

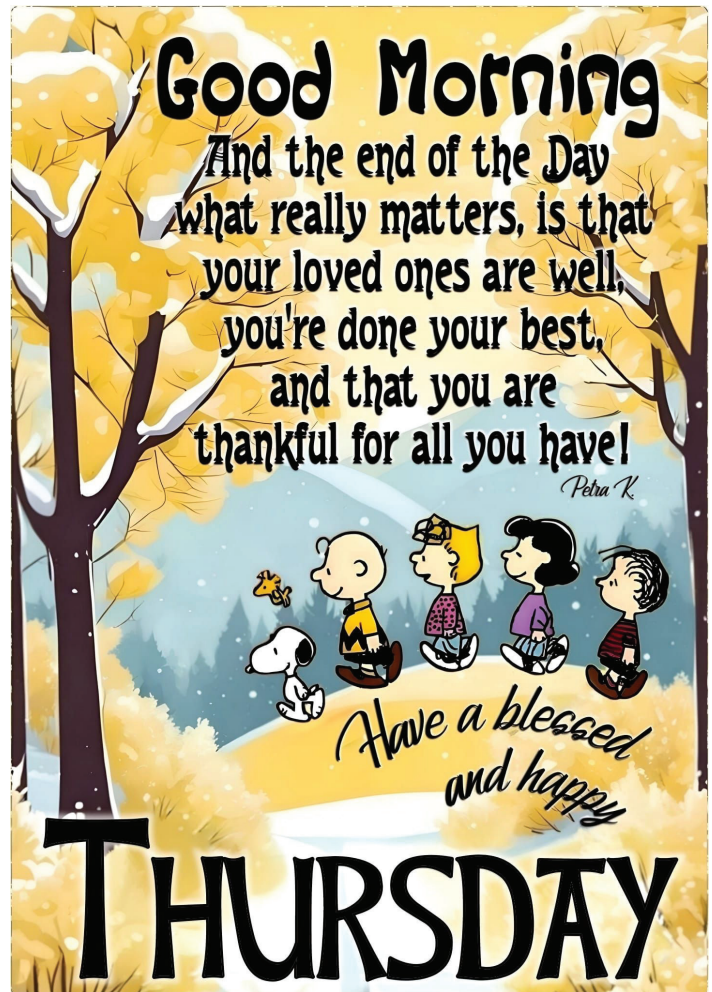
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Thursday, Jan. 15, 2026

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



Friday, Jan. 16, 2026

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

Saturday, Jan. 17, 2026

Boys Wrestling at Battler Invitational (Gettysburg), 10 a.m.
Boys Basketball: Dakota Valley at Groton: (BC-2, JVB-3:15, VB-4:30)

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.

US Greenland Meeting

Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio met with the foreign ministers of Denmark and Greenland yesterday in Washington, DC. The meeting came as President Donald Trump ramped up pressure over Greenland, saying the US would not accept anything less than full control of the world's largest island.

Greenland has been under Danish control for nearly 300 years, but the Arctic island of approximately 57,000 people gained self-rule status in 2009. It is home to the northernmost US military base, including around 150 US Air Force and Space Force personnel. Trump has joined other presidents in expressing an interest in acquiring Greenland. He has threatened to invade Greenland if Denmark does not sell the territory, citing the island's large reserves of rare earth minerals, oil, and gas, and its strategic placement vis-à-vis Russia and China.

This week, Denmark expanded its military presence on Greenland and yesterday announced Operation Arctic Endurance—a multinational group that includes officers from Canada, France, Sweden, Germany, and the Netherlands.

Digg-ing Up the Past

Rebooted message board platform Digg launched its open beta to the public yesterday. The release comes almost one year after the company was acquired by its original founder, Kevin Rose, and Reddit cofounder, Alexis Ohanian.

Founded in 2004 as a news aggregation site, Digg was once called the homepage of the internet. At its peak, the company boasted 40 million monthly users and was valued at \$175M. However, a website redesign in 2010 saw Digg lose more than one-quarter of its users. Rose left Digg in 2011, and the company was split up the following year and sold (reportedly for as little as \$500K) to Betaworks, LinkedIn, and The Washington Post. Meanwhile, competitor Reddit outpaced Digg by 2012.

Last year, Rose teamed up with Ohanian to purchase Digg for an undisclosed amount. The two are aiming to differentiate the platform from Reddit by emphasizing content moderation and cryptographic methods to verify users are real people.

25 Years of Wikipedia

Wikipedia turns 25 today, boasting more than 65 million articles in over 300 languages—written, edited, and fact-checked by nearly 250,000 volunteers worldwide.

Jimmy Wales, a former financial trader, founded Wikipedia's predecessor, Nupedia, in 2000. Entries were written by subject experts and underwent rigorous peer review, resulting in fewer than two dozen articles published by early 2001. In response, Wales and Nupedia editor-in-chief Larry Sanger launched a lower-barrier-to-entry platform. Powered by wiki software that enables collaborative editing, Wikipedia produced about 18,000 articles in its first year, and by 2002, nearly 200 people were editing the site daily. Since 2003, Wikipedia has been operated by the Wikimedia Foundation, a nonprofit reliant primarily on donations averaging \$11.

Wikipedia publishes about 500 articles daily and receives nearly 15 billion visits monthly, but its user base is shifting. Human traffic fell by 8% last year, and roughly 65% of Wikipedia's most intense traffic now comes from bots, largely scraping articles to train AI models.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Global music industry reaches record 5.1 trillion streams in 2025, up 9.6% from 2024, which held the previous annual streaming record; Christian, rock, and Latin music see most growth in the US.

Golden Globes show averages nearly 8.7 million viewers, down about 7% from last year; social media engagement up roughly 5% from 2025 to record level.

Spanish singer Julio Iglesias faces sexual abuse allegations from former live-in female employees.

"West Wing" actor Timothy Busfield appears in court on child sexual abuse charges related to alleged incidents involving child actors.

Science & Technology

US allows Nvidia to export H200 AI chips to China, provided they undergo a third-party review and there is sufficient domestic supply; Nvidia's most advanced chips—the Blackwell and forthcoming Rubin—are not approved for export.

Hidden growth rings reveal Tyrannosaurus rexes reached full size of roughly 8 tons at about 40 years; past studies estimated growth stopped around 25 years.

Young tropical forests recover from disruptions, such as logging, wildfires, and agriculture, nearly twice as fast when nitrogen is added to their ecosystem.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -0.5%, Dow -0.1%, Nasdaq -1.0%).

US existing home sales rise 5.1% month over month in December, the fastest pace since February 2023; median home price of \$405,400 is up 0.4% from a year ago.

Saks Global, owner of Saks Fifth Avenue, files for Chapter 11 bankruptcy roughly a year after acquiring rival Neiman Marcus.

China hits record \$1.2T trade surplus—when the value of exports exceeds the value of imports—in 2025 despite sweeping US tariffs.

Politics & World Affairs

Iranian government reportedly postpones execution of 26-year-old protester amid pressure from President Donald Trump as death toll reportedly approaches 3,500 people; see live updates.

US military pulls some troops from Qatar.

FBI searches home of Washington Post journalist, seizes phone and two laptops as part of investigation into government contractor charged with illegal retention of classified information.

State Department announces it will suspend immigration visas for 75 countries beginning Jan. 21; the change will not apply to tourism, student visas.

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Coming Up on
GDILIVE.COM

Groton
Area
Tigers
Groton, SD

GDILIVE



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Groton Daily Independent



For more info: GDILIVE.COM



**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**

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Deadlines to claim \$2 Million and \$500K Powerball prizes approaching

PIERRE, S.D. – Time is running out for a pair of South Dakota Lottery players to claim their large prizes.

A \$2 million Powerball prize from the Aug. 23, 2025, drawing remains unclaimed. The winning ticket was purchased at Gas N More in Mobridge. The deadline to claim the multi-million-dollar prize is Feb. 19, 2026.

The winning ticket matched five of five winning numbers, but did not match the Powerball. The player doubled their second prize by purchasing the Power Play add on, which multiplies all non-jackpot winning amounts.

A \$500,000 Powerball Double Play prize from the Aug. 27, 2025, drawing also remains unclaimed. The winning ticket was purchased at Hy Vee Gas, located on 5201 W. 26th St. in Sioux Falls. The winning player has until Feb. 23, 2026, to claim the prize.

The player matched 5 of 5 winning numbers in the Double Play drawing and was just the Double Play Powerball away from winning \$10 million top prize.

In both instances, the retailers will receive an incentive for selling the winning ticket, but only if the prizes are claimed. The \$2 million prize would yield a \$25,000 bonus, while the \$500,000 ticket would result in a \$10,000 bonus.

All lotto prizes must be claimed within 180 days after the date of the drawing in which the prize was won. If prizes are not claimed, they are distributed to the South Dakota Lottery's Unclaimed Prize Fund, which helps fund prizes for future games.

The South Dakota Lottery advises the winning players to sign the backs of their tickets immediately before claiming their prize at any Lottery validation center. The Pierre validation center is located at 711 E. Wells Ave. The Sioux Falls validation center is at 3605 S. Western Ave.

The state's General Fund, which supports K-12 schools, state universities and technical institutes, receives 70 percent of net revenue from lotto games such as Powerball. The state's Capital Construction Fund receives the remaining 30 percent. This supports the Water and Environment Fund, the Ethanol Fuel Fund, and the State Highway Fund.



A  **A**
♥

Jackpot is around \$20,000

Text Paul at 605-397-7460 if you would like to purchase a ticket.

Tickets are \$5 each or 5 for \$20.

Deadline to purchase from Paul is 3 p.m. Thursday. Or stop in at the Groton Legion by 5:30 p.m. Thursday.

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High School Basketball Doubleheader

Tiospa Zina @ Groton Area
Thursday, January 15th, 2026

Game Times:

Main Court in Arena <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 4:00 PM CT → Boys JV- 5:00 PM CT → Girls JV- 6:15 PM CT → Boys Varsity- 7:30 PM CT → Girls Varsity<ul style="list-style-type: none">o <i>Halftime Entertainment: Little Leaders Cheer Camp</i>	Ticket Takers - Report @ 3:30pm: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Carrie Cole- Ann Gibbs- Lindsey DeHoet Report @ 6pm: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Sarah Hanten- Elizabeth Bahr- Mary Johnson Admin on Duty: Brett Schwan
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Prior to the Girls Varsity game, the National Anthem will be first, with Varsity Introductions/Lineups to follow.

GHS Softball Fundraiser – Split Pot

LOCKER ROOMS: Tiospa Zina will use the two locker rooms down the JH hallway (two doors on the left). Boys Team will be in the first. The Girls' Team will be in the second.

TEAM BENCHES: South Bench- Groton Area | North Bench- Tiospa Zina

ATHLETIC TRAINER: There will be an athletic trainer on site.

AED – one is with the trainer, and one is also located near the ticket booth.

ADMISSION & SPECTATORS: Adults: \$6.00 Students: \$4.00.

CONCESSIONS: Will be available

Varsity Officials: Jordon Moench, Daren Lorenz, Spencer Aberle

JV Officials: Jordan Kjellsen, Shaun Wanner, Kristi Zoellner

JV/V Scoreboard: Kristen Swartz

JV/V Official Book: Kristi Zoellner(V), Alexa Sperry (JV)

JV/V Shot Clock Operator: Sean Schuring

Announcer: Mike Imrie

National Anthem: Recording

Livestream: www.GDILive.com or Groton High School | High School Sports | Home | Hudl
(fan.hudl.com/usa/sd/groton/organization/12097/groton-high-school)

Thank you,
Alexa Sperry, Athletic Director
Alexa.Sperry@k12.sd.us
605-380-7887

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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!**



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Health, public safety, foster care can improve with collaboration, tribal leader tells lawmakers

BY: JOHN HULT

PIERRE — South Dakota and the tribal nations in the state can make improvements for health care and public safety during the 2026 legislative session, Rosebud Sioux Tribe President Kathleen Wooden Knife said.

Wooden Knife, the first female president of Rosebud, delivered the annual State of the Tribes speech to a joint session of the South Dakota Legislature on Wednesday at the Capitol.

The State-Tribal Relations Committee endorsed bills on health care and public safety before the session began, and both have been filed and have sponsors.

Lakota and Dakota people have a lower life expectancy than the general population, Wooden Knife said, a sign that the federal government's treaty obligations to provide for the health of Native Americans isn't being upheld. Rosebud has sued the federal Indian Health Service more than once for failure to provide adequate health care.

Wooden Knife said the tribes need to look beyond IHS.

A managed care model for tribal members on Medicaid has the potential to improve outcomes and efficiencies on and off the state's reservations, she said.

In such a model, tribes could contract with the state of South Dakota to direct federal Medicaid dollars into a pool of funds for health care. An entity of the tribes' choosing could negotiate costs with off-reservation providers and coordinate care — including preventative care or incentives for healthy habits — for tribal members who seek care on or off tribal land.

"When we stand together for health care, our Sioux Nation tribes, working with the state, can bring the strongest health care resources to the table to improve health care for Native Americans," Wooden Knife said.

Will Mortenson, R-Fort Pierre, is a member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and is chair of the State-Tribal Relations Committee, which endorsed a bill he's now sponsoring that would create a task force to study a managed care model in South Dakota.

Public safety

The State-Tribal Relations Committee also endorsed a bill that would recognize tribal law enforcement members as certified law enforcement under state law. That would enable legal protections for tribal police who assist state, county or local officers.

On Tuesday, Gov. Larry Rhoden endorsed that bill during his State of the State address. Wooden Knife did the same on Wednesday.

Tribes and state leaders have also pushed in recent years to get more tribal officers trained through the state's basic law enforcement certification course, as most officers on tribal land are expected to train at a federal facility in New Mexico.

U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds, R-South Dakota, has pushed for a Great Plains law enforcement academy for tribes, a move also endorsed by the State-Tribal Relations Committee, and, on Wednesday, by Wooden Knife.

"We look forward to working with you to improve law enforcement, to get training locally for our police officers, and to improve public safety for all South Dakotans," Wooden Knife said.

Crow Creek Tribal Chairman Peter Lengkeek, among the tribal leaders on hand for Wooden Knife's speech, said cooperation between state and tribal officials can work to improve public safety, provided that tribes

maintain sovereignty.

For about a decade, Crow Creek has had an agreement whereby state troopers act as a police force on the reservation during its powwow. This year, Lengkeek said, the tribe expanded that agreement. Now the Crow Creek reservation, which can call on Bureau of Indian Affairs officers for aid but lacks a tribal police force, can call upon the Highway Patrol in public safety emergencies.

"We bring them on when we need them," Lengkeek said.

Foster care

Wooden Knife also encouraged state leaders to work with tribes on foster care. Around 70% of children in foster care are Native American, according to the state's most recent figures.

Efforts to expand the number of Native American foster homes have shown some promise, but most South Dakota foster parents are non-Native.

"We need an equal chance to preserve our children and families as the future of our Native communities, so the state should enter kinship placement agreements with the tribal governments," Wooden Knife said, referring to a form of foster care placement that connects children with family members.

There are no bills directly related to foster care and Native American families on the docket for the 2026 session at this point, but Rep. Peri Pourier, R-Rapid City, said she doesn't expect that's needed just yet.

Pourier, a member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, is on a group called the Indian Child Welfare Act Advisory Council, a state-level group named for the federal act that prioritizes keeping Native American families together.

The council was born of a bill introduced and passed in 2024, and Pourier said important conversations about collaboration on kinship care and foster family recruitment are moving forward as a result.

The group, Pourier said, is "getting down to the nitty gritty, and they're going to work together to see what things that they could come up with.

"If we need to step in with legislation," she said, "we will."

Water rights, consultation

Wooden Knife also encouraged the state to be in conversation with tribes on issues of water rights, water pipelines and drinking water access in the years ahead, noting the needs yet unmet by projects like the Mni Wiconi water pipeline. That project was first funded at the federal level in 1988 and needs upgrades, Wooden Knife said.

"As the state Legislature plans for water system improvements, we ask that you stay in touch with the Sioux Nation tribes, because we have senior water rights in the Missouri River basin and we are active water system operators," she said.

Wooden Knife called for the governor and state lawmakers to meet at least quarterly to address the need for "increased consultation, mutual respect and consideration of mutually beneficial solutions to our shared concerns."

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.

Chief justice outlines roadmap to more services for drug offenders, young people and probationers

State-level public defense expansion also on the table, courts leader tells lawmakers

BY: JOHN HULT

PIERRE — South Dakota will expand a specialty program for people facing drug charges, a move spurred by a decision last year to lessen the penalties for drug use.

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The state will also pilot a program meant to keep a closer eye on people serving probation sentences, South Dakota Supreme Court Chief Justice Steven Jensen said Wednesday during his State of the Judiciary message to lawmakers.

Until last year's vote to change it, South Dakota's ingestion law was the only one in the nation to explicitly allow felony penalties for drug use alone. Since the new law took effect in July, first- and second-offense ingestion of a controlled substance is a misdemeanor, punishable by jail time and a fine.

The law change directed the court system to lean on the HOPE program as an option for monitoring people charged with drug use in the state. Under the terms of that program, which originated in Hawaii, participants call a number each day to find out if they'll need to take a drug test. Those who fail to come when called or fail their test are jailed.

At the time Gov. Larry Rhoden signed the bill into law, however, South Dakota had used the program sparingly, and only for people facing felony charges.

The state's court system is "in the process of expanding HOPE probation to misdemeanor cases," Jensen told lawmakers.

The Unified Judicial System does not intend to ask for additional funds from lawmakers just yet, Jensen said, although the expansion will require oversight at the state level.

It will also require buy-in from county leaders, who would administer the program.

Currently, all but a handful of South Dakota's 66 counties use the 24-7 sobriety program, which typically asks participants to prove their sobriety with daily breath tests for alcohol or thrice-weekly tests for drug use.

Separately, the state has specialty drug courts, which aim to help addicted people who've pleaded guilty to felony charges stay sober through incentives and weekly, support-group style meet-ups with judges and the court's other participants.

"HOPE probation has the most potential in rural counties, where monitoring services such as 24-7 and specialty courts are scarce," Jensen said.

Sen. Tamara Grove, R-Lower Brule, was the sponsor of last year's ingestion bill. She said after the speech that she was pleased to hear the chief justice commit to expanding HOPE probation.

"The reason why I even brought the bill was because of what he said on the floor about the success of drug courts in general," Grove said. "I worked a lot with those in Lower Brule, so I had a passion for that."

Pre-trial supervision

The issue of pre-trial probation more broadly is the focus of a pilot program in Pennington County, Jensen said.

Currently, the courts have no authority to "provide services" to people who haven't been convicted or pleaded guilty to a crime, Jensen said. That could mean helping judges set the conditions for release for a person jailed as they await trial, or monitoring a person who's been released as they await trial to make sure they're behaving as their bond conditions dictate and that they show up for court dates.

The pilot program in Pennington County to allow for pre-trial supervision in the Rapid City area will be paid for by grant funds.

"We will report to the Governor's Office and the Legislature on our progress and hope to expand these services statewide in the future," Jensen said.

Lawmakers will need to authorize the pilot program by passing a court system-sponsored bill that awaits a hearing in the House of Representatives.

The state also aims to train court service officers on the best ways to deal with offenders between 18 and 25 years of age, and to work with partners to expand youth mentoring programs for people in that age group.

"Research shows that brain development continues through the early- to mid-20s, meaning young adults often think, learn, and respond more impulsively than older adults," Jensen said.

The training and expansion of mentoring will help the courts, he added, "implement tailored supervision

techniques to improve outcomes for emerging adults.”

Indigent legal services

Another area where Jensen said lawmakers might one day be asked to pitch in additional funding involves legal aid for those who can't afford it.

South Dakota leans on counties to shoulder the financial burden of court-appointed attorneys in criminal cases. Last year, lawmakers approved funding for a state public defender's office, which handles appeals in criminal and abuse and neglect cases.

That office has improved efficiencies in the court system, Jensen said, and removed some of the financial strain from counties.

The next step will be state intervention on the front-end of criminal cases. A state Commission on Indigent Legal Services has concluded that training for defense attorneys through the state public defender's office, higher compensation rates and the creation of regional public defenders offices to handle "high-level felony cases" in the counties would reduce potential errors upfront and improve the system as a whole.

"A system that is efficient and effective, while also accessible in both rural and urban counties, is essential to ensure the rights the courts must uphold," Jensen said.

The Legislature needn't take any action this year, he said, as the commission works to "solidify the plans for future expansion for another year."

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.

Democrats in Congress seek to impeach Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA

WASHINGTON — U.S. House Democrats Wednesday introduced three articles of impeachment against Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, after a deadly shooting of a woman in Minneapolis by a federal immigration officer.

The Department of Homeland Security did not immediately respond to States Newsroom's request for comment.

The three articles of impeachment were introduced by Illinois Democratic Rep. Robin Kelly. Nearly 70 Democrats have co-signed, but as the minority party in both chambers, any support or movement for the articles will likely only occur if Democrats win the midterm elections and flip the House.

"She needs to be held accountable for her actions," Kelly said. "Renee Nicole Good is dead because Secretary Noem allowed her DHS agents to run amok."

On Jan. 7, 37-year-old Renee Good was shot and killed by federal immigration officer Jonathan Ross in Minneapolis. Federal immigration officers have intensified immigration enforcement, leading to massive pushback from the community there and protests across the country.

The articles from Kelly accuse Noem of obstructing Congress after lawmakers were denied oversight visits at DHS facilities that hold immigrants; violating public trust through due process violations of U.S. citizens' and immigrants' rights and aggressive warrantless arrests in immigration enforcement; and misusing \$200 million in taxpayer funds by awarding a contract to a company run by the husband of DHS spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin, according to ProPublica.

A dozen members of Congress have sued Noem over those denied visits at ICE facilities to conduct oversight and were granted a stay to that policy by a federal judge. But Noem issued a new policy and last weekend several Minnesota lawmakers were blocked from visits to ICE facilities.

A federal judge is currently probing to see if the new policy from Noem violates her court order from

December.

Kelly was joined by several Democrats, including Minnesota's Angie Craig, who represents a swing district. "We are being terrorized by Homeland Security and ICE," Craig said. "This has crossed a line. This rogue agency is violating the rights of American citizens in our communities, and last Wednesday ... the escalation by ICE in our communities got Renee Good killed."

Noem would not be the only Homeland Secretary to be impeached, should the House take that action. In 2024, Republicans impeached the Biden administration's DHS secretary, Alejandro Mayorkas, on the grounds that he lied to Congress that the southern border was secure and that he violated his duty when he rolled back several Trump-era immigration policies.

The Senate, then controlled by Democrats, dismissed the articles of impeachment.

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

Former university coach charged with allegedly using state resources for personal benefit

BY: SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT STAFF

A former equestrian coach at South Dakota State University in Brookings has been indicted for allegedly using state resources to pay for her personal horses' veterinarian bills and to board them for about a year.

South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley announced on Wednesday that a Brookings County grand jury indicted Kamerra Brown, 38, of Brookings, on Jan. 8.

The total value of the alleged theft is estimated between \$5,000 and \$100,000, Jackley's office said. Brown faces a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison if convicted.

The case is being investigated and prosecuted by the attorney general's Public Integrity Unit.

Brown is one of numerous former public employees charged with crimes over the past two years in South Dakota. One former Department of Social Services employee, Lonna Carroll was sentenced to seven years in prison for the theft of \$1.8 million from the state across multiple years. Other former state employees have been accused or found guilty of charges such as forging food service inspections, falsifying child abuse reports, creating false vehicle titles and issuing themselves a medical marijuana card.

War powers resolution fails in US Senate after 2 Republicans flip, Vance breaks tie

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY

WASHINGTON — Vice President JD Vance broke a tied Senate vote to block advancement of a war powers resolution that would have stopped President Donald Trump from taking further military action against Venezuela without congressional authorization.

Senate Republicans used a procedural maneuver Wednesday night to halt debate on the Vietnam War-era statute that gives Congress a check on the president's deployments abroad.

Sens. Todd Young of Indiana and Josh Hawley of Missouri flipped on their previous votes to advance the resolution, splitting support at 50-50 — and delivering a victory to Trump, who had strongly criticized Republican senators who earlier defected from the administration.

Sens. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, Susan Collins of Maine and Rand Paul of Kentucky voted to keep the effort alive in the Senate. Paul is the only Republican co-sponsor of the bill. Democratic Sen. Tim Kaine of Virginia was the leading Democratic co-sponsor.

Young said while he "strongly" believes Congress must be involved in any decisions about the commit-

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ment of U.S. troops, administration officials assured him that is not the state of play in Venezuela.

"After numerous conversations with senior national security officials, I have received assurances that there are no American troops in Venezuela. I've also received a commitment that if President Trump were to determine American forces are needed in major military operations in Venezuela, the Administration will come to Congress in advance to ask for an authorization of force," Young said in a written statement after he cast his vote.

Rare rebuke doesn't last

The vote came less than a week after Young and Hawley were among the five Senate Republicans who broke with party ranks to move the resolution across an initial procedural hurdle — a rare rebuke of Trump from some in his own party.

Trump pointedly attacked the five GOP senators after they voted, writing on his Truth Social platform that the lawmakers "should never be elected to office again."

Senate Republicans argued a resolution to rein in Trump's military actions against Venezuela is not relevant because "there's no troops there, there is nothing to terminate," as Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chair Jim Risch said on the floor ahead of the vote.

"Now, I know some of my colleagues will argue that a vote for this resolution is a prospective statement about limiting future action in Venezuela. That's not what it says. They argue, 'we still have ships in the Caribbean, and clearly the president is ready to invade again,' they say. But again, that is not what the resolution says. ... No language in this resolution addresses future action," said Risch, R-Idaho, who moved to table the measure.

The vote came 11 days after U.S. special forces apprehended Venezuela's president, Nicolás Maduro, and his wife, Cilia Flores, from their bedroom during a surprise overnight raid. The couple was wanted by U.S. authorities on federal drug and conspiracy charges.

The vote also comes after a monthslong bombing campaign on small boats in the Caribbean Sea and eastern Pacific Ocean in which U.S. strikes killed more than 115 alleged "narco-terrorists," according to U.S. Southern Command.

Within an hour before senators voted to block any advancement of the war powers resolution, Trump posted on social media that he "had a very good call" Thursday morning with Venezuela's interim President Delcy Rodríguez.

"We are making tremendous progress, as we help Venezuela stabilize and recover. Many topics were discussed, including Oil, Minerals, Trade and, of course, National Security. This partnership between the United States of America and Venezuela will be a spectacular one FOR ALL. Venezuela will soon be great and prosperous again, perhaps more so than ever before!" Trump wrote on his own platform, Truth Social.

Trump hosted oil executives at the White House Friday for a meeting on potential investment in Venezuela's oil industry. Prior to the meeting, the president announced the South American nation had already agreed to give the U.S. between 30 million and 50 million barrels of oil. Trump said he would control the money made from the sale.

'We are heavily engaged'

Paul and Democratic sponsors of the war powers resolution vehemently disagreed with the GOP statements about the U.S. presence in and around Venezuela.

"You don't have to be a great expert in military affairs to know that we are heavily engaged," said Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, a New York Democrat, ahead of the vote.

"Donald Trump says we're not engaged in hostilities? Tell that to the 16,000 U.S. service members currently deployed in the Caribbean. Tell that to our service members on the Ford carrier strike force. Look at the Marine expeditionary unit operating in the region," Schumer said. "Donald Trump is turning the Caribbean into a dangerous powder keg — and Congress must rein him in before one mistake ignites a larger, more unstable conflict."

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Kaine likened the Republicans' procedural move to "a parliamentary gag rule on discussion of this military operation."

"If this cause and if this legal basis were so righteous and so lawful, the administration and its supporters would not be so afraid to have this debate before the public and the United States Senate," Kaine said on the floor ahead of the vote.

Paul said the administration's claim that Venezuela is not an official war is "an absurdity."

"The invasion of another country, blockading of a country and removing another country's leader, to my mind, clearly, is war," Paul said on the floor ahead of the vote.

U.S. Southern Command declined to confirm Wednesday the exact number of troops and warships present in the region.

Venezuelan Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello said more than 100 were killed in the raid, according to numerous media outlets that posted a video of his statement. The Cuban government announced on Facebook 32 of its citizens were among the dead.

Seven U.S. troops were injured in the incursion, according to the Pentagon. Five returned to work within days after the attack, while two were still recovering as of Jan. 8. Pentagon officials declined to comment further on their conditions Wednesday.

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

Trump signs law to allow whole milk in school lunches

BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump signed a law Wednesday that will restore whole milk in federally subsidized school lunches.

The dairy staple — out of school meal programs for more than a decade amid a broader push to curb childhood obesity — will soon return to school cafeterias under the law.

Trump said during a signing ceremony in the Oval Office that the Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act will "ensure that millions of school-aged children have access to high-quality milk as we make America healthy again."

Seated with a jug of milk on the Resolute Desk, Trump said the changes will also be "major victories for the American dairy farmers who we love and who voted for me in great numbers."

White House ceremony

Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins celebrated the legislation becoming law and said her department would post Wednesday the "new rulemaking that is necessary to get whole milk back into school lunches."

Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. also lauded Trump's efforts and described the measure as a "long overdue correction of the school nutrition policy that puts children's health first."

Trump was also joined by Dr. Ben Carson, national advisor for nutrition, health, and housing at USDA, along with Democratic Sen. Peter Welch of Vermont, GOP Sens. John Boozman of Arkansas, Mike Crapo of Idaho and Roger Marshall of Kansas, Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick and advocates who supported the bill.

Rep. Glenn "GT" Thompson of Pennsylvania, who chairs the House Agriculture Committee, and Rep. Tim Walberg of Michigan, chair of the House Committee on Education and Workforce, also attended the ceremony.

The U.S. House passed the bill in December, following unanimous passage in the Senate in November. Welch and Marshall, along with Pennsylvania Sens. Dave McCormick, a Republican, and John Fetterman, a Democrat, introduced the measure in the Senate.

Thompson and Democratic Rep. Kim Schrier of Washington state brought corresponding legislation in the House.

What the new law does

Under the law, schools that are part of the USDA's National School Lunch Program can offer "flavored and unflavored organic or nonorganic whole, reduced-fat, low-fat, and fat-free fluid milk and lactose-free fluid milk."

The program — which provides free or low-cost lunches in public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions — saw nearly 29.4 million children participate on a typical day during the 2023-2024 school year, according to the Food Research & Action Center.

The schools can also provide "nondairy beverages that are nutritionally equivalent to fluid milk and meet the nutritional standards established by" the Agriculture secretary.

The law exempts milk fat from being considered saturated fat as it applies to schools' "allowable average saturated fat content of a meal."

Parents and guardians, as well as physicians, can also offer a written statement for their student to receive a nondairy milk substitute.

Michael Dykes, president and CEO of the International Dairy Foods Association, celebrated the bill becoming law in a Wednesday statement.

Dykes dubbed the law a "win for our children, parents, and school nutrition leaders, giving schools the flexibility to offer the flavored and unflavored milk options, across all healthy fat levels, that meet students' needs and preferences."

The signing marked the second major nutrition policy change this month. The U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services released the 2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which encourages more full-fat dairy and protein.

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

Abortion pill safety review at FDA targeted by frustrated Republicans, advocates

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT

WASHINGTON — Republicans on a key U.S. Senate committee on Wednesday called on the Food and Drug Administration to wrap up its ongoing safety review of medication abortion and pressed for the Trump administration to once again require in-person dispensing.

Democrats on the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee argued women, not politicians, are in the best position to determine whether to ask for a prescription for mifepristone.

Louisiana Republican Sen. Bill Cassidy, chairman of the panel, said he hopes FDA Commissioner Marty Makary will agree to testify before the committee on the process in the future, though he didn't set a deadline.

"At an absolute minimum, the previous in-person safeguards should be restored and it should be done immediately," Cassidy said.

Republicans and anti-abortion organizations have become increasingly skeptical about the FDA's review after news broke in December that Makary wanted to delay its release until after the November midterm elections.

Washington Democratic Sen. Patty Murray questioned Cassidy's reasons for holding the hearing, saying more than "160 high-quality studies have been conducted and millions of women around the world use mifepristone safely every year with fewer complications, by the way, than Viagra or penicillin."

Supreme Court case

Access to mifepristone, one of two pharmaceuticals used in medication abortion, which is FDA-approved

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for up to 10 weeks gestation, surged to the forefront after the U.S. Supreme Court ended the nationwide right to abortion in 2022.

Many Republican state legislatures have moved to bar access to mifepristone for abortions, while Democratic states have enacted shield laws to protect health care providers who prescribe and ship it to people in states with limited or no access.

Dr. Nisha Verma, a fellow at Physicians for Reproductive Health in Atlanta, testified before the committee that "the science on mifepristone's safety and effectiveness is long-standing and settled."

"Over the past 25 years, medication abortion using mifepristone and misoprostol has been rigorously studied and proven safe and effective in over 100 high-quality, peer-reviewed studies," Verma said. "Extensive data show that medication abortion through telehealth is equally safe and effective and provides vital access for those who live in rural areas and in the growing number of maternity care deserts in the country."

Verma contended the likely reason for the hearing was not genuine concern from Republicans about the safety and efficacy of mifepristone but "because people in this room feel uncomfortable with abortion."

"And that's okay, and we can talk about that," Verma said. "And we can have an honest conversation about that and complexity and the reasons that my patients need abortion care. But we should not pretend that this is an issue of the science."

Louisiana attorney general testifies

Louisiana Attorney General Elizabeth Murrill, a Republican, criticized the FDA's decision during the Biden administration to allow prescriptions via telehealth and for the pharmaceuticals to be shipped, sometimes into states that bar their use.

"Shield laws in some states protect providers from liability and effectively nullify laws in other states," Murrill said. "Their purpose is to make it more difficult to sue or prosecute individuals in those states."

Indiana Republican Sen. Jim Banks expressed frustration that FDA Commissioner Makary was not among the witnesses testifying at the hearing and urged the agency to release the results of its review of mifepristone quickly.

"I'm disappointed that the FDA under Dr. Makary's leadership hasn't moved faster to restore the in-person dispensing requirement and strengthen the (Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategies) program for mifepristone," Banks said. "I hope the rumors are false, some of them are in print, that the agency is intentionally slow-walking its study on mifepristone health risks."

Emily G. Hilliard, press secretary for the Department of Health and Human Services, which includes the FDA, wrote in a statement the department "is conducting a study of reported adverse events associated with mifepristone to assess whether the FDA's risk mitigation program continues to provide appropriate protections for women."

"The FDA's scientific review process is thorough and takes the time necessary to ensure decisions are grounded in gold-standard science," Hilliard wrote. "Dr. Makary is upholding that standard as part of the Department's commitment to rigorous, evidence-based review."

Cassidy said after Banks raised his concerns that he hopes to have Makary testify "before the committee very soon and we've been speaking with the FDA to facilitate discussion on this and other issues."

Cassidy added that HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. "did promise to come back and we have requested that he come back and testify."

Republicans, Family Research Council urge action by FDA

During a press conference after the hearing, Cassidy joined a handful of other GOP lawmakers and Family Research Council President Tony Perkins to further press the Trump administration to change the prescription guidelines for mifepristone.

Perkins said the Trump administration could change FDA guidelines around how mifepristone is prescribed and distributed "overnight" if it wanted to.

He also said it should immediately begin enforcing The Comstock Act, an 1873 law that could block

shipping medication abortion.

"This is a two-step solution. One, is the in-person requirement being reestablished, the medical examinations to ensure that the women, their lives, are not put at risk," Perkins said. "But then also ... simply enforcing the law as it pertains to Comstock."

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

Visa processing for immigrants from 75 nations frozen by Trump administration

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA

WASHINGTON — The State Department announced Wednesday it would suspend all visa processing for immigrants hailing from 75 countries because they are deemed likely to need governmental assistance in the United States, known as a "public charge."

The State Department did not answer States Newsroom's inquiry as to when the policy would take effect or a list of the 75 countries in question. The State Department, in a social media post, listed several that would be affected, including Somalia, Haiti, Iran and Eritrea.

"The State Department will pause immigrant visa processing from 75 countries whose migrants take welfare from the American people at unacceptable rates," the State Department wrote. "The freeze will remain active until the U.S. can ensure that new immigrants will not extract wealth from the American people."

It will take effect Jan. 21 and other countries affected include Afghanistan and Russia, according to The Associated Press.

The Department of Homeland Security in November published a notice for proposed rulemaking that outlined major changes to how immigration officials assess whether certain immigrants are likely to become a public charge and if that constitutes grounds for inadmissibility, meaning a noncitizen would be ineligible for admission or adjustment of their immigration status.

During President Donald Trump's first administration, he tried to broaden the definition of public charge to include any immigrant who had received certain public benefits for more than 12 months in a 36-month period. The move was tied up in the courts.

One of the earliest federal immigration laws is an 1882 law that barred the immigration of people to the U.S. if they were likely to become a public charge. The Clinton administration in 1999 formally defined public charge as those who were dependent on cash assistance, such as food assistance.

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

Judge weighs Trump administration limits on congressional visits to immigration facilities

Previous ruling put temporary block on policy by Noem that required seven days notice

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA

WASHINGTON — U.S. District Court Judge Jia Cobb Wednesday probed whether the Trump administration has violated her court order, after Minnesota lawmakers said they were denied an oversight visit to a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility following a deadly shooting by an immigration officer in Minneapolis.

Democratic Reps. Ilhan Omar, Angie Craig and Kelly Morrison of Minnesota said they were denied entry

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to the Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Building in Minneapolis last weekend.

An attorney representing the lawmakers, Christine L. Coogle, asked Cobb to make it clear to the Trump administration that her stay order is in place.

Last month, Cobb issued a temporary block on a policy by Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem that required seven days notice for lawmakers to conduct oversight visits at ICE facilities.

Cobb found Noem violated a 2019 appropriations law, referred to as Section 527, that allows for unannounced oversight visits at facilities that hold immigrants.

"If the government is using 527 funds to exclude members of Congress from (ICE) facilities, that does run afoul of my order," Cobb said during Wednesday's hearing.

Dems eye DHS funding

As the Trump administration has carried out an aggressive immigration campaign, and with Democrats the minority party in both chambers of Congress, unannounced oversight visits to ICE facilities are one of the few tools Democrats can use. The other way they could try to counter the enforcement push is through appropriations to the Department of Homeland Security.

For example, the Congressional Progressive Caucus, which is made up of nearly 100 Democrats, vowed on Tuesday to vote against any DHS appropriations bill unless major changes are made at ICE regarding immigration enforcement.

Separately, Democrats on Wednesday introduced articles of impeachment against Noem. One count is connected to the denial of oversight visits.

New Noem policy after Renee Good killing

One day after federal immigration officer Jonathan Ross killed 37-year-old Renee Good in Minneapolis, Noem issued a new memo for members of Congress who want to conduct oversight visits at ICE facilities.

She required a seven-day notice, nearly identical to the policy that initially prompted the suit from Democrats last year.

Noem argued in her new policy that because those federal ICE facilities are using funds through the spending and tax cuts package, and not the DHS appropriations bill, they are therefore exempt from unannounced oversight visits by members of Congress.

In an emergency request, Democrats argued the funds DHS is using apply under Section 527, and DHS is violating Cobb's stay.

Cobb said on Wednesday she could not make a determination if her order was violated until she can get a clear answer from the Trump administration as to the source of the funds. She directed Department of Justice lawyers to determine what it is.

Funding stream question

In court filings, DOJ argued the facilities are funded through the "One, Big, Beautiful Bill Act" passed and signed into law last year, and that DHS does not need to comply with Section 527.

The OBBBA, passed through a congressional process called reconciliation, is allowed to adjust federal spending even though it is not an appropriations law.

Coogle said until OBBAA, the only funding for ICE came from appropriations, and argued the two funding streams can't be separated. She said the Trump administration is trying to "make a game here" with appropriations law.

"Appropriations are not a game. They are the law," Coogle said.

The House Democrats who sued include Joe Neguse of Colorado, Adriano Espaillat of New York, Jamie Raskin of Maryland, Robert Garcia of California, J. Luis Correa of California, Jason Crow of Colorado, Veronica Escobar of Texas, Dan Goldman of New York, Jimmy Gomez of California, Raul Ruiz of California, Bennie Thompson of Mississippi and Norma Torres of California.

Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include immigration, congressional

policy and legal challenges with a focus on how those policies impact the lives of immigrants and migrants coming to the U.S.

Campaign funds can pay for child care and security in some cases, SD attorney general says

Democratic lawmaker says request for advisory opinion was linked to shootings of lawmakers in Minnesota

BY: JOHN HULT

South Dakota's attorney general issued an opinion Tuesday saying that candidates for office and elected officials can use campaign funds to pay child care and security costs under some circumstances.

Marty Jackley's official opinion came in response to a question on the issue from Democratic Senate Minority Leader Liz Larson of Sioux Falls.

State law doesn't "forbid or permit" the use of campaign funds for security or child care, Jackley's opinion says, but there are broad outlines on what constitutes acceptable uses.

Campaign money can be spent on things directly related to a campaign, "incident to being a public official" or former public official, or donated to other campaigns or campaign committees, the opinion says.

State laws offer "broad descriptions" on what constitutes campaign activity, which Jackley says was intentional and meant to avoid excluding some activities those laws' authors may not have considered.

The Federal Election Commission, he notes in the opinion, "explicitly permits candidates for federal office to use campaign contributions for childcare expenses incurred during the candidate's political campaign."

"As of the date of this letter, fifteen states have enacted similar laws," the opinion says.

"These states, including our neighbors Minnesota and Montana, permit a candidate to use campaign funds to pay reasonable and necessary childcare or dependent care expenses incurred because of the campaign."

A smaller number of states, he wrote, now recognize security spending as an acceptable use of funds.

Jackley concluded that such expenses may be permissible "so long as there is a clear nexus to the campaign or office and are not for personal benefit."

"The Legislature has the power to create and revise statutes and has the duty to clarify the relevant statutes if desired," Jackley wrote.

Senator: Clarity request born of safety concerns

Security was the primary reason for the request, Larson said. Concerns over the safety of candidates have grown since the killing last year of Minnesota state Rep. Melissa Hortman and her husband, Larson said. The man who killed the Hortmans shot and wounded Minnesota state Sen. John Hoffman and his wife the same day.

"This is a dangerous role that we're playing at certain times," Larson said. "So we want a clarification on that."

Security spending wouldn't necessarily take the form of paid security guards, Larson said, although it could. Campaign funds could be used to pay for more basic security features like deadbolts at campaign offices or surveillance cameras.

"We're not governor-level," Larson said of state lawmakers. "We don't need a full entourage. But sometimes there are things that you want to have taken care of."

Wrapping child care into the request for clarification made sense, Larson said, as that's become a more common question around the country for parents who aim for political office.

Former Democratic Sen. Reynold Nesiba of Sioux Falls brought a bill to legalize the use of campaign dollars for child care in 2024, with Larson as a co-sponsor. The Senate State Affairs Committee rejected that bill 8-1.

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.

Iowa House introduces bill to ban CO2 pipelines from using eminent domain

South Dakota passed prohibition last year affecting proposed Summit Carbon Solutions project

BY: CAMI KOONS

A House subcommittee advanced a bill Tuesday that would prohibit carbon dioxide pipeline operators from exercising eminent domain for the purpose of building a carbon sequestration pipeline.

Landowners and some Iowa Republicans have been opposed to the use of eminent domain, or the taking of private property with just compensation for public use, in relation to a proposed carbon sequestration pipeline.

The House passed a similar bill last year, and a faction of senators attempted to amend a different pipeline-related bill to an eminent domain ban, but the effort was not accepted on the Senate floor.

Rep. Steven Holt, R-Denison, said the language in House Study Bill 507 is "as simple as it can get." Holt said the bill would not stop the pipeline from being built, but would protect Iowans' private property rights.

"Economic development is of profound importance, but it does not trump fundamentally constitutional rights," Holt said. "The use of government power to seek property for a private economic development project is not constitutional."

Opponents of the bill argued it would stall economic growth in the state by blocking construction of the Summit Carbon Solutions pipeline, a project that would connect to ethanol plants in Iowa and surrounding states and transport sequestered carbon dioxide from the plants to underground storage.

This would give Iowa's renewable fuel industry access to the ultra-low carbon fuel market.

The project has already been affected by a South Dakota law banning the use of eminent domain for carbon sequestration pipelines. Recent filings indicate Summit may change course from its original plan to sequester the carbon dioxide in North Dakota, in order to avoid crossing through South Dakota.

Jake Ketzner, speaking on behalf of Summit Carbon Solutions, said HSB 507 would "kill" the project and take away Iowa's ability to compete in new and emerging markets for low carbon ethanol.

Ketzner said the company instead supports a bill that widens the pipeline corridor beyond the route in its state permit to allow the pipeline to find a route without having to cross through unwilling landowner's property.

"This bill is a ban," Ketzner said. "We can do better."

Senate Majority Leader Mike Klimesh, R-Spillville, has said he plans to file a bill related to eminent domain. While not yet filed, Klimesh has said his bill, rather than banning eminent domain, would allow pipeline operators to deviate from their approved routes to instead find passage with willing landowners.

Klimesh has said his vision for dealing with the controversial topic, is similar to an amendment filed by Sen. Mike Bousset, R-Ankeny, to the pipeline bill in 2025.

This amendment was opposed by Senate Democrats and a group of Senate Republicans who sided with the majority of House Republicans on the pipeline issue. The pipeline has caused tension within the Iowa Republican Party.

Rep. Charley Thomson, R-Charles City, said the bill boils down to the constitutional rights and protections that Iowans have around property. Thomson said even with the bill, there are still issues of eminent domain that will have to be solved in the state of Iowa.

"The Summit proposal is a clever, but very corrupt perversion of our constitutional system," Thomson said.

Several representatives from labor unions also spoke against the bill and said it would lead to a "direct

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result in job loss for the Iowa trades workers.”

Landowners who testified in favor of the bill said Summit could still build its pipeline if the bill were enacted, but it would protect them from eminent domain.

Pipeline opponents say House is behind them

Earlier in the day, landowners opposed to the pipeline project gathered in the Iowa State Capitol Rotunda to kick off their fifth year lobbying against the project.

Last year marked the first time a pipeline-related bill was taken up in the Senate, and while the bill narrowly passed the chamber, it was vetoed by Gov. Kim Reynolds.

Landowners, wearing their signature red attire, joined in a prayer led by Rockwell City pastor Dillon Brandt. He prayed lawmakers would “seek what is best for the people, the land and future generations.”

Peg Rasmussen, a Montgomery County landowner impacted by the secondproposed phase of Summit’s project, came to the Capitol Tuesday to begin her second year lobbying against the pipeline.

Rasmussen said she felt the House was “solidly behind” the pipeline fighters’ cause, but said the Senate, “as always” will be a challenge.

Rasmussen said Holt’s bill was a “simple clean bill.”

In her veto message, Reynolds said House File 639 had “vague legal standards and sweeping mandates” rather than “clear, careful lines.”

Rasmussen said landowners, about 80 of whom were in attendance Tuesday, have asked some of the senators who have been previously on their side to submit an eminent domain ban — like HSB 507 — in the Senate.

She said that while she hasn’t seen the language of Klimesh’s bill, she doubts it’s “as short and simple” as HSB 507.

What about the Senate bill?

Holt argued that a bill widening the pipeline corridor may reduce the use of eminent domain for the project, but it does not protect landowners as eminent domain could still be used.

Tom Hayes, president of South Central Iowa Federation of Labor, spoke in opposition to the bill and said for all of the pipeline projects he has worked on, eminent domain was a problem.

“This bill can knock out only the carbon capture pipeline,” Hayes said.

He argued a bill that allowed pipeline operators to look outside of their approved routes would go further in preventing the use of eminent domain on private property owners.

Holt and Thomson held that carbon capture pipelines do not rise to the level of a public use that is required for the use of eminent domain.

“I will continue to support ethanol, I will continue to support corn growers, and I will continue to support agriculture, but they do not trump the constitutional rights of the good men and women sitting in this room,” Holt said.

Holt advanced the bill to the House Judiciary Committee.

This story was originally produced by Iowa Capital Dispatch, which is part of States Newsroom, a nonprofit news network which includes South Dakota Searchlight, and is supported by grants and a coalition of donors as a 501c(3) public charity.

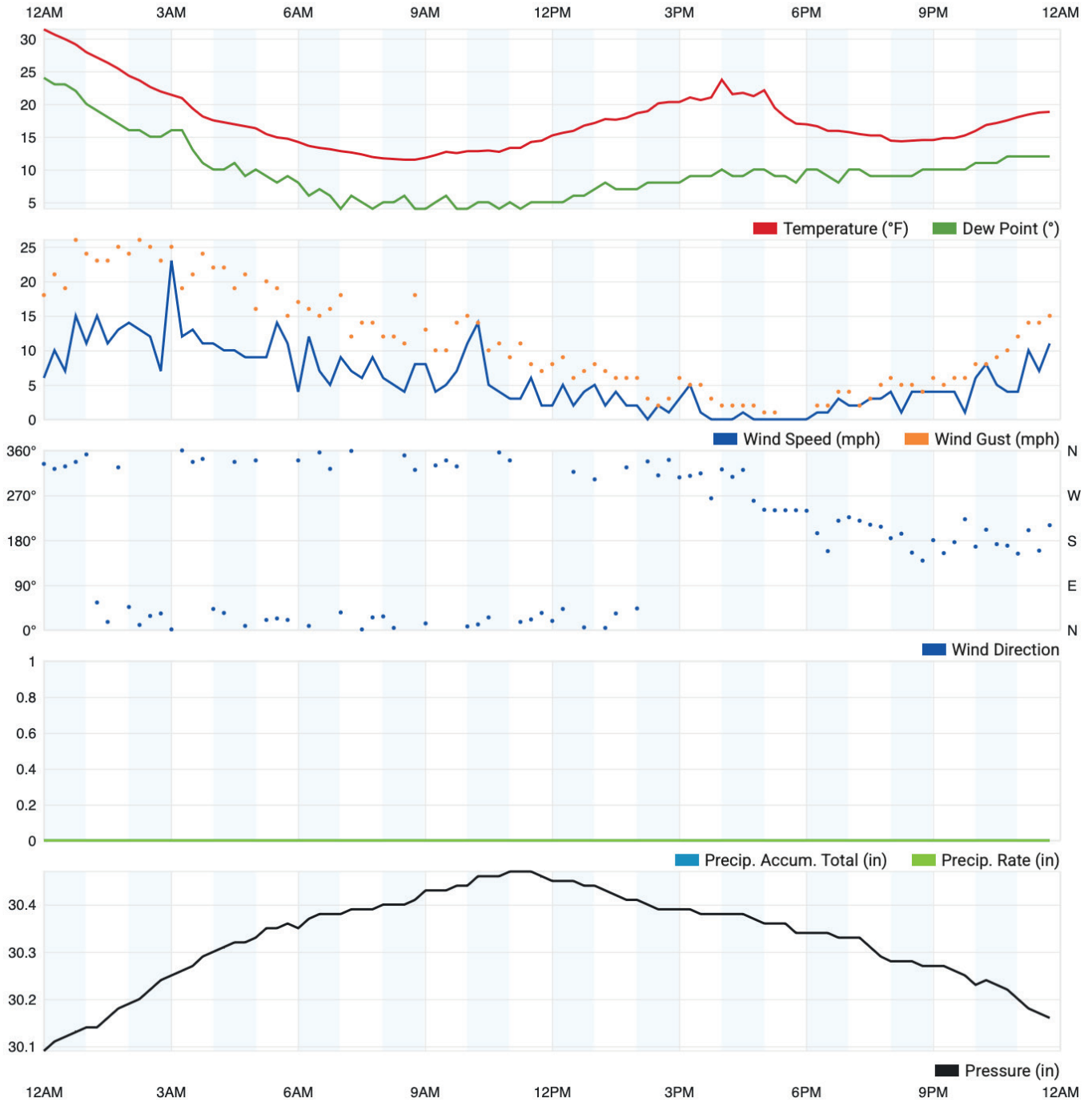
Cami Koons is an Iowa Capital Dispatch reporter covering agriculture and the environment. She previously worked at publications in Kansas and Missouri, covering rural affairs.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

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Today



High: 42 °F

Partly Sunny then Mostly Sunny and Breezy

Tonight



Low: 14 °F

Slight Chance Snow and Blustery then Chance Snow and Windy

Friday



High: 20 °F ↓↓

Snow Likely and Areas Blowing Snow

Friday Night



Low: -3 °F

Chance Snow and Blustery

Saturday



High: 6 °F

Cold and Blustery



High Wind Watch in Effect

January 14, 2026
3:29 PM

Winds of 35-45 mph and gusts up to 65 mph Thursday night through Friday

Key Messages:

- Northwest winds Thursday night through the day Friday
- Gusts of 45 to 65 mph
- Strongest winds across Central/North Central South Dakota
- **Strong winds may combine with falling snow to cause significant visibility reductions!**

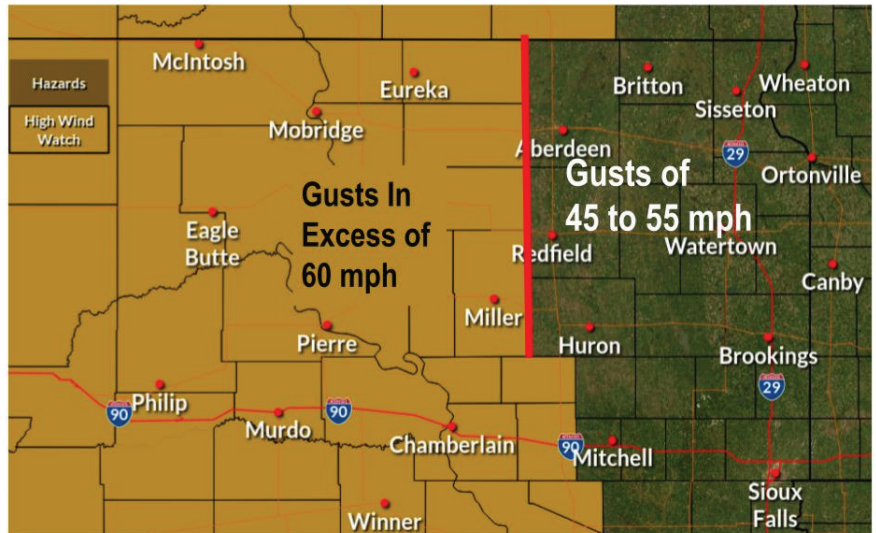
NEW

What Has Changed?

- **High Wind Watch** remains in effect for areas west of the James River Valley.

Next Scheduled Update: Thursday Morning

High Wind Watch Thursday Evening - Friday Evening



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

A system will bring high winds and snow to the region late Thursday through the day Friday. Winds across the area will gust out at between 45 to 65 mph. The combination of winds and snow will potentially result in hazardous travel conditions. We could also see some rain/snow mix early in the system, and with falling temperatures could result in a flash freeze to add another layer of travel difficulties.

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Snowfall Timing

- Snowfall Timing: When to anticipate precipitation moving into your area...
- Most of the snowfall moves through Thursday evening through about mid-day Friday (Highlighted Area)
- Highlighted timeframe is also when most **Accumulation** is expected

- Rain +

- Snow +

- Wintry Mix +

	Thu								Fri								Sat
	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am
Aberdeen	15%	5%	5%	5%	10%	15%	35%	40%	65%	65%	60%	60%	35%	35%	15%	15%	15%
Britton	20%	10%	5%	5%	20%	30%	45%	55%	80%	80%	75%	75%	55%	55%	20%	20%	15%
Brookings	5%	10%	10%	10%	10%	15%	25%	25%	55%	55%	75%	75%	45%	45%	10%	10%	5%
Chamberlain	5%	0%	5%	5%	5%	5%	10%	10%	30%	30%	50%	50%	30%	30%	10%	10%	10%
Clark	10%	5%	5%	5%	10%	15%	20%	35%	75%	75%	85%	85%	70%	70%	25%	25%	25%
Eagle Butte	0%	0%	5%	5%	5%	10%	10%	15%	25%	25%	25%	25%	10%	10%	5%	5%	5%
Ellendale	10%	5%	5%	5%	10%	25%	50%	55%	65%	65%	55%	55%	25%	25%	10%	10%	5%
Eureka	5%	5%	0%	5%	5%	15%	40%	50%	65%	65%	40%	40%	20%	20%	5%	5%	10%
Gettysburg	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%	10%	15%	20%	60%	60%	55%	55%	15%	15%	5%	5%	10%
Huron	10%	0%	5%	5%	10%	10%	25%	25%	55%	55%	80%	80%	60%	60%	10%	10%	15%
Kennebec	0%	0%	0%	5%	5%	5%	5%	10%	25%	25%	50%	50%	25%	25%	10%	10%	10%
McIntosh	0%	5%	5%	5%	5%	10%	30%	40%	60%	60%	25%	25%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%
Milbank	15%	25%	5%	10%	15%	20%	30%	45%	75%	75%	65%	65%	20%	20%	15%	15%	5%
Miller	10%	0%	5%	5%	5%	10%	15%	20%	60%	60%	75%	75%	40%	40%	10%	10%	15%
Mobridge	0%	5%	5%	0%	5%	10%	25%	35%	60%	60%	30%	30%	10%	10%	5%	5%	5%
Murdo	0%	0%	0%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	20%	20%	40%	40%	25%	25%	10%	10%	15%
Pierre	0%	0%	0%	5%	5%	5%	5%	15%	30%	30%	50%	50%	20%	20%	10%	10%	5%
Redfield	15%	0%	5%	5%	15%	15%	20%	30%	65%	65%	70%	70%	40%	40%	15%	15%	20%
Sisseton	25%	15%	5%	10%	15%	25%	50%	60%	85%	85%	70%	70%	35%	35%	20%	20%	5%
Watertown	15%	10%	10%	5%	15%	20%	25%	40%	70%	70%	75%	75%	50%	50%	15%	15%	5%
Webster	15%	10%	5%	5%	20%	25%	35%	50%	80%	80%	80%	80%	50%	50%	20%	20%	10%
Wheaton	20%	30%	10%	10%	25%	40%	55%	65%	85%	85%	50%	50%	15%	15%	10%	10%	5%

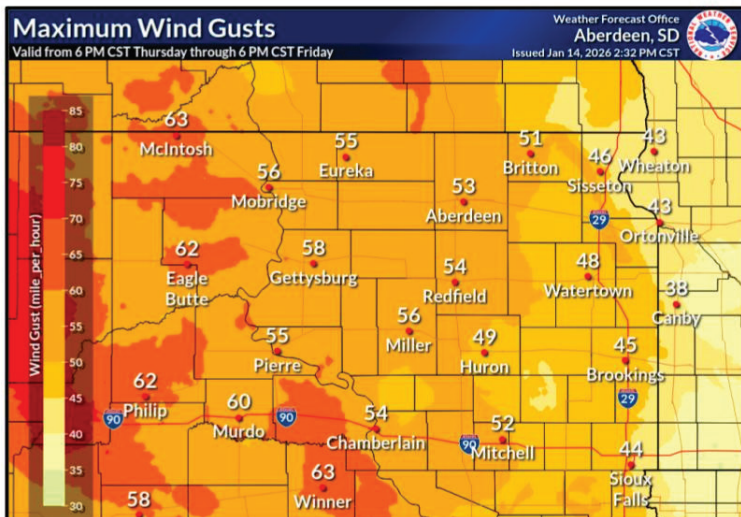


Maximum Wind Gusts and Timing

January 14, 2026
4:44 PM

Strong Winds Expected Thursday and Friday

- Winds increase Thursday and remain strong through Friday.
 - Sustained 35-45 mph with gusts up to 65 mph are expected heading into Thursday night.
- The highest wind gusts expected over central South Dakota.
- Winds may blow loose outdoor objects, damage property & cause power outages. *Travel could be difficult, especially for high profile vehicles.*



Maximum Wind Gust Forecast (mph)

	1/15 Thu				1/16 Fri				12am
	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	
Aberdeen	20↑	31↑	44↑	41↑	45↑	52↑	51↑	41↑	31↓
Britton	24↑	30↑	44↑	41↑	45↑	51↑	49↑	39↑	30↓
Chamberlain	12↑	31↑	40↑	40↑	48↑	56↑	59↑	39↑	28↓
Clark	22↑	26↑	43↑	41↑	45↑	49↑	51↑	41↑	32↓
Eagle Butte	24↑	44↑	53↑	51↑	59↑	62↑	61↑	48↑	38↓
Eureka	18↑	40↑	49↑	47↑	52↑	54↑	55↑	44↑	33↓
Gettysburg	20↑	39↑	48↑	45↑	52↑	58↑	58↑	44↑	33↓
McIntosh	24↑	46↑	58↑	53↑	56↑	62↑	63↑	48↑	37↓
Milbank	15↑	24↑	38↑	38↑	38↑	44↑	45↑	37↑	28↓
Miller	20↑	35↑	45↑	45↑	51↑	56↑	56↑	39↑	31↓
Mobridge	17↑	37↑	46↑	46↑	51↑	56↑	54↑	43↑	32↓
Murdo	20↑	39↑	49↑	47↑	53↑	59↑	60↑	47↑	36↓
Pierre	10↑	33↑	45↑	45↑	48↑	55↑	55↑	44↑	30↓
Redfield	20↑	29↑	45↑	40↑	48↑	54↑	55↑	41↑	32↓
Sisseton	18↑	28↑	40↑	40↑	43↑	45↑	46↑	39↑	29↓
Watertown	20↑	26↑	40↑	41↑	44↑	47↑	47↑	38↑	28↓
Webster	22↑	28↑	40↑	41↑	43↑	47↑	47↑	40↑	30↓
Wheaton	20↑	22↑	35↑	36↑	38↑	43↑	41↑	36↑	30↓

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 31 °F at 12:00 AM

Low Temp: 11 °F at 8:26 AM

Wind: 27 mph at 2:17 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 48 in 1942

Record Low: -42 in 2009

Average High: 23

Average Low: 2

Average Precip in Jan.: 0.30

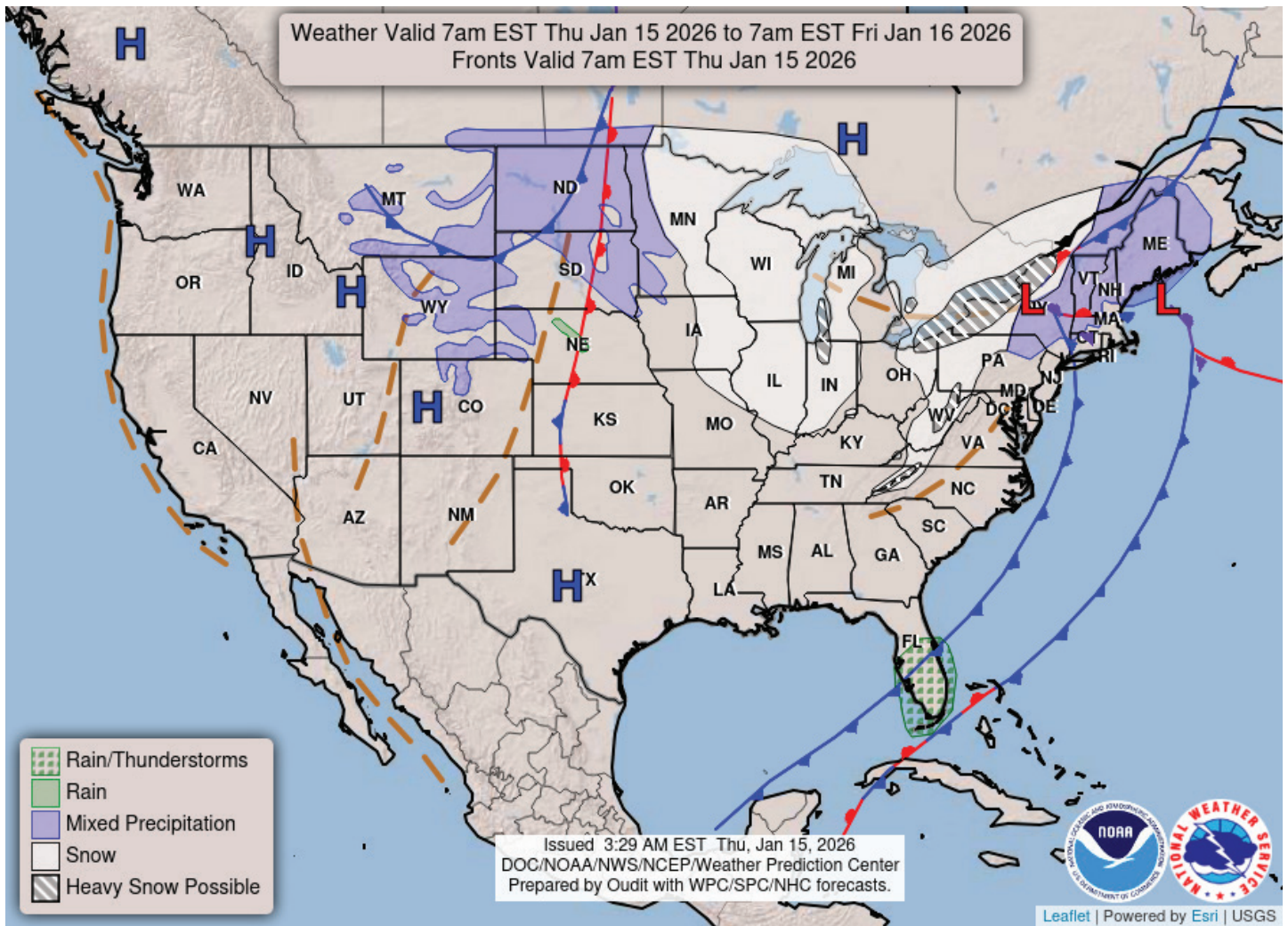
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.30

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 5:14 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:07 am



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Today in Weather History

January 15, 1982: Snowfall amounts of one to four inches and powerful northwest winds of 35 to 45 mph with gusts to 60 mph caused blizzard conditions with widespread drifting across much of South Dakota and Minnesota from the early morning of the 15th to mid-afternoon on the 16th. Wind chills were lowered to 50 to 80 degrees below zero, and visibilities were near zero across most areas. One death was attributed to exposure. There were numerous weather-related accidents. Some of the major accidents included; a truck blown off Interstate 90 near Murdo, injuring the driver, a truck blown off Highway 281, turned upside down in a ditch, and a truck slamming into a bridge on Interstate 90 near Murdo. The extreme cold killed numerous fruit trees at a nursery in Watertown.

January 15, 1985: Heavy snow fell in central and south-central South Dakota from the early evening of the 15th to around noon on the 16th, with areas around Pierre receiving up to 18 inches. Generally, 5 to 10 inches fell with numerous minor traffic accidents reported. Interstate 90 had a no travel advisory in a 95-mile stretch from Kimball to Murdo until the afternoon of the 16th due to low visibility and heavy drifting. Also, many schools and businesses were closed. Some snowfall amounts included 4 inches at Kennebec, 6 inches at Murdo, and 10 inches at Pierre.

January 15, 2009: An Arctic high pressure settled in on the morning of the 15th, bringing the region's coldest temperatures in many years. The combination of a fresh and deep snowpack, clear skies, and light winds allowed temperatures to fall to record levels at many locations on the 15th. Daytime highs remained well below zero across the area. This was one of the coldest days that most areas experienced since the early 1970s. The records were broken by 1 to as much as 7 degrees.

1852: In 1852, the long, cold winter froze the Susquehanna River in Maryland to a depth of 2 to 3 feet, preventing all ferry service. Railroad officials overcame this perplexing situation by laying tracks across the ice, with trestles for either bank's inclines. During the several weeks from January 15 to February 29, approximately 1,300 cars with a total weight of 10,000 tons were hauled across the river from Havre de Grace, Maryland, to Perryville, Maryland.

1932 — Up to two inches of snow whitened the Los Angeles basin of California. The Los Angeles Civic Center reported an inch of snow, and even the beaches of Santa Monica were whitened with snow, in what proved to be a record snowstorm for Los Angeles. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1952 — A six day snowstorm was in progress in the western U.S. The storm produced 44 inches of snow at Marlette Lake NV, 52 inches at Sun Valley ID, and 149 inches at Tahoe CA, establishing single storm records for each of those three states. In addition, 24 hour snowfall totals of 22 inches at the University of Nevada, and 26 inches at Arco ID, established records for those two states. The streamliner, 'City of San Francisco' was snowbound in the Sierra Nevada Range, near Donner Summit. (David Ludlum)

1967: The Green Bay Packers beat the Kansas City Chiefs, 35-10, in Super Bowl I at the Memorial Coliseum in Los Angeles. From the weather station at the USC campus in downtown LA, the high temperature was 79 degrees, and the low was 51. There was a light west wind.

1972: In Flint, Michigan, the daytime temperature rose to only -3 degrees. This is the second coldest maximum temperature recorded in the city of Flint since 1921. Detroit's high temperature was zero.

1987 — A powerful storm over the Southern Plateau and the Southern Rockies produced 24 inches of snow at Colorado Springs CO, including 22 inches in 24 hours, a January record. High winds in the southwestern U.S. gusted to 65 mph in the Yosemite Valley of California. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — A small storm over the Atlantic Ocean produced heavy snow along the coast of North Carolina. The five inch total at Wilmington NC was their third highest for any storm in January in 117 years of records. (National Weather Summary)

1989 — A storm in the northwestern U.S. produced up to 14 inches of snow in the Cascade Mountain Range. Light snow in the north central U.S. was just enough to push the snowfall total for January at Fargo ND past their previous all-time monthly record of 30.7 inches.

1990 — While one Pacific storm crossed the Central Rockies, another approached the west coast. The northern mountains of Utah were buried under 17 to 35 inches of snow while the mountains of southern Utah received another 12 to 16 inches. Eighteen cities in the central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date as readings warmed into the 50s and 60s. Wichita KS reported a record high of 68 degrees. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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 In Touch Ministries

Daily Devotion

Wholly Available

Believers are called to be God's light in the world.

Matthew 5:13-16: 13 "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.

14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;

15 nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

16 "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Ask yourself this question: When it comes to my faith, what kind of light am I? Is your light a flicker others can see only if they're really looking? Or is it the kind that brightens everything up when you walk into a room? Remember, when even a small flame is strong, it brings light to the whole room. So, as Christians, we ought to "shine," no matter where we are.

Shortsightedness may be what dims our radiance, and it can cause us to miss out on blessings. Before deciding to cooperate with the Lord, we may think we have to see exactly what He plans to do. But we are called just to be faithful ambassadors who trust His Spirit to do the work in people's hearts.

As believers, we are all special—God's "workmanship" is the term used in Ephesians 2:10. We're members of His family, indwelt by the Holy Spirit; His light is the radiance within us. So our life has potential beyond imagination. We have no idea what amazing things the Lord can do through our willingness simply to shine the light of His powerful love.

If you'll pray, "Father, do whatever You want with my life," you can be sure that He'll reveal the next step. God is willing and ready to move in the life of anyone who chooses to be available for Him.

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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paypal.me/paperpaul

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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.13.26

16 40 56 64 66 4

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$230,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 19

DRAW: Mins 36 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.14.26

1 10 23 33 35 6

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$12,980,000

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 34

DRAW: Mins 36 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.14.26

14 17 21 30 36 3

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT 16 Hrs 49 Mins 35

DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.14.26

2 13 25 30 31

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$197,000

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 49

DRAW: Mins 35 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.14.26

6 20 28 47 48 3

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT 2 Days 17 Hrs 18

DRAW: Mins 35 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.14.26

6 24 39 43 51 2

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$179,000,000

NEXT 2 Days 17 Hrs 18

DRAW: Mins 35 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Fear and anger spread after another immigration shooting in Minneapolis

By STEVE KARNOWSKI, ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and HALLIE GOLDEN Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A federal officer shot a man in the leg in Minneapolis after being attacked with a shovel and broom handle, further heightening the sense of fear and anger radiating across the city a week after an immigration agent fatally shot a woman in the head.

Smoke filled the street Wednesday night near the site of the latest shooting as federal officers wearing gas masks and helmets fired tear gas into a small crowd while protesters threw rocks and shot fireworks. Minneapolis Police Chief Brian O'Hara said during a news conference that the gathering was an unlawful assembly and "people need to leave."

Things later began to quiet down at the scene, and by early Thursday fewer demonstrators and law enforcement officers were there.

Such protest scenes have become common on the streets of Minneapolis since a federal agent fatally shot Renee Good on Jan. 7 amid a massive immigration crackdown that has seen thousands of officers sent into the Twin Cities. Agents have yanked people from cars and homes and been confronted by angry bystanders who are demanding that officers pack up and leave.

Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey described the situation as not "sustainable."

"This is an impossible situation that our city is presently being put in and at the same time we are trying to find a way forward to keep people safe, to protect our neighbors, to maintain order," he said.

Frey described a federal force that is five times as big as the city's 600-officer police force and has "invaded" the city, scaring and angering residents, some of whom want the officers to "fight ICE agents." At the same time, the police force is still responsible for their day-to-day work to keep the public safe.

The Department of Homeland Security says it has made more than 2,000 arrests in the state since early December and is vowing to not back down.

Shooting followed chase

In a statement describing the events that led to Wednesday's shooting, Homeland Security said federal law enforcement officers stopped a person from Venezuela who was in the U.S. illegally. The person drove away and crashed into a parked car before taking off on foot, DHS said.

After officers reached the person, two other people arrived from a nearby apartment and all three started attacking the officer, according to DHS.

"Fearing for his life and safety as he was being ambushed by three individuals, the officer fired a defensive shot to defend his life," DHS said.

The two people who came out of the apartment are in custody, it said.

O'Hara said the man shot was in the hospital with a non-life-threatening injury.

The shooting took place about 4.5 miles (7.2 kilometers) north of where Good was killed. O'Hara's account of what happened largely echoed that of Homeland Security.

Clashes in court as well

Earlier Wednesday, a judge gave the Trump administration time to respond to a request to suspend its immigration crackdown in Minnesota, while the Pentagon looked for military lawyers to join what has become a chaotic law enforcement effort in the state.

"What we need most of all right now is a pause. The temperature needs to be lowered," state Assistant Attorney General Brian Carter said during the first hearing in a lawsuit filed by Minnesota and the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Local leaders say the government is violating free speech and other constitutional rights with the surge of law enforcement. U.S. District Judge Katherine Menendez gave the U.S. Justice Department until Monday to file a response to a request for a restraining order.

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Justice Department attorney Andrew Warden suggested the approach set by Menendez was appropriate. The judge is also handling a separate lawsuit challenging the tactics used by Immigration and Customs Enforcement and other federal officers when they encounter protesters and observers. A decision could be released this week.

During a televised speech before Wednesday's shooting, Gov. Tim Walz described Minnesota as being in chaos, saying what's happening in the state "defies belief."

"Let's be very, very clear, this long ago stopped being a matter of immigration enforcement," he said. "Instead, it's a campaign of organized brutality against the people of Minnesota by our own federal government."

Military lawyers may join the surge

CNN, citing an email circulating in the military, says Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth is asking the military branches to identify 40 lawyers known as judge advocate general officers or JAGs, and 25 of them will serve as special assistant U.S. attorneys in Minneapolis.

Pentagon spokesperson Kingsley Wilson appeared to confirm the CNN report by posting it on X with a comment that the military "is proud to support" the Justice Department.

The Pentagon did not immediately respond to emails from The Associated Press seeking more details.

It's the latest step by the Trump administration to dispatch military and civilian attorneys to areas where federal immigration operations are taking place. The Pentagon last week sent 20 lawyers to Memphis, U.S. Attorney D. Michael Dunavant said.

Mark Nevitt, an associate professor at Emory University School of Law and a former Navy JAG, said there's concern that the assignments are taking lawyers away from the military justice system.

"There are not many JAGs but there are over one million members of the military, and they all need legal support," he said.

An official says the agent who killed Good was injured

Jonathan Ross, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer who killed Good, suffered internal bleeding to his torso during the encounter, a Homeland Security official told The Associated Press.

The official spoke to AP on condition of anonymity in order to discuss Ross' medical condition. The official did not provide details about the severity of the injuries, and the agency did not respond to questions about the extent of the bleeding, exactly how he suffered the injury, when it was diagnosed or his medical treatment.

There are many causes of internal bleeding, and they vary in severity from bruising to significant blood loss. Video from the scene showed Ross and other officers walking without obvious difficulty after Good was shot and her Honda Pilot crashed into other vehicles.

She was killed after three ICE officers surrounded her SUV on a snowy street a few blocks from her home.

Bystander video shows one officer ordering Good to open the door and grabbing the handle. As the vehicle begins to move forward, Ross, standing in front, raises his weapon and fires at least three shots at close range. He steps back as the SUV advances and turns.

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem has said Ross was struck by the vehicle and that Good was using her SUV as a weapon — a self-defense claim that has been deeply criticized by Minnesota officials.

Chris Madel, an attorney for Ross, declined to comment on any injuries.

Good's family, meanwhile, has hired a law firm, Romanucci & Blandin, that represented George Floyd's family in a \$27 million settlement with Minneapolis. Floyd, who was Black, died after a white police officer pinned his neck to the ground in the street in May 2020.

The firm said it would conduct its own investigation and publicly share what it learns.

Federal officer shoots person in leg after being attacked during Minneapolis arrest, officials say

By STEVE KARNOWSKI and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A federal officer shot a man in the leg in Minneapolis after being attacked with a

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shovel and broom handle while trying to make an arrest Wednesday, officials said.

Smoke filled the street near the site of the shooting as federal officers and protesters squared off. A group of officers wearing gas masks and helmets fired tear gas and grenades into a small crowd while protesters threw snowballs and chanted, "Our streets."

Such scenes have become common on the streets of Minneapolis since an immigration agent fatally shot Renee Good on Jan. 7. Agents have yanked people from cars and homes and been confronted by angry bystanders who bare demanding that officers pack up and leave.

The Department of Homeland Security said in a statement on the social media platform X that federal law enforcement officers stopped a person from Venezuela who was in the U.S. illegally. The person drove away and crashed into a parked car before taking off on foot, DHS said.

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"Fearing for his life and safety as he was being ambushed by three individuals, the officer fired a defensive shot to defend his life," DHS said.

The two people who came out of the apartment are in custody, it said.

The city of Minneapolis said on X that the man shot was in the hospital with non-life-threatening injuries.

"We understand there is anger," it said. "We ask the public to remain calm."

The shooting took place about 4.5 miles (7.2 kilometers) north of where Good was killed.

Clashes in court as well

Earlier Wednesday, a judge gave the Trump administration time to respond to a request to suspend its immigration crackdown in Minnesota, while the Pentagon looked for military lawyers to join what has become a chaotic law enforcement effort in the state.

"What we need most of all right now is a pause. The temperature needs to be lowered," state Assistant Attorney General Brian Carter said during the first hearing in a lawsuit filed by Minnesota and the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Local leaders say the government is violating free speech and other constitutional rights with the surge of law enforcement. U.S. District Judge Katherine Menendez promised to keep the case "on the front burner" and gave the U.S. Justice Department until Monday to file a response to a request for a restraining order.

The judge said these are "grave and important matters," and that there are few legal precedents to apply to some of the key points in the case.

Justice Department attorney Andrew Warden suggested the approach set by Menendez was appropriate.

The judge is also handling a separate lawsuit challenging the tactics used by Immigration and Customs Enforcement and other federal officers when they encounter protesters and observers. A decision could be released this week.

During a televised speech Wednesday evening, Gov. Tim Walz described Minnesota as being in chaos, saying what's happening in the state "defies belief."

"Let's be very, very clear, this long ago stopped being a matter of immigration enforcement," he said. "Instead, it's a campaign of organized brutality against the people of Minnesota by our own federal government."

Walz added that "accountability" will be coming through the courts.

Military lawyers may join the surge

The Department of Homeland Security says it has made more than 2,000 arrests in the state since early December and is vowing to not back down. The Pentagon is preparing to send military lawyers to Minneapolis to assist.

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Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem has said Ross was struck by the vehicle and that Good was using her SUV as a weapon — a self-defense claim that has been deeply criticized by Minnesota officials.

Chris Madel, an attorney for Ross, declined to comment on any injuries.

'An agent of peace'

Good's family, meanwhile, has hired a law firm, Romanucci & Blandin, that represented George Floyd's family in a \$27 million settlement with Minneapolis. Floyd, who was Black, died after a white police officer pinned his neck to the ground in the street in May 2020.

The firm said Good was following orders to move her car when she was shot. It said it would conduct its own investigation and publicly share what it learns.

"They do not want her used as a political pawn," the firm said, referring to Good and her family, "but rather as an agent of peace for all."

Students march against ICE

Waving signs reading "Love Melts ICE" and "DE-ICE MN," hundreds of teenagers left school in St. Paul and marched in freezing temperatures to the state Capitol for a protest and rally.

The University of Minnesota, meanwhile, informed its 50,000-plus students that there could be online options for some classes when the new term starts next week. President Rebecca Cunningham noted that "violence and protests have come to our doorstep." The campus sits next to the main Somali neighborhood in Minneapolis.

North Dakota State earns 76-65 victory over South Dakota State

By The Associated Press undefined

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — Treyson Anderson scored 20 points as North Dakota State beat South Dakota State 76-65 on Wednesday night.

Anderson also contributed six rebounds for the Bison (15-5, 5-0 Summit League). Trevian Carson scored 14 points while shooting 4 for 7 (3 for 5 from 3-point range) and 3 of 3 from the free-throw line and added six rebounds and three steals. Markhi Strickland finished 6 of 9 from the floor to finish with 12 points.

Jaden Jackson finished with 16 points, eight rebounds, four assists and four steals for the Jackrabbits

(9-10, 2-2). South Dakota State also got 12 points from Joe Sayler. Matthew Mors also had 10 points and seven rebounds.

Grok blocked from undressing images in places where it's illegal, X says

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — Elon Musk's AI chatbot Grok won't be able to edit photos to portray real people in revealing clothing in places where that is illegal, according to a statement posted on X.

The announcement late Wednesday followed a global backlash over sexualized images of women and children, including bans and warnings by some governments.

The pushback included an investigation announced Wednesday by the state of California, the U.S.'s most populous, into the proliferation of nonconsensual sexually explicit material produced using Grok that it said was harassing women and girls.

Initially, media queries about the problem drew only the response, "legacy media lies."

Musk's company, xAI, now says it will geoblock content if it violates laws in a particular place.

"We have implemented technological measures to prevent the Grok account from allowing the editing of images of real people in revealing clothing such as bikinis, underwear and other revealing attire," it said.

The rule applies to all users, including paid subscribers, who have access to more features.

xAI also has limited image creation or editing to paid subscribers only "to ensure that individuals who attempt to abuse the Grok account to violate the law or our policies can be held accountable."

Grok's "spicy mode" had allowed users to create explicit content, leading to a backlash from governments worldwide.

Malaysia and Indonesia took legal action and blocked access to Grok, while authorities in the Philippines said they were working to do the same, possibly within the week. The U.K. and European Union were investigating potential violations of online safety laws.

France and India have also issued warnings, demanding stricter controls. Brazil called for an investigation into Grok's misuse.

The British government, which has been one of Grok's most vociferous critics in recent days, has welcomed the change, while the country's regulator, Ofcom, said it would carry on with its investigation.

"I shall not rest until all social media platforms meet their legal duties and provide a service that is safe and age-appropriate to all users," Technology Secretary Liz Kendall said.

California Attorney General Rob Bonta urged xAI to ensure there is no further harassment of women and girls from Grok's editing functions.

"We have zero tolerance for the AI-based creation and dissemination of nonconsensual intimate images or of child sexual abuse material," he said.

California has passed laws to shield minors from AI-generated sexual imagery of children and require AI chatbot platforms to remind users they aren't interacting with a human.

But Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom also vetoed a law last year that would have restricted children's access to AI chatbots.

Ailing astronaut returns to Earth early in NASA's first medical evacuation

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — An ailing astronaut returned to Earth with three others on Thursday, ending their space station mission more than a month early in NASA's first medical evacuation.

SpaceX guided the capsule to a middle-of-the-night splashdown in the Pacific near San Diego, less than 11 hours after the astronauts exited the International Space Station.

"It's so good to be home," said NASA astronaut Zena Cardman, the capsule commander.

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It was an unexpected finish to a mission that began in August and left the orbiting lab with only one American and two Russians on board. NASA and SpaceX said they would try to move up the launch of a fresh crew of four; liftoff is currently targeted for mid-February.

Cardman and NASA's Mike Fincke were joined on the return by Japan's Kimiya Yui and Russia's Oleg Platonov. Officials have refused to identify the astronaut who developed the health problem last week or explain what happened, citing medical privacy.

While the astronaut was stable in orbit, NASA wanted them back on Earth as soon as possible to receive proper care and diagnostic testing. The entry and splashdown required no special changes or accommodations, officials said, and the recovery ship had its usual allotment of medical experts on board.

The astronauts will receive more in-depth medical checks at a local hospital before flying to their home base in Houston, NASA said. Platonov's return to Moscow was unclear.

The astronauts emerged from the capsule, one by one, after it was aboard the recovery ship. They were helped onto reclining cots and then whisked away for standard medical checks, waving to the cameras.

Jared Isaacman, NASA's new administrator, monitored the action from Mission Control in Houston.

NASA stressed repeatedly over the past week that this was not an emergency. The astronaut fell sick or was injured on Jan. 7, prompting NASA to call off the next day's spacewalk by Cardman and Fincke, and ultimately resulting in the early return. It was the first time NASA cut short a spaceflight for medical reasons. The Russians had done so decades ago.

The space station has gotten by with three astronauts before, sometimes even with just two. NASA said it will be unable to perform a spacewalk, even for an emergency, until the arrival of the next crew, which has two Americans, one French and one Russian astronaut.

Iran's nationwide protests feel smothered after a weeklong crackdown and internet outage

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The nationwide protests challenging Iran's theocracy appeared increasingly smothered Thursday, a week on from authorities shutting the country off from the world and escalating a bloody crackdown that activists say killed at least 2,615 people.

In Iran's capital, Tehran, witnesses say recent mornings saw no new signs of bonfires lit the night before or debris in the streets. The sound of gunfire, which had been intense for several nights, has faded. Meanwhile, Iranian state media announces wave after wave of arrests by authorities, targeting those it calls "terrorists" and also apparently looking for Starlink satellite internet dishes, the only way to get videos and images out to the internet.

"Since Jan. 8, we saw a full-fledged war and anybody who was in the gathering since then is a criminal," said Justice Minister Amin Hossein Rahimi, according to a report Wednesday from the judiciary's Mizan news agency.

But as Iran tries to assert control at home, it faces challenges abroad. The Islamic Republic shut down its airspace for hours early Thursday morning without explanation, something it has done in previous rounds of attacks between it and Israel, as well as during the 12-day war in June. The U.S. also took steps to move some personnel from Qatar's Al Udeid Air Base while also warning diplomats in Kuwait to stay away from military bases with American troops stationed there.

Airspace shut

The closure ran for over four hours, according to pilot guidance issued by Iran, which lies on a key East-West flight route. International carriers diverted north and south around Iran, but after one extension, the closure appeared to have expired and several domestic flights were in the air just after 7 a.m.

Around midday, Iranian state television carried a statement from the country's Civil Aviation Authority saying that the nation's "skies are hosting incoming and outgoing flights, and airports are providing services to passengers." It did not acknowledge the closure.

Iran previously shut its airspace during the 12-day war against Israel in June and when it exchanged fire

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with Israel during the Israel-Hamas war. However, there were no signs of current hostilities though the closure immediately rippled through global aviation.

"Several airlines have already reduced or suspended services, and most carriers are avoiding Iranian airspace," said the website SafeAirspace, which provides information on conflict areas and air travel. "The situation may signal further security or military activity, including the risk of missile launches or heightened air defense, increasing the risk of misidentification of civil traffic."

Iran in the past has misidentified a commercial aircraft as a hostile target. In 2020, Iranian air defense shot down Ukraine International Airlines Flight PS752 with two surface-to-air missiles, killing all 176 people on board. Iran for days adamantly dismissed allegations of downing the plane as Western propaganda before finally acknowledging it.

Iran protests spark reaction abroad

Videos of demonstrations broadly have stopped coming out of Iran, likely signaling the slowdown of their pace under the heavy security force presence in major cities. But in the meantime, protests against Iran have been held around the world as global attention has focused on the crackdown.

The U.N. Security Council scheduled an emergency meeting on Iran at the request of the United States on Thursday afternoon.

U.S. President Donald Trump made a series of vague statements Wednesday that left unclear what American action, if any, would take place against Iran.

In comments to reporters, Trump said he had been told that plans for executions in Iran have stopped, without providing many details. The shift comes a day after Trump told protesters in Iran that "help is on the way" and that his administration would "act accordingly" to respond to the Islamic Republic's deadly crackdown.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi also sought to tone down the rhetoric, urging the U.S. to find a solution through negotiation.

Asked by Fox News what he would say to Trump, Araghchi said: "My message is: Between war and diplomacy, diplomacy is a better way, although we don't have any positive experience from the United States. But still diplomacy is much better than war."

The change in tone by the U.S. and Iran came hours after the chief of the Iranian judiciary said the government must act quickly to punish the thousands who have been detained.

Activists warned that hangings of detainees could come soon. The security forces' crackdown on the demonstrations has killed at least 2,615, the U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency reported, warning it likely would rise even higher. The death toll exceeds that of any other round of protest or unrest in Iran in decades and recalls the chaos surrounding the country's 1979 Islamic Revolution.

The U.S.-based agency, founded 20 years ago, has been accurate throughout multiple years of demonstrations, relying on a network of activists inside Iran that confirms all reported fatalities.

With communications greatly limited in Iran, the AP has been unable to independently confirm the group's toll. The theocratic government of Iran has not provided overall casualty figures for the demonstrations.

European troops arrive in Greenland as talks with US highlight 'disagreement' over island's future

By EMMA BURROWS, CLAUDIA CIOBANU and DANIEL NIEMANN Associated Press

NUUK, Greenland (AP) — Troops from several European countries, including France, Germany, Norway and Sweden, are arriving in Greenland to help boost the Arctic island's security after talks between representatives of Denmark, Greenland and the U.S. on Wednesday highlighted "fundamental disagreement" between the Trump administration and European allies.

"The first French military elements are already en route" and "others will follow," French President Emmanuel Macron announced Wednesday, as French authorities said about 15 French soldiers from the mountain infantry unit were already in Nuuk for a military exercise.

Germany will deploy a reconnaissance team of 13 personnel to Greenland on Thursday, its Defense

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Ministry said.

Denmark announced it would increase its military presence in Greenland, with NATO allies joining them, just as the Danish and Greenlandic foreign ministers met with White House representatives on Wednesday in Washington to discuss U.S. President Donald Trump's intentions to take over the island in order to tap its mineral resources and protect the security of the Arctic region amid rising Russian and Chinese interest.

On Thursday, Danish Defense Minister Troels Lund Poulsen said the intention was "to establish a more permanent military presence with a larger Danish contribution," according to Danish broadcaster DR. He said soldiers from several NATO countries will be in Greenland on a rotation system.

Danish Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen, flanked by his Greenlandic counterpart Vivian Motzfeldt, said Wednesday that a "fundamental disagreement" over Greenland remains with Trump after they held highly anticipated talks at the White House with Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

Rasmussen added that it remains "clear that the president has this wish of conquering over Greenland." "We really need it," Trump told media in the Oval Office after the meeting. "If we don't go in, Russia is going to go in and China is going to go in. And there's not a thing Denmark can do about it, but we can do everything about it."

Trump said he had not yet been briefed about the contents of the White House meeting when he made his remarks.

In Greenland's capital, Nuuk, local residents told The Associated Press they were glad the first meeting between Greenlandic, Danish and American officials had taken place but suggested it left more questions than answers.

Several people said they viewed Denmark's decision to send more troops, and promises of support from other NATO allies, as protection against possible U.S. military action. But European military officials have not suggested the goal is to deter a U.S. move against the island.

Maya Martinsen, 21, agreed and said it was "comforting to know that the Nordic countries are sending reinforcements" because Greenland is a part of Denmark and NATO.

The dispute, she said, is not about "national security" but rather about "the oils and minerals that we have that are untouched."

More troops, more talks

On Wednesday, Poulsen had announced a stepped-up military presence in the Arctic "in close cooperation with our allies," calling it a necessity in a security environment in which "no one can predict what will happen tomorrow."

"This means that from today and in the coming time there will be an increased military presence in and around Greenland of aircraft, ships and soldiers, including from other NATO allies," Poulsen said.

Asked whether the European troop movements were coordinated with NATO or what role the U.S.-led military alliance might play in the exercises, NATO referred all questions to the Danish authorities.

However, NATO is looking at how members can collectively bolster the alliance's presence in the Arctic, according to a NATO official who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Rasmussen, the Danish foreign minister, announced the creation of a working group with the Americans to discuss ways to work through differences.

"The group, in our view, should focus on how to address the American security concerns, while at the same time respecting the red lines of the Kingdom of Denmark," he said.

Commenting on the outcome of the Washington meeting on Thursday, Poulsen said the working group was "better than no working group" and "a step in the right direction." He added nevertheless that the dialogue with the U.S. did not mean "the danger has passed."

Line McGee, a 38-year old from Copenhagen, told AP that she was glad to see some diplomatic progress. "I don't think the threat has gone away," she said. "But I feel slightly better than I did yesterday."

Speaking to FOX News Channel's Special Report on Wednesday after the White House talks, Rasmussen rejected both a military takeover and the potential purchase of the island by the U.S. Asked whether he thinks the U.S. will invade, he replied: "No, at least I do not hope so, because, I mean, that would be the

end of NATO.”

Rasmussen said Greenlanders were unlikely to vote for U.S. rule even if financial incentives were offered “because I think there’s no way that U.S. will pay for a Scandinavian welfare system in Greenland, honestly speaking.”

“You haven’t introduced a Scandinavian welfare system in your own country,” he added.

Trump, in his Oval Office meeting with reporters, said: “We’ll see how it all works out. I think something will work out.”

What to know about protests in Iran as the government halts the internet

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, which has responded with a deadly crackdown and shutting down the internet.

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.

U.S. President Donald Trump has warned that if Tehran “violently kills peaceful protesters” the U.S. “will come to their rescue” — a threat that 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 600 protests have taken place across all of Iran’s 31 provinces, according to data from the U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency Thursday. The death toll has reached at least 2,615, it said, with 18,470 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 the internet is blocked in Iran. Iranians could dial abroad with their mobile phones Tuesday after restrictions were lifted.

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 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

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price increases in the future, as the government now will review prices every three months. Meanwhile, food prices 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, protesters soon began 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 has called for protests.

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. Before the U.S. attack in June, Iran had been enriching uranium to near weapons-grade levels, 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 that 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 have 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 Iraqi leader 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.

Venezuela war powers resolution fails in Senate as 2 Republicans bow to Trump pressure

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Republicans voted to dismiss a war powers resolution Wednesday that would have limited President Donald Trump's ability to conduct further attacks on Venezuela after two GOP senators reversed course on supporting the legislation.

Trump put intense pressure on five Republican senators who joined with Democrats to advance the resolution last week and ultimately prevailed in heading off passage of the legislation. Two of the Republicans — Sens. Josh Hawley of Missouri and Todd Young of Indiana — flipped under the pressure.

Vice President JD Vance had to break the 50-50 deadlock in the Senate on a Republican motion to dismiss the bill.

The outcome of the high-profile vote demonstrated how Trump still has command over much of the Republican conference, yet the razor-thin vote tally also showed the growing concern on Capitol Hill over the president's aggressive foreign policy ambitions.

Democrats forced the debate after U.S. troops captured Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro in a surprise nighttime raid earlier this month

"Here we have one of the most successful attacks ever and they find a way to be against it. It's pretty amazing. And it's a shame," Trump said at a speech in Michigan Tuesday. He also hurled insults at several of the Republicans who advanced the legislation, calling Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky a "stone cold loser" and Sens. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Susan Collins of Maine "disasters." Those three Republicans stuck to their support for the legislation.

Trump's latest comments followed earlier phone calls with the senators, which they described as terse. The president's fury underscored how the war powers vote had taken on new political significance as Trump also threatens military action to accomplish his goal of possessing Greenland.

The legislation, even if it had cleared the Senate, had virtually no chance of becoming law because it would eventually need to be signed by Trump himself. But it represented both a test of GOP loyalty to the president and a marker for how much leeway the Republican-controlled Senate is willing to give Trump to use the military abroad. Republican angst over his recent foreign policy moves — especially threats of using military force to seize Greenland from a NATO ally — is still running high in Congress.

Two Republicans reconsider

Hawley, who helped advance the war powers resolution last week, said Trump's message during a phone call was that the legislation "really ties my hands." The senator said he had a follow-up phone call with Secretary of State Marco Rubio Monday and was told "point blank, we're not going to do ground troops."

The senator added that he also received assurances that the Trump administration will follow constitutional requirements if it becomes necessary to deploy troops again to the South American country.

"We're getting along very well with Venezuela," Trump told reporters at a ceremony for the signing of an unrelated bill Wednesday.

As senators went to the floor for the vote Wednesday evening, Young also told reporters he was no longer in support. He said that he had extensive conversations with Rubio and received assurances that the secretary of state will appear at a public hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Young also shared a letter from Rubio that stated the president will "seek congressional authorization in advance (circumstances permitting)" if he engaged in "major military operations" in Venezuela.

The senators also said his efforts were also instrumental in pushing the administration to release Wednesday a 22-page Justice Department memo laying out the legal justification for the snatch-and-grab operation against Maduro.

That memo, which was heavily redacted, indicates that the administration, for now, has no plans to ramp up military operations in Venezuela.

"We were assured that there is no contingency plan to engage in any substantial and sustained operation

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that would amount to a constitutional war," according to the memo signed by Assistant Attorney General Elliot Gaiser.

Trump's shifting rationale for military intervention

Trump has used a series of legal arguments for his campaign against Maduro.

As he built up a naval force in the Caribbean and destroyed vessels that were allegedly carrying drugs from Venezuela, the Trump administration tapped wartime powers under the global war on terror by designating drug cartels as terrorist organizations.

The administration has claimed the capture of Maduro himself was actually a law enforcement operation, essentially to extradite the Venezuelan president to stand trial for charges in the U.S. that were filed in 2020.

Paul criticized the administration for first describing its military build-up in Caribbean as a counternarcotics operation but now floating Venezuela's vast oil reserves as a reason for maintaining pressure.

"The bait and switch has already happened," he said.

Trump's foreign policy worries Congress

Lawmakers, including a significant number of Republicans, have been alarmed by Trump's recent foreign policy talk. In recent weeks, he has pledged that the U.S. will "run" Venezuela for years to come, threatened military action to take possession of Greenland and told Iranians protesting their government that "help is on its way."

Senior Republicans have tried to massage the relationship between Trump and Denmark, a NATO ally that holds Greenland as a semi-autonomous territory. But Danish officials emerged from a meeting with Vance and Rubio Wednesday saying a "fundamental disagreement" over Greenland remains.

"What happened tonight is a roadmap to another endless war," Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said at a news conference following the vote.

More than half of U.S. adults believe President Donald Trump has "gone too far" in using the U.S. military to intervene in other countries, according to a new AP-NORC poll.

How Republican leaders dismissed the bill

Last week's procedural vote on the war powers resolution was supposed to set up hours of debate and a vote on final passage. But Republican leaders began searching for a way to defuse the conflict between their members and Trump as well as move on quickly to other business.

Once Hawley and Young changed their support for the bill, Republicans were able to successfully challenge whether it was appropriate when the Trump administration has said U.S. troops are not currently deployed in Venezuela.

"We're not currently conducting military operations there," said Senate Majority Leader John Thune in a floor speech. "But Democrats are taking up this bill because their anti-Trump hysteria knows no bounds."

Democratic Sen. Tim Kaine, who has brought a series of war powers resolutions this year, accused Republicans of burying a debate about the merits of an ongoing campaign of attacks and threats against Venezuela.

"If this cause and if this legal basis were so righteous, the administration and its supporters would not be afraid to have this debate before the public and the United States Senate," he said in a floor speech.

Kaine vowed to force votes on war powers resolutions that would apply to a number of potential military conflicts, including Greenland. House Democrats have also filed a similar war powers resolution and can force a vote on it as soon as next week.

Ukrainians endure freezing temperatures at home as crews rush to restore power

By VASILISA STEPANENKO Associated Press

BORYSPIL, Ukraine (AP) — Emergency repair crews are working flat out to restore power in the Kyiv region of Ukraine, officials said Wednesday, after relentless Russian barrages on energy infrastructure left Ukrainians at the mercy of the coldest winter in years.

At Boryspil, a town in the Kyiv region with a population of around 60,000, workers dismantled and rebuilt

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burned-out electrical systems as they rushed to fix the damage.

They work in the snow amid temperatures of -15 C (13 degrees F) from early morning till midnight, Yurii Bryzh, who leads the Boryspil regional department of private electricity provider DTEK, told The Associated Press.

They have managed to restore the supply for four hours a day. But Bryzh said the problem was "when the power comes back on, people turn on all the electrical equipment that is available in the house" as they dash to wash, cook or recharge their phones. That collapses the system again, he said.

The hardship of civilians is acute amid what Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko described as the longest and broadest outages since Russia's full-scale invasion of its neighbor almost four years ago. Some homes have been going without electricity for days.

Apartments in the capital are freezing, and when venturing outside people wear heavy layers of clothes against the bitter cold that chills to the bone. Across Kyiv, snow covers the ground and roofs and is piled up next to sidewalks. At night, the streets are dark and towering apartment blocks show no light in the windows.

Kyiv residents told the AP how they cope with the lack of light and heat at home.

A married couple, scientists Mykhailo, 39, and Hanna, 43, said the temperature in the bedroom of their 5-year-old daughter Maria has fallen to -15 degrees C (13 degrees F). They gave only their first names for security reasons.

They have a gas stove to cook but at night they huddle together in the same bed under heavy blankets. "We have to use all the blankets we have in the house," Hanna said.

The couple take their daughter to work with them during the day, because the premises have a generator whereas Maria's kindergarten has no heating.

Christmas decorations still hang on the walls of their apartment, occasionally lit up by their flashlights.

Zinaida Hlyha, 76, said she heats water on her gas stove and puts it in bottles that she tucks into bed. She says she doesn't complain because Ukrainian soldiers on the roughly 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) front line have it worse.

"Of course it's hard, but if you imagine what our guys in the trenches are going through now, you have to endure," she said. "What can you do? This is war."

Tetiana Tatarenko said two of her sons are fighting in the war. She grew more fearful of Russia's nighttime barrages after a Shahed drone hit the apartment building next door.

In her cold apartment, it seemed that normal life has shut down.

"It's as if life in the house has stopped, that's the feeling," she said.

Her neighbor, 89-year-old physicist Raisa Derhachova, lives alone and sometimes plays the piano in what she calls "this terrifying cold."

"Of course, it's hard to survive this. We survived World War II, and now this terrible war is upon us," she said.

Russian barrages are aiming at power plants and large substations, and procuring replacement equipment such as transformers can take months, according to Dennis Sakva, an energy sector analyst at Dragon Capital, a Ukrainian investment company.

"There are two types of heroes in Ukraine," he said. "They are the military and energy workers."

NASA sends 4 astronauts back to Earth in first medical evacuation

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — An astronaut in need of doctors' care departed the International Space Station with three crewmates on Wednesday in NASA's first medical evacuation.

The four returning astronauts — from the U.S., Russia and Japan — are aiming for an early Thursday morning splashdown in the Pacific near San Diego with SpaceX. The decision cuts short their mission by over a month.

"Our timing of this departure is unexpected," NASA astronaut Zena Cardman said before the return trip,

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"but what was not surprising to me was how well this crew came together as a family to help each other and just take care of each other."

Officials refused to identify the astronaut who needed care last week and would not divulge the health concerns.

The ailing astronaut is "stable, safe and well cared for," outgoing space station commander Mike Fincke said earlier this week via social media. "This was a deliberate decision to allow the right medical evaluations to happen on the ground, where the full range of diagnostic capability exists."

Launched in August, Cardman, Fincke, Japan's Kimiya Yui and Russia's Oleg Platonov should have remained on the space station until late February. But on Jan. 7, NASA abruptly canceled the next day's spacewalk by Cardman and Fincke and later announced the crew's early return. Officials said the health problem was unrelated to spacewalk preparations or other station operations, but offered no other details, citing medical privacy. They stressed it was not an emergency situation.

NASA said it would stick to the same entry and splashdown procedures at flight's end, with the usual assortment of medical experts aboard the recovery ship in the Pacific. It was another middle-of-the-night crew return for SpaceX, coming less than 11 hours after undocking from the space station. NASA said it was not yet known how quickly all four would be flown from California to Houston, home to Johnson Space Center and the base for astronauts.

One U.S. and two Russian astronauts remain aboard the orbiting lab, just 1 1/2 months into an eight-month mission that began with a Soyuz rocket liftoff from Kazakhstan. NASA and SpaceX are working to move up the launch of a fresh four-person crew from Florida, currently targeted for mid-February.

Computer modeling predicted a medical evacuation from the space station every three years, but NASA hasn't had one in its 65 years of human spaceflight. The Russians have not been as fortunate. In 1985, Soviet cosmonaut Vladimir Vasyutin came down with a serious infection or related illness aboard his country's Salyut 7 space station, prompting an early return. A few other Soviet cosmonauts encountered less serious health issues that shortened their flights.

It was the first spaceflight for Cardman, 38, biologist and polar explorer who missed out on spacewalking, as well as Platonov, 39, a former fighter pilot with the Russian air force who had to wait a few extra years to get to space because of an undisclosed health issue. Cardman should have launched last year but was bumped to make room on the way down for NASA's Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams, who were stuck nearly a year at the space station because of Boeing's capsule problems.

Fincke, 58, a retired Air Force colonel, and Yui, 55, a retired fighter pilot with the Japan Air Self-Defense Force, were repeat space fliers. Fincke has spent 1 1/2 years in orbit over four missions and conducted nine spacewalks on previous flights, making him one of NASA's top performers. Last week, Yui celebrated his 300th day in space over two station stays, sharing stunning views of Earth, including Japan's Mount Fuji and breathtaking auroras.

"I want to burn it firmly into my eyes, and even more so, into my heart," Yui said on the social platform X. "Soon, I too will become one of those small lights on the ground."

NASA officials had said it was riskier to leave the astronaut in space without proper medical attention for another month than to temporarily reduce the size of the space station crew by more than half. Until SpaceX delivers another crew, NASA said it will have to stand down from any routine or even emergency spacewalks, a two-person job requiring backup help from crew inside the orbiting complex.

The medical evacuation was the first major decision by NASA's new administrator Jared Isaacman. The billionaire founder of a payment processing company and two-time space flier assumed the agency's top job in December.

"The health and the well-being of our astronauts is always and will be our highest priority," Isaacman said in announcing the decision last week.

Venezuela's acting president vows to continue releasing prisoners detained under Maduro

By REGINA GARCIA CANO Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Venezuela's acting President Delcy Rodríguez said Wednesday her government would continue releasing prisoners detained under former President Nicolás Maduro's rule in what she described as "a new political moment" since his ouster by the United States earlier this month.

It appeared to be an understatement for the Maduro loyalist now tasked with placating an unpredictable American president who has said he will "run" Venezuela, while also consolidating power in a government that long has seethed against U.S. meddling.

Rodríguez opened her first press briefing since Maduro's capture by U.S. forces with a conciliatory tone. Addressing journalists from a red carpet at the presidential palace in the capital, Caracas, she offered assurances that the process of releasing detainees — a move reportedly made at the behest of the Trump administration — "has not yet concluded."

The lawyer and veteran politician pitched a "Venezuela that opens itself to a new political moment, that allows for ... political and ideological diversity."

A Venezuelan human rights organization estimates about 800 political prisoners are still being detained. That figure includes political leaders, soldiers, lawyers and members of civil society.

'Great conversation'

President Donald Trump said Wednesday he had a "great conversation" with Rodríguez, their first since Maduro was seized and flown to the U.S. on Jan. 3 to face drug-trafficking charges.

"We had a call, a long call. We discussed a lot of things," Trump said during a bill signing in the Oval Office. "And I think we're getting along very well with Venezuela."

Unlike past speeches directed at her domestic audience that echoed Maduro's anti-imperialist rhetoric, Rodríguez did not mention the U.S. — or the dizzying pace at which relations between both countries were evolving.

But she criticized organizations that advocate on behalf of prisoners' rights. She pledged "strict" enforcement of the law and credited Maduro with starting the prisoner releases as a signal that her government meant no wholesale break from the past.

"Crimes related to the constitutional order are being evaluated," she said, in apparent reference to detainees held on what human rights groups say are politically motivated charges. "Messages of hatred, intolerance, acts of violence will not be permitted."

Flanked by her brother and National Assembly President Jorge Rodríguez, as well as hard-line Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello, she took no questions. Cabello, she said, was coordinating the prisoner releases, which have drawn criticism for being too slow and secretive.

Walking a tightrope

Trump has enlisted Rodríguez to help secure U.S. control over Venezuela's oil sales despite sanctioning her for human rights violations during his first term. To ensure she does his bidding, earlier this month, Trump threatened Rodríguez with a "situation probably worse than Maduro," who is being held in a Brooklyn jail.

Maduro has pleaded not guilty to drug-related charges.

In endorsing Rodríguez, who served as Maduro's vice president since 2018, Trump has sidelined María Corina Machado, the leader of Venezuela's opposition who won a Nobel Peace Prize last year for her campaign to restore the nation's democracy. Machado is scheduled to meet with Trump on Thursday at the White House.

After a lengthy career running Venezuela's feared intelligence service, managing its crucial oil industry and representing the revolution started by the late Hugo Chávez on the world stage, Rodríguez now walks a tightrope, navigating pressures from both Washington and her hard-line colleagues who hold sway over the security forces.

"The regime, on one hand, wants to send a message within Venezuela that it still has complete control and the United States isn't dominating," said Ronal Rodríguez, a researcher at the Venezuela Observa-

tory in Colombia's Universidad del Rosario. "On the other hand, internationally it's sending a message of gradual progress with the release of political prisoners. ... They're playing a game."

Those tensions were on display in her speech Wednesday, which focused only on the issue of prisoner releases. Venezuela's leading prisoner rights organization, Foro Penal, had verified at least 72 prisoners freed since her interim government raised hopes for a mass release with a promise to free a "significant number" of prisoners.

Foro Penal reported the release Wednesday of at least a dozen people imprisoned for political reasons, including political activist Nicmer Evans and Roland Carreño, a journalist and opposition member. Machado campaign staffers Julio Balza and Gabriel González were also freed Wednesday, the opposition leader's party announced.

Differing tallies

Within the past week, Rodríguez's government released U.S., Italian and Spanish nationals and opposition figures.

But it was Maduro who first started the process of releasing prisoners, Rodríguez insisted, apparently pushing back on White House claims that the prisoners were being freed due to U.S. pressure. She said Maduro oversaw the release of 194 prisoners in December because he "was thinking precisely about opening spaces for understanding, for coexistence, for tolerance."

Without offering any evidence, Rodríguez also claimed that 406 prisoners had been released since December, meaning that her own caretaker government had freed 212 detainees. Foro Penal estimates that over 800 prisoners were still held in Venezuela's prison system on political grounds, and has criticized the government's lack of transparency.

Rodríguez did not address those complaints. Instead, she slammed "self-proclaimed nongovernmental organizations" as having "tried to sell falsehoods about Venezuela."

"There will always be those who want to fish in troubled waters," she said, trying to present her first press briefing as an effort to counter false narratives and "let the truth be reported."

Iran signals plans for fast trials and executions while promising retaliation against US, Israel

By JON GAMBRELL and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iranian officials signaled Wednesday that fast trials and executions lay ahead for suspects detained in nationwide protests, while the Islamic Republic promised retaliation if the U.S. or Israel intervenes in the domestic unrest.

The threats emerged as some personnel at a key U.S. military base in Qatar were advised to evacuate, even as President Donald Trump made a series of vague statements that left unclear what American action, if any, would take place against Iran.

Iran shut its airspace to commercial flights early Thursday morning for several hours, without explanation. The notice to pilots said the closure was estimated to end at 7:30 a.m. Flight-tracking website FlightRadar24.com show aircraft flying around Iran from its north and south.

In comments to reporters, Trump said he had been told that plans for executions in Iran have stopped, without providing many details. The shift comes a day after Trump told protesters in Iran that "help is on the way" and that his administration would "act accordingly" to respond to the Islamic Republic's deadly crackdown.

"We've been told that the killing in Iran is stopping — it's stopped — it's stopping," Trump said at the White House while signing executive orders and legislation. "And there's no plan for executions, or an execution, or executions — so I've been told that on good authority."

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi also sought to tone down the rhetoric, urging the U.S. to find a solution through negotiation.

Asked by Fox News what he would say to Trump, Araghchi said: "My message is: Between war and diplomacy, diplomacy is a better way, although we don't have any positive experience from the United

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States. But still diplomacy is much better than war.”

The change in tone by the U.S. and Iran came hours after the chief of the Iranian judiciary said the government must act quickly to punish the thousands who have been detained.

Activists warned that hangings of detainees could come soon. The security forces’ crackdown on the demonstrations has killed at least 2,615, the U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency reported. The death toll exceeds that of any other round of protest or unrest in Iran in decades and recalls the chaos surrounding the country’s 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Currency collapse sparked demonstrations

The demonstrations began Dec. 28 over the collapse of the Iranian rial currency, as the country’s economy is squeezed by international sanctions levied in part over its nuclear program.

Trump has repeatedly warned about potential U.S. military action over the killing of peaceful protesters, just months after American forces bombed Iranian nuclear sites during the 12-day Iran-Israel war in June.

In other developments Wednesday, a mass funeral was held for some 100 security force members killed in the demonstrations. Tens of thousands of mourners attended, holding Iranian flags and photos of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The caskets, draped in Iranian flags, were stacked at least three high. Red and white roses and framed photographs of the dead covered them.

People elsewhere remained fearful in the streets. Plainclothes security forces still milled around some neighborhoods, though anti-riot police and members of the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard’s all-volunteer Basij force appeared to have been sent back to their barracks.

“We are very frightened because of these sounds (of gunfire) and protests,” said a mother of two shopping for fruits and vegetables, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals. “We have heard many are killed and many are injured. Now peace has been restored, but schools are closed, and I’m scared to send my children to school again.”

Ahmadreza Tavakoli, 36, told The Associated Press he witnessed one demonstration in Tehran and was shocked by the use of firearms by authorities.

“People were out to express themselves and protest, but quickly it turned into a war zone,” Tavakoli said. “The people do not have guns. Only the security forces have guns.”

‘We have to do it quickly’

Earlier Wednesday, Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejei, Iran’s judiciary chief, said the government should press ahead with rapid trials and executions.

“If we want to do a job, we should do it now. If we want to do something, we have to do it quickly,” he said in a video shared by Iranian state television online. “If it becomes late, two months, three months later, it doesn’t have the same effect. If we want to do something, we have to do that fast.”

The comments stand as a direct challenge to Trump, who warned Iran about executions in an interview with CBS aired Tuesday.

“If they do such a thing, we will take very strong action,” Trump said.

“We don’t want to see what’s happening in Iran happen. And you know, if they want to have protests, that’s one thing. When they start killing thousands of people, and now you’re telling me about hanging — we’ll see how that works out for them. It’s not going to work out good.”

One Arab Gulf diplomat told the AP that major Mideast governments had been discouraging the Trump administration from launching a war with Iran, fearing “unprecedented consequences” for the region that could explode into a “full-blown war.” The diplomat spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn’t authorized to speak to journalists.

Satellite internet service offer

Iran’s government cut off the country from the internet and international telephone calls on Jan. 8.

Activists said Wednesday that Starlink was offering free service in Iran. The satellite internet service has been key in getting around the internet shutdown. Iran began allowing people to call out internationally on Tuesday via mobile phones, but calls from people outside the country into Iran remain blocked.

“We can confirm that the free subscription for Starlink terminals is fully functional,” said Mehdi Yahy-

anejad, a Los Angeles-based activist who has helped get the units into Iran. "We tested it using a newly activated Starlink terminal inside Iran."

Starlink itself did not immediately acknowledge the decision.

Security service personnel apparently were searching for Starlink dishes, as people in northern Tehran reported authorities raiding apartment buildings with satellite dishes. While satellite television dishes are illegal, many in the capital have them in homes, and officials broadly gave up on enforcing the law in recent years.

Death toll continues to rise

The Human Rights Activists News Agency said 2,615 of the dead were protesters and 153 were government-affiliated. Thirteen children were killed, along with 14 civilians it said were not taking part in protests.

More than 18,400 people have been detained, the group said.

Gauging the demonstrations from abroad has grown more difficult, and the AP has been unable to independently assess the toll given the communications being disrupted in the country.

Liberian man arrested in Minneapolis raid was regularly checking in with authorities, lawyer says

By TIM SULLIVAN Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The Liberian man arrested over the weekend after heavily armed immigration agents used a battering ram to break through the front door of his Minneapolis home had been checking in regularly with federal authorities for years, his attorney said Tuesday.

The arrest of Garrison Gibson, 37 during a Minnesota immigration crackdown that the Department of Homeland Security has called its largest enforcement operation ever, was a "blatant constitutional violation," since the agents did not have a proper warrant, said attorney Marc Prokosch.

The arrest Sunday came in a city increasingly on edge after an immigration agent shot and killed 37-year-old Renee Good last week, setting off waves of angry protests and clashes between authorities and activists.

"This was an illegal search, absolutely," said Prokosch, because agents had brought only an administrative warrant, which authorizes someone's arrest but does not allow officers to forcibly enter private homes. Forced entry requires a criminal warrant signed by a judge.

Gibson, who fled the Liberian civil war as a child, had been ordered removed from the U.S., apparently because of a 2008 drug conviction that was later dismissed by the courts. But he had remained in the country legally under what's known as an order of supervision, with the requirement that he meet regularly with immigration authorities.

Only days before his arrest, Gibson had checked in with immigration authorities at regional immigration offices — the same building where agents have been staging enforcement raids in recent weeks.

"He would have had another check-in in a couple of months," Prokosch said. "So if he's this dangerous person, then, why are they letting him walk around?"

Tricia McLaughlin, a spokeswoman for the Homeland Security Department, said earlier this week that Gibson has "a lengthy rap sheet (that) includes robbery, drug possession with intent to sell, possession of a deadly weapon, malicious destruction and theft." She did not indicate if those were arrests, charges or convictions.

McLaughlin did not respond to questions about whether the agents' use of force was justified.

But court records indicate Gibson's legal history — dominated by a few traffic violations, minor drug arrests and an arrest for riding public transportation without paying the fare — shows only one felony, the 2008 conviction for third-degree narcotics sales that was later dismissed.

Prokosch said Gibson had been flown to Texas by immigration authorities in the hours after his arrest, then quickly flown back to Minnesota on a judge's order after the lawyer filed a habeas corpus petition, used by courts to determine if an imprisonment is legal. The courts have not yet ruled on the petition.

Gibson is currently being held at an immigration detention center in Albert Lea, Minnesota, after being held at a large camp on the Fort Bliss Army base in El Paso, Texas, according to ICE's detainee locator.

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The Department of Homeland Security did not respond to an email from The Associated Press with follow-up questions about Gibson's case.

Guns, activists and pepper spray

Gibson's wife, Teyana Gibson Brown, a nurse who was inside the home with the couple's 9-year-old child during the raid, was deeply shaken by the arrest, Prokosch said.

During their conversations, she "was having a hard time just completing sentences because she's just been so distraught," he said.

Activists who had been keeping watch on the immigration agents before Gibson's arrest banged on drums, blew whistles and honked car horns in attempts to disrupt the operation and warn neighbors, some of whom poured into the streets.

Video taken at the scene by the AP shows agents pushing and pepper-spraying demonstrators.

The Twin Cities — the latest target in President Donald Trump's immigration enforcement campaign — has been convulsed by the killing of Good, who was shot Jan. 7 during a confrontation with agents.

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.

City and state officials have dismissed those explanations based on videos of the confrontation.

State and local authorities are urging the public to share video and any other evidence as they seek to investigate Good's death after federal authorities insisted they would work on their own and not share information.

More than 2,000 immigration arrests have been made in Minnesota since the enforcement operation began at the beginning of December, according to the Department of Homeland Security.

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

Danish official says there's a 'fundamental disagreement' with Trump over Greenland

By EMMA BURROWS, CLAUDIA CIOBANU and BEN FINLEY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A top Danish official said Wednesday that a "fundamental disagreement" over Greenland remains with President Donald Trump after holding highly anticipated White House talks with Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

The two sides, however, agreed to create a working group to discuss ways to work through differences as Trump continues to call for a U.S. takeover of the semiautonomous territory of NATO ally Denmark.

"The group, in our view, should focus on how to address the American security concerns, while at the same time respecting the red lines of the Kingdom of Denmark," Danish Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen told reporters after joining Greenland's foreign minister, Vivian Motzfeldt, for the talks. He added that it remains "clear that the president has this wish of conquering over Greenland."

Trump is trying to make the case that NATO should help the U.S. acquire the world's largest island and says anything less than it being under American control is unacceptable.

Denmark, meanwhile, announced plans to boost the country's military presence in the Arctic and North Atlantic as Trump tries to justify his calls for a U.S. takeover of the vast territory by repeatedly claiming that China and Russia have their designs on Greenland, which holds vast untapped reserves of critical minerals.

The president, who did not take part in Wednesday's meeting, told reporters he remained committed to acquiring the territory.

"We need Greenland for national security," Trump said. "We'll see how it all works out. I think something will work out."

Trump named Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry as a special envoy to Greenland last month. Landry did not attend Wednesday's meeting, but was scheduled to travel to Washington on Thursday and Friday for meetings that include the topic of Greenland, his spokesperson said.

Landry, following Trump's latest comments, posted on X that Trump was "absolutely right" about acquir-

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ing Greenland and the territory "is a critical component of our nation's national security portfolio."

Before the meeting, Trump took to social media to make the case that "NATO should be leading the way" for the U.S. to acquire the territory. NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte has sought to keep an arms-length away from the dispute between the most important power and the other members of the 32-country alliance unnerved by the aggressive tack Trump has taken toward Denmark.

Both Løkke Rasmussen and Motzfeldt offered measured hope that the talks were beginning a conversation that would lead to Trump dropping his demand and create a path for tighter cooperation with the U.S. "We have shown where our limits are and from there, I think that it will be very good to look forward," Motzfeldt said.

Denmark bolstering presence in Arctic

In Copenhagen, Danish Defense Minister Troels Lund Poulsen announced a stepped-up military presence in the Arctic "in close cooperation with our allies," a necessity in a security environment in which "no one can predict what will happen tomorrow."

Several of the country's allies, including Germany, France, Norway and Sweden, announced they were arriving in Greenland along with Danish personnel to take part in joint exercises or map out further military cooperation in the Arctic.

NATO is also looking at how members can collectively bolster the alliance's presence in the Arctic, said a NATO official who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Greenlanders want the US to back off

Greenland is strategically important because, as climate change causes the ice to melt, it opens up the possibility of shorter trade routes to Asia. That also could make it easier to extract and transport untapped deposits of critical minerals which are needed for computers and phones.

Trump says Greenland is also "vital" to the United States' Golden Dome missile defense program. He also has said Russia and China pose a threat in the region.

But experts and Greenlanders question that claim, and it has become a hot topic on the snow-covered main street in Greenland's capital, where international journalists and camera crews have descended as Trump continues his takeover talk.

In interviews, Greenlanders said the outcome of the Washington talks didn't exactly evince confidence that Trump can be persuaded.

"Trump is unpredictable," said Geng Lastein, who immigrated to Greenland 18 years ago from the Philippines.

Maya Martinsen, 21, said she doesn't buy Trump's arguments that Greenland needs to be controlled by the U.S. for the sake maintaining a security edge in Arctic over China and Russia. Instead, Martinsen said, Trump is after the plentiful "oils and minerals that we have that are untouched."

Greenland "has beautiful nature and lovely people," Martinsen added. "It's just home to me. I think the Americans just see some kind of business trade."

Denmark has said the U.S., which already has a military presence, can boost its bases on Greenland. The U.S. is party to a 1951 treaty that gives it broad rights to set up military bases there with the consent of Denmark and Greenland.

Bipartisan concern from U.S. senators

Løkke Rasmussen and Motzfeldt also met with a bipartisan group senators from the Arctic Caucus. The senators said they were concerned Trump's push to acquire Greenland could upend NATO and play into the hands of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, who has introduced legislation to try to block any U.S. action in Greenland, said it was "stunning" to her that they were even discussing the matter. "We are operating in times where we are having conversations about things that we never even thought possible," Murkowski said.

Sen. Angus King, I-Maine, said it is "nonsense" to say that the U.S. needs to control Greenland to protect national security. The officials were "very open to additional national security assets in Greenland in order

to meet whatever risks there are.”

A bipartisan delegation of U.S. lawmakers plans to show their solidarity by traveling to Copenhagen this week.

A part that broke on a UPS plane that crashed in Kentucky failed 4 times on other planes years ago

By JOSH FUNK AP Transportation Writer

Boeing warned plane owners in 2011 about a broken part that contributed to a UPS plane crash that killed 15 last year but at that point the plane manufacturer didn't believe it threatened safety, the National Transportation Safety Board said Wednesday.

The UPS plane crashed in November 2025 shortly after taking off in Louisville, Kentucky, when the left engine flew off the wing as the plane rolled down the runway. Three pilots on the plane that was headed for Hawaii were killed along with 12 more people on the ground near Louisville's Muhammad Ali International Airport.

The NTSB said Wednesday that Boeing had documented in 2011 there were four previous failures of a part that helps secure the MD-11's engines to the wings on three different planes, but at that point the plane manufacturer "determined it would not result in a safety of flight condition." These planes were actually built by McDonnell Douglas, which was later bought by Boeing.

The NTSB previously said investigators found cracks in some of the parts that held the engine to the wing. Those cracks hadn't been caught in regular maintenance done on the plane, which raised questions about the adequacy of the maintenance schedule. The last time those key engine mount parts were examined closely was in October 2021, and the plane wasn't due for another detailed inspection for roughly 7,000 more takeoffs and landings.

2015 crash brings up issues from 1979 crash

It's not clear when the cracks started to develop in the parts that helped hold the engine on the wing, but this crash is reminiscent of a 1979 crash in Chicago when the left engine flew off an American Airlines DC-10 during takeoff, killing 273 people. The DC-10 was the predecessor of the MD-11.

That previous crash led to the worldwide grounding of 274 DC-10s. The airline workhorse was allowed to return to the skies because the NTSB determined that maintenance workers damaged the plane that crashed while improperly using a forklift to reattach the engine. That meant the crash wasn't caused by a fatal design flaw even though there had already been a number of accidents involving DC-10s.

But former FAA and NTSB crash investigator Jeff Guzzetti said that a service bulletin McDonnell Douglas issued in 1980 did identify failures of the spherical bearing race as a "safety of flight condition" so it's surprising that Boeing didn't call it that in 2011. He said that American had removed the engine of that plane so it could inspect that bearing.

"I just think it raises questions regarding the adequacy of the severity of the 2011 service letter, and it also raises questions about how UPS incorporated that information and acted upon it," Guzzetti said.

Repairs weren't required by FAA

The service bulletin that Boeing issued didn't require plane owners to make repairs like an FAA airworthiness directive would, and the agency didn't issue such a directive.

Former federal crash investigator Alan Diehl said the notice from Boeing recommended replacing the bearings with a redesigned part that was less likely to fail, but it still allowed operators to replace defective bearings with another older bearing that had demonstrated it was prone to failing.

"As the investigation continues, the NTSB will have to address whether this service bulletin was an adequate solution to a known problem which could have had catastrophic results," Diehl said. "The UPS crash highlights the need for increased maintenance measures on older airframes."

NTSB didn't say whether there had been additional documented failures of the spherical bearing race since 2011. Investigators found that part broken into two pieces after the UPS crash, and the lugs that held that part were cracked.

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Photos released by the NTSB of the Nov. 4 crash show flames erupting as the rear of the engine starting to detach before it flew up and over the wing. Then the wing was engulfed by fire as the burning engine flew above it.

Investigators search for reason why engine flew off

The factual report released Wednesday doesn't state what caused the engine to fly off, but it's clear that investigators are focused on the failure of this bearing. The ultimate conclusion won't come though until the NTSB's final report, which usually doesn't come until more than a year after a crash.

But the report will undoubtedly be cited in the first lawsuit over the crash, filed last month, and subsequent ones. They will be investigating what Boeing knew at the time and what UPS did in response to this 2011 bulletin.

"I think that this even further demonstrates that there was warning signs that predated the crash that any reasonable organization should have utilized to make sure that the Louisville crash didn't happen," said attorney Brad Cosgrove of the Clifford Law firm, which filed the first lawsuit.

The report does make clear that neither of the plane's two other engines were on fire before the crash. Some experts had previously speculated that debris from the left engine might have damaged the engine on the tail.

Boeing, UPS and the Federal Aviation Administration are limited on what they can say while the NTSB investigation is ongoing, so they all declined to comment on Wednesday's report. Boeing and UPS both expressed condolences to the families that lost loved ones in the crash.

"We remain profoundly saddened by the Flight 2976 accident," UPS spokesperson Jim Mayer said. "Our thoughts continue to be with the families and Louisville community who are grieving, and we remain focused on the recovery effort," Mayer said.

Plane involved in the crash was an older model

The 34-year-old MD-11 plane only got 30 feet (9.1 meters) off the ground before crashing into several industrial buildings just past the runway and generating a massive fireball that could be seen for miles. Dramatic videos of the crash showed the plane on fire as it plowed into buildings and released a massive plume of smoke.

Airlines quit flying this type of plane commercially years ago because it isn't as efficient as newer models, but they had continued to fly for cargo carriers like UPS and FedEx and a few of these planes were also modified for use in firefighting. All the MD-11s that had been in use and 10 related DC-10s have been grounded since the crash.

Cosgrove said he thinks it will eventually become clear that these MD-11s "probably should have been retired and that they had exceeded their shelf life."

FBI searches a Washington Post reporter's home as part of a classified documents investigation

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — FBI agents searched a Washington Post reporter's home on Wednesday as part of a leak investigation into a Pentagon contractor accused of taking home classified information, the Justice Department said.

Hannah Natanson, who has been covering President Donald Trump's transformation of the federal government, had a phone, two laptops and a Garmin watch seized in the search of her Virginia home, the Post reported. Natanson has reported extensively on the federal workforce and recently published a piece describing how she gained hundreds of new sources — leading one colleague to call her "the federal government whisperer."

While classified documents investigations aren't unusual, the search of a reporter's home marks an escalation in the government's efforts to crack down on leaks. The Post was told that Natanson and the newspaper are not targets of the probe, executive editor Matt Murray said in an email to colleagues.

"Nonetheless, this extraordinary, aggressive action is deeply concerning and raises profound questions

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and concern around the constitutional protections for our work," Murray wrote. "The Washington Post has a long history of zealous support for robust press freedoms. The entire institution stands by those freedoms and our work."

Attorney General Pam Bondi said that the search was done at the request of the Defense Department and that the journalist was "obtaining and reporting classified and illegally leaked information from a Pentagon contractor."

"Leaking classified information puts America's national security and the safety of our military heroes in serious jeopardy," White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said in a post on X. "President Trump has zero tolerance for it and will continue to aggressively crack down on these illegal acts moving forward."

The warrant says the search was related to an investigation into a system engineer and information technology specialist for a government contractor in Maryland who authorities allege took home classified materials, the Post reported. The worker, Aurelio Perez-Lugones, was charged earlier this month with unlawful retention of national defense information, according to court papers. He has not been charged with sharing classified information, and he has not been accused in court papers with leaking.

Perez-Lugones, who held a top secret security clearance, is accused of printing classified and sensitive reports at work. In a search of his Maryland home and car this month, authorities found documents marked "SECRET," including one in a lunchbox, according to court papers.

An FBI spokesperson declined to comment on Wednesday. The Washington Post said Wednesday that it was monitoring and reviewing the situation. An email seeking comment was sent to lawyers for Perez-Lugones, who is expected to appear in court on Thursday for a detention hearing.

First Amendment groups expressed alarm at the search, saying it could chill investigative journalism that holds government officials to account.

"Physical searches of reporters' devices, homes, and belongings are some of the most invasive investigative steps law enforcement can take," Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press president Bruce Brown said. "While we won't know the government's arguments about overcoming these very steep hurdles until the affidavit is made public, this is a tremendous escalation in the administration's intrusions into the independence of the press."

The Justice Department over the years has developed, and revised, internal policies governing how it will respond to news media leaks.

In April, Bondi rescinded a policy from President Joe Biden's Democratic administration that protected journalists from having their phone records secretly seized during leak investigations — a practice long decried by news organizations and press freedom groups.

The moves again gave prosecutors the authority to use subpoenas, court orders and search warrants to hunt for government officials who make "unauthorized disclosures" to journalists. A memo she issued said members of the press are "presumptively entitled to advance notice of such investigative activities," and subpoenas are to be "narrowly drawn." Warrants must also include "protocols designed to limit the scope of intrusion into potentially protected materials or newsgathering activities," the memo states.

The aggressive posture with regard to The Washington Post stands in contrast to the Justice Department's approach to the disclosure of sensitive military information via a Signal chat last spring involving senior Trump administration officials. A reporter was mistakenly added to that chat. Bondi indicated publicly at the time that she was disinclined to open an investigation, saying she was confident that the episode had been a mistake.

Bondi also repeated Trump administration talking points that the highly sensitive information in the chat was not classified, though current and former U.S. officials have said the posting of the launch times of aircraft and the times that bombs would be released before those pilots were even in the air would have been classified.

Wall Street slumps as bank and tech stocks fall

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Losses for several banks and Big Tech stocks pulled indexes lower on Wednesday, even though the majority of stocks on Wall Street rose.

The S&P 500 slipped 0.5% for its second straight loss after setting its all-time high. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dipped 42 points, or 0.1%, and the Nasdaq composite lost 1%.

Wells Fargo helped pull the market lower after falling 4.6%. The San Francisco-based bank reported weaker profit and revenue for the latest quarter than expected, with analysts citing lower trading fees and other miscellaneous items.

Bank of America fell 3.8% despite reporting a stronger profit than analysts expected, with some consternation about the size of its upcoming expenses. Citigroup, which is in the midst of a turnaround under Chair and CEO Jane Fraser, fell 3.3% following its own profit report.

Companies across industries are under pressure to report strong growth in profits to justify how high their stock prices have run recently. Analysts are looking for businesses across the S&P 500 to report earnings per share for the final three months of 2025 that are roughly 8% higher than a year earlier, according to FactSet.

Biogen sank 5% after the biotechnology company said it expects to take a hit to its profit for the fourth quarter of 2025 due to research and development expenses and other costs that it acquired.

The heaviest weights on the market were tech stocks, which gave back a bit of their huge gains from recent years created by the frenzy around artificial-intelligence technology. Such stellar performances caused some critics to say their stock prices had become too expensive.

Nvidia fell 1.4%, and Broadcom sank 4.2%.

Still, more stocks rose on Wall Street than fell, and the strongest forces keeping the S&P 500 from steeper losses were Exxon Mobil and other oil companies.

Exxon Mobil rose 2.9%, and Chevron climbed 2.1% as the price for a barrel of benchmark U.S. oil rose 1.4% to settle at \$62.02.

Stocks of smaller companies also did better than the rest of the market, with the Russell 2000 index rising 0.7%.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 37.14 points to 6,926.60. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dipped 42.36 to 49,149.63, and the Nasdaq composite fell 238.12 to 23,471.75.

Oil prices have rallied recently after protests swept Iran, which is a member of the OPEC group that helps set crude prices. The protests could lead to disruptions in production and squeeze supplies of crude.

Brent crude, the international standard, rose 1.6% and briefly brought its gain for the year so far to nearly 10%, before prices for both it and U.S. oil fell back later in the afternoon.

In the bond market, Treasury yields sank as investors sought investments seen as safer. Several reports on the U.S. economy also came in mixed.

One said that shoppers spent more at U.S. retailers in November than economists expected. That could be an encouraging signal about the main engine of the U.S. economy.

A separate report said prices rose modestly at the U.S. wholesale level in November. It followed data on Tuesday that said inflation at the U.S. consumer level was close last month to economists' expectations, though it remained above the Federal Reserve's 2% target.

Taken altogether, the reports did little to change Wall Street's expectation that the Federal Reserve will cut its main interest rate at least twice this year to shore up the job market, likely beginning around June, according to CME Group.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury fell to 4.14% from 4.18% late Tuesday.

In stock markets abroad, Japan's Nikkei 225 rallied 1.5% to another record as expectations grew that Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi may call general elections soon.

Indexes were mixed elsewhere. Stocks rose 0.6% in Hong Kong but fell 0.3% in Shanghai after a report showed China's trade surplus surged 20% in 2025 to a record despite President Donald Trump's tariffs.

Trump claims killing of Iran protesters 'has stopped' even as Tehran signals executions ahead

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump made a vague statement Wednesday that he's been told "on good authority" that plans for executions in Iran have stopped, even as Tehran has indicated fast trials and executions ahead in its crackdown on protesters.

The U.S. president's claims, which were made with few details, come as he's told protesting Iranians in recent days that "help is on the way" and that his administration would "act accordingly" to respond to the Iranian government. But Trump has not offered any details about how the U.S. might respond and it wasn't clear if his comments Wednesday indicated he would hold off on action.

"We've been told that the killing in Iran is stopping -- it's stopped -- it's stopping," Trump said at the White House while signing executive orders and legislation. "And there's no plan for executions, or an execution, or executions -- so I've been told that on good authority."

Trump did not specify where he had received that information but only described it as "very important sources on the other side."

Trump said he would "find out" later if it was true, but he didn't explain how.

"I hope it's true," he said. "Who knows?"

When asked if that meant he was not planning to take any action against the Iranian government, Trump said: "We're going to watch it and see what the process is. But we were given a very good statement by people that are aware of what's going on."

The president on Tuesday consulted with his national security team about next steps after telling reporters he believed the killing in Iran was "significant."

Vice President JD Vance, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and key White House National Security Council officials began meeting last Friday to develop options for Trump, ranging from a diplomatic approach to military strikes.

The Iranian security force crackdown on the demonstrations has killed at least 2,586, the U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency reported.

On Wednesday, Iranian officials signaled that suspects detained in nationwide protests would face fast trials and executions while the Islamic Republic promised a "decisive response" if the U.S. or Israel intervene in the domestic unrest.

The threats emerged as some personnel at a key U.S. military base in Qatar were advised to evacuate by Wednesday evening following Trump's escalated warnings of potential military action over the killing of peaceful demonstrators.

Mohammad Pakpour, commander of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, reiterated Iranian claims, without providing evidence, that the U.S. and Israel have instigated the protests and that they are the real killers of protesters and security forces who have died in the turmoil, according to Iran's semiofficial Tasnim news agency.

He added that those countries will "receive the response in the appropriate time."

Earlier Wednesday, Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejei, Iran's judiciary chief, said the government must act quickly to punish more than 18,000 people who have been detained through rapid trials and executions. Mohseni-Ejei's comments about rapid trials and executions were made in a video shared by Iranian state television online.

"If we want to do a job, we should do it now. If we want to do something, we have to do it quickly," he said. "If it becomes late, two months, three months later, it doesn't have the same effect. If we want to do something, we have to do that fast."

The comments stand as a direct challenge to Trump, who warned Iran about executions in an interview with CBS aired Tuesday. "If they do such a thing, we will take very strong action," Trump said.

What to know about the threats on federal funds flowing to Minnesota

By GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

It's not just about sending federal law enforcement officers into Minnesota.

President Donald Trump's administration is also lashing out at the state by threatening to withhold billions in federal money, much of it intended to help low-income families with food aid, health care and child care — and with a new lawsuit against the state.

Trump's administration has struck out at Democratic-run states broadly, but it's made a prime example of Minnesota, where the president last month called the state's Somali population "garbage," targeting it with actions not seen elsewhere.

The administration has not spelled out its exact plans in most cases, and it's not clear if some of the money will actually stop flowing — or, if so, when.

Trump's administration has unleashed a wave of threats to halt the flow of some federal funds to other states, too — including federal funds to "sanctuary cities" that limit cooperation with federal immigration officials and their states.

Minnesota has been singled out in some cuts as Trump repeatedly criticizes Gov. Tim Walz over fraud in federal programs. Walz, the 2024 Democratic vice presidential nominee and a high-profile Trump critic, ended his campaign this month for a third term, saying he couldn't run a campaign while fending off the attacks and running the state.

Minnesota is pushing back in courts or otherwise.

Here's a look at the planned freezes in Minnesota.

Agriculture Department grants suspended

The Agriculture Department said it's freezing funding in the state and its largest city, Minneapolis — but without laying out many details. Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins said in a social media post Jan. 9 announcing the action: "No more handouts to thieves!"

In a letter to Walz and Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey, she cited a major fraud case involving a USDA-funded pandemic relief program that broke in 2022 in which 78 people have been charged — and 57 convicted.

Rollins said she was suspending all current and future awards to the city and state and told them to provide payment justifications for all transactions since Jan. 20, 2025, the day Trump returned to office. The justifications would be required to receive future money, too.

Rollins said the awards at risk total more than \$129 million but did not specify which programs are included. Her department has not clarified whether the amount includes payments that go to individuals, or just those to government entities.

Based on the figure from Rollins, the freeze would not appear to include funds for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which helps about 1 in 12 Minnesota residents buy groceries. Minnesota residents received more than \$850 million through that program in 2024. Still, a Minnesota Department of Children, Youth and Families website says the department is analyzing any impacts to SNAP.

It also appears the National School Lunch Program, which provides and subsidizes school meals, is not included. Minnesota was expected to receive more than \$240 million in that program in the budget year that ended Sept. 30.

The Agriculture Department also runs programs aimed at food producers, including disaster aid and price supports.

Minnesota Agriculture Commissioner Thom Peterson said at a news conference Wednesday that it's not clear exactly which programs might lose funding, but the state has started receiving notices from some pauses, including to a University of Minnesota poultry testing lab. He said that leaves uncertainty about who would pay if avian influenza is found at a farm and birds must be removed.

Minnesota appeals reduction in Medicaid payments

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services also told Minnesota last week that it intends to withhold \$515 million every three months from 14 Medicaid programs that were deemed high risk after rejecting a

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corrective action plan the federal government demanded because of fraud allegations.

The programs identified as high risk include adult companion services, residential treatment services and nonemergency medical transportation.

The amount to be withheld is equivalent to one-fourth of the federal money for those programs.

On a call with reporters Tuesday, state Department of Human Services said they were mounting an administrative appeal to the freeze.

They said the department has been emphasizing anti-fraud measures for more than a year and questioned the federal action, which they said is unlike anything they've found in other states.

"Minnesota cannot absorb the loss of more than \$2 billion in annual funding for these programs without catastrophic consequences for the people we serve," Temporary Human Services Commissioner Shireen Gandhi said, adding that the state can't find other examples of similar federal decisions.

"It's not corrective action," she said. "It's a punitive action."

Court pauses freeze on child care and other social services money

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services told Minnesota in late December that it was freezing funds in the child Care and Development Block Grant, which subsidizes child care for low-income families, telling the state that it had to submit attendance records and other information before the money would flow again.

Last week, the Trump administration said it was halting payments of the child care money, along with temporary aid for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, which provides job training and cash assistance, and the Social Services Block Grant, which funds a variety of social services, for Minnesota and four other states where Democrats lead the government.

The five states — along with Minnesota, California, Colorado, Illinois and New York — sued. Advocates and officials warned that stopping the childcare subsidy would put many daycare providers at risk of layoffs or closures. And those could put the families of all their clients in binds, not just those who rely on the subsidies.

Last week, a federal judge ruled that the administration cannot block the money for now.

Federal government launches lawsuit over government hiring practices

The federal administration on Wednesday unleashed another line of attack on the Minnesota state government.

The U.S. Department of Justice sued the state government in federal court over its affirmative action hiring requirements. The lawsuit seeks to end programs intended to diversify the government workforce, claiming "Minnesota requires its hiring managers to jump through additional hoops to hire employees with disfavored skin colors or sex chromosomes."

The lawsuit also seeks money for employees and prospective employees who were impacted.

The state attorney general's office said it would respond in court.

What to know as New York City nurses strike for a 3rd day

By PHILIP MARCELO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — New York City nurses are striking for a third day Wednesday, with both sides seemingly preparing for a protracted walkout.

None of the three major hospital systems affected by the strike have met with union negotiators, though one said it plans to sit down with nurses Thursday.

Picketing nurses instead held a rally at a Bronx hospital in which their leaders took aim at hospital administrators who they say are mischaracterizing their contract demands.

Meanwhile, the hospital systems said they've committed to keeping on the temporary nurses they brought on to fill work gaps at least through next week.

Here's what you need to know about the biggest nursing strike the city has seen in decades:

Who's walking out?

Roughly 15,000 nurses unionized under the New York State Nurses Association went on strike Monday

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morning at multiple campuses of three private, nonprofit hospital systems -- Mount Sinai, Montefiore and NewYork-Presbyterian.

But hospital officials have suggested unionized nurses are not all in lockstep: Mount Sinai says an increasing number have opted to continue working rather than join the picket line. The hospital said they've gone from 20% percent of unionized nurses still on staff Tuesday to 23% Wednesday.

Not every hospital run by the three health care systems is affected by the strike. Other private hospital systems in the city reached tentative deals with the union, averting walkouts at their facilities. City-run public hospitals are not affected by the strikes.

Where do negotiations stand?

A spokesperson for NewYork-Presbyterian said hospital administrators planned to meet with their union counterparts on Thursday evening.

The sides haven't met since Sunday before the strike.

The union has accused the hospitals of failing to come to the bargaining table, while administrators have laid the blame on the nurses.

Each medical center is negotiating with the union independently.

What are nurses seeking?

The nurses' demands vary by hospital, but the union says the top concerns for members are health care, safe staffing and workplace violence.

They say emergency rooms are overcrowded at too many hospitals, their workloads have become unmanageable and medical facilities need better security measures to keep patients and staff safe.

Erika Perrotta, an emergency room nurse at Montefiore, said at the rally Wednesday that many patients at the Bronx hospital's ER are frequently left in the hallways because there are no rooms, making it hard for nurses to even move around the area quickly.

"It's unacceptable," she told the crowd in front of the hospital.

Phiona Hunnigan-McFarlane, a nurse at Montefiore who also spoke at the rally, said she was punched to the ground by a troubled patient.

She said her injuries were so bad that she had to have her family take care of her while she was out of work for six months.

What are the hospitals saying?

The hospitals say they're willing to provide nurses pay raises but that the union's salary demands are simply too costly. They've described them as "extreme" and "exorbitant."

Montefiore says the union's proposal would raise the average salary of a nurse to \$220,000 in three years while Mount Sinai says it would raise it to nearly \$250,000. Unionized nurses' salaries currently average around \$163,000 a year at the three systems.

Montefiore, in response to the security issues raised at Wednesday's rally, said its security protocol is "best-in-class" and includes weapons detection systems, armed New York City police officers stationed around-the-clock, internal hospital security personnel and wearable panic buttons issued to nurses.

Montefiore has also been critical of a union proposal it says would prevent nurses from being fired, even if they're found to be compromised by drugs or alcohol while on the job.

Union officials fired back Wednesday, saying the hospital is "stigmatizing" those dealing with substance abuse issues while also "blatantly mischaracterizing" a "non-controversial measure" already being implemented around the state.

How are patients being impacted?

City officials haven't raised any problems so far in the early days of the walkout.

Hospitals have urged patients not to avoid getting care during the strike as they've brought on thousands of temporary, contract nurses to cover shifts of their regular nurses.

Ruth Villanueva was among the patients leaving Montefiore's Bronx hospital as the striking nurses rallied Wednesday. The 75-year-old resident said she didn't have any issues on her visit and that the hospital seemed to be operating as usual.

"They're still the same. Nothing that is coming out different," she said, adding that she believed nurses

deserved better pay.

Mount Sinai said its emergency department has been managing a 25% increase in patient registrations in the early days of the strike, which hit during the busy flu season.

The Greater New York Hospital Association, an industry group, has said hospitals canceled scheduled surgeries, transferred patients from more specialized units and increased discharges in the days leading up to the strike in order to streamline and reduce the number of patients they're serving.

When was the last nurses' strike?

Nurses last walked off the job in 2023. The strike impacted Mount Sinai and Montefiore and lasted three days.

It resulted in a deal raising pay 19% over three years at the two hospital systems.

The pact also included provisions to address nurses' staffing and workload concerns, though the union claims the hospitals are trying to walk back those guarantees in the current contract talks.

US will suspend immigrant visa processing from 75 countries over public assistance concerns

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The State Department said Wednesday it will suspend the processing of immigrant visas for citizens of 75 countries, including Afghanistan, Iran, Russia and Somalia, whose nationals the Trump administration has deemed likely to require public assistance while living in the United States.

The State Department, led by Secretary of State Marco Rubio, said it had instructed consular officers to halt immigrant visa applications from the countries affected in accordance with a broader order issued in November that tightened rules around potential immigrants who might become "public charges" in the U.S.

The step builds on earlier immigration and travel bans by the administration on nearly 40 countries and is part of President Donald Trump's ongoing efforts to tighten U.S. entry standards for foreigners.

"The Trump administration is bringing an end to the abuse of America's immigration system by those who would extract wealth from the American people," the department said in a statement. "Immigrant visa processing from these 75 countries will be paused while the State Department reassess immigration processing procedures to prevent the entry of foreign nationals who would take welfare and public benefits."

The suspension, which will begin Jan. 21, will not apply to applicants seeking non-immigrant visas, or temporary tourist or business visas, who make up the vast majority of visa seekers. Demand for non-immigrant visas is expected to rise dramatically in the coming months and years due to the upcoming 2026 World Cup and 2028 Olympics both of which the U.S. will host or co-host.

Cable calls for screening of non-immigrant visa applicants

A separate notice sent to all U.S. embassies and consulates said that non-immigrant visa applicants should be screened for the possibility that they might seek public benefits in the United States.

"With the uncovering of massive public benefits fraud across the United States, the Trump administration is laser-focused on eliminating and preventing fraud in public benefits programs," said the cable that referred specifically to most non-immigrant visa applications and was sent on Monday.

The cable, a copy of which was obtained by The Associated Press, urged consular officers to ensure that foreigners wanting to travel to the U.S. "have been fully vetted and screened" for whether they may rely on public services before they are issued a visa.

The cable noted several times that it is up to the applicant to prove that they would not apply for public benefits while in the U.S. and said consular officers who suspect the applicant might apply should require them to fill out a form proving their financial bona fides.

President Donald Trump's administration has already severely restricted immigrant and non-immigrant visa processing for citizens of dozens of countries, many of them in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Consular officials must consider a range of personal details

The November guidance on which Wednesday's decision is based directed U.S. Embassy and consulate officials to comprehensively and thoroughly vet visa applicants to demonstrate that they will not need to

rely on public benefits from the government any time after their admission in the U.S.

While federal law already required those seeking permanent residency or legal status to prove they wouldn't be a public charge, Trump in his first term widened the range of benefit programs that could disqualify applicants, and the guidelines in the cable appear to go further in scope.

Immigrants seeking entry into the U.S. already undergo a medical exam by a physician who's been approved by a U.S. Embassy. They are screened for communicable diseases, like tuberculosis, and asked to disclose any history of drug or alcohol use, mental health conditions or violence. They're also required to have a number of vaccinations.

The new directive expanded those with more specific requirements. It said consular officials must consider a range of specific details about people seeking visas, including their age, health, family status, finances, education, skills and any past use of public assistance regardless of the country. It also said they should assess applicants' English proficiency and can do so by conducting interviews in English.

Experts said at the time it could further limit who gets to enter the country at a time when the Republican administration is already tightening those rules.

The countries affected by the suspension announced on Wednesday are:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Bhutan, Bosnia, Brazil, Burma, Cambodia, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Colombia, Congo, Cuba, Dominica, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gambia, Georgia, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Haiti, Iran, Iraq, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Macedonia, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Republic of the Congo, Russia, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Uruguay, Uzbekistan and Yemen.

Gaza is entering the second phase of the ceasefire plan Trump helped broker, US says

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States said Wednesday that it is moving into the next phase of a Gaza ceasefire plan that involves disarming Hamas, rebuilding the war-ravaged territory and establishing the group of Palestinian experts that will administer daily affairs in Gaza under American supervision.

President Donald Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff said in a post on X that the deal that the Republican president helped broker was entering its second phase following two years of war between Israel and Hamas, including the establishment of a technocratic government in Gaza.

While Wednesday's announcement indicates a key step forward, a new government in Gaza and the ceasefire agreement face a number of huge challenges — including the deployment of an international security force to supervise the deal and the difficult process of disarming Hamas.

Witkoff did not offer any details about who would serve on the new transitional Palestinian administration that would govern Gaza. The White House did not immediately offer any more information, either.

The other mediators of the ceasefire deal — Egypt, Turkey and Qatar — welcomed the establishment of the Palestinian technocratic committee and said it would be led by Ali Shaath, a former deputy minister in the Palestinian Authority.

In a joint statement, the three countries called it an "important development ... aimed at consolidating stability and improving the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip."

Shaath is a Gaza native who served as a deputy minister for transportation with the internationally recognized Palestinian Authority. Shaath, an engineer, is an expert in economic development and reconstruction, according to his biography on the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute's website.

Witkoff said the U.S. expects Hamas to immediately return the final Israeli hostage as part of its obligations under the deal, noting that "failure to do so will bring serious consequences."

A Hamas spokesperson, Hazem Qassem, told Al-Jazeera Live on Wednesday that Witkoff's announcement

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is an important and positive development, adding that the group is ready to hand over the administration of Gaza to the independent technocratic committee and facilitate its work.

" Hamas is ready to engage in internal Palestinian approaches to discuss the issue of the resistance weapons," said Qassem in the statements that he shared on his Telegram channel.

The last hostage, Ran Gvili, was a 24-year-old police officer who was killed while fighting Hamas militants during the Oct. 7, 2023, attack that started the war in Gaza.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke Wednesday evening to Gvili's parents, Tali and Itzik Gvili, and told them that the return of their son's remains a top priority, his office said in a statement.

"The declarative move to establish a technocratic committee will not affect efforts to return Ran to Israel's grave," the statement said.

The statement added that Israel will act on any information the mediators receive and said Hamas is required under the ceasefire agreement to do all it can to return each and every hostage.

The ceasefire reached under Trump's 20-point plan took effect in October and stopped much of the fighting. Under the first phase of the three-phase deal, Hamas released all but one hostage it was holding in exchange for hundreds of Palestinians who were held by Israel.

Appointees to a technocratic committee that Witkoff said would be established under the second phase are part of a broader plan to end Hamas' 18-year rule of Gaza. The appointees will run day-to-day affairs in Gaza, under the oversight of a Trump-led "Board of Peace," whose members have also not yet been named.

The technocratic committee will be tasked with providing public services to the more than 2 million Palestinians in Gaza, but it faces towering challenges and unanswered questions, including about its operations and financing.

The United Nations has estimated that reconstruction will cost more than \$50 billion. The process is expected to take years, and little money has been pledged so far.

There also is the more immediate challenge of figuring out how to take over basic services after nearly two decades of Hamas-led rule in Gaza and repeated rounds of conflict with Israel.

What Americans think about Trump's military intervention abroad, according to a new AP-NORC poll

By LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — More than half of U.S. adults believe President Donald Trump has "gone too far" in using the U.S. military to intervene in other countries, according to a new AP-NORC poll.

The poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research was conducted Jan. 8-11, after Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro's capture. It found that 56% of U.S. adults think Trump has overstepped on military interventions abroad, while majorities disapprove of how the Republican president is handling foreign policy in general and Venezuela in particular.

The findings largely cut against Trump's aggressive foreign policy stance, which has recently included efforts to exert control over Venezuelan oil, calls for the U.S. to take over Greenland and warnings the U.S. would provide aid to people protesting in Iran. Many did see the Trump administration's recent intervention in Venezuela as a "good thing" for stopping the flow of illegal drugs into the U.S. and a benefit for the Venezuelan people, but fewer say it's a positive for U.S. national security or the U.S. economy.

Republicans are mostly following Trump's lead, despite the sharp contrast with the "America First" platform he ran on. But few Republicans want Trump to go further, underscoring the risks of a continued focus abroad.

Most Republicans say Trump's actions have been 'about right'

While the U.S. used its military power in Venezuela to capture Maduro, Trump has also made recent comments about seizing Greenland "the hard way" if Denmark's leaders do not agree to a deal for the U.S. to take it over, and he has warned Iran that the U.S. will come to the "rescue" of peaceful protesters.

Democrats and independents are driving the belief that Trump has overstepped. About 9 in 10 Demo-

crats and roughly 6 in 10 independents say Trump has "gone too far" on military intervention, compared with about 2 in 10 Republicans.

The vast majority of Republicans, 71%, say Trump's actions have been "about right," and only about 1 in 10 want to see him go further.

About 6 in 10 Americans, 57%, disapprove of how Trump is handling the situation in Venezuela, which is slightly lower than the 61% who disapprove of his approach to foreign policy. Both measures are in line with his overall job approval, which has largely remained steady throughout his second term.

Many say the US action in Venezuela will be good for halting drug trafficking

Many Americans see some benefits from U.S. intervention in Venezuela.

About half of Americans believe the U.S. intervening in Venezuela will be "mostly a good thing" for halting the flow of illegal drugs into the country. Close to 4 in 10, 44%, believe the U.S. actions will do more to benefit than harm the Venezuelan people, who lived under Maduro's rule for more than a decade. But U.S. adults are divided on whether intervention will be good or bad for U.S. economic and national security interests or if it simply won't have an impact.

Republicans are more likely than Democrats and independents to see benefits to the U.S. action, particularly its effects on drug trafficking. About 8 in 10 Republicans say America's intervention will be "mostly a good thing" for stopping the flow of illegal drugs into the country, but fewer Republicans, about 6 in 10, believe it will benefit the U.S. economy.

Democrats and independents drive desire for US to take a 'less active' role

Most Americans don't want greater U.S. involvement in world affairs, the poll found. Nearly half of Americans want the U.S. to take a "less active" role, and about one-third say its current role is "about right."

Only about 2 in 10 U.S. adults say they want the country to be more involved globally, including about 1 in 10 Republicans.

At least half of Democrats and independents now want the U.S. to do less, a sharp shift from a few months ago.

Republicans, meanwhile, have grown more likely to indicate that Trump's level of involvement is right. About 6 in 10 Republicans, 64%, say the country's current role in world affairs is "about right," which is up slightly from 55% in September. About one-quarter of Republicans say the U.S. needs to take a "less active role" in solving problems around the globe, down slightly from 34% a few months ago.

Luxury retailer Saks seeks bankruptcy protection overwhelmed by debt

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO and ELAINE KURTENBACH The Associated Press

The owner of Saks Fifth Avenue is seeking bankruptcy protection, buffeted by rising competition and the massive debt it took on to buy its rival in the luxury sector, Neiman Marcus, just over a year ago.

Saks Global, which also operates Bergdorf Goodman, has secured roughly \$1.75 billion in financing, the New York company said as it filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy Wednesday in the Southern District of Texas.

The privately held Saks Global said its stores will remain open as it restructures company debt, meaning that it will honor the programs it has for customers. Suppliers and employees will be paid, Saks said.

There are about 33 Saks stores and 36 Neiman Marcus locations, according to the company, as well as two Bergdorf Goodman stores and roughly 70 Saks Off 5th discount stores.

"This is a defining moment for Saks Global, and the path ahead presents a meaningful opportunity to strengthen the foundation of our business and position it for the future," said Geoffroy van Raemdonck, who took over for CEO and Executive Chairman Richard Baker this week. Baker had assumed control after the company's CEO Marc Metrick, who stepped down earlier this month.

When Saks said that it would buy Neiman Marcus for \$2.65 billion in the summer of 2024, the goal was to create a powerhouse in a luxury sector that had grown more fragmented. Online sellers have been siphoning customers, and big name brands had expanded the number of its own stores to sell its goods.

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But the acquisition only added to an already onerous debt at Saks as luxury sales weakened. Saks was having trouble paying suppliers before and by last year it began to stretch out payment periods, angering brands and fraying relationships.

The debt-fueled acquisition of Neiman Marcus made bankruptcy a more likely possibility, said Neil Saunders, managing director of GlobalData Retail. But he was surprised by the speed at which it took place.

"Behind the glossy facade the deal was an entanglement of complex financial engineering that made it impossible for the group to execute their stated vision," Saunders wrote Wednesday.

And it is a difficult environment for retailers like Saks even if it were on firmer financial footing.

Global sales of luxury goods are expected to contract for the second straight year as consumers, anxious about the economy, pare back spending, according to a study by Bain & Co. consultancy released in November.

Hudson's Bay, Canada's oldest company, began liquidating all but six of its stores in March 2025. Neiman Marcus entered bankruptcy protection for about four months in 2020 as the coronavirus pandemic spread. Lord & Taylor sought bankruptcy protection in August of that year, then said it would close all of its stores and operate as an online retailer only.

The century-old department store Nordstrom agreed to be taken private in a \$6.25 billion deal last year.

Sales at the long-suffering Macy's have begun to improve under new CEO Tony Spring, but only after he shuttered faltering stores.

There is concern among vendors about Saks and how things will move forward.

"They're very nervous, very concerned, very worried about spring deliveries for merchandise that they've already produced," said Gary Wassner, CEO of Hilldun Corp., which ensures suppliers get paid for products shipped to retailers. "They weren't able to complete deliveries on what they had produced for the fourth quarter of (2025), so they're sitting with that inventory."

Wassner said Saks Global accounted for 40% to 50% of the business of some of his clients. He said that he told his clients to stop shipping to Saks last month given the uncertainty. His clients have \$130 million in spring orders waiting to be delivered to Saks, but they want payment guarantees from Hilldun first.

Saks said that it has financing commitments of \$1.5 billion from some of its creditors and another \$240 million in "incremental liquidity" from its lenders.

According to the bankruptcy filing, the company listed \$1 billion to \$10 billion in assets and liabilities. Chanel topped the list of its 30 largest unsecured claims that were not insiders, with an unsecured claim of roughly \$136 million. Kering, which owns such brands as Gucci, Saint Laurent and Balenciaga, was ranked No. 2, with an unsecured claim of \$59.9 million, according to the documents.

While Americans continue to spend, an extended period of inflation has tipped a wide spectrum of retailers into bankruptcy courts. In recent months, that has included mall staple Claires and the craft store Joann.

Bankruptcies are rising across almost all sectors, according to S&P Global Market Intelligence, which counted 785 last year, marking the third consecutive annual increase and the highest total since 2010. Retailers had the second largest concentration of filings.

Diversity still a major issue at the Winter Olympics. The US is making some strides

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Sports Writer

LAKE PLACID, N.Y. (AP) — When USA Bobsled and Skeleton unveils its Olympic rosters, the most likely scenario is that either eight or nine women will wind up competing for that federation on the ice at the Milan Cortina Winter Games.

Most of those sliders will almost certainly be women of color.

By the time the Games open, this could be the most diverse U.S. Olympic winter roster ever assembled. The 2018 U.S. roster for the 2018 Games included 21 athletes of either Black or Asian descent, about 8% of the total; the 2026 team could top that number. There is still obvious potential for far more growth on

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the diversity front, but some athletes feel that steps are being taken in the right direction.

"We're really doing this," said U.S. skeleton athlete Mystique Ro, a woman of Black and Korean descent and someone who teamed with Austin Florian to win last year's world championship in the sport's mixed event. "The train has left the station. We're going. And it's such a surreal feeling. ... We're really making history out here and it's not slowing down at all."

People of color fill the rosters for non-traditional winter sports nations like Jamaica but most of the dominant teams from European powers — and, to be fair, the U.S. as well — are almost entirely white. Still, some of the top American medal hopefuls at these Olympics will be Black women, and that's not exactly a new phenomenon — especially in bobsled.

Bobsledder Elana Meyers Taylor is a five-time Olympic medalist and is the most decorated Black athlete in Winter Games history. Kaysha Love is the reigning world champion in monobob, making her the first Black woman to hold that title. Speedskater Erin Jackson, who in 2022 became the first Black woman to win Olympic winter gold in an individual sport, is back for more in 2026. Laila Edwards is a rising star of the powerhouse U.S. women's hockey team and will be the first Black woman to wear the American sweater on the Olympic stage.

"It's a really big deal," Edwards said when the roster was unveiled. "Representation matters. In terms of processing it, I think I'm just trying to use it as something that motivates me to be the best role model and person I can be."

It also remains clear that the sports offered as part of the Winter Olympic program seem to come with fewer opportunities for athletes of color. The National Ski Areas Association said in 2024 that, of all guests who visit U.S. ski resorts, about 1% identify as Black. The reasons most commonly cited are cost and accessibility: many winter sports are expensive and ski areas are generally remote.

Of the 2,900 or so athletes who competed at the most recent Winter Games in Beijing, the overwhelming majority of them identified white. There was a smattering of non-traditional winter sports nations to see athletes qualify — Ghana, Nigeria and Haiti among them — and the impact that Jamaica's famed "Cool Runnings" bobsled team had when it debuted at the Olympics a generation ago is still felt today.

"I never thought I would be doing this," said bobsledder Adanna Johnson, who was 17 when she competed for Jamaica at last year's world championships. "The sport is growing. There are more opportunities."

Much more needs to be done, Ro said, particularly in the years where the Winter Olympic spotlight doesn't shine on these sports.

"There's a lot more diversity," Ro said. "But seeing us without the helmet, seeing the roster, seeing the names, it's just really important how we present it to the people so it's not just at the Olympics. It has to be every year because we compete every year."

Almost every person who has made a national team over the last few decades came to bobsled after being recruited from another sport — often track, since bobsled thrives on a combination of speed and power. Vonetta Flowers was the first Black woman to win a bobsled medal for the U.S., teaming with Jill Bakken for gold at the Salt Lake City Games in 2002, and the Americans have seen women of color make their way to the medal stand steadily ever since.

Meyers Taylor, an elite softball player in college, counts Flowers as one of her top inspirations. So does Love, who was a record-setting sprinter in high school who went on to UNLV. She then got invited to try bobsled and is about to become a two-time Olympian.

She always knew she'd get there. She just thought it'd be in gymnastics.

"Growing up, I was really only excited about summer sports because that's where I saw me. That's where I saw representation," Love said. "You always had Black athletes in gymnastics and track and even swimming sometimes. So, to know that now I get to be that representation along with like some of my other teammates who have worked so hard to be a part of this ... that change is inspiring."

Ukraine's new defense minister reveals scale of desertions as millions avoid the draft

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Wide-scale desertions and 2 million draft-dodgers are among a raft of challenges facing Ukraine's military as Russia presses on with its invasion of its neighbor after almost four years of fighting, the new defense minister said Wednesday.

Mykhailo Fedorov told Ukraine's parliament that other problems facing Ukraine's armed forces include excessive bureaucracy, a Soviet-style approach to management, and disruptions in the supply of equipment to troops along the about 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) front line.

"We cannot fight a war with new technologies but an old organizational structure," Fedorov said.

He said the military had faced some 200,000 troop desertions and draft-dodging by around 2 million people.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy appointed 34-year-old Fedorov at the start of the year. The former head of Ukraine's digital transformation policies is credited with spearheading the the army's drone technology and introducing several successful e-government platforms.

His appointment was part of a broad government reshuffle that the Ukrainian leader said aimed to sharpen the focus on security, defense development and diplomacy amid a new U.S.-led push to find a peace settlement.

Fedorov said the defense ministry is facing a shortfall of 300 billion hryvnia (\$6.9 billion) in funding needs.

The European Union will dedicate most of a massive new loan program to help fund Ukraine's military and economy over the next two years, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said Wednesday.

Fedorov said Ukraine's defense sector has expanded significantly since Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022. At the start of the war, he said, the country had seven private drone companies and two firms developing electronic warfare systems. Today, he said, there are nearly 500 drone manufacturers and about 200 electronic warfare companies in Ukraine.

He added that some sectors have emerged from scratch, including private missile producers, which now number about 20, and more than 100 companies manufacturing ground-based robotic systems.

Scientists call another near-record hot year a 'warning shot' of a shifting, dangerous climate

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Earth's average temperature last year hovered among one of the three hottest on record, while the past three years indicate that warming could be speeding up, international climate monitoring teams reported.

Six science teams calculated that 2025 was behind 2024 and 2023, while two other groups — NASA and a joint American and British team — said 2025 was slightly warmer than 2023. World Meteorological Organization, NASA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration officials said 2023 and 2025 temperatures were so close — .02 degrees Celsius (.04 degrees Fahrenheit) apart — that it's pretty much a tie.

Last year's average global temperature was 15.08 degrees Celsius (59.14 degrees Fahrenheit), which is 1.44 degrees Celsius (2.59 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer than pre-industrial time, the World Meteorological Organization calculated, averaging out the eight data sets. The temperature data used by most of the teams goes back to 1850.

All of the last three years flirted close to the internationally agreed-upon limit of 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) of warming since the mid 19th century. That goal for limiting temperature increases, established in Paris in 2015, is likely to be breached by the end of this decade, the scientists said.

When charted on a graph, 2023, 2024 and 2025 "seemed to jump up," said NOAA climate monitoring chief Russ Vose. When averaged together, those three years shoot above the 1.5-degree mark, according

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to the European climate service Copernicus.

Rising global temperatures intensify heat waves and other extreme weather, endangering people and causing billions of dollars in damage. The weather monitoring teams warn that the 2025 temperature increase is a dangerous sign of worsening storms, heat, floods and fires.

Earth is warming at a faster rate

The last 11 years have been the hottest 11 years on record, the climate monitoring groups found.

"The last three years are indicative of an acceleration in the warming. They're not consistent with the linear trend that we've been observing for the 50 years before that," said Robert Rohde, chief scientist at the Berkeley Earth monitoring group.

While Rohde said nearly all of the warming is from human-caused emissions of greenhouse gases, the past three years' temperatures had a boost from a combination of less soot pollution from ships that normally has a cooling effect, peak solar activity and perhaps a 2022 underwater volcano eruption.

Samantha Burgess, strategic climate lead of the Copernicus service, said the overwhelming culprit is clear: the burning of coal, oil and natural gas.

"Climate change is happening. It's here. It's impacting everyone all around the world and it's our fault," Burgess told The Associated Press.

Three teams — including NOAA and NASA — reported their data Wednesday, while the other teams released their information late Tuesday. Copernicus and Japan use a combination of satellite data and computer simulations, while the rest of the groups use ground and sea observations. The eight data sets were within less than a tenth of a degree apart.

Northern Illinois University meteorology professor Victor Gensini, who was not part of any of the teams, called what's happening "another warning shot" of a shifting climate "where record/near-record global temperatures are the norm, not the exception."

Higher temperatures endanger people

Burgess noted numerous heat waves in 2025 that broke local or national temperature records, also having significant effects on people's bodies.

"When we look at a warmer world, we know that extreme events become more frequent and more intense," Burgess said, mentioning 2025's Los Angeles wildfires. "When we have severe storms or a flooding events, the rain is more intense."

Berkeley Earth calculated that 770 million people — one out of every 12 people on the planet — experienced record annual heat, with 450 million of them in China. Other record hot spots included much of Australia, northern Africa, the Arabian peninsula and Antarctica, according to Copernicus. The continental United States had its fourth warmest year on record, NOAA found.

One major natural factor in global temperatures is the El Nino/La Nina oscillation — a cyclic warming or cooling of the equatorial Pacific that changes weather across much of the planet. Usually a warm El Nino spikes temperatures and its cool La Nina flip side depresses temperatures.

Last year there were two weak, cool La Ninas so there was a "big part of the surface of the Earth that's a little cooler than it otherwise would be and that's probably gonna tuck a little temperature down just a little bit," NOAA's Vose said.

An even warmer future waits

Some forecasts have an El Nino developing this year, but it's still murky, meteorologists said. Carlo Buontempo, director of Copernicus' climate service, said that when the next El Nino materializes, which he expects within the next couple of years, it will likely drive another record annual temperature.

Several of the climate monitoring groups are predicting that 2026 will be about as hot as 2025.

Looking ahead, both Copernicus and Berkeley Earth calculated that 2029 is the likely date that the planet's long-term average will breach the 1.5 degree threshold.

"In a decade's time when we're in the 2030s ... the number of extreme events around the world will increase. The cost associated with the damages and impacts of those extreme events will be worse," Burgess said. "And we will look back to the mild climate of the mid 2020s with nostalgia."

A construction crane falls onto a moving train in Thailand, killing at least 32 people

By JINTAMAS SAKSONCHAI and WASAMON AUDJARINT Associated Press

NAKHON RATCHASIMA, Thailand (AP) — A construction crane crashed onto a moving passenger train in northeastern Thailand on Wednesday, triggering a derailment that killed at least 32 people and injured dozens more.

The crash occurred in Nakhon Ratchasima, some 200 kilometers (135 miles) northeast of Bangkok, on a section of a planned high-speed rail project that is intended to eventually connect China with much of Southeast Asia.

The province's Public Health Provincial Office said there were 32 fatalities and 64 injured victims, including seven with severe injuries. There were still three passengers missing among the 171 believed to have been on board the train, it said in a statement issued as night fell.

Authorities said the crane was being used to build an elevated part of the railway when it fell as the train was traveling from the capital, Bangkok, to Ubon Ratchathani province. Thailand's Rail Transport Department said the crane was what is called a launching gantry crane, a self-supporting structure with vertical legs that usually runs on rails or wheels for mobility, allowing it to progress along with the construction project that it straddles. Such cranes are often used to help build elevated roads.

Images published in Thai media showed plumes of white, then dark, smoke rising from the crash site, with construction equipment dangling from girders between two concrete support pillars.

Rescue workers pull survivors from mangled, overturned carriages

Rescue workers stood on top of overturned railway carriages, some of them with gaping holes torn on their sides, video from public broadcaster ThaiPBS showed. What appeared to be sections of the crane were scattered along the track.

Sixty-two year-old Samai Teechantuek, whose house is about 100 meters (yards) from the site of the accident, told The Associated Press of the horror of witnessing the accident, and hearing "the noises screeching, and then bam, bam, bam, all the way over there."

"When the dust settled, I saw the top of the train carriage. I heard people shouting 'save the children first!'" she said. "A conductor pulled people out. I saw them pulling many people out. People from the shop over there also ran out to help."

"My legs were shaking. I was standing there shaking. I didn't dare going any closer," she said.

Transport Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn said he ordered an investigation.

In August 2024, a railway tunnel on the planned route, also in Nakhon Ratchasima, collapsed, killing three workers. Days of heavy rainfall were believed to have been a factor in the collapse.

The elevated segment that collapsed is a part of a Thai-Chinese high-speed railway project linking the capital to the northeastern province of Nong Khai, bordering Laos. The two-stage rail project has a total investment cost of more than 520 billion baht (\$16.8 billion) and is associated with an ambitious plan to connect China with Southeast Asia under Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative. The section where the accident took place had a budget of more than 179 billion baht (\$5.7 billion) and according to its original plans was expected to start operating in 2027.

Anan Phonimdaeng, acting governor of the State Railway of Thailand, said the project's contractor is Italian-Thai Development, with a Chinese company responsible for design and construction supervision. He said he ordered the contractor to suspend operations at the site until the investigation of the accident is completed.

Anan said authorities will examine the responsibilities of both parties, and the Railway Department plans to take legal action against the contractor as a first step. Damage to the train was estimated to be more than 100 million baht (\$3.2 million), while construction equipment suffered limited damage, he said.

A statement posted on the company's website expressed condolences to the victims and said the company would take responsibility for paying compensation to the families of the dead and hospitalization expenses for the injured.

The main contractor for the route's first stage between Bangkok and Nakhon Ratchasima, Italian-Thai Development, was also the directly responsible for construction of the segment where Wednesday's accident occurred.

Main contractor was tied to last year's Bangkok building collapse

The rail accident sparked outrage because the company, also known as ItalThai, was also the co-lead contractor for the State Audit Building in the Thai capital Bangkok, which collapsed during construction in March during a major earthquake.

About 100 people were killed in the collapse, which was the only major structure in Thailand to suffer such serious damage. Dozens of executives were indicted in connection with the disaster but none have yet been tried.

The involvement of Chinese companies in both projects has also drawn attention, as has ItalThai's and Chinese companies' involvement in the construction of several expressway extensions in and around Bangkok where several accidents, some fatal, had occurred.

Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, who was interior minister when the State Audit Building collapsed, said that the Comptroller General's Department and Transport Ministry are responsible for blacklisting contractors, and the laws could not be amended in the brief time he was interior minister to expedite the matter.

In Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said the government was aware of the reports about the accident and had expressed condolences.

"The Chinese government attaches great importance to the safety of projects and personnel, and we are also learning about the situation," she said. "At present, it appears that the relevant section is being constructed by a Thai company, and the cause of the accident is still under investigation."

A novel sanctuary in Antarctica is preserving ice samples from rapidly melting glaciers

By NICOLE WINFIELD and PAOLO SANTALUCIA Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Scientists in Antarctica on Wednesday inaugurated the first global repository of mountain ice cores, preserving the history of the Earth's atmosphere in a frozen vault for future generations to study as global warming melts glaciers around the world.

An ice core is something of an atmospheric time capsule, containing information about the Earth's past changes in a frozen climate archive. With global glaciers melting at an unprecedented rate, scientists have raced to preserve ice cores for future study before they disappear altogether.

The Ice Memory Foundation, a consortium of European research institutes, inaugurated the frozen sanctuary on Wednesday at the Concordia station in the Antarctic Plateau. The foundation livestreamed the ceremonial ribbon cutting and opening of the frozen cave where the ice samples will be kept for future generations.

The first two sets of samples of Alpine mountain ice cores were drilled out of Mont Blanc in France and Grand Combin in Switzerland and arrived at the station after a 50-day refrigerated icebreaker and plane journey from Trieste, Italy.

During the inauguration ceremony, pairs of foundation team members brought box after box of ice cores into the cave, burrowed deep into a 5-meter (yard) high compacted snow drift at a constant temperature of around -52°C/-61°F.

"By safeguarding physical samples of atmospheric gases, aerosols, pollutants and dust trapped in ice layers, the Ice Memory Foundation ensures that future generations of researchers will be able to study past climate conditions using technologies that may not yet exist," said Carlo Barbante, vice chair of the Ice Memory Foundation and a professor at Ca' Foscari University in Venice.

The Ice Memory project was launched in 2015 by a consortium of research institutes: From France, the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), the French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development (IRD) and the University of Grenoble-Alpes; from Italy the National Council of Research (CNR) and the Ca' Foscari University in Venice, and Switzerland's Paul Scherrer Institute.

Scientists have already identified and drilled ice cores at 10 glacier sites worldwide and plan to transport them to the cave sanctuary for safekeeping in the coming years. The aim over the coming decade is to craft an international convention to preserve and safeguard the samples for future generations to study.

As temperatures globally rise, glaciers are disappearing at a rapid clip, and with them critical information about the atmosphere: Since 2000, glaciers have lost between 2% and 39% of their ice regionally and about 5% globally, the foundation said.

"These ice cores are not relics ... they are reference points," said Celeste Saulo, secretary-general of the U.N. World Meteorological Organisation. "They allow scientists now and in the future to understand what changed, how fast and why."

China's trade surplus surges 20% to a record \$1.2 trillion, even with Trump's tariffs

By CHAN HO-HIM AP Business Writer

HONG KONG (AP) — China's trade surplus surged to a record of almost \$1.2 trillion in 2025, the government said Wednesday, as exports to other countries made up for slowing shipments to the U.S. under President Donald Trump's onslaught of higher tariffs.

China's exports rose 5.5% for the whole of last year to \$3.77 trillion, customs data showed, as Chinese automakers and other manufacturers expanded into markets across the globe. Imports flatlined at \$2.58 trillion. The 2024 trade surplus was over \$992 billion.

In December, China's exports climbed 6.6% from the year before in dollar terms, better than economists' estimates and higher than November's 5.9% year-on-year increase. Imports in December were up 5.7% year-on-year, compared to November's 1.9%.

China's trade surplus surpassed the \$1 trillion mark for the first time in November, when the trade surplus reached \$1.08 trillion in the first 11 months of last year.

Economists expect exports will continue to support China's economy this year, despite trade friction and geopolitical tensions.

"We continue to expect exports to act as a big growth driver in 2026," said Jacqueline Rong, chief China economist at BNP Paribas.

While China's exports to the U.S. fell sharply after Trump returned to office and escalated his trade war with the world's second-largest economy, that decline has been largely offset by shipments to other markets in South America, Southeast Asia, Africa and Europe.

For the whole of 2025, China's exports to the U.S. fell 20%. In contrast, exports to Africa surged 26%. Those to Southeast Asian countries jumped 13%; to the European Union 8%, and to Latin America, 7%.

Strong global demand for computer chips and other devices and the materials needed to make them were among categories that supported China's exports, analysts said.

Car exports also grew last year. Auto exports surged 21% in 2025 to more than 7 million units, driven by electric vehicles and plug-in hybrids, according to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers, an industry group, on Wednesday.

Mechanical and electrical items were the largest export category last year, rising 8.4% from a year earlier, customs data showed. China also exported more grain and fertilizer, while exports of furniture, clothing, shoes and other labor intensive products fell.

Strong exports have helped keep China's economy growing at an annual rate close to its official target of about 5%. That has triggered alarm in countries that fear a flood of cheap imports is damaging local industries.

China faces a "severe and complex" external trade environment in 2026, Wang Jun, vice minister of China's customs administration, told reporters in Beijing. But he said China's "foreign trade fundamentals remain solid."

"Even if exports sustain neutral or positive growth this year, more of China's growth drivers will need to come from domestic demand," wrote HSBC economists Erin Xin and Taylor Wang in a note on Wednesday.

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The head of the International Monetary Fund last month called for China to fix its economic imbalances and speed up its shift from reliance on exports by boosting domestic consumption and investment.

A prolonged property downturn in China after the authorities cracked down on excessive borrowing, triggering defaults by many developers, is still weighing on consumer confidence and domestic demand.

China's leaders have made increasing spending by consumers and businesses a focus of economic policy, but actions taken so far have had a limited impact. That included government trade-in subsidies over the past months that encouraged consumers to buy newer, more energy efficient items, such as home appliances and vehicles.

"We expect domestic demand growth to stay tepid," said Rong of BNP Paribas. "In fact, the policy boost to domestic demand looks weaker than last year -- in particular the fiscal subsidy program for consumer goods."

In the case of autos, domestic passenger car sales rose 6% in 2025, according to industry figures, but they fell back toward the end of the year as subsidies were scaled back or phased out in some areas.

Gary Ng, a senior economist at French investment bank Natixis, forecasts that China's exports will grow about 3% in 2026, less than the 5.5% growth in 2025. With slow import growth, he expects China's trade surplus to remain above \$1 trillion this year.

Democrats see a path to win the Senate. It's narrow and has little room for error

By THOMAS BEAUMONT and JOEY CAPPELLETTI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Democratic leaders believe they have a path to winning the majority in November, though it's one with very little wiggle room.

The party got a new burst of confidence when former Rep. Mary Peltola announced Monday she'll run for the Senate in Alaska. Her bid gives Democrats a critical fourth candidate with statewide recognition in states where Republican senators are seeking reelection this year. Nationally, Democrats must net four seats to edge Republicans out of the majority.

That possibility looked all but impossible at the start of last year. And while the outlook has somewhat improved as 2026 begins, Democrats still almost certainly must sweep those four seats. First they must settle some contentious primaries, the mark of a party still struggling with its way forward after Republicans took full control of Washington in 2024. Importantly, they must also beat back challenges to incumbents in some of the most competitive states on the map.

And though some of Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer's top Democratic Senate recruits were lauded for their statewide success in pivotal states, some are nearly 70 or older, hardly the key to a lasting Democratic transformation.

Republicans doubt the chances Democrats can pull off such a task, considering most of the 2026 contests are in states that Donald Trump easily won in 2024.

Still, independent voters have drifted in Democrats' direction over the past year, according to a new Gallup poll, a slight breeze at Democrats' back they didn't expect a year ago when there was little path at all.

"I say it's a much wider path than the skeptics think, and a much wider path than it was three months ago and certainly a year ago," Schumer told The Associated Press Tuesday.

Republicans currently hold 53 seats, while the Democratic caucus has 47 members, including two independents.

4 statewide candidates in GOP-held states

Schumer argues that Peltola, elected twice statewide to Alaska's at-large House seat, puts the typically Republican-leaning state in play as a potential pickup for Democrats.

It's a development similar to other states where Schumer believes Democrats have recruited strong candidates: former three-term Sen. Sherrod Brown in Ohio, former two-term Gov. Roy Cooper in North Carolina and two-term Gov. Janet Mills in Maine.

But they hardly represent a quartet of guarantees. Brown, a longtime pro-labor progressive in increasingly

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GOP-leaning Ohio, and Peltola, who was elected during a special election in 2022, both lost reelection in 2024. Mills, finishing her second term as governor, faces a competitive primary challenge from progressive veteran and oyster farmer Graham Platner.

None of the four had runaway popularity with voters in their states in 2024. Right around half of voters had somewhat or very favorable views of all of them, with Cooper slightly higher and Brown slightly lower, according to AP VoteCast, a survey of the electorate.

Age remains another issue. After President Joe Biden, in his early 80s, withdrew from the 2024 race amid concerns he was too old to serve, Democratic Senate leadership hasn't changed course. Schumer, 75, has recruited candidates who are older, with several top recruits – including Mills and Brown – well into their 70s.

"Voters sent a very clear message in 2024 that they're sick of the gerontocracy. They're sick of Democrats putting up old candidates and that they want some new blood," said Lis Smith, a national Democratic strategist. "And some of the recruits, like in Maine, seem to completely ignore the message that voters sent in 2024."

Schumer said winning back the Senate is paramount over all else.

"It's not young versus old. It's not left versus center. It's who can best win in the states," he said. "So, these are all really good candidates, and I don't think you look at them through one narrow prism. You look at who can win."

Primaries and party tensions

Before Democrats can test their general-election appeal, they must navigate some primaries that highlight lingering divisions within the party.

Platner, who has been endorsed by independent Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont, has demonstrated formidable fundraising for his Maine contest, despite controversies surrounding past social media posts and a tattoo linked to Nazi imagery. Some Democrats worry his insurgent appeal could be a liability in November if he is the nominee.

In Michigan, Democratic Sen. Gary Peters' retirement has opened a seat in a state Trump carried narrowly. Republicans have unified behind former Rep. Mike Rogers, while Democrats face a crowded August primary after failing to recruit Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.

Crowded or contentious primaries are also playing out in Minnesota, Texas and Iowa, forcing Democrats to devote resources even in states not central to their path to a majority.

Sen. Chris Van Hollen is part of an informal group of Democratic senators known as Fight Club that has been openly critical of party leadership's approach to the midterms. Van Hollen said the group has objected to what it sees as the Senate Democrats' campaign arm — controlled by Schumer — "wading into certain Democratic primaries."

"So, yes, we're taking a look at all of them," Van Hollen said of endorsing more progressive candidates.

Republicans also like their odds

Betsy Ankney, political director for the National Republican Senatorial Committee in 2020, acknowledged Democrats' desire to make the case for competitiveness but characterized Trump's presidential victories in Alaska and Ohio in 2024 — by 13 and 11 percentage point margins, respectively — as enormous hurdles.

She said Republicans are "rightly focused, on real tangible targets in Georgia, in Michigan," calling them "very real pickup opportunities."

Democrats' shot at the majority almost certainly depends on Sen. Jon Ossoff winning reelection in Georgia, where Trump won in 2024 by 2.2 percentage points, and holding Michigan, where Peters' retirement creates an open seat in a state Trump carried by 1.4 percentage points.

"It's not just about where the Democrats can play. It's about where we can play, too," Ankney said.

An unsettled political environment

Despite the challenges, Democrats see reasons for optimism in the broader political climate.

A new Gallup survey found 47% of U.S. adults now identify with or lean toward the Democrats, while 42% are Republicans or lean Republican. That gives Democrats the advantage in party affiliation for the first time since Trump's first term.

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But the data strongly suggests that independents are moving toward Democrats because of their souring attitude toward Trump, rather than greater goodwill toward Democrats. The Democratic Party's favorability is still low, and Gallup's analysis found that, as more Americans identify as independents, they tend to gravitate toward the party that is out of political power — whether it's the Democrats or the Republicans.

Still, that appears to be a dynamic in Democrats' favor, as economic unease creeps into the election year with little time before the feelings lock into voters' political thinking, veteran Republican pollster Ed Goeas said.

"That creates an environment that will affect these Senate races," Goeas said, predicting House Republicans could lose their majority. He said Republicans are assuming the economy and the political environment are going to be better.

"I think they are going to end up getting frustrated going into the summer because, first of all, the economy is not on all levels improving. It's going to be a target-rich environment for Democrats," he said.

"It's going to be close."

Today in History: January 15

US Airways jet makes emergency landing in Hudson River

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Thursday, Jan. 15, the 15th day of 2026. There are 350 days left in the year.

On Jan. 15, 2009, US Airways Capt. Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger landed an Airbus A320 safely in New York's Hudson River after striking a flock of birds that disabled both engines shortly after takeoff; all 155 people aboard survived the emergency water landing, which became known as "The Miracle on the Hudson."

Also on this date:

In 1559, Elizabeth I was crowned queen of England and Ireland in Westminster Abbey.

In 1919, in Boston, a tank containing an estimated 2.3 million gallons (8.7 million liters) of molasses burst, flooding the city's North End and killing 21 people in what was later dubbed the "Great Molasses Flood."

In 1929, civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. was born in Atlanta.

In 1943, work was completed on the Pentagon, headquarters of the U.S. Department of War (now Defense).

In 1967, the Green Bay Packers of the National Football League defeated the Kansas City Chiefs of the American Football League 35-10 in the first AFL-NFL World Championship Game, known retroactively as Super Bowl I.

In 1991, Sean Lennon's remake of his father's "Give Peace A Chance" was released to coincide with the United Nations' midnight deadline for Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. The lyrics were updated to reflect concerns of the 1990s.

In 1992, more than two dozen European nations formally recognized Croatia and Slovenia as independent nations amid the breakup of Yugoslavia.

In 2001, Wikipedia, the free online encyclopedia maintained by volunteer editors, made its debut.

In 2019, extremists stormed a luxury hotel in Kenya's capital of Nairobi, setting off explosives and gunning down people at cafe tables in an attack claimed by Africa's deadliest Islamic militant group, al-Shabab. At least 21 people were killed in the attack and 28 others wounded.

In 2022, an undersea volcano erupted in the Pacific island nation of Tonga, shooting millions of tons of water vapor high into the atmosphere. A handful of deaths were blamed on the eruption, and scientists studied the blast afterward seeking to determine whether the water vapor acted as a heat-trapping greenhouse gas.

Today's birthdays: Actor Andrea Martin is 79. Football Hall of Famer Randy White is 73. Actor-director Mario Van Peebles is 69. Boxing Hall of Famer Bernard Hopkins is 61. Actor-director Regina King is 55. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni is 49. Former NFL quarterback Drew Brees is 47. Rapper-reggaeton artist Pitbull is 45. Conservative commentator Ben Shapiro is 42. DJ-music producer Skrillex is 38. Actor-singer Dove Cameron is 30. Singer-songwriter Grace VanderWaal is 22.