

Groton Daily Independent

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Sunday, Jan. 18, 2026

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4th Grade BBB Practice, 1 p.m.

6th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.

Dance Team Practice, 5 p.m.



Monday, Jan. 19, 2026

School Breakfast: Stuffed bagels.

School Lunch: Oriental chicken, egg rolls.

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

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

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

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

5th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.

Kindergarten BBB Practice, 6 p.m.

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

Groton Daily Independent
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We the People

The South Dakota Humanities Council is making available a weekly column -- "We the People" -- that focuses on the U.S. Constitution. It is written by David Adler, who is president of The Alturas Institute, a non-profit organization created to promote the Constitution, gender equality, and civic education.



By David Adler

Trump's Foreign Policy: The Strong Impose What They Can

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the defense of President Trump's invasion of Venezuela, and his repeated threats to seize Greenland, the semiautonomous Danish territory, was the obliteration by Stephen Miller of the philosophy of the rules-based international order, which the United States played a leading role in creating in the closing days of World War II. In an interview with CNN's Jake Tapper, Miller, a top White House adviser, dismissed the international law treaty guarantees of the right of nations to self-determination, territorial sovereignty and independence, as "legal niceties." Miller declared: "We live in a world, in the real world, Jake, that is governed by strength, that is governed by force, that is governed by power. These are the iron laws of the world since the beginning of times." As Miller explained it, in terms reinforced by the White House Press Secretary, Karoline Leavitt, if President Trump wants Greenland, he can simply take it. "Nobody," Miller said, "is going to fight the United States militarily." Message to Greenlanders: So much for your right to independence and self-governance.

Miller's dark, cynical view would unravel the world order and, in the event of military strikes against Greenland, it would destroy NATO, roughly 80 years after it was created to protect Europe from Russian, not American, aggression. Miller's view is not new, but rather one of ancient vintage. It reflects the singular assertion and projection of raw, brutal power-- might makes right—which dominated the Old World before the desire among nations to create a civilized order led to the establishment of international law, courts and institutions that might restrain warfare and promote peace and stability.

Miller's approach finds its platform in Thucydides' historically acclaimed, The Peloponnesian War, in which he described the war between Athens and Sparta (431-404 BCE), and revealed the savage world of power politics in the Athenians' demand to the Melians that they join their empire, or face destruction. In the realm of international relations, the Athenians stated, "the strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must." Might makes right; justice only truly applies between equals. In such a world, the weak must submit to the demands of the strong, or they will face destruction, as the Melians did, when their men were killed and children and women were enslaved.

It was this philosophy of international relations that the first writers on the Law of Nations— now International Law -- sought to eclipse in the early 17th Century. European commentators — Vattel, Grotius and Bynkershoek, among others -- introduced legal principles and practices to govern relations, the exchange of ambassadors, treaties and trade arrangements, the use of military force, and rules governing the High Seas. This historic campaign to draw legal order from the chaos and brutality that enveloped the international realm was undertaken through treaties and international conventions, customs and usage, and the generally accepted principles of law and equity.

America's founders rejected the Old World and embraced the New World. The aborning world of legal norms, conventions and aspirations found a suitemate in America. Legalism, after all, was a dominant part of our culture since birth. For the founders, constitutionalism applied to both the domestic and foreign realms. The Swiss citizen, Vattel, an authoritative influence on the founding generation, infused our colonists with lessons about the right of self-determination. Hamilton, Madison and Jefferson, and courts and legislative bodies, quoted from his seminal work, The Law of Nations (1758), which they invoked as

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their Bible on questions of international law.

Those who wrote the Constitution signaled America's commitment to international law by incorporating it into our domestic law. The right of self-determination, extended to all nations, was integral to our creation. Treaties guaranteeing our sovereign rights were not mere "legal niceties," but rather, essential legal instruments necessary for our independence, protection and growth. The role of law as a foundational underpinning of American foreign policy was reinforced in the context of World War II and its aftermath. America can be justly proud of its leading role in the creation of the world order that has been integral to world peace. Americans, moreover, contrary to Trump's beliefs, were the beneficiaries of NATO when allies, in accordance with Article V, rushed to our side when al-Qaeda, led by Osama bin Laden, attacked the U.S. on 9/11. International laws should be honored, not cynically dismissed as "niceties."

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Balanced Tigers defend, rebound, and roll past Dakota Valley

Groton, S.D. — The Groton Area Tigers put together another complete Saturday performance, using stifling defense and balanced scoring to defeat Dakota Valley 65–42 in boys basketball action.

Dakota Valley opened the game with a three-pointer, but Groton answered immediately with an eight-point run to take an 8–3 lead. The Tigers led 17–8 after one quarter and carried a 32–20 advantage into halftime after a seven-point burst midway through the second period. Groton continued to build separation in the third quarter, pushing the lead to 46–30, before closing out the 23-point victory.

"I thought our kids defended like crazy," said Groton head coach Greg Kjellsen. "I was a little concerned having Gage and Becker matched up on six-foot guards, but dang it, they defended well. For the most part, we got done what we wanted to get done."

Groton's defensive pressure and rebounding were key throughout. The Tigers finished with 34 rebounds, six steals, and just eight turnovers.

"I thought we really owned the boards," Kjellsen said. "The kids already knew how to play defense, and now they're getting more comfortable in our offensive system too."

Offensively, Groton shot 58% on two-point attempts (19-of-33), 38% from three (5-of-13), and 67% at the free-throw line (12-of-18), while recording 13 assists.

Karson Zak led the Tigers with 16 points, seven rebounds, and five assists in his return after missing Thursday's game with a foot injury.

"He was in a boot until yesterday," Kjellsen said. "Practiced yesterday, felt fine, and we let him go. You couldn't even tell he'd been out."

Ryder Johnson added 15 points and seven rebounds, while Gage Sippel finished with 14 points, eight rebounds, and a blocked shot. Keegen Tracy scored eight points, Easton Weber had eight points, two assists, and two steals, and Becker Bosma pulled down eight rebounds with four assists.

Kjellsen also credited his bench for maintaining momentum when foul trouble forced lineup changes in the second quarter.

"Guys that come in can do the job, and they did," he said. "That stretch could've been a storm, but we weathered it and even widened the lead."



Jayden Schwan and Cash Slater had arms tied up in a scramble for the ball. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Ryder Johnson puts up this three-pointer for the Tigers. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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Dakota Valley was led by Tatum Sorensen with 16 points, including 6-of-6 at the free-throw line. Luke Anema scored 10 points, Payton Sorensen added seven, and Aaron Bruns had five. The Panthers shot 29% from the field and committed 10 turnovers.

"I've watched Dakota Valley on film — they're young and they can shoot lights out," Kjellsen said. "They make quick runs, and we told our guys we had to weather the storm. I thought we did a better job tonight putting the nail in the coffin to start the third quarter."

Groton improved to 8–3 on the season and will host Milbank in a doubleheader Thursday. Dakota Valley fell to 4–5.

Junior varsity

Groton completed the sweep with a 44–26 junior varsity victory. The game was tied twice early, with the first seven points coming at the free-throw line. Groton led 11–8 after one quarter, 21–13 at halftime, and 31–16 after three before pulling away.

Asher Johnson scored 10 points to lead Groton. Anthony Tracy had nine, Ethan Kroll eight, Jace Johnson six, J.J. Muller five, Jordan Schwan four, and Ryder Schelle two.

Geoffrey Nelson led Dakota Valley with 12 points, while Cash Slater added nine.

C-game

The Tigers also earned a 49–34 win in the C-game. Dakota Valley led 10–4 after one quarter before Groton edged ahead 23–22 at halftime. An 11-point run bridging the second and third quarters helped the Tigers take control, leading 38–30 after three.

Major Dolan scored 18 points to lead Groton. Trey Tietz had 11, Ryder Schwan eight, Trayce Schelle six, Zach Flihs four, and Connor Kroll two.

Ryan Snoozy paced Dakota Valley with 11 points, Matthew Bryan added nine, and Jaxon Sommervold and Patrick Smith scored five each.

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

Lyman County Multi-Vehicle Fatal Crash

What: Multi vehicle fatal crash
Where: Interstate 90, mile marker 244, five miles west of Reliance, SD
When: 3:44 p.m., Friday, January 16, 2026

Driver 1: 50-year-old male from Locust Grove, VA, no injuries
Vehicle 1: 2025 Kenworth
Seat belt Used: Yes

Driver 2: 28-year-old male from Colome, SD, fatal injuries
Vehicle 2: 2008 Mercury Sable
Seat belt Used: Yes
Passenger 2a: 27-year-old male from Martin, SD, fatal injuries
Seat belt Used: Yes
Passenger 2b: 27-year-old male from Alexandria, SD, serious, non-life-threatening injuries
Seat belt Used: Under investigation
Passenger 2c: 26-year-old male from Hartford, SD, serious, non-life-threatening injuries
Seat belt Used: Under investigation

Driver 3: 71-year-old male, serious, non-life-threatening injuries
Vehicle 3: 2025 Ford F-150
Seat belt Used: Yes
Passenger 3a: 72-year-old female, serious, non-life-threatening injuries
Seat belt Used: Yes
Passenger 3b: 46-year-old female, serious, non-life-threatening injuries
Seat belt Used: Yes
Passenger 3c: 19-year-old female, no injuries
Seat belt Used: Yes

Driver 4: 59-year-old male, serious, non-life-threatening injuries
Vehicle 4: 2013 Ford F-150
Seat belt Used: No
Passenger 4a: 54-year-old female, serious, non-life-threatening injuries
Seat belt Used: No

Driver 5: 52-year-old female, minor injuries
Vehicle 5: 2010 GMC Yukon
Seat belt Used: Yes

Lyman County, S.D.- Two people died and several were injured in a multi-vehicle crash Friday afternoon, five miles west of Reliance, SD.

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

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2025 Kenworth was traveling westbound on Interstate 90 near mile marker 244 and had slowed down due to a possible crash in front of him. A 2008 Mercury Sable collided with the rear end of the semi, and a chain reaction of collisions including a 2025

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Ford F-150, a 2013 Ford F-150, and a 2010 GMC Yukon occurred.

The two front seat passengers in the Mercury Sable were pronounced deceased at the scene. Two other passengers in the vehicle sustained serious, non-life-threatening injuries. The driver and two passengers in the 2025 Ford F-150 sustained serious, non-life-threatening injuries while a fourth passenger was uninjured.

The driver and a passenger in the 2013 Ford F-150 both received serious, non-life-threatening injuries. The 2010 GMC Yukon sustained minor injuries, and the driver of the Kenworth had no injuries.

Weather conditions with whiteout visibility were a contributing factor in the crash.

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

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

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Groton Area takes eighth at Battler Invitational

Gettysburg, S.D. — The Groton Area wrestling team finished eighth out of 23 teams Saturday at the Battler Invitational in Gettysburg, scoring 106.5 team points in a deep and competitive tournament field.

South Border captured the team title with 179 points, followed by Clark/Willow Lake (171.5) and Chamberlain (153.5). Stanley County and Harding County rounded out the top five. Groton Area's eighth-place finish put the Tigers ahead of Deuel, Britton-Hecla, Pierre T.F. Riggs, Lemmon, Webster, and host Gettysburg.

Heavyweight Gavin Englund led the Tigers with a championship performance at 285 pounds. Englund opened with a fall over Cooper Gerard of Chamberlain in 3:08, pinned Lane Brown of Warner in 1:27, and secured another fall over Jaspur Gran of Wessington Springs/Woonsocket/Wolsey Wessington in 3:25 to reach the finals. He then closed the title bout with an 8-2 decision over Tristen Baloun of Faulkton Area to claim first place and 28 team points.

At 126 pounds, Kyson Kucker delivered a runner-up finish. After receiving a first-round bye, Kucker pinned Bransen Flack of Warner in 3:37 and earned a technical fall over Cooper Auble of Pierre T.F. Riggs to advance to the championship match. He finished second following a major decision loss to Benny Pommer of Clark/Willow Lake.

Preston Hinkelman put together a resilient tournament at 106 pounds, fighting through the consolation bracket to earn fifth place. Hinkelman started his day with a fall over Evan Hummel of Pierre T.F. Riggs in 1:25 before dropping a quarterfinal match by technical fall. He responded with four straight falls — over Cashton Rausch of Gettysburg, Henry Kilker of Britton-Hecla, and Rowdy Schrempp of CEB/Dupree in the fifth-place match — to secure 17 team points.

Wyatt Hagen added a fourth-place finish at 120 pounds. Hagen recorded a major decision over Easton Rausch of Gettysburg to reach the semifinals, then bounced back with a fall over Xavier Sanchez-Gonzalez of CEB/Dupree in the consolation semifinals before dropping a narrow 8-7 decision to Jyles Auble of Pierre T.F. Riggs in the third-place bout.

Ben Hoeft rounded out Groton Area's placers with a sixth-place finish at 165 pounds. Hoeft opened with a decision over Hayden Landmark of Deuel and a fall over Ayden Forgey of Gettysburg to reach the semifinals before battling through the back side of the bracket.

Other Tigers also logged valuable mat time and victories. At 113 pounds, Luke Gauer received a first-round bye before falling to Retro Benson of Lemmon and John Ortmeier of Faulkton Area. Noah Scepaniak (132) opened with a fall over Damian Garcia of Sully Buttes and later earned a decision over Erich Fokken of Deuel. Aiden Strom (138) dropped matches to Luke Olson of Mobridge/Pollock and Tanner Atkinson of Britton-Hecla. Grayson Flores (144) rebounded from an opening loss with a decision over Zach Dekle of CEB/Dupree. Kason Oswald (150) recorded a fall over Spencer Schulte of Faulkton Area. Donavon Block (157) posted a fall over Rayin Mansfield of Warner. Isaiah Scepaniak (190) picked up a fall over Kameron Hunnel of Gettysburg.

Krueger claims title at Harrisburg girls wrestling tournament

HARRISBURG, S.D. — Groton Area's Liza Krueger continued her dominant season Friday, capturing the championship at the 2026 Harrisburg Girls Wrestling Tournament with a perfect run through the 105-pound bracket.

Krueger, now 29-2 on the season, placed first and scored 28 team points for the Tigers. After receiving a first-round bye, she opened her day with a quick fall over Alondra Romero Mondragon of Milbank in 1:09. She followed with another pin in the semifinals, sticking Shaylee Arredondo of Brandon Valley in 2:49. In the championship match, Krueger sealed the title by pinning Harper Gibson of Tri-Valley at 3:43.

The victory adds another tournament championship to an already impressive season for Krueger, who has established herself as one of the top lightweight wrestlers in the region.

At 110 pounds, Groton Area's Gracie Decker competed in a tough bracket. Decker fell in the championship round opener to Benazir Wilson of Harrisburg by pin in 0:37. After receiving a bye in the consolation round, Decker returned to the mat but was pinned by Aubrey Fischer of Pierre T.F. Riggs in 0:30. She finished the day unplaced but gained valuable mat time against strong competition.



Photo by Paul Kosel

Light pillars create dazzling winter display in cold night skies

GROTON, S.D. — On the coldest winter nights, residents looking out across town may notice something unusual rising above streetlights, buildings, or even the moon — tall, glowing columns of light stretching into the sky. The phenomenon, known as light pillars, is a natural atmospheric effect that turns ordinary winter evenings into striking visual displays.

Light pillars occur when bright light reflects off countless tiny ice crystals suspended in the air. During extremely cold weather — typically when temperatures fall below about 20 degrees — microscopic hexagonal ice crystals can form in calm, stable air. These crystals drift slowly downward, naturally orienting themselves horizontally like tiny floating mirrors.

When light from a streetlamp, the setting sun, or a bright moon hits these flat crystal surfaces, it reflects toward the observer's eyes. Because the crystals are spread through different heights in the atmosphere, the reflections stack vertically, creating the appearance of a luminous pillar extending above or below the light source.

The effect is most common on still, frigid nights with clear or slightly hazy skies. Areas across the northern Plains — including South Dakota — experience ideal conditions for light pillars during deep winter cold snaps. In towns like Groton, rows of streetlights can produce multiple glowing columns, giving the sky an almost otherworldly appearance.

Though dramatic in appearance, light pillars are harmless. They are purely an optical effect, similar to sun halos or sundogs, and require no special weather beyond cold air and ice crystals.

For those who catch a glimpse, the pillars serve as a reminder that even the harshest winter conditions can produce moments of unexpected beauty.

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Golden Bears sweep weekend in Aberdeen

Aberdeen, S.D. — Concordia–St. Paul completed a weekend sweep of Northern State University basketball Saturday at Wachs Arena, handing the Wolves setbacks in both the women's and men's contests.

In the women's game, Northern State fell 78–51 to the Golden Bears. The Wolves dropped to 10-8 overall and 5-7 in the NSIC, while CSP improved to 11-6 overall and 7-5 in league play. Attendance was 1,747.

The opening quarter featured tight play, with the teams trading baskets before Concordia–St. Paul edged ahead 16-11. The Golden Bears extended the margin to 40-27 by halftime and maintained control throughout. Northern produced its best offensive stretch in the third quarter, scoring 19 points, including ten from Taylor Tool. However, the Wolves struggled in the fourth, managing just five points on 16.7% shooting.

Tool led Northern with 14 points, three rebounds, and three assists. Izzy Moore added ten points, five rebounds, and two steals, while Carli Kuyper contributed eight points off the bench. Lily Klein finished with five points, three rebounds, and two assists.

For CSP, Lydia Haack recorded 15 points, six rebounds, four assists, and two steals. Emma Mommsen added 13 points, three rebounds, and three blocks in 19 minutes, while Ashley Schuelke and Lauren Fedema each scored 11. The Golden Bears held a rebounding edge and shot 63.6% from the floor.

In the men's game, Northern State came up just short in a 78–73 loss to Concordia–St. Paul. The Wolves fell to 7-11 overall and 7-5 in the NSIC, while CSP moved to 12-6 overall and 7-5 in conference play. Attendance was 1,689.

The contest featured nine tie scores and seven lead changes. Northern carried a 40-39 lead into halftime, but the Golden Bears outscored the Wolves 39-33 in the second half. CSP's advantage came largely at the free-throw line, converting 24-of-29 attempts.

Joshua Book led Northern with 23 points and seven assists, hitting all six of his free throws. James Glenn scored 16 points and matched his career high with four steals, while Simon Akena added 11 points. Tobi Obiora posted a strong performance inside with 14 rebounds and eight points. Marshawn Smith contributed nine points off the bench.

Northern knocked down ten three-pointers and recorded advantages in assists, steals, and blocks, but CSP's rebounding and free-throw success proved decisive.

Up next

Both Northern State teams travel to Minnesota next weekend. The Wolves will face Minnesota State on Friday — the women at 5:30 p.m. and the men at 7:30 p.m. — before meeting St. Cloud State on Saturday, with the women tipping at 2 p.m. and the men at 4 p.m.

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What can \$20 get you?



for
Senior Citizens

or anyone using physical therapy
a gym membership at

15 N Main - Ste. 101

Open 24/7

GDI Living Fitness

Call/Text Paul at 605/397-7460

Call/Text Tina at 605/397-7285

for details



Annual Membership Rates

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

Month-to-Month Rates

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

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

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THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

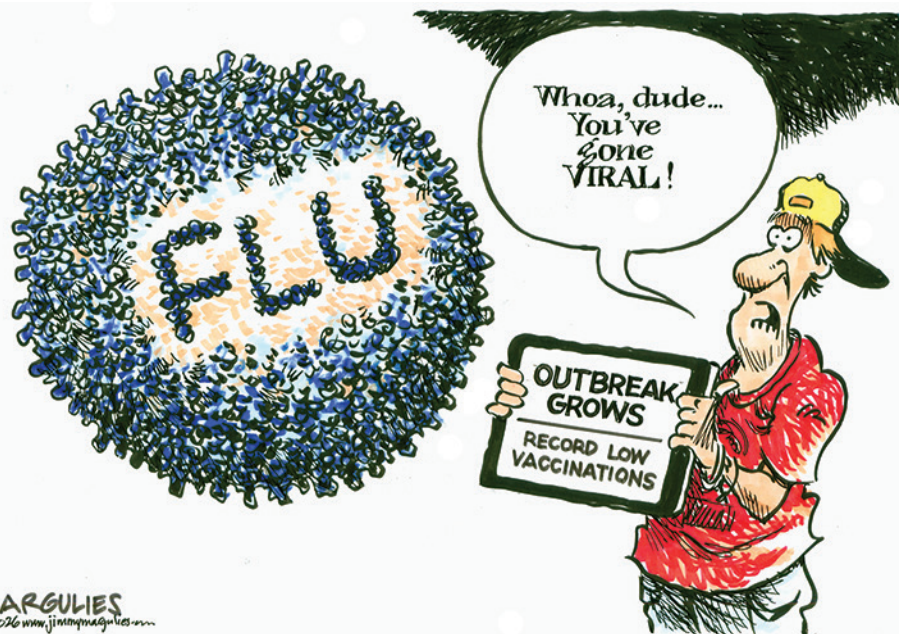
To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose
under heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die;
A time to plant, and a time to pluck what is planted;
A time to kill, and a time to heal;
A time to break down, and a time to build up...

~ Ecclesiastes 3:1-3 ~

Aztec Sun Stone Calendar



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MARGULIES
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BIBLE

TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey

1. Is the book of James (KJV) in the Old or New Testament or neither?

2. From Joshua 10, the sun stood still while Joshua's army destroyed what people? *Amorites, Midianites, Egyptians, Philistines*

3. How old was Abram when God changed his name to Abraham? *12, 17, 40, 99*

4. From Genesis 9, who saw a rainbow in the sky? *Adam, Moses, Noah, Abraham*

5. Who was David's oldest brother? *Jonah, Eliab, Joel, Agrippa*

6. From 1 Samuel 2, how many more children did Hannah have? *5, 10, 15, 20*

ANSWERS: 1) New, 2) Amorites, 3) 99, 4) Noah, 5) Eliab, 6) Five

Sharpen your understanding of scripture with Wilson Casey's latest book, "Test Your Bible Knowledge," available in bookstores and online.

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OUR STORY SO FAR...



DALE AND RENSHAW ARE HELD CAPTIVE BY GARAKAHN.

RENSHAW MAKES A DEAL WITH THE DEMON...
FLASH'S LIFE IN EXCHANGE FOR HIS OWN.



SET FREE, HE IS GIVEN A MESSAGE TO DELIVER...

YOU WILL TELL GORDON GARAKAHN HAS HIS MATE.

AND TELL HIM MUST HURRY..

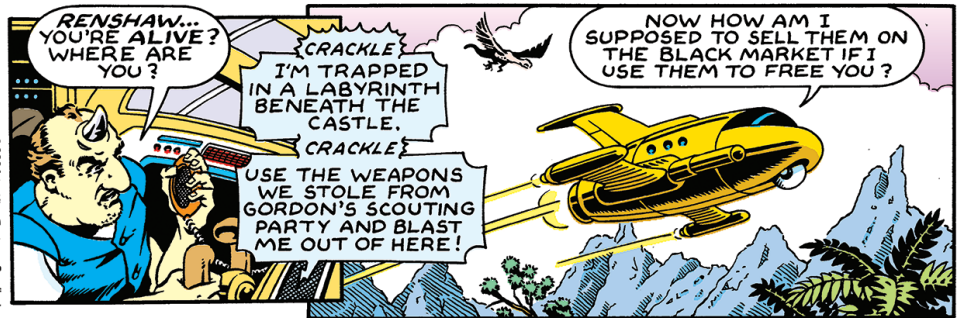
FOR GARAKAHN GROWS HUNGRY!

FLASH GORDON

BY JIM KEEFE

1-4

ONCE FREE OF GARAKAHN'S CLUTCHES, RENSHAW DISREGARDS THE DEAL HE HAS MADE AND MAKES PLANS TO ESCAPE.

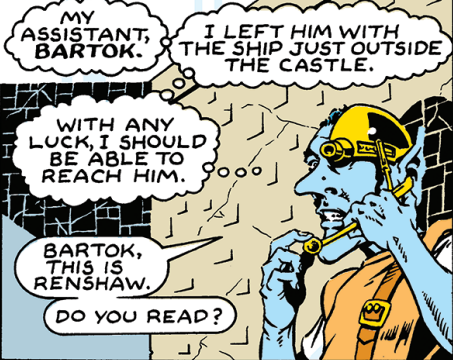


RENSHAW... YOU'RE ALIVE? WHERE ARE YOU?

{CRACKLE} I'M TRAPPED IN A LABYRINTH BENEATH THE CASTLE.

{CRACKLE} USE THE WEAPONS WE STOLE FROM GORDON'S SCOUTING PARTY AND BLAST ME OUT OF HERE!

NOW HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO SELL THEM ON THE BLACK MARKET IF I USE THEM TO FREE YOU?



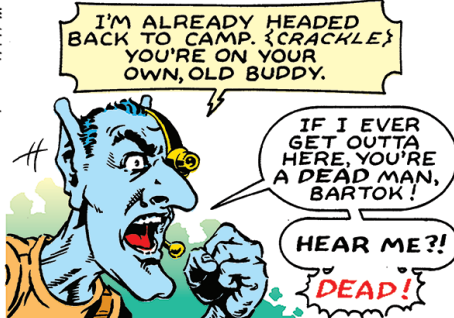
MY ASSISTANT, BARTOK.

I LEFT HIM WITH THE SHIP JUST OUTSIDE THE CASTLE.

WITH ANY LUCK, I SHOULD BE ABLE TO REACH HIM.

BARTOK, THIS IS RENSHAW.

DO YOU READ?

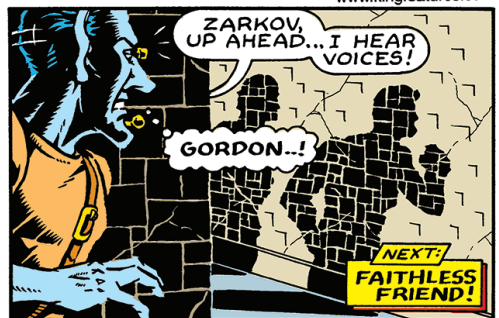


I'M ALREADY HEADED BACK TO CAMP. {CRACKLE} YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN, OLD BUDDY.

IF I EVER GET OUTTA HERE, YOU'RE A DEAD MAN, BARTOK!

HEAR ME?!

DEAD!

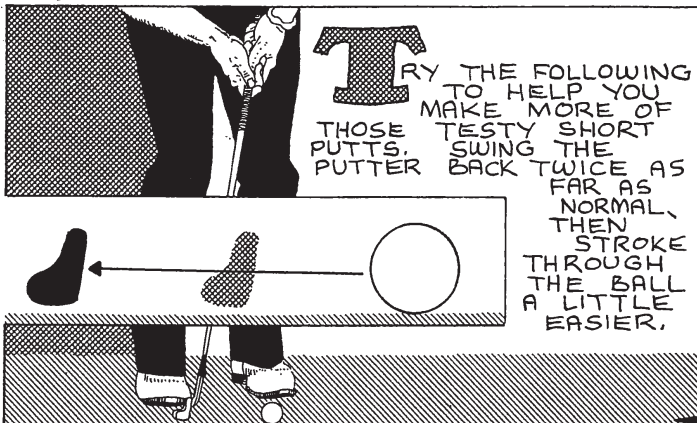


ZARKOV, UP AHEAD... I HEAR VOICES!

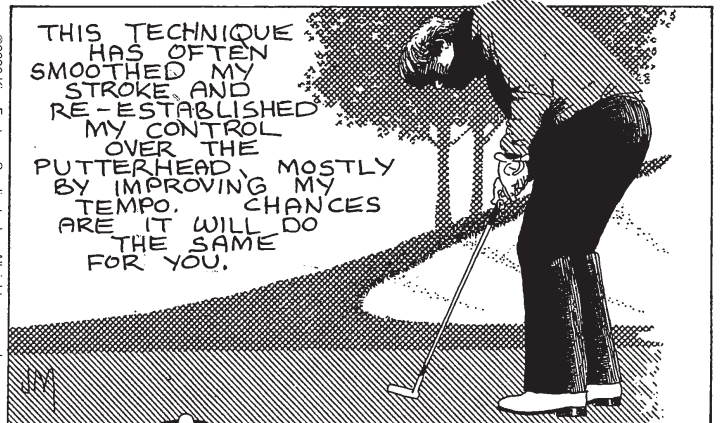
GORDON..!

NEXT: FAITHLESS FRIEND!

Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS



TRY THE FOLLOWING TO HELP YOU MAKE MORE OF THOSE TESTY SHORT PUTTS. SWING THE PUTTER BACK TWICE AS FAR AS NORMAL, THEN STROKE THROUGH THE BALL A LITTLE EASIER.



THIS TECHNIQUE HAS OFTEN SMOOTHED MY STROKE AND RE-ESTABLISHED MY CONTROL OVER THE PUTTERHEAD, MOSTLY BY IMPROVING MY TEMPO. CHANCES ARE IT WILL DO THE SAME FOR YOU.

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Man Experiences Symptoms of Excess Thyroid After MRI

DEAR DR. ROACH: I am a male who is 58 years of age. I recently had an MRI of my cervical spine, and just this month, I had a CT scan of my whole abdomen. Since then, I have had symptoms of dry eyes, weight loss and insomnia. I wondered if the contrast dye used for the MRI or CT scan can cause hyperthyroidism, as these are common symptoms for excess thyroid hormone. Do you think that I have hyperthyroidism? -- G.L.

ANSWER: You are quite right that all these symptoms are commonly seen in people with excess thyroid. The weight loss is due to the increased metabolism of people with excess thyroid hormone. Insomnia is also common for similar reasons. Palpitations, tremor, anxiety, frequent bowel movements,

and heat intolerance are all classical symptoms of excess thyroid hormone.

You are also right that the iodine-containing dye from CT scans can precipitate hyperthyroidism in a person who is destined to get it. However, the risk of this occurring is low. There is no increased risk of thyroid disease with MRI dye.

You could, indeed, have hyperthyroidism, and if you saw your doctor, you would very likely be tested. (I would certainly do so if I had a patient with these symptoms.) My experience is that these symptoms are not specific to thyroid disease, and it is probably some other cause. So, I would not be surprised if your thyroid tests were normal.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I recently got married again after being single for six years and have had five urinary tract infections (UTIs) in 14 months. My primary care doctor, a urogynecologist, and a urologist have all agreed on estradiol cream. I was basically put on this treatment for a prolapsed bladder and to build up my vaginal walls since I am sexually active again.

After reading your recent column about hormone replacement therapy (HRT) in older women, I am concerned since I underwent menopause 20 years ago (instead of under 10) and just started this treatment two months ago.

I might add that I had not had a UTI for 50 years prior, but vaginal dryness may be contributing to these UTIs. My doctor has not recommended a progestin, but I have also been introduced to taking a cranberry supplement once a day in tablet form to keep bacteria from multiplying.

Would you have recommended the same treatment knowing that I have not had a period for 20 years? -- L.E.

ANSWER: The risks from estrogen replacement in postmenopausal women are from systemic estrogen -- meaning estrogen that gets absorbed into the blood. This includes estrogen pills and patches.

Topical estrogen, such as vaginal creams, rings and gels, are not well-absorbed in the body and do not significantly increase the risk of heart disease, which is the major reason that I recommended caution to women who underwent menopause more than 10 years ago.

Similarly, progestins need to be used in women with a uterus when they're taking systemic estrogen -- but not topical estrogen. (Topical estrogen is absorbed slightly in women with atrophy of the vaginal lining, so it is always worth a consultation with an oncologist for women with estrogen-sensitive tumors, such as breast cancer.)

I don't generally advise systemic HRT more than 10 years postmenopause, but there still may be some times when it's appropriate after a thorough discussion between a woman and her doctor. In your case, however, the risk of heart disease, breast cancer or blood clots is negligible from topical estrogen.

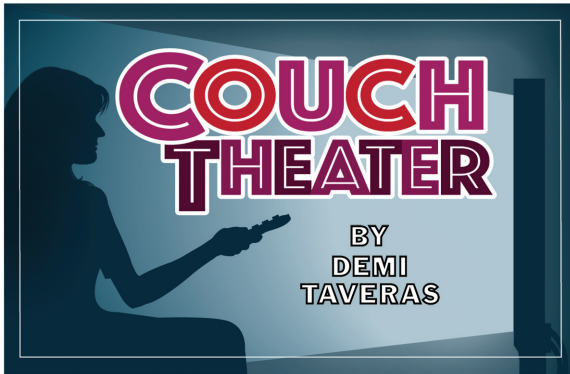
Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu.

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Groton Daily Independent

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Mia McKenna-Bruce, left, and Helena Bonham-Carter star in "Agatha Christie's Seven Dials."

(Courtesy of Netflix)

"Heated Rivalry" (TV-MA) -- There's a large chance that you've already heard of this new sports-romance series starring Hudson Williams ("Tracker") and Connor Storrie ("Joker: Folie a Deux"); it's making huge waves among critics and fans of the novels on which it is adapted. Williams plays Canadian hockey player Shane Hollander, a strong, silent type who is the complete opposite of his Russian rival Ilya Rozanov. Ilya, on the other hand, is boisterous, cocky and seasoned in the spoils of life, but when the two hit the ice, they are both unstoppable. But the real story between Shane and Ilya happens in moments off the ice, when their attraction to each other sparks a heated romance that can melt all the ice that a hockey rink has to offer. All six episodes are out now; just make sure that no little ones are around when you're watching this spicy show. (HBO Max)

"Agatha Christie's Seven Dials" (TV-14) -- This new mystery series, based on Agatha Christie's 1929 novel, is led by rising star Mia McKenna-Bruce ("The Lady"), who is set to play Maureen Starkey (first wife of Ringo Starr) in the upcoming Beatles biopic. This series follows Lady Bundle Brent (McKenna-Bruce), a young aristocrat who is drawn to sleuthing after her friend, Gerry Wade (Corey Mylchreest), is found dead at a country house party. Because Gerry usually oversleeps, eight alarm clocks were set to wake him up, but Lady Brent realizes that one clock is missing upon finding his body. With a hunch that these clocks have something to do with his death, she teams up with Lady Caterham (Helena Bonham-Carter) and Superintendent Battle (Martin Freeman) to solve the mystery. All three episodes are out now, so it's an easy binge! (Netflix)

"Steal" (TV-MA) -- Sophie Turner, best known for playing Sansa Stark in "Game of Thrones," is back in another leading role for television -- but this time, it's a contemporary thriller series with a gripping story that spans six episodes. Premiering Jan. 21, "Steal" follows Zara, one of many ordinary office workers who coincidentally get caught up in the biggest armed robbery in British history. At first, Zara thinks that the robbers spared her life for the price of transferring the money, but even after billions have been stolen from people's pensions, the robbers are still hot on her tracks to make sure that she doesn't utter a single word to intelligence officers. Archie Madekwe ("Saltburn") plays another office worker named Luke in the series, while Jacob Fortune-Lloyd ("Midas Man") portrays intelligence officer Rhys. (Amazon Prime Video)

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1. Who wrote and released "Forever in Blue Jeans"?
2. Which group wrote and released "Catch Us if You Can"?
3. Who wrote and released "I Won't Back Down"?
4. Which artist released "Hit Me With Your Best Shot"?
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "I realize the way your eyes deceived me, With tender looks that I mistook for love."

Answers

1. Neil Diamond, in 1979. The single was first released on his "You Don't Bring Me Flowers" album the year before. Tommy Overstreet released a country cover in 1979.
2. The Dave Clark Five, in 1965. They were the second British band to appear on "The Ed Sullivan Show," and would eventually appear 17 more times. The Beatles only appeared on the show four times.
3. Tom Petty, in 1989, on his "Full Moon Fever" album. It topped the rock chart for five weeks.
4. Pat Benatar, in 1980.
5. "Paper Roses," by Anita Bryant, in 1960. The song was Bryant's best success, going to No. 5 on the charts in the U.S. but reaching No. 1 in Canada. In 1973 Marie Osmond released a country cover that topped the chart -- when she was just 14 years old.

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GRIN and BEAR IT ^{Wagner}



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"So far we've been unable to capture a coach."

Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



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* "For pastry cooking, try grating frozen butter into the flour. It cuts in better and will stay cool longer. This helps when I am making shortbread, as the flour and butter need to be combined. I don't end up having to put it in the fridge to cool it back down." -- C.S. in South Carolina

* Freshen stuffed animals by securing a few in a pillowcase and adding a fabric softener sheet. Put in the dryer on low heat for 20 minutes, then remove and brush out the fur if necessary while still warm.

* "Schedule important doctor's checkups, like your annual physical and dental cleanings, in the same month each year, so you will know when they are coming up. I use my birth month. My mom always has hers done in February." -- E.D. in

Massachusetts

* Here is an ingenious way to store markers: Collect enough toilet paper rolls to fill a shoebox standing upright. Paint or decorate the outside of the shoebox with brightly colored paper or paints. Fill with the rolls. The markers stand upright in the toilet paper rolls and they are kept standing uniformly across the box. Much better than a messy bin, where you can't see the colors that are on the bottom.

* When you are finished pan frying something, add a bit of water to the pan and put it back on the still-warm burner while you eat. When you come back to clean up after dinner, the pan drippings will slide right off!

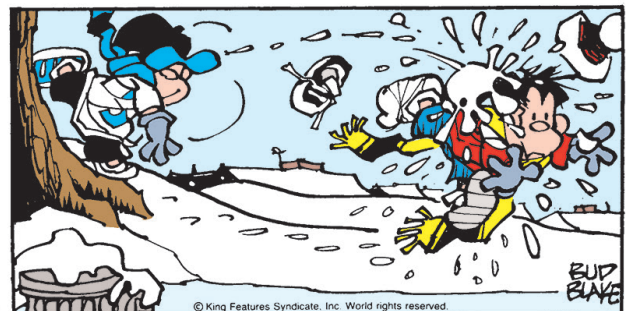
* If you've been decluttering as a part of your New Year's resolutions and you came across old pairs of eyeglasses, know that you can donate them to any Lions Club in your area. They redistribute the glasses to those who cannot afford them. You don't have to know the prescription, and they take reading glasses too!

Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803.

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TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Melville cap-
tain
- 5 Bottle part
- 9 Schlep
- 12 Petty of "Tank
Girl"
- 13 Jai —
- 14 Navarro on
"The View"
- 15 Tangy fruit pie
- 17 White wine
cocktail
- 18 Night light?
- 19 Comic Chase
- 21 Prove untrue
- 24 Converse
- 25 With (Fr.)
- 26 Woo with a
tune
- 30 Rule, for
short

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11
12					13					14		
15					16					17		
			18					19	20			
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		36						37				
38	39					40	41					
42				43	44					45	46	47
48				49					50			
51				52						53		

- 31 Ohio's
"Rubber
Capital"
- 32 Crone
- 33 Genius
- 35 Speck
- 36 Fireplace fuel
- 37 Golf great
Sam
- 38 "Untrue!"
- 40 Stated
- 42 Jargon suffix
- 43 Small digit
- 48 "Caught ya!"
- 49 Leading
man?
- 50 McGregor of
film

- 51 Grier of "The
L Word"
- 52 Really pesters
- 53 Pixels
- 8 Chef's work-
place
- 9 Sierra Nevada
resort
- 10 Prof's
employer
- 11 Actor Sinise
- 16 Born abroad?
- 20 Solo of "Star
Wars"
- 21 Biting remark
- 22 Always
- 23 Defendant's
defenders
- 24 Gator's kin
- 26 Takes to the
slopes
- 27 Epoch
- 28 Facts and fig-
ures
- 29 "Zounds!"
- 31 Luanda resi-
dent
- 34 Cyclades isle
- 35 Truly
- 37 Part of RSVP
- 38 Tide type
- 39 Job-safety
org.
- 40 Male deer
- 41 \$ dispensers
- 44 Journalist
Tarbell
- 45 Pair
- 46 Feedbag bit
- 47 USN rank

DOWN

- 1 The whole
enchilada
- 2 Weed whack-
er
- 3 Branch
- 4 Having
superhuman
strength, say
- 5 Post-WWII
alliance
- 6 Flair
- 7 Lot vehicle

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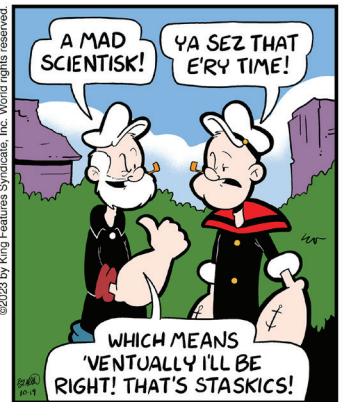
King Crossword

Answers

Solution time: 23 mins.

A	H	A	B		N	E	C	K		L	U	G	
L	O	R	I		A	L	A	I		A	N	A	
L	E	M	O	N	T	A	R	T		K	I	R	
			N	E	O	N		C	H	E	V	Y	
B	E	L	I	E			C	H	A	T			
A	V	E	C		S	E	R	E	N	A	D	E	
R	E	G			A	K	R	O	N		H	A	G
B	R	A	I	N	I	A	C			I	O	T	A
		L	O	G	S			S	N	E	A	D	
N	O	T	S	O		S	A	I	D				
E	S	E			L	I	T	T	L	E	T	O	E
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P	A	M			N	A	G	S		D	O	T	S

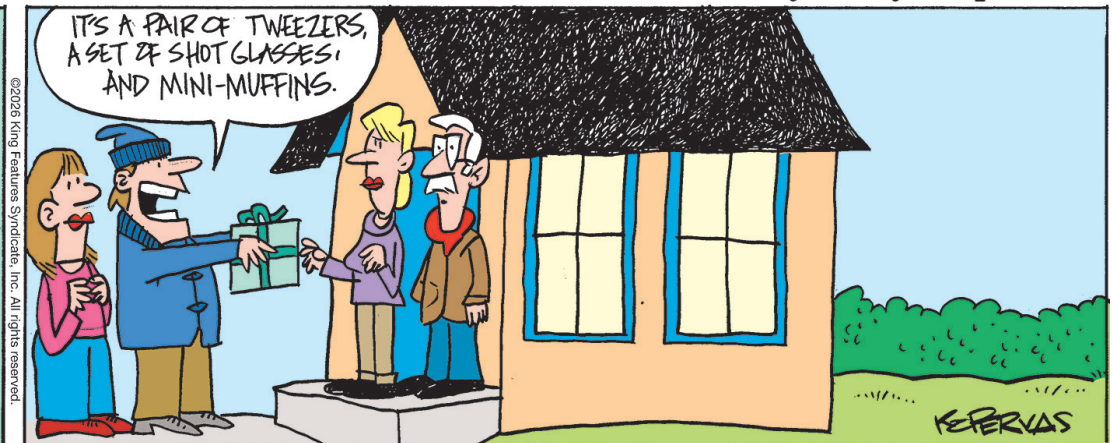
Olive



Out on a Limb

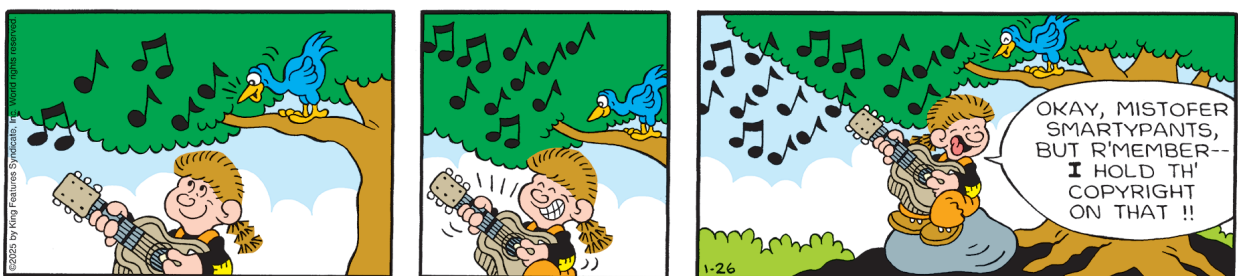
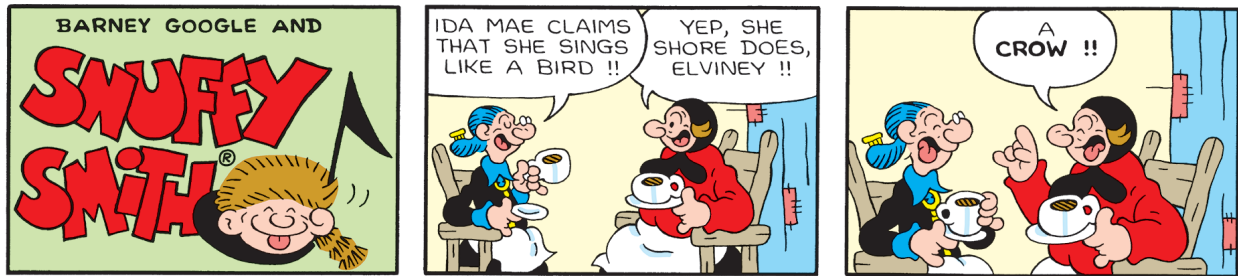
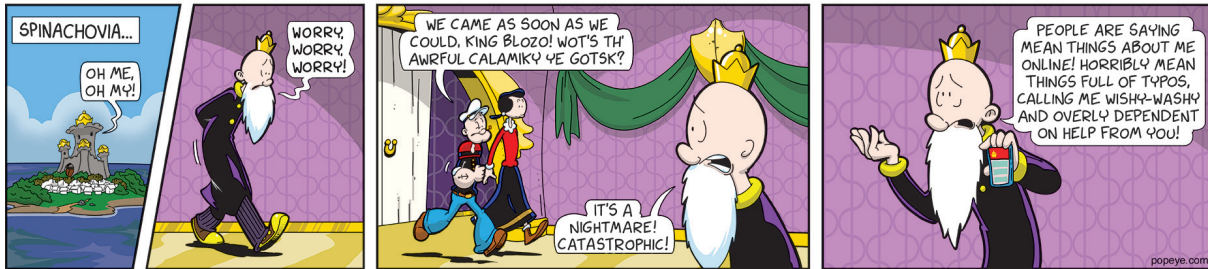
by Gary Kopervas

HOUSEWARMING GIFTS FOR PEOPLE WHO MOVE INTO ONE OF THOSE TINY HOMES.



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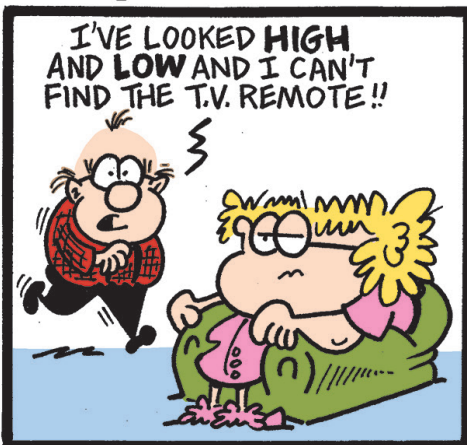
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The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

When it's time to change doctors

Now and then, not too often but sometimes, you hear that audible click and come to the realization that you need to change doctors.

Maybe it's because once again you don't feel like your doctor is really listening to your concerns. Maybe it's because once again tests are ordered without you getting a clear explanation about why they're necessary. Maybe it's because your health concern doesn't seem to be getting better. Maybe it's because you see the physician assistant (PA) when you expect to see the doctor. Or maybe it's just because you have a gut feeling you should go elsewhere.

Whatever the reason, if the time comes to make a change, it won't be easy if you've been with your current doctor for a long time.

Your first step, once you've decided to do this, is to "interview" another doctor. You'll need to call around to see who's taking new patients or inquire among friends for recommendations. Then check out the doctor online with reviews by other people. Look at Healthgrades (www.healthgrades.com). Or do an online search with the doctor's name.

Be sure the doctor is in your insurance network and make an appointment. Go in with a written list of questions and make notes.

When you find a doctor you'd like to see in the future, you'll need to have your records transferred from the old doctor.

And that's where I part company with advice I was given. I'm told that it's best to transfer your records to a new doctor before you go to the first appointment. You'll need to decide for yourself. My preference was to meet the doctor first before records were transferred, and to not let the current medical practice know I was leaving until I was certain.

If you find the right doctor, the difficulty will be worth it.

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1. Name the Baseball Hall of Fame pitcher, known as "The Heater From Van Meter," who had his No. 19 retired by the Cleveland Indians in 1956.

2. What U.S. city was awarded the 1976 Winter Olympics but then had to back out after voters rejected using state tax revenues to support the Games in a 1972 referendum?

3. Florida-based sports radio personality and podcaster Jon Weiner is better known by what professional name?

4. How old was Julia Hawkins when she became the first female runner in her age category to record a time in the 100-meter sprint when she ran at the 2021 Louisiana Senior Games?

5. What Hockey Hall of Famer for the Chicago Blackhawks had a brief, uncredited cameo in the 1992 comedy movie "Wayne's World"?

6. In November 1988, which Canadian boxer did Sugar Ray LEONard defeat to win the WBC light heavyweight championship?

7. On Nov. 13, 1934, the St. Louis Eagles' Ralph "Scotty" Bowman became the first player in NHL history to do what?



by Ryan A. Berenz

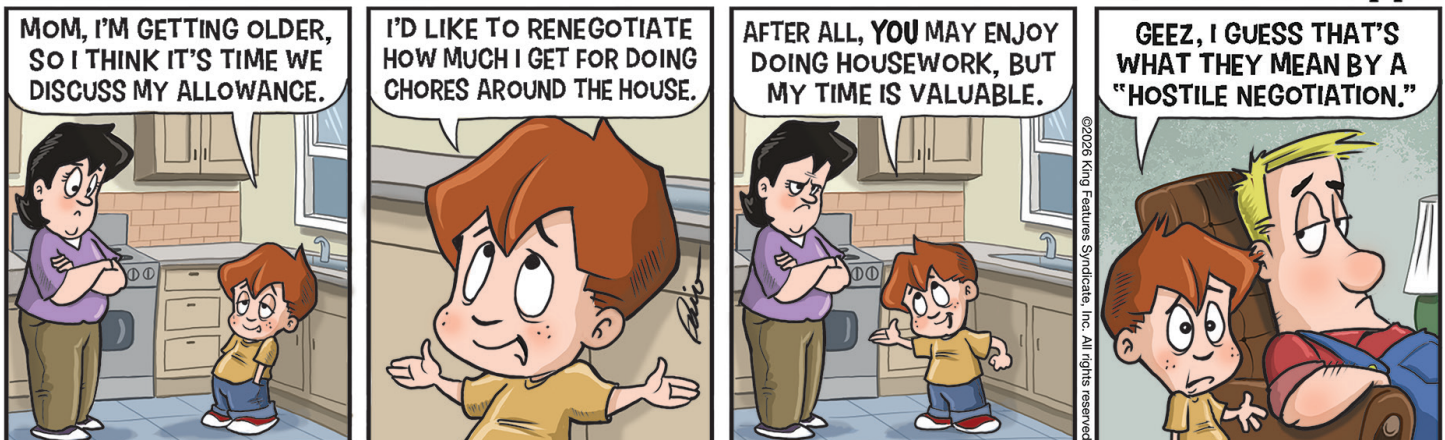
Answers

1. Bob Feller.
2. Denver.
3. Stugotz.
4. 105 (her time was 1:02.95).
5. Stan Mikita.
6. Donny Lalonde.
7. Score a penalty shot goal.

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





DEAR PAW'S CORNER: My 1-year-old puppy, "Duke," is super-active and loves the snow. Just walking him around the block isn't enough to dispel his energy, so I'd like to take him on a hike each week. Do you think he's ready for it at this age? -- Billy in Claremont, New Hampshire

DEAR BILLY: At a year old, Duke is ready for short hikes. Depending on his breed, size and tolerance for cold, he may be able to handle longer periods, but you'll need to evaluate that by taking him out for gradually longer hikes.

As with any winter hike, whether with dogs or alone, safety and awareness are paramount. Duke needs cold-weather gear, paw protection, and food and water to keep him energized and producing his own heat. Here

are a few tips.

- Start small: Keep the first hikes short, less than a mile out and back. Gradually increase the distance. Turn around if Duke starts hesitating, whining or shivering.
- Be prepared: Pack separate food, water, pickup bags and first aid for your dog. Make sure Duke wears a collar with his ID tags attached.
- Communicate: Tell someone where you're going and when you'll be back.
- Check conditions first: Check the weather, but also contact the park or message a local hiking group to find out what shape the trail is in.
- Follow park regulations: Review rules for hiking with pets on state or federal lands.
- Don't push the limits: Turn back well before your dog (or you) starts to get cold or exhausted. Avoid potential dangers like frozen lakes or avalanche zones.

After the hike, before driving home, dry your dog's coat and check his paws for packed snow or frostbite. Put a warm doggy sweater on him for the ride home.

Send your tips, comments or questions to ask@pawscorner.com.

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Strange BUT TRUE

- * The Statue of Liberty was originally brown.
- * Parrotfish are among the sleepest of sea creatures, averaging around a good 13 hours of rest per night. When not dozing, they spend as much as 90% of their time eating algae that grows on coral reefs.
- * Reindeer eyes change color according to the seasons -- they're golden in the summer and blue during winter.
- * The @ symbol was invented more than four centuries before email was.

* The U.S. Postal Service employs a sharp-eyed group of folks whose job is to determine where to send letters and packages with illegible addresses. They work their magic at the USPS Remote Encoding Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, the first facility of its kind and now the only one still standing.

* Just 43 people have been known to have "golden blood," the rarest of blood types.

* Potatoes are potato plants that also grow tomatoes. The hybrid occurs when a tomato plant is grafted onto a potato plant, a relatively easy thing since they're both members of the solanum genus of the nightshade family.

* LEOnardo da Vinci's famous painting "The Last Supper" originally included Jesus' feet.

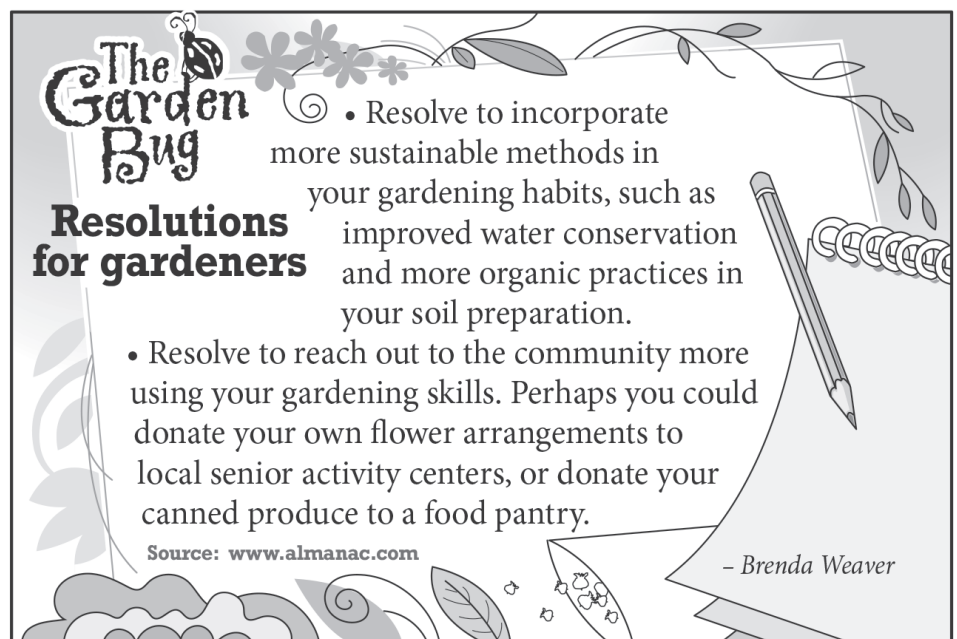
* Portland, Oregon, was named in a coin toss in 1845 between Asa Lovejoy and Francis Pettygrove when the two couldn't agree on a suitable moniker for their new land claim.

* Cacti aren't native to most deserts.

* The human stomach can expand to hold as much as a 2-liter soda bottle, since its inner surface, the mucosa, is lined with folds called rugae that unfold and stretch out to accommodate food as it arrives.

Thought for the Day: "If you break your neck, if you have nothing to eat, if your house is on fire, then you got a problem. Everything else is inconvenience." -- Robert Fulghum

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The Garden Bug

Resolutions for gardeners

- Resolve to incorporate more sustainable methods in your gardening habits, such as improved water conservation and more organic practices in your soil preparation.
- Resolve to reach out to the community more using your gardening skills. Perhaps you could donate your own flower arrangements to local senior activity centers, or donate your canned produce to a food pantry.

Source: www.almanac.com

- Brenda Weaver



by Freddy Groves

Thieves don't always do prison time

The reports from the VA's Office of Inspector General are mind-boggling outlines of just how low scammers will go to steal money, and just how much they are able to take. Not all of them, however, will do prison time.

A recent report indicates that one man was able to scam over \$1 billion by creating fake medical drug and device claims. This scheme used telemedicine as well as phone calls, the internet and junk mail to con vulnerable people into handing over their personally identifiable information. Armed with that information, the thieves were able to generate fake doctor orders and use their partner pharmacies, telemarketers and equipment suppliers to ship out unneeded medicine and medical items -- and get paid for it all to the tune of \$1.45 billion.

The head thief, CEO of the medical software company behind all the fraud, is not likely to have time to enjoy the fruits of his ill-gotten cash because, at age 79, he's been sentenced to 15 years in prison and fined over \$452 million in restitution.

Then there is the guy who stole VA grants to the tune of \$1.3 million (and DOL grants for half a million) while pretending to run a nonprofit homeless veterans shelter. He didn't just apply for grants once, he did it multiple times. And not only did he spend some of that cash on himself, but he pretended to provide counseling services that the veterans never received.

While he could have received up to 10 years in federal prison, he was only sentenced to 42 months, followed by supervised release.

On the other hand, there is the pain doctor who is managing to not go to prison even after knowingly billing for multiple tests on the same patient on the same day. Instead, it's been called civil, not criminal, but he does have to pay \$13.6 million under the False Claims Act.

How is it the theft of that amount of money doesn't result in prison time?

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Wishing Well®

8	7	5	2	5	3	4	5	6	3	5	3	4
Y	Y	B	S	E	R	L	U	B	E	N	W	O
7	2	8	6	5	2	3	6	8	4	5	8	5
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6	5	3	4	6	2	7	5	3	8	3	7	3
O	S	R	E	N	R	U	T	D	I	S	R	A
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N	N	S	G	R	D	F	P	D	R	A	L	L
4	7	8	7	4	8	7	4	7	4	7	4	7
O	E	L	W	W	Y	A	I	R	N	D	G	S

HERE IS A PLEASANT LITTLE GAME that will give you a message every day. It's a numerical puzzle designed to spell out your fortune. Count the letters in your first name. If the number of letters is 6 or more, subtract 4. If the number is less than 6, add 3. The result is your key number. Start at the upper left-hand corner and check one of your key numbers, left to right. Then read the message the letters under the checked figures give you.

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1. LITERATURE: Who was the first Canadian to win the Nobel Prize in Literature?

2. MYTHOLOGY: What is the home of the Greek gods?

3. LANGUAGE: Which language is the second most spoken in Canada?

4. HISTORY: Which explorer sailed around Africa to discover a trade route between Europe and India?

5. MOVIES: What is the name of Elle Woods' Chihuahua in "Legally Blonde"?

6. GAMES: In what year was the original Pac-Man video game released?

7. TELEVISION: What is the name of the town where "Hart of Dixie" is set?

8. FOOD & DRINK: Which popular fruit has seeds on the outside?

9. MEDICAL TERMS: What is the common name for alopecia?

10. GEOGRAPHY: In which country are the Cliffs of Moher located?

Answers

1. Short story author Alice Munro, 2013.

2. Mount Olympus.

3. French.

4. Vasco da Gama.

5. Bruiser.

6. 1980.

7. Bluebell, Alabama.

8. Strawberries.

9. Hair loss.

10. Ireland.

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South Dakota Governor



Larry Rhoden



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

Our Next Big Industry

In my first year as Governor, we've taken some important steps to keep South Dakota safe. And while we do that, South Dakota is keeping the entire nation safe and secure.

In my State of the State Address, I declared that National Security would be South Dakota's next big industry. This builds on the proclamation of my predecessor, Former Governor Kristi Noem, who declared that cybersecurity would be South Dakota's "next big industry," and we've put real action behind those words. My declaration takes that success a step further.

This will be the major focus of my economic development efforts. National security creates major opportunities for South Dakota, and we need to seize them.

South Dakota is already punching above our weight in national security. Of course, Kristi Noem is our Secretary of Homeland Security; John Thune is our U.S. Senate Majority Leader; Senator Mike Rounds serves on the armed services committee, where he focuses on defense, intelligence, and cybersecurity; and the Secretary of the Air Force is a South Dakotan, Dr. Troy Meink.

Beyond those leaders, the next generation B-21 bomber is coming to Ellsworth Air Force Base in Western South Dakota. And our cybersecurity industry has grown by 350% over the last decade – the second-fastest growth in the nation.

Businesses are already recognizing South Dakota as a great place for national security companies. In my State of the State Address, I recognized MMS Products. They're a Sioux Falls-based warfare-technology company, and they're leading the field for innovation of drone munitions. Just last month, we announced that they received a \$35 million contract from the Department of War to produce groundbreaking war-heads for America's drone fleet.

And they won't be the last announcement we make. The continued growth and leadership of Ellsworth Air Force base will pave the way for economic development in national security. Dakota State University will continue leading the field in cybersecurity. And bold, innovative companies like MMS Products will continue to make important contributions to America's security. I talked to Senator Rounds about this last month, and he agreed that there is huge potential in this area.

We also recognize that food security is national security, and that is why I will continue to prioritize value-added ag. The new High Plains Processing plant near Mitchell and the CJ Schwan's development in Sioux Falls are each half-a-billion-dollar investments in our state. Both will create new markets and better prices for our farmers. I look forward to more announcements in value-added ag as well.

South Dakota's growing national security industry will tie all these elements – and more – together in a cohesive strategy. My Commissioner of Economic Development, Bill Even, calls it a "systems approach," and he is well positioned to help me deliver on this declaration.

With South Dakota's growing national security industry, we will keep our nation safe, and we will continue to keep South Dakota strong, safe, and free.

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Return to Sender: Common Sense

The United States Postal Service (USPS) is not meeting the needs of South Dakotans. I hear almost every day about a lost package,

delayed mail resulting in late fees, medication delays, and the questionable routing of mail. USPS delivery times continue to get worse, and it's having a real impact on individuals and businesses. The data shows USPS service performance data has trended downward in every measurable category for every type of postage for the last four years.

At the end of December, I surveyed South Dakotans about their Postal Service experiences. I received more than 4,200 responses. More than 50% of these folks said their service is poor or very poor. More than 3,000 people shared their stories of difficulties with the Postal Service.

I heard from folks like Susan from Faulkton who incurred a \$2,700 late fee because her check took 25 days to get to Sioux Falls. There's a business in Bath whose customers often don't receive their checks or get them two months late. And some people like Mary bought Christmas presents early, only to have them travel to nine different states before being delivered to Huron – 10 days late, and after Christmas.

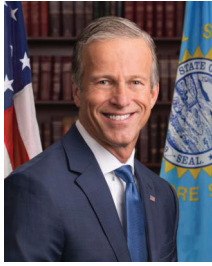


I held a roundtable in Sioux Falls to allow constituents to share their USPS story. I was joined by my colleague, Congressman Pete Sessions who chairs the House subcommittee that oversees the U.S. Postal Service, so he could hear directly from South Dakotans.

During the roundtable, we heard about how the unreliable delivery of mail is delaying critical medications, messages between family and friends, and is costing our small businesses money. In Sioux Falls, the closing of several retail counters has caused even longer lines and worsened the customer experience.

Following these discussions, it's clear the issue with the Postal Service is often not with the individual carriers who deliver the mail. The issue is mostly with the Postal Service leadership whose decisions have decreased the quality of service the USPS provides in South Dakota.

I'm grateful to all who shared their stories with me. While the U.S. Postal Service was unable to attend the roundtable, I'll be sending them a full report displaying the impact of their service decisions in South Dakota.



JOHN THUNE
U.S. SENATOR FOR SOUTH DAKOTA

Cracking Down on Waste, Fraud, and Abuse

The nonpartisan Government Accountability Office (GAO) estimates that as much as \$500 billion is stolen from federal programs each year due to fraud. That's not an inconsequential sum, and every dollar of waste, fraud, and abuse is a dollar that isn't going to an American in need.

Recent reports suggest that widespread fraud has taken root in Minnesota with as much as \$9 billion or more stolen from federal programs since 2018, and prosecutors have indicted numerous individuals for a number of schemes. I hope that these individuals are prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law and that we soon get to the bottom of what happened in Minnesota.

Over the past year, Republicans have been working hard to prevent the type of waste, fraud, and abuse that is now coming to light in Minnesota. Our landmark legislation, the Working Families Tax Cuts, contained a number of reforms to guard against abuse, focus federal dollars on those most in need, and hold states accountable for the federal funding they receive.

New measures in the law prevent noncitizens from receiving federal health care and nutrition benefits and refocus those programs to serving American citizens. It includes stronger work requirements for able-bodied, working-age adults without young children. It increases accountability, requiring states to check enrollees' eligibility for Medicaid twice per year and taking aim at duplicative enrollment in federal health care programs, which is estimated to cost taxpayers \$14 billion per year.

These are just a few of the commonsense reforms that Republicans enacted last year to crack down on waste, fraud, and abuse. Unfortunately, while one would hope this would be a bipartisan issue, it's not. Democrats panned the commonsense measures in the Working Families Tax Cuts as "cruel." They have said little about the fraud scandal in Minnesota, and they have shown they are perfectly willing to allow waste, fraud, and abuse to continue in the Obamacare exchanges.

Although there is evidence of fraud in the exchanges and in the Biden COVID subsidies, which were especially susceptible to fraud, Democrats want to extend those subsidies without any reforms. A recent GAO report revealed that the ACA exchanges continue to enroll fake individuals, improperly pay out taxpayer-subsidized health insurance, and fail to ensure payment accuracy. The agency tested 24 accounts, and 23 of them were enrolled with false or no documentation to verify Social Security numbers, citizenship, or reported income. Then there are the 40 percent of enrollees in fully subsidized health insurance who never filed a claim. But despite these and other issues, Democrats voted numerous times to extend enhanced subsidies without a single reform.

We have a responsibility to taxpayers to be good stewards of their tax dollars and ensure that money goes toward its intended purpose. We need to have guardrails on federal programs to protect against nefarious schemes and bad actors and restore integrity to these programs. Republicans have made progress on that this past year, and our work continues.

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January 5 - 11, 2026

Welcome back to the first Weekly Round[s] Up of 2026. After a well-spent holiday with friends and family, it was straight back to work in Washington, D.C. My week quickly filled with meetings, briefings and votes, setting the tone for a busy start to the new year. Outside of D.C., I also had the opportunity

to travel and attend two events. One at the U.S.–Mexico border in Texas to learn more about the work being done there and another in Rapid City for a welcome home ceremony honoring the South Dakota Army National Guard. More on both of these events and the rest of my week in the Weekly Round[s] Up:

South Dakota groups I visited with: Rosebud Sioux Tribe Council and SD rancher Eric Jennings.

Met with South Dakotans from: Rosebud and Spearfish.

Other meetings: Rwandan Ambassador Mathilde Mukantabana; Amanda Eversole, CEO of Financial Services Forum; and USPS Inspector General Hull (more on that later!).

On Friday I visited the southern border in Texas with a few Senate colleagues. We met with Border Patrol Agents and discussed new improvements under the Trump administration. Under the previous administration, there were 10.5 million illegal border crossings, marking a record-high level of illegal immigration. Compare this to today, for the seventh consecutive month, U.S. Border Patrol has released zero illegal aliens into the United States.

Additionally, over the weekend I had the opportunity to attend a welcome home ceremony for The South Dakota Army National Guard's 109th Engineer Battalion. This group started in San Diego, CA and transitioned to Eagle Pass, TX during their 13 month deployment. They operated in one of the most active and challenging regions along the southern border and assisted in the apprehension of more than 21,000 individuals attempting to cross the border illegally. The return of the 109th Engineer Battalion highlights the resilience and dedication of South Dakota National Guard Soldiers.

Briefings: I attended two Senate Select Committee on Intelligence briefings, a Cyber Operations Quarterly Briefing and a classified briefing on Venezuela. Click here to watch my video on social media recapping what we learned (that we're able to share!).

Senate Bible Study and Prayer Breakfast: On Tuesday I attended Senate Bible Study where we started a new study titled "Buoying Your New Year's Resolution to Study the Bible." I also attended our Senate Prayer Breakfast on Wednesday morning.

Votes taken: 6 – This past week I voted on multiple nominees including Keith Bass to be an Assistance Secretary of Defense, Joshua Simmons to be General Counsel of the Central Intelligence Agency, Sara Bailey to be Director of National Drug Control Policy, and Alexander Van Hook to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Louisiana (All Yeas).

Additionally, I voted Nay on both the Whitehouse Air Plan Approval South Dakota CRA and on the motion to discharge the Kaine War Powers Resolution (Venezuela).

Steps taken: 57,095 steps or 27.05 miles.



Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries

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What It Was, Was a Coughing and Sneezing Contest

The New Year started rather nicely for us. After all the exciting holiday activities, it was nice to settle into a more relaxed frame of mind. We had a whole week before us with nothing really to do and no place to go. What could be better?

I like it when there's not much to do, but The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage has a very opposite view. If she's not doing something in her craft room, she can't handle it.

However, some things have a way of changing.

Halfway through the first week of the New Year, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage came down with flu-like symptoms. She was coughing, sneezing, and all that's associated with the Flu.

She was sitting on the couch with her eyes closed, and as lunchtime approached, I said, "Would you like me to make lunch today?"

She always makes lunch, and I thought this was an opportunity to help her out with the lunch plan.

She opened her eyes, looked at me very strangely, and then said, "Heavens no. I'm sick enough as it is, I don't need any more." She then got up, went to the kitchen, and began making lunch. At least I tried to help.

By the time she finished lunch, I started coughing and sneezing. My nose was running so much that I couldn't handle it. It was then that it occurred to me that whatever she had, she gave to me.

It wasn't long before both of us were sick, and I couldn't help but laugh at how our 'Flu' had turned us into a couple of couch potatoes. We were coughing, sneezing, and feeling miserable, but somehow, it made our start of the New Year memorable in a funny way.

I often wonder why they call it "Flu" when it never flies away. I want to say, "Whatever I had, it Flu away. But this Flu has a very exaggerated fascination with me. And of course, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage.

This went on for at least a week. For six days, I never got out of my pajamas. It was like I never got out of bed in the morning. I didn't have the energy to put on my work clothes, so I just stayed in my pajamas.

The only work I was doing was walking into the living room, taking a cup of coffee, and sitting down in my easy chair. It took a lot of work to get here.

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Not only did I not change out of my pajamas, but The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage did the same. One thing was quite strange: she never left the house to go shopping. That was the real clue that she was sick.

We couldn't handle much activity, but then The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage invented some game for us to play. She called it the "Cough and Sneeze Challenge." I never heard of that before, but I was in for it. I had nothing else to do, and there was no way I could stop from coughing or sneezing.

It was rather strange that I sneezed three times. I couldn't sneeze just once or even twice, but three times.

At the beginning, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage was far ahead of me in her coughing and sneezing. After all, she got this flulike thing way before I did. But it did not take long for me to catch up with her.

We were sitting together in the living room, coughing and sneezing in turn. I would let her go first, and then I would follow not long after. I tried to be a gentleman about it, but pretty soon I was no longer in control of my coughing and sneezing.

She had a couple of hours ahead of me, but it wasn't long before I caught up.

After my last coughing and sneezing fit, I looked at The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage and said, "When will this game be over?"

She coughed and sneezed and then cleared her throat and said, "It will be over when one of us wins the contest."

I really didn't know what she was talking about or how to respond. It went on for five days, and each day seemed worse than the one before. We got up in the morning coughing and sneezing, and it continued throughout the day, and then we went to bed coughing and sneezing.

"I have an idea," I said to her, "if I surrender and let you win can we then call it quits?"

As soon as I said that, I went into the worst coughing and sneezing fit I had all week.

Laughing between coughing and sneezing fits, she said, "Are you really willing to lose this game?"

She knows that I don't like losing. But I've had a history of losing, and this would be a great time to keep losing. I wouldn't mind losing to this if we get it over with.

For the next half hour, we coughed and sneezed together as partners. Sometimes quitting is not an option.

In the middle of a sneeze, a Bible verse came to mind. "Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing," (James 1:3-4).

Patience has a way of getting through difficult times.



"Right To Repair" Extends Product Lifespans by Kristy Chan

Dear EarthTalk: What is the "Right to Repair" movement and what makes it "sustainable"?

—Priscilla Thompson, Colorado Springs, CO

The Right to Repair movement is a legal concept and a grassroots campaign that advocates for a protected freedom to repair, modify, and maintain products once they have been purchased. The movement is not just about fixing devices; it's about giving consumers and repair shops the legal and technical means to extend the lifespan of products by sharing information and reducing wasteful product replacement.

A key reason why modern devices often seem of lower quality and are regularly replaced is due to planned obsolescence, a tactic used by businesses to maximize profits by intentionally producing products that are difficult to repair or prone to breaking, thereby forcing consumers into a cycle of constant replacement and accelerated waste.

Electronic waste is the world's fastest-growing solid waste stream, with 62 million tonnes of electronic waste generated in 2022 alone. Just 22% was recycled. Limited repair options lead to increased disposal, and when these devices are discarded, mixed waste streams and toxic materials become significant sources of pollution. Manufacturers often maintain a lack of options for repair, leaving consumers with little choice but to purchase more of their products or seek their repair services. An independent study conducted in 2018 revealed that forty-five out of fifty companies required warranty coverage to be conditioned on the use of authorized repair services.

Since consumers are often restricted from prioritizing repair, it creates an unsustainable cycle of disposal and replacement. As Chief John Marshall famously said, "It is a general and indisputable rule, that where there is a legal right, there is also a legal remedy," meaning that consumers should have a righteous remedy if their rights are restricted. To democratize repair is to replace our unsustainability with a circular economy, where the demand for overproduction is reduced, and raw materials are revitalized, repurposed, and reused.

The first step is to call out manufacturers withholding access to parts, tools, and service documentation. All states have introduced at least one piece of Right to Repair legislation to counteract planned obsolescence. Yet, a lack of uniformity persists, allowing loopholes that ultimately limit consumers' repair options. The democratization of repair knowledge and access to repair can foster local economies, train skilled technicians, and reduce overall electronic waste.

The Right to Repair movement is far from complete. After all, it's also a cultural movement, best put by Right to Repair advocate Louis Rossmann, "[a] movement among people who want to have the ability to own their property again." Everyone can advocate for the movement, even through small actions like attending public events where tech policies are discussed, starting a local drive to recycle old technology, supporting local repair shops, and signing up for newsletters from Right to Repair organizations.



Credit: Kenny Jenkins, FlickrCC

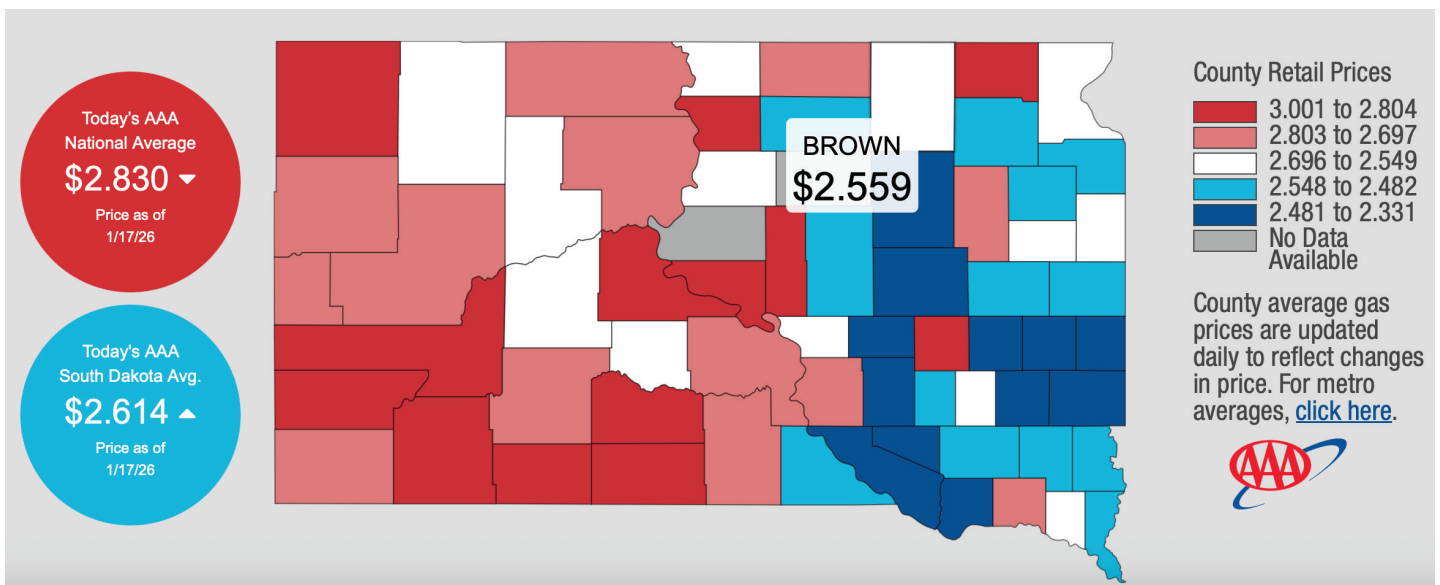
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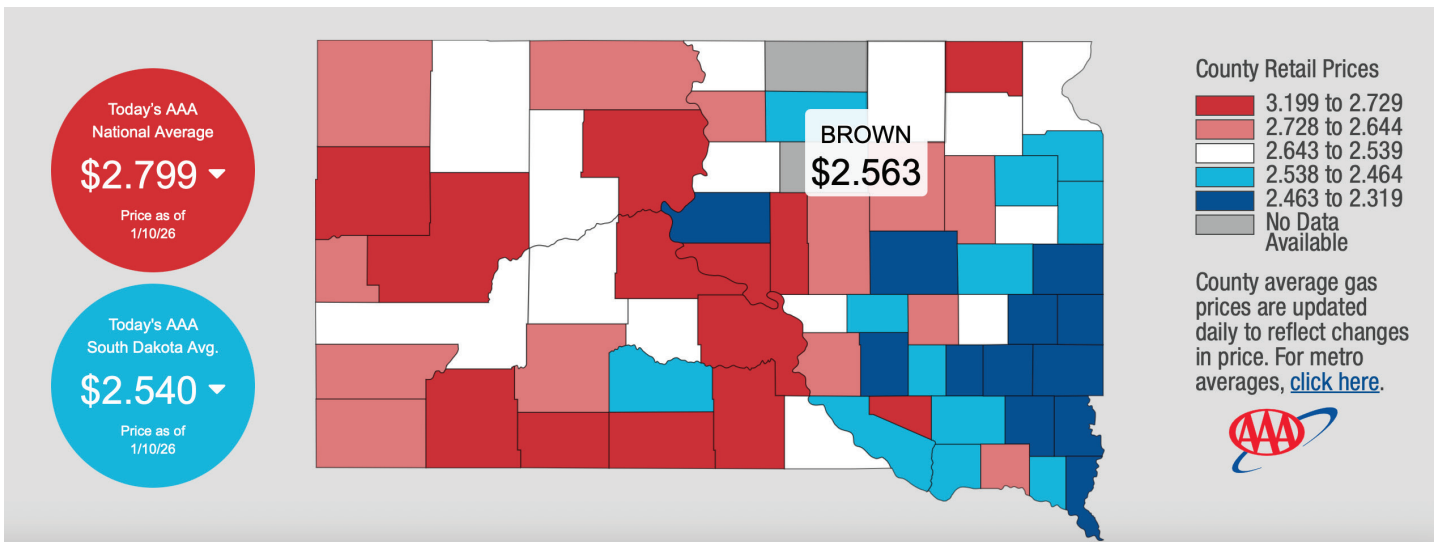
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$2.540	\$2.719	\$3.196	\$3.167
Current Avg.	\$2.614	\$2.777	\$3.268	\$3.193
Yesterday Avg.	\$2.607	\$2.766	\$3.260	\$3.169
Week Ago Avg.	\$2.540	\$2.719	\$3.196	\$3.167
Month Ago Avg.	\$2.672	\$2.829	\$3.314	\$3.408

This Week



Last Week



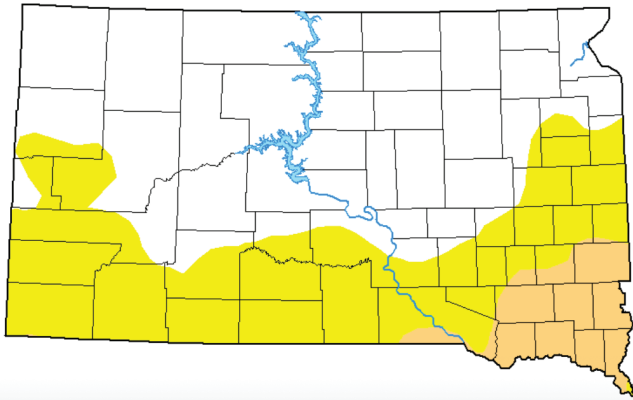
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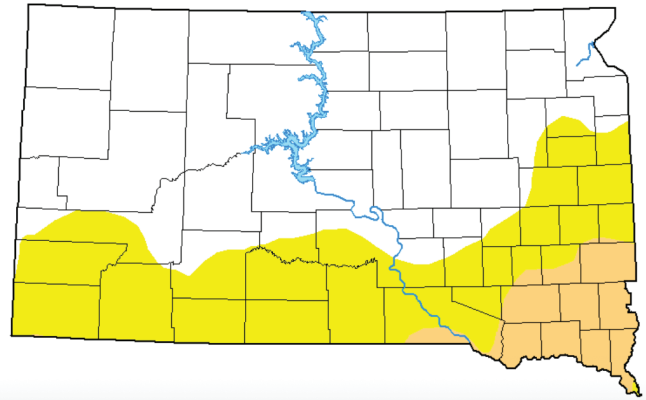
Drought Classification

- | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| None | D2 (Severe Drought) | D4 (Exceptional Drought) |
| D0 (Abnormally Dry) | D3 (Extreme Drought) | No Data |
| D1 (Moderate Drought) | | |

Drought Monitor



Jan. 13



Jan. 6

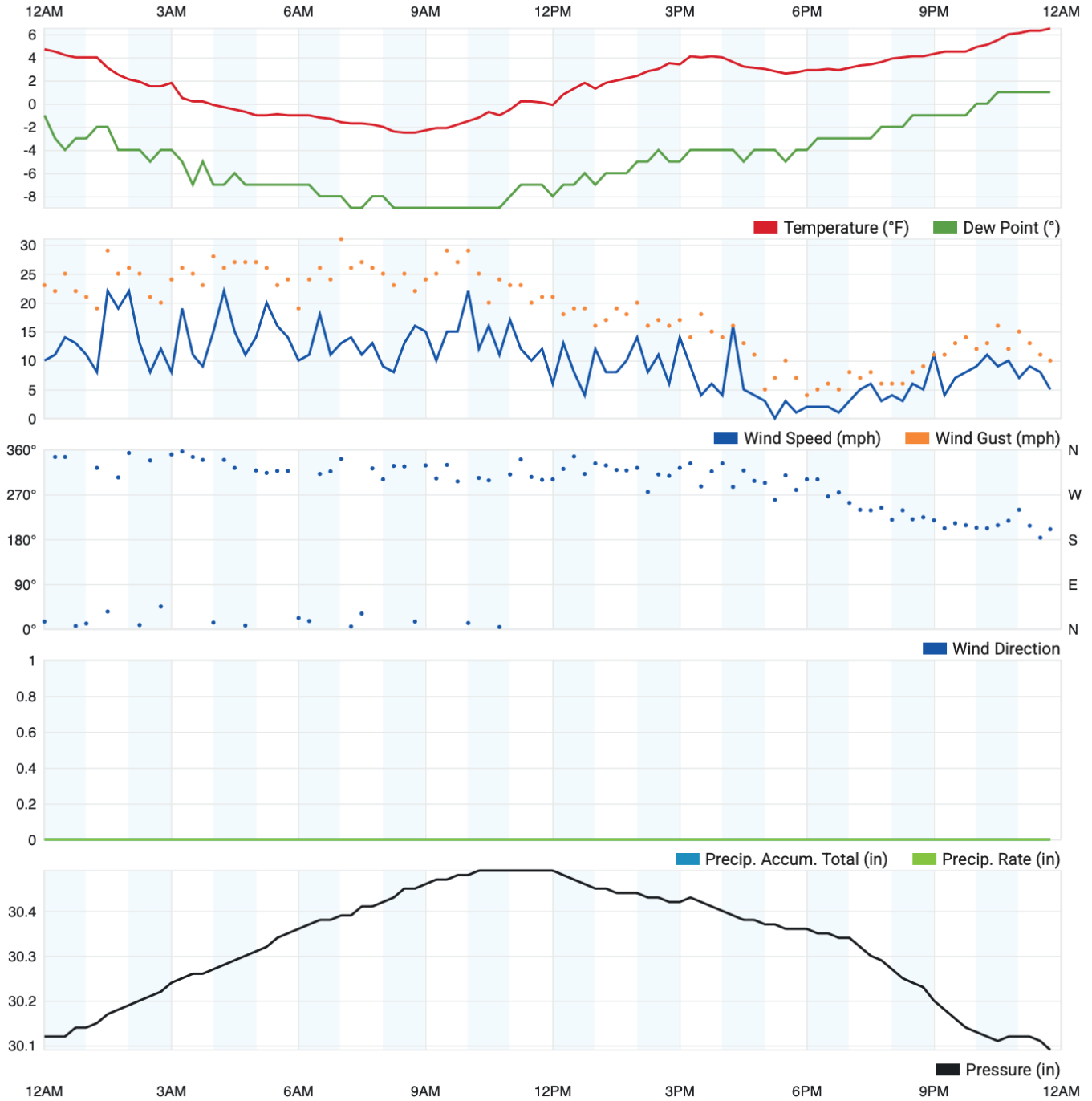
Above-normal precipitation occurred across eastern Colorado, Kansas, and southeast Nebraska, falling primarily as rain and infiltrating soils due to warm temperatures. Much of the rest of the region remained dry. Temperatures were 10–15°F above normal across most areas, with parts of the Dakotas and eastern Montana 15–20°F above normal. Southeast Colorado was the only area near to below normal. Abnormally dry and moderate drought conditions improved in southeast Nebraska, eastern Kansas, and parts of south-central Colorado. Drought expanded across eastern Wyoming, west-central South Dakota, and northeast Colorado.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

January 17, 2026



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Weather Advisory

Wind Advisory

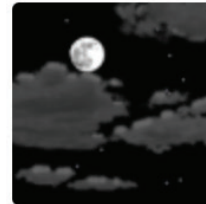
Sunday

Sunday Night

M.L.King Day

Monday Night

Tuesday



High: 20 °F

Low: -4 °F

High: 12 °F

Low: -4 °F

High: 20 °F

Slight Chance
Snow and
Blowing Snow

Patchy
Blowing Snow
and Blustery
then Partly
Cloudy

Partly Sunny

Partly Cloudy

Partly Sunny
then Chance
Snow



Snow & Wind Return Sunday

January 17, 2026

3:46 PM CST

Winds gusts of 45 to 55 mph through Sunday afternoon

Key Messages

- Winds will increase out of the northwest early Sunday morning, with gusts of 45 to 55 mph, through Sunday afternoon
- An inch or less is possible across portions of northeastern SD and west central MN
- The combination of falling snow and gusty winds may lead to drifting and blowing snow and reduced visibilities at times

What Has Changed

- A Winter Weather Advisory has been issued for central and northeast SD into west central MN from 3 AM to 9 PM CST Sunday
- A Wind Advisory has been issued for central and northeast SD into west central MN from 4 AM to 6 PM CST Sunday

Next Scheduled Update

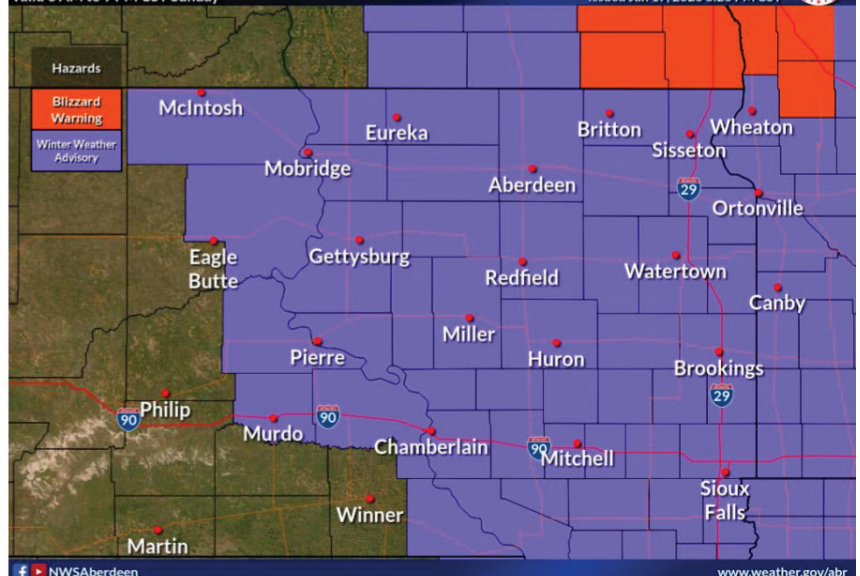
- Sunday morning

Winter Weather Advisory

valid 3 AM to 9 PM CST Sunday

Weather Forecast Office
Aberdeen, SD

Issued Jan 17, 2026 3:26 PM CST



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Another round of snow and wind will move in Sunday. A Winter Weather Advisory has been issued for central and northeast SD into west central SD from 3 AM to 9 PM CST Sunday.

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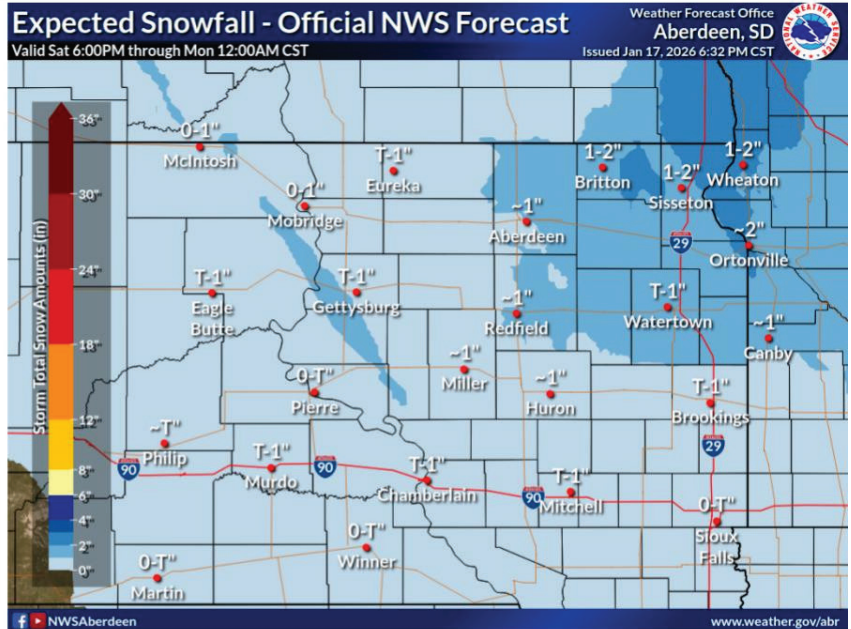


Snow Through Sunday Evening

January 17, 2026
6:36 PM CST

Key Messages

- Total accumulations generally an inch or less
- Chance of more than an inch between 60-80% along and northeast of a line from Britton, SD to Ortonville, MN



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD



Strong Winds Return Sunday

January 17, 2026
3:51 PM

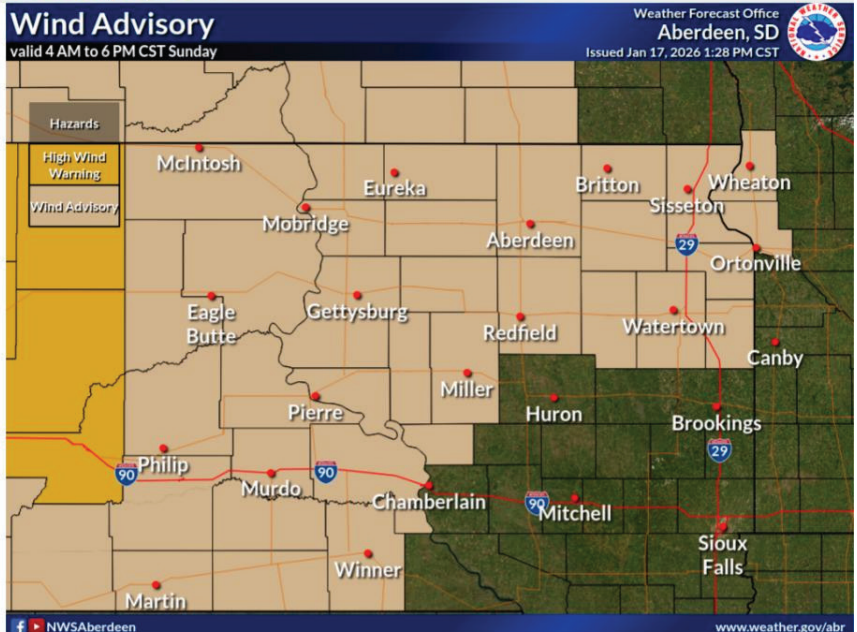
NW Winds of 30-35 mph with gusts of 45-55 mph possible

Key Messages

- Strong winds will combine with a 30-50% chance of light snow leading to **blowing snow** and **reduced visibilities**

Maximum Wind Gust Forecast (mph)

	1/18 Sun									
	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	
Aberdeen	25	28	36	44	44	43	37	31	25	
Mobridge	29	40	43	44	44	40	35	31	25	
Pierre	20	40	41	45	45	43	35	29	23	
Sisseton	22	29	39	44	46	45	41	38	32	
Watertown	24	25	36	43	45	45	41	36	31	



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 6 °F at 11:21 PM

Low Temp: -3 °F at 8:33 AM

Wind: 31 mph at 6:54 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 51 in 1944

Record Low: -34 in 1970

Average High: 23

Average Low: 1

Average Precip in Jan.: 0.35

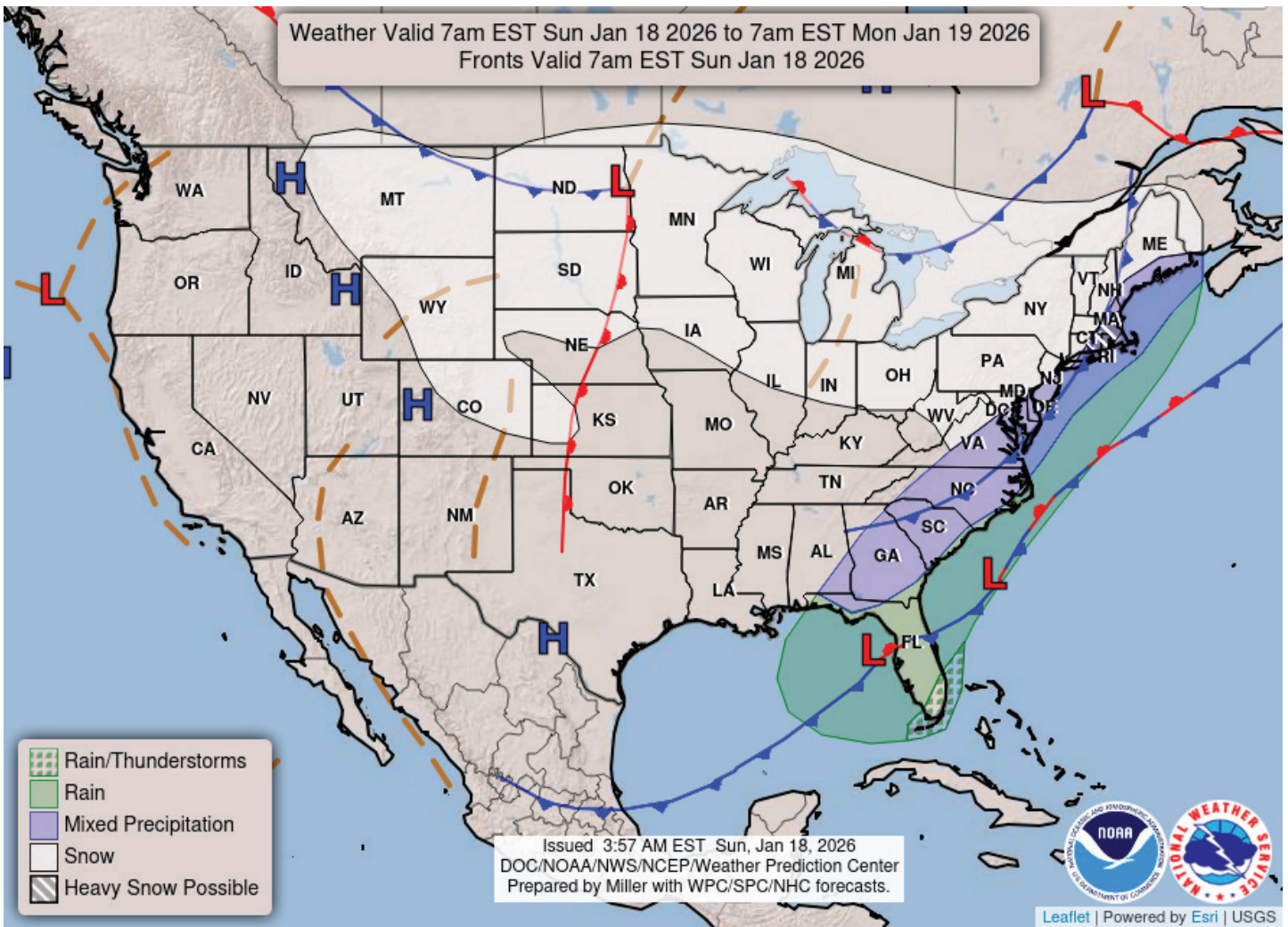
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.35

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 5:18 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:05 am



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Today in Weather History

January 18, 1979: An area of low pressure moving across the region brought widespread snow of 5 to 10 inches to much of Minnesota from the 18th through the 20th. Travel was difficult, if not impossible, in many areas where there were near blizzard conditions. Schools and businesses closed, along with many flights canceled.

January 18, 1999: One to 4 inches of snowfall combined with winds of 30 to 45 miles an hour brought blizzard conditions to part of northeast South Dakota. Highway 12 and Interstate 29 were most affected by the low visibilities. There was a seven-car pileup on Highway 12 near Andover with minor injuries. As a result, traffic was shut off in the westbound lanes for a few hours. Over 200 people were stranded overnight at a restaurant near Summit. There was also a rollover north of Summit, which resulted in minor injuries. One traveler said the visibility was frequently near zero.

January 18, 2014: A strong Alberta Clipper low-pressure system moved over the Northern Plains Friday night and Saturday morning. Anywhere from a trace to just near 3 inches of fresh snowfall accompanied this low-pressure system. Over this area, strong northwest winds of 25 to 40 mph developed by late Friday night with gusts of 45 to 55 mph. A few areas even experienced gusts to 58 mph or higher again. This system packed such a wallop that a couple of instances of thundersnow occurred, as evidenced by the cloud to ground lightning strikes showing up in southwestern Day County and northwestern Clark County early Saturday morning.

Numerous reports of visibility reduced to one-quarter mile or less across northeast South Dakota, specifically on or just to the east of the Glacial Lakes region, were received.

1857 — A great cold storm swept across the Atlantic Seaboard. Snowfall totals of 12 inches were common, whole gales caused shipwrecks and damage property on islands, and temperatures near zero prevailed from Virginia northward. Great drifts of snow blocked transportation. Richmond VA was cut off from Washington DC for a week. (David Ludlum)

1943: Idaho's coldest night on record occurred as the low temperature dropped to 60 degrees below zero at Island Park Dam.

1950: Oregon continued in the grips of one of its worst winter months ever. A significant winter storm brought a thick glaze of ice to Columbia River Gorge, stopping automobile traffic in its tracks. Hundreds of motorists were stranded and had to be rescued by train. Even that wasn't easy with the coating of ice. The storm caused widespread power outages.

1971: A warm Santa Ana condition brought a 95 degree reading to Los Angeles, the highest January temperature on record. It was 95 degrees in Palm Springs, the highest temperature on record for January as well.

1973: The first tornado death of the year has been registered north of Corey, Louisiana, during the afternoon hours. Although a girl was killed when a tenant farm was destroyed, a baby received only minor injuries when it was carried 300 to 400 yards by the tornado.

1978: In Connecticut, the Hartford Arena collapsed after experiencing the largest snowstorm of its 5-year life. Multiple issues caused the collapse.

1980: A tropical depression that developed on January 15th became Tropical Storm Hyacinthe on the 18th. From the 18th through the 27th, this storm produced a world-record rainfall amount of 223.5 inches at Cratère Commerson on La Réunion.

1990 — A winter storm produced heavy snow and high winds across the southwestern U.S. Snowfall totals ranged up to 18 inches at Lake Arrowhead CA and Ashford AZ. High winds in New Mexico gusted to 100 mph east of Albuquerque. Unseasonably warm weather continued from Texas to the Atlantic coast. Twenty cities reported record high temperatures for the date including Roanoke VA with a reading of 71 degrees. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



Daily Devotion

Seeking God's Will

With perfect timing, God will reveal His direction to those who are committed to following Him.

1 John 5:14-15: 14 This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.

As Christians, we are blessed to have an omniscient and mighty heavenly Father who makes many things known to us. In every situation, the best course of action is clear to Him, and He promises, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you" (Psalm 32:8).

Let's explore how to discern God's will whenever we reach a crossroads in life. The first step is to make sure that we have repented of all known sin. After confessing and repenting, we can ask for direction. Next, we should read Scripture regularly with an open heart, one that is eager to learn from God. The last step involves the Holy Spirit—the wonderful gift our Father has given each of His children (Luke 11:13). The Spirit provides truth and guidance as we read the Word and pray. We should listen patiently for His leading, which is often communicated quietly to our spirit as we spend time with the Father.

When asking the Lord to reveal His will, we shouldn't expect instant answers. The discipline of waiting builds character, and besides, rushing the process may lead to a path that misses God's best. Take the time to seek the Lord's plan for your life, remembering He'll provide all you need in order to follow 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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Name: _____
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City _____
State, Zip Code _____
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The following will be used for your log-in information.

E-mail _____
Password _____

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

paypal.me/paperpaul

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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.16.26

2 22 33 42 67 1

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$250,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.17.26

7 28 29 35 39 8

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$13,090,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.17.26

10 17 24 32 34 17

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 54 Mins 9 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.17.26

2 13 24 25 28

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$205,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.17.26

1 4 6 34 56 19

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.17.26

5 8 27 49 57 14

Power Play: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$193,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the **AP** Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Bowman County, N.D. 54, Belle Fourche 44
Canby, Minn. 65, Arlington 59
Castlewood 56, Centerville 47
Chamberlain 53, Bon Homme 42
Clark-Willow Lake 48, Flandreau 38
Crow Creek Tribal School 67, Little Wound 65
Dell Rapids St Mary's 55, Canton 39
Deubrook 62, Beresford 54
Elkton-Lake Benton 81, Sioux Falls Lutheran 62
Emery 53, Canistota 30
Faulkton 70, Redfield 36
Gayville-Volin High School 71, Burke 41
Groton 65, Dakota Valley 42
Hill City 70, Sundance, Wyo. 27
Langford 67, Florence-Henry 66, OT
Leola-Frederick High School 42, Ellendale, N.D. 34
Luverne, Minn. 84, Dell Rapids 62
Northwestern 78, Andes Central/Dakota Christian 71
Sioux Falls Christian 65, Rapid City Christian 43
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 59, Sioux Falls Jefferson 54
Sioux Valley 74, Pine Ridge 69, OT
Tea 64, Aberdeen Central 43
Timber Lake 52, Aberdeen Christian 48
Todd County 67, McLaughlin 33

Some high school basketball scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL=

Aberdeen Central 66, Tea 55
Bowman County, N.D. 34, Belle Fourche 30
Castlewood 44, Luverne, Minn. 35
Chamberlain 35, Bon Homme 22
Clark-Willow Lake 42, Flandreau 31
Corsica/Stickney 53, Harding County 46
Crow Creek Tribal School 71, Little Wound 63
Dell Rapids St Mary's 41, Edgerton, Minn. 33
Deubrook 52, Beresford 39
Ellendale, N.D. 43, Leola-Frederick High School 31
Florence-Henry 68, Warner 62
Gayville-Volin High School 52, Burke 18
Hill City 60, Sundance, Wyo. 48
Lyman 62, Mobridge-Pollock 59
Mahpiya Lúta Red Cloud 66, Lennox 56
Rapid City Christian 55, Sioux Falls Christian 54, OT
Sanborn Central-Woonsocket 54, Elk Point-Jefferson 41

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St Thomas More 57, Dakota Valley 52
Todd County 49, McLaughlin 33
Viborg-Hurley 44, Sioux Falls Lutheran 20
Wagner 54, Hamlin 48
Waubay/Summit 59, Arlington 42
Woodbury Central, Merville, Iowa 59, Hanson 34

Some high school basketball scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

South Dakota State defeats Kansas City 90-62

By The Associated Press undefined

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — Joe Saylor had 22 points in South Dakota State's 90-62 win over Kansas City on Saturday.

Saylor shot 7 of 10 from the field, including 5 of 7 from 3-point range, and went 3 of 4 from the line for the Jackrabbits (10-10, 3-2 Summit League). Alec Squires added 14 points while shooting 6 of 6 from the field to go with five rebounds and three steals.

Kasheem Grady II finished with 14 points for the Roos (4-16, 1-5). Karmello Branch added 12 points for Kansas City. Jerome Palm put up 11 points, six rebounds and two blocks.

Uelmen's 26 lead North Dakota over South Dakota 96-80

By The Associated Press undefined

GRAND FORKS, N.D. (AP) — Greyson Uelmen scored 26 points as North Dakota beat South Dakota 96-80 on Saturday.

Uelmen went 10 of 17 from the field (4 for 8 from 3-point range) for the Fightin' Hawks (10-12, 4-2 Summit League). Garrett Anderson scored 17 points and added seven rebounds. Eli King shot 6 of 14 from the field, including 1 for 4 from 3-point range, and went 2 for 3 from the line to finish with 15 points.

Jordan Crawford led the way for the Coyotes (10-10, 2-3) with 24 points and four assists. Isaac Bruns added 21 points for South Dakota. Cameron Fens had 13 points, 14 rebounds and two blocks.

Broncos reach AFC title game after 33-30 win over Bills, but lose Nix for season with ankle injury

By ARNIE STAPLETON AP Pro Football Writer

DENVER (AP) — The Denver Broncos wrangled their biggest win in a decade from Josh Allen and the Buffalo Bills but suffered an enormous loss in the process.

About an hour after second-year quarterback Bo Nix led the Broncos to a 33-30 win on Wil Lutz's 23-yard field goal in overtime Saturday, Denver coach Sean Payton returned to the postgame lectern to deliver the stunning news.

He said Nix broke his right ankle a few plays before Lutz's kick sent the top-seeded Broncos (15-3) to the AFC championship game against either New England or Houston.

Nix will have season-ending surgery Tuesday in Birmingham, Alabama.

"We celebrate the season for him," Payton said. "And listen, the city's ready and we'll be ready for the next challenge."

Backup QB Jarrett Stidham takes over for Nix. He took just one snap this season, a kneel-down in a blowout win over Dallas in Week 8.

"Stiddy's ready," Payton declared. "He's ready. I said this at the beginning of the season I've got a 2 that's capable of starting for a number of teams. And I know he feels the same way. So, watch out."

Stidham has appeared in 20 games in six NFL seasons, starting four and winning one.

Nix got hurt on a keeper where he lost 2 yards and was tackled by safety Cole Bishop. Nix was limping

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after the play, but there was no indication that he suffered such a serious injury.

On the next play, Nix threw a deep pass to Marvin Mims Jr. that drew a 30-yard pass interference flag and got the Broncos well into field-goal range. Nix then took a knee to center the ball for Lutz's game-ending field goal.

Nix tied Russell Wilson's NFL record with two dozen victories in his first two seasons. Saturday's victory was his first in the playoffs. The Broncos lost last year at Buffalo but Nix led Denver to the AFC's top seed this season.

"He's a tough cookie," Payton said. "And this team all year has lost key players and will rise up for the next challenge."

Before word of Nix's injury broke, Denver was jubilant over the Broncos' first playoff victory in a decade.

Denver's game-winning drive came after nickel back Ja'Quan McMillian intercepted Allen's deep pass in overtime. McMillian's pick was Denver's fifth takeaway of the game after they were minus-3 in turnover differential during the season.

McMillian wrested the ball away from Brandin Cooks at the Broncos 20-yard line when a field goal would have won the game for Buffalo (13-6).

"He actually had the ball coming down and I had my hand on the ball," McMillian said. "I was able to take it from him. I fell on top of him, just held the ball up, showed the fans some love."

Cooks said he thought it was a catch.

"I feel that way," he said. "But at the end of the day, you don't, you know, no matter, ultimately this is where we're sitting now."

Referee Carl Cheffers said in a pool report, "The receiver has to complete the process of a catch. He was going to the ground as part of the process of the catch and he lost possession of the ball when he hit the ground. The defender gained possession of it at that point. The defender is the one that completed the process of the catch, so the defender was awarded the ball."

Cooks said he just has to make sure next time not to leave it in the "officials' hands."

Or McMillian's.

Nix said nothing about being hurt during a postgame interview with CBS, and he sounded as if he was looking forward to the next game.

"It's great to have home-field advantage in a situation like this. It's exciting. This is why you play the game, this is why you compete. You get to playoff football, and good things happen," Nix said.

Former Broncos kicker Matt Prater nailed a 50-yard field goal with 5 seconds left in regulation, knotting it up at 30-all. That came after Nix's 26-yard touchdown throw to Mims with 55 seconds left had given Denver a 30-27 lead.

Allen, who hadn't turned the ball over in his previous six playoff appearances, threw two interceptions and lost two fumbles.

"I felt like I let my teammates down," a teary-eyed Allen said.

The Bills failed once again to reach the Super Bowl with Allen under center even though Patrick Mahomes, Joe Burrow and Lamar Jackson weren't standing in his way this time as that trio of franchise quarterbacks all missed the postseason party.

Coming off the first road playoff win of his career, Allen's first three turnovers helped Denver build a 23-10 lead before he threw a 10-yard touchdown pass to Keon Coleman and a 14-yarder to Dalton Kincaid to give Buffalo a 24-23 lead early in the fourth quarter.

Quick strikes

The Broncos scored 10 points in the final 22 seconds of the first half to take a 20-10 lead into the locker room, and they got their third takeaway just two plays into the second half on Nik Bonitto's strip-sack of Allen that was recovered by Malcolm Roach at the Bills 17, leading to a field goal.

Denver avenged a 31-7 loss at Buffalo in the playoffs last year.

"We weren't ready last year," Payton said. "But we were ready today."

Injuries

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Bills: LB Dorian Williams (neck) got hurt covering the opening kickoff and was taken to a hospital. ... DT Ed Oliver (knee) left in the third quarter.

Broncos: WR Pat Bryant sustained a concussion on Denver's initial drive after he caught three passes for 32 yards. ... WR Troy Franklin pulled a hamstring.

Up next

The Bills are left wondering what it'll take to get to the Super Bowl.

The Broncos host their first AFC championship game in a decade.

Thousands of fans celebrate life of legendary Grateful Dead guitarist Bob Weir in San Francisco

By JANIE HAR Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Thousands of people gathered Saturday at San Francisco's Civic Center to celebrate the life of Bob Weir, the legendary guitarist and founding member of the Grateful Dead who died last week at age 78.

Musicians Joan Baez and John Mayer spoke on a makeshift stage in front of the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium after four Buddhist monks opened the event with a prayer in Tibetan. Fans carried long-stemmed red roses, placing some at an altar filled with photos and candles. They wrote notes on colored paper, professing their love and thanking him for the journey.

Several asked him to say hello to fellow singer and guitarist Jerry Garcia and bass guitarist Phil Lesh, also founding members who preceded him in death. Garcia died in 1995; Lesh died in 2024.

"I'm here to celebrate Bob Weir," said Ruthie Garcia, who is no relation to Jerry, a fan since 1989. "Celebrating him and helping him go home."

Saturday's celebration brought plenty of fans with long dreadlocks and wearing tie-dye clothing, some using walkers. But there were also young couples, men in their 20s and a father who brought his 6-year-old son in order to pass on to the next generation a love of live music and the tight-knit Deadhead community.

The Bay Area native joined the Grateful Dead — originally the Warlocks — in 1965 in San Francisco at just 17 years old. He wrote or co-wrote and sang lead vocals on Dead classics including "Sugar Magnolia," "One More Saturday Night" and "Mexicali Blues." He was generally considered less shaggy looking than the other band members, although he adopted a long beard like Garcia's later in life.

The Dead played music that pulled in blues, jazz, country, folk and psychedelia in long improvisational jams. Their concerts attracted avid Deadheads who followed them on tours. The band played on decades after Garcia's death, morphing into Dead & Company with John Mayer.

Darla Sagos, who caught an early flight out of Seattle Saturday morning to make the public mourning, said she suspected something was up when there were no new gigs announced after Dead & Company played three nights in San Francisco last summer. It was unusual, as his calendar often showed where he would be playing next.

"We were hoping that everything was OK and that we were going to get more music from him," she said. "But we will continue the music, with all of us and everyone that's going to be playing it."

Sagos and her husband, Adam Sagos, have a one-year-old grandson who will grow up knowing the music.

A statement on Weir's Instagram account announced his passing Jan. 10. It said he beat cancer, but he succumbed to underlying lung issues. He is survived by his wife and two daughters, who were at Saturday's event.

His death was sudden and unexpected, said daughter Monet Weir, but he had always wished for the music and the legacy of the Dead to outlast him.

American music, he believed, could unite, she said.

"The show must go on," Monet Weir said.

European Union and Mercosur bloc of South American nations sign landmark free trade agreement

By NAYARA BATSCHKE and ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

ASUNCION, Paraguay (AP) — The European Union and the Mercosur bloc of South American countries formally signed a long-sought free trade agreement on Saturday, strengthening commercial ties in the face of rising protectionism and trade tensions around the world.

The signing ceremony in Paraguay's capital, Asuncion, caps more than a quarter-century of torturous negotiations. It marks a major geopolitical victory for the EU in an age of American tariffs and surging Chinese exports, expanding the bloc's foothold in a resource-rich region increasingly contested by Washington and Beijing.

It also sends a message that South America is keeping a range of trade and diplomatic relationships even as U.S. President Donald Trump makes an aggressive push for geopolitical dominance of the Western Hemisphere.

The agreement could still face hurdles in the EU parliament, which must ratify it before it can take effect. Ratification is considered all but guaranteed in South America, where the agreement has broad support.

Mercosur consists of the region's two biggest economies, Argentina and Brazil, as well as Paraguay and Uruguay. Bolivia, the bloc's newest member, is not included in the trade deal but could join in the coming years. Venezuela has been suspended from the bloc and isn't included in the agreement.

Supported by South America's cattle-raising countries and European industrial interests, the accord will gradually eliminate more than 90% of tariffs on goods ranging from Argentine beef to German cars, creating one of the world's largest free trade zones and making shopping cheaper for more than 700 million consumers.

Leaders call deal a win over protectionism

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who heads the EU's executive branch, portrayed the deal as a bulwark against the disruptive policies of the Trump administration.

"It reflects a clear and deliberate choice: We choose fair trade over tariffs. We choose a productive long-term partnership over isolation," von der Leyen declared in a veiled rebuke of Trump at the ceremony, which got underway as Trump announced 10% tariffs on eight European nations over their opposition to American control of Greenland.

"We will join forces like never before, because we believe that this is the best way to make our people and our countries prosper," she added.

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, a longtime advocate of the trade deal, hailed it as a victory for global cooperation.

"At a time when unilateralism isolates markets and protectionism inhibits global growth, two regions that share democratic values and a commitment to multilateralism choose a different path," Lula posted on X.

Final push for deal came after EU demanded more concessions for farmers

But Lula skipped the signing ceremony, signaling simmering tensions between the trading blocs.

Brazil, which held the rotating presidency of Mercosur last year, was gearing up to host the signing ceremony last month when European countries called it off, demanding more concessions for farmers scared of a surge in cheap agricultural imports.

Robbed of the spotlight, Lula was outraged at what was widely seen in South America as the latest example of the EU's overbearing demands.

One of the main reasons the deal took so long to clinch was Brussels' demands for controls on South American agricultural processes, from deforestation regulation to rules on plastic packaging, as European farmers complained they couldn't compete if their South American counterparts were held to lower standards.

"The EU's maximalist wish lists of demands from developing economies willing to sign free trade agreements are often perceived as patronizing," said Agathe Demarais, a senior policy fellow with the European

Council on Foreign Relations.

Some European farmers hope to block ratification

After the accord incorporated environmental regulations, strict quotas on farm imports like beef and sugar and staggered timelines for tariff reductions, the EU sweetened the deal further for its farmers with a promise of hefty subsidies. That pushed agricultural powerhouse Italy across the line earlier this month.

But even as the ink dried on Saturday, powerful lobbies in Europe were still hoping to prevent the agreement from clearing its main final hurdle: ratification by the European Parliament.

France remains opposed to the accord, with President Emmanuel Macron worrying that farmers' frustration with the EU could drive more voters to the country's far right in the 2027 presidential election.

In an interview, EU trade commissioner Maroš Šefčovič said he'd start lobbying Monday to get European Parliament members on board with the deal in hopes of seeing it passed in the first half of this year.

"We'll have very intense communication with all the members on a group level, on an individual level," Šefčovič told The Associated Press, expressing confidence that "everyone will do the procedures as quickly as possible so we can benefit from this historic achievement."

Šefčovič didn't name Trump, but as the U.S. threatens higher tariffs the commissioner said the accord sent the message "that if someone prefers and believes in high tariffs and power politics, Mercosur and European countries representing more than 700 million people clearly believe in ... international law, predictability, certainty and the removing of trade barriers."

A revived Mercosur wins over skeptical Milei

The deal is a sign of the bloc's revived relevance after years in which it was embroiled in political spats, undermined by economic crises and constrained by protectionist governments.

Perhaps most striking is the enthusiasm of Argentine President Javier Milei, a radical libertarian and admirer of Trump who shares the U.S. leader's contempt for global institutions like the United Nations. Milei came to office in late 2023 with nothing but scorn for Mercosur, trashing it as a "prison," threatening to withdraw and skipping the 2024 summit.

But his enthusiasm for free trade overcame any skepticism of the bloc at Saturday's ceremony.

"Argentina understands firsthand that closure and protectionism, sheltered by rhetoric rather than results, are the greatest causes of economic stagnation," he said before signing.

New York Giants hire John Harbaugh as coach after identifying him as their top choice

By STEPHEN WHYNO AP Sports Writer

John Harbaugh agreed Saturday to become coach of the New York Giants, finalizing the big-market, longstanding franchise's all-out pursuit of its top candidate.

Owners John Mara and Steve Tisch made the hire official less than 72 hours after a lengthy interview and dinner with Harbaugh that sealed the deal. The sides began working on a contract Wednesday night when it was clear Harbaugh was a fit and he canceled meetings with other teams.

Harbaugh is expected to report directly to ownership, rather than general manager Joe Schoen.

"To serve as this franchise's head coach is a tremendous honor," Harbaugh said in a statement. "I come from a football family, and I have deep respect for the history and tradition of this organization."

Harbaugh joins the Giants less than two weeks after he was fired by the Baltimore Ravens, who made the playoffs 12 times in 18 seasons with him in charge and won the Super Bowl in the 2012 season. Baltimore fell short of the postseason this year because of a missed kick at the buzzer in the season finale, leading ownership to make a change and put Harbaugh on the market.

Schoen and the Giants pounced, bringing on a proven winner. Harbaugh was flown in on co-owner Steve Tisch's private plane earlier this week, spent several hours at the team facility in East Rutherford, New Jersey, spoke with young quarterback Jaxson Dart and got wine and dined at nearby Elia Mediterranean Restaurant.

With the courting process complete, Harbaugh is now tasked with turning around the beleaguered

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franchise that has made just two playoff appearances over the past 12 years and not made it past the divisional round. Todd Monken could follow him from Baltimore to be offensive coordinator, unless he takes a head-coaching gig in Cleveland or elsewhere.

"Joe Schoen presented us an outstanding group of candidates, which allowed us to be deliberate and confident in this decision," Mara said. "Through numerous conversations, John consistently stood out for his conviction and vision for leading a winning organization."

Harbaugh got the job over the likes of Kevin Stefanski, Mike McCarthy, Raheem Morris and Antonio Pierce, leapfrogging some expected front-runners who got shuffled back as soon as the 63-year-old became available. The chance to work for stable ownership and Dart made New York an attractive landing spot over places such as Tennessee, Atlanta and Miami.

"John is a proven winner whose teams are disciplined, resilient, and prepared," Tisch said. "His passion for the game, his ability to connect with players, and his experience leading at the highest level made him an outstanding fit for us, and we're excited to move forward together."

The Giants have talented pieces in place on either side of the ball, including running back Cam Skattebo, receiver Malik Nabers and left tackle Andrew Thomas on offense, plus pass rushers Brian Burns and Abdul Carter and nose tackle Dexter Lawrence on defense. They have the fifth pick in the draft to add to that stockpile.

Changing the culture of losing that has pervaded the Meadowlands for the better part of the last decade is now on Harbaugh's shoulders. Counting playoff games, the seven coaches who followed 2007 and '11 Super Bowl champion Tom Coughlin have gone 45-105-1, a winning percentage of .300.

Harbaugh is 193-124 in 317 games, a .609 winning percentage, since taking over the Ravens in 2008. He spent the previous 10 seasons as an assistant with Philadelphia, mostly as special teams coordinator and then defensive backs coach.

Schoen, after finding out from Tisch and co-owner John Mara that he was returning for a fifth year as GM, said the search would not be limited to just offensive- or defensive-minded options. While Harbaugh comes from a special teams background, he provides the kind of all-around coaching Schoen was believed to be looking for, along with a championship pedigree and a reputation that should garner him immediate respect within the locker room.

This is Schoen's second hire after bringing Brian Daboll with him from Buffalo, where both were assistants with the Bills, in January 2022. Ownership fired Daboll on Nov. 10 after the Giants lost eight of the first 10 games in his fourth season as coach.

Mike Kafka coached out the string as the interim replacement after being promoted from offensive coordinator, and the team lost five in a row before winning its final two games to finish with a 4-13 record. Kafka interviewed but was never a serious candidate for the full-time job.

Almost no one was compared with Harbaugh, giving the Giants an off-field win that might be their biggest of any kind in several years.

"Throughout our conversations, John stood out for his clarity, competitiveness and approach for building a sustainable winning program," Schoen said. "He has a strong track record of developing players, building cohesive staffs, and setting a clear standard of accountability. We are excited to work with John in moving this team in the right direction."

Trump's Twin Cities immigration crackdown has made chaos and tension the new normal

By TIM SULLIVAN Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Work starts around sunrise for many of the federal officers carrying out the immigration crackdown in and around the Twin Cities, with hundreds of people in tactical gear emerging from a bland office building near the main airport.

Within minutes, hulking SUVs, pickup trucks and minivans begin leaving, forming the unmarked convoys that have quickly become feared and common sights in the streets of Minneapolis, St. Paul and their suburbs.

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Protesters also arrive early, braving the cold to stand across the street from the fenced-in federal compound, which houses an immigration court and government offices. "Go home!" they shout as convoys roar past. "ICE out!"

Things often turn uglier after nightfall, when the convoys return and the protesters sometimes grow angrier, shaking fences and occasionally smacking passing cars. Eventually, the federal officers march toward them, firing tear gas and flash grenades before hauling away at least a few people.

"We're not going anywhere!" a woman shouted on a recent morning. "We're here until you leave."

This is the daily rhythm of Operation Metro Surge, the Trump administration's latest and biggest crackdown yet, with more than 2,000 officers taking part. The surge has pitted city and state officials against the federal government, sparked daily clashes between activists and immigration officers in the deeply liberal cities, and left a mother of three dead.

The crackdown is barely noticeable in some areas, particularly in whiter, wealthier neighborhoods and suburbs, where convoys and tear gas are rare. And even in neighborhoods where masked immigration officers are common, they often move with ghostlike quickness, making arrests and disappearing before protesters can gather in force.

Still, the surge can be felt across broad swaths of the Twin Cities area, which is home to more than 3 million people.

"We don't use the word 'invasion' lightly," Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey, a Democrat, told reporters this week, noting that his police force has just 600 officers. "What we are seeing is thousands — plural, thousands — of federal agents coming into our city."

Those agents have an outsized presence in a small city.

It can take hours to drive across Los Angeles and Chicago, both targets of Trump administration crackdowns. It can take 15 minutes to cross Minneapolis.

So as worry ripples through the region, children are skipping school or learning remotely, families are avoiding religious services and many businesses, especially in immigrant neighborhoods, have closed temporarily.

Drive down Lake Street, an immigrant hub since the days when newcomers came to Minneapolis from Norway and Sweden, and the sidewalks now seem crowded only with activists standing watch, ready to blow warning whistles at the first sign of a convoy.

At La Michoacana Purepecha, where customers can order ice cream, chocolate covered bananas and pork rinds, the door is locked and staff let in people one at a time. Nearby, at Taqueria Los Ocampo, a sign in English and Spanish says the restaurant is temporarily closed because of "current conditions."

A dozen blocks away at the Karmel Mall, where the city's large Somali community goes for everything from food and coffee to tax preparation, signs on the doors warn, "No ICE enter without court order."

The shadow of George Floyd

It's been nearly six years since George Floyd was murdered by a Minneapolis police officer, but the scars from that killing remain raw.

Floyd was killed just blocks from where an Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer shot and killed Renee Good, a 37-year-old American citizen, during a Jan. 7 confrontation after she stopped to help neighbors during an enforcement operation. Federal officials say the officer fired in self-defense after Good "weaponized" her vehicle. City and state officials dismiss those explanations and point to multiple bystander videos of the confrontation.

For Twin Cities residents, the crackdown can feel overwhelming.

"Enough is enough," said Johan Baumeister, who came to the scene of Good's death soon after the shooting to lay flowers.

He said he didn't want to see the violent protests that shook Minneapolis after Floyd's death, causing billions of dollars in damage. But this city has a long history of activism and protests, and he had no doubt there would be more.

"I think they'll see Minneapolis show our rage again," he predicted.

He was right.

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In the days since, there have been repeated confrontations between activists and immigration officers. Most amounted to little more than shouted insults and taunting, with destruction mostly limited to broken windows, graffiti and some badly damaged federal vehicles.

But angry clashes now flare regularly across the Twin Cities. Some protesters clearly want to provoke the federal officers, throwing snowballs at them or screaming obscenities through bullhorns from just a couple feet away. The serious force, though, comes from immigration officers, who have broken car windows, pepper-sprayed protesters and warned observers not to follow them through the streets. Immigrants and citizens have been yanked from cars and homes and detained, sometimes for days. And most clashes end in tear gas.

Drivers in Minneapolis or St. Paul can now stumble across intersections blocked by men in body armor and gas masks, with helicopters clattering overhead and the air filled with the shriek of protesters' whistles.

Shovel your neighbor's walk

In a state that prides itself on its decency, there's something particularly Minnesotan about the protests, Soon after Good was shot, Gov. Tim Walz, a Democrat and regular Trump target, repeatedly said he was angry but also urged people to find ways to help their communities.

"It might be shoveling your neighbor's walk," he said. "It might mean being at a food bank. It might be pausing to talk to someone you haven't talked to before."

He and other leaders have pleaded with protesters to remain peaceful, warning that the White House was looking for a chance to crack down harder.

And when protests do become clashes, residents will often spill from their homes, handing out bottled water so people can flush tear gas from their eyes.

Residents stand watch at schools to warn immigrant parents if convoys approach while they're picking up their children. They take care packages to people too afraid to go out, and arrange rides for them to work and doctor's visits.

On Thursday, in the basement of a Lutheran church in St. Paul, the group Open Market MN assembled food packs for more than a hundred families staying home. Colin Anderson, the group's outreach director, said the group has seen a surge in requests.

Sometimes, people don't even understand what has happened to them.

Like Christian Molina from suburban Coon Rapids, who was driving through a Minneapolis neighborhood on a recent day, taking his car to a mechanic, when immigration officers began following him. He wonders if it's because he looks Hispanic.

They turned on their siren, but Molina kept driving, unsure who they were.

Eventually, the officers sped up, hit his rear bumper and both cars stopped. Two emerged and asked Molina for his papers. He refused, saying he'd wait for the police. Crowds began to gather, and a clash soon broke out, ending with tear gas.

So the officers left.

They left behind an angry, worried man who suddenly owned a sedan with a mangled rear fender.

Long after the officers were gone he had one final question.

"Who's going to pay for my car?"

Iran's leader calls Trump a 'criminal' for backing protests and blames demonstrators for deaths

By ELENA BECATOROS Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Saturday branded U.S. President Donald Trump a "criminal" for supporting protesters in Iran, and blamed demonstrators for causing thousands of deaths.

In a speech broadcast by state television, Khamenei said the protests had left "several thousand" people dead — the first indication from an Iranian leader of the extent of the casualties from the wave of protests

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that began Dec. 28 and led to a bloody crackdown.

"In this revolt, the U.S. president made remarks in person, encouraged seditious people to go ahead and said: 'We do support you, we do support you militarily,'" said Khamenei, who has final say on all state matters. He reiterated an accusation that the U.S. seeks domination over Iran's economic and political resources.

"We do consider the U.S. president a criminal, because of casualties and damages, because of accusations against the Iranian nation," he said. He described the protesters as "foot soldiers" of the United States and said they had destroyed mosques and educational centers. "Through hurting people, they killed several thousand of them," he said.

In response, Trump called for an end to Khamenei's nearly 40-year reign.

"The man is a sick man who should run his country properly and stop killing people," Trump told Politico in an interview Saturday. "His country is the worst place to live anywhere in the world because of poor leadership."

"It's time to look for new leadership in Iran," he added.

Trump had sounded a conciliatory tone

The back-and-forth rhetoric came a day after Trump sounded a conciliatory tone, saying that "Iran canceled the hanging of over 800 people," and adding that "I greatly respect the fact that they canceled." He did not clarify whom he spoke to in Iran to confirm the state of any planned executions. His comments were a sign he may be backing away from a military strike.

The official IRNA news agency reported that Tehran Prosecutor Gen. Ali Salehi, referring to Trump's remarks about the cancellation of the death sentence of 800 protesters, said: "Trump always makes futile and irrelevant statements. Our attitude is severe, preventive and fast." He did not elaborate.

In recent days, Trump had told protesting Iranians that " help is on the way " and that his administration would "act accordingly" if the killing of demonstrators continued or if Iranian authorities executed detained protesters.

In his speech, Khamenei said rioters were armed with live ammunition that was imported from abroad, without naming any countries.

"We do not plan, we do not take the country toward war. But we do not release domestic offenders, worse than domestic offenders; there are international offenders. We do not let them alone either," he said, and urged officials to pursue the cases.

An uneasy calm

Iran has returned to an uneasy calm after harsh repression of protests that began Dec. 28 over Iran's ailing economy. The crackdown has left at least 3,308 people dead, according to the U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency, exceeding that of any other round of protest or unrest in Iran in decades and recalling the chaos surrounding the 1979 revolution.

The agency has been accurate throughout the years of demonstrations, relying on a network of activists inside Iran that confirms all reported fatalities. The AP has been unable to independently confirm the toll.

Iranian officials have repeatedly accused the United States and Israel of fomenting unrest in the country. On Friday, Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian, in a phone conversation with Russian President Vladimir Putin, accused the U.S. and Israel of meddling in the unrest.

Reports of limited internet access briefly restored

There have been no signs of protests for days in Tehran, where shopping and street life have returned to normal, and Iranian state media have not reported any new unrest.

During the protests, authorities blocked all internet access on Jan. 8. On Saturday, text messaging and very limited internet services began functioning again briefly in parts of Iran, witnesses said.

Cellphone text messaging began operating overnight, while users were able to access local websites through a domestic internet service. Some also reported limited access to international internet services via the use of a virtual private network, or VPN.

The extent of access and what was behind it wasn't immediately clear. It's possible that officials were turning on some systems for the start of the Iranian working week, as the outage has affected businesses,

particularly banks in the country, trying to handle transactions.

Internet traffic monitoring service Cloudflare and internet access advocacy group NetBlocks reported very slight increases in connectivity Saturday morning, while Iran's semiofficial Mehr news agency also reported limited internet access. It did not offer an explanation.

No new protests reported after exiled Iranian royal's call for further demonstrations

A call by Iran's exiled Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi for protesters to take to the streets again from Saturday to Monday did not appear to have been heeded by Saturday afternoon.

Pahlavi, whose father was overthrown by Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution, enjoys support from die-hard monarchists in the diaspora but has struggled to gain wider appeal within Iran. However, that has not stopped him from presenting himself as the transitional leader of Iran if the government were to fall.

Blast of winter weather hits Midwest and East Coast and could bring snow to Florida

By JUAN A. LOZANO Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — A blast of winter weather brought snowfall and subfreezing wind chills across the Midwest and East Coast on Saturday as well as near-freezing temperatures in parts of the South, including normally balmy Florida.

In northeastern Ohio, sudden bursts of heavy snow and gusty winds created whiteout conditions, according to the National Weather Service. Snow squall conditions moved into the Cleveland metro area and were expected to continue east into Pennsylvania and parts of eastern New York.

"Expect visibilities of less than a quarter of a mile and rapid snow accumulation on roadways. Travel will be difficult and possibly dangerous in the heavy snow," the National Weather Service warned.

Below-average temperatures in the Central and Eastern U.S. were predicted for the weekend and into early next week.

"The next few nights are forecast to be very cold for much of the Central and Eastern United States," the Weather Prediction Center, part of the National Weather Service, said. "Sub-zero wind chills are forecast from the Plains to the Midwest and Northeast, with the coldest wind chills expected in the Upper Midwest on Sunday night."

"Impactful snowfall" was forecast to begin late Saturday up and down the East Coast, from the western Florida Panhandle to Maine, according to the prediction center. Snow was expected to blanket Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island by Sunday night, with some areas getting up to 4 inches (10 centimeters) of snow.

Meanwhile Oklahoma, Tennessee, Georgia and Florida were expected to have near-freezing temperatures at least through the weekend.

In Tallahassee, Florida, there could be some snowfall Sunday morning, according to the National Weather Service. But it should not last long.

"So here in Tallahassee, the likelihood of any snow accumulation is not zero, but it's very low. I mean the ground will be just too warm for anything to stick and accumulate," said Kristian Oliver, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service's office in Tallahassee.

It would be the second time in as many years that the state has seen snow: In January 2025 up to 10 inches (25 centimeters) fell in parts of the Panhandle, part of a record-breaking snowstorm that impacted the Deep South including other normally snow-free places like Houston and New Orleans.

"On average we have an event like this maybe every few years. But having two back to back I'd say is pretty anomalous for the area," Oliver said.

Up to 3 inches (7.6 centimeters) was forecast for central Georgia south of Atlanta, with the heaviest snowfall expected between 6 a.m. and 11 a.m.

"Plan on slippery roads during the snow, as well as on Sunday night into Monday morning as remaining water/snow refreezes," the National Weather Service's Atlanta office said.

AP obtains documents showing Venezuelan leader Delcy Rodríguez has been on DEA's radar for years

By JIM MUSTIAN, JOSHUA GOODMAN and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When President Donald Trump announced the audacious capture of Nicolás Maduro to face drug trafficking charges in the U.S., he portrayed the strongman's vice president and longtime aide as America's preferred partner to stabilize Venezuela amid a scourge of drugs, corruption and economic mayhem.

Left unspoken was the cloud of suspicion that long surrounded Delcy Rodríguez before she became acting president of the beleaguered nation earlier this month.

In fact, Rodríguez has been on the radar of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration for years and in 2022 was even labeled a "priority target," a designation DEA reserves for suspects believed to have a "significant impact" on the drug trade, according to records obtained by The Associated Press and more than a half dozen current and former U.S. law enforcement officials.

The DEA has amassed a detailed intelligence file on Rodríguez dating to at least 2018, the records show, cataloging her known associates and allegations ranging from drug trafficking to gold smuggling. One confidential informant told the DEA in early 2021 that Rodríguez was using hotels in the Caribbean resort of Isla Margarita "as a front to launder money," the records show. As recently as last year she was linked to Maduro's alleged bag man, Alex Saab, whom U.S. authorities arrested in 2020 on money laundering charges.

The U.S. government has never publicly accused Rodríguez of any criminal wrongdoing. Notably for Maduro's inner circle, she's not among the more than a dozen current Venezuelan officials charged with drug trafficking alongside the ousted president.

Rodríguez's name has surfaced in nearly a dozen DEA investigations, several of which remain ongoing, involving agents in field offices from Paraguay and Ecuador to Phoenix and New York, the AP learned. The AP could not determine the specific focus of each investigation.

Three current and former DEA agents who reviewed the records at the request of AP said they indicate an intense interest in Rodríguez throughout much of her tenure as vice president, which began in 2018. They were not authorized to discuss DEA investigations and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The records reviewed by AP do not make clear why Rodríguez was elevated to a "priority target," a designation that requires extensive documentation to justify additional investigative resources. The agency has hundreds of priority targets at any given moment, and having the label does not necessarily lead to being charged criminally.

"She was on the rise, so it's not surprising that she might become a high-priority target with her role," said Kurt Lunkenheimer, a former federal prosecutor in Miami who has handled multiple cases related to Venezuela. "The issue is when people talk about you and you become a high-priority target, there's a difference between that and evidence supporting an indictment."

Venezuela's communications ministry did not respond to emails seeking comment.

The DEA and U.S. Justice Department also did not respond to requests for comment. Asked whether the president trusts Rodríguez, the White House referred AP to Trump's earlier remarks on a "very good talk" he had with the acting president Wednesday, one day before she met in Caracas with CIA Director John Ratcliffe.

Almost immediately after Maduro's capture, Trump started heaping praise on Rodríguez — this past week referring to her as a "terrific person — in close contact with officials in Washington, including Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

The DEA's interest in Rodríguez comes even as Trump has sought to install her as the steward of American interests to navigate a volatile post-Maduro Venezuela, said Steve Dudley, co-director of InSight Crime, a think tank focused on organized crime in the Americas.

"The current Venezuela government is a criminal-hybrid regime. The only way you reach a position of

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power in the regime is by, at the very least, abetting criminal activities," said Dudley, who has investigated Venezuela for years. "This isn't a bug in the system. This is the system."

Those sentiments were echoed by opposition leader María Corina Machado, who met with Trump at the White House Thursday in a bid to push for more U.S. support for Venezuelan democracy.

"The American justice system has sufficient information about her," said Machado, referring to Rodríguez. "Her profile is quite clear."

Rodríguez, 56, worked her way to the apex of power in Venezuela as a loyal aide to Maduro, with whom she shares a deep-seated leftist bent stemming from her socialist father's death in police custody when she was only 7 years old. Despite blaming the U.S. for her father's death, she steadily worked while foreign minister and later vice president to court American investment during the first Trump administration, hiring lobbyists close to Trump and even ordering the state oil company to make a \$500,000 donation to his inaugural committee.

The charm offensive flopped when Trump, urged on by Rubio, pressured Maduro to hold free and fair elections. In September 2018, the White House sanctioned Rodríguez, describing her as key to Maduro's grip on power and ability to "solidify his authoritarian rule." She was also sanctioned earlier by the European Union.

But those allegations focused on her threat to Venezuela's democracy, not any alleged involvement in corruption.

"Venezuela is a failed state that supports terrorism, corruption, human rights abuses and drug trafficking at the highest echelons. There is nothing political about this analysis," said Rob Zachariasiewicz, a longtime former DEA agent who led investigations into top Venezuelan officials and is now a managing partner at Elicius Intelligence, a specialist investigations firm. "Delcy Rodríguez has been part of this criminal enterprise."

The DEA records seen by AP provide an unprecedented glimpse into the agency's interest in Rodríguez. Much of it was driven by the agency's elite Special Operations Division, the same Virginia-based unit that worked with prosecutors in Manhattan to indict Maduro.

One of the records cites an unnamed confidential informant linking Rodríguez to hotels in Margarita Island that are allegedly used as a front to launder money. The AP has been unable to independently confirm the information.

The U.S. has long considered the resort island, northeast of the Venezuelan mainland, a strategic hub for drug trafficking routes to the Caribbean and Europe. Numerous traffickers have been arrested or taken haven there over the years, including representatives of Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán's Sinaloa cartel.

The records also indicate the feds were looking at Rodríguez's involvement in government contracts awarded to Maduro's ally Saab — investigations that remain ongoing even after President Joe Biden pardoned him in 2023 as part of a prisoner swap for Americans imprisoned in Venezuela.

The Colombian businessman rose to become one of Venezuela's top fixers as U.S. sanctions cut off its access to hard currency and Western banks. He was arrested in 2020 on federal charges of money laundering while traveling from Venezuela to Iran to negotiate oil deals helping both countries circumvent sanctions.

In an unrelated matter, the DEA records also indicate agents' interest in Rodríguez's possible involvement in allegedly corrupt deals between the government and Omar Nassif-Sruji, a relative of a longtime romantic partner of Rodríguez's, Yusef Nassif.

Nassif-Sruji did not respond to emails and text messages seeking comment and an attorney for Nassif denied his client was involved in any nefarious activity, pointing out that he hasn't been accused of any crime.

"He has the utmost respect and confidence in the acting president's vision for Venezuela and believes she is a true patriot who has committed her entire life to the betterment of the Venezuelan people," the attorney, Jihad M. Smaili, said in a statement. "The insinuations that Mr. Nassif is currently involved in any untoward relationship with the acting president are false."

Taken together, the DEA investigations underscore how power has long been exercised in Venezuela,

which is ranked as the world's third most corrupt country by Transparency International. For Rodríguez, they also represent something of a razor-sharp sword over her head, breathing life to Trump's threat soon after Maduro's ouster that she would "pay a very big price, probably bigger than Maduro" if she didn't fall in line. The president added that he wanted her to provide the U.S. "total access" to the country's vast oil reserves and other natural resources.

"Just being a leader in a highly corrupted regime for over a decade makes it logical that she is a priority target for investigation," said David Smilde, a Tulane University professor who has studied Venezuela for three decades. "She surely knows this, and it gives the U.S. government leverage over her. She may fear that if she does not do as the Trump administration demands, she could end up with an indictment like Maduro."

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni secures 7th term as opposition rejects results

By RODNEY MUHUMUZA Associated Press

KAMPALA, Uganda (AP) — Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni won his seventh term with 71.65% of the vote, according to official results Saturday, in an election marred by a days-long internet shutdown and rigging claims by his youthful challenger, who rejected the outcome and called for peaceful protests.

The musician-turned-politician best known as Bobi Wine took 24.72% of the vote, the final results showed. Wine, whose real name is Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, has condemned what he described as an unfair electoral process and alleged abductions of his polling agents before voting had even started in parts of the East African country. He said he rejected the "fake" results and urged Ugandans to peacefully protest until the "rightful results are announced."

Wine said he had to escape to avoid arrest by security forces who stormed his house Friday night. Police spokesperson Kituuma Rusoke said Wine was "not under arrest" and was free to leave his house, but there was "controlled access" for others trying to go into the property to prevent people from using the premises to incite violence.

Electoral officials face questions about the failure of biometric voter identification machines on Thursday that caused delays in the start of voting in urban areas — including the capital, Kampala — that are opposition strongholds.

After the machines failed, in a blow to pro-democracy activists who have long demanded their use to curb rigging, polling officials used hard-copy registers of voters.

The failure of the machines is likely to be the basis for any legal challenges to the official result.

Wine has not said whether he would launch a legal challenge with the courts, which previously have refused opposition efforts to nullify Museveni's victories while recommending electoral reforms.

Museveni said he agreed with the electoral commission's plan to revert to paper records of voters after the biometric machines failed, but Wine alleged fraud, claiming that there was "massive ballot stuffing" and that his party's polling agents were abducted to give an unfair advantage to the ruling party.

The head of the observer mission for the African Union, former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan, told journalists Saturday that the mission did not find "any evidence of ballot stuffing" in the polling stations the team observed. He urged electoral authorities to test biometric machines in advance to prevent the failures and delays witnessed on election day.

But some local observers were more critical, calling the failure of biometric machines a red flag. In addition, the election climate was characterised by "fear and tension among the electorate, and some people just chose not to participate in the process," said Livingstone Sewanyana, head of the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative, a civic group in Kampala.

Voter turnout stood at 52%, the lowest since the country's return in 2006 to multi-party politics.

Museveni, 81, has stayed in power over the years by rewriting the rules. The last legal obstacles to his rule — term limits and age restrictions — have been removed from the constitution, and some of Musev-

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eni's possible rivals have been jailed or sidelined. He has not said when he will retire and has no rivals in the upper ranks of his party.

Veteran opposition figure Kizza Besigye, a four-time presidential candidate, remains in prison after he faced treason charges he says are politically motivated.

Yusuf Serunkuma, an academic and columnist for the local Observer newspaper, told The Associated Press on Saturday that Wine "didn't stand a chance" against the authoritarian Museveni, who appoints the electoral commission.

"He has quite successfully emasculated the opposition," Serunkuma said of Museveni.

Even with Wine's challenge, Museveni faced "one of the weakest oppositions" in recent times, in part because opposition figures are not united while the president is the undisputed leader of his party and enjoys authority over the armed forces, Serunkuma said.

To implement the internet shutdown, which remained in force from Tuesday to late Saturday, the Uganda Communications Commission directed internet service providers to suspend access over an unspecified threat to national security.

The service providers obliged, even though the directive lacked legal weight without a declaration of a state of emergency. The shutdown devastated a range of businesses, from sports betting shops to Uber drivers.

The security forces were a constant presence throughout the election campaign, and Wine said authorities followed him and harassed his supporters, using tear gas against them. He campaigned in a flak jacket and helmet due to his security fears.

Uganda has not witnessed a peaceful transfer of presidential power since independence from British colonial rule six decades ago.

Abigail Spanberger sworn in as Virginia's first woman governor

By OLIVIA DIAZ Associated Press/Report for America

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Amid a cold drizzle, Democrat Abigail Spanberger was sworn into office Saturday at the state Capitol as Virginia's first female governor after centuries of men holding the state's top office.

The inauguration of Spanberger, who defeated Republican Winsome Earle-Sears to succeed Gov. Glenn Youngkin, marks a new chapter in Virginia as Democrats pull the levers of power in state government while Republican President Donald Trump sits in the White House in neighboring Washington.

"The history and the gravity of this moment are not lost on me," Spanberger said in her address. "I maintain an abiding sense of gratitude to those who work, generation after generation, to ensure women could be among those casting ballots, but who could only dream of a day like today."

Spanberger ran on a vow to protect Virginia's economy from the aggressive tactics of Trump's administration. On the trail, she spoke of the White House's gutting the civil service, the rising costs of goods and changes impacting the state's already fragile health care system.

In a thinly veiled dig at the president, Spanberger said it was time for Virginians to fix what was broken.

"I know many of you are worried about the recklessness coming out of Washington," she said. "You are worried about policies that are hurting our communities, cutting health care access, imperiling rural hospitals and driving up costs."

Two other Democrats were also sworn in Saturday. Ghazala F. Hashmi, the first Muslim woman to serve in statewide office in the U.S., is the new lieutenant governor. Hashmi placed her hand on a Quran as she was sworn in. Jay Jones is Virginia's first Black attorney general. He was sworn into his post, notably, in the former capital of the Confederacy.

After the ceremony, Hashmi and Jones stood behind Spanberger as she signed her first 10 executive orders. One order that Spanberger signed Saturday rescinds a Youngkin directive from last year instructing state law enforcement and corrections officers to assist with immigration enforcement.

"Local law enforcement should not be required to divert their limited resources to enforce federal civil immigration laws," she said.

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Spanberger's inauguration as the state's 75th governor is a historic first: only men have held the post since Virginia first became a commonwealth in 1776. And no woman served as a colonial governor before then.

She will be referred to with traditional formality: "Madam Governor" or, as some officials phrase it, "her excellency."

According to "A Guide to Virginia Protocol and Traditions," males in the official party wear morning coats and women wear dark suits for the inauguration and many, including the new governor's husband, kept to that tradition on Saturday.

But as the first woman to serve as governor, Spanberger wore all white on Saturday, a possible tribute to the women's suffrage movement. She wore a gold pin on her long, white coat that said: "One country. One destiny."

Prominent Democrats attended the ceremony, such as New Jersey Gov.-Elect Mikie Sherrill and Maryland Gov. Wes Moore. U.S. Sens. Elissa Slotkin and Adam Schiff were seated in the crowd.

On his 95th birthday, former Virginia Gov. Douglas Wilder also sat behind Spanberger and watched her inauguration.

"On these steps, Virginia inaugurated our 66th governor and our nation's first elected African American governor," Spanberger said in her speech. "Gov. L. Douglas Wilder changed what so many of our fellow citizens believed was even possible."

Democrats in the statehouse have vowed to work with Spanberger to push through their bullish agenda, which includes redrawing the state's congressional district map ahead of the midterm elections this year.

The state Democrats picked up 13 seats in the House of Delegates a year after the party's stunning losses nationwide in the 2024 presidential election.

Board of Peace for Gaza is forming with ambitions for a wider mandate of other conflicts

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's "Board of Peace," which was initially seen as a mechanism focused on ending the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, is taking shape with ambitions to have a far broader mandate of other global crises, potentially rivaling the United Nations in what would be a major upheaval to the post-World War II international order.

In letters sent Friday to various world leaders inviting them to be "founding members" of the board, Trump says the body would "embark on a bold new approach to resolving global conflict."

Invitation letters from Trump to Argentine President Javier Milei and Paraguay's leader Santiago Peña, that were posted Saturday to their official social media accounts note that Trump's 20-point Gaza ceasefire plan, which includes the creation of the Board of Peace, was endorsed by the U.N. Security Council and indicates that the panel of world leaders may not confine their work to Gaza.

"Now it is time to turn all of these dreams into reality," Trump wrote. "At the heart of the plan is the Board of Peace, the most impressive and consequential board ever assembled, which will be established as a new International Organization and Transitional Governing Administration."

Other leaders whose governments have confirmed receiving invitation letters include Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. It was not immediately clear how many or which other leaders would receive invitations.

Trump's apparent aspirations to turn to the Board of Peace into an international institution that could provide an alternative to the United Nations is sure to be controversial and opposed by numerous countries, including China and Russia, which hold veto power in the U.N. Security Council and have significant interests in opposing any radical change in the world order.

Smaller nations are also likely to have objections as the U.N. system has given them at least a voice in major international decisions since the end of the Second World War.

"This is a U.S. shortcut in an attempt to wield its veto power on world affairs," Daniel Forti, head of U.N. affairs at the International Crisis Group, said. "It allows the U.S. to really take the role it has on the Gaza-

Israel file, where it's able to shape things to its will and try to extend that to other conflicts."

He added that this idea "would give world leaders involved a sort of mechanism to try and sidestep longstanding agreements around sovereignty and territorial integrity in exchange for transactional deals."

A senior U.S. official said an expanded role for the Board of Peace remains "aspirational" but that Trump and his advisers believe it is possible, particularly as the U.S. and others have repeatedly expressed frustration with the United Nations and its associated organizations, commissions and advisory boards.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal Trump administration thinking, did not say the Board of Peace is intended to replace the United Nations but suggested that it could perhaps galvanize the world body into action.

The Trump administration has often been at odds with the United Nations as it zeroed in on eliminating billions of dollars in funding to international organizations and humanitarian assistance at large. Trump and his allies have blasted the world body for not reaching its potential and for "bloated" and redundant agencies that push "woke" ideology.

The letters follow Trump's post on social media Thursday, saying the Board of Peace had been formed and that the names of its members would be announced "shortly." Officials say a formal announcement is expected to be made next week during the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, Switzerland.

It comes after the White House on Friday evening released the names of some of the leaders who will play a role in overseeing next steps in Gaza, including an executive board that will work to carry out the vision of the Board of Peace. Israel's government objected Saturday, saying it "was not coordinated with Israel and is contrary to its policy.

That executive committee includes Trump administration officials Secretary of State Marco Rubio and envoy Steve Witkoff as well as businesspeople like Apollo Global Management CEO Marc Rowan and others like former British Prime Minister Tony Blair and World Bank President Ajay Banga.

The White House did not respond to a request for comment Saturday on Trump's ambitions for the Board of Peace nor the letters posted by leaders. The United Nations also did not immediately respond.

US launches another retaliatory strike in Syria, killing leader tied to deadly Islamic State ambush

Associated Press undefined

WASHINGTON (AP) — A third round of retaliatory strikes by the U.S. in Syria resulted in the death of an Al-Qaeda-affiliated leader, who officials say had a direct tie to the Islamic State member responsible for last month's ambush that killed two U.S. soldiers and one American civilian interpreter in the country.

U.S. Central Command announced that the strike in northwest Syria on Friday killed Bilal Hasan al-Jasim, who they claim was "an experienced terrorist leader who plotted attacks and was directly connected" to the Dec. 13 attack that killed Sgt. Edgar Brian Torres-Tovar, Sgt. William Nathaniel Howard and civilian interpreter Ayad Mansoor Sakat.

"The death of a terrorist operative linked to the deaths of three Americans demonstrates our resolve in pursuing terrorists who attack our forces," Adm. Brad Cooper, CENTCOM commander, said in a statement. "There is no safe place for those who conduct, plot, or inspire attacks on American citizens and our warfighters. We will find you."

It was the latest strike as part of a broader U.S. operation ordered by President Donald Trump following the ambush of the Americans to target "ISIS thugs" trying to regroup after the ouster of autocratic leader Bashar Assad a year ago.

The Republican president has stressed that Syria was fighting alongside American troops, as the U.S. military is expanding its cooperation with security forces as part of a coalition fighting the militant group. He added at the time that Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa was "extremely angry and disturbed by this attack."

CENTCOM said that the operation, titled "Hawkeye Strike," has resulted in U.S. and partners like Jordan and Syria targeting more than 100 Islamic State infrastructure and weapons site targets.

Israel objects to US announcement of leaders who will help oversee next steps in Gaza

By NATALIE MELZER Associated Press

NAHARIYA, Israel (AP) — Israel's government is objecting to the White House announcement of leaders who will play a role in overseeing next steps in Gaza as the ceasefire moves into its challenging second phase.

The rare criticism from Israel of its close ally in Washington said the Gaza executive committee "was not coordinated with Israel and is contrary to its policy," without details. Saturday's statement also said Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has told the foreign ministry to contact Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

The committee announced by the White House on Friday includes no Israeli official but has an Israeli businessman, billionaire Yakir Gabay. Other members announced so far include two of U.S. President Donald Trump's closest confidants, a former British prime minister, a U.S. general and representatives of several Middle Eastern governments.

The White House has said the executive committee will carry out the vision of a Trump-led "Board of Peace," whose members have not yet been named. The White House also announced the members of a new Palestinian committee to run Gaza's day to day affairs, with oversight from the executive committee. The Palestinian committee met for the first time on Thursday in Cairo.

The executive committee's members include Rubio, Trump envoy Steve Witkoff, Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Apollo Global Management CEO Marc Rowan, World Bank President Ajay Banga and Trump's Deputy National Security Adviser Robert Gabriel.

Committee members also include a diplomat from Qatar, an intelligence chief from Egypt and Turkey's foreign minister — all countries have been ceasefire mediators — as well as a Cabinet minister for the United Arab Emirates.

Turkey has a strained relationship with Israel but good relations with Hamas and could play an important role in persuading the group to yield power and disarm. Hamas has said it will dissolve its government in Gaza once the new Palestinian committee takes office, but it has shown no sign that it will dismantle its military wing or security forces.

Netanyahu's office didn't respond Saturday to questions about its objections regarding the executive committee.

Minutes after its statement, Israel's far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir in a statement backed Netanyahu and urged him to order the military to prepare to return to war. Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, another far-right Netanyahu ally, said on social media that "the countries that kept Hamas alive cannot be the ones that replace it."

The Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Gaza's second-largest militant group after Hamas, in a statement Saturday also expressed dissatisfaction with the makeup of the Gaza executive committee and claimed it reflected Israeli "specifications."

The Trump administration on Wednesday said the U.S.-drafted ceasefire plan for Gaza was now moving into its second phase, which includes the new Palestinian committee in Gaza, deployment of an international security force, disarmament of Hamas and reconstruction of the war-battered territory.

The last hostage, Ran Gvili in Gaza, was killed during the attack that sparked the war. On Saturday his parents, Talik and Itzik Gvili, said in a statement they were "deeply concerned by moves toward the rehabilitation of Gaza" while Hamas had not fulfilled its obligation to return everyone.

The ceasefire in the deadliest war ever fought between Israel and Hamas took effect on Oct. 10. The first phase focused on the return of all remaining hostages in exchange for the release of hundreds of Palestinian detainees, along with a surge in humanitarian aid and a partial withdrawal of Israeli forces in Gaza.

The war began with the Hamas-led attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, that killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took over 250 hostage. Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed over 71,400 Palestinians, including over 460 since this ceasefire began, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

The ministry, part of the Hamas-run government, maintains detailed casualty records that are seen as generally reliable by U.N. agencies and independent experts.

Trump says 8 European countries will face 10% tariff for opposing US control of Greenland

By JOSH BOAK, EMMA BURROWS and DANIEL NIEMANN Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — President Donald Trump said Saturday that he would charge a 10% import tax starting in February on goods from eight European nations because of their opposition to American control of Greenland, setting up a potentially dangerous test of U.S. partnerships in Europe.

Denmark, Norway, Sweden, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Finland would face the tariff, Trump said in a social media post while at his golf club in West Palm Beach, Florida. The rate would climb to 25% on June 1 if no deal was in place for “the Complete and Total purchase of Greenland” by the United States, he said.

The Republican president appeared to indicate that he was using the tariffs as leverage to force talks with Denmark and other European countries over the status of Greenland, a semiautonomous territory of NATO ally Denmark that he regards as critical to U.S. national security.

“The United States of America is immediately open to negotiation with Denmark and/or any of these Countries that have put so much at risk, despite all that we have done for them,” Trump said on Truth Social.

The tariff threat could mark a problematic rupture between Trump and America’s longtime NATO partners, further straining an alliance that dates to 1949 and provides a collective degree of security to Europe and North America. Trump has repeatedly tried to use trade penalties to bend allies and rivals alike to his will, generating investment commitments from some nations and pushback from others, notably China.

Trump is scheduled to travel on Tuesday to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, where he likely will run into the European leaders he just threatened with tariffs that would start in little more than two weeks.

Danish Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen said Trump’s move was a “surprise” given the “constructive meeting” with top U.S. officials this week in Washington.

The European Commission’s president, Ursula von der Leyen, and the head of the European Council, Antonio Costa, said in a joint statement that tariffs “would undermine transatlantic relations and risk a dangerous downward spiral.” They said Europe would remain “committed to upholding its sovereignty.”

There are immediate questions about how the White House could try to implement the tariffs because the EU is a single economic zone in terms of trading, according to a European diplomat who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity. It was unclear, too, how Trump could act under U.S. law, though he could cite emergency economic powers that are currently subject to a U.S. Supreme Court challenge.

Trump has long said he thinks the U.S. should own the strategically located and mineral-rich island, which has a population of about 57,000 and whose defense is provided by Denmark. He intensified his calls a day after the military operation to oust Venezuela’s Nicolás Maduro earlier this month.

The president indicated the tariffs were retaliation for what appeared to be the deployment of symbolic levels of troops from the European countries to Greenland, which he has said was essential for the “Golden Dome” missile defense system for the U.S., He also has argued that Russia and China might try to take over the island.

The U.S. already has access to Greenland under a 1951 defense agreement. Since 1945, the American military presence in Greenland has decreased from thousands of soldiers over 17 bases and installations to 200 at the remote Pituffik Space Base in the northwest of the island, the Danish foreign minister has said. That base supports missile warning, missile defense and space surveillance operations for the U.S. and NATO.

Resistance has steadily built in Europe to Trump’s ambitions even as several countries on the continent agreed to his 15% tariffs last year in order to preserve an economic and security relationship with Wash-

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ington.

French President Emmanuel Macron, in a social media post, seemed to equate the tariff threat to Russian leader Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine.

"No intimidation or threats will influence us, whether in Ukraine, Greenland or anywhere else in the world when we are faced with such situations," Macron said in a translated post on X.

'Important for the whole world'

Earlier Saturday, hundreds of people in Greenland's capital, Nuuk, braved near-freezing temperatures, rain and icy streets to march in a rally in support of their own self-governance.

Thousands of people also marched through Copenhagen, many of them carrying Greenland's flag. Some held signs with slogans such as "Make America Smart Again" and "Hands Off."

"This is important for the whole world," Danish protester Elise Riechie told The Associated Press as she held Danish and Greenlandic flags. "There are many small countries. None of them are for sale."

The rallies occurred hours after a bipartisan delegation of U.S. lawmakers, while visiting Copenhagen, sought to reassure Denmark and Greenland of their support.

European training exercises

Danish Maj. Gen. Søren Andersen, leader of the Joint Arctic Command, told the AP that Denmark does not expect the U.S. military to attack Greenland, or any other NATO ally, and that European troops were recently deployed to Nuuk for Arctic defense training.

He said the goal is not to send a message to the Trump administration, even though the White House has not ruled out taking the territory by force.

"I will not go into the political part, but I will say that I would never expect a NATO country to attack another NATO country," he said from aboard a Danish military vessel docked in Nuuk. "For us, for me, it's not about signaling. It is actually about training military units, working together with allies."

The Danish military organized a planning meeting Friday in Greenland with NATO allies, including the U.S., to discuss Arctic security on the alliance's northern flank in the face of a potential Russian threat. The Americans were also invited to participate in Operation Arctic Endurance in Greenland in the coming days, Andersen said.

In his 2½ years as a commander in Greenland, Andersen said that he hasn't seen any Chinese or Russian combat vessels or warships, despite Trump saying that they were off the island's coast.

But in the unlikely event of American troops using force on Danish soil, Andersen confirmed that Danish soldiers have an obligation to fight back.

'Almost no better' ally to US than Denmark

Trump has contended that China and Russia have their own designs on Greenland and its vast untapped reserves of critical minerals. He said recently that anything less than the Arctic island being in U.S. hands would be "unacceptable."

The president has seen tariffs as a tool to get what he wants without having to resort to military actions. At the White House on Friday, he recounted how he had threatened European allies with tariffs on pharmaceuticals and he teased the possibility of doing so again.

"I may do that for Greenland, too," Trump said.

After Trump followed through, Rep. Don Bacon, R-Neb., said "Congress must reclaim tariff authorities" so that they are not used solely at a president's discretion.

Denmark said this week that it was increasing its military presence in Greenland in cooperation with allies.

"There is almost no better ally to the United States than Denmark," said Sen. Chris Coons, D-Del., while visiting Copenhagen with other members of Congress. "If we do things that cause Danes to question whether we can be counted on as a NATO ally, why would any other country seek to be our ally or believe in our representations?"

Family of Iranian protester searched for her body in a pile of corpses and buried her on a roadside

By SARAH EL DEEB and JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Robina Aminian's family believes the college student was killed by a bullet fired by Iranian security forces straight into the back of her head.

But her death in the nationwide protests that challenged the Islamic Republic's theocracy was only the start of the family's agony. In the aftermath of the killing, Aminian's mother had to look through piles of bloodied corpses to find her daughter's body. Then the family raced to escape authorities who might demand payment to release the body and buried her hastily in an unmarked roadside pit.

Their odyssey reflects the trail of anguish left by Iran's deadly assault on protesters, which has led to desperate relatives searching overflowing morgues across the country. For families, the loss of loved ones is compounded by the difficulty they face in grieving and giving the dead a dignified sendoff.

More than a week after she was killed, Aminian's relatives say they still have not held a funeral for the young Kurdish woman who was studying fashion in Tehran, the capital.

"She wanted a bright future for herself," her uncle, Nezar Minoei, said from Oslo. "But unfortunately, the future has been stolen from her."

Details of death unclear

Details about what happened to Aminian are scant. After her death, her mother called relatives outside the country, recounting what she learned from Aminian's friends, who were present when she was killed.

The Associated Press spoke to three relatives, who all described similar details from the mother's account. An Oslo-based human rights organization, Iran Human Rights, released a report about her killing, citing witness testimony. They verified there was a shooting on the night of Jan. 8 around the campus of the Shariati Technical and Vocational College for Girls.

With communications greatly limited in Iran, the AP has been unable to independently confirm the family's account or the wounds to Aminian's body or to verify its location. The Iranian mission to the United Nations in New York has declined to comment.

The U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency, which relies on a network of activists on the ground and has been accurate during previous unrest in Iran, said at least 3,090 people have been killed. Iran's government has not offered any overall casualties figures.

Friends called mother

Everything that Aminian's relatives abroad know about her death comes from a brief phone call her mother was able to make Jan. 10 to relatives in Oslo.

They say the mother, Amina Norei, got a call Jan. 8 from Aminian's friends, who said she had been gunned down by security forces. The friends told Norei they were walking away from campus in Tehran after dark when they saw a protest and joined in.

A bullet fired by security forces struck the back of Aminian's head, her friends told the mother.

Videos shared on social media, verified by the AP, and statements by rights groups, doctors and survivors, describe Iranian agents using rifles and shotguns to disperse protesters across the country.

Iran's theocracy, which has used violence in previous rounds of unrest, increasingly refers to demonstrators as "terrorists." Authorities allege some demonstrators were armed, but there are no allegations that anyone was armed in Aminian's vicinity at the time of her death.

Aminian's relatives said she was not an activist or involved in politics.

Unzipping body bags

Aminian's mother was in Kermanshah, a western city in the Kurdish region of Iran nearly 460 kilometers (230 miles) from Tehran, when she learned about her daughter's death.

She rushed to Tehran in the middle of the night, she told family. Norei recalled to them how she began unzipping body bag after body bag, looking for Aminian.

"She looked through so many beautiful faces, trying to find her girl," Hali Norei, Aminian's aunt, said from Oslo. "And what is so horrifying for me is imagining what my sister feels as she searches for her daughter."

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Many other Iranian families are searching overflowing morgues for loved ones, according to rights group Amnesty International. Bodies have piled up in trucks, freight containers and warehouses, the group said.

When Norei found her daughter, she was joined by her husband, daughter and son, and the family rushed out with the body, fearing authorities would block their way and insist on a payment to release the corpse, according to Minoei, Aminian's uncle.

"She actually stole the body," Minoei said.

In a statement to the AP, the New York City-based Center for Human Rights in Iran said it has received multiple accounts of intelligence forces demanding money from families in exchange for the return of protesters' bodies. The group called the levies "a well-known, standard practice" in Iran to scare families into not publicly mourning their dead.

Other families reported to the center that they were forced to sign papers falsely declaring that their dead relatives were members of the security forces in order to retrieve the bodies.

Iranian state television recently aired a statement saying mortuary and burial services were free, after repeated allegations of the practice.

Minoei said the mother told him that she and her oldest daughter spent the seven-hour ride back to Kermanshah clutching the body in the backseat, blood and tears staining their clothes. When they got home, the mother told him, security forces had surrounded their house.

Amina Norei told her family they had only one option: They drove out of town and dug a pit on the side of the road. They placed the body inside and drove away. Aminian is still believed to be buried there, in an unmarked grave.

Relatives said they have not heard from Amina Norei or other relatives in Iran since Sunday.

Ukrainian delegation arrives in US for peace talks as Russia hammers energy sites

By SAMYA KULLAB and ELISE MORTON Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A Ukrainian delegation arrived in the United States for talks Saturday on a U.S.-led diplomatic push to end the nearly 4-year-old war as Russian attacks again took aim at Ukraine's power grid, cutting electricity and heating in freezing temperatures.

Kyrylo Budanov, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's chief of staff, said he arrived in the U.S. to discuss "the details of the peace agreement."

Writing on the Telegram messaging app, Budanov said he, together with Ukrainian negotiators Rustem Umerov and Davyd Arakhamia, would meet with U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff, President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner and U.S. Army Secretary Dan Driscoll.

Also on Telegram, Zelenskyy said Saturday that the principal task for the Ukrainian delegation was to convey how ongoing Russian strikes are undermining diplomacy.

The strikes, he said, are "constantly worsening even the small opportunities for dialogue that existed. The American side must understand this."

Zelenskyy's latest comments came after he said Friday that the delegation would try to finalize with U.S. officials documents for a proposed peace settlement that relate to postwar security guarantees and economic recovery.

If American officials approve the proposals, the U.S. and Ukraine could sign the documents next week at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Zelenskyy said at a Kyiv news conference with Czech President Petr Pavel. Trump plans to be in Davos, according to organizers.

Russia would still need to be consulted on the proposals.

Attacks on Ukraine's power grid deepen energy crisis

Russia struck energy infrastructure in Ukraine's Kyiv and Odesa regions overnight into Saturday, the Ministry of Energy said. More than 20 settlements in the Kyiv region were left without power following the attacks, the ministry wrote on its official Telegram channel.

Kharkiv Mayor Ihor Terekhov said a Russian attack on a critical infrastructure facility in the city's industrial

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district Saturday could seriously affect power and heating in Ukraine's second-largest city. Three people were wounded in the attack.

"We're talking about serious strikes on the system that keeps the city warm and lit," he wrote on Telegram, adding that the system is "constantly operating at its limits." Each new strike, he said, means "maintaining a stable supply will become even more difficult, and recovery will be longer and harder."

Zelenskyy said Sunday he held a special energy coordination meeting, noting that the most difficult situations with regard to the energy supply were in the cities of Kyiv, Kharkiv and Zaporizhzhia, and the surrounding regions.

He said Ukraine needed to ramp up the importation of electricity and the acquisition of additional equipment from partners.

Russia has hammered Ukraine's power grid, especially in winter, throughout the war. It aims to weaken the Ukrainian will to resist in a strategy that Kyiv officials call "weaponizing winter."

Ukraine's new energy minister, Denys Shmyhal, said Friday that Russia had conducted 612 attacks on energy targets over last year. That barrage has intensified in recent months as nighttime temperatures plunge to minus 18 degrees Celsius (zero Fahrenheit).

Ukraine has introduced emergency measures, including temporarily easing curfew restrictions to allow people to go whenever they need to public heating centers set up by the authorities, Shmyhal said. He said hospitals, schools and other critical infrastructure remain the top priority for electricity and heat supplies.

Officials have instructed state energy companies Ukrzaliznytsia, Naftogaz and Ukroboronprom to urgently purchase imported electricity covering at least 50% of their own consumption, according to Shmyhal.

Trump confidants, former British leader and Middle East officials are at forefront of US Gaza plan

By SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Two of President Donald Trump's closest confidants, a former British prime minister, an American general and a collection of top officials from Middle Eastern governments are at the forefront of the U.S. Gaza ceasefire plan.

The White House this week announced the members of a new Palestinian committee to run Gaza's day to day affairs, along with an executive committee of international experts who will supervise these efforts. They include a high-powered group of people with strong connections across the region and varying degrees of leverage of Israel and Hamas.

The entire effort will be overseen by the "Board of Peace" — a collection of world leaders led by Trump whose other members still have not been named.

Still, this week's appointments mark an important step forward for Trump's ambitious ceasefire plan. The White House this week said the plan had entered its second phase, which includes the new Palestinian committee in Gaza, deployment of an international security force, disarmament of Hamas and reconstruction of the war-battered territory.

Here's a closer look at the appointments of the executive committee:

Marco Rubio

Rubio is the U.S. secretary of state and national security adviser, putting him at the center of American foreign policy.

Steve Witkoff

Witkoff has served as the White House Mideast envoy during Trump's second term in office. A real estate developer and close friend of Trump, he was a key architect of the ceasefire plan, which took effect on Oct. 10.

Jared Kushner

Kushner is Trump's son-in-law who has long been a key foreign policy adviser to Trump. Kushner was a driving force in the Abraham Accords, a series of diplomatic agreements between Israel and Arab countries during Trump's first term. Kushner has returned to the White House as an important player in pushing

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forward the new ceasefire.

Tony Blair

The British prime minister from 1997 to 2007, Blair has decades of experience in the Middle East. He took the United Kingdom into the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 despite strong public opposition. He later served as Middle East envoy for the "Quartet" of Mideast mediators — the United States, the European Union, Russia and the United Nations. The post began with great promise but struggled to deliver results in its quest to promote peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

Maj. Gen. Jasper Jeffers

Jeffers has been appointed commander of the International Stabilization Force, an on-the-ground multinational force meant to enforce and guarantee the ceasefire. Jeffers previously served as head of the U.S. military's special operations command and oversaw implementation of the 2024 ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah.

Hakan Fidan

Fidan has been the Turkish foreign minister since 2023 and is close to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. While Turkey has a strained relationship with Israel, it has good relations with Hamas and could play an important role in persuading the Islamic group to yield power and disarm.

Ali Al-Thawadi

Ali Al-Thawadi is a diplomat from Qatar, which has been a key mediator between Israel and Hamas throughout the war.

Gen. Hassan Rashad

Rashad is the director of Egypt's intelligence agency. Egypt borders both Israel and Gaza and, like Qatar, has been a key mediator throughout the war.

Reem Al-Hashimy

Al-Hashimy is a Cabinet minister for the United Arab Emirates. The wealthy Gulf country has strong ties with Israel and is expected to play an important role in the reconstruction process of Gaza.

Ajay Banga

Banga is the president of the World Bank. Born in India, since moving to the U.S. in the early 2000s, Banga has held prestigious positions in the corporate world, including heading Mastercard and serving as director of Exor and Temasek, large holding companies.

Marc Rowan

Rowan is a co-founder, chief executive and chairman of Apollo Global Management, a U.S. asset-management firm. The billionaire businessman is also a philanthropist who has supported projects in Israel, the U.S. Jewish community and the University of Pennsylvania, where he and Trump both studied.

Sigrid Kaag

Kaag, the Netherlands' former deputy prime minister, has served as the United Nations coordinator for humanitarian aid to Gaza since the war erupted in late 2023.

Robert Gabriel

Gabriel served as a policy adviser on Trump's first presidential campaign and currently is deputy national security adviser.

Yakir Gabay

Gabay is an Israeli billionaire who is a major shareholder in Aroundtown SA, a global real estate group. He previously was chief executive of Israel's largest bank, Leumi. Gabay's presence gives Israel an unofficial representative on the executive board.

Nickolay Mladenov

Mladenov, a Bulgarian politician and former U.N. envoy to the Middle East, will serve as the "high representative" for Gaza. He will act as the on-the-ground link between the Board of Peace and the Palestinian technocratic committee.

Ali Shaath

Shaath has been named as head of the new Palestinian committee administering Gaza's daily affairs.

Shaath, an engineer, is a Gaza native who previously served as deputy transportation minister for the internationally recognized Palestinian Authority in the West Bank.

ICE says Cuban immigrant died while attempting suicide. A witness says guards pinned and choked him

By MICHAEL BIESECKER, CEDAR ATTANASIO and RYAN J. FOLEY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Cuban immigrant died in a Texas immigration detention facility earlier this month during an altercation with guards, and the local medical examiner has indicated that his death will likely be classified as a homicide.

The federal government has provided a differing account surrounding the Jan. 3 death of Geraldo Lunas Campos, saying the detainee was attempting suicide and staff tried to save him.

A witness told The Associated Press that Lunas Campos died after he was handcuffed, tackled by guards and placed in a chokehold until he lost consciousness. The immigrant's family was told by the El Paso County Medical Examiner's Office on Wednesday that a preliminary autopsy report said the death was a homicide resulting from asphyxia from chest and neck compression, according to a recording of the call reviewed by the AP.

The death and conflicting accounts have intensified scrutiny into the conditions of immigration jails at a time when the government has been rounding up immigrants in large numbers around the country and detaining them at facilities like the one in El Paso where Lunas Campos died.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is legally required to issue public notification of detainee deaths. Last week, it said Lunas Campos, a 55-year-old father of four and registered sex offender, had died at Camp East Montana, but made no mention of him being involved in an altercation with staff immediately before his death.

In response to questions from the AP, the Department of Homeland Security, which includes ICE, on Thursday amended its account of Lunas Campos' death, saying he tried to kill himself.

"Campos violently resisted the security staff and continued to attempt to take his life," DHS spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin said. "During the ensuing struggle, Campos stopped breathing and lost consciousness."

In an interview before DHS updated its account, detainee Santos Jesús Flores, 47, from El Salvador, said he witnessed the incident through the window of his cell in the special housing unit, where detainees are held in isolation for disciplinary infractions.

"He didn't want to enter the cell where they were going to put him," Flores told the AP on Thursday, speaking in Spanish from a phone in the facility. "The last thing he said was that he couldn't breathe."

Among the first sent to Camp Montana East

Camp Montana East is a sprawling tent facility hastily constructed in the desert on the grounds of Fort Bliss, an Army base. The AP reported in August that the \$1.2 billion facility, expected to become the largest detention facility in the United States, was being built and operated by a private contractor headquartered in a single-family home in Richmond, Virginia. The company, Acquisition Logistics LLC, had no prior experience running a corrections facility.

It was not immediately clear whether the guards present when Lunas Campos died were government employees or those of the private contractor. Emails seeking comment on Thursday from Acquisition Logistics executives received no response.

Lunas Campos was among the first detainees sent to Camp Montana East, arriving in September after ICE arrested him in Rochester, New York, where he lived for more than two decades. He was legally admitted to the U.S. in 1996, part of a wave of Cuban immigrants seeking to reach Florida by boat.

ICE said he was picked up in July as part of a planned immigration enforcement operation due to criminal convictions that made him eligible for removal.

New York court records show Lunas Campos was convicted in 2003 of sexual contact with an individual under 11, a felony for which he was sentenced to one year in jail and placed on the state's sex offender registry.

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Lunas Campos was also sentenced to five years in prison and three years of supervision in 2009 after being convicted of attempting to sell a controlled substance, according to the New York corrections records. He completed the sentence in January 2017.

Lunas Campos' adult daughter said the child sexual abuse accusation was false, made as part of a contentious custody battle.

"My father was not a child molester," said Kary Lunas, 25. "He was a good dad. He was a human being."

Conflicting accounts

On the day he died, according to ICE, Lunas Campos became disruptive while in line for medication and refused to return to his assigned dorm. He was then taken to the segregation block.

"While in segregation, staff observed him in distress and contacted on-site medical personnel for assistance," the agency said in its Jan. 9 release. "Medical staff responded, initiated lifesaving measures, and requested emergency medical services."

Lunas Campos was pronounced dead after paramedics arrived.

Flores said that account omitted key details — Lunas Campos was already handcuffed when at least five guards pinned him to the floor, and at least one squeezed his arm around the detainee's neck.

Within about five minutes, Flores said, Lunas Campos was no longer moving.

"After he stopped breathing, they removed the handcuffs," Flores said.

Flores is not represented by a lawyer and said he has already consented to deportation to his home country. Though he acknowledged he was taking a risk by speaking to the AP, Flores said he wanted to highlight that "in this place, guards abuse people a lot."

He said multiple detainees in the unit witnessed the altercation, and security cameras there should have captured the events. Flores also said investigators had not interviewed him.

DHS did not respond to questions about whether Lunas Campos was handcuffed when they say he attempted suicide, or exactly how he had tried to kill himself.

"ICE takes seriously the health and safety of all those detained in our custody," McLaughlin said. "This is still an active investigation, and more details are forthcoming."

DHS wouldn't say whether other agencies were investigating. The El Paso medical examiner's office confirmed Thursday that it conducted an autopsy, but declined further comment.

A final determination of homicide by the medical examiner would typically be critical in determining whether any guards are held criminally or civilly liable. When such deaths are ruled accidental or something other than homicide, they are less likely to trigger criminal investigations, while civil wrongful death lawsuits become harder to prove.

The fact that Lunas Campos died on an Army base could also limit state and local officials' legal jurisdiction to investigate. An El Paso County District Attorney's Office spokesperson declined to comment Thursday on whether it was involved in an investigation.

The deaths of inmates and other detainees after officers hold them face down and put pressure on their backs and necks to restrain them have been a problem in law enforcement for decades. A 2024 AP investigation documented hundreds of deaths during police encounters in which people were restrained in a prone position. Many uttered "I can't breathe" before suffocating, according to scores of body camera and bystander videos. Authorities often attempt to shift the blame for such deaths to preexisting medical conditions or drug use.

Dr. Victor Weedn, a forensic pathologist who has studied prone restraint deaths, said the preliminary autopsy ruling of homicide indicates guards' actions caused Lunas Campos' death, but does not mean they intended to kill. He said the medical examiner's office could come under pressure to stop short of calling it a homicide, but will probably "stick to its guns."

"This probably passes the 'but for' test. 'But for' the actions of the officers, he would not have died. For us, that's generally a homicide," he said.

'I just want justice, and his body here'

Jeanette Pagan-Lopez, the mother of Lunas Campos' two youngest children, said the day after he died the medical examiner's office called to inform her that his body was at the county morgue. She immedi-

ately called ICE to find out what happened.

Pagan-Lopez, who lives in Rochester, said the assistant director of the El Paso ICE field office eventually called her back. She said the official told her the cause of death was still pending and that they were awaiting toxicology report results. He also told her the only way Lunas Campos' body could be returned to Rochester free of charge was if she consented to his being cremated, she said.

Pagan-Lopez declined and is now seeking help from family and friends to raise the money needed to ship his body home and pay for a funeral.

After failing to get details about the circumstances surrounding his death from ICE, Pagan-Lopez said she got a call from a detainee at Camp Montana East who then put her in touch with Flores, who first told her about the altercation with guards.

Since then, she said she has repeatedly called ICE, but is no longer getting a response. Pagan-Lopez, who is a U.S. citizen, said she also twice called the FBI, where an agent took her information and then hung up.

Pagan-Lopez said she and Lunas Campos were together about 15 years before breaking up eight years ago. She described him as an attentive father who, until his detention, had worked in a minimum-wage job at a furniture store, the only employment she said he could find due to his criminal record.

She said that in the family's last phone call the week after Christmas, Lunas Campos talked to his kids about his expected deportation back to Cuba. He said he wanted them to visit the island, so that he could stay in their lives.

"He wasn't a bad guy," Pagan-Lopez said. "I just want justice, and his body here. That's all I want."

Judge rules feds in Minneapolis immigration operation can't detain or tear gas peaceful protesters

By AUDREY McAVOY and STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Federal officers in the Minneapolis area participating in its largest recent U.S. immigration enforcement operation can't detain or tear gas peaceful protesters who aren't obstructing authorities, including when these people are observing the agents, a judge in Minnesota ruled Friday.

U.S. District Judge Kate Menendez's ruling addresses a case filed in December on behalf of six Minnesota activists. The six are among the thousands who have been observing the activities of Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Border Patrol officers enforcing the Trump administration's immigration crackdown in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area since last month.

Federal agents and demonstrators have repeatedly clashed since the crackdown began. The confrontations escalated after an immigration agent fatally shot Renee Good in the head on Jan. 7 as she drove away from a scene in Minneapolis, an incident that was captured on video from several angles. Agents have arrested or briefly detained many people in the Twin Cities.

The activists in the case are represented by the American Civil Liberties Union of Minnesota, which says government officers are violating the constitutional rights of Twin Cities residents.

After the ruling, U.S. Department of Homeland Security Assistant Secretary Tricia McLaughlin issued a statement saying her agency was taking "appropriate and constitutional measures to uphold the rule of law and protect our officers and the public from dangerous rioters."

She said people have assaulted officers, vandalized their vehicles and federal property, and attempted to impede officers from doing their work.

"We remind the public that rioting is dangerous — obstructing law enforcement is a federal crime and assaulting law enforcement is a felony," McLaughlin said.

The ACLU didn't immediately respond to requests for comment Friday night.

The ruling prohibits the officers from detaining drivers and passengers in vehicles when there is no reasonable suspicion they are obstructing or interfering with the officers.

Safely following agents "at an appropriate distance does not, by itself, create reasonable suspicion to justify a vehicle stop," the ruling said.

Menendez said the agents would not be allowed to arrest people without probable cause or reasonable

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suspicion the person has committed a crime or was obstructing or interfering with the activities of officers.

Menendez is also presiding over a lawsuit filed Monday by the state of Minnesota and the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul seeking to suspend the enforcement crackdown, and some of the legal issues are similar. She declined at a hearing Wednesday to grant the state's request for an immediate temporary restraining order in that case.

"What we need most of all right now is a pause. The temperature needs to be lowered," state Assistant Attorney General Brian Carter told her.

Menendez said the issues raised by the state and cities in that case are "enormously important." But she said it raises high-level constitutional and other legal issues, and for some of those issues there are few on-point precedents. So she ordered both sides to file more briefs next week.

Today in History: January 18

Willie O'Ree becomes first Black NHL player

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Sunday, Jan. 18, the 18th day of 2026. There are 347 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Jan. 18, 1958, Canadian Willie O'Ree became the first Black player in the National Hockey League as he made his debut with the Boston Bruins.

Also on this date:

In 1778, English navigator Captain James Cook reached the present-day Hawaiian Islands, which he dubbed the "Sandwich Islands."

In 1803, President Thomas Jefferson asked Congress in a confidential message for \$2,500 in funding for exploration of Western lands all the way to the Pacific, an early step in the eventual formation of the Lewis and Clark expedition that would ultimately accelerate American expansion westward beyond the Mississippi River.

In 1911, the first landing of an aircraft on a ship took place as pilot Eugene B. Ely brought his Curtiss biplane in for a safe landing on the deck of the armored cruiser USS Pennsylvania in San Francisco Harbor.

In 1977, scientists identified the bacteria responsible for the deadly form of atypical pneumonia known as Legionnaires' disease.

In 1990, Washington, D.C., Mayor Marion Barry was arrested after FBI agents caught him smoking crack cocaine in a hotel room in a videotaped sting. (Convicted of drug possession, Barry spent a few months in prison, returning to win a D.C. Council seat in 1992 and his fourth and final mayoral victory in 1994. He died in 2014.)

In 1993, the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday was observed in all 50 states for the first time.

In 1996, Lisa Marie Presley filed for divorce from Michael Jackson, citing "irreconcilable differences" after less than two years of marriage.

In 2013, former Democratic New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin was indicted on charges that he'd used his office for personal gain, accepting payoffs, free trips and gratuities from contractors while the devastated city was struggling to recover from Hurricane Katrina. (Nagin was later convicted, served time, and was released from prison in 2020.)

In 2019, Jason Van Dyke, the white Chicago police officer who gunned down Black teenager Laquan McDonald in 2014, was sentenced to nearly seven years in prison.

In 2025, a gasoline tanker exploded in Nigeria, killing at least 70 people as individuals sought to transfer gasoline from one tanker into another truck as numerous bystanders looked on.

Today's birthdays: Actor-filmmaker Kevin Costner is 71. Actor Mark Rylance is 66. Hockey Hall of Famer Mark Messier is 65. Actor Dave Bautista is 57. Actor Jesse L. Martin is 57. Rock singer Jonathan Davis (Korn) is 55. Football Hall of Famer Julius Peppers is 46. Actor Jason Segel is 46. Actor Carlacia Grant is 35. Singer and activist Montana Tucker is 33. Spanish soccer star Aitana Bonmati is 28. Actor Karan Brar is 27.