

Groton Daily Independent

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Saturday, Jan. 24, 2026

Basketball Doubleheader vs. Milbank. Boys C/Girls JV at 2 p.m., Boys JV at 3 p.m., Girls Varsity at 4 p.m. and Boys Varsity at 5:15 p.m.

Cancelled: Groton Ford "C" Team Classic at Groton, 10 a.m.

Boys Wrestling at Kingsbury County Invitational (Arlington), 10 a.m.

Sunday, Jan. 25, 2026

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship at 9 a.m. with congregational meeting to follow; 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.

Carnival of Silver Skates, 2 p.m. and 6 p.m.
Groton Soccer Association Clinics, GHS Arena, 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

4th Grade BBB Practice, 2 p.m.

6th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.

Dance Team Practice, 5 p.m.

Groton Daily Independent
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1440

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

Olympian Outlaw Caught

Former Olympic snowboarder and FBI most-wanted fugitive Ryan Wedding, 44, was arrested in Mexico and transported to the US yesterday. He faces charges tied to an alleged transnational drug ring.

Wedding, who represented Canada in the 2002 Winter Olympics, was added to the FBI's Ten Most Wanted Fugitives list in March 2025, months after allegedly ordering the killing of a federal witness. Federal authorities accuse Wedding of coordinating the importation of roughly 60 metric tons of cocaine annually from Mexico to the US and Canada, generating about \$1B in profits per year. Reports suggest Wedding was introduced to drug networks a few years after placing 24th in the men's parallel giant slalom snowboarding Olympic event. In 2010, he was sentenced to prison in the US on cocaine-related charges and is believed to have begun working with Mexican drug cartels, including the Sinaloa cartel, after his release in 2011.

Wedding, who faces separate charges in Canada, is expected to appear in federal court Monday.

US, Russia, and Ukraine talk in the United Arab Emirates.

The two-day meeting, which began yesterday, marks the first trilateral convening since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine nearly four years ago. Previous talks have largely stalled due to the Kremlin and Kyiv's competing claims on Ukraine's Donbas region. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced this new round of talks after meeting with US President Donald Trump at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, this week.

Japan's prime minister dissolves parliament, paving way for snap elections Feb. 8.

Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi dissolved the 465-member lower house of parliament yesterday, about three months after becoming Japan's first female leader. Analysts say the move is an attempt to help her Liberal Democratic Party regain seats by capitalizing on her popularity. The party has lost ground after a series of scandals; meanwhile, Takaichi—a conservative—has a roughly 70% approval rating.

NFL playoffs' conference championship round begins tomorrow.

The Denver Broncos face the New England Patriots tomorrow at 3 pm ET without their quarterback, Bo Nix, who's out with an ankle injury. The winner will be crowned the AFC champion and earn a spot in the Super Bowl (Feb. 8). Then, at 6:30 pm ET, the Los Angeles Rams travel to the Seattle Seahawks to contend for the NFC title and a chance at the Super Bowl.

South Koreans repatriated from Cambodia over online scam allegations.

Seventy-three South Koreans were returned to their home country yesterday to face investigations into online scams that allegedly swindled \$33M from fellow Koreans. Among them was a couple accused of operating a deepfake romance scam that collected \$8.2M from roughly 100 victims. Cambodian authorities say they've detained 5,106 suspects from 23 nationalities over the past seven months in a crackdown on online scam networks, which have surged since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Intel shares plunge as chipmaker warns of supply shortage.

Shares fell 17% yesterday, after executives cited supply constraints Thursday when projecting first-quarter revenue of \$11.7B to \$12.7B and breakeven earnings per share. Analysts had expected \$12.5B in revenue and earnings of 5 cents per share. Intel's foundry unit, which makes chips for other companies, also continues to trail competitors.

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Whales may ration resources to adapt to ecosystem changes.

Researchers analyzed over 1,100 skin samples from humpback, fin, and minke whales in the North Atlantic, collected between 1992 and 2019, to see how their diets shifted amid warming waters and increased human activity. The data shows all three species have shifted toward more fish-based diets as krill populations dwindled. But, the overlap in the fish each species eats has narrowed over time.

Humankind(ness)

Dear readers—We cherish reading and spotlighting your stories of kindness. In the same spirit of human connection, we're taking a brief intermission next month to feature your love stories—from meet-cutes and comical first dates to lessons learned over decades of marriage. Have a story to tell? Make us smile, cry, or giggle [here](#).

Today, we're sharing a kindness story from reader Cary S. in Hillsville, Virginia.

"My wife was leaving a shopping center and noticed a gentleman at the back of his truck arranging flowers. A closer look showed that he had two vases and was building two arrangements. She commented on how beautiful they were.

"He said his father is in a rehabilitation center and when visiting him he met two ladies with no visitors or signs that anyone was interested in brightening their day. He decided to remedy that the next time he visited his father."

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I'm in Groton but am willing
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Wolves Fall to Mavericks in Twin Bill at Minnesota State

MANKATO, Minn. – Northern State University came up short in both ends of a weekend NSIC double-header Friday night in Mankato, as the Wolves men's and women's basketball teams each dropped road contests to Minnesota State.

Men's Basketball – Mavericks Pull Away Late

The NSU men battled toe-to-toe with Minnesota State for much of the night before the Mavericks pulled away in the final minutes for a 78-67 victory.

Northern trailed by just one point at halftime after trading baskets throughout the opening 20 minutes. However, Minnesota State created separation down the stretch, outscoring the Wolves 39-29 in the second half to secure the win.

NSU struggled with shooting efficiency, finishing at 39.7% from the field, 30.4% from three-point range, and 62.5% at the free-throw line. The Wolves did control the glass, out-rebounding MSU 43-37 and grabbing 13 offensive boards that led to 11 second-chance points.

Joshua Book led Northern with 19 points and four assists, scoring 14 of his points in the second half. Simon Akena added 15 points and seven rebounds, while James Glenn contributed 11 points and a team-high three steals. Tobi Obiora paced the Wolves on the boards with nine rebounds and added three blocks.

Minnesota State capitalized on turnovers and bench production, scoring 22 points off NSU miscues and 24 points from its reserves.

Men's Final: Minnesota State 78, Northern State 67

Records: NSU 7-12 (7-6 NSIC), MSU 12-9 (6-7 NSIC)

Women's Basketball – No. 2 Mavericks Overwhelm Wolves

In the women's contest, No. 2-ranked Minnesota State used stifling defense and a fast start to defeat Northern State 81-52.

The Mavericks held NSU scoreless for the first six minutes and limited the Wolves to just 10 points in the opening quarter. Minnesota State maintained control throughout, forcing 38 Northern turnovers and recording 21 team steals.

Reagan Rus, Telia Graham, and Makenzie Carrier each scored 11 points to lead the Wolves. Rus shot an efficient 80% from the floor and added three assists, while Graham pulled down a team-high eight rebounds. Lily Klein contributed six rebounds and two steals.

For Minnesota State, Natalie Bremer poured in a game-high 22 points, becoming the Mavericks' all-time leading scorer in the process. Ava Stier, Rhyan Holmgren, and Mackenzie Schweim also reached double figures.

NSU finished the game shooting 47.6% from the floor but struggled from long range at 12.5% beyond the arc.

Women's Final: Minnesota State 81, Northern State 52

Records: NSU 10-9 (5-8 NSIC), MSU 19-0 (13-0 NSIC)

Up Next

Both Northern State teams continue their Minnesota road trip Saturday in St. Cloud. The women face the Huskies at 2 p.m., followed by the men's matchup at 4 p.m.

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High School Basketball Doubleheader

Milbank @ Groton Area

~~Thursday, January 22nd, 2026~~

Saturday, January 24th, 2026

Game Times:

Main Court in Arena <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 2:00 PM CT → Girls JV- 3:00 PM CT → Boys JVo Halftime Entertainment: FCCLA Shoot-for-a-Pop- 4:00 PM CT → Girls Varsityo Halftime Entertainment: GHS Pep Band- 5:15 PM CT → Boys Varsityo Halftime Entertainment: Groton Dynamics Dance Team	Main Court in Old Gym <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 2:00 PM CT → Boys C	Ticket Takers - Report @ 1:00pm: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Todd Peterson- Lindsey Vanderwal- Joel Guthmiller Report @ 3:30pm: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Todd Peterson- Lindsey Vanderwal- Kelly Oswald Admin on Duty: Becky Hubsch
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Prior to the Girls Varsity game, the National Anthem will be first, with Varsity Introductions/Lineups to follow.

Split Pot Fundraiser – Groton Spring Baseball

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

TEAM BENCHES: South Bench- Groton Area | North Bench- Milbank

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

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

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

CONCESSIONS: Will be available

Varsity Officials: Tanner Jondahl, Spencer Aberle, Dave Planteen

JV Officials: Travis Kurth, Shaun Wanner, Andrew Wanner

JV/V Scoreboard: Alexa Sperry

JV/V Official Book: Kristi Zoellner (V), Joe Schwan (JV)

JV/V Shot Clock Operator: Sean Schuring

C Officials: Kasey Kurtz, Quintin Biermann, Kristi Zoellner

C Scoreboard: Brett Schwan

C Scorebook: Krissi Zak

Announcer: Joe Schwan

National Anthem: GHS Freshman, Aspen Beto, on clarinet

Livestream:

- www.GDlive.com
- Groton High School | High School Sports | Home | Hudl
(fan.hudl.com/usa/sd/groton/organization/12097/groton-high-school)
- KMSD Radio/Livestream: <https://www.youtube.com/@KMSDRadio>

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Sat., Jan. 24, 2026 - Milbank
Double Header Basketball in Groton
Boys C at 2 p.m., JV Boys at 3 p.m.
Girls Varsity: 4:00, Boys Varsity follows

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Lawmakers advance resolution asking voters to put eminent domain restrictions in SD constitution

Move follows last year's adoption of law banning the practice for carbon capture pipelines

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR

A committee of state lawmakers advanced legislation Friday asking voters to put restrictions on eminent domain in the state constitution, after the measure's supporters argued South Dakotans need stronger protections than the law banning eminent domain for carbon capture pipelines adopted last year.

Eminent domain is the power to take private property for public use, with just compensation to the landowner. Although eminent domain is often used for water pipelines, electrical transmission lines and other infrastructure, it's been a divisive issue in South Dakota the last several years because of a proposed multi-state carbon capture pipeline that would pass through the eastern part of the state.

The Legislature's House State Affairs Committee voted 10-3 on Friday at the Capitol in Pierre to send the new eminent domain resolution to the full House of Representatives. If passed by the House and Senate, the measure will go on the ballot for the November general election.

Rep. Spencer Gosch, R-Glenham, introduced the bill. He told lawmakers the resolution is meant to "revert the power of eminent domain authority to the government and public use only." He said the current law allows eminent domain for "tax revenue and economic development," and argued South Dakota should "revert it back to the way it was supposed to be."

The constitutional amendment would add language to the state constitution that reads, "Eminent domain may not be exercised for the purpose of transferring private property to a non-governmental entity solely to promote economic development or increase tax revenue without the provision of a public use, purpose, or utility."

Amanda Radke, who farms and ranches near Mitchell and opposes eminent domain for carbon pipelines, said the amendment would "eliminate the predatory practices of private companies who come to take things against the will of the people of South Dakota."

"This isn't a change to the constitution," she said. "This is fortifying what the founding fathers intended when it came to property rights."

Pacific Legal Foundation policy counsel Emily Amin, of Nashville, said property rights "mean very little if the government can override them whenever it believes a different private use might generate more tax revenue."

Opponents, including water and electric utilities and various business groups, warned that the language is unclear and could trigger lawsuits and uncertainty for essential infrastructure projects.

Darla Pullman Rogers, representing rural electric cooperatives in the state, said changing the constitution could "inadvertently or indirectly affect our ability to exercise eminent domain," raising questions about projects tied to economic development, such as electrical service for data centers.

Brett Koenecke, lobbying on behalf of investor-owned electric utilities, said the proposal is "confusing" and could "consign people to litigation to figure out what this means." He said the clarity opponents were looking for would have to be sought in a courtroom through lawsuits.

South Dakota Chamber of Commerce and Industry CEO Ryan Budmayr said the current system works, calling the amendment "unnecessary," arguing it "sends the wrong message" to businesses that South Dakota is not "open for opportunity."

American Petroleum Institute Midwest Region Director Mike Karbo said the measure could hinder oil pipeline connections and jeopardize job creation and economic benefits.

Committee member Rep. Greg Jamison, R-Sioux Falls, asked if the amendment would bar eminent domain for running an electric or water line to a project that was built for economic development purposes.

Gosch said he believed it would not. He argued the resolution is "pretty clear" in seeking to ban eminent domain that's solely "to promote economic development and increase tax revenue," and he told the committee that approving the resolution does not amend the constitution.

"You're simply saying, 'I trust my voters, I'm gonna let them decide,'" Gosch said.

The proposed carbon capture pipeline through South Dakota is a project of Iowa-based Summit Carbon Solutions. The five-state pipeline would capture carbon dioxide from ethanol plants in South Dakota, North Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa and Nebraska and transport it to an underground sequestration site in North Dakota, to capitalize on federal tax credits incentivizing the prevention of heat-trapping gases into the atmosphere. The project has been granted permits in other states, but those have been subjected to legal challenges, and South Dakota regulators have twice denied permits for the project.

Landowner opposition to the project in South Dakota culminated in the Legislature's passage of a law last year banning carbon pipelines from using eminent domain. Iowa's House of Representatives sent a similar bill to the Iowa Senate this week.

Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked for five years as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

Governor proposes stiffer penalties for threats or violence that prevent religious practices

BY: MEGHAN O'BRIEN

PIERRE — South Dakota Republican Gov. Larry Rhoden announced legislation Friday that would increase the punishment for threats or violent acts that prevent people from practicing their religion.

The crime is currently a misdemeanor punishable by up to a year of county jail time, a \$2,000 fine or both. The proposed legislation would change the crime to a felony and allow a judge to send someone to a state prison for two years, fine them \$4,000 or both.

"If religious liberties fail, any other liberty eventually fails with it," Rhoden said during a press conference. "If someone decides to target a house of worship, there will be real consequences."

He was "troubled," he said, by recent events at a church in St. Paul, Minnesota, where protests against U.S. Immigration and Customs enforcement actions disrupted a church service. A pastor at the church works for ICE, which has had thousands of agents in Minnesota conducting enforcement actions for weeks, stirring controversy with events including the fatal shooting of an unarmed 37-year-old woman, Renee Good.

South Dakota House Majority Leader Scott Odenbach, a Republican from Spearfish, and Senate Majority Leader Jim Mehlhaff, a Republican from Pierre, are the prime sponsors of the bill.

Mehlhaff said it made him "angry" to watch as "out-of-state, professional agitators invaded the sanctuary of a church."

"It's not just shameful, in my opinion, it's criminal," Mehlhaff said. "This bill will send a message to these out-of-state agitators that if they come to South Dakota, they should plan to stay a while."

The U.S. Department of Justice has opened a civil rights investigation into the St. Paul incident, and several people were arrested. There are federal laws against threats or violence that disrupt religious services.

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

Prison staffing hits highest level in years, but state struggles to keep new officers

Recent hires, some as young as 18, often give up on corrections within six months

BY: JOHN HULT

The South Dakota Department of Corrections aims to cut its turnover rate by 12 percentage points in the next year, in part by offering recruits a better idea of what they're in for.

The number of open security staff positions has plummeted in recent years, Corrections Secretary Nick Lamb told the Legislature's Joint Appropriations Committee on Thursday at the Capitol in Pierre, from a high of 27% in late 2022 to 5% today.

But security staff turnover has nearly doubled since 2020, from 17% to 33%. Around 70% of the department's 971 correctional employees work on the security side.

Reducing the turnover is one of what Lamb called the agency's "wildly important goals" for the coming year.

When asked by Sen. John Carley, R-Piedmont, why people are leaving, Lamb said age and prior experience are major factors.

"This work is not for everyone," he said.

Increased starting pay for security staffers, from \$17.89 a few years ago to \$25.50 an hour today, has helped the agency recruit people to serve, he said, but "we're having a hard time retaining them."

About 45% of those who leave officer positions do so within their first six months, he said.

The department plans to work through ways to give recruits a better sense of what the work might be like upfront, Lamb said, possibly through videos on day-to-day operations.

At the moment, officers have a four-week training academy in the classroom, 40 hours of orientation and 40 hours of on-the-job training.

Some moves in that direction began before Lamb's arrival in November, Director of Operations Amber Pirraglia told the committee. The agency began to assign field training officers to follow new employees through their first six months of work and "really through their first year."

"That is something we've implemented in the last year that's been very successful, and hopefully we'll see a better retention rate with those new officers," Pirraglia said.

'Kids' overseeing inmates

Gov. Larry Rhoden hired Lamb as secretary following the resignation of Kelli Wasko last fall. Lamb came from Iowa but also worked in prisons in New Mexico and Illinois.

He told the committee he more or less stumbled into a career in corrections "because I needed a job." He was a high school dropout who "made mistakes," he said, and earned his GED after completing basic training with the Army. He would eventually earn a master's degree in behavioral medicine.

Back in 1994, his GED and military training were just enough to qualify him for a prison job in southern Illinois, Lamb said. That was a win for him as a young father who'd been making around \$4 an hour in a factory that was set to close.

He grew to love corrections, he said, because "you can save a life" by talking to and listening to inmates.

"I got to realize that inmates are people, too," Lamb said. "God does not make trash."

The big difference between Lamb's experience and that of some current staff members at the penitentiary is that prison jobs didn't go to teenagers at the time in Illinois. There was too much demand for those positions for older adults.

The story is different for South Dakota's prisons in 2026, Lamb said.

"I'm here to tell you that I've got 18-year-old kids working the galleries at night, with adults," said Lamb, using a term for the tiered floors of inmates at the penitentiary. "God bless them. They're going to make mistakes, but that's what we have now."

The security work being done by those younger officers is more difficult in some ways, as well, he said. He pointed to K2, a drug typically sprayed on pieces of paper that killed most of the eight men who died

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of drug overdoses in South Dakota prisons last year.

"We didn't have the synthetic cannabinoids that we have now that's so hard to detect," Lamb said, using the technical term for K2 as he tapped a pad of paper. "It could be on this piece of paper right now, and I wouldn't know it and you wouldn't know it."

Nursing shortage

There are fewer open security staff positions than the department has seen for years, but the story is different for correctional nurses.

The agency took over correctional health from the Department of Health in July 2023.

Brittini Skipper, the director of finance for corrections, told the committee that 58 of the DOC's 175 clinical positions are open.

"That's clearly not covering the open shifts we have for clinical, so to cover those shifts we have to have existing staff work overtime, or we contract for nurses," Skipper said.

The state budgeted \$4.6 million for traveling contract nurses for 2026. That's up from \$4.2 million in 2025 and \$3.1 million in 2024. Another \$279,000 was budgeted for overtime for clinical staff.

There are incentives in place for nurses, Skipper said, among them a student loan repayment plan and a \$10,000 hiring bonus, paid in two \$5,000 installments in a new correctional nurse's first two paychecks. The nurses have to stay for two years to keep the bonuses.

Nurses also get an extra \$7.50 an hour at clinics that are "below minimum staffing levels."

Last year, Skipper said, the state paid \$10,000 bonuses to 29 employees, 15 of which are still employed. The state requests the \$10,000 back if the nurse leaves before two years are up, and Skipper said the agency has been repaid in each case.

Rep. Jack Kolbeck, R-Sioux Falls, mentioned South Dakota's push to train nurses at public universities in recent years and asked Skipper if having more nurses in the state has made a difference.

"Are you getting the applications?" Kolbeck said.

The state hired a recruiting agency to look for nurses, Skipper said, a strategy that worked well with security staff recruitment. The same agency reached out to 400 nurses last year, got replies from 13, and only five of them were interested.

"The reason that they noted for that is because they don't want to work in a correctional facility when they could be in a hospital or a clinic," Skipper said.

Pay for nurses is "similar" to what a hospital might offer, Skipper said, but "we just can't compete with what contract nurses pay."

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

Tens of thousands gather in downtown Minneapolis for 'ICE Out' day

BY: MICHELLE GRIFFITH, MAX NESTERAK AND ALYSSA CHEN

Tens of thousands of Minnesotans marched in downtown Minneapolis Friday in a negative 30 degree windchill to protest the federal government's continuing surge of immigration enforcement — demanding civil rights and a withdrawal of the 3,000 officers sent here by the administration of President Donald Trump.

The demonstration took place on "ICE Out of Minnesota: Day of Truth & Freedom," a general strike supported by Minnesota unions, progressive faith leaders and community activists. Proponents encouraged all Minnesotans to stay home from work, school and refrain from shopping — disruptions of normal orders of business to protest the presence of federal immigration agents in Minnesota.

The massive protest began at The Commons Park at 2 p.m. in Minneapolis. The march ended with a rally at Target Center.

Natasha Dockter, the first vice president of the Minneapolis Federation of Educators' teachers chapter, handed out hand warmers to demonstrators at The Commons alongside other teachers.

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"I'm out here today because what's going on in our city is completely and totally unacceptable. It's impacting the lives of our students and their families that we serve," Dockter said.

Sergey Goro and Ben Daniel were visiting the Twin Cities from San Francisco and Seattle for the U.S. Pond Hockey Championships, which was delayed due to the extreme cold.

Goro said that he'd been to No Kings protests — demonstrations against the Trump administration's authoritarian policies — in San Francisco, but that they weren't as large as the Minneapolis protest.

Daniel agreed: "We can really feel that everyone's on board here — that this is ridiculous and it's gotta stop."

Daniela Morales, 16, carrying a Mexican flag, said her parents are both Mexican immigrants and that she attended the protest on behalf of people who can't speak out.

"I'm really glad to see everybody come out and support each other and our neighbors and fight against the administration," Morales said.

Other protests led to arrests

A morning protest at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport led to the arrests of roughly 100 clergy by MSP and Bloomington law enforcement Friday, according to a statement from protest organizers.

Demonstrators at the airport were standing or kneeling on the roadway outside Terminal 1's departures area and led away by law enforcement.

Jeff Lea, a spokesperson for the Metropolitan Airports Commission, said in an email that the airport "worked in advance with event organizers to best accommodate their right to freedom of expression while also ensuring uninterrupted operations."

"When the permitted activity went beyond the agreed-upon terms, MSP Airport Police began taking necessary action, including arrests, to protect public safety, airport security and access to Terminal 1," Lea wrote. Lea confirmed there were around 100 arrests.

At least one demonstrator was also arrested at the nearby Whipple Federal Building, where federal agents deployed chemical irritants into a crowd of protestors, the Star Tribune reported. Around noon, the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office announced that it had given three dispersal orders for protestors to unblock an access road at the building. The Whipple Building, now a base for federal immigration operations, has been an ongoing site of protests.

Life stood still Friday for many Minnesotans. Over 700 businesses closed Friday to support the "ICE Out" day, according to Bring Me The News, which is keeping a running list.

"It is time to suspend the normal order of business to demand immediate cessation of ICE actions in MN, accountability for federal agents who have caused loss of life and abuse to Minnesota residents and call for Congress to immediately intervene," the demonstration's website states.

Over a dozen churches across Minnesota announced prayer vigils to "mourn, pray and plant seeds of hope with one another," according to ISAI AH, the nonprofit coalition of Minnesota faith and community groups.

Dozens of school districts across the state closed Friday because of the dangerously cold temperatures. Minneapolis Public Schools were already planned to be closed Friday for a teacher record-keeping day.

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

Michelle Griffith covers Minnesota politics and policy for the Reformer, with a focus on marginalized communities. Most recently she was a reporter with The Forum of Fargo-Moorhead in North Dakota where she covered state and local government and Indigenous issues.

Max Nesterak is the deputy editor of the Reformer and reports on labor and housing. Previously, he was an associate producer for Minnesota Public Radio after a stint at NPR. He also co-founded the Behavioral Scientist and was a Fulbright Scholar to Berlin, Germany.

Trump to block foreign aid for transgender care, Vance tells anti-abortion rally

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration plans to expand a policy that blocks foreign aid dollars from going to organizations that discuss, refer or perform abortions to also include groups that address transgender health care or have policies on diversity, equity and inclusion, Vice President JD Vance said Friday.

"We're expanding this policy to protect life, to combat DEI and the radical gender ideologies that prey on our children. And with these additions, the rule will now cover every non-military foreign assistance that America sends," Vance announced at the March for Life anti-abortion rally on the National Mall.

"All in all, we have expanded the Mexico City Policy about three times as big as it was before," he added. "And we're proud of it, because we believe in fighting for life."

The White House did not immediately respond to a request from States Newsroom for more details on the policy expansion or when it would be implemented.

Defending administration's record

Vance said during the rally he needed to "address an elephant in the room" that President Donald Trump and others in the administration have not made enough progress on anti-abortion initiatives during the first year of unified Republican control of the federal government.

"I want you to know that I hear you and that I understand," he said. "There will inevitably be debates within this movement. We love each other. But we're going to have open conversations about how best to use our political system to advance life, how prudential we must be in the cause of advancing human life. I think these are good, natural and honest debates."

Vance mentioned that Trump nominated some of the Supreme Court justices that overturned *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 case that had guaranteed a constitutional right to an abortion for nearly 50 years.

He also noted that Republicans in Congress included a provision in the "big, beautiful" law that blocks Medicaid funding from going to Planned Parenthood for one year for any type of health care. Federal law had already barred funding from going to abortions, with limited exceptions.

Vance argued that in addition to judicial rulings and federal laws, members of the anti-abortion movement must strive to change hearts and minds as well.

"We're not trying to argue to the Supreme Court anymore," he said. "We're trying to argue to our fellow citizens that we must build up that culture of life. And as you know, that effort is going to take a lot of time, it's going to take a lot of energy and it's going to take a little bit of money."

Later in his speech, Vance sought to discourage people from concentrating on professional lives and instead called on them to focus more on getting married and having children.

"You're never going to find great meaning in a cubicle or in front of a computer screen," he said. "But you will find great meaning if you dedicate yourself to the creation and sustenance of human life."

Trump didn't attend the rally in person but recorded a video message that was played just before Vance spoke, telling attendees he "was proud to be the first president in history to attend this march in person" six years ago.

"In my first term I was honored to appoint judges and justices who believed in interpreting the Constitution as written. That was a big deal. And because of that, the pro-life movement won the greatest victory in its history," Trump said. "Now the work to rebuild a culture that supports life continues in every state, every community and every part of our beautiful land."

Calls for action on medication abortion

Trump and some in his administration have come under scrutiny lately for not moving faster to complete a safety review of mifepristone, one of two pharmaceuticals used in medication abortion, which is approved for up to 10 weeks gestation.

Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America, and Lila Rose, founder of the

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anti-abortion group Live Action, both released statements in December calling on Trump to fire Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Marty Makary over the pace of that review.

Anti-abortion organizations want the administration to end the ability of doctors or other qualified health care providers to prescribe mifepristone and the second pharmaceutical used in medication abortion, misoprostol, via telehealth and have it shipped to patients.

Several Republicans in Congress have joined their call, with Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee Chairman Bill Cassidy, R-La., holding a hearing on mifepristone earlier this month.

The U.S. Supreme Court rejected efforts from anti-abortion organizations to limit access to mifepristone in a June 2024 ruling, writing they never had standing to bring the lawsuit in the first place.

Trump told House Republicans during a policy retreat at the Kennedy Center earlier this month they must be "flexible" about the Hyde Amendment, which blocks federal funding for abortion with limited exceptions, in order to broker a health care deal that can reach his desk.

Dannenfelser rebuked Trump for the comment, writing in a statement that to "suggest Republicans should be 'flexible' is an abandonment of this decades-long commitment. If Republicans abandon Hyde, they are sure to lose this November."

GOP leaders tout major law

U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., also spoke at the March for Life rally, touting the "big, beautiful" law as "the most pro-life and pro-family legislation that has been signed into law in decades."

"For the first time since Roe v. Wade was reversed, we have the White House, the Senate and the House all working together to deliver meaningful and historic pro-life victories," he said.

The law included several policies that Johnson said will aid Americans in having children, including an expansion of the child tax credit and the adoption tax credit as well as the investment accounts for babies.

Johnson said the provision that blocks Medicaid patients from going to Planned Parenthood for non-abortion health care services, depriving the organization of that income, was a massive policy victory for Republicans.

"We stand here today with one united voice to affirm the federal government should not be subsidizing any industry that profits from the elimination of human life," Johnson said.

New Jersey Republican Rep. Chris Smith, speaking just after Johnson while other GOP lawmakers stood on the stage, said eliminating access to mifepristone must be accomplished.

"I've been here since Ronald Reagan's first election, 1981," Smith said. "And I can tell you, this leadership is the most pro-life, so committed. And behind me are just absolute heroes. Men and women who take up the fight every single day."

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., didn't attend the rally in person but submitted a video that touted the Planned Parenthood defunding provision.

"Thanks to that landmark legislation, this year, some of the nation's largest abortion providers, including Planned Parenthood, are prohibited from receiving Medicaid funding," Thune said.

Other Republicans attending the rally included Alabama Rep. Robert Aderholt, Arkansas Rep. French Hill, Florida Rep. Kat Cammack, Georgia Rep. Andrew Clyde, Maryland Rep. Andy Harris, Michigan Reps. Bill Huizenga and Tim Walberg, Minnesota Rep. Michelle Fischbach, Missouri Rep. Bob Onder, Pennsylvania Rep. Dan Meuser, South Carolina Rep. William Timmons, Texas Reps. Michael Cloud and Dan Crenshaw, Utah Rep. Mike Kennedy, Virginia Rep. John McGuire and Wisconsin Rep. Glenn Grothman.

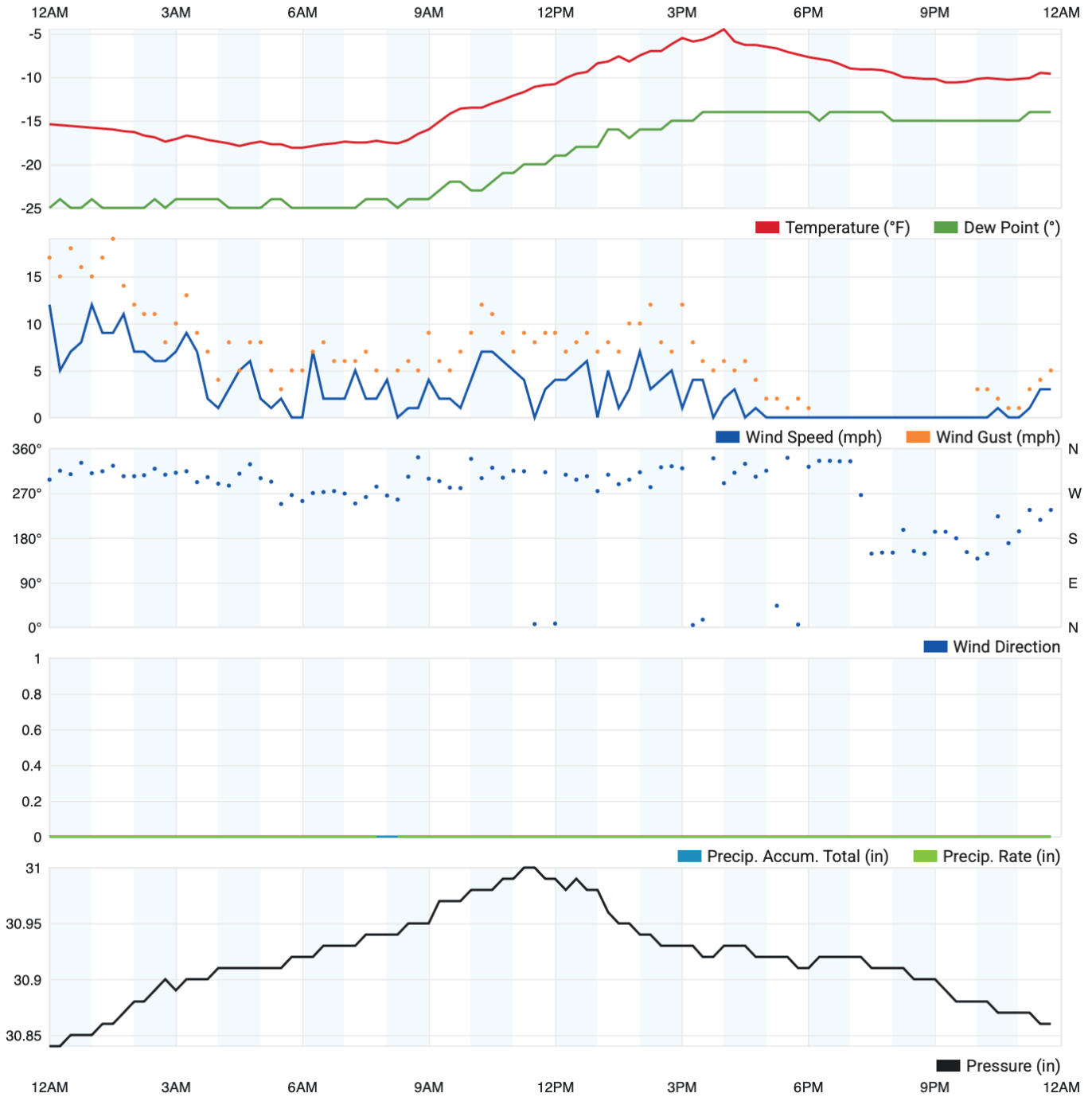
Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

January 23, 2026



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Cold ...

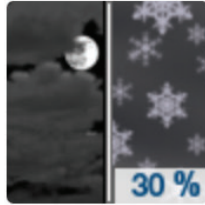
Today



High: 2 °F

Cold

Tonight



Low: -9 °F

Mostly Cloudy
then Chance
Snow Showers

Sunday



High: -3 °F

Slight Chance
Snow Showers
then Mostly
Sunny

Sunday Night



Low: -13 °F

Mostly Clear

Monday



High: 20 °F

Mostly Sunny



Cold Weather Advisory Today

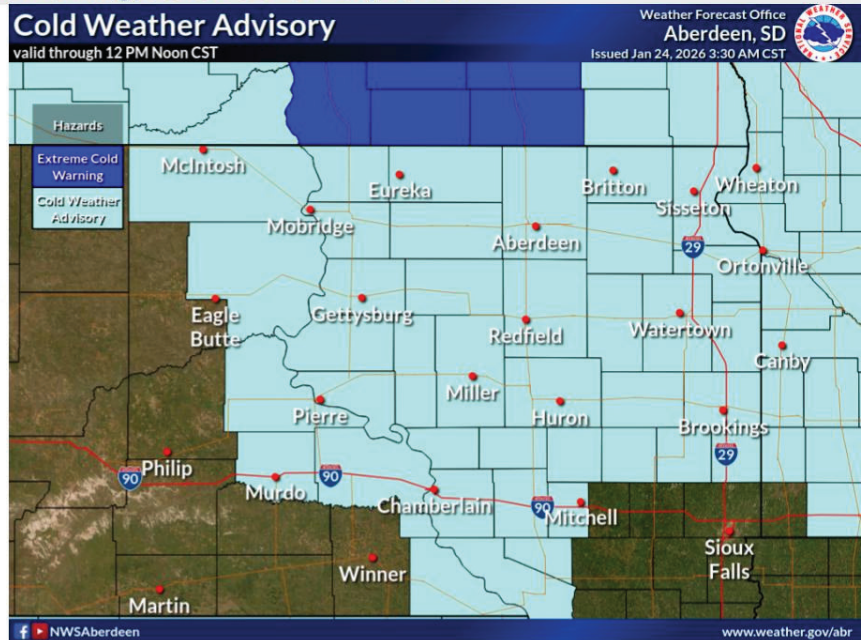
January 24, 2026

3:41 AM CST

Dangerously cold wind chills this morning, as low as -30° expected.

Key Messages:

- A **Cold Weather Advisory** remains in effect until **12 PM CST today**.
 - **Wind chills as low as -30° will be possible through this morning.**
 - The area under the advisory includes northeastern SD, western MN, and parts of central and north central SD.
- At these temperatures, frostbite can occur on exposed skin in as little as 10 minutes. If you must go outside, dress in layers, including a hat, face mask, and gloves.
- Keep pets indoors as much as possible. Make sure that outdoor animals have a warm, dry shelter with access to food and unfrozen water.



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

A Cold Weather Advisory remains in effect until 12 PM Noon CST today for wind chills as low as -30 degrees. At these temperatures, frostbite can occur on exposed skin in as little as 10 minutes. If you must go outside, dress in layers, including a hat, face mask, and gloves. Also, keep pets indoors as much as possible.

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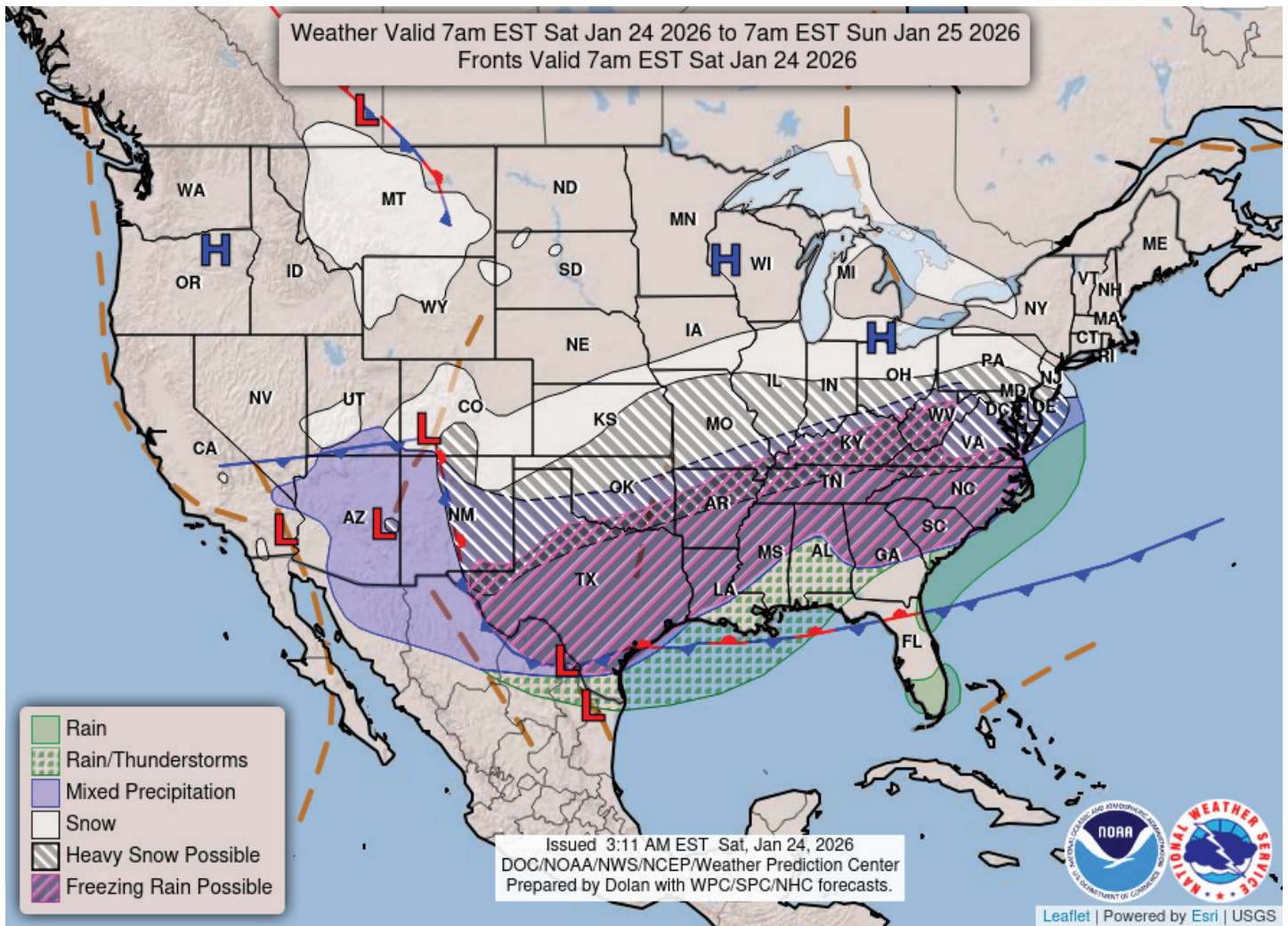
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: -4 °F at 3:59 PM
Low Temp: -18 °F at 5:52 AM
Wind: 21 mph at 1:16 AM
Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 60 in 1981
Record Low: -35 in 1915
Average High: 24
Average Low: 1
Average Precip in Jan.: 0.44
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.44
Precip Year to Date: 0.00
Sunset Tonight: 5:27 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:00 am



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Today in Weather History

January 24, 1972: Snowfall of a dusting to as much as 8 inches accompanied by 30 to 40 mph winds resulted in widespread blowing and drifting snow across much of South Dakota. Many roads were blocked by drifting snow. Visibilities were near zero at times. Many activities were canceled or postponed.

January 24, 1985: Blizzard conditions associated with an Arctic front moved into western Minnesota and northeast South Dakota during the afternoon and continued into the evening. The blizzard brought travel to a standstill. Winds increased to 40 to 60 mph. Many roads were closed due to drifts of snow. Temperatures fell rapidly behind the front with wind chills of 30 to 50 below zero overnight. There were some accidents and stranded motorists. Many vehicles went into the ditch, with many people stranded. The National Guard was called upon to search for stranded motorists. Portions of northeast South Dakota experienced near-blizzard conditions as wind speeds gusted to near 60 mph with dangerous travel conditions.

1916 — The temperature at Browning MT plunged 100 degrees in just 24 hours, from 44 degrees above zero to 56 degrees below zero. It was a record 24 hour temperature drop for the U.S. (Weather Channel) (National Severe Storms Forecast Center)

1935 — Snowstorms hit the northeastern U.S. and the Pacific Northwest producing record 24 hour snowfall totals of 23 inches at Portland ME and 52 inches at Winthrop MA. (David Ludlum)

1940: A record-breaking 19.9 inches of snow fell in Richmond, Virginia, on this day. The storm, which began on the 23rd, produced 21.6 inches of snow for the Richmond area. The headline in the Richmond Times-Dispatch was "Blizzard Sweeps State, Bringing Deep Snow; Public Schools Closed."

1956 — Thirty-eight inches of rain deluged the Kilauea Sugar Plantation of Hawaii in 24 hours, including twelve inches in just one hour. (David Ludlum)

1963 — A great arctic outbreak reached the southern U.S. The cold wave broke many records for duration of cold weather along the Gulf Coast. A reading of 15 degrees below zero at Nashville TN was an all-time record low for that location. (David Ludlum)

1967: A tornado outbreak across the Central U.S. was the furthest north ever recorded in the winter up to that time. Severe weather occurred across a good portion of the southeast and east-central Iowa. Two-inch hail fell at Armstrong, and over two dozen tornadoes were reported. Five miles north of Fort Madison, one fatality occurred from a tornado, along with six injuries. A tornado causing F4 damage killed 3 people and injured 216 in St. Louis County, Missouri. Storms also affected parts of northern and central Illinois. One strong tornado in Mason County killed one person and injured three others. Another tornado moved across the Champaign-Urbana metropolitan area, injuring five people. Other strong tornadoes were reported across Carroll County in Mt. Carroll, where 12 people were injured, and near Gladstone in Henderson County. Funnel clouds were reported across the southwest section of Chicago, IL. Iowa had never recorded a tornado in January before this outbreak. 32 total tornadoes occurred, 14 of them in Iowa. Nine twisters occurred in Missouri, 8 in Illinois, and 1 in Wisconsin.

1982 — Chinook winds plagued the foothills of southeastern Wyoming and northern and central Colorado for the second straight Sunday. The winds gusted to 140 mph at Wondervu CO, located northeast of Denver. Chinook winds a week earlier produced wind gusts to 137 mph. (Storm Data)

1988 — A blizzard rapidly developed in the north central U.S. In just one hour weather conditions in eastern North Dakota switched from sunny skies, light winds and temperature readings in the 20s, to rapidly falling temperatures and near zero visibility in snow and blowing snow. High winds in Wyoming, gusting to 72 mph at Gillette, produced snow drifts sixteen feet high. Northwestern Iowa experienced its second blizzard in just 24 hours. High winds in Iowa produced wind chill readings as cold as 65 degrees below zero. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Heavy snow blanketed the Rockies and the Northern High Plains Region. Hettinger ND received 12 inches of snow. Wolf Creek Pass CO was blanketed with 16 inches of snow in just 24 hours. Severe cold prevailed across Alaska. Between the 24th and the 29th of January, a total of thirty stations in the state report all-time record low temperatures. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 — A deep low pressure system brought high winds and heavy snow to the western Aleutian Islands of Alaska. Winds gusting to 82 mph at Shemya reduced the visibility to near zero in blowing snow. Rain and gale force winds lashed the northern Pacific coast. Thunderstorms produced locally heavy rains over the central Gulf coast states. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



The Greater Purpose of Blessings

Just as the Lord blesses you, He wants you to be a blessing to others.

Psalms 67:1-7:

- 1 God be gracious to us and bless us, And cause His face to shine upon us-- Selah.
- 2 That Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations.
- 3 Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You.
- 4 Let the nations be glad and sing for joy; For You will judge the peoples with uprightness And guide the nations on the earth. Selah.
- 5 Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You.
- 6 The earth has yielded its produce; God, our God, blesses us.
- 7 God blesses us, That all the ends of the earth may fear Him.

It is God's nature to bless. However, we need to understand that His purpose is likely greater than we realize. His ultimate goal is far more expansive than just to make us happy or prosperous. In fact, it is never the Lord's intention for His blessings to end with us. He wants them to flow out to others as part of His plan for the whole earth.

As we can see in today's psalm, the Lord blesses us so that His salvation, ways, and justice may be known by every nation and people group around the globe (vv. 2-4, 7). He is always acting with this larger picture in mind—even while working in the minute details of individual lives.

Knowing this should fill us with an awesome yet humble sense of significance. Every believer has a part in helping others know and understand the one true God (Matthew 28:19-20). Each of His blessings benefits us and, at the same time, is intended to further this cause. If we're willing to fit our requests into God's greater plans, we will experience the joy of being used by Him for great purposes.

When the Lord blesses you, He's not only doing something for you; He's also doing something in and through you. Ask God how to use His gifts as a way to point people to 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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The Groton Independent

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.23.26

30 42 49 53 66 4

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$285,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.21.26

11 30 39 48 51 4

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$13,560,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 43 Mins 10 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.23.26

6 16 17 18 29 4

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 58 Mins 10 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.21.26

11 15 25 27 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$214,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 58 Mins 10 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.21.26

16 20 28 36 52 12

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 27 Mins 10 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.21.26

11 26 27 53 55 12

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 27 Mins 10 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Dupree 61, Harding County 51
Faith 61, Bison 39
Hill City 66, Philip 32
Milbank 65, Florence-Henry 27
Timber Lake 55, Lemmon High School 45, OT
Wagner 82, Burke 59
Wall 88, New Underwood 65
Winner 55, Bennett County 41
Panhandle Conference Tournament=
Consolation=
Edgemont 40, Fullerton, Neb. 33

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

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Hill City 82, Philip 55
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 43, Kimball-White Lake 28
LMC Tournament=
Faith 56, Timber Lake 40
Harding County 68, Dupree 20
Lemmon High School 68, Newell 39
McIntosh High School 42, Bison 36

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

How the old and new U.S. defense strategies differ on traditional priorities

By The Associated Press undefined

The new U.S. National Defense Strategy released by President Donald Trump's administration is the first since 2022 and contrasts with its predecessor, issued under former President Joe Biden. Here's a look at how the two Pentagon strategies address some of the traditional concerns of U.S. security policy.

The Western Hemisphere

2022: "The United States derives immense benefit from a stable, peaceful, and democratic Western Hemisphere that reduces security threats to the homeland. To prevent distant threats from becoming a challenge at home, the Department will continue to partner with countries in the region to build capability and promote security and stability.

"As in all regions, the Department will work collaboratively, seeking to understand our partners' security needs and areas of mutual concern."

2026: "We will actively and fearlessly defend America's interests throughout the Western Hemisphere. We will guarantee U.S. military and commercial access to key terrain, especially the Panama Canal, Gulf of America, and Greenland. We will provide President Trump with credible military options to use against narco-terrorists wherever they may be. We will engage in good faith with our neighbors, from Canada to our partners in Central and South America, but we will ensure that they respect and do their part to defend our shared interests. And where they do not, we will stand ready to take focused, decisive action

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that concretely advances U.S. interests.”

Russia and European security

2022: “The Department will maintain its bedrock commitment to NATO collective security, working alongside Allies and partners to deter, defend, and build resilience against further Russian military aggression and acute forms of gray zone coercion. As we continue contributing to NATO capabilities and readiness — including through improvements to our posture in Europe and our extended nuclear deterrence commitments — the Department will work with Allies bilaterally and through NATO’s established processes to better focus NATO capability development and military modernization to address Russia’s military threat.”

2026: “Russia will remain a persistent but manageable threat to NATO’s eastern members for the foreseeable future.”

“European NATO dwarfs Russia in economic scale, population, and, thus, latent military power. At the same time, although Europe remains important, it has a smaller and decreasing share of global economic power. It follows that, although we are and will remain engaged in Europe, we must — and will — prioritize defending the U.S. Homeland and deterring China.”

“Fortunately, our NATO allies are substantially more powerful than Russia — it is not even close. Germany’s economy alone dwarfs that of Russia. At the same time, under President Trump’s leadership, NATO allies have committed to raise defense spending to the new global standard of 5% of GDP in total, with 3.5% of GDP invested in hard military capabilities. Our NATO allies are therefore strongly positioned to take primary responsibility for Europe’s conventional defense, with critical but more limited U.S. support. This includes taking the lead in supporting Ukraine’s defense.”

China and the Indo-Pacific

2022: “The NDS (National Defense Strategy) directs the Department to act urgently to sustain and strengthen U.S. deterrence, with the People’s Republic of China (PRC) as the pacing challenge for the Department.”

“The most comprehensive and serious challenge to U.S. national security is the PRC’s coercive and increasingly aggressive endeavor to refashion the Indo-Pacific region and the international system to suit its interests and authoritarian preferences.”

“The PRC’s increasingly provocative rhetoric and coercive activity towards Taiwan are destabilizing, risk miscalculation, and threaten the peace and stability of the Taiwan Strait. This is part of a broader pattern of destabilizing and coercive PRC behavior that stretches across the East China Sea, the South China Sea, and along the Line of Actual Control.”

“The Department will support Taiwan’s asymmetric self-defense commensurate with the evolving PRC threat and consistent with our one China policy.”

2026: “Were China — or anyone else, for that matter — to dominate this broad and crucial region, it would be able to effectively veto Americans’ access to the world’s economic center of gravity, with enduring implications for our nation’s economic prospects, including our ability to reindustrialize. That is why the NSS (National Security Strategy) directs DoW (Department of War) to maintain a favorable balance of military power in the Indo-Pacific.

“Not for purposes of dominating, humiliating, or strangling China. To the contrary, our goal is far more scoped and reasonable than that: It is simply to ensure that neither China nor anyone else can dominate us or our allies. This does not require regime change or some other existential struggle. Rather, a decent peace, on terms favorable to Americans but that China can also accept and live under, is possible.”

North Korea

2022: “The Department will continue to deter attacks through forward posture; integrated air and missile defense; close coordination and interoperability with our ROK (South Korea) Ally; nuclear deterrence; resilience initiatives; and the potential for direct cost imposition approaches that come from globally deployable Joint Forces.”

2026: “With its powerful military, supported by high defense spending, a robust defense industry, and mandatory conscription, South Korea is capable of taking primary responsibility for deterring North Korea with critical but more limited U.S. support. South Korea also has the will to do so, given that it faces a

direct and clear threat from North Korea.”

Middle East

2022: “As the Department continues to right-size its forward military presence in the Middle East following the mission transition in Afghanistan and continuing our ‘by, with, and through’ approach in Iraq and Syria, we will address major security challenges in the region in effective and sustainable ways.”

“The Department will prioritize cooperation with our regional and global partners that results in their increased ability to deter and defend against potential aggression from Iran, for example by working to advance integrated air and missile defense, maritime security, and irregular warfare capabilities. Working in concert with global and interagency partners, the Department will redouble efforts to support regional security coalitions within the Gulf Cooperation Council and among states in the region to ensure maritime security and improve collective intelligence and warning.”

2026: “DoW will empower regional allies and partners to take primary responsibility for deterring and defending against Iran and its proxies, including by strongly backing Israel’s efforts to defend itself; deepening cooperation with our Arabian Gulf partners; and enabling integration between Israel and our Arabian Gulf partners, building on President Trump’s historic initiative, the Abraham Accords. As we do, DoW will maintain our ability to take focused, decisive action to defend U.S. interests.”

Iran’s Revolutionary Guard commander warns the US, says his force has its ‘finger on the trigger’

By ELENA BECATOROS Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran’s paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, a force which was key in putting down recent nationwide protests in a crackdown that left thousands dead, is “more ready than ever, finger on the trigger,” its commander said Saturday, as U.S. warships headed toward the Middle East.

Nournews, a news outlet close to Iran’s Supreme National Security Council, reported on its Telegram channel that the commander, Gen. Mohammad Pakpour, warned the United States and Israel “to avoid any miscalculation.”

“The Islamic Revolutionary Guards and dear Iran stand more ready than ever, finger on the trigger, to execute the orders and directives of the Commander-in-Chief,” Nournews quoted Pakpour as saying.

Tension remains high between Iran and the U.S. in the wake of a bloody crackdown on protests that began on Dec. 28, triggered by the collapse of Iran’s currency, the rial, and swept the country for about two weeks.

Trump’s warnings

U.S. President Donald Trump has repeatedly warned Tehran, setting two red lines for the use of military force: the killing of peaceful demonstrators and the mass execution of people arrested in the protests.

Trump has repeatedly said Iran halted the execution of 800 people detained in the protests. He has not elaborated on the source of the claim — which Iran’s top prosecutor, Mohammad Movahedi, strongly denied Friday in comments carried by the judiciary’s Mizan news agency.

On Thursday, Trump said aboard Air Force One that the U.S. was moving warships toward Iran “just in case” he wants to take action.

“We have a massive fleet heading in that direction and maybe we won’t have to use it,” Trump said.

A U.S. Navy official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss military movements, said Thursday that the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln and other warships traveling with it were in the Indian Ocean.

Trump also mentioned the multiple rounds of talks American officials had with Iran over its nuclear program before Israel launched a 12-day war against the Islamic Republic in June, which also saw U.S. warplanes bomb Iranian nuclear sites. He threatened Iran with military action that would make earlier U.S. strikes against Iranian uranium enrichment sites “look like peanuts.”

“They should have made a deal before we hit them,” Trump said.

Airline jitters

The tension has led at least two European airlines to suspend some flights to the wider region.

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Air France cancelled two return flights from Paris to Dubai over the weekend. The airline said it was "closely following developments in the Middle East in real time and continuously monitors the geopolitical situation in the territories served and overflowed by its aircraft in order to ensure the highest level of flight safety and security." It said it would resume its service to Dubai later Saturday.

Luxair said it had postponed its Saturday flight from Luxembourg to Dubai by 24 hours "in light of ongoing tensions and insecurity affecting the region's airspace, and in line with measures taken by several other airlines."

It told the AP it was closely monitoring the situation "and a decision on whether the flight will operate tomorrow will be taken based on the ongoing assessment."

Arrivals information at Dubai's international airport also showed the cancellation of Saturday flights from Amsterdam by Dutch carriers KLM and Transavia. The airlines did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Some KLM flights to Tel Aviv in Israel were also canceled on Friday and Saturday, according to online flight trackers.

Rising death toll

Although there have been no further demonstrations in Iran for days, the death toll reported by activists has continued to rise as information trickles out despite the most comprehensive internet blackout in Iran's history, which has now lasted more than two weeks.

The U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency on Saturday put the death toll at 5,137, with the number expected to increase. More than 27,700 people have been arrested, it said.

The group's figures have been accurate in previous unrest and rely on a network of activists in Iran to verify deaths. That death toll exceeds that of any other round of protest or unrest there in decades, and recalls the chaos surrounding Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Iran's government offered its first death toll on Wednesday, saying 3,117 people were killed. It said 2,427 were civilians and security forces, and labeled the rest as "terrorists." In the past, Iran's theocracy has undercounted or not reported fatalities from unrest.

Russia attacks Ukraine ahead of second day of peace talks between US and both countries

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian attacks on Ukraine killed at least one person and wounded 31 overnight into Saturday as negotiators from Ukraine, Russia and the United States were to meet in the United Arab Emirates for a second day of talks to end Russia's nearly four-year full-scale invasion.

One person was killed and four were wounded in Russian drone attacks on the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, according to Kyiv City Military Administration head Tymur Tkachenko.

In Ukraine's second-largest city, Kharkiv, drone attacks wounded 27 people, Kharkiv regional head Oleh Syniehubov said Saturday.

The attacks came as envoys were expected to meet in Abu Dhabi, the UAE capital, for a second day of talks on Saturday. The talks are the first known instance that officials from the Trump administration have sat down with both countries as part of Washington's push for progress to end Moscow's nearly 4-year-old invasion.

The UAE's foreign ministry said the talks are part of efforts "to promote dialogue and identify political solutions to the crisis." The White House described Friday's first day as productive.

Following the latest attacks, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha slammed Russian President Vladimir Putin over the onslaught.

"Cynically, Putin ordered a brutal massive missile strike against Ukraine right while delegations are meeting in Abu Dhabi to advance the America-led peace process," Sybiha wrote on X. "His missiles hit not only our people, but also the negotiation table."

There has been a flurry of diplomatic activity in recent days, from Switzerland to the Kremlin, even though serious obstacles remain between both sides.

While Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in Davos, Switzerland, on Thursday that a potential peace deal was “nearly ready,” certain sensitive sticking points — most notably those related to territorial issues — remain unresolved.

Just hours before the three-way talks began, Putin discussed a Ukraine settlement with U.S. President Donald Trump’s envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner during marathon overnight talks. The Kremlin insists that to reach a peace deal, Kyiv must withdraw its troops from the areas in the east that Russia illegally annexed but has not fully captured.

Firefighters battle blaze on top floors of Bronx apartment

NEW YORK (AP) — Firefighters battled a blaze early Saturday on the top two floors of a high-rise apartment in New York City, according to fire officials.

The 4-alarm fire in the Bronx started shortly after midnight and spread to multiple apartments in the 17-story building, according to a statement from the New York City Fire Department.

There was no immediate word on what caused the fire.

More than 200 fire and emergency crew were working at the scene, according to the fire department.

It was not immediately clear if anyone had been injured.

In video posted online, flames could be seen engulfing part of the top floors of the building.

Freezing and in the dark, Kyiv residents are stranded in tower blocks as Russia targets power system

By DEREK GATOPOULOS, VASILISA STEPANENKO, and VOLODYMYR YURCHUK Associated Press
KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Olena Janchuk spends another day of freezing isolation in her high-rise apartment. The former kindergarten teacher has severe rheumatoid arthritis, and has been trapped for weeks on the 19th floor of her Kyiv tower block, 650 steps from the ground.

Long daily blackouts caused by Russia’s bombardment of power plants and transmission lines have made working elevators a luxury.

With January temperatures plummeting to minus 10 degrees Celsius (14 degrees Fahrenheit), there’s a permanent line of frost on the inside of Janchuk’s windows, white patterns creeping across the glass by morning.

The 53-year-old huddles over a makeshift fireplace of candles arranged beneath stacked bricks, designed to absorb and slowly release heat. USB charging cables snake across the floor from overloaded power strips, while her electric blanket is hooked up to a power bank rationed for the coldest hours.

“When there’s no light and heat for seventeen and a half hours, you have to come up with something,” she said. “The bricks work best in a small room, so we stay in there.”

By day, the family shifts into rooms that catch the winter sun, the function of each space changing with the blackout schedule. At night, heavy clothes stay on indoors as the apartment cools rapidly without central heating.

Kyiv, a city of about 3 million people, is dominated by tower blocks, many from the Soviet era, now left without power for most of the day.

In this fourth winter of war, electricity is a rationed commodity.

Residents plan their lives around electricity schedules: when to cook, shower, charge phones and run washing machines. Food is chosen for shelf life, water filtered into bottles and stored in buckets. Small camping gas burners are used to heat soup or tea when the power is out.

Sleep is fractured by air raid sirens and the need to use electricity during off-peak hours.

Outside, across snow-covered Kyiv, diesel generators rumble on commercial streets. Shoppers navigate aisles using phone flashlights, and bars glow by candlelight.

Apps notify users of narrowing electricity windows — usually just a few hours — enough for a household reboot.

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Life gets harder on the higher floors

Janchuk's 22-story building is located near a power station and residents can see the missile and drone attacks firsthand, flashes lighting up the horizon at night.

During blackouts, they climb the stairs in darkness, phone lights bouncing off concrete steps, often accompanied by the echo of children and barking dogs. People sometimes leave plastic bags with cookies or water inside elevators for those who get stuck when the power cuts midride.

Janchuk's husband, out working most of the day, brings the groceries in the evening while her mother, 72-year-old Lyudmila Bachurina, is in charge of chores.

"It's cold, but we manage," the mother says, holding a square USB-charged flashlight she recently mounted on the wall. "When the lights come on, I start turning on the washing machine, fill up water bottles, cook food, charge power banks, run around the kitchen and run around the house."

In upscale neighborhoods, residents pool funds for generators to keep elevators running. But most blocks — home to pensioners, families and people with disabilities — cannot afford them.

Disability advocates, including groups representing wounded war veterans, say staircases have become an invisible social barrier, cutting people off inside their own homes.

They are urging city officials to fund generators for residential buildings.

Until then, life bends around the electricity timetable. USB lamps, power banks and inverter batteries have become household staples. Telegram chats help neighbors check on the elderly and swap blackout updates.

From upper floors, Kyivans look out over a skyline of high rises and the city's historic golden-domed churches. At night, flashes of explosions are visible as Russia continues its campaign against Ukraine's energy system.

Russia has inflicted vast damage on Ukraine's infrastructure

Too many power stations and transmission lines have been hit to meet demand, even with electricity imports from Europe. To prevent a grid collapse, operators impose rolling blackouts, keeping hospitals and critical services alive while homes go dark.

At one coal-fired power plant struck repeatedly, shift supervisor Yuriy walks through wreckage of charred machinery, collapsed roofs and control panels melted into useless lumps. Repairs are carried out by torchlight, giant sandbags shielding what still works. Photographs of colleagues killed on the job hang near the entrance.

"After missile and drone attacks, the consequences are terrible — large-scale," he said.

Officials asked that the plant's location and Yuriy's full name not be disclosed for security reasons.

"Our energy equipment has been destroyed. It is expensive," Yuriy said. "Right now, we're restoring what we can."

Ukraine's energy sector has suffered more than \$20 billion in direct war damage, according to a joint estimate by the World Bank, the European Commission and the United Nations.

Kyiv has repeatedly updated its austere winter power-saving schedule, dimming or cutting streetlights in low-traffic areas and investing in less centralized power generation.

In the tower blocks, restoration feels far off.

"I'm tired, really tired, to be honest. When you can't go outside, when you don't see the sun, when there's no light and you can't even go to the store on your own. ... It wears you down," Bachurina said.

"But the important thing, as all Ukrainians say now, is that we will endure anything until the war ends."

A suicide bomber strikes a wedding in northwestern Pakistan and kills 7 people

DERA ISMAIL KHAN, Pakistan (AP) — A suicide bomber detonated an explosive vest among guests at a wedding ceremony in northwestern Pakistan on Friday, killing at least seven people and wounding 25, police said.

The attack took place at the home of Noor Alam Mehsud, a pro-government community leader in Dera

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Ismail Khan, a district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, said local police chief Adnan Khan. He said officers transported the victims to a hospital, where some of the wounded were listed in critical condition.

The ceremony was underway, with guests dancing to the beat of drums, when the bomber struck.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack. However, suspicion is likely to fall on the Pakistani Taliban, also known as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan or TTP, who have carried out numerous attacks in the country in recent years. The group is separate from but allied with the Afghan Taliban.

TTP has been emboldened since the Afghan Taliban returned to power in neighboring Afghanistan in 2021 when U.S. and NATO troops left the country after 20 years of war. Many TTP leaders and fighters have found sanctuaries in Afghanistan since the Taliban takeover there.

Stranded by winter weather? Here's what airlines owe you

By RIO YAMAT AP Airlines and Travel Writer

Winter weather can upend even the best-laid travel plans, but one less thing to worry about is losing money if your flight is canceled: U.S. airlines are required to provide refunds.

A major, dayslong winter storm is threatening to bring snow, sleet, ice and extensive power outages to about half the U.S. population. Thousands of weekend flights already have been canceled, and forecasters warn that catastrophic damage, especially in areas pounded by ice, could rival that of a hurricane.

Here's a guide for travelers as flight disruptions start stacking up:

Keep an eye on weather forecasts

When airlines expect bad weather to create problems for flights, they often give travelers a chance to postpone their trips by a few days without having to pay a fee. Search online for your airline's name and "travel alerts" or similar phrases to look for possible rescheduling offers.

American Airlines, for example, said it is waiving change fees for passengers impacted by the storm, which brought freezing rain to parts of Texas on Friday. The Texas-based airline has canceled more than 1,200 flights scheduled to depart Saturday, according to aviation analytics firm Cirium.

American also added extra flights to and from Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport through at least Sunday — totaling more than 3,200 additional seats.

Check before going to the airport

Use the airline's app to make sure your flight is still on before heading to the airport. Cancellations can happen hours or even days before departure time.

My flight was canceled, now what?

If you're already at the airport, get in line to speak to a customer service representative. If you're still at home or at your hotel, call or go online to connect to your airline's reservations staff. Either way, it helps to also research alternate flights while you wait to talk to an agent.

Most airlines will rebook you on a later flight for no additional charge, but it depends on the availability of open seats.

Can I get booked on another airline?

You can, but airlines aren't required to put you on another carrier's flight. Some airlines, including most of the biggest carriers, say they can put you on a partner airline, but even then it can be a hit or miss.

Am I owed a refund?

If your flight was canceled and you no longer want to take the trip, or you've found another way to get to your destination, the airline is legally required to refund your money — even if you bought a non-refundable ticket. It doesn't matter why the flight was canceled.

The airline might offer you a travel credit, but you are entitled to a full refund. You are also entitled to a refund of any bag fees, seat upgrades or other extras that you didn't get to use.

When will I get my refund?

If you paid with a credit card, a refund is due within seven business days after you decline an offer from the airline for another flight or a voucher, and within 20 calendar days if you paid for the ticket with a check or cash, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation.

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What else will my airline cover?

U.S. airlines aren't required by the Transportation Department to compensate passengers for meals or lodging when an airline cancels or significantly delays a flight during an "uncontrollable" event like bad weather.

Each airline, however, does have its own policies for assisting passengers who are stranded by a so-called "controllable" flight cancellation or long delay. These include disruptions caused by maintenance issues, crew shortages or computer outages that halt operations. The Transportation Department can hold airlines accountable for these commitments and maintains a website that lets travelers see what each airline promises if a major disruption is their fault.

Other tips

If the weather forecast is troubling, Kyle Potter, executive editor of Thrifty Traveler, suggests looking into booking a backup flight. Some airlines stand out as potential backups, Potter says, because they let customers get a full refund as long as they cancel within 24 hours of booking.

The customer service phone lines will be slammed if flight cancellations and delays start stacking up during a bad storm. If you're traveling with someone who has a higher frequent-flyer status, call the airline using their priority number. Another trick: Look up the airline's international support number. Those agents can often rebook you just the same.

After accepting US deportees, South Sudan wanted sanctions relief for top official, documents show

By JOSEPH FALZETTA Associated Press

JUBA, South Sudan (AP) — After agreeing to accept deportees from the United States last year, South Sudan sent a list of requests to Washington that included American support for the prosecution of an opposition leader and sanctions relief for a senior official accused of diverting over a billion dollars in public funds.

The requests, contained in a pair of diplomatic communications made public by the State Department this month, offer a glimpse into the kind of benefits that some governments may have sought as they negotiated with the U.S. over the matter of receiving deportees.

In the documents, the U.S. expresses "appreciation" to South Sudan for accepting the deportees and details the names, nationalities and crimes for which each individual was convicted.

In July, South Sudan became the first African country to receive third-country deportees from the U.S. Rwanda, Eswatini, Ghana and Equatorial Guinea have since received deportees.

The eight deportees to South Sudan included nationals of Mexico, Cuba, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar and South Sudan itself.

Contentious deportations

They arrived in the South Sudanese capital of Juba after spending weeks on a U.S. military base in Djibouti, where they were held after a U.S. court temporarily blocked their deportation. Six of the eight men remain at a residential facility in Juba under the supervision of security personnel.

South Sudanese national Dian Peter Domach was later freed, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, while Jesus Munoz-Gutierrez, a Mexican, was repatriated in September.

South Sudanese officials have not publicly said what long-term plan is in place for those still in custody. The third-country deportations were highly contentious, criticized by rights groups and others who expressed concern South Sudan would become a dumping ground.

Details of the deal between the U.S. and South Sudan remain murky. It is still unclear what, if anything, South Sudan may have actually received or been promised. The documents only offer a glimpse into what the South Sudanese government hoped to get in return.

In other cases, Human Rights Watch said it saw documents showing the U.S. agreed to pay Rwanda's government around \$7.5 million to take up to 250 deportees. The U.S. will give Eswatini \$5.1 million to take up to 160 deportees, according to the group.

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For South Sudan, in one communication dated May 12 and marked confidential, South Sudan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs raised eight "matters of concern which the Government of South Sudan believes merit consideration." These ranged from the easing of visa restrictions for South Sudanese nationals to the construction of a rehabilitation center and "support in addressing the problem of armed civilians."

Request to lift sanctions

But an eye-catching ask was for the lifting of U.S. sanctions against former Vice President Benjamin Bol Mel as well as Washington's support for the prosecution of opposition leader Riek Machar, the now-suspended first vice president of South Sudan who faces treason, murder and other criminal charges in a controversial case.

The allegations against Machar stem from a violent incident in March, when an armed militia with historical ties to him attacked a garrison of government troops. Machar's supporters and some activists describe the charges as politically motivated.

Bol Mel is accused of diverting more than a billion dollars earmarked for infrastructure projects into companies he owns or controls, according to a U.N. report. He wielded vast influence in the government and was touted by some as Kiir's likely successor in the presidency until he was dismissed and placed under house arrest in November.

Bol Mel was also viewed as a key figure behind the prosecution of Machar, one of the historical leaders of South Sudan's ultimately successful quest for independence from Sudan in 2011.

Machar was Kiir's deputy when they fell out in 2013, provoking the start of civil war as government troops loyal to Kiir fought forces loyal to Machar.

A 2018 peace agreement brought Machar back into government as the most senior of five vice presidents. His prosecution has been widely criticized as a violation of that agreement, and has coincided with a spike in violence that the U.N. says killed more than 1,800 people between January and September 2025.

The U.N. has also warned that a resurgence of fighting has brought the country "back to the edge of a relapse into civil war." Machar is under house arrest in Juba while his criminal trial proceeds slowly.

In its communications with the U.S., South Sudan also asked for sanctions to be lifted over South Sudanese oil companies "to encourage direct foreign investments," and for the U.S. to consider investing in other sectors including fossil fuels, minerals and agriculture.

When asked if the U.S. government had provided or promised South Sudan anything in return for accepting the deportees, a State Department official said, "In keeping with standard diplomatic practice, we do not disclose the details of private discussions."

A spokesman for South Sudan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thomas Kenneth Elisapana, declined to comment.

US aid cuts

Despite accepting the U.S. request to admit deportees, relations between the two governments have been strained in recent months.

In December, the U.S. threatened to reduce aid contributions to the country, accusing the government of imposing fees on aid groups and obstructing their operations.

The U.S. has historically been one of the largest donors to South Sudan, providing roughly \$9.5 billion in aid since 2011. Over the years, South Sudan's government has struggled to deliver many of the basic services of a state, and years of conflict have left the country heavily reliant on foreign aid.

Scale of Iran's nationwide protests and bloody crackdown come into focus even as internet is out

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The bloodiest crackdown on dissent since Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution is slowly coming into focus, despite authorities cutting off the Islamic Republic from the internet and much of the wider world.

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Cities and towns smell of smoke as fire-damaged mosques and government offices line streets. Banks have been torched, their ATMs smashed. Officials estimate the damage to be at least \$125 million, according to an Associated Press tally of reports by the state-run IRNA news agency from over 20 cities.

The number of dead demonstrators reported by activists continues to swell. Activists warn it shows Iran engaging in the same tactics it has used for decades, but at an unprecedented scale — firing from rooftops on demonstrators, shooting birdshot into crowds and sending motorcycle-riding paramilitary Revolutionary Guard volunteers in to beat and detain those who can't escape.

"The vast majority of protesters were peaceful. The video footage shows crowds of people — including children and families — chanting, dancing around bonfires, marching on their streets," said Raha Bahreini, of Amnesty International. "The authorities have opened fire unlawfully."

The killing of peaceful protesters — as well as the threat of mass executions — have been a red line for military action for U.S. President Donald Trump. An American aircraft carrier and warships are approaching the Mideast, possibly allowing Trump to launch another attack on Iran after bombing its nuclear enrichment sites last year. That risks igniting a new Mideast war.

Iran's mission to the United Nations did not respond to detailed questions from the AP regarding the suppression of the demonstrations.

Protests over rial spiral

The demonstrations began Dec. 28 at Tehran's historic Grand Bazaar, initially over the collapse of Iran's currency, the rial, then spread across the country.

Tensions exploded on Jan. 8, with demonstrations called for by Iran's exiled crown prince, Reza Pahlavi. Witnesses in Tehran told the AP before authorities cut internet and phone communication that they saw tens of thousands of demonstrators on the streets.

As communications failed, gunfire echoed through Tehran.

"Many witnesses said they had never seen such a large number of protesters on the streets," said Bahar Saba of Human Rights Watch. "Iranian authorities have repeatedly shown they have no answers other than bullets and brutal repression to people taking to the streets."

Ali Akbar Pourjamshidian, a deputy interior minister speaking on state TV Wednesday, acknowledged the violence began in earnest on Jan. 8.

"More than 400 cities were involved," he said.

By Jan. 9, Revolutionary Guard Gen. Hossein Yekta, previously identified as leading plainclothes units of the force, went on Iranian state TV and warned "mothers and fathers" to keep their children home.

"Tonight you all must be vigilant. Tonight is the night for keeping mosques, all bases everywhere filled with 'Hezbollahi,'" Yekta said, using a word for "followers of God" that carries the connotation of fervent supporters of Iran's theocracy.

Already weakened by the 12-day war Israel launched against Iran in June, the authorities decided to fully employ violence to end the demonstrations, experts said.

"I think the regime viewed it as this was a moment of existential threat and that they could either allow it to play out and allow the protests to build and allow foreign powers to increase their rhetoric and increase their demands on Iran," said Afshon Ostovar, an expert on the Revolutionary Guard and professor at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California.

"Or they could turn out the lights, kill as many people as necessary ... and hope they could get away with it. And I think that's what they ultimately did."

Basij key in disrupting protests

In Iran, one of the main ways its theocracy can squash demonstrations is through the Basij, the Guard's volunteer arm.

Mosques in Iran include facilities for the Basij. Guard Gen. Heydar Baba Ahmadi was quoted by the semi-official Mehr news agency in 2024 as estimating "79% of Basij resistance bases are located in mosques and 5% in other holy places."

Iranian state media repeatedly has aired images of mosques damaged in the protests without exploring their links to the Basij.

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"Most neighborhood Basij bases are co-located with mosques and most neighborhood Basij leaders are associated with the mosque leadership," Ostovar said, adding that demonstrators "going after regime targets" associated with repression would have considered them "a legitimate part of it."

Videos show Basij holding long guns, batons and pellet guns. Anti-riot police can be seen wearing helmets and body armor, carrying assault rifles and submachine guns.

The videos show police firing shotguns into crowds, something authorities deny despite corpses showing wounds consistent with metal birdshot. Scores have reportedly suffered blinding eye wounds from birdshot — something seen in the protests around the 2022 death of Mahsa Amini.

Iran's semiofficial ILNA news agency reported that Tehran's Farabi Eye Hospital, the premiere clinic for eye injuries, called in "all current and retired doctors" to help those injured.

We "received accounts that the security forces were just firing relentlessly at protesters," said Bahreini of Amnesty International.

"They're not just targeting one or two people to create a climate of terror for people to disperse ... but just relentlessly firing at thousands of protesters and chasing after them, even as they were fleeing so that more people were just collapsing to the ground with severe gunshot wounds."

Casualties grow as crackdown intensifies

For two weeks, Iran offered no overall casualty figures. Then on Wednesday, the government said 3,117 people were killed, including 2,427 civilians and security forces. That left another 690 dead that Pourjamshidian identified as "terrorists."

That conflicts with figures from the U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency, which put the death toll on Saturday at 5,137, based on activists inside Iran verifying fatalities against public records and witness statements. It said 4,834 were demonstrators, 208 were government-affiliated personnel, 54 were children and 41 were civilians not participating in protests.

Death tolls in Iran have long been inflated or deflated for political reasons. But the fact that Iran's theocracy offered any death toll — and gave a number beyond any other political unrest to strike the country in the modern era — underlines the scale of what happened.

It also provides a justification for the ongoing mass arrest campaign and internet shutdown. State media report dozens to hundreds of people detained daily.

Pourjamshidian also gave an extensive list of vandalism from the protests and crackdown, including 750 banks, 414 government buildings, 600 ATMs and hundreds of vehicles that sustained damage.

Meanwhile, uncertainty looms for Iran's theocracy over what Trump may or may not do.

Traditionally, Iranians hold memorial services for their late loved ones 40 days after their deaths — meaning the country could see renewed demonstrations around Feb. 17. Online videos from Behesht-e Zahra, the massive cemetery on the outskirts of Tehran, show mourners chanting: "Death to Khamenei!"

Satellite photos from Planet Labs PBC analyzed by the AP show large numbers of cars daily at Behesht-e Zahra's southern reaches, where those killed in the demonstrations are being buried.

Elaheh Mohammadi, a journalist at Tehran's pro-reform newspaper Ham Mihan, recently noted it had been shut by authorities. She said journalists were working on stories about Behesht-e Zahra they weren't able to publish.

"We send out a message to let people know we're still alive," Mohammadi wrote online. "The city smells of death."

"Hard days have passed and everyone is stunned; a whole country is in mourning, a whole country is holding back tears, a whole country has a lump in its throat."

Channing Tatum, Olivia Wilde and Charli xcx premiere movies at Sundance Film Festival

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

PARK CITY, Utah (AP) — The Sundance Film Festival was in full swing Friday in Park City, with Channing Tatum, Olivia Wilde and Charli xcx movies premiering back-to-back at the storied Eccles Theatre in the evening.

First up was "Josephine," writer-director Beth De Araujo's raw drama about an 8-year-old girl (Mason Reeves) whose life and sense of safety is upended after she witnesses a sexual assault in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park. Tatum and Gemma Chan play the parents who are unsure how to help her navigate these new emotions and fears. The film, which is part of the U.S. Dramatic Competition, is based on De Araujo's own experience of seeing something scarring at that age.

There wasn't a seat to spare, and over 400 people on the waitlist were unable to get in. Afterward the crowd gave a long standing ovation as the filmmaker and actors came onstage for a Q&A.

Araujo discovered Reeves at a San Francisco farmer's market, where she told her mother she was casting for someone to play Tatum and Chan's daughter.

Reeves said one of her favorite parts of the film was a scene in which she and Tatum eat a jelly doughnut.

"I only ate the outside and fed the jelly part to him," Reeves said.

Tatum chimed in: "That is true."

He also praised his young co-star, saying "how good is she?" He watched the film for the first time with the Sundance audience and said he cried "five, six, seven times."

The next film, Gregg Araki's "I Want Your Sex," brought a distinct change in tone to the Eccles. It's the story of a college graduate in his early 20s (played by Cooper Hoffman) who gets his first job as a kind of intern/assistant to a renowned art world provocateur named Erika Tracy (Wilde), who Araki described as "bold, daring and very controversial," a cross between Robert Mapplethorpe and Madonna.

"It's the story of their affairs and the impact it has on this kid's life and how it kind of turns his whole world upside down," Araki told The Associated Press. "It's fun, it's colorful, it's sexy. And it's a ride."

It's a film that Araki has been working on for over 10 years, as it evolved from a comic "Fifty Shades of Grey" with a female intern to what it is now.

"After #MeToo and Harvey Weinstein, all the stuff that was going on, it was literally like, I don't really want to see a woman getting dragged around by the hair," Araki said. "I don't want to seed that kind of patriarchal dynamic, even if it's consensual."

Flipping the gender roles and making the young intern a man made the movie more interesting for Araki, "as a filmmaker who has always been heavily influenced by feminist film theory and feminism in general," he said.

At the same time, he was absorbing news stories about Gen Z and how they don't have sex or relationships anymore and a new dynamic emerged.

"What I knew as an old person, as an old-timer, in terms of socialization, dating, sex, all of this stuff that seemed to be kind of falling away," Araki said. "And so that kind of became a major theme of the movie."

Things Wilde's character says are things he has also said in interviews about sex and sexuality. Her character gets into generational debates about it. And ultimately it's sex positive.

"It was very important to me to make something sex positive," Araki said. "I Want Your Sex" is like the opposite of "Babygirl," which I found to be very sex negative."

Wilde said after the premiere that she wished "more people made movies" like Araki: getting a cool group of people together and making something fun in a noncorporate environment.

The film also features a supporting turn from Charli xcx, who was a fan of Araki and whose "Brat" album cover was partially inspired by the title credits to his film "Smiley Face." When she heard about this new movie, he said, she asked if she could be in it. He was interested, but told her agent that she needed to do a self-tape "like everyone else" to play the part of Hoffman's girlfriend.

"The character is not her. That's what's so fun," he said. "She's American, she's super uptight and kind

of pill.”

She filmed her scenes in one day, on a two-day break in the middle of her Brat tour.

It was a Charli xcx double feature at the Eccles with the world premiere of her self-referential mockumentary “The Moment,” in which she plays a version of herself grappling with the end of “brat summer,” before it hits theaters Jan. 30.

“This movie is about the end of an era, and obviously this is the end of an era for Sundance in Park City,” Charli xcx said. “We feel really honored to be here.”

After the premiere she said, “I like to think I’m not as much of a nightmare as Charli in the film.”

Earlier Friday the world premiere of William David Caballero’s mixed-media film “TheyDream” immersed viewers in the intimate story of a Puerto Rican family learning to process grief through art. Caballero and cowriter Elaine Del Valle have screened short films at Sundance in the past but were honored to bring a full-length feature to the festival.

“Sundance has always been about possibility for me — about artists being given space to take creative risks and tell personal stories,” Del Valle, who is also a producer on the film, told AP. “Bringing our first feature, especially in Sundance’s final year in Utah, carries a different weight.”

Over 8,000 flights canceled as major winter storm bears down across much of the US

By EMILIE MEGNIEN, JEFF AMY and JAMIE STENGLE Associated Press

DALLAS (AP) — More than 8,000 flights across the U.S. set to take off over the weekend have been canceled as a major storm expected to wreak havoc across much of the country bears down, threatening to knock out power for days and snarl major roadways.

Roughly 140 million people were under a winter storm warning from New Mexico to New England. The National Weather Service forecast warns of widespread heavy snow and a band of catastrophic ice stretching from east Texas to North Carolina.

Forecasters say damage, especially in areas pounded by ice, could rival that of a hurricane.

By Friday night, the edge of the storm was sending freezing rain and sleet into parts of Texas while snow and sleet were falling in Oklahoma. After sweeping through the South, the storm was expected to move into the Northeast, dumping about a foot (30 centimeters) of snow from Washington through New York and Boston, the weather service predicted.

Governors in more than a dozen states sounded the alarm about the turbulent weather ahead, declaring emergencies or urging people to stay home.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott told residents on the social media platform X that the state Department of Transportation was pretreating the roads and told residents, “Stay home if possible.”

More than 3,400 flights were delayed or canceled Saturday, according to the flight tracking website FlightAware. More than 5,000 were called off for Sunday.

Angela Exstrom was supposed to fly back to Omaha, Nebraska, from a trip in Mexico, but she learned her Saturday flight out of Houston had been canceled. So instead, she is going back via Los Angeles.

“If you live in the Midwest and travel in the winter, stuff can happen,” she said.

Frigid temperatures and ice

Utility companies braced for power outages because ice-coated trees and power lines can keep falling long after a storm has passed.

The Midwest saw wind chills as low as minus 40 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 40 Celsius), meaning that frostbite could set in within 10 minutes.

In Bismarck, North Dakota, where the wind chill was minus 41 (minus 41 Celsius), Colin Cross was bundled up Friday in long johns, two long-sleeve shirts, a jacket, hat, hood, gloves and boots as he cleaned out an empty unit for the apartment complex where he works.

“I’ve been here awhile and my brain stopped working,” Cross said.

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The storm has been a popular topic of discussion for days at Saint Paul Mini Market in Baltimore.

"Every single person that walks in talks about the storm," said owner Ayaz Ahmed.

"Somehow, this time around, they did a good job letting people know that here's a storm coming their way, and everybody knows about the storm, but how to deal with that is another thing," Ahmed said.

Government prepares to respond

The federal government put nearly 30 search and rescue teams on standby. Officials had more than 7 million meals, 600,000 blankets and 300 generators placed throughout the area the storm was expected to cross, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

President Donald Trump said via social media on Friday that his administration was coordinating with state and local officials and "FEMA is fully prepared to respond."

After the storm passes, it will take a while to thaw out. Ice can add hundreds of pounds to power lines and branches and make them more susceptible to snapping, especially if it's windy.

In at least 11 Southern states from Texas to Virginia, a majority of homes are heated by electricity, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

A severe cold snap five years ago took down much of the power grid in Texas, leaving millions without power for days and resulting in hundreds of deaths. Abbott vowed that will not happen again, and utility companies were bringing in thousands of employees to help keep the lights on.

Church, Carnival and classes canceled

Churches moved Sunday services online, and the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, Tennessee, decided to hold its Saturday night radio performance without fans. Carnival parades in Louisiana were canceled or rescheduled.

Philadelphia announced schools would be closed Monday. Superintendent Tony B. Watlington Sr. told students, "It's also appropriate to have one or two very safe snowball fights."

Some universities in the South canceled classes for Monday, including the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the University of Mississippi's main campus in Oxford.

At the University of Georgia, in Athens, sophomore Eden England stayed on campus to ride things out with friends, even as the school encouraged students to leave dorms and go home because of concerns about losing power.

"I'd rather be with my friends," England said, "kind of struggling together if anything happens."

Court records raise doubts that ICE is detaining the 'worst of the worst' in Maine

By PATRICK WHITTLE, HOLLY RAMER and LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — Immigration and Customs Enforcement has highlighted the detention of people whom it called some of Maine's most dangerous criminals during operations this past week, but court records paint a more complicated picture.

Federal officials say more than 100 people have been detained statewide in what ICE dubbed "Operation Catch of the Day," a reference to the fishing industry. ICE said in a statement that it was arresting the "worst of the worst," including "child abusers and hostage takers."

Court records show some were violent felons. But they also show other detainees with unresolved immigration proceedings or who were arrested but never convicted of a crime.

Immigration attorneys and local officials say similar concerns have surfaced in other cities where ICE has conducted enforcement surges and many of those targeted lacked criminal records.

One case highlighted by ICE that involves serious felony offenses and criminal convictions is that of Sudan native Dominic Ali. ICE said Ali was convicted of false imprisonment, aggravated assault, assault, obstructing justice and violating a protective order.

Court records show Ali was convicted in 2004 of violating a protective order and in 2008 of second-degree assault, false imprisonment and obstructing the reporting of a crime. In the latter case, prosecutors said

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he threw his girlfriend to the floor of her New Hampshire apartment, kicked her and broke her collarbone. "His conduct amounted to nothing less than torture," Judge James Barry said in 2009 before sentencing Ali to five to 10 years in prison.

Ali was later paroled to ICE custody, and in 2013 an immigration judge ordered his removal. No further information was available from the Executive Office for Immigration Review, and it remains unclear what happened after that order.

Other cases were more nuanced, like that of Elmara Correia, an Angola native whom ICE highlighted in its public promotion of the operation, saying she was "arrested previously for endangering the welfare of a child."

Maine court records show someone with that name was charged in 2023 with violating a law related to learner's permits for new drivers, a case that was later dismissed.

Correia filed a petition Wednesday challenging her detention, and a judge issued a temporary emergency order barring authorities from transferring her from Massachusetts, where she is being held. Her attorney said she entered the United States legally on a student visa about eight years ago and has never been subject to expedited removal proceedings.

"Was she found not guilty, or are we just going to be satisfied that she was arrested?" Portland Mayor Mark Dion said during a news conference in which he raised concerns that ICE failed to distinguish between arrests and convictions or explain whether sentences were served.

Dion also pointed to another person named in the release: Dany Lopez-Cortez, whom ICE said is a "criminal illegal alien" from Guatemala who was convicted of operating under the influence.

ICE highlighted Lopez-Cortez's case among a small group of examples it said reflected the types of arrests made during the operation. Dion questioned whether an operating-under-the-influence conviction, a serious offense but one commonly seen in Maine, should rise to the level of ICE's "worst of the worst" public narrative.

Boston immigration attorney Caitlyn Burgess said her office filed habeas petitions Thursday on behalf of four clients who were detained in Maine and transferred to Massachusetts.

The most serious charge any of them faced was driving without a license, Burgess said, and all had pending immigration court cases or applications.

"Habeas petitions are often the only tool available to stop rapid transfers that sever access to counsel and disrupt pending immigration proceedings," she said.

Attorney Samantha McHugh said she filed five habeas petitions on behalf of Maine detainees Thursday and expected to file three more soon.

"None of these individuals have any criminal record," said McHugh, who is representing a total of eight detainees. "They were simply at work, eating lunch, when unmarked vehicles arrived and immigration agents trespassed on private property to detain them."

Federal court records show that immigration cases involving criminal convictions can remain unresolved or be revisited years later.

Another whose mug shot was included in materials on "the worst of the worst" of those detained in Maine is Ambessa Berhe.

Berhe was convicted of cocaine possession and assaulting a police officer in 1996 and cocaine possession in 2003.

In 2006 a federal appeals court in Boston vacated a removal order for him and sent the case back to the Board of Immigration Appeals for further consideration.

According to the ruling, Berhe was born in Ethiopia and later taken to Sudan by his adoptive parents. The family was admitted to the United States as refugees in 1987, when he was about 9.

ICE has said the operation is targeting about 1,400 immigrants in a state of about 1.4 million people, roughly 4% of whom are foreign-born.

More than half the US threatened with ice, snow and cold in massive winter storm

By EMILIE MEGNIEN, JEFF AMY and JAMIE STENGLE Associated Press

DALLAS (AP) — Freezing rain fell in parts of Texas on Friday as a huge, dayslong winter storm began a trek that threatened to bring snow, sleet, ice, bone-chilling temperatures and extensive power outages to about half the U.S. population. Forecasters warned that catastrophic damage, especially in areas pounded by ice, could rival that of a hurricane.

Schools in Chicago and other Midwestern cities called off classes, airlines canceled thousands of weekend flights, churches moved Sunday services online and the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, Tennessee, decided to hold its Saturday night radio performance without fans. Carnival parades in Louisiana were canceled or rescheduled.

At least 182 million people were under watches or warnings for ice and snow, and more than 210 million were under cold weather advisories or warnings. In many places those overlapped.

Utility companies braced for power outages because ice-coated trees and power lines can keep falling long after a storm has passed.

"It's going to be a big storm," Maricela Resendiz said as she picked up chicken, eggs and pizzas at a Dallas store to get her, her 5-year-old son and her boyfriend through the weekend. Her plans: "Staying in, just being out of the way."

Freezing rain slickened roads in Lubbock, Texas, in the afternoon as temperatures dropped.

After sliding into the South, the storm was expected to move into the Northeast, dumping about a foot (30 centimeters) of snow from Washington through New York and Boston, the National Weather Service predicted.

Arctic air was the first piece to fall in place

Frigid air that spilled down from Canada prompted the cancellations of classes at schools throughout the Midwest. Wind chills as low as minus 40 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 40 Celsius) meant that frostbite could set in within 10 minutes, making it too dangerous to walk to school or wait for the bus.

In Bismarck, North Dakota, where the wind chill was minus 41 (minus 41 Celsius), Colin Cross cleaned out an empty unit for the apartment complex where he works.

"I've been here awhile and my brain stopped working," said Cross, bundled up in long johns, two long-sleeve shirts, a jacket, hat, hood, gloves and boots.

Despite the bitter cold, a protest over an immigration crackdown went on as planned in Minnesota, with thousands demonstrating in downtown Minneapolis.

Nationwide, nearly 5,000 flights were delayed or canceled Friday, many of them in Dallas and Chicago, according to the flight tracking website FlightAware. About 2,800 were called off for Saturday.

In Oklahoma, Department of Transportation workers treated roads with salt brine, the Highway Patrol canceled troopers' days off and National Guard units were activated to help stranded drivers.

The federal government put nearly 30 search and rescue teams on standby. Officials had more than 7 million meals, 600,000 blankets and 300 generators placed throughout the area the storm was expected to cross, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

President Donald Trump said via social media that his administration was coordinating with state and local officials and "FEMA is fully prepared to respond."

Ice could take down power lines, and pipes could freeze

After the storm passes, it will take a while to thaw out. Ice can add hundreds of pounds to power lines and branches and make them more susceptible to snapping, especially if it's windy.

In at least 11 Southern states from Texas to Virginia, a majority of homes are heated by electricity, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

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In Atlanta, where temperatures could dip to 10 degrees (minus 12 Celsius) and stay below freezing for 36 hours, M. Cary & Daughters Plumbing co-owner Melissa Cary ordered all the pipe and repair supplies she could get. She predicted that her daily calls could go from about 40 to several hundred.

"We're out there; we can't feel our fingers, our toes; we're soaking wet," Cary said. "I keep the hot chocolate and soup coming."

Northeast braces for possibly heaviest snow in years

Boston declared a cold emergency through the weekend, and Connecticut was working with neighboring New York and Massachusetts in case travel restrictions are needed on major highways.

Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont urged people to go grocery shopping now and "stay home on Sunday."

Philadelphia announced schools would be closed Monday. Superintendent Tony B. Watlington Sr. told students, "It's also appropriate to have one or two very safe snowball fights."

Hunkering down

Whitni Slater, who has been sleeping in his car in Detroit, got scared when he saw the weather forecast and searched for a place to stay. On Thursday night he slept on one 80 cots set up in a gymnasium at the Pope Francis Center.

"It was very welcoming, very warm," Slater said the next day.

But in Charleston, West Virginia, visitors and vendors at the three-day Hunting and Fishing Show were not too worried. Ron Blymire was focused on selling South Africa safari trips and not on navigating the roads back home to Columbus, Ohio.

"I have a four-wheel-drive truck, and as long as I'm patient and take my time, I'm not concerned about getting stranded or stuck or anything like that," he said.

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Trump administration's defense strategy tells allies to handle their own security

By KONSTANTIN TOROPIN and COURTNEY BONNELL Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Pentagon released a priority-shifting National Defense Strategy late Friday that chastised U.S. allies to take control of their own security and reasserted the Trump administration's focus on dominance in the Western Hemisphere above a longtime goal of countering China.

The 34-page document, the first since 2022, was highly political for a military blueprint, criticizing partners from Europe to Asia for relying on previous U.S. administrations to subsidize their defense. It called for "a sharp shift — in approach, focus, and tone." That translated to a blunt assessment that allies would take on more of the burden countering nations from Russia to North Korea.

"For too long, the U.S. Government neglected — even rejected — putting Americans and their concrete interests first," read the opening sentence.

It capped off a week of animosity between President Donald Trump's administration and traditional allies like Europe, with Trump threatening to impose tariffs on some European partners to press a bid to acquire Greenland before announcing a deal that lowered the temperature.

As allies confront what some see as a hostile attitude from the U.S., they will almost certainly be unhappy to see that Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's department will provide "credible options to guarantee U.S. military and commercial access to key terrain," especially Greenland and the Panama Canal.

Following a tiff this week at the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, Switzerland, with Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, the strategy at once urges cooperation with Canada and other neighbors while still issuing a stark warning.

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"We will engage in good faith with our neighbors, from Canada to our partners in Central and South America, but we will ensure that they respect and do their part to defend our shared interests," the document says. "And where they do not, we will stand ready to take focused, decisive action that concretely advances U.S. interests."

Much like the White House's National Security Strategy that preceded it, the defense blueprint reinforces Trump's "America First" philosophy, which favors nonintervention overseas, questions decades of strategic relationships and prioritizes U.S. interests. The National Defense Strategy last was published in 2022 under then-President Joe Biden and focused on China as America's "pacing challenge."

Western Hemisphere

The strategy simultaneously courts help from partners in America's backyard, while warning them that the U.S. will "actively and fearlessly defend America's interests throughout the Western Hemisphere."

It specifically points to access to the Panama Canal and Greenland. It comes just days after Trump said he reached a "framework of a future deal" on Arctic security with NATO leader Mark Rutte that would offer the U.S. "total access" to Greenland, a territory of NATO ally Denmark.

Danish officials, who spoke Thursday on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive negotiations, say formal negotiations have yet to begin.

Trump previously suggested that the U.S. should potentially consider retaking control of the Panama Canal and accused Panama of ceding influence to China. Asked this week if the U.S. reclaiming the canal was still on the table, Trump demurred.

"I don't want to tell you that," the president responded. "Sort of, I must say, sort of. That's sort of on the table."

The Pentagon also touted the operation that ousted Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro earlier this month, saying "all narco-terrorists should take note."

China and the greater Asia-Pacific region

The new policy document views China — which the Biden administration saw as a top adversary — as a settled force in the Indo-Pacific region that only needs to be deterred from dominating the U.S. or its allies.

The goal "is not to dominate China; nor is it to strangle or humiliate them," the document says. It later adds, "This does not require regime change or some other existential struggle."

"President Trump seeks a stable peace, fair trade, and respectful relations with China," it says, which follows efforts to climb down from a trade war sparked by the administration's sky-high tariffs. It says it will "open a wider range of military-to-military communications" with China's army.

The strategy, meanwhile, makes no mention of or guarantee to Taiwan, the self-governing island that Beijing claims as its own and says it will take by force if necessary. The U.S. is obligated by its own laws to give military support to Taiwan.

By contrast, the Biden administration's 2022 strategy said the U.S. would "support Taiwan's asymmetric self-defense."

In another example of offloading regional security to allies, the document says, "South Korea is capable of taking primary responsibility for deterring North Korea with critical but more limited U.S. support."

Europe

While saying that "Russia will remain a persistent but manageable threat to NATO's eastern members for the foreseeable future," the defense strategy asserts that NATO allies are much more powerful and so are "strongly positioned to take primary responsibility for Europe's conventional defense."

It says the Pentagon will play a key role in NATO "even as we calibrate U.S. force posture and activities in the European theater" to focus on priorities closer to home.

The U.S. already has confirmed that it will reduce its troop presence on NATO's borders with Ukraine, with allies expressing concern that the Trump administration might drastically cut their numbers and leave a security vacuum as European countries confront an increasingly aggressive Russia.

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What Trump officials and immigration lawyers say about ICE detaining a 5-year-old

By STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The detention of a 5-year-old Ecuadorian boy with his father outside their home in Minnesota has become the latest lightning rod for America's divisions on immigration under the Trump administration. Versions offered by government officials and the family's attorney and neighbors offer contradictory versions of whether the parents were given adequate opportunity to leave the child with someone else.

Neighbors and school officials say that federal immigration officers used the preschooler as "bait" by telling him to knock on the door to his house so that his mother would answer.

The Department of Homeland Security calls that description of events an "abject lie." It says the father, Adrian Alexander Conejo Arias, fled on foot and left the boy, Liam Conejo Ramos, in a running vehicle in their driveway.

The dueling narratives come just two weeks after the deadly shooting of Renee Good in Minneapolis by a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer that witnesses also viewed as a blatant abuse of power — and that the government defended as a legitimate act of self-defense.

The father and son are now at family detention facility in Dilley, Texas, near San Antonio.

Federal officials say the father was in the U.S. illegally, without offering details. Stephen Miller, the White House deputy chief of staff, said he came illegally in December 2024.

The family's attorney said he had a pending asylum claim allowing him to stay in the country.

Both can be true. The government may have tried deporting him after determining he entered illegally but he may have exercised a legal right to seek asylum, putting his removal on hold until a judge rules on his claim.

An online court summary shows the case was filed on Dec. 17, 2024, and is assigned to the immigration court inside the Dilley detention center.

Here's a look at what various officials, lawyers and others are saying about the case:

School officials say ICE used the boy as 'bait'

Columbia Heights Public Schools Superintendent Zena Stenvik told reporters that the officers instructed

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the boy to knock on the door to his home to see if other people were inside, "essentially using a 5-year-old as bait," she said.

The father told the child's mother, who was inside, not to open the door, Stenvik said.

School officials said the agents wouldn't leave Liam with other adults.

A photo of the boy wearing a beanie and a Spiderman backpack has circulated widely on social media, sparking strong reactions.

"Why detain a 5-year-old?" the superintendent asked. "You cannot tell me that this child is going to be classified as a violent criminal."

Other adults at the scene wanted to care for the boy

School officials said other adults at the scene offered to care for the boy but were ignored by agents, including a neighbor who said they had papers authorizing her to take care of Liam on behalf of the parents.

Mary Granlund, school board chair for Columbia Heights, said she told agents that she also could take care of him.

ICE denies what school officials and neighbors said

"ICE did NOT target, arrest a child or use a child as 'bait,'" said Homeland Security spokeswoman Tricia McLaughlin. "ICE law enforcement officers were the only people primarily concerned with the welfare of this child."

McLaughlin said the child was abandoned and officers tried extensively to get the mother to take custody of the child. "Officers even assured her she would NOT be taken her into custody."

The officers, she said, "abided by the father's wishes to keep the child with him."

Bovino and ICE officials criticize media coverage

At a news conference Friday, Border Patrol Commander at Large Greg Bovino criticized what he called the "false media narrative" about the case.

Marcos Charles, acting executive associate director of ICE enforcement and removal operations, faulted the father for "abandoning his child in the middle of winter in a vehicle." He told reporters one officer stayed with the child while others arrested the father. He said his officers then got food for the boy, and "did everything they could to reunite him with his family."

"Tragically, when we approached the door of his residence, the people inside refused to take him in and open the door. ... Fortunately, Conejo Arias eventually requested that his child stay with him," Charles said.

And Charles said he didn't know what had become of the child's mother.

Where are the father and son now?

They're at a family detention center in Dilley, Texas, where families have reported that children are malnourished, ill and suffering from prolonged detention. Conditions there are worse than ever, said Leecia Welch, chief legal counsel at Children's Rights, who visited the facility last week.

"The number of children had skyrocketed and significant numbers of children had been detained for over 100 days," Welch said. The administration in December acknowledged that about 400 children had faced extended detention.

"Nearly every child we spoke to was sick," Welch said.

Bovino pointed out that when U.S. citizens anywhere in the country are arrested and jailed by their local police, they get separated from their children.

"I challenge any other law enforcement agency anywhere nationwide to show me the fantastic care that ICE and the U.S. Border Patrol provide children," Bovino said.

If Liam wasn't with his father, Bovino said, he could have ended up in the custody of social services without a parent instead.

Charles said people at the family centers "get top-notch care. They have medical care. The food is good. They have learning services. They have church services available. They have recreation."

The family's lawyer was unable to reach them

The family's lawyer, Marc Prokosch, said Thursday that he assumed Liam and his father were in a family holding cell but that he did not have direct contact with them.

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"We're looking at our legal options to see if we can free them either through some legal mechanisms or through moral pressure," he said at a news conference Thursday.

On Friday, Prokosch's office said he was unavailable to comment.

What is the Trump administration's policy on detaining children?

The child's immigration status may be a critical factor, and it is unclear if the 5-year-old was legally in the United States. If he wasn't, he may be subject to deportation with one or both parents. Charles, the ICE official, said Friday that the family entered the United States together, suggesting the he was not a U.S.-born citizen.

Trump border czar Tom Homan has repeatedly said parents of U.S.-born children have a choice to take their children with them when deported or leave them with someone else.

"This is parenting 101. You can decide to take that child with you or you can decide to leave the child with a relative or another spouse," Homan said last year on CBS' "Face the Nation."

The Trump administration last July issued a "Detained Parents Directive" that if minor children are encountered during ICE enforcement actions, ICE "should under no circumstances take custody of children or transport them." The directive includes exemptions for when people could lose their immigration status.

The directive says that ICE should allow parents and guardians to make alternate care arrangements for the children before their detention.

It does not specify what happens when the parents say that they want their child to stay with them.

"If a parent is arrested while with their child, the government is not required to arrest the child, regardless of the child's immigration status," said Neha Desai, managing director at Children's Human Rights and Dignity at the National Center for Youth Law. "When ICE detains a parent, its own policy requires them to allow time for arrangements to be made for the child's care."

Thousands rally against immigration enforcement in subzero Minnesota temperatures

By GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO, SARAH RAZA and JACK BROOK Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Police arrested about 100 clergy demonstrating against immigration enforcement at Minnesota's largest airport Friday, and several thousand gathered in downtown Minneapolis despite Arctic temperatures to protest the Trump administration's crackdown.

The protests are part of a broader movement against President Donald Trump's increased immigration enforcement across the state, with labor unions, progressive organizations and clergy urging Minnesotans to stay away from work, school and even shops. The faith leaders gathered at the airport to protest deportation flights and urge airlines to call for an end to to what the Department of Homeland Security has called its largest-ever immigration enforcement operation.

The clergy were issued misdemeanor citations of trespassing and failure to comply with a peace officer and were then released, said Jeff Lea, a Metropolitan Airports Commission spokesman. They were arrested outside the main terminal at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport because they went beyond the reach of their permit for demonstrating and disrupted airline operations, he said.

Rev. Mariah Furness Tollgaard of Hamline Church in St. Paul said police ordered them to leave but she and others decided to stay and be arrested to show support for migrants, including members of her congregation who are afraid to leave their homes. She planned to go back to her church after her brief detention to hold a prayer vigil.

"We cannot abide living under this federal occupation of Minnesota," Tollgaard said.

Protesters demand ICE leave Minnesota

The Rev. Elizabeth Barish Browne traveled from Cheyenne, Wyoming, to participate in the rally in downtown Minneapolis, where the high temperature was minus 9 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 23 degrees Celsius) despite a bright sun.

"What's happening here is clearly immoral," the Unitarian Universalist minister said. "It's definitely chilly, but the kind of ice that's dangerous to us is not the weather."

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Protesters have gathered daily in the Twin Cities since Jan. 7, when 37-year-old mother of three Renee Good was fatally shot by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer. Federal law enforcement officers have repeatedly squared off with community members and activists who track their movements.

Sam Nelson said he skipped work so he could join the march. He said he's a former student of the Minneapolis high school where federal agents detained someone after class earlier this month. That arrest led to altercations between federal officers and bystanders.

"It's my community," Nelson said. "Like everyone else, I don't want ICE on our streets."

Organizers said Friday morning that more than 700 businesses statewide have closed in solidarity with the movement, from a bookstore in tiny Grand Marais near the Canadian border to the landmark Guthrie Theater in downtown Minneapolis.

"We're achieving something historic," said Kate Havelin of Indivisible Twin Cities, one of the more than 100 participating groups.

FBI agent resigns over Good investigation

An FBI supervisory agent in Minnesota has resigned over the Justice Department's handling of the investigation into Good's killing, two people familiar with the matter said on Friday. The agent resigned because she felt pressured to not investigate the shooting in a way she felt the FBI would have ordinarily done, said the people, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss personnel moves.

The FBI declined to comment.

The Hennepin County Medical Examiner, meanwhile, posted Good's initial autopsy report online, which classified her death as a homicide and determined she died from "multiple gunshot wounds."

A more detailed independent autopsy commissioned by Good's family said one bullet pierced the left side her head and exited on the right side. This autopsy, released Wednesday through the Romanucci & Blandin law firm, said bullets also struck her in the arm and breast, although those injuries weren't immediately life-threatening.

Detention of a 2-year-old and a 5-year-old

A 2-year-old was reunited with her mother Friday, a day after she was detained with her father outside of their home in South Minneapolis, lawyer Irina Vaynerman told The Associated Press.

Vaynerman said they had quickly challenged the family's detention in federal court. The petition states that the child, a citizen of Ecuador, was brought to the U.S. as a newborn. The child and her father, Elvis Tipan Echeverria, both have a pending asylum application and neither are subject to final orders of removal.

A U.S. district judge on Thursday had barred the government from transferring the toddler out of state, but she and her father were on a commercial flight to Texas about 20 minutes later, according to court filings. They were flown back Friday.

Agents arrested Tipan Echeverria during a "targeted enforcement operation," according to a DHS statement. DHS said the child's mother was in the area but refused to take the child.

Vaynerman rejected that explanation, saying Tipan Echeverria was "not allowed" to bring his 2-year-old to her mother inside their home.

DHS repeated its allegation Friday that the father of 5-year-old Liam Ramos abandoned him during his arrest by immigration officers in Columbia Heights on Tuesday, leading to the child being detained, too.

Department spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin said Liam was detained because his father, Adrian Alexander Conejo Arias, "fled from the scene." The two are detained together at the Dilley Detention Center in Texas, which is intended to hold families. McLaughlin said officers tried to get Liam's mother to take him, but she refused to accept custody.

The family's attorney Marc Prokosch said he thinks the mother refused to open the door to the ICE officers because she was afraid she would be detained. Columbia Heights district superintendent Zena Stenvik said Liam was "used as bait."

Prokosch found nothing in state records to suggest Liam's father has a criminal history.

On Friday, Border Patrol commander Gregory Bovino sought to shift the narrative away from Liam's detention by attacking the news media for, in his view, insufficient coverage of children who have lost

parents to violence by people in the country illegally. After briefly mentioning the 5-year-old during a news conference, he talked about a mother of five who was killed in August 2023.

Private guard called 911 in ICE detainee homicide, saying man 'kept going' after suicide attempt

By RYAN J. FOLEY and MICHAEL BIESECKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Cuban immigrant at a Texas detention center tried to hang himself, was restrained by guards in handcuffs, and stopped breathing during a subsequent struggle, according to a 911 call from a private security contractor.

A caller identifying himself as Lt. Paul Walden called for emergency help as medical staff tried to revive Geraldo Lunas Campos on Jan. 3 at Camp East Montana in El Paso, Texas. A county medical examiner ruled earlier this week that the death was a homicide.

"He tried to hang himself, and then we put him in cuffs, and he kept going," Walden said, according to a recording of the call The Associated Press obtained through a Texas public information request. He did not elaborate on how Lunas Campos tried to hang himself or what happened afterward. The City of El Paso redacted parts of the call to protect medical information.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, which oversees Camp East Montana, did not mention in its initial statement on the death that Lunas Campos had attempted suicide or been physically restrained. It did not immediately respond to questions Friday about the 911 call.

The 911 call lends some support to an amended description of the incident an agency spokesperson offered days later that guards intervened to help when Lunas Campos tried to kill himself. Lunas Campos "violently resisted the security staff and continued to attempt to take his life," and stopped breathing during the struggle, the spokesperson said.

A witness told The Associated Press last week that Lunas Campos was handcuffed as at least five guards held him down and one put an arm around his neck and squeezed until he was unconscious.

The El Paso County Medical Examiner's Office ruled the death of Lunas Campos, 55, a homicide caused by asphyxia due to compression to his neck and torso. Unlike many homicides, it is unclear whether any law enforcement agency outside of ICE is investigating the death.

The autopsy report said witnesses saw Lunas Campos become unresponsive while being restrained by guards. It found injuries consistent with guards holding him down and putting pressure on his neck and back until his body did not have enough oxygen to survive.

Camp East Montana was built last year to house thousands of immigrants in the desert at Fort Bliss, a massive Army base just a few miles from the U.S. border with Mexico.

The 911 caller, Walden, has been a detention officer with federal contractor Akima Global Services since Sept. 1, which was within days of the camp's opening, according to his Texas private security guard license. Walden, 25, didn't respond to messages left at a phone number and email address associated with him. Akima, which also did not return messages seeking comment, provides detention and security services for ICE.

A second Camp East Montana official called police asking for an investigation of the death shortly after Lunas Campos was declared dead, but was rebuffed, according to records and phone calls released Friday. That man said he did not witness the death but had been told it was a suicide.

ICE's initial statement on the death said Lunas Campos became disruptive while in line for medication, refused to return to his dorm and was placed in solitary confinement. The statement said staff then "observed him in distress" and contacted medical staff to treat him.

ICE took custody of Lunas Campos, who had lived in the U.S. since 1996, last July after an operation in Rochester, New York. An immigration judge had ordered his removal in 2005 after he'd been convicted of sexual contact with a minor, but his deportation never happened. He later served prison time on a drug charge, and he had been released from state supervision in New York in 2017.

Walden told the dispatcher that Lunas Campos, who had a history of bipolar disorder and anxiety, had

vomited and urinated on himself. He said Camp East Montana staffers were using a portable defibrillator to try to restore his heartbeat.

El Paso Fire Department paramedics found Lunas Campos "pulseless and apneic on the floor of his cell" as staff members performed CPR, according to an incident report obtained by AP. They provided "advanced life support" before he was pronounced dead.

An hour after Walden's call, a man identifying himself as Camp East Montana deputy director Daniel Rios called the county sheriff's office to request a death investigation. The county transferred the call to the city. Rios said he was driving to the camp and did not witness the death.

"I believe he just hung himself," Rios said. But he added that he didn't have details and, "I don't want to lie to you."

Rios called back an hour later after no one responded, asking when detectives would arrive. Records show the El Paso Police Department did not get involved.

US carries out first known strike on alleged drug boat since Maduro's capture

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. military said Friday that it has carried out a deadly strike on a vessel accused of trafficking drugs in the eastern Pacific Ocean, the first known attack since the raid that captured Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro earlier this month.

U.S. Southern Command said on social media that the boat was "engaged in narco-trafficking operations" and that the strike killed two people and left one survivor. It said it notified the Coast Guard to launch search and rescue operations for that person.

A video accompanying the post announcing the latest strike shows a boat moving through the water before exploding in flames. The U.S. military has focused lately on seizing sanctioned oil tankers with connections to Venezuela since the Trump administration launched an audacious raid to capture Maduro and bring him to New York to face drug trafficking charges.

With the latest military action, there have been 36 known strikes against alleged drug smuggling boats in South American waters since early September that killed at least 117 people, according to announcements from the U.S. military and Trump. The majority of those of strikes have occurred in the Caribbean Sea.

The last reported boat strikes occurred in late December, when the military said it struck five alleged drug-smuggling boats over two days, killing a total of eight people while others jumped overboard. Days later, the Coast Guard suspended its search.

The U.S. conducted a large-scale operation in Caracas, the capital of Venezuela, on Jan. 3 that led to the capture of Maduro and his wife, who were then flown to New York to face federal drug trafficking charges.

Maduro, before his capture, said the U.S. military operations were a thinly veiled effort to oust him from power.

President Donald Trump has repeatedly said that the U.S. strikes targeting alleged smugglers are having an enormous impact on slowing drug trafficking routes in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific.

"We've stopped — virtually stopped almost 100% of all drugs coming in by water," Trump said in remarks on Thursday at the World Economic Forum at Davos.

Former Olympic snowboarder on FBI's most-wanted list is arrested in Mexico, faces drug charges

By AMY TAXIN, RUSS BYNUM and JULIE WATSON Associated Press

ONTARIO, Calif. (AP) — Former Canadian Olympic snowboarder Ryan Wedding, a top FBI fugitive accused of moving some 60 tons of cocaine from Latin America into the United States annually and orchestrating several killings, was arrested in Mexico and then flown to California, officials said Friday.

Wedding, 44, turned himself in Thursday at the U.S. embassy in Mexico City. FBI Director Kash Patel said his arrest came after U.S. investigators worked with authorities in Mexico, Canada, Colombia and the

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Dominican Republic for more than a year.

Officials say Wedding moved cocaine between Colombia, Mexico, Canada and Southern California, and they believe he was working under the protection of the Sinaloa Cartel, one of Mexico's most powerful drug rings. Authorities said his aliases included "El Jefe," "Public Enemy" and "James Conrad Kin."

"He's the modern-day El Chapo," Patel told a news conference in California, comparing Wedding to the legendary former Sinaloa cartel kingpin Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, who is imprisoned in the U.S. after pleading guilty to drug trafficking charges.

Wedding was previously convicted in the U.S. of conspiracy to distribute cocaine and was sentenced to prison in 2010, federal records show. He now faces charges related to running a multinational drug trafficking ring as well as the killings of a federal witness and three other people.

It was not immediately known if Wedding had an attorney who could comment on his behalf. He had no lawyers listed in federal court records for the cases pending against him.

'It takes a united front'

U.S. authorities believe the former Olympian, who competed in a single event for his home country in the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, had been hiding in Mexico for more than a decade before his apprehension.

Wedding was added to the FBI's Ten Most Wanted Fugitives list last March, and authorities had offered a \$15 million reward for information leading to his arrest and conviction.

"When you go after a guy like Ryan Wedding, it takes a united front, and that's what you're seeing here," said Patel, who declined to give details about the arrest. He praised Mexico's government and "global partnerships" for their roles in the operation.

Mexico's Security Secretary Omar García Harfuch wrote on X earlier Friday that a Canadian citizen had turned himself in at the U.S. embassy. A member of Mexico's Security Cabinet later told The Associated Press that individual was Wedding. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly.

Wedding is expected to appear in federal court Monday, said Akil Davis, assistant director in charge of the FBI field office in Los Angeles.

Davis said 36 people have been arrested in connection with the drug ring Wedding is accused of running, and authorities seized large volumes of drugs, weapons and cash, as well as millions of dollars worth of automobiles, motorcycles, artwork and jewelry from Wedding and others charged in the case.

Charges of ordering killings

Wedding was indicted in the U.S. in 2024 on federal charges of running a criminal enterprise, murder, conspiring to distribute cocaine and other crimes.

The indictment says Wedding ran a billion-dollar drug trafficking group that was the largest supplier of cocaine to Canada. The group obtained cocaine from Colombia and worked with Mexican drug cartels to move drugs by boat and plane to Mexico and then into the U.S. using semitrucks, the indictment said. It said the group stored cocaine in Southern California before sending it to Canada and other U.S. states.

The murder charges accuse Wedding of directing the 2023 killings of two members of a Canadian family in retaliation for a stolen drug shipment, and for ordering a killing over a drug debt in 2024.

Last November, Wedding was indicted on new charges of orchestrating the killing of a witness in Colombia to help him avoid extradition to the U.S.

Authorities said Wedding and co-conspirators used a Canadian website called "The Dirty News" to post a photograph of the witness so he could be identified and killed. The witness was then followed to a restaurant in Medellín in January and shot in the head.

Wedding's arrest was also applauded in Canada, where he faces separate drug trafficking charges that date back to 2015. Gary Anandasangaree, Canada's minister of public safety, called it "a significant step forward" in an international fight against illegal drugs.

Second FBI fugitive also apprehended

Patel identified a second apprehended fugitive as Alejandro Rosales Castillo, a 27-year-old U.S. citizen charged with murder in the 2016 killing of a North Carolina woman. He also faces a federal charge of

unlawful flight to avoid prosecution. According to the FBI, Castillo was arrested a week ago in Mexico. Mexico has increasingly sent detained cartel members to the U.S. as the country attempts to offset mounting threats by U.S. President Donald Trump, who said last month U.S. forces "will now start hitting land" south of the border to target drug trafficking rings.

FACT FOCUS: As cold hits, Trump asks, where's global warming? Scientists say it's still here

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

As much of the United States faces numbing cold, treacherous ice and heavy snow from an enormous winter storm, President Donald Trump used social media to dispute that the world is warming.

In a 25-word post on his Truth Social account, the president Friday questioned how the world can be warming when it is so cold, and called the temperatures nearly unprecedented. He also called advocates and scientists "environmental insurrectionists."

More than a dozen scientists Friday told The Associated Press the president's claims were wrong. They point out that even in a warmer world, winter and cold occur, and they never said otherwise. They note that even as it is cold in the eastern United States, more of the world is warmer than average. They also stressed the difference between daily and local weather and long-term, planetwide climate change.

Meteorologists also said that global warming over the past couple of decades may make this cold seem unprecedented and record-smashing. But government records show it has been much colder in the past.

"This social media post crams a remarkable amount of inflammatory language and factually inaccurate assertions into a very short statement," said climate scientist Daniel Swain of the California Institute for Water Resources. "First of all, global warming continues — and has in fact been progressing at an increased rate in recent years."

Here's a closer look at the facts:

Climate change is still here

TRUMP: "WHATEVER HAPPENED TO GLOBAL WARMING???"

THE FACTS: "Global warming hasn't gone anywhere, it's here," Princeton University climate scientist Gabriel Vecchi said.

The last three years have been the warmest on record, increasing at significantly faster rate than they had been, data shows.

Globally, winter temperatures — December, January and February — have increased by 1.3 degrees Fahrenheit (0.72 degrees Celsius) since 1995, with the previous two winters the warmest on record, according to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration records. The United States has warmed slower than the rest of the world, about half a degree Fahrenheit (0.28 degrees Celsius) since 1995. Last month was the fifth-hottest December on record globally and in the United States.

Local cold differs from longer, global warming

Scientists note they talk about "global" when it comes to warming. The United States is only 2% of Earth's area — and west of the Rockies isn't that cold for this time of year. Global temperature maps show two-thirds of the United States is many degrees colder than normal and same for Russia. But Australia, Africa, the Arctic, Antarctica, Asia, Canada, much of Europe and even Greenland are warmer than normal.

"Even as the Earth warms, cold days and cold winters are not projected to disappear, just become fewer in number," said Princeton University climate scientist Michael Oppenheimer. "In addition, what happens in the U.S. during a brief period of days is not an indication of what's happening to the U.S. as a whole or the Earth as a whole over the long term."

There is even a theory among many scientists — but it is not yet a consensus — that the American East is getting more extreme winter outbreaks because of a warming Arctic, which is part of climate change.

"This is an active research area with uncertainty," said Northern Illinois University meteorology professor Victor Gensini. "One hypothesis is that Arctic warming reduces the temperature contrast between the pole and mid-latitudes, which can sometimes weaken or distort the jet stream and allow cold Arctic air to

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spill south. That said, not every cold outbreak can or should be attributed to climate change. Weather still has large natural variability.”

It has been colder in the past

TRUMP: “Record Cold Wave expected to hit 40 States. Rarely seen anything like it before.”

THE FACTS: Yes we have.

The National Weather Service forecasts Minneapolis to be minus-11 degrees on Saturday (minus-24 Celsius) and minus-13 (minus-25 Celsius) on Sunday, but that is nowhere near the records of minus-33 and minus-31 (minus-36 and minus-35 Celsius) set in 1904 there. Chicago is supposed to drop to 2 degrees (minus-17 Celsius) Saturday and 8 degrees (minus-13 Celsius) Sunday, but the record for those days are minus-15 and minus-20 (minus-26 and minus-29 Celsius) from 1897 and as recently as Jan. 30, 2019 it hit minus-23 (minus-31 Celsius) in Chicago. Fargo, North Dakota and Washington, D.C. are forecast to not come within a dozen degrees of the coldest day on record.

“Truly historic cold waves, like those in 1978–79, 1983–85, or earlier decades, were often colder and more persistent over large regions,” Gensini said. “We are also less accustomed to severe cold now because winters overall are warmer than they were several decades ago.”

Don’t expect too many broken records

Kristina Dahl, vice president of science at Climate Central, said a check of U.S. weather stations with at least 50 years of data finds 45 record lows set in January of this year — compared to 1,092 record highs.

While some daily records may fall, especially in the Plains, Texas and Louisiana, it will be “very hard to break long-period (100 years+) records with this cold blast,” said Ryan Maue, who was NOAA’s chief scientist in the end of Trump’s first term. Maue forecast that on Monday the Lower 48 states will average a low of 10 degrees Fahrenheit (minus-12 degrees Celsius) with more than 90% of the country below freezing. But in January 1985, the Lower 48 averaged a low of 4.1 degrees (minus-15.5 degrees Celsius), Maue tweeted.

Maue lauded Trump for “appropriately raising alarm about the impending severe cold. In a roundabout way, while he is trolling about global warming it seems to be on his mind.”

Wall Street drifts as Intel tumbles and gold’s price rises to another record

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S. stock market drifted through mixed trading Friday, as a zigzag week punctuated by loud threats and pullbacks finished with a quiet and tentative close.

The S&P 500 was basically flat and edged up by less than 0.1% but still notched a second straight week with a modest loss. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dipped 285 points, or 0.6%, and the Nasdaq composite rose 0.3%.

The majority of stocks on Wall Street fell, and Intel weighed on the market after tumbling 17%. The chip company reported better results for the end of 2025 than analysts expected. But investors focused instead on its forecast for the first three months of this year, which fell short of Wall Street’s expectations.

Chief Financial Officer David Zinsner said shortages of supplies are affecting the entire industry, and Intel expects available supply to hit a bottom early this year before improving in the spring and beyond. CEO Lip-Bu Tan highlighted the company’s opportunities created by the artificial-intelligence era.

Moves in the U.S. bond market were relatively modest following sharp swings early in the week, but other markets still showed potential signs of nervousness.

The U.S. dollar’s value fell against the Japanese yen, Swiss franc and other currencies. It had slid sharply early in the week after President Donald Trump threatened 10% tariffs on European countries for opposing his push to own Greenland.

That drop, paired with declines for prices for U.S. Treasury bonds, had suggested global investors may be backing out of U.S. markets. But some relief came on Wednesday after Trump announced “the framework of a future deal with respect to Greenland” and called off the tariffs, though few details are available about it.

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Gold's price, meanwhile, rose to another record Friday and neared \$5,000 per ounce in a signal that investors are still looking for something safer to own. It's already up nearly 15% for the year so far.

On Wall Street, Capital One Financial sank 7.6% after reporting a weaker profit for the end of 2025 than analysts expected. It also said it was buying Brex, which helps businesses issue corporate credit cards, for \$5.15 billion in cash and stock.

On the winning side of the market was CSX, which climbed 2.4% even though the railroad reported a weaker profit than analysts expected. Some analysts highlighted the company's forecast for how much more operating profit it expects to retain from each \$1 of revenue during 2026.

Clorox gained 1.1% after saying it was buying the maker of Purell, GOJO Industries, for \$2.25 billion in cash.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 2.26 points to 6,915.61. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 285.30 to 49,098.71, and the Nasdaq composite rose 65.22 to 23,501.24.

In the bond market, Treasury yields inched lower as prices for U.S. government bonds rose.

A survey of U.S. consumers said expectations for inflation in the upcoming year improved to 4%. That's the lowest such reading in a year, according to the University of Michigan's survey, even it remains well above the 2% inflation that the Federal Reserve targets.

That kind of improvement could help avoid a worst-case scenario the Fed has been desperate to avoid, one where expectations for high inflation trigger a vicious cycle of behavior that only worsens inflation.

Overall sentiment among U.S. consumers was also a touch stronger than economists expected. That could help keep them spending and the main engine of the U.S. economy humming. A separate preliminary report from S&P Global suggested growth is continuing for U.S. business activity.

The yield of the 10-year Treasury fell to 4.23% from 4.26% late Thursday.

The Fed's next chance to move the short-term interest rate it controls will come on Wednesday, but the widespread expectation is that it will hold steady.

In stock markets abroad, indexes were mixed in Europe after rising across much of Asia.

Japan's Nikkei 225 added 0.3% after the Bank of Japan kept its key interest rate unchanged, as many investors expected. The central bank has been slowly pulling its policy rate higher from below zero and had raised it to 0.75% in December.

Global markets have calmed after struggling with a quick surge for long-term government bond yields in Japan early in the week. The move higher came on worries that Japan's Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi might make moves that would add heavily to the government's already big debt.

Haiti's transitional council deepens political chaos by voting to oust the prime minister

By EVENS SANON and DÁNICA COTO Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — Haiti's long-running political crisis deepened Friday when the country's transitional presidential council announced it had voted to fire Prime Minister Alix Didier Fils-Aimé, just two weeks before the panel is supposed to step down.

Edgard Leblanc Fils made the announcement at a news conference alongside fellow council member Leslie Voltaire, saying a majority of the panel took the step in a vote Thursday, defying calls from the U.S. government to maintain stability in the Caribbean country's leadership. No other members of the panel were at the news conference.

The U.S. State Department said in a statement late Thursday that keeping Fils-Aimé on in the position was "integral" to Haiti's efforts to overcome the gangs terrorizing the country, and warned that any politicians supporting the "vicious gangs" would pay a steep cost.

Leblanc did not elaborate on the reasons why council members had turned against Fils-Aimé, who they chose for the position in November 2024. But Leblanc said the council would secure a replacement within 30 days "to find the way to fully restore security and stability and enter a cycle of development, correct the mistakes of the past and look ahead."

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"We know that the decision we make is in the interest of the country and in this sense, our friends in the international community will have to take note of our decisions," Leblanc said.

Voltaire said the council chose Fils-Aimé in the first place — "it wasn't the whites who chose Didier" — and that the council also would choose his successor, as well as a new government, free of foreign interference.

"Everyone is looking for a Haitian solution to the crisis, but when we start to find a Haitian solution to the crisis, the international community comes in with all its claws," Voltaire said.

He added that while the council recognized Fils-Aimé's capacity and enthusiasm, "the population doesn't get what it needs."

Voltaire said the council was on its way out but that it wants the "second half to play with a good team." And if political parties and the civil sector do not find "the best of the best" by Feb. 6, "we will come up with a solution."

The announcement came as the council faces increased pressure to hold general elections for the first time in a decade. Tentative dates were set for August and December this year to elect a president for the first time since President Jovenel Moïse was killed at his home in July 2021.

Gang violence has surged since then, with armed men controlling an estimated 90% of Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, and swaths of land in the country's central region. More than 8,100 killings were reported across the country of nearly 11 million people from January to November last year, according to the U.N., which warned those figures are underreported.

Leblanc said he wants political organizations, civil society and the religious sector to come together and decide how best to govern Haiti after Feb. 7, when the council is supposed to step down.

Michael Deibert, the author of two books on Haiti, warned that if the council doesn't step down by that date, it "could add another element of volatility and uncertainty in the political arena in a country already struggling with the rupture of constitutional order and incredibly severe crises of violence and insecurity."

He also noted that more upheaval could occur in the next two weeks: "Alliances are very changeable and transactional in the political arena in Haiti."

No other members of the nine-member council were present at Friday's news conference. Seven of them have voting powers, with five considered a majority.

It wasn't immediately clear if the council's current leader, Laurent Saint-Cyr, supported dismissing the prime minister. Saint-Cyr said in a statement earlier this week that he opposes any push to undermine the government's stability ahead of Feb. 7.

On Friday, a spokesman said that U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio spoke with Fils-Aimé to reaffirm U.S. support for Haiti's stability and security and said that ongoing gang violence can only be stopped with consistent, strong leadership, with the full support of the Haitian people.

Rubio also said that the council "must be dissolved by February 7 without corrupt actors seeking to interfere in Haiti's path to elected governance for their own gain," Principal Deputy Spokesperson Tommy Pigott said.

Vance touts the Trump administration's record against abortion at a Washington rally

By MEG KINNARD Associated Press

Vice President JD Vance on Friday encouraged anti-abortion activists to "take heart in how far we've come" on the quest to limit the practice, listing the Trump administration's accomplishments including an expansion of a ban on U.S. foreign aid for groups supporting abortion services.

"There is still much road ahead to travel together," Vance told attendees at the annual March for Life demonstration, which draws tens of thousands of people annually to Washington. Attendees rallied on the National Mall before heading to the Supreme Court.

Vance, a Republican, has spent years passionately advocating for Americans to have more children. He repeatedly expressed alarm about declining birth rates as he launched his political career in 2021 with a successful bid for the U.S. Senate in Ohio, and as vice president he has continued on that mission.

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"I want more babies in the United States of America," Vance said in addressing last year's March for Life. Earlier this week, Vance and his wife, second lady Usha Vance, announced in a social media post they are expecting a son, their fourth child, in late July.

"Let the record show, you have a vice president who practices what he preaches," Vance said Friday.

Vance cited the Supreme Court's 2022 Dobbs decision, which overturned Roe v. Wade, calling it "the most important Supreme Court decision of my lifetime." He said President Donald Trump's leadership and appointment of conservative jurists "put a definitive end to the tyranny of judicial rule on the question of human life."

He also lauded the "historic expansion of the Mexico City policy," the broadening of a ban on U.S. foreign aid for groups supporting abortion services, to include assistance going to international and domestic organizations and agencies that promote gender identity as well as diversity, equity and inclusion programs.

"We believe that every country in the world has the duty to protect life," Vance said, to a sea of supporters waving signs reading "Choose Life," "Make More Babies" and "I am the Pro-Life Generation."

"It's not our job as the United States of America to promote radical gender ideology," he said. "It's our job to promote families and human flourishing."

From the Vatican, Pope Leo XIV — the first U.S.-born pope — sent a message of support to participants in the march.

"I would encourage you, especially the young people, to continue striving to ensure that life is respected in all of its stages," Leo wrote in a letter shown on a video at the march. "May Jesus, who promised to be with us always, accompany you today as you courageously and peacefully march on behalf of unborn children."

On Thursday, an official said the Trump administration was implementing new rules, halting foreign assistance from going not only to groups that provide abortion as a method of family planning but also to those that advocate "gender ideology" and DEI. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity ahead of the rules' publication in the Federal Register on Friday.

First established under President Ronald Reagan, a Republican, the policy was rescinded by subsequent Democratic administrations and was reinstated in Trump's first term.

With its origins in the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision that nationally enshrined federal protection for abortion rights, the March for Life developed an entrenched presence among conservatives arguing against abortion. In 2017, Trump addressed the march by video, becoming the first sitting U.S. president to make live remarks. Three years later, he attended the event in person, further cementing its role in conservative politics.

In a video address to this year's crowd, Trump recounted his administration's "unprecedented strides to protect innocent life and support the institution of the family like never before," enumerating his appointment of "judges and justices who believed in interpreting the Constitution as written" and "reflecting on the Dobbs decision that overturned Roe v. Wade.

Since the June 2022 Supreme Court ruling that overturned Roe, the march has become more celebratory, with organizers relishing a state-by-state fight in legislatures around the country and urging a continued fight until abortion is eliminated.

Illinois surgeon pleads not guilty to the killings of his ex-wife and her dentist husband in Ohio

By JULIE CARR SMYTH and PATRICK AFTOORA-ORSAGOS Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — An Illinois doctor indicted on murder charges in the December shooting deaths of his ex-wife and her dentist husband in their Columbus home pleaded not guilty to the killings in an Ohio courtroom on Friday.

Michael David McKee, 39, appeared remotely on camera from jail for his arraignment in Franklin County, where he faced four aggravated murder counts and one count of aggravated burglary while using a firearm suppressor in connection with the Dec. 30 double homicide of Monique Tepe, 39, and Dr. Spencer Tepe,

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37. He was garbed in prison attire and did not speak during the brief hearing. Defense attorney Diane Menashe waived a request for bond, at least for now.

The mystery that first surrounded the case — which featured no forced entry, no weapon and no obvious signs of theft, additional violence or a motive — drew national attention. McKee, of Chicago, was arrested 11 days later near his workplace in Rockford, Illinois. He was returned to Ohio on Tuesday to face the charges against him.

Who is Michael David McKee?

McKee attended Catholic high school in Zanesville, a historic Ohio city about 55 miles (89 kilometers) east of the capital, according to the Diocese of Columbus. He enrolled at Ohio State University in September 2005 — the same semester that his future wife, then Monique Sabaturski, enrolled, university records show. Both graduated with bachelor's degrees in June 2009. Sabaturski earned a master of education degree from Ohio State in 2011, and McKee earned his medical degree there in 2014.

Sabaturski and McKee married in Columbus in August 2015 but were living apart by the time Monique filed to end in the marriage in May 2017, court records show. Their divorce was granted that June. McKee was living in Virginia at the time, court and address records show. He completed a two-year fellowship in vascular surgery at the University of Maryland Medical Center in October 2022, according to the school.

McKee also lived in and was licensed to practice medicine in both California and in Nevada, where he was among doctors named in a personal injury lawsuit in a Las Vegas court in 2023. OSF Saint Anthony Medical Center in Rockford, Illinois, where McKee was working at the time of his arrest, declined to provide specific information on the dates of his employment. His Illinois medical license became active in October 2024.

What is McKee accused of?

An Ohio grand jury indicted McKee in the double homicide last week.

McKee is accused of illegally entering the Tepes' home with a firearm equipped with a silencer, shooting the Tepes — whose bodies were found in a second-floor bedroom — and leaving the property along a dark alley alongside the house.

Columbus Police Chief Elaine Bryant has said that McKee was the person seen walking down that alley in video footage captured the night of the killings. She also said a gun found in his Chicago apartment was a ballistic match to evidence at the scene and that his vehicle's movements were tracked from Columbus back to Illinois.

A message seeking comment was left with McKee's attorney.

McKee is charged with two aggravated murder counts for each homicide, one for prior calculation and design and one for committing the crime, as well as facing the aggravated burglary count. If convicted, he faces a minimum of life in prison with parole eligibility after 32 years and a maximum term of life in prison without parole.

How were the killings discovered?

Columbus police conducted a wellness check on Spencer Tepe at around 10 a.m. on Dec. 30, after his manager at a dental practice in Athens, Ohio, reported that he had not shown up to work on that day, saying tardiness was very worrying and "out of character" for Tepe, according to a 911 call.

Someone else called to request a wellness check before a distraught man who described himself as a friend of Spencer Tepe called police and said, "Oh, there's a body. There's a body. Oh my God." He said he could see Spencer Tepe's body was off the side of a bed in a pool of blood.

The Franklin County Coroner's Office deemed the killings an "apparent homicide by gunshot wounds."

Who were the Tepes?

Family members said the Tepes were "extraordinary people whose lives were filled with love, joy and deep connection to others."

They have described Monique as a "joyful mother," avid baker and "thoughtful planner." According to their obituaries, which were issued jointly, the pair were married in 2020.

Spencer Tepe got his bachelor's degree from Ohio State University in 2012 and earned his doctor of dental surgery degree in 2017, according to school records. He was a member of the American Dental

Association and had been involved with the Big Brothers Big Sisters organization.

They had two young children. Both were home at the time of the killings and left unharmed, as was the family dog.

Iranian prosecutor denies Trump's claim 800 prisoners were spared execution

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran's top prosecutor on Friday called U.S. President Donald Trump's repeated claims that he halted the hangings of 800 detained protesters there "completely false." Meanwhile, the overall death toll from a bloody crackdown on nationwide demonstrations rose to at least 5,032, activists said.

Activists fear many more are dead. They struggle to confirm information as the most comprehensive internet blackout in Iran's history has crossed the two-week mark.

Tensions remain high between the United States and Iran as an American aircraft carrier group moves closer to the Middle East, something Trump likened to an "armada" in comments to journalists late Thursday.

Analysts say a military buildup could give Trump the option to carry out strikes, though so far he's avoided that despite repeated warnings to Tehran. The mass execution of prisoners had been one of his red lines for military force — the other being the killing of peaceful demonstrators.

"While President Trump now appears to have backtracked, likely under pressure from regional leaders and cognizant that airstrikes alone would be insufficient to implode the regime, military assets continue to be moved into the region, indicating kinetic action may still happen," New York-based think tank the Soufan Center said in an analysis Friday.

Prosecutor denies Trump claim

Trump has repeatedly said Iran halted the execution of 800 people detained in the protests, without elaborating on the source of the claim. On Friday, Iran's top prosecutor Mohammad Movahedi strongly denied that in comments carried by the judiciary's Mizan news agency.

"This claim is completely false; no such number exists, nor has the judiciary made any such decision," Movahedi said.

His remarks suggested Iran's Foreign Ministry, led by Abbas Araghchi, may have offered that figure to Trump. Araghchi has had a direct line to U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff and conducted multiple rounds of negotiations over Iran's nuclear program with him.

"We have a separation of powers, the responsibilities of each institution are clearly defined, and we do not, under any circumstances, take instructions from foreign powers," Movahedi said.

A White House official disputed Movahedi's assertion later Friday, and reasserted that planned executions were called off as a result of Trump's warnings. The official, who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity, underscored that Trump was watching the situation in Iran closely and "all options are on the table if the regime executes protesters."

But the official did not provide any evidence or details backing Trump's claim.

Iranian judiciary officials have called some of those being held "mohareb" — or "enemies of God." That charge carries the death penalty. It had been used along with others to carry out mass executions in 1988 that reportedly killed at least 5,000 people.

At a U.N. Human Rights Council special session on Iran held in Geneva Friday, Volker Türk, the U.N.'s high commissioner for human rights, expressed concern over "contradictory statements from the Iranian authorities about whether those detained in connection with the protests may be executed."

He said Iran "remains among the top executioner states in the world," with at least 1,500 people reportedly executed last year — a 50% increase over 2024.

Meanwhile, Mohammad Javad Haji Ali Akbari, the Friday prayer leader in Tehran, mocked Trump as a "yellow-faced, yellow-haired and disgraced man" who is "like a dog that only barks."

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"That foolish man has resorted to threatening the nation, especially over what he said about Iran's leader," the cleric said in comments aired by Iranian state radio. "If any harm were to occur, all your interests and bases in the region would become clear and precise targets of Iranian forces."

Iran's foreign ministry lashed out at a European Parliament resolution adopted Thursday which slammed "repression and mass murders being perpetrated by the Iranian regime against protesters in Iran." The resolution called for the release of those detained and urged the European Council to designate Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, which was key in putting down the nationwide protests, as a terrorist organization.

The foreign ministry expressed "its strong revulsion at the insulting assertions" of the resolution. In a statement issued Friday, it stressed that "any illegal or interventionist decision or position concerning the armed forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the country's security defenders will be met with reciprocal action by Iran, and responsibility for the consequences will rest with those who initiate such actions."

Death toll rises

The latest death toll was given by the U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency, which reported that more than 4,700 of the dead were demonstrators. It added that more than 27,600 people had been detained.

The group's figures have been accurate in previous unrest and rely on a network of activists in Iran to verify deaths. That death toll exceeds that of any other round of protest or unrest there in decades, and recalls the chaos surrounding Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Iran's government offered its first death toll Wednesday, saying 3,117 people were killed. It added that 2,427 of the dead in the demonstrations that began Dec. 28 were civilians and security forces, with the rest being "terrorists." In the past, Iran's theocracy has undercounted or not reported fatalities from unrest.

The Associated Press has been unable to independently assess the death toll, in part because of authorities cutting access to the internet and blocking international calls into the country.

US warships on the move

The American military meanwhile has moved more military assets toward the Mideast, including the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln and associated warships traveling with it from the South China Sea.

A U.S. Navy official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss military movements, said Thursday the Lincoln strike group is in the Indian Ocean.

Trump said Thursday aboard Air Force One that the U.S. is moving the ships toward Iran "just in case" he wants to take action.

"We have a massive fleet heading in that direction and maybe we won't have to use it," Trump said.

Trump also mentioned the multiple rounds of talks American officials had with Iran over its nuclear program prior to Israel launching a 12-day war against the Islamic Republic in June, which saw U.S. warplanes bomb Iranian nuclear sites. He threatened Iran with military action that would make earlier U.S. strikes against its uranium enrichment sites "look like peanuts."

"They should have made a deal before we hit them," Trump said.

The U.K. Defense Ministry separately said its joint Eurofighter Typhoon fighter jet squadron with Qatar, 12 Squadron, "deployed to the (Persian) Gulf for defensive purposes noting regional tensions."

Judge rules Trump administration must keep funding child care subsidies in 5 states for now

By GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

A federal judge ruled Friday that President Donald Trump's administration must keep federal funds flowing to child care subsidies and other social service programs in five Democratic-controlled states — at least for now.

The ruling Friday from U.S. District Judge Vernon Broderick extends by two weeks a temporary one issued earlier this month that blocked the federal government from holding back the money from California, Colorado, Illinois, Minnesota and New York. The initial temporary restraining order was to expire Friday.

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Broderick said Friday that he would decide later whether the money is to remain in place while a challenge to cutting it off works its way through the courts.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services sent the five states notices in early January informing them it would require justifications for spending the money aimed at helping low-income families. It also said it would require more documentation, including the names and Social Security numbers of the beneficiaries of some of the programs.

The programs are intended to help low-income families

The programs impacted by the restrictions at the heart of this case are the Child Care and Development Fund, which subsidizes child care for 1.3 million children from low-income families nationwide; the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, which provides cash assistance and job training; and the Social Services Block Grant, a smaller fund that provides money for a variety of programs.

The states say that they receive a total of more more than \$10 billion a year from those programs — and that the programs are essential for low-income and vulnerable families, including paying about half the cost of shelters for homeless families in New York City.

For TANF and the Social Service Block Grant, the request required the states to submit the data, including personal information of recipients beginning in 2022, with a deadline of Jan. 20.

Government lawyers said Friday that the department was working on more guidelines about what exactly was required before the initial restraining order was put in place.

The administration says it took action because of concerns about fraud

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services said earlier this month that it was pausing the funding because it had "reason to believe" the states were granting benefits to people in the country illegally. At the time, it didn't explain why.

But in Friday's hearing, Mallika Balachandran, a federal government lawyer, said that the concerns were raised by media reports, though she told the judge she did not know which ones. Federal officials have previously cited a video by a right-wing influencer that claimed fraud by Minneapolis day care centers operated by people with Somali backgrounds.

Broderick asked whether the government picked the five states first and then did research into whether there were fraud claims there. Balachandran said she didn't know that either.

Broderick said he didn't understand why the government made it harder for the states to access money for the programs before any wrongdoing had been found.

"It just seems like the cart before the horse," he said.

The states, which all have Democratic governors, say the move was instead intended to damage Trump's political adversaries.

Around the same time as the actions aimed at the five states, the administration put up hurdles to Minnesota for even more federal dollars. It also began requesting all states to explain how they're using money in the child care program.

States call the action 'unlawful many times over'

In court papers last week, the states say what they describe as a funding freeze does not follow the law.

They say Congress created laws about how the administration can identify noncompliance or fraud by recipients of the money — and that the federal government hasn't used that process.

They also say it's improper to freeze funding broadly because of potential fraud and that producing the data the government called for is an "impossible demand on an impossible timeline."

Jessica Ranucci, a lawyer in New York's attorney general's office arguing on behalf of the five states, told the judge that she was told only about a half-hour before the hearing that the government had been developing more information about what states needed to provide. That wasn't mentioned in the court filings, she said.

The administration says it's not a freeze

In a court filing this week, the administration objected to the states describing the action as a "funding freeze," even though the headline on the Department of Health and Human Services announcement was:

"HHS Freezes Child Care and Family Assistance Grants in Five States for Fraud Concerns."

Federal government lawyers said the states could get the money going forward if they provide the requested information and the federal government finds them to be in compliance with anti-fraud measures.

The administration also notes that it has continued to provide funding to the states.

The lawyer for the states said that most of the funding, though, was not accessible until after the restraining order was entered.

This isn't the only case where the federal government has threatened to cut off funding recently. Trump has said this month that "sanctuary cities" that resist his administration's immigration policies — and their states — could lose federal funds.

This week, his budget office told other federal departments and agencies to collect information about money several states receive — but said it wasn't to withhold money.

Russia, Ukraine and the US are holding peace talks in Abu Dhabi. They're coming at a key moment

By KATIE MARIE DAVIES Associated Press

Ukrainian, Russian and U.S. envoys met in the United Arab Emirates on Friday, the first known instance that officials from the Trump administration have sat down with both countries as part of Washington's push for progress to end Moscow's nearly 4-year-old invasion.

The talks follow a flurry of diplomatic activity in recent days, from Switzerland to the Kremlin, even though serious obstacles remain between both sides.

While Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in Davos, Switzerland, on Thursday that a potential peace deal was "nearly ready," certain sensitive sticking points — most notably those related to territorial issues — remain unresolved.

Here's what's known and not known about the meeting:

What's different about these talks

They are taking place in the UAE's capital of Abu Dhabi. Representatives from Russia and Ukraine have already met several times on separate occasions, but this is believed to be the first time U.S. envoys will be there too — a significant step in that President Donald Trump has been pressing for a halt to the war.

The talks are an outgrowth of recent diplomatic activity, even though Russia has kept up its attacks on Ukraine and its energy infrastructure, leaving parts of the country without power amid a bitterly cold winter.

Zelenskyy met with Trump on Thursday behind closed doors for about an hour at the World Economic Forum in Davos, describing it as a "productive and meaningful" session. Trump said later that it had gone well and that both Russia and Ukraine were "making concessions" to try to end the war.

Russian President Vladimir Putin met U.S. envoys Steve Witkoff and Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner in overnight talks at the Kremlin that lasted nearly four hours.

A spokesman for Zelenskyy said there are "many different formats in these talks — sometimes participants step aside for separate discussions, sometimes everyone meets together, sometimes several groups break off by topic."

Who is participating

The U.S. has confirmed Witkoff and Kushner are attending. Army Secretary Dan Driscoll also is part of the team, according to a U.S. official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive diplomatic process. NATO's top general, U.S. Air Force Gen. Alexis Grynkeiwich also is attending.

The Ukrainian team includes Rustem Umerov, head of Ukraine's national security and defense council; Andrii Hnatov, chief of the general staff; and Kyrylo Budanov, head of the presidential office.

Putin's foreign affairs adviser Yuri Ushakov said Russia's delegation is led by the chief of military intelligence, Adm. Igor Kostyukov. The Kremlin later said the rest of the delegation are from the Defense Ministry as well, but did not elaborate. Putin's envoy Kirill Dmitriev also is attending.

The talks are scheduled to conclude Saturday.

Questions of territory and security

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Little is known about the specific issues to be discussed. Zelenskyy said the fraught issue of territorial concessions is a likely topic, while the Kremlin offered few details beyond calling the meeting a "working group on security issues." Separate economic discussions will take place between Witkoff and Dmitriev, Kremlin officials said.

The sides have indicated that a possible peace deal hinges on the apparently still unresolved issue of territory. Speaking in a WhatsApp chat with journalists Friday, Zelenskyy described the issue of who would control the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine as "key."

Russia's bigger army has managed to capture about 20% of Ukraine since hostilities began in 2014 and its full-scale invasion of 2022. But the battlefield gains along the roughly 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) front line have been costly for Moscow, and the Russian economy is feeling the consequences of the war and international sanctions.

In his briefing on Putin's meeting with Witkoff and Kushner, Ushakov stressed that "reaching a long-term settlement can't be expected without solving the territorial issue," a reference to Moscow's demand that Kyiv withdraw its troops from areas in the east that Russia illegally annexed in 2022 but never fully captured.

Peskov also said Friday that Moscow had already made its position clear and that Kyiv must withdraw its troops from the Donbas region.

Ukraine has been pressing for security guarantees from the West to prevent Russia from invading its territory again.

What weather apps sometimes miss about dangerous winter storm conditions

By SETH BORENSTEIN and TAMMY WEBBER Associated Press

Smartphone weather apps that summarize their forecasts with eye-popping numbers and bright icons may be handy during mild weather, but meteorologists say it's better to listen to human expertise during multi-faceted, dangerous winter storms like the one blowing through the U.S.

The multistate storm's combination of heavy snow, treacherous ice and subzero temperatures shows why it's best to seek out forecasters who can explain its nuances via local TV or radio newscasts, online livestreams or detailed websites, said meteorologists interviewed by The Associated Press. The data is changing rapidly before and during the storm, and the distance of a few miles can mean the difference between snow, sleet or dangerous freezing rain.

"Weather apps are really bad at storms that have multiple types of precipitation and it really makes messaging hard," said University of Georgia meteorology professor Marshall Shepherd, a past president of the American Meteorological Society. "Apps don't understand the details of why snow, sleet or freezing rain happens."

University of Oklahoma meteorology professor Jason Furtado and other experts said humans are important in these cases, especially those with local expertise.

"For extreme weather events, it is especially important to know there are human forecasters interpreting the data and making the best localized forecasts for your area," Furtado said. "Unfortunately, many of the weather forecast apps use AI methods to either make the forecast or 'interpolate' from larger grids to your hometown, introducing the potential for significant errors."

But some apps can be useful, especially those that pair National Weather Service data with meteorologists' expertise, forecasters said. And they are definitely getting used right about now.

The Weather Channel app, which is seeing booming traffic this week, uses numerous models, data sources, weather observers and staff, said James Belanger, vice president of its parent company, which also owns the Weather Channel and weather.com. That level of proficiency matters, he said.

"It's an all-hands-on-deck kind of approach that we take," Belanger said, adding that "not all weather apps are created equal."

What apps can and can't do

Apps get much of their information from the National Weather Service and some companies augment

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it with proprietary information and the well-regarded European forecast models. Many offer forecasts by ZIP code or geographic areas far from weather stations by using software that focuses broader regional forecasts to where the phone is located.

While there are good apps, especially those displaying National Weather Service warnings and information, many "oversimplify uncertainty and present highly precise-looking numbers that imply more confidence than actually exists," said Northern Illinois University meteorology professor Victor Gensini. This type of storm is where apps are weakest because they don't get nuances, he said.

Weather apps are good for forecasting nice warm summer days, but not days like much of the country is facing now, said Steven DiMartino of NY NJ PA Weather. The paid online subscription service touts its human expertise with the slogan "Meteorology Not Modelology."

"The problem with the weather app is that it just provides data, but not explanation," DiMartino said. "Anyone can look at data, but you need a meteorologist, you need that human touch to look at it and say, 'Hmm, that looks like an error; we're gonna tweak this.'"

Seeking quality sources of data

Cory Mottice, a National Weather Service meteorologist since 2014, developed the app EverythingWeather, which uses weather service data, as an easy place for the public to find the latest weather forecasts for their area without navigating the agency's website. He said it's "just for fun" and not affiliated with the weather service.

The strength of his app, he said, is that the information comes from professional meteorologists at the more than 125 weather service offices. Many apps just use raw computer modeling data – which aren't always reliable in extreme events — with no human oversight, "which can really lead to some very misleading numbers or graphics depending on what you're at," he said.

With his approach, "you have actual meteorologists that are experts in their field at different places all over the country for that specific area, looking at the data, adjusting it, making the forecast as needed," Mottice said.

Mixing decades of experience, 100 meteorologists and AI

The popular Weather Channel app uses information from many sources, including the weather service and more than 100 weather models, including those from the U.S. and Europe and their own distinct model. They augment it with input from over 100,000 citizens to help forecast weather events, said The Weather Company's Belanger. And it's all synthesized by artificial intelligence to come up with a forecast, he said.

That's more accurate than relying on a single model or provider, he said, because AI is able to learn which models are the most accurate in different conditions to help "create that optimal forecast."

Even so, humans, including a team of more than 100 meteorologists, always have the final say about what goes on the app, Belanger said.

"One of the things that has been a lesson and a principle that we've adopted is that it's the combination of advancements in technology with the human oversight," that allows the company to provide the best forecasts — especially in situations like the current winter storm, Belanger said.

Be careful with social media

Forecasters also warn against another quick fix for weather information: social media, where hype, misinformation and short takes can spread quickly.

While social media can help amplify official sources like the weather service, "it's also where misinformation spreads fastest," Gensini wrote in an email.

"Weather is complex, and social media tends to reward confidence and drama, not nuance," Gensini said. "That mismatch is a real challenge during major events like this."

Kim Klockow McClain, an extreme weather social scientist at the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research, said people are "getting misled by hyped forecasts."

"When people are continually exposed to only worst-case forecasts, research suggests they will lose trust over time," she said.

Immigrants often don't open the door to ICE, but that may no longer stop officers

By JULIE WATSON and AMY TAXIN Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Since coming to the United States 30 years ago from Mexico, Fernando Perez said U.S. immigration officers have stopped by his home numerous times, but he has never once answered the door.

"There are rules and I know them," said Perez, speaking in a mix of English and Spanish in a Home Depot parking lot where he has routinely sought work as a day laborer from contractors and people renovating their homes.

Over the decades it has become common knowledge in immigrant communities across the country to not open the door for federal immigration officers unless they show a warrant signed by a judge. The Supreme Court has long held that the Constitution's Fourth Amendment against unreasonable search and seizure prohibits the government's forced entry into someone's home.

As a result, immigration officers have had to adapt by making arrests in public, which often requires long hours of surveillance outside homes as they wait to nab someone walking to the street.

But an internal Immigration and Customs Enforcement memo obtained by The Associated Press states immigration officers can forcibly enter people's homes without a judge's warrant, marking a dramatic shift that could upend the legal advice given to immigrants for decades.

The change comes as immigration arrests nationwide soar under a mass deportation campaign by President Donald Trump's administration that is already reshaping enforcement tactics in cities such as Minneapolis.

Perez said officers in the past would knock, wait and then move on.

"But if they are going to start coming into my home, where I am paying the rent — they are not paying the rent — that's the last straw," he said.

Most immigration arrests have been carried out under administrative warrants, documents issued by immigration authorities that authorize an arrest. Traditionally they do not permit officers to enter private spaces without consent. Only warrants signed by independent judges have carried that authority.

It is unclear how broadly the memo's directive has been applied in immigration enforcement operations. AP witnessed ICE officers ramming through the front door of a Liberian man's home in Minneapolis on Jan. 11 with only an administrative warrant, wearing heavy tactical gear and with their rifles drawn.

Democratic U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut is demanding congressional hearings on the ICE memo and calling on Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem for an explanation.

"Every American should be terrified by this secret ICE policy authorizing its agents to kick down your door and storm into your home," Blumenthal said in a news release.

Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens wrote for the court in 1980 that the "physical entry of the home is the chief evil against which the wording of the Fourth Amendment is directed."

The waiting game

For years, people have managed to evade arrest by skipping work and outings for days until agents move on. A senior ICE official once likened the surveillance experience to watching paint dry.

In July, the AP observed as immigration officers saw a Russian man enter his home in Irvine, California. They gave up when he didn't leave after three hours. They waited longer for a Mexican man who never emerged from his house in nearby El Monte, though they caught up with him two days later at a convenience store.

ICE has tried what the agency called "knock and talks" to get people to answer the door by casually asking residents to step outside to answer a few questions, according to a 2020 lawsuit in which a federal judge found the practice illegal. In one case, they told a woman they were probation officers looking for her brother.

More often, immigration officers simply play the waiting game — a pace that is not conducive to Trump fulfilling his promise of mass deportations.

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Not answering the door is a key part of know-your-rights trainings

Since shortly after ICE was created in 2003, advocacy groups and immigrant-friendly state and local governments have diligently spread the word that people should not open their doors for immigration officers unless they can show a warrant signed by a judge.

They've held know-your-rights trainings for communities, passed out flyers and posted videos on social media to teach immigrants how to protect themselves.

Ahilan Arulanantham, co-faculty director of the UCLA Law School's Center for Immigration Law and Policy who has held such trainings, called the memo "quite disturbing."

"Know-your-rights trainings have included that information for decades and even people who are only minimally aware of their rights learn that because it's sort of the first and foundational elements of Fourth Amendment law," he said. "They know to ask officers to slide the warrant under the door so they can see if it was signed by a judge or is an administrative warrant."

In the predominantly Latino city of Santa Ana, where ICE agents were seen roaming the streets in recent days, several residents who did not want to give their names said they were well aware of that right. Jesus Delgado, a father of three, said the local elementary school sent out information to parents about what to do if ICE comes to your door.

"They send us bulletins, to not answer the door, to not answer any questions," he said.

Another man said he learned that from TikTok.

Trump's border czar Tom Homan has been highly critical of groups providing the information.

"They call it 'know-your-rights,'" he said last year on CNN. "I call it 'how to escape arrest.'"

Experts warn barging into homes could put all at risk

The memo says immigration officers can forcibly enter homes and arrest immigrants using solely a warrant signed by an immigration official if they have a final order of removal.

Officers must first knock on the door and share who they are and why they're at the residence, and they can only go into the home after 6 a.m. and before 10 p.m. The people inside must be given a "reasonable chance to act lawfully." But if that doesn't work, the memo says, they can use force to go in.

Law enforcement and legal experts warn if more immigration officers barge into homes, everyone could be put at greater risk.

With stand-your-ground laws, people in many states have the right to shoot intruders, which could lead to officers being shot, or agents opening fire on someone coming at them with a baseball bat or other item they grab in the heat of a moment, Arulanantham said. ICE records often contain wrong addresses, which could further lead to confrontations and agents busting into homes of U.S. citizens.

Arulanantham said agents' aggressive tactics have been building since the Supreme Court lifted a lower court's order in September that barred federal agents in the Los Angeles area from indiscriminately stopping people because of their race, language, job or location.

"This would just be another step down that path," he said. "Obviously it will be more significant because it suggests you're not safe even in your own house."

To clear ice and snow, there are rock salt alternatives that are safer for your pets and yard

By ALEXA ST. JOHN and CALEIGH WELLS Associated Press

Winter has its fans, but even those who enjoy playing in the snow probably dislike the chore of clearing up after a big storm that dumps several inches or even feet of snow and ice.

It's easy to dash to the closest hardware store to grab a bag of salt, but experts say there are a lot of environmental and other factors to consider when tackling all that ice and snow.

Here's what to know.

What kinds of salt are out there?

Rock salt, also known as sodium chloride, is the cheapest and most commonly used product. But it's not great for the environment and it's not the most effective option out there.

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"There's a chart we reference that's chemical effectiveness at certain temperatures. And really, when you get to about 15 degrees or colder, you can keep applying more and more rock salt and it's not going to do any more than it already does," said Martin Tirado, CEO of the Snow and Ice Management Association, a trade group for industry professionals.

In those conditions, other products — calcium chloride, magnesium chloride — release heat that helps the salt work better, Tirado said.

The different formulations vary in other ways, too, including how quickly they work, their corrosiveness and how they interact with moisture. Calcium chloride and magnesium chloride can cost at least twice as much as rock salt.

But all contain chlorides that can pollute fresh water, damage shrubs, trees and grass and crumble concrete sidewalks, stoops and driveways.

Blends and coatings can reduce the corrosive nature and environmental hazards of these salts, experts say.

Calcium manganese acetate is one of the tamest de-icing products out there, developed specifically to replace rock salt and be more environmentally friendly. It is biodegradable, a corrosion inhibitor, and typically used as a liquid. But it is much more expensive and can still create issues with dissolved oxygen on bodies of water.

What about those environmental effects?

Pamela Bennett, a horticulture professor at Ohio State, said rock salt is the worst for plants. It gets them in two ways: through the roots and through the air.

Salt percolates through the soil. When plants start to draw in salty water in the spring, that dries roots, leading to dry leaves. Brown tips on leaves indicate the soil might have gotten too salty.

Salt can also reach plant foliage — in the winter, that's evergreens — directly when it's carried by mist and spray. That's an issue that's worse on major roads as a lot of traffic moves quickly.

"When you have a lot of road salt on the highways, cars are splashing and wind blows it. That salt turns into what looks like a burn," Bennett says.

What about my pets?

Most people walking their dog in snowy places have seen what happens when they walk across a heavy salt treatment — stopping suddenly and lifting a paw as if in pain.

"Their paw pads get dry or they get little cuts because those crystals are sharp, and then they're chewing them because that's the only way they know to make it feel better," said Alison Manchester, an assistant clinical sciences professor at Cornell University. If they swallow enough salt, it can lead to vomiting, too.

For some people, animal safety is a strong reason to look to a nonsalt option against ice and snow.

So what are my nonsalt alternatives?

Abrasives such as gravel and sand can help with grip, so pedestrians and tires are less likely to slip. But they also come with their own problems.

Sand that runs off into freshwater bodies — lakes, streams and rivers — can kill natural growth, Tirado said.

Sand can also accumulate in your soil, eventually becoming a problem for plant growth. It can even make a type of concrete when it mixes in clay-heavy soils, experts say.

Unconventional solutions are out there. You can buy a deicer that wraps its chlorides in beet juice or beet extract that coats the granules for a variety of benefits, including melting ice faster, working in colder temperatures and staying where it's put. And a Korean company, Star's Tech, is working with material taken from invasive starfish to produce a deicer that it says more slowly releases chloride material and thus avoids some of the corrosion and environmental problems of salt.

Be ready to shovel more than once — and don't over-apply

Experts say preparation and strategy can make clearing ice easier. That starts with watching forecasts to see how much snow is expected.

"People wait until after the storm to start shoveling," Tirado said. "That's fine if you're having 1 to 2 inches. If you start getting 3, 4 or more inches than that, you can't wait ... you need to go out multiple

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times. That way it keeps the paved surface more clear in a productive and proactive manner.”

Ground temperature matters. If it’s warmer, you may be able to use less than you think you need. Colder ground temperatures might require more.

Proper application of whatever you put on your sidewalk or driveway is important, too.

“The key here is to not use too much and scatter it too much,” said David Orr, director of the Local Roads Program at Cornell. “We also do probably need to get into the habit that it may not be perfectly bare and that can be OK.”

Today in History: January 24 Gold discovered at Sutter’s Mill in California

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Saturday, Jan. 24, the 24th day of 2026. There are 341 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Jan. 24, 1848, James W. Marshall found a gold nugget at Sutter’s Mill in northern California, a discovery that sparked the California gold rush.

Also on this date:

In 1835, a major slave rebellion began in Bahia, Brazil, leading to the deaths of dozens of enslaved people in clashes with troops, police and armed civilians in the provincial capital of Salvador. The uprising was seen as influential in helping to bring about an end to slavery in the country decades later.

In 1945, Associated Press war correspondent Joseph Morton was among a group of captives executed by German soldiers at the Mauthausen-Gusen concentration camp in Austria.

In 1965, Winston Churchill died in London at age 90.

In 1978, a nuclear-powered Soviet satellite, Kosmos 954, plunged through Earth’s atmosphere and disintegrated, scattering radioactive debris over parts of northern Canada.

In 1984, Apple Computer began selling its first Macintosh model, which boasted a built-in 9-inch monochrome display, a clock rate of 8 megahertz and 128k of RAM.

In 1989, confessed serial killer Ted Bundy was executed in Florida’s electric chair.

In 2003, former Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Ridge was sworn as the first secretary of the new Department of Homeland Security.

In 2011, a suicide bomber attacked Moscow’s busiest airport, killing 37 people; Chechen separatists claimed responsibility.

In 2013, President Barack Obama’s Defense Secretary Leon Panetta announced the lifting of a ban on women serving in direct ground combat roles.

In 2018, former sports doctor Larry Nassar, who had admitted to molesting some of the United States’ top gymnasts for years under the guise of medical treatment, was sentenced to 40 to 175 years in prison.

In 2023, a farmworker killed seven people in back-to-back shootings in a case of “workplace violence” at two Northern California mushroom farms. It marked the state’s third mass killing in just over a week.

Today’s birthdays: Cajun musician Doug Kershaw is 90. Singer-songwriter Ray Stevens is 87. Singer-songwriter Neil Diamond is 85. Singer Aaron Neville is 85. Physicist Michio Kaku is 79. Actor Daniel Auteuil is 76. Comedian Yakov Smirnoff is 75. Actor William Allen Young is 72. Musician Jools Holland is 68. Actor Nastassja Kinski is 65. Olympic gymnastics gold medalist Mary Lou Retton is 58. Actor Matthew Lillard is 56. Musician Beth Hart is 54. Actor Ed Helms is 52. Actor-comedian Kristen Schaal is 48. Actor Tatyana Ali is 47. Actor Carrie Coon is 45. Actor and rapper Daveed Diggs is 44. Actor Mischa Barton is 40. NFL coach Sean McVay is 40. Soccer player Luis Suárez is 39. Actor Callan McAuliffe is 31. Singer Johnny Orlando is 23.