to Powell's position as Fed chair," Krishna Guha, an analyst at Evercore ISI, an investment bank, wrote in a note to clients.

"We are stunned by this deeply disturbing development which came out of the blue after a period in which tensions between Trump and the Fed seemed to be contained," Guha added.

In a brief interview with NBC News Sunday, Trump insisted he didn't know about the investigation into Powell. When asked if the investigation is intended to pressure Powell on rates, Trump said, "No. I wouldn't even think of doing it that way."

Powell's term as chair ends in May, and Trump administration officials have signaled that he could name a potential replacement this month. Trump has also sought to fire Fed governor Lisa Cook, an unprecedented step, though she has sued to keep her job and courts have ruled she can remain in her seat while the case plays out. The Supreme Court will hear arguments in that case Jan. 21.

At the Senate Banking Committee hearing in June, Chairman Tim Scott, a Republican from South Carolina, said the Fed's building renovation included "rooftop terraces, custom elevators that open into VIP dining rooms, white marble finishes, and even a private art collection."

Powell disputed those details in his testimony, saying "there's no new marble. ... there are no special elevators" and added that some of the controversial items are "not in the current plan." In July, Russell Vought, director of the Office of Management and Budget, said in a letter to Powell that his testimony about changes to the building plans "raises serious questions about the project's compliance" with previous plans approved by a planning commission.

Still, later that month, Trump visited the building site and, while standing next to Powell, overstated the cost of the renovation. Later that day, Trump, speaking to reporters, downplayed any concerns with the renovation. He said, "they have to get it done" and added, "Look, there's always Monday morning quartermasters. I don't want to be that. I want to help them get it finished."

When asked if it was a firing offense, Trump said, "I don't want to put that in this category."

The Justice Department in a statement Sunday said it can't comment on any particular case, but added that Attorney General Pam Bondi "has instructed her US Attorneys to prioritize investigating any abuse of tax payer dollars."

Timothy Lauer, a spokesperson for U.S. Attorney Jeanine Pirro's office, said they don't comment on ongoing investigations.

With the subpoenas, Powell becomes the latest perceived adversary of the president to face a criminal investigation by the Trump administration's Justice Department. Trump himself has urged prosecutions of his political opponents, obliterating institutional guardrails for a Justice Department that for generations has taken care to make investigative and prosecutorial decisions independent of the White House.

The potential indictment has already drawn concern from one Republican senator, who said he'll oppose any future nominee to the central bank, including any replacement for Powell, until "this legal matter is fully resolved."

"If there were any remaining doubt whether advisers within the Trump Administration are actively pushing to end the independence of the Federal Reserve, there should now be none," said North Carolina

Sen. Thom Tillis, who sits on the Banking Committee, which oversees Fed nominations. "It is now the independence and credibility of the Department of Justice that are in question."

Video captures Minneapolis immigration arrest in a city on edge after shooting of Renee Good

By REBECCA SANTANA, MIKE HOUSEHOLDER and MARK VANCLEAVE Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Federal agents carrying out immigration arrests in Minnesota's Twin Cities region already shaken by the fatal shooting of a woman rammed the door of one home Sunday and pushed their way inside, part of what the Department of Homeland Security has called its largest enforcement operation ever.

In a dramatic scene similar to those playing out across Minneapolis, agents captured a man in the home just minutes after pepper spraying protesters outside who had confronted the heavily armed federal agents. Along the residential street, protesters honked car horns, banged on drums and blew whistles in attempts to disrupt the operation.

Video of the clash taken by The Associated Press showed some agents pushing back protesters while a distraught woman later emerged from the house with a document that federal agents presented to arrest the man. Signed by an immigration officer, the document — unlike a warrant signed by a judge — does not authorize forced entry into a private residence. A warrant signed by an immigration officer only authorizes arrest in a public area.

Immigrant advocacy groups have conducted extensive "know-your-rights" campaigns urging people not to open their doors unless agents have a court order signed by a judge.

But within minutes of ramming the door in a neighborhood filled with single-family homes, the handcuffed man was led away.

More than 2,000 immigration arrests have been made in Minnesota since the enforcement operation began at the beginning of December, said Homeland Security spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin.

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem told Fox News on Sunday that the administration would send additional federal agents to Minnesota to protect immigration officers and continue enforcement.

Minneapolis still tense after Renee Good shooting

The Twin Cities — the latest target in President Donald Trump's immigration enforcement campaign — is bracing for what is next after 37-year-old Renee Good was shot and killed by an immigration officer on Wednesday.

"We're seeing a lot of immigration enforcement across Minneapolis and across the state, federal agents just swarming around our neighborhoods," said Jason Chavez, a Minneapolis city councilmember. "They've definitely been out here."

Chavez, the son of Mexican immigrants who represents an area with a growing immigrant population, said he is closely monitoring information from chat groups about where residents are seeing agents operating.

People holding whistles positioned themselves in freezing temperatures on street corners Sunday in the neighborhood where Good was killed, watching for any signs of federal agents.

More than 20,000 people have taken part in a variety of trainings to become "observers" of enforcement activities in Minnesota since the 2024 election, said Luis Argueta, a spokesperson for Unidos MN, a local human rights organization.

"It's a role that people choose to take on voluntarily, because they choose to look out for their neighbors," Argueta said.

The protests have been largely peaceful, but residents remained anxious. On Monday, Minneapolis public schools will start offering remote learning for the next month in response to concerns that children might feel unsafe venturing out while tensions remain high.

Many schools closed last week after Good's shooting and the upheaval that followed.

Questions about who should handle investigation

While the enforcement activity continues, two of the state's leading Democrats said that the investigation

into Good's shooting death should not be overseen solely by the federal government.

Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey and U.S. Sen. Tina Smith said in separate interviews Sunday that state authorities should be included in the investigation because the federal government has already made clear what it believes happened.

"How can we trust the federal government to do an objective, unbiased investigation, without prejudice, when at the beginning of that investigation they have already announced exactly what they saw — what they think happened," Smith said on ABC's "This Week."

The Trump administration has defended the officer who shot Good in her car, saying he was protecting himself and fellow agents and that Good had "weaponized" her vehicle.

Todd Lyons, acting director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, defended the officer on Fox News Channel's "The Sunday Briefing."

"That law enforcement officer had milliseconds, if not short time to make a decision to save his life and his other fellow agents," he said.

Lyons also said the administration's enforcement operations in Minnesota wouldn't be needed "if local jurisdictions worked with us to turn over these criminally illegal aliens once they are already considered a public safety threat by the locals."

The killing of Good by an ICE officer and the shooting of two people by federal agents in Portland, Oregon, led to dozens of protests in cities across the country over the weekend, including New York, Los Angeles, Washington D.C. and Oakland, California.

Trump 'inclined' to keep ExxonMobil out of Venezuela after CEO response at White House meeting

By SEUNG MIN KIM and JULIA NIKHINSON Associated Press

ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE (AP) — President Donald Trump said Sunday that he is "inclined" to keep ExxonMobil out of Venezuela after its top executive was skeptical about oil investment efforts in the country after the toppling of former President Nicolás Maduro.

"I didn't like Exxon's response," Trump said to reporters on Air Force One as he departed West Palm Beach, Florida. "They're playing too cute."

During a meeting Friday with oil executives, Trump tried to assuage the concerns of the companies and said they would be dealing directly with the U.S., rather than the Venezuelan government.

Some, however, weren't convinced.

"If we look at the commercial constructs and frameworks in place today in Venezuela, today it's uninvestable," said Darren Woods, CEO of ExxonMobil, the largest U.S. oil company.

An ExxonMobil spokesperson did not immediately respond Sunday to a request for comment.

Also on Friday, Trump signed an executive order that seeks to ensure that Venezuelan oil revenue remains protected from being used in judicial proceedings.

The executive order, made public on Saturday, says that if the funds were to be seized for such use, it could "undermine critical U.S. efforts to ensure economic and political stability in Venezuela." Venezuela has a history of state asset seizures, ongoing U.S. sanctions and decades of political uncertainty.

Getting U.S. oil companies to invest in Venezuela and help rebuild the country's infrastructure is a top priority of the Trump administration after Maduro's capture.

The White House is framing the effort to "run" Venezuela in economic terms, and Trump has seized tankers carrying Venezuelan oil, has said the U.S. is taking over the sales of 30 million to 50 million barrels of previously sanctioned Venezuelan crude, and plans to control sales worldwide indefinitely.

A \$400,000 payout after Maduro's capture is putting prediction markets in the spotlight

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS AP Business Writer

Prediction markets let people wager on anything from a basketball game to the outcome of a presidential election — and recently, the downfall of former Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro.

The latter is drawing renewed scrutiny into this murky world of speculative, 24/7 transactions. Last week, an anonymous trader pocketed more than \$400,000 after betting that Maduro would soon be out of office.

The bulk of the trader's bids on the platform Polymarket were made mere hours before President Donald Trump announced the surprise nighttime raid that led to Maduro's capture, fueling online suspicions of potential insider trading because of the timing of the wagers and the trader's narrow activity on the platform. Others argued that the risk of getting caught was too big, and that previous speculation about Maduro's future could have led to such transactions.

Polymarket did not respond to requests for comment.

The commercial use of prediction markets has skyrocketed in recent years, opening the door for people to wage their money on the likelihood of a growing list of future events. But despite some eye-catching windfalls, traders still lose money everyday. And in terms of government oversight in the U.S., the trades are categorized differently than traditional forms of gambling — raising questions about transparency and risk.

Here's what we know:

How prediction markets work

The scope of topics involved in prediction markets can range immensely — from escalation in geopolitical conflicts, to pop culture moments and even the fate of conspiracy theories. Recently, there's been a surge of wagers on elections and sports games. But some users have also bet millions on things like a rumored — and ultimately unrealized — "secret finale" for the Netflix's "Stranger Things," whether the U.S. government will confirm the existence of extraterrestrial life and how much billionaire Elon Musk might post on social media this month.

In industry-speak, what someone buys or sells in a prediction market is called an "event contract." They're typically advertised as "yes" or "no" wagers. And the price of one fluctuates between \$0 and \$1, reflecting what traders are collectively willing to pay based on a 0% to 100% chance of whether they think an event will occur.

The more likely traders think an event will occur, the more expensive that contract will become. And as those odds change over time, users can cash out early to make incremental profits, or try to avoid higher losses on what they've already invested.

Proponents of prediction markets argue putting money on the line leads to better forecasts. Experts like Koleman Strumpf, an economics professor at Wake Forest University, think there's value in monitoring these platforms for potential news — pointing to prediction markets' past success with some election outcomes, including the 2024 presidential race.

Still, it's never a "crystal ball," he noted, and prediction markets can be wrong, too.

Who is behind all of the trading is also pretty murky. While the companies running the platforms collect personal information of their users in order to verify identities and payments, most people can trade under anonymous pseudonyms online — making it difficult for the public to know who is profiting off many event contracts. In theory, people investing their money may be closely following certain events, but others could just be randomly guessing.

Critics stress that the ease and speed of joining these 24/7 wagers leads to financial losses everyday, particularly harming users who may already struggle with gambling. The space also broadens possibilities for potential insider trading.

The major players

Polymarket is one of the largest prediction markets in the world, where its users can fund event contracts through cryptocurrency, debit or credit cards and bank transfers.

Restrictions vary by country, but in the U.S., the reach of these markets has expanded rapidly over recent

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years, coinciding with shifting policies out of Washington. Former President Joe Biden was aggressive in cracking down on prediction markets and following a 2022 settlement with the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, Polymarket was barred from operating in the country.

That changed under Trump late last year, when Polymarket announced it would be returning to the U.S. after receiving clearance from the commission. American-based users can now join a platform "waitlist."

Meanwhile, Polymarket's top competitor, Kalshi, has been a federally-regulated exchange since 2020. The platform offers similar ways to buy and sell event contracts as Polymarket — and it currently allows event contracts on elections and sports nationwide. Kalshi won court approval just weeks before the 2024 election to let Americans put money on upcoming political races and began to host sports trading about a year ago.

The space is now crowded with other big names. Sports betting giants DraftKings and FanDuel both launched prediction platforms last month. Online broker Robinhood is widening its own offerings. Trump's social media site Truth Social has also promised to offer an in-platform prediction market through a partnership with Crypto.com — and one of the president's sons, Donald Trump Jr., holds advisory roles at both Polymarket and Kalshi.

"The train has left the station on these event contracts, they're not going away," said Melinda Roth, a visiting associate professor at Washington and Lee University's School of Law.

Loose regulation

Because they're positioned as selling event contracts, prediction markets are regulated by the CFTC. That means they can avoid state-level restrictions or bans in place for traditional gambling and sports betting today.

"It's a huge loophole," said Karl Lockhart, an assistant professor of law at DePaul University who has studied this space. "You just have to comply with one set of regulations, rather than (rules from) each state around the country."

Sports betting is taking center stage. There are a handful of big states — like California and Texas, for example — where sports betting is still illegal, but people can now wager on games, athlete trades and more through event contracts.

A growing number of states and tribes are suing to stop this. And lawyers expect litigation to eventually reach the U.S. Supreme Court, as added regulations from the Trump administration seem unlikely.

Federal law bars event contracts related to gaming as well as war, terrorism and assassinations, Roth said, which could put some prediction market trades on shaky ground, at least in the U.S. But users might still find ways to buy certain contracts while traveling abroad or connecting to different VPNs.

Whether the CFTC will take any of that on has yet to be seen. But the agency, which did not respond to request for comment, has already taken steps away from enforcement.

Despite overseeing trillions of dollars for the overall U.S. derivatives market, the CFTC is also much smaller than the Securities and Exchange Commission. And at the same time event contracts are growing rapidly on prediction market platforms, there have been additional cuts to the CFTC's workforce and a wave of leadership departures under Trump's second term. Only one of five commissioner slots operating the agency is currently filled.

Still, other lawmakers calling for a stronger crack down on potential insider trading in prediction markets — particularly following suspicion around last week's Maduro trade on Polymarket. On Friday, Democratic Rep. Ritchie Torres introduced a bill aimed at curbing government employees involvement in politically-related event contracts.

The bill has already gotten support from Kalshi CEO Tarek Mansour — who on LinkedIn maintained that insider trading has always been banned on his company's platform but that more needs to be done to crack down on unregulated prediction markets.

Google teams up with Walmart and other retailers to enable shopping within Gemini AI chatbot

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Google said Sunday that it is expanding the shopping features in its AI chatbot by teaming up with Walmart, Shopify, Wayfair and other big retailers to turn the Gemini app into a virtual merchant as well as an assistant.

An instant checkout function will allow customers to make purchases from some businesses and through a range of payment providers without leaving the Gemini chat they used to find products, according to Walmart and Google.

The news was announced on the first day of the National Retail Federation's annual convention in New York, which is expected to draw 40,000 attendees from retail and technology companies this week. The role of artificial intelligence in e-commerce and its impact on consumer behavior are expected to dominate the three-day event.

"The transition from traditional web or app search to agent-led commerce represents the next great evolution in retail," John Furner, Walmart's incoming president and CEO, said in a joint statement with Google and Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai.

Google's new AI shopping feature works this way: if a customer asks what gear to get for a winter ski trip, for example, Gemini will return items from a participating retailers' inventory.

In the case of Walmart, customers who link their Walmart and Google accounts will receive recommendations based on their past purchases, and any products they decide to buy via the chatbot could get combined with their existing Walmart or Sam's Club online shopping carts, according to the statement.

OpenAI and Walmart announced a similar deal in October, saying the partnership would allow ChatGPT members to use an instant checkout feature to shop for nearly everything available on Walmart's website except for fresh food.

Google, OpenAI and Amazon all are racing to create tools that would allow for seamless AI-powered shopping by taking chatbot users from browsing to buying within the same program instead of having to go to a retailer's website to complete a purchase. The race between OpenAI and Google has heated up in recent months.

Before the recent holiday shopping season, OpenAI launched an instant checkout feature within ChatGPT that allows users to buy products from select retailers and Etsy sellers without leaving the app.

San Francisco software company Salesforce estimated that AI influenced \$272 billion, or 20%, of all global retail sales, in one way or another during the holiday shopping season.

Google said the AI-assisted shopping features in Gemini only would be available to U.S. users initially but that it planned to expand internationally in the coming months. Shoppers initially only can make payments through the cards linked to their Google accounts but soon will be able to make purchases using PayPal, the company said.

The aim of deploying chatbots in e-commerce is to make it easier for people to find what they're looking for. Instead of entering search terms and keywords, they can type or use voice dictation, and refine their searches through a conversational back-and-forth. Tech companies also are rolling out "AI agents" that are a step beyond today's generative AI chatbots, though their ability to buy products on behalf of consumers is still limited.

"I'm under no false belief that there's going to be a snap of the finger and then all of a sudden, agentic commerce is going to get everywhere," Mike Edmonds, PayPal's vice president of agentic commerce and commercial growth, said at Sunday's convention. But he cautioned retailers against taking a wait-and-see approach.

Shopify founder and CEO Tobi Lutke told a small group of reporters on Thursday that many people like the experience of "having a personal shopper who really gets them, understands them and can fit something in your budget," but Shopify also wants to make it doesn't "over automate."

"The person, the shopper, is in charge, and they can make the final call, but also we make it so that

people find the perfect product for themselves," he added.

Walmart's Furner said Sunday that the largest employer and retailer in the U.S. is trying to "close the gap between I want it and I have it" with the help of AI.

He and Pichaei announced from a stage at the National Retail Federation conference that Walmart plans to expand drone delivery service to 150 more stores in partnership with Wing, a division of Alphabet. The addition will bring Walmart's drone delivery locations with Wing to 270 by 2027, stretching from Los Angeles to Miami, the companies said.

Thousands of New York City nurses set to strike Monday if deal isn't reached with hospitals

By JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Thousands of nurses at some of New York City's biggest hospitals could go on strike Monday during a severe flu season, three years after a similar walkout forced some of the same medical facilities to transfer some patients and divert ambulances.

The looming strike could impact operations at several of the city's major private hospitals, including Mount Sinai in Manhattan, Montefiore Medical Center in the Bronx and NewYork-Presbyterian/Columbia University Irving Medical Center.

Nearly 15,000 nurses could walk off the job early Monday if a deal is not reached, amounting to the largest nurses strike in city history, according to Nancy Hagans, president of the New York State Nurses Association. As of Sunday morning, little progress had been made at the bargaining table, Hagans said. A vast majority of the union's nurses voted to authorize the strike last month.

Like the 2023 labor fight, this year's dispute involves a complicated array of issues, claims, counterclaims and hospital-by-hospital particulars. Once again, staffing levels are a major flashpoint: Nurses say the big-budget medical centers are refusing to commit to — or even backsliding on — provisions for manageable, safe workloads.

Safety concerns at issue

This time, the nurses' union also wants guardrails on hospitals using artificial intelligence, plus more workplace security measures. A gunman strode into Mount Sinai in November, and a man with a sharp object barricaded himself in a Brooklyn hospital room this week; both men ultimately were killed by police.

The private, nonprofit hospitals involved in the current negotiations say they've made strides in staffing since 2023. Some of them suggest the union's demands, taken as a whole, are far too expensive.

Scores of nurses rallied Friday in Manhattan, insisting their primary concern was proper caregiving and accusing the medical centers — whose top executives make millions of dollars a year — of greed and intransigence.

"My hospital tries to cut corners on staffing every day, and then they try to fight historic gains we made three years ago," said Sophie Boland, a pediatric intensive care nurse in the NewYork-Presbyterian hospital system.

The hospitals, meanwhile, have called the union's strike threat "reckless." They vowed in a statement Thursday to "do whatever is necessary to minimize disruptions."

Hagans, the union president, has also stressed that patients should not delay care during a potential strike.

Still, New York Gov. Kathy Hochul expressed concern that a strike could affect patient care, urging both sides on Friday "to stay at the table and get a deal done."

Hospitals prepare for a walkout

Mount Sinai has hired over 1,000 temporary nurses and held preparatory drills for a strike that could affect its 1,100-bed main hospital and two affiliates — Mount Sinai Morningside and Mount Sinai West — with about 500 beds each.

NewYork-Presbyterian said it also had arranged for temporary nurses but, if the strike happens, some patients might be moved to new rooms or advised to transfer to another facility. Montefiore posted a message assuring patients that appointments would be kept.

The same union mounted a three-day strike at the Mount Sinai flagship facility and Montefiore in 2023, when nurses emphasized their sacrifices during the exhausting, frightening height of the COVID-19 pandemic and the national nurse staffing crisis that followed.

The walkout prompted those hospitals to postpone non-emergency surgeries, tell many ambulances to go elsewhere and transfer some intensive-care infants and other patients. Temporary nurses and even administrators with clinical backgrounds were tapped to fill in, but some patients noticed longer waits and more sparsely staffed wards.

The strike ended with an agreement on raises totaling 19% over three years and staffing improvements, including the possibility of extra pay if nurses had to work short-handed.

Now, the union says, the hospitals are retreating from those guarantees and falling short on other promises.

Montefiore, for example, agreed to "make all reasonable efforts" to stop keeping some emergency room patients in hallways while they wait for space to open up in other wards. Yet three years later, nurses still scramble to treat "hallway patients," Montefiore intensive care nurse Michelle Gonzalez said Friday.

Montefiore has suggested it's made some progress: The hospital told elected officials in a letter in October that there has been a 35% reduction in the time it takes from emergency admission to a clinical unit bed.

Overall, the hospitals say they have greatly reduced nursing job vacancy rates in the last three years, and Mount Sinai and NewYork-Presbyterian/Columbia Irving University Medical Center say they also have added hundreds of nursing positions.

In recent days, several smaller hospitals — including multiple Northwell Health facilities on Long Island — averted potential walkouts by striking deals or making what the union viewed as adequate progress.

Transgender teen athlete in a Supreme Court fight knows the upcoming sports season could be her last

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Becky Pepper-Jackson finished third in the discus throw in West Virginia last year though she was in just her first year of high school. Now a 15-year-old sophomore, Pepper-Jackson is aware that her upcoming season could be her last.

West Virginia has banned transgender girls like Pepper-Jackson from competing in girls and women's sports, and is among the more than two dozen states with similar laws. Though the West Virginia law has been blocked by lower courts, the outcome could be different at the conservative-dominated Supreme Court, which has allowed multiple restrictions on transgender people to be enforced in the past year.

The justices are hearing arguments Tuesday in two cases over whether the sports bans violate the Constitution or the landmark federal law known as Title IX that prohibits sex discrimination in education. The second case comes from Idaho, where college student Lindsay Hecox challenged that state's law.

Decisions are expected by early summer.

President Donald Trump's Republican administration has targeted transgender Americans from the first day of his second term, including ousting transgender people from the military and declaring that gender is immutable and determined at birth.

Pepper-Jackson has become the face of the nationwide battle over the participation of transgender girls in athletics that has played out at both the state and federal levels as Republicans have leveraged the issue as a fight for athletic fairness for women and girls.

"I think it's something that needs to be done," Pepper-Jackson said in an interview with The Associated Press that was conducted over Zoom. "It's something I'm here to do because ... this is important to me. I know it's important to other people. So, like, I'm here for it."

She sat alongside her mother, Heather Jackson, on a sofa in their home just outside Bridgeport, a rural West Virginia community about 40 miles southwest of Morgantown, to talk about a legal fight that began when she was a middle schooler who finished near the back of the pack in cross-country races.

Pepper-Jackson has grown into a competitive discus and shot put thrower. In addition to the bronze

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medal in the discus, she finished eighth among shot putters.

She attributes her success to hard work, practicing at school and in her backyard, and lifting weights. Pepper-Jackson has been taking puberty-blocking medication and has publicly identified as a girl since she was in the third grade, though the Supreme Court's decision in June upholding state bans on gender-affirming medical treatment for minors has forced her to go out of state for care.

Her very improvement as an athlete has been cited as a reason she should not be allowed to compete against girls.

"There are immutable physical and biological characteristic differences between men and women that make men bigger, stronger, and faster than women. And if we allow biological males to play sports against biological females, those differences will erode the ability and the places for women in these sports which we have fought so hard for over the last 50 years," West Virginia's attorney general, JB McCuskey, said in an AP interview. McCuskey said he is not aware of any other transgender athlete in the state who has competed or is trying to compete in girls or women's sports.

Despite the small numbers of transgender athletes, the issue has taken on outsized importance. The NCAA and the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committees banned transgender women from women's sports after Trump signed an executive order aimed at barring their participation.

The public generally is supportive of the limits. An Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll conducted in October 2025 found that about 6 in 10 U.S. adults "strongly" or "somewhat" favored requiring transgender children and teenagers to only compete on sports teams that match the sex they were assigned at birth, not the gender they identify with, while about 2 in 10 were "strongly" or "somewhat" opposed and about one-quarter did not have an opinion.

About 2.1 million adults, or 0.8%, and 724,000 people age 13 to 17, or 3.3%, identify as transgender in the U.S., according to the Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law.

Those allied with the administration on the issue paint it in broader terms than just sports, pointing to state laws, Trump administration policies and court rulings against transgender people.

"I think there are cultural, political, legal headwinds all supporting this notion that it's just a lie that a man can be a woman," said John Bursch, a lawyer with the conservative Christian law firm Alliance Defending Freedom that has led the legal campaign against transgender people. "And if we want a society that respects women and girls, then we need to come to terms with that truth. And the sooner that we do that, the better it will be for women everywhere, whether that be in high school sports teams, high school locker rooms and showers, abused women's shelters, women's prisons."

But Heather Jackson offered different terms to describe the effort to keep her daughter off West Virginia's playing fields.

"Hatred. It's nothing but hatred," she said. "This community is the community du jour. We have a long history of isolating marginalized parts of the community."

Pepper-Jackson has seen some of the uglier side of the debate on display, including when a competitor wore a T-shirt at the championship meet that said, "Men Don't Belong in Women's Sports."

"I wish these people would educate themselves. Just so they would know that I'm just there to have a good time. That's it. But it just, it hurts sometimes, like, it gets to me sometimes, but I try to brush it off," she said.

One schoolmate, identified as A.C. in court papers, said Pepper-Jackson has herself used graphic language in sexually bullying her teammates.

Asked whether she said any of what is alleged, Pepper-Jackson said, "I did not. And the school ruled that there was no evidence to prove that it was true."

The legal fight will turn on whether the Constitution's equal protection clause or the Title IX anti-discrimination law protects transgender people.

The court ruled in 2020 that workplace discrimination against transgender people is sex discrimination, but refused to extend the logic of that decision to the case over health care for transgender minors.

The court has been deluged by dueling legal briefs from Republican- and Democratic-led states, mem-

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bers of Congress, athletes, doctors, scientists and scholars.

The outcome also could influence separate legal efforts seeking to bar transgender athletes in states that have continued to allow them to compete.

If Pepper-Jackson is forced to stop competing, she said she will still be able to lift weights and continue playing trumpet in the school concert and jazz bands.

"It will hurt a lot, and I know it will, but that's what I'll have to do," she said.

Guard at Winter Olympic construction site dies in nighttime subfreezing temperatures

MILAN (AP) — A guard at a construction site near a 2026 Winter Olympic venue in the mountain resort of Cortina d'Ampezzo died during a frigid overnight shift, authorities confirmed on Saturday.

Italy's Infrastructure Minister Matteo Salvini called for a full investigation into the circumstances of the 55-year-old worker's death.

Italian media reported that the death occurred on Thursday while the worker was on duty at a construction site near Cortina's ice arena. Temperatures that night plunged to minus 12 degrees Celsius (10.4 degrees Fahrenheit.)

Milan Cortina organizers said that the worker died of a heart attack.

"The information we have is that it was a death by natural cause, it was a heart attack. And we are investigating," Andrea Varnier, CEO of the Fondazione Milano Cortina 2026, told reporters at a test event at the new hockey arena in Milan.

"All the documentation that we have was in order. And we are waiting for the investigation to understand what the specific cause was. At the moment, the information we have from the emergency services is it was a death caused by natural causes ... while he was on site," Varnier said.

The Milan Cortina Winter Olympics are scheduled for Feb. 6-22.

The construction site was not one overseen by Simico, the governmental company responsible for Olympic infrastructure, the company said in a statement expressing its condolences.

Cortina city officials said they were "deeply saddened and troubled by the death."

Cortina will host curling, sliding and women's Alpine skiing.

With Cuban ally Maduro ousted, Trump warns Havana to make a 'deal' before it's too late

By SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — President Donald Trump on Sunday fired off another warning to the government of Cuba as the close ally of Venezuela braces for potential widespread unrest after Nicolás Maduro was deposed as Venezuela's leader.

Cuba, a major beneficiary of Venezuelan oil, has now been cut off from those shipments as U.S. forces continue to seize tankers in an effort to control the production, refining and global distribution of the country's oil products.

Trump said on social media that Cuba long lived off Venezuelan oil and money and had offered security in return, "BUT NOT ANYMORE!"

"THERE WILL BE NO MORE OIL OR MONEY GOING TO CUBA - ZERO!" Trump said in the post as he spent the weekend at his home in southern Florida. "I strongly suggest they make a deal, BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE." He did not explain what kind of deal.

Hours later, Cuba's president, Miguel Díaz-Canel, responded on X by saying "those who turn everything into a business, even human lives, have no moral authority to point the finger at Cuba in any way, absolutely in any way."

The Cuban government said 32 of its military personnel were killed during the American operation last weekend that captured Maduro. The personnel from Cuba's two main security agencies were in Caracas,

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the Venezuelan capital, as part of an agreement between Cuba and Venezuela.

"Venezuela doesn't need protection anymore from the thugs and extortionists who held them hostage for so many years," Trump said Sunday. "Venezuela now has the United States of America, the most powerful military in the World (by far!), to protect them, and protect them we will."

Trump also responded to another account's social media post predicting that his secretary of state, Marco Rubio, will be president of Cuba: "Sounds good to me!" Trump said.

Trump and top administration officials have taken an increasingly aggressive tone toward Cuba, which had been kept economically afloat by Venezuela. Long before Maduro's capture, severe blackouts were sidelining life in Cuba, where people endured long lines at gas stations and supermarkets amid the island's worst economic crisis in decades.

"Those who hysterically accuse our nation today do so out of rage at this people's sovereign decision to choose their political model," Díaz-Canel said in his post. He added that "those who blame the Revolution for the severe economic shortages we suffer should be ashamed to keep quiet" and he railed against the "draconian measures" imposed by the U.S. on Cuba.

The island's communist government has said U.S. sanctions cost the country more than \$7.5 billion between March 2024 and February 2025.

Trump has said previously that the Cuban economy, battered by years of an American embargo, would slide further with the ouster of Maduro.

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

Hamas says it will dissolve its Gaza government when new Palestinian body takes over

By SAMY MAGDY and JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Hamas said Sunday it will dissolve its existing government in Gaza once a Palestinian technocratic leadership committee takes over the territory, as mandated under the U.S.-brokered peace plan. But the group gave no specifics on when the change will occur.

Hamas and the rival Palestinian Authority, the Palestinians' internationally recognized representative, have not announced the names of the technocrats, who are not supposed to be politically affiliated, and it remains unclear if they will be cleared by Israel and the U.S.

The "Board of Peace," an international body led by Trump, is supposed to oversee the government and other aspects of the ceasefire that took effect on Oct. 10, including disarming Hamas and deploying an international security force. The board's members have not been announced.

Meanwhile, the post-ceasefire death toll continued to rise in Gaza, with Israeli gunfire killing three Palestinians, according to Palestinian hospital officials.

The ceasefire began with a halt in fighting and the release of hostages held in Gaza in exchange for thousands of Palestinians held by Israel. The deal is still in its first phase as efforts continue to recover the remains of the final hostage left in Gaza.

An Egyptian official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss closed-door information, said Hamas was sending a delegation to talks with Egyptian, Qatari and Turkish officials about moving to the second phase.

Future Gaza governance in flux

In comments posted on his Telegram channel Sunday, Hazem Kasseem, a Hamas spokesperson, called for speeding up the establishment of the technocratic committee.

The Egyptian official said Hamas will meet with other Palestinian factions this week to finalize the committee's formation. The Hamas delegation will be chaired by top negotiator Khalil al-Hayya, the official said.

Trump has said the "Board of Peace" will monitor the committee and handle the disarmament of Hamas, the deployment of an international security force, additional pullbacks of Israeli troops and Gaza's reconstruction. The U.S. has reported little progress on any of these fronts, though the members of the board are expected to be announced this week.

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Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Thursday that Bulgarian diplomat Nickolay Mladenov has been selected as the board's director-general. Mladenov is a former Bulgarian defense and foreign minister who served as U.N. envoy to Iraq before being appointed as the U.N. Mideast peace envoy from 2015 to 2020. During that time, he had good working relations with Israel and frequently worked to ease Israel-Hamas tensions.

Also Sunday, Israel's Foreign Minister Gideon Saar met in Jerusalem with Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi. Saar said Israel was committed to enforcing Trump's plan, while Motegi expressed Japan's willingness to play an active role in the ceasefire.

According to Japan's Foreign Ministry, Motegi visited the Civil-Military Coordination Center, where the ceasefire is being monitored. He was also set to meet Netanyahu and Palestinian officials in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Violence in Gaza continues

In Gaza, two men were shot dead in the southern town of Bani Suhaila, according to Nasser Hospital, which received the bodies. Earlier Sunday, a man was killed by Israeli gunfire in the Tuffah neighborhood of Gaza City, according to Al-Ahly hospital, which received the body.

In response to questions about the Tuffah incident, Israel's military said it had fired at and hit a "terrorist" in northern Gaza who had approached troops. In a later statement, the military said it had killed a "terrorist" in southern Gaza who approached troops.

Israel and Hamas have accused each other of violating the ceasefire. Continued Israeli strikes in Gaza have killed more than 400 Palestinians, according to local health officials.

The Israeli military says any actions since the ceasefire began have been in response to violations of the agreement.

Israeli police detain top official

Israeli police said Sunday they were questioning a top official from Netanyahu's office over possible obstruction of an investigation into last year's leak of classified military information to a German tabloid.

Israeli media identified the official as Tzachi Braverman, Netanyahu's chief of staff, who is expected to start as the next ambassador to the United Kingdom in the coming months.

He's the latest official to be caught up in the scandal, in which Netanyahu's inner circle is accused of leaking confidential information to German tabloid Bild to improve public perception of the prime minister following the killing of six hostages in Gaza in 2024.

It comes after an explosive interview by Kan News with former Netanyahu spokesperson Eli Feldstein, who described a clandestine meeting with Braverman in an underground parking lot in the middle of the night in connection with the leak. Feldstein, who has been indicted, said Braverman offered to "shut down" the probe into the leaked information.

Opposition leader Yair Lapid immediately called for the suspension of Braverman as ambassador. "It is unacceptable that a person suspected of involvement in obstructing a serious security investigation should be the face of Israel in one of Europe's most important countries," Lapid wrote on X.

In response, Saar defended Braverman's appointment and said he would not be removed from it until formally charged or tried.

Ukrainian drone attack in Russia kills 1 following Moscow's intense bombardment

By The Associated Press undefined

A Ukrainian drone strike killed one person and wounded three others in the Russian city of Voronezh, local officials said Sunday. Meanwhile, thousands of residents were still without power in Kyiv, following an intense Russian bombardment.

A young woman died overnight in a hospital intensive care unit after debris from a drone fell on a house during the attack on Saturday, Voronezh regional Gov. Alexander Gusev said on Telegram.

Three other people were wounded and more than 10 apartment buildings, private houses and a high

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school were damaged, he said, adding that air defenses shot down 17 drones over Voronezh. The city is home to just over 1 million people and lies some 250 kilometers (155 miles) from the Ukrainian border.

Ukraine's General Staff said Sunday its forces hit three drilling platforms operated by Russian oil giant Lukoil in the waters of the Caspian Sea. Ukraine's long-range drone strikes on Russian energy sites aim to deprive Moscow of the oil export revenue it needs to pursue its full-scale invasion.

The attacks came after Russia bombarded Ukraine with hundreds of drones and dozens of missiles overnight into Friday, killing at least four people in the capital Kyiv, according to Ukrainian officials. For only the second time in the nearly four-year war, Russia used a powerful new hypersonic missile that struck western Ukraine in a clear warning to Kyiv and NATO.

Ukraine's largest private energy supplier, DTEK, said Sunday that 30,000 people in Kyiv were still without power following the attack. Mayor Vitali Klitschko said Friday around half the apartment buildings — nearly 6,000 — in snowy Kyiv were left without heat in daytime temperatures of about minus 8 degrees Celsius (17.6 Fahrenheit).

The intense barrage and the launch of the nuclear-capable Oreshnik missile followed reports of major progress in talks between Ukraine and its allies on how to defend the country from further aggression by Moscow if a U.S.-led peace deal is struck.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Saturday in his nightly address that Ukrainian negotiators "continue to communicate with the American side."

Chief negotiator Rustem Umerov was in contact with U.S. partners on Saturday, he said.

Separately, Ukraine's General Staff said Russia targeted Ukraine with 154 drones overnight into Sunday and 125 were shot down.

The Ukrainian Defense Ministry's main intelligence directorate said Sunday that Russia this month deployed the new jet-powered "Geran-5" strike drone against Ukraine for the first time. The Geran is a Russian variant of the Iranian-designed Shahed.

According to the directorate, the drone can carry a 90-kilogram (200-pound) warhead and has a range of nearly 1,000 kilometers (620 miles).

Erich von Däniken, Swiss writer who spawned alien archaeology, dies at 90

BERLIN (AP) — Erich von Däniken, the Swiss author whose bestselling books about the extraterrestrial origins of ancient civilizations brought him fame among paranormal enthusiasts and scorn from the scientific community, has died. He was 90.

Von Däniken's representatives announced on his website on Sunday that he had died the previous day in a hospital in central Switzerland.

Von Däniken rose to prominence in 1968 with the publication of his first book "Chariots of the Gods," in which he claimed that the Mayans and ancient Egyptians were visited by alien astronauts and instructed in advanced technology that allowed them to build giant pyramids.

The book fueled a growing interest in unexplained phenomena at a time when thanks to conventional science man was about to take its first steps on the Moon.

"Chariots of the Gods" was followed by more than two dozen similar books, spawning a literary niche in which fact and fantasy were mixed together against all historical and scientific evidence.

Public broadcaster SRF reported that altogether almost 70 million copies of his books were sold in more than 30 languages, making him one of the most widely read Swiss authors.

While von Däniken managed to shrug off his many critics, the former hotel waiter had a troubled relationship with money throughout his life and frequently came close to financial ruin.

Born in 1935, the son of a clothing manufacturer in the northern Swiss town of Schaffhausen, von Däniken is said to have rebelled against his father's strict Catholicism and the priests who instructed him at boarding school by developing his own alternatives to the biblical account of the origins of life.

After leaving school in 1954, von Däniken worked as a waiter and barkeeper for several years, during

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which he was repeatedly accused of fraud and served a couple of short stints in prison.

In 1964, he was appointed manager of a hotel in the exclusive resort town of Davos and began writing his first book. Its publication and rapid commercial success were quickly followed by accusations of tax dodging and financial impropriety, for which he again spent time behind bars.

By the time he left prison, "Chariots of the Gods" was earning von Däniken a fortune and a second book "Gods from Outer Space" was ready for publication, allowing him to commit himself to his paranormal passion and travel the world in search of new mysteries to uncover.

Throughout the 1970s von Däniken undertook countless field trips to Egypt, India, and above all Latin America, whose ancient cultures held a particular fascination for the amateur archaeologist.

He lectured widely and set up societies devoted to promoting his theories, later pioneering the use of video and multimedia to reach out to ever-larger audiences hungry for a different account of history.

No amount of criticism dissuaded him and his fans from believing that Earth has been visited repeatedly by beings from Outer Space, and will be again in the future.

In 1991 von Däniken gained the damning accolade of being the first recipient of the "Ig Nobel" prize for literature — for raising the public awareness of science through questionable experiments or claims.

Even when confronted with fabricated evidence in a British television documentary — supposedly ancient pots were shown to be almost new — von Däniken insisted that, minor discrepancies aside, his theories were essentially sound.

In 1985 von Däniken wrote "Neue Erinnerungen an die Zukunft" — "New Memories of the Future" — ostensibly to address his many critics: "I have admitted (my mistakes), but not one of the foundations of my theories has yet been brought down."

Although his popularity was waning in the English-speaking world by the 1980s, von Däniken's books and films influenced a wave of semi-serious archaeological documentaries and numerous popular television shows, including "The X-Files," which featured two FBI agents tasked with solving paranormal mysteries.

His last major venture, a theme park based on his books, failed after just a few years due to lack of interest. The "Mystery Park" still stands, its man-made pyramids and otherworldly domes rotting as tourists prefer to explore the charms of the nearby town of Interlaken and the imposing Swiss Alps that surround it.

Erich von Däniken is survived by his wife of 65 years, Elisabeth Skaja, Cornelia and two grandchildren.

Iranian protests are growing. Israel is watching closely

By MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Israel is "closely monitoring" the fallout from widespread Iranian protests, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Sunday, as U.S. President Donald Trump's threats to attack Iran could escalate the protests within the borders of the Islamic Republic into a regional war.

"The people of Israel, the entire world, are in awe of the tremendous heroism of the citizens of Iran," Netanyahu said at the start of the weekly cabinet meeting. He condemned the killing of civilians and said he hoped to rebuild relations between Israel and Iran once the country was "freed from the yoke of tyranny."

Netanyahu and U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio spoke overnight Saturday about a number of issues, including Iran, according to an Israeli official who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

But Israel's military said there are no new guidelines for civilians to stay close to bomb shelters due to concerns about an attack of Iranian missiles, as there have been in the past when there were concrete threats.

The Israeli military said the protests in Iran are an "internal Iranian matter," but that the military "will be equipped to respond with power if need be."

A former Israeli intelligence official said Israel is unlikely to instigate an attack against Iran, even though Israel could have an easy target as Iranian leadership is weakened and distracted by the protests roiling the country.

"From an Iranian standpoint, the last thing Iran wants to see is diverting their attention towards Israel,"

said Danny Citrinowicz, who once headed research on Iran in one of the Israeli military's intelligence branches and is now a senior researcher with the Israeli defense think tank the Institute for National Security Studies.

"Their priority, first and foremost, is to retrieve the calmness and stability in Iran."

Neither side has an appetite for another war

The current situation in Iran is so uncertain that Israel is likely to wait and see what will happen next, Citrinowicz said. He added that "neither side has an appetite" to start a new round of the 12-day war this past summer.

The war began with Israel targeting Iranian nuclear and military sites, saying it could not allow Tehran to develop atomic weapons and that it feared the Islamic Republic was close. Iran has long maintained that its program is peaceful.

Israeli strikes on Iran killed 1,190 people and wounded another 4,475, according to the U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency. Iran's missile barrages killed almost 30 people in Israel and wounded 1,000.

On Sunday, Iran's parliament speaker warned the U.S. military and Israel would be "legitimate targets" if America strikes the Islamic Republic. Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf made the threat as lawmakers rushed the dais in the Iranian parliament, shouting: "Death to America!"

Trump, who has posted a number of times on social media about Iran over the weekend, has a history of following through on threats to attack. "Do not play games with President Trump. When he says he'll do something, he means it," the State Department warned on Saturday.

Citrinowicz said that an attack, either American or Israeli, could have the opposite impact on the protests, possibly even weakening the protests by fostering a sense of patriotism and uniting against a common enemy.

The U.S. both brokered the ceasefire and assisted Israel during the Israel-Iran war this past summer, by dropping bunker-buster bombs on multiple Iranian nuclear sites — a move that was crucial for Netanyahu to declare to the Israeli public that Israel had achieved its objectives against Iran's nuclear program and accept Trump's truce.

Israel doesn't want to meddle with an internal Iranian affair

"What Israel is really concerned with is ballistic missiles, and stuff like that, not what kind of regime is going to be in Iran," said Menahem Merhavy, an expert on Iran from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

"Unless there's something really dramatic happening with missiles, I don't see Israel stepping into this."

And an Iranian attack against Israel would be "a suicide note for the regime," Merhavy said, because there will be little outcry if Israel responds strongly against the Iranian leadership given the outcry over their hardhanded response to the protests. "There are few tears that will be shed if, say, Israel kills the minister of foreign affairs," Merhavy said.

He noted that Israel could help on the margins, like enabling internet access to certain individuals or leaders, but said even that is doubtful.

"Israel doesn't want to meddle with this. It's internally an Iranian matter," Merhavy said.

Kurdish fighters evacuated from Aleppo after days of violent clashes

By GHAITH ALSAYED Associated Press

ALEPPO, Syria (AP) — Kurdish fighters were evacuated from a contested neighborhood in Syria's northern city of Aleppo, officials said early Sunday, a move that could bring an end to several days of violent clashes with government forces.

State-run news agency SANA reported buses transported the last of the fighters from the Aleppo neighborhood of Sheikh Maqsoud to northeastern Syria, which is under the control of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces.

"Through international mediation to halt the attacks and violations against our people in Aleppo, we have reached an understanding leading to a ceasefire and the safe evacuation of martyrs, the wounded,

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trapped civilians, and fighters from the Achrafieh and Sheikh Maqsoud neighborhoods to northern and eastern Syria," SDF commander Mazloum Abdi said in a post on X.

He called for "mediators to uphold their promises to stop the violations and work towards the safe return of the displaced to their homes."

An Associated Press journalist at the scene saw buses leaving Sunday and was told by officials that the transports carried 360 fighters. Other buses carrying civilians and detained fighters departed on Saturday.

Drone strikes are part of intense clashes

Syrian security forces deployed Saturday in Sheikh Maqsoud after days of clashes with Kurdish fighters that killed and wounded dozens.

During the day, several drone strikes were reported in Aleppo, Syria's largest city, leading authorities to stop civilian flights at Aleppo International Airport until further notice, state TV said.

On Saturday afternoon, an explosive drone hit the Aleppo Governorate building shortly after two Cabinet ministers and a local official held a news conference on the developments in the city. There was no immediate word on casualties.

Syria's state TV aired footage showing a drone exploding as it slammed into the building and blamed Kurdish fighters for the attack. The SDF denied the reports, saying its fighters did not attack a civilian target.

The fighting between the two sides is the most intense since the fall of then-President Bashar Assad in December 2024. At least 22 people were killed in five days of clashes and more than 140,000 were displaced.

U.S. Special Envoy to Syria Tom Barrack held talks in Damascus Saturday with top officials, including President Ahmad al-Sharaa, and called on all parties to cease hostilities and return to dialogue.

"Violence risks undermining the progress achieved since the fall of the Assad regime and invites external interference that serves no party's interests," Barrack said in comments posted on X. "We urge all parties to exercise maximum restraint, immediately cease hostilities, and return to dialogue," he added, saying that fighting undermines the deal reached in March between the government and the Kurdish leadership.

He said recent developments in Aleppo were "deeply concerning," and Washington's objective "remains a sovereign, unified Syria — at peace with itself and its neighbors — where equality, justice, and opportunity are extended to all its people."

Residents flee Kurdish-majority areas of Aleppo

Syria's state news agency SANA reported that two Kurdish fighters blew themselves up while surrounded by security forces without inflicting casualties, as gunfire was still heard in the neighborhood of Sheikh Maqsoud around noon Saturday.

From the early hours, Syrian security forces were sweeping the neighborhood after calling on residents to stay home for their own safety.

Hundreds of people who fled the neighborhood days earlier were waiting at Sheikh Maqsoud's entrances to be allowed in once the military operations are over.

Clashes broke out Tuesday in the predominantly Kurdish northern neighborhoods of Sheikh Maqsoud, Achrafieh and Bani Zaid, after the government and the Syrian Democratic Forces, the main Kurdish-led force in the country, failed to make progress on how to merge their forces into the national army. Security forces have since captured Achrafieh and Bani Zaid.

Kurdish forces said at least 12 civilians were killed in the Kurdish-majority neighborhoods in the five days of fighting, while government officials reported at least 10 civilians were killed in the surrounding government-controlled areas.

Syria accuses Kurdish fighters of using civilian buildings

Syria's Information Minister Hamza al-Mustafa told state TV that Kurdish fighters used civilian buildings including hospitals and clinics during the fighting. Each side has accused the other of starting the violence and of deliberately targeting civilian neighborhoods and infrastructure, including ambulance crews and hospitals.

The Kurdish-led Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, which controls much of Syria's northeast, said that security forces targeted Khaled Fajr Hospital in Sheikh Maqsoud, putting the

lives of patients and paramedics in danger. It called on the international community to intervene to force government forces to stop shelling.

State TV reported that at least one security member was wounded when a drone fired by the SDF struck the neighborhood.

Associated Press journalists said bursts of gunfire could be heard as government-deployed drones flew over Sheikh Maqsoud.

The Syrian military declared the neighborhood a "closed military zone" since Friday night as it launched a "clearing operation."

On Friday, Barrack discussed the developments in Syria with Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi in Amman. The U.S. envoy said Jordan offered support to efforts aimed at consolidating the ceasefire and the peaceful withdrawal of Kurdish fighters from Aleppo.

Buddhist monks and their dog captivate Americans while walking for peace

By DEEPA BHARATH Associated Press

A group of Buddhist monks and their rescue dog are striding single file down country roads and highways across the South, captivating Americans nationwide and inspiring droves of locals to greet them along their route.

In their flowing saffron and ochre robes, the men are walking for peace. It's a meditative tradition more common in South Asian countries, and it's resonating now in the U.S., seemingly as a welcome respite from the conflict, trauma and politics dividing the nation.

Their journey began Oct. 26, 2025, at a Vietnamese Buddhist temple in Texas, and is scheduled to end in mid-February in Washington, D.C., where they will ask Congress to recognize Buddha's day of birth and enlightenment as a federal holiday. Beyond promoting peace, their highest priority is connecting with people along the way.

"My hope is, when this walk ends, the people we met will continue practicing mindfulness and find peace," said the Venerable Bhikkhu Pannakara, the group's soft-spoken leader who is making the trek barefoot. He teaches about mindfulness, forgiveness and healing at every stop.

Preferring to sleep each night in tents pitched outdoors, the monks have been surprised to see their message transcend ideologies, drawing huge crowds into churchyards, city halls and town squares across six states. Documenting their journey on social media, they — and their dog, Aloka — have racked up millions of followers online. On Saturday, thousands thronged in Columbia, South Carolina, where the monks chanted on the steps of the State House and received a proclamation from the city's mayor, Daniel Rickenmann.

The physical toll of the monks long walk

At their stop Thursday in Saluda, South Carolina, Audrie Pearce joined the crowd lining Main Street. She had driven four hours from her village of Little River, and teared up as Pannakara handed her a flower.

"There's something traumatic and heart-wrenching happening in our country every day," said Pearce, who describes herself as spiritual, but not religious. "I looked into their eyes and I saw peace. They're putting their bodies through such physical torture and yet they radiate peace."

Hailing from Theravada Buddhist monasteries across the globe, the 19 monks began their 2,300 mile (3,700 kilometer) trek at the Huong Dao Vipassana Bhavana Center in Fort Worth.

Their journey has not been without peril. On Nov. 19, as the monks were walking along U.S. Highway 90 near Dayton, Texas, their escort vehicle was hit by a distracted truck driver, injuring two monks. One of them lost his leg, reducing the group to 18.

This is Pannakara's first trek in the U.S., but he's walked across several South Asian countries, including a 112-day journey across India in 2022 where he first encountered Aloka, an Indian Pariah dog whose name means divine light in Sanskrit.

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Then a stray, the dog followed him and other monks from Kolkata in eastern India all the way to the Nepal border. At one point, he fell critically ill and Pannakara scooped him up in his arms and cared for him until he recovered. Now, Aloka inspires him to keep going when he feels like giving up.

"I named him light because I want him to find the light of wisdom," Pannakara said.

The monk's feet are now heavily bandaged because he's stepped on rocks, nails and glass along the way. His practice of mindfulness keeps him joyful despite the pain from these injuries, he said.

Still, traversing the southeast United States has presented unique challenges, and pounding pavement day after day has been brutal.

"In India, we can do shortcuts through paddy fields and farms, but we can't do that here because there are a lot of private properties," Pannakara said. "But what's made it beautiful is how people have welcomed and hosted us in spite of not knowing who we are and what we believe."

Churches, families and towns host the monks along their path

In Opelika, Alabama, the Rev. Patrick Hitchman-Craig hosted the monks on Christmas night at his United Methodist congregation.

He expected to see a small crowd, but about 1,000 people showed up, creating the feel of a block party. The monks seemed like the Magi, he said, appearing on Christ's birthday.

"Anyone who is working for peace in the world in a way that is public and sacrificial is standing close to the heart of Jesus, whether or not they share our tradition," said Hitchman-Craig. "I was blown away by the number of people and the diversity of who showed up."

After their night on the church lawn, the monks arrived the next afternoon at the Collins Farm in Cusseta, Alabama. Judy Collins Allen, whose father and brother run the farm, said about 200 people came to meet the monks — the biggest gathering she's ever witnessed there.

"There was a calm, warmth and sense of community among people who had not met each other before and that was so special," she said.

Monks say peace walks are not a conversion tool

Long Si Dong, a spokesperson for the Fort Worth temple, said the monks, when they arrive in Washington, plan to seek recognition of Vesak, the day which marks the birth and enlightenment of the Buddha, as a national holiday.

"Doing so would acknowledge Vesak as a day of reflection, compassion and unity for all people regardless of faith," he said.

But Pannakara emphasized that their main goal is to help people achieve peace in their lives. The trek is also a separate endeavor from a \$200 million campaign to build towering monuments on the temple's 14-acre property to house the Buddha's teachings engraved in stone, according to Dong.

The monks practice and teach Vipassana meditation, an ancient Indian technique taught by the Buddha himself as core for attaining enlightenment. It focuses on the mind-body connection — observing breath and physical sensations to understand reality, impermanence and suffering. Some of the monks, including Pannakara, walk barefoot to feel the ground directly and be present in the moment.

Pannakara has told the gathered crowds that they don't aim to convert people to Buddhism.

Brooke Schedneck, professor of religion at Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee, said the tradition of a peace walk in Theravada Buddhism began in the 1990s when the Venerable Maha Ghosananda, a Cambodian monk, led marches across war-torn areas riddled with landmines to foster national healing after civil war and genocide in his country.

"These walks really inspire people and inspire faith," Schedneck said. "The core intention is to have others watch and be inspired, not so much through words, but through how they are willing to make this sacrifice by walking and being visible."

On Thursday, Becki Gable drove nearly 400 miles (about 640 kilometers) from Cullman, Alabama, to catch up with them in Saluda. Raised Methodist, Gable said she wanted some release from the pain of losing her daughter and parents.

"I just felt in my heart that this would help me have peace," she said. "Maybe I could move a little bit forward in my life."

Gable says she has already taken one of Pannakara's teachings to heart. She's promised herself that each morning, as soon as she awakes, she'd take a piece of paper and write five words on it, just as the monk prescribed.

"Today is my peaceful day."

Husband charged in double homicide after having affair with au pair is going on trial in Virginia

By OLIVIA DIAZ Associated Press/Report for America

FAIRFAX, Va. (AP) — A Virginia man who had a relationship with a Brazilian au pair is going to trial Monday in what prosecutors say was an elaborate double-murder scheme to frame another man in the stabbing of his wife.

Brendan Banfield is charged with aggravated murder in the February 2023 killings of Christine Banfield and Joseph Ryan at the Banfields' home in northern Virginia. He has pleaded not guilty in the case.

Banfield and Juliana Peres Magalhães, the family's au pair, were with the wife and Ryan on the morning the victims were killed in the primary bedroom of the Banfield home, court records say. Authorities have said on that day, Banfield and Magalhães told officials they saw Ryan, a stranger, stabbing the wife after he entered the house. Then they each shot the intruder, Banfield and Magalhães said at the time.

Prosecutors have painted a different picture, arguing that Brendan Banfield and Magalhães lured Ryan to the house and staged it to look like he and the au pair shot a predator in defense. Officials have said Banfield and Magalhães had a romantic affair beginning the year before the killings.

Both the au pair and husband were arrested between 2023 and 2024 and initially handed murder charges in the case. In 2024, Magalhães pleaded guilty to a downgraded manslaughter charge after giving a statement to officials confirming parts of their theory.

In that statement, Magalhães said she and Brendan Banfield created an account in his wife's name on a social media platform for people interested in sexual fetishes. There, Ryan connected with the account in Christine Banfield's name, and the users made plans to meet on the morning of Feb. 24, 2023, for a sexual encounter that would involve a knife, authorities said based on the statement from Magalhães.

Prosecutor Eric Clingan said last year that the au pair's statement helped the state solidify its theory ahead of trial.

"With 12 different homicide detectives, there were 24 different theories," Clingan said. "Now, one theory."

Not all officials investigating the case have believed Banfield and Magalhães catfished Ryan.

Brendan Miller, a former digital forensic examiner with the Fairfax County Police Department, testified last year that he analyzed dozens of devices and concluded Christine Banfield had connected with Ryan herself through the social networking platform.

An evidence analysis team at the University of Alabama peer-reviewed and affirmed Miller's digital forensic findings, according to evidence submitted to the court.

Miller was transferred out of the department's digital forensics unit in late 2024, though a former Fairfax County commander testified the reassignment was not punitive or disciplinary.

John Carroll, Banfield's attorney, argued that Miller's transfer was directly tethered to the case. He also said in court that Fairfax County police reassigned the case's lead detective after that man had pushed back on the top brass' catfishing theory.

"It is a theory in search of facts rather than a series of facts supporting a theory," Carroll said.

Banfield, whose daughter was at the house on the morning of the killings, is also charged with child abuse and felony child cruelty in connection with the case. He will also face those charges during the aggravated murder trial.

Retouched images of Netanyahu's wife, distributed by the state, ignite a fiery ethics debate

By JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — The photos seemed destined for posterity in Israel's state archives.

In the snapshots, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is joined by his wife, Sara, as well as U.S. Ambassador Mike Huckabee and a group of Israeli soldiers, as they light Hannukah candles at Western Wall, the holiest site where Jews pray. The leaders exchange triumphant looks.

But something is off.

Sara Netanyahu's skin is poreless, her eyes overly defined and her hair perfectly coiffed — a look officials acknowledge is the result of heavy retouching.

Critics say the issue isn't the use of photo-editing software, which is common on the social media accounts of celebrities and public figures. They say it's the circulation of the images in official government announcements, which distorts reality, violates ethical codes and risks compromising official archiving and record-keeping efforts.

"All the pictures to this day in the archives in Israel are authentic pictures of reality as it was captured by the lenses of photographers' cameras since the establishment of the state," said Shabi Gatenio, the veteran political journalist who broke the story in *The Seventh Eye*, an Israeli site that covers local media. "These images, if entered into the database, will forever infect it with a virtual reality that never existed."

Since the manipulation of images was revealed, the government has taken the unprecedented step of crediting Sara Netanyahu in its releases that include manipulated images. And it's not clear if the official archive will include images of her taken during the second half of last year, when Gatenio said the editing appears to have begun.

Mrs. Netanyahu's personal spokesperson did not respond to a request for comment.

Nitzan Chen, director of the Government Press Office, told *The Associated Press* that images of the prime minister are never manipulated and that his office would not upload any retouched photos to the official archive.

Personal Photoshop habit enters political realm

Sara Netanyahu, 67, has long used photo-editing software on her images. Her social media account is filled with images in which her face appears heavily retouched.

But the topic raised eyebrows since her Photoshop habit entered the public record.

Gatenio said he first noticed this last July, when the couple visited President Donald Trump in Washington, D.C., and again in September, as Sara Netanyahu joined her husband on the tarmac ahead of a trip to New York for the U.N. General Assembly.

At the time, the prime minister's office released a video of the send-off along with a photo, credited to Avi Ohayon, an official government photographer.

Comparing the photo to the raw video, Hany Farid, a digital forensics expert at the University of California, Berkeley, said the image had been post-processed, bearing local manipulations to smooth her skin and remove wrinkles.

Since then, photos showing Mrs. Netanyahu meeting with Vice President JD Vance and his wife, Usha, in Washington also appear to have been retouched, Farid said.

"There's been some Photoshop editing to — let's call it — 'beautify,' lighten, smooth the face," Farid said.

"Is it nefarious? No. Is it a problem? Yes. This is about something bigger than, 'she Photoshopped her face to make herself look younger.' This is about trust. Why should I trust any official photo coming out of that administration?"

Chen, the head of the Government Press Office, said office lawyers are trying to determine how to handle and properly identify photos "processed by people other than GPO photographers."

He said the Justice Ministry is also examining the "criteria, limitations and possibilities" of the edited images, though he stressed there is nothing illegal about touching up photos. The issue, he said, is being transparent when such changes are made.

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For now, the Prime Minister's Office has decided to add Sara Netanyahu's name to press releases that include retouched images. Since November, press releases showing photos of her smiling next to Trump and the family of the last hostage in Gaza in Washington, visiting a Miami synagogue and attending a funeral for an Israeli mayor have included this label.

At least one outlet, the Times of Israel, has said it will no longer carry official state photos that appear to have been manipulated. The Associated Press does not publish images that appear to have been retouched or digitally manipulated.

A broader phenomenon

Chen said the prime minister is never edited: "No Photoshop, no corrections, no color. Nothing."

While his face may not be retouched, the prime minister's official Instagram account tells another story.

The page has posted a bevy of content that appears to be AI-edited or generated, including a picture of the couple with Trump and first lady Melania Trump celebrating the new year in Washington.

The photo raised suspicions in Israel because it shows Sara Netanyahu wearing a black dress absent from other photos of the event, where she wore a dark red frock. Appearing in the sky above the couples are brightly colored fireworks and American and Israeli flags that Farid said were "almost certainly" generated by AI.

It is now marked with a tag on Instagram indicating that it may have been altered or generated using AI. It is not clear when the tag was added nor by whom.

Netanyahu is not alone. Many world figures, including Trump, frequently use AI-generated image manipulation in their public output.

Tehilla Shwartz Altshuler, who runs the "Democracy in the Digital Age Program," at the Israel Democracy Institute, a Jerusalem think tank, called it "part of the populist playbook" and said there was "no question" that Netanyahu was emulating how Trump uses the technology.

Netanyahu's official Instagram has posted video of Trump and Netanyahu in a B-2 bomber that appears entirely AI-generated. It is captioned "on our victory lap," referencing the joint Israel-U.S. attacks on Iran last year.

"This is exactly what Netanyahu and his surrounding circle have tried to do for many years," she said. "Presenting himself as a superhero, his wife as a supermodel, their family as a super loyal family. Even when it wasn't the case, even at the expense of actual political work, administrative work and social work."

She said Israel has reached a critical point in official government record-keeping and communications.

"The question of archiving the truth, archiving history, will be one of the questions of our time."

Lawsuits by Trump allies could shape how the 2030 census is done and who will be counted

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — The next U.S. census is four years away, but two lawsuits playing out this year could affect how it will be done and who will be counted.

Allies of President Donald Trump are behind the federal lawsuits challenging various aspects of the once-a-decade count by the U.S. Census Bureau, which is used to determine congressional representation and how much federal aid flows to the states.

The challenges align with parts of Trump's agenda even as the Republican administration must defend the agency in court.

A Democratic law firm is representing efforts to intervene in both cases because of concerns over whether the U.S. Justice Department will defend the bureau vigorously. There have been no indications so far that government attorneys are doing otherwise, and department lawyers have asked that one of the cases be dismissed.

As the challenges work their way through the courts, the Census Bureau is pushing ahead with its planning for the 2030 count and intends to conduct practice runs in six locations this year.

The legal challenges

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America First Legal, co-founded by Stephen Miller, Trump's deputy chief of staff, is leading one of the lawsuits, filed in Florida. It contests methods the bureau has used to protect participants' privacy and to ensure that people in group-living facilities such as dorms and nursing homes will be counted.

The lawsuit's intent is to prevent those methods from being used in the 2030 census and to have 2020 figures revised.

"This case is about stopping illegal methods that undermine equal representation and ensuring the next census complies with the Constitution," Gene Hamilton, president of America First Legal, said in a statement.

The other lawsuit was filed in federal court in Louisiana by four Republican state attorneys general and the Federation for American Immigration Reform, which opposes illegal immigration and supports reduced legal immigration. The lawsuit seeks to exclude people who are in the United States illegally from being counted in the numbers for redrawing congressional districts.

In both cases, outside groups represented by the Democratic-aligned Elias Law Group have sought to intervene over concerns that the Justice Department would reach friendly settlements with the challengers.

In the Florida case, a judge allowed a retirees' association and two university students to join the defense as intervenors. Justice Department lawyers have asked that the case be dismissed.

In the Louisiana lawsuit, government lawyers said three League of Women Voters chapters and Santa Clara County in California had not shown any proof that department attorneys would do anything other than robustly defend the Census Bureau. A judge has yet to rule on their request to join the case.

A spokesman for the Elias Law Group, Blake McCarren, referred in an email to its motion to dismiss the Florida case, warning of "a needlessly chaotic and disruptive effect upon the electoral process" if the conservative legal group were to prevail and all 50 states had to redraw their political districts.

Aligning with Trump's agenda

The goals of the lawsuits, particularly the Louisiana case, align with core parts of Trump's agenda, although the 2030 census will be conducted under a different president because his second term will end in January 2029.

During his first term, for the 2020 census, Trump tried to prevent those who are in the U.S. illegally from being used in the apportionment numbers, which determine how many congressional representatives and Electoral College votes each state receives. He also sought to have citizenship data collected through administrative records.

A Republican redistricting expert had written that using only the citizen voting-age population, rather than the total population, for the purpose of redrawing congressional and state legislative districts could be advantageous to Republicans and non-Hispanic whites.

Both Trump orders were rescinded when Democratic President Joe Biden arrived at the White House in January 2021, before the 2020 census figures were released by the Census Bureau. The first Trump administration also attempted to add a citizenship question to the 2020 census questionnaire, a move that was blocked by the U.S. Supreme Court.

In August, Trump instructed the U.S. Commerce Department to change the way the Census Bureau collects data, seeking to exclude immigrants who are in the U.S. illegally. Neither officials at the White House nor the Commerce Department, which oversees the Census Bureau, explained what actions were being taken in response to the president's social media post.

Congressional Republicans have introduced legislation to exclude noncitizens from the apportionment process. That could shrink the head count in both red and blue states because the states with the most people in the U.S. illegally include California, Texas, Florida and New York, according to the Pew Research Center.

The Constitution's 14th Amendment says "the whole number of persons in each state" should be counted for the numbers used for apportionment. The numbers also guide the distribution of \$2.8 trillion in federal dollars to the states for roads, health care and other programs.

Defending the Census Bureau

The Louisiana lawsuit was filed at the end of the Biden administration and put on hold in March at the request of the Commerce Department. Justice Department lawyers representing the Cabinet agency said

they needed time to consider the position of the new leadership in the second Trump administration. The state attorneys general in December asked for that hold to be lifted.

So far, in the court record, there is nothing to suggest that those government attorneys have done anything to undermine the Census Bureau's defense in both cases, despite the intervenors' concerns.

In the Louisiana case, Justice Department lawyers argued against lifting the hold, saying the Census Bureau was in the middle of planning for the 2030 census: "At this stage of such preparations, lifting the stay is not appropriate."

Slow-moving prisoner releases in Venezuela enter 3rd day after government announces goodwill effort

By REGINA GARCIA CANO Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO DE YARE, Venezuela (AP) — As Diógenes Angulo was freed Saturday from a Venezuelan prison after a year and five months, he, his mother and his aunt trembled and struggled for words. Nearby, at least a dozen other families hoped for similar reunions.

Angulo's release came on the third day that families had gathered outside prisons in the capital, Caracas, and other communities hoping to see loved ones walk out after Venezuela's government pledged to free what it described as a significant number of prisoners. Members of Venezuela's political opposition, activists, journalists and soldiers were among the detainees that families hoped would be released.

Angulo was detained two days before the 2024 presidential election after he posted a video of an opposition demonstration in Barinas, the home state of the late President Hugo Chávez. He was 17 at the time.

"Thank God, I'm going to enjoy my family again," he told The Associated Press, adding that others still detained "are well" and have high hopes of being released soon. His faith, he said, gave him the strength to keep going during his detention.

Minutes after he was freed, the now 19-year-old learned former President Nicolás Maduro had been captured by U.S. forces Jan. 3 in a nighttime raid in Caracas.

Venezuela's government on Thursday pledged to free a significant number of prisoners in what it described as a gesture to "seek peace." Officials have not identified or given a number of prisoners being considered for release, leaving rights groups scouring for hints of information and families to watch the hours tick by with no word.

U.S. President Donald Trump said the release of people detained for political reasons came at Washington's request.

"Venezuela has started the process, in a BIG WAY, of releasing their political prisoners," Trump wrote Saturday on his Truth Social platform. "Thank you! I hope those prisoners will remember how lucky they got that the USA came along and did what had to be done."

Trump added that should prisoners forget, "it will not be good for them."

As of Saturday night, only 16 people imprisoned for political reasons had been released, according to Foro Penal, a Venezuelan advocacy group for prisoners. Eight hundred and four remained imprisoned, the group said.

A brother of human rights attorney Rocío San Miguel, one of the first to be released and who immediately relocated to Spain, said in a statement that her release "is not full freedom, but rather a precautionary measure substituting deprivation of liberty." The conditions of her release ban her from speaking to the media.

"This situation does not constitute exile, nor a waiver of her rights, but is part of the humanitarian and diplomatic agreements reached to facilitate her release," José Manuel San Miguel said of his sister's move to Spain.

Among the prominent members of the country's political opposition who were detained after the 2024 presidential elections and remain in prison are former lawmaker Freddy Superlano and Perkins Rocha, lawyer for opposition leader María Corina Machado. Juan Pablo Guanipa, a former governor and one of Machado's closest allies, and Rafael Tudares, the son-in-law of opposition presidential candidate Edmundo

González, also remain imprisoned.

One week after the U.S. military intervention in Caracas, Venezuelans aligned with the government marched in several cities across the country demanding the return of Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores. The pair were captured and transferred to the U.S., where they face charges including conspiracy to commit narco-terrorism. Both pleaded not guilty.

In Caracas, many demonstrators waved Venezuelan flags and chanted, "Maduro, keep on going, the people are rising."

Acting president Delcy Rodríguez, speaking at a public social-sector event in Caracas, again condemned the U.S. military action on Saturday.

"There is a government, that of President Nicolás Maduro, and I have the responsibility to take charge while his kidnapping lasts ... We will not stop condemning the criminal aggression," she said, referring to Maduro's ousting.

After the shocking military action that overthrew Maduro, Trump stated the U.S. would "run" the South American country and demanded access to oil resources, which he promised to use "to benefit the people" of both nations.

"I love the Venezuelan people and I am already making Venezuela prosperous and safe again," Trump said in his Saturday post.

The U.S. and Venezuelan governments on Friday announced they are evaluating the restoration of diplomatic relations, broken since 2019, and the reopening of their respective diplomatic missions. A U.S. delegation visited Venezuela for several hours Friday.

Venezuelan Foreign Minister Yván Gil responded to Pope Leo XIV's statement Friday calling for maintaining peace and "respecting the will of the Venezuelan people."

"With respect for the Holy Father and his spiritual authority, Venezuela reaffirms that it is a country that builds, works, and defends its sovereignty with peace and dignity," Gil said in a social media post, inviting the pontiff "to get to know this reality more closely."

Kenyan women lost their husbands and then their land. But some are fighting back

By EVELYNE MUSAMBI Associated Press

SIAYA, Kenya (AP) — Rebecca Anyango stood outside the house she has called home for 26 years, wondering how long it will remain hers.

As a widow, she's been threatened with eviction for years by her late husband's family, who claim she has no inheritance rights. This year they filed a lawsuit, and the 70-year-old Anyango has no legal representation.

She pointed out where her husband is buried, a few steps from the door.

"Where do I take the grave?" she asked softly.

Anyango is among thousands of widows in western Kenya who face losing everything after their husbands die. They are often in rural areas and with little education, unaware of their rights.

Violating Kenya's constitution

In the Luo, Luhya, and Kisii ethnic groups, widowhood can come with certain cultural expectations that can be considered illegal. One is "sexual cleansing," in which a widow is made to have sex with another man, often a brother of her late husband, in the belief that the "dark cloud" of widowhood will lift.

Another is "wife inheritance," in which a widow is taken in as a wife by her late husband's brother.

Those who refuse, like Anyango and others who spoke with The Associated Press, are often isolated and stripped of their land, a violation of Kenya's constitutional guarantee of the right to land ownership for all citizens.

"If the woman is not aware of what protects her, then she will be disinherited," said Simiyu Waddimba, who teaches anthropology at the University of Nairobi and authored a paper on wife inheritance.

But in November, the local assembly in Siaya County, where Anyango lives, unanimously passed a Wid-

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ows Protection Bill. If signed by the governor, it will criminalize forced disinheritance or forced remarriage.

The legislation was championed by county legislator Scholastica Madowo, herself a widow and one of four elected women in the 42-member local assembly. She said the "atrocities that the women go through" inspired her to act.

"Those cultural practices are actually a violation of their rights unless the woman does it willingly," she said.

While Madowo wasn't forcibly disinherited or remarried, she faced opponents' insinuations about her widowhood during her campaign for office, including allegations that she had killed her husband.

Her bill would establish welfare committees to help widows access legal aid to challenge disinheritance.

Efforts made elsewhere

In neighboring Kisii County, Anne Bonareri was stripped of her home and her commercial property, which had been in her late husband's name.

Within hours of her husband's death in 1997, her in-laws also took his possessions, including photos and clothes. Bonareri was left with three young children and another on the way.

"They took everything, and I was left with one photo of the father," the 60-year-old recalled, her voice catching.

The day after the burial, she said, her husband's elder brother came to claim her as a wife. When she refused, armed men were sent to attack her.

Bonareri said she later worked three jobs to buy a small piece of land and build a new house.

Her daughter, Emma Mong'ute, founded the Amandla MEK Foundation in 2019 to help women in such circumstances by offering legal advice and connecting them to pro bono lawyers. She said they have had some success in helping women retain land.

Banned like her mother from their land, and unable to visit her father's grave there, Mong'ute said the disinheritance of widows creates a cycle of poverty for hundreds of thousands of children in Kenya. She said her organization would consider pushing for a bill like the one in Siaya County.

Some widows elsewhere in Africa face similar pressures. In southern Africa, there is tension between general and customary law, which dominates inheritance cases.

"While the general law protects the inheritance rights of surviving spouses and children, customary practices still allow different ethnic groups to administer estates according to their traditions, often to the detriment of widows," said Misheck Dube, a former associate professor at the University of Limpopo in South Africa who has researched widowhood.

Fighting back

Most widows are disinherited because they don't understand Kenya's land succession laws, which recognize widows and children as the true inheritors, said Easter Okech with the Kenya Female Advisory Organization in Kisumu County.

She now offers legal training for women so they can represent themselves, and some are doing so in ongoing cases. She also encourages people to write wills — many people in rural areas don't make one — and have a neutral executor.

Some widows in western Kenya have fought back on their own.

Marie Owino, a 87-year-old former teacher, said she knew her rights under the law. She said her confidence and financial independence meant her in-laws "didn't dare" to disinherit her after her husband died 33 years ago.

She still lives in the brick house she and her husband shared on their 100 acres, its manicured gardens a symbol of the boundaries she laid down long ago.

"Once you have established yourself that you can, then I'm telling you all those people will give you respect," she said.

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Today in History: January 12

Joe Namath, New York Jets win Super Bowl III

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Monday, Jan. 12, the 12th day of 2026. There are 353 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Jan. 12, 1969, the biggest upset in Super Bowl history occurred as the New York Jets of the American Football League defeated the Baltimore Colts of the National Football League 16-7 in Super Bowl III, played at the Orange Bowl in Miami.

Also on this date:

In 1915, the U.S. House of Representatives rejected a proposed constitutional amendment to give women nationwide the right to vote.

In 1932, Hattie W. Caraway of Arkansas became the first woman to win election to the U.S. Senate after initially being appointed to serve out the remainder of the term of her late husband, Thaddeus.

In 1948, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Sipuel v. Board of Regents of University of Oklahoma*, unanimously ruled that state law schools could not discriminate against applicants on the basis of race.

In 1959, Berry Gordy Jr. founded Motown Records (originally Tamla Records) in Detroit.

In 1966, "Batman" premiered on ABC, starring Adam West and Burt Ward.

In 2010, Haiti was struck by a magnitude 7.0 earthquake that the Haitian government estimated killed some 300,000 people.

Today's birthdays: Author Haruki Murakami is 77. Filmmaker Wayne Wang is 77. Football Hall of Famer Drew Pearson is 75. Writer Walter Mosley is 74. Media personality Howard Stern is 72. Filmmaker John Lasseter is 69. Broadcast journalist Christiane Amanpour is 68. Actor Oliver Platt is 66. Basketball Hall of Famer Dominique Wilkins is 66. Entrepreneur Jeff Bezos is 62. Musician-filmmaker Rob Zombie is 61. Rock singer Zack de la Rocha (Rage Against the Machine) is 56. Rapper Raekwon (Wu Tang Clan) is 56. Singer Melanie Chisholm (Spice Girls) is 52. Hockey Hall of Famer Marián Hossa is 47. Actor Issa Rae is 41. Singer Zayn Malik is 33. Actor Nathan Gamble is 27.