

Groton Daily Independent

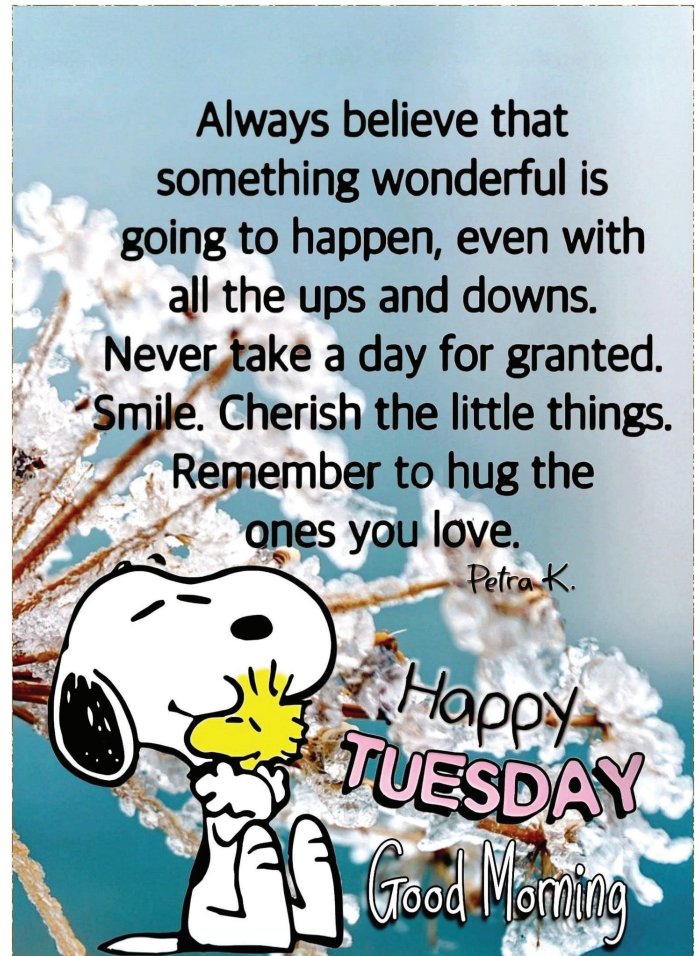
Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 1 of 78

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [4- Today on GDILIVE.COM](#)
- [5- Obit: Jerry Sundling](#)
- [6- Obit: William Reints](#)
- [7- Warrington selected for SDSU Honor Band](#)
- [7- Two selected for MS All-State Band](#)
- [8- Second Quarter Groton Area Honor Roll](#)
- [9- January Students of the Month](#)
- [10- GDI Fitness Center Ad](#)
- [10- Babysitter/House Cleaning ad](#)
- [11- SD SearchLight: State Senate endorses bill requiring elections for schools to exceed property tax limits](#)
- [11- SD SearchLight: Lawmakers reject effort to remove governor's exclusive control of economic development fund](#)
- [12- SD SearchLight: Lawmakers advance proposal to cover students' reduced-price meal costs](#)
- [13- SD SearchLight: Legislature considers removing contact info for judges and law enforcement from public voter roll](#)
- [13- SD SearchLight: Congress hurtles toward partial shutdown after Alex Pretti killing in Minneapolis](#)
- [15- SD SearchLight: Overdose death at Springfield prison draws 11 indictments for drug distribution](#)
- [16- SD SearchLight: Paying ballot-question petition circulators would be banned by bill advancing to SD House](#)
- [17- SD SearchLight: Homan heads to Minneapolis as White House, under siege, softens tone](#)
- [19- SD SearchLight: Native Americans are dying from pregnancy, and they want a voice to stop the trend](#)
- [22- Weather Pages](#)
- [26- Daily Devotional](#)
- [27- Subscription Form](#)
- [28- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [29- News from the Associated Press](#)

Carnival of Silver Skates is rescheduled for Sunday, Feb. 1, 2 p.m. and 6 p.m.

Tuesday, Jan. 27, 2026

- School Breakfast: Muffins.
- School Lunch: Pasta bake, green beans.
- Groton United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.
- JH BBB: Sisseton at Groton (7th at 4 p.m., 8th at 5 p.m.)
- GBB at Aberdeen Roncalli: (GC-5, JVGBB-6, VGBB-7:30)
- Girls and Boys Wrestling at Garretson, 5 p.m.



Wednesday, Jan. 28, 2026

- School Breakfast: Oatmeal.
- School Lunch: Soup and (tbd), sandwich.
- Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.
- United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.
- Groton C&MA: Kid's Club, Youth Group, Adult Bible Study, 7 p.m.
- 6th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.
- 3rd/4th Grade Volleyball Practice, 6 p.m.
- 5th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.

**Groton Daily Independent
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Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 2 of 78

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.

Social Media Addiction

Jury selection begins today in a high-profile case against Meta, TikTok, and YouTube. A 19-year-old identified as KGM and her mom are suing the companies, alleging they designed their platforms to be addictive, fueling KGM's mental health crisis.

KGM says she began using social media at age 10, alleging "addictive design," including frequent notifications, fostered her dependency on the platforms and contributed to her anxiety and depression. She also alleges that recommendation features suggested harmful body image content and led her to connect with predatory adults. Top executives, including Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg, are expected to appear before the court to rebut the claims. The companies are expected to, in part, rely on Section 230, a federal law protecting platforms from liability over content posted by their users.

The outcome of the case could influence more than 1,000 similar personal injury lawsuits. While Snap was originally one of the defendants, it settled last week for an undisclosed amount.

Dark Matter Map

Scientists have used data from NASA's James Webb Space Telescope to build one of the clearest maps of dark matter yet, offering insights into how this invisible material helped form galaxies, stars, and planets like Earth.

Webb spent 255 hours scanning a region of the constellation Sextans, identifying roughly 800,000 galaxies whose visible components are made of ordinary matter. Scientists then analyzed the images for warped shapes, clues to invisible dark matter whose gravity bends nearby light despite not emitting, absorbing, or reflecting it. The analysis revealed clusters of thousands of galaxies next to equally massive amounts of dark matter. The finding suggests dark matter pulled regular matter toward it, creating regions with enough ordinary matter for early galaxies to form. Helium and hydrogen from star formations then gave rise to planets.

NASA plans to investigate the fundamental properties and evolution of dark matter with the Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope, scheduled to launch by May 2027.

Last Hostage Recovered

Israel announced yesterday it has recovered the remains of the last hostage held in Gaza since Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, cross-border attack, a development seen as key to advancing the ceasefire process.

The remains of a 24-year-old special forces officer killed during the initial assault were identified after a military operation in a northern Gaza cemetery that involved exhuming and testing more than 250 bodies. The recovery completes Israel's effort to account for roughly 250 hostages abducted by Hamas, allowing focus to shift to the next phase of the US-brokered ceasefire plan, which took effect Oct. 10. That phase is expected to include reopening the Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt, installing a new governance structure, and disarming Hamas, which has ruled the territory for nearly 20 years.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 3 of 78

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

US committee announces full 232-athlete roster for Milan Cortina Winter Olympics; events begin Feb. 4, with opening ceremony set for Feb. 6.

Tony Awards set June 7 ceremony at Radio City Music Hall; nominations to be announced May 5.

Olivia Wilde's indie film "The Invite" reportedly sparks first major bidding war at Sundance among A24, Netflix, Universal, and others.

Sly Dunbar, Grammy-winning reggae drummer and member of Sly and Robbie, dies at age 73.

Ye, formerly Kanye West, apologizes for antisemitic comments in full-page Wall Street Journal ad, citing brain injury and mental health issues.

Science & Technology

Nvidia launches open-source AI climate modeling software to help governments and businesses build custom weather forecasts.

Microsoft unveils in-house chip designed to run AI models, competing with Nvidia.

Caring for grandchildren may protect against cognitive decline, according to a six-year study of 2,887 grandparents; grandparents who provided child care scored higher on memory and verbal fluency tests.

Scientists find oldest-known wooden tools at lakeshore archaeological site in Greece, dating back roughly 430,000 years; one tool may have been used to dig in mud, another to shape stone tools.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +0.5%, Dow +0.6%, Nasdaq +0.4%).

Gold rallies above \$5,000 per ounce for first time.

Treasury cancels \$21M in Booz Allen Hamilton contracts following prior data leak of around 406,000 taxpayers, including President Donald Trump.

USA Rare Earth shares rise as Commerce Department takes equity stake in \$1.6B deal.

Bob's Discount Furniture eyes up to roughly \$2.5B valuation in initial public offering.

Organic kids snacks maker Once Upon a Farm, cofounded by Jennifer Garner, targets up to roughly \$764M valuation in IPO.

Politics & World Affairs

President Donald Trump and Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz (D) signal possible pullback of federal immigration enforcement presence in the state following death of protester Alex Pretti; federal judge hears arguments over ICE presence.

Gregory Bovino reportedly removed as Border Patrol chief, expected to retire.

Former Canadian Olympian turned alleged drug kingpin Ryan Wedding makes first court appearance in California following capture in Mexico City.

Lightning strike injures 89 people at a rally supporting former President Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil's capital Sunday.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 4 of 78



Coming Up on
GDILIVE.COM

Groton
Area
Tigers
Groton, SD

GDILIVE



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Groton Daily Independent

For more info: GDILIVE.COM



Tues., Jan. 27, 2026 - at Roncalli
Girls C at 5 p.m., Girls JV at 6 p.m.
Girls Varsity to follow

The Life of Jerry K. Sundling



Jerry K. Sundling, age 77, died on Friday, January 23, 2026 at his home in Sioux Falls, SD. His family will be present to greet friends for visitation on Saturday, January 31, 2026 at George Boom Funeral Home & On-Site Crematory in Sioux Falls, SD beginning at 1:00 PM followed by Military honors and a service of remembrance at 2:00 PM. Please come to the service in casual attire.

Gerald Keith Sundling or "Jerry" was born on March 25, 1948 in St. Paul, Minnesota. He was raised and received his education in Groton, SD, graduating from Groton High School in 1966. He continued his education at N.S.U. and for his secondary education, U.S.D in Vermillion earning his Master's degree.

Jerry joined the United States Army and honorably served in Vietnam from 1968 to 1970, earning a Bronze Star, for his heroic service.

Throughout Jerry's life, he worked at the South Dakota Development Center, also as a school guidance counselor and behavioral therapist.

Jerry recently became a member of Celebrate Church in Sioux Falls and received his baptism last year. Finding his relationship with God, giving Jerry a brighter outlook on life.

Jerry enjoyed running, being active and working out. He was blessed with the personality to talk with anyone. To Jerry a stranger was just someone he hadn't talked to yet. He loved sports and especially loved attending his grandchildren's sporting and school events, being their biggest fan. He also enjoyed fishing with his best friend, Harry and working on cars. He was a loving father, grandpa, veteran and friend who will be deeply missed.

Grateful for having shared his life are his four children, Joan Sundling-Heiman, Aberdeen, SD, Tom Sundling, Sioux Falls, SD, Mike (Kim) Sundling, Rochester, MN and Michelle (Allen Wanner) Sundling, Aberdeen, SD, six grandchildren, Hunter, Tanner, Gracelyn, Kyan, Moana and Laylani; one brother, Robert "Bob" (Judy) Sundling, Aberdeen, SD; one sister, Diane (David) Knutson, Sheridan, WY; nephew, Jonathan Knutson; nieces, Traci Sundling, and Erin Knutson; special friend, Vicky Walls, Sioux Falls, SD; many other relatives and friends.

He is preceded in death by his mother, Joyce Sundling-Sogn; and his father, Charles Keith Sundling.

In lieu of flowers, please send cards to George Boom Funeral Home & On-Site Crematory, 3408 E. 10th St. Sioux Falls, SD 57103.

The Life of William "Bill" Reints



The funeral service for William "Bill" Reints will be 10:30 a.m. Thursday, January 29, 2026 at Evangelical Lutheran Church in Langford. Pastor Dan Cole and Diane Hoines will officiate the service. Burial will take place at Sunset Memorial Gardens in Aberdeen, SD. The family requests casual dress. You may also join the family after 4:30 p.m. Thursday evening at Pont's in Pierpont to celebrate Bill's life.

Visitation will be 5:00-7:00 p.m. Wednesday, January 28, 2026 at the church.

William Taylor Reints was born December 29, 1946, in Britton, South Dakota to William and Beverly (Schmidt) Reints. Bill was raised on the farm with his three sisters. He attended school in Langford, graduating from Langford High School in 1965.

In August 1971, Bill was introduced to Jeanne Sanderson. Bill would go on to say when he walked up to the house to pick her up for their first date, he saw her and said, "Uffda." He knew she was the

one from that moment. Bill and Jeanne were united in marriage on March 17, 1972. Together, they made their home in the rural Langford area where they continued to farm and raise their family together for 53 years. He came to be known as "Mr. Bill" during their years running Mr. Bill's bar and restaurant in Pierpont.

Bill was an active volunteer in both the Langford and Pierpont communities, serving others as a member of Langford Evangelical Lutheran Church, Langford Jaycees, the Homertownship board, and Pierpont Firework Committee. Bill most enjoyed farming, fishing, hosting hunters, and "circling" the area to visit with friends and family. There was rarely a conversation where he didn't sprinkle in a song or dance. You could find him playing cards with the coffee crew at the C-store in Langford most days.

Mr. Bill passed away Thursday, January 22, 2026 at his home in rural Langford, at the age of 79.

Grateful for having shared in his life are his wife, Jeanne; his children: Taylor (Crystal) Reints of Pierpont, Vaughn (Melinda) Reints of Pierpont, Carter (Josie) Reints of Langford, Mollie (Brent) Greenway of Mitchell; 9 grandchildren: Addy (Austin) Taylor, Madeline (Jamison) Reints, Hayden (Mariah) Reints, Holden Sippel, Gage Sippel, Hudson Reints, Case Reints, Hunter Adams, and Margo Greenway; great grandson, Kooper Reints; his sisters Linda (Steve) Witt of Bristol, SD, Joan (Hal) Sharpe of Edinburg, VA and Teresa (Billy) McCraw of Clarksville, TN; brother-in-law Bruce (Carolyn) Sanderson of Claremont, SD, and numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, and people that loved him.

Preceding him in death were his parents, Bill and Betty Reints and his in-laws, Harold and Bonnie Sanderson.

Condolences may be directed to the family in care of Jeanne Reints – 41963 125th St. – Langford, SD 57454.



Warrington selected for SDSU Honor Band

Novalea Warrington was selected to participate in the South Dakota State University Honor Band. The band includes participants from throughout the region including South Dakota, Minnesota, Nebraska, Iowa, and North Dakota and will be held on the campus of South Dakota State University in Brookings on February 27 and 28, 2026. She is the daughter of Amy and Neil Warrington, Groton.



Two selected for MS All-State Band

Liam Johnson and Ayce Warrington were selected into the 2026 SDMEA Middle School All-State Band. Ayce earned second chair Euphonium in the 2026 Festival Band and Liam earned first chair Alto Saxophone in the 2026 Honor Band. Liam will be recognized at the concert for being selected into the Middle School All-State Band for all three years of eligibility.

Ayce and Liam will rehearse with their bands on Friday, March 6 and Saturday, March 7 at the Mitchell Performing Arts Center with the final concert held at 2:30 PM on Saturday, March 7, 2026.

Johnson is the son of Reid and Nicole Johnson and Warrington is the son of Amy and Neil Warrington.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 8 of 78

Second Quarter Groton Area Honor Roll

Seniors:

4.0 GPA: Nathan Unzen, Natalia Warrington, Karsten Fliehs, Carly Gilbert, Jerica Locke, Jaedyn Penning, Talli Wright, Mia Crank, Drake Peterson, Raelee Lilly, Gage Sippel

3.99-3.50: London Bahr, Rylee Dunker, Ryder Johnson, Hannah Sandness, Keegen Tracy, Cali Tollifson, Breslyn Jeschke, Lincoln Krause, Paisley Mitchell, Becker Bosma, Garrett Schultz, Olivia Stiegelmeier, Gentry Pigors, Logan Warrington, Aiden Meyers, Lucas Carda, De Eh Tha Say, Emma Davies, Charlie Frost

3.49-3.00: Keegan Harry, Jayden Schwan, Nicolas Groeblichhoff, Benjamin Hoeft, Karter Moody, Cambria Bonn

Juniors

4.0 GPA: Carlee Johnson, Teegan Hanten, Ashlynn Warrington, Liby Althoff, Kira Clocksene, Brody Lord, Taryn Traphagen, Colt Williamson

3.99-3.50: Halee Harder, Emerlee Jones, Kella Tracy, Leah Jones, Claire Schuelke, Hailey Pauli, Addison Hoffman Wipf, Gavin Kroll, McKenna Tietz, Avery Crank

3.49-3.00: Blake Lord, Zander Harry, Hayden Zoellner, Walker Zoellner, Brenna Imrie, Aiden Strom

Sophomores

4.0 GPA: Mckenna Krause, Thomas Schuster

3.99-3.50: Mya Feser, Chesney Weber, Sydney Locke, Taryn Thompson, Easton Weber, Jace Johnson, Elizabeth Cole, Layne Johnson, Kinsley Rowen

3.49-3.00: Rylen Ekern, Kyleigh Kroll, Rylie Rose, John Bisbee, Ryder Schelle, Brysen Sandness, Gracie Pearson, Brayden Barrera, Ethan Kroll, Addison Hoeft,

Freshmen

4.0 GPA: Neely Althoff, Kolton Antonsen, Aspen Beto, Wesley Borg, Abby Fjeldheim, Zachary Fliehs, Tevan Hanson, Asher Johnson, Brooklyn Spainer, Novalea Warrington

3.99-3.50: Lincoln Shilhanek, Jordan Schwan, Tenley Frost, Arianna Dinger, Logan Olson

3.49-3.00: Wesley Morehouse, Connor Kroll, Sydney Holmes, Lillian Cowan, Jose Fernando Nava Remigio, Samuel Crank

Eighth Graders

4.0 GPA: Axel Abeln, Amelia Ewalt, Sophia Fliehs, Gavin Hanten

3.99-3.50: Hudson Eichler, Andi Gauer, Liam Johnson, Liam Lord, Jameson Penning, Ryder Schwan, Gavin Younger, Asher Zimmerman, Trey Tietz, Keegan Kucker, Trayce Schelle, Elias Heilan, Nolan Bahr, Rowan Patterson, Kyson Kucker

3.49-3.00: Dawson Feist, Major Dolan, Wyatt Morehouse, Haden Harder, Jace Hofer

Seventh Graders

4.0 GPA: Gracie Borg, Lillian Davis, Brynlee Dunker, Andi Iverson

3.99-3.50: Libby Johnson, Victoria Schuster, Rylee Stoltenburg, Taylynn Traphagen, Bella Barrera, Amara El Salahy, Zoe Olson, Ayce Warrington, Kinley Sandness, Addison Steffes, Hadley Heilman, Maycee Moody, Ambrielle Feist, Easton Larson, Mya Moody, Kendyll Kroll, Mason Locke, Drew Fjeldheim, Brinley Guthmiller, Hank Hill, Gradyn Rowen

3.49-3.00: Preston Hinkelman, Jaela Fliehs, Charlie Jacobsen, Parker Zoellner, Knox Mulder, Ivan Schwan, Rylee Hofer

Sixth Graders

4.0 GPA: Arthur Eichler

3.99-3.50: Tigh Fliehs, Hayden Hubbard, Devan Locke, Taylor Fliehs, Lennox Locke, Jernie Weig, Brody Zimmerman, Willow Cowan, Kacie McComsey, Blakely Stiegelmeier, Ryan Hanson, Titan Johnson, Elise Pharis, Gideon Rix, Shealee Gilchrist, Boston Kurth, Taylor Thompson, Harley Furman, Avery Huber, Micah Krause, Rowan Hanson

3.49-3.00: Hudson McGannon, Kayson Hofer, Jack Schuelke, Terrence Feist, Deylon Johnson, Calvin Locken, Simon Simunek, Kaelee Morehouse, Rosalyn Block, Adam Fliehs

Groton Area January Students of the Month



These students have been selected as the January Students of the Month. In back, left to right, are, seventh grader Amara El Salahy, junior Halee Harder, senior Talli Wright and freshman Abby Fjeldheim; in front, left to right, are sixth grader Devan Locke, eighth grader Gavin Younger and sophomore Ethan Kroll. (Courtesy Photo)

Groton Area School works to ensure that all levels of academic instruction also include the necessary life skills teaching, practicing, and modeling that encourages essential personal life habits that are universally understood to facilitate helping our students become good human beings and citizens.


It is learning with our heads, hearts, and hands to be caring and civil, to make healthy decisions, to effectively problem solve, to be respectful and responsible, to be good citizens, and to be empathetic and ethical individuals.

Students are selected based on individual student growth in the areas of: positive behavior, citizenship, good attendance, a thirst for knowledge, and high academic standards.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 10 of 78

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or anyone using physical therapy

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- Single: \$35.15 per month or \$319.50 per year
- 2-Person: \$55.45 per month or \$575.10 per year
- Family: \$67.10 per month or \$702.26 per year

MONTH-TO-MONTH

- Student: \$35.15 per month
- Single: \$40.48 per month
- 2-Person: \$59.78 per month
- Family: \$72.43 per month
- Senior/PT: \$20 per month

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Same rates for several years!



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♥ **Babysitting Available!**

House Cleaning Offered!

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I'm in Groton but am willing to drive to nearby towns!





SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

State Senate endorses bill requiring elections for schools to exceed property tax limits

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

A bill to require a local election after any South Dakota school board decides to exceed property tax limitations passed the Senate on a 20-14 vote Monday at the Capitol in Pierre.

The bill targets decisions by school districts to raise more revenue by "opting out" of property tax limitations imposed by the state. Local residents can already petition a board's opt-out decision to a public vote, but there is no requirement for an election if nobody organizes a petition drive.

Under the bill, a school board could approve an opt-out with a two-thirds vote, but the decision would then go to a mandatory election. The bill also requires boards to spell out not only the number of years an opt-out would run, but the "total maximum dollar amount of taxes payable over the full term."

There are 79 active school district opt-outs across South Dakota, according to data from the Legislative Research Council, resulting in a combined total of \$43 million in excess property taxes.

Sen. Sue Peterson, R-Sioux Falls, introduced the bill, which was recommended by lawmakers on last summer's Comprehensive Property Tax Task Force.

The bill aims to provide property tax relief and increase accountability among school districts and boards, Peterson told lawmakers, adding that the current system is "making spending limits obsolete."

"It only makes sense that the burden should be on the school boards to get direct consent from the people if they want to circumvent spending limits," Peterson said. "It should not be the responsibility of the people to gather petition signatures to prevent over-the-limit spending."

Opponents of the bill said taxpayer dollars would be spent on unnecessary elections since many referred opt-outs are upheld by voters. Sen. Jamie Smith, D-Sioux Falls, said that school board members decide to opt out because of inadequate state funding.

The bill now heads to the House of Representatives.

Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan who regularly reports on the intersection of politics and policy with health, education, social services and Indigenous affairs. Her work with South Dakota Searchlight earned her the title of South Dakota's Outstanding Young Journalist in 2024, and she was a 2024 finalist for the national Livingston Awards.

Lawmakers reject effort to remove governor's exclusive control of economic development fund

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR

PIERRE — The South Dakota governor should retain exclusive control over a pot of economic development money known as the Future Fund, a committee of lawmakers decided Monday at the Capitol.

The Senate State Affairs Committee rejected a bill that would have subjected the fund to greater oversight, after an earlier tie vote left the measure in limbo.

The committee voted 4-4 earlier this month on a motion to send the bill to the full Senate, with Sen. Arch Beal, R-Sioux Falls, excused due to illness. On Monday, with Sen. Curt Voight, R-Rapid City, replacing Beal on the committee, the proposal was defeated 5-4.

The bill would have required Future Fund awards to be approved by a majority vote of the governor-

appointed Board of Economic Development, instead of the governor alone. It also would have directed the Governor's Office of Economic Development to write rules establishing an application process, methods of assessing economic impact, selection criteria, qualification requirements and procedures for disbursing awards.

The Future Fund receives money from a fee paid by employers. It has drawn scrutiny in recent years over uses by former Gov. Kristi Noem, including millions in spending for a shooting range that lawmakers declined to fund, a rodeo and an advertising campaign starring Noem.

Some of the bill's opponents said a few examples do not undermine the value of a governor-controlled fund, which is intended to give the governor flexibility to quickly respond to economic opportunities.

"This is funded by the employers. Not every taxpayer in the state funds this," said Sen. Randy Deibert, R-Spearfish. "And those groups that represent employers are soundly opposed to this."

Groups opposing the bill included the South Dakota Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the South Dakota Retailers Association.

Earlier this month, Gov. Larry Rhoden attempted to get ahead of the issue with an executive order laying out procedures for how Future Fund awards are handled. It self-imposes requirements for public posting of awards and agreements, while still preserving the governor's sole authority over the fund. The order is not binding on future governors if they choose to operate the fund differently.

Meanwhile, another bill would increase the Governor's Office of Economic Development's reporting requirements for the Future Fund. That bill, from Rep. Erik Muckey, D-Sioux Falls, has not yet had a hearing.

The economic development office is already required to report minimal information about the Future Fund twice per year to the Legislature's budget committee. Muckey's bill would require additional information to be included in the reports, such as all awards made in the prior 20 years, the fund balance at the time of the report, and the status of the research or economic development purpose of the awards. The report would also add a list of other legislative committees required to receive the reports once per year.

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.

Lawmakers advance proposal to cover students' reduced-price meal costs

Officials estimate the change will require \$600,000 from state

BY: MEGHAN O'BRIEN

PIERRE — Families of students who qualify for reduced-price school meals would no longer have to pay a portion of the cost if a bill advancing to its next step in the South Dakota Legislature becomes law.

"The government already plays a role in education," said Rep. Kady Wittman, D-Sioux Falls, who introduced the bill. "When the state mandates education, it takes on a shared responsibility to ensure that students can succeed while they are there."

The bill would require \$601,000 of state funding annually to reimburse schools, according to Grant Judson from the state's Bureau of Finance and Management. Students whose families meet income qualifications for the reduced-price program currently pay 30 cents for breakfast and 40 cents for lunch. The rest of the cost is covered by the federal government, which also covers the cost of free meals for students whose families meet stricter income limits.

More than a third of the state's public school students receive free or reduced-price school meals, according to the South Dakota Department of Education.

The federal government requires that students in the program receive a meal, regardless of whether they have incurred meal debts.

"Even if a child receives a meal, that meal still has to be paid for, the food still must be purchased, the

staff must prepare it, and the cost has to come from somewhere," Wittman told the committee. "Right now, that burden is being covered through a patchwork of local fundraising, philanthropy and the generosity of faith communities and nonprofits."

Sen. Brandon Wipf, R-Huron, said the cost of the bill seems like "pennies compared to the enormous investment that we make in education." Other supporters of the bill said students from lower-income families shouldn't have to worry about meal debt.

The House Education Committee voted 13-1 on Monday at the Capitol in Pierre to send the bill to the House Appropriations Committee for further consideration.

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.

Legislature considers removing contact info for judges and law enforcement from public voter roll

BY: MEGHAN O'BRIEN

PIERRE — A South Dakota legislative committee approved a bill Monday at the Capitol that would remove phone numbers, home addresses and email addresses for law enforcement officers and judges from the state's publicly available voter roll.

Last year, lawmakers required the state's entire voter registration list to be made publicly available for free on a state website.

Katie Hruska, the governor's general counsel, said the disclosure makes judges and law enforcement officers vulnerable to bad actors. The Governor's Office requested the legislation.

"Certainly the goal of transparency is always there, but it should never drop to the side in favor of reckless distribution of personal information," Hruska said.

The bill originally would have removed the same information from the records of people elected or appointed to state and federal offices.

Rep. Will Mortenson, R-Fort Pierre, said running for office means accepting the risk of private information becoming public. The House Judiciary Committee approved the legislation 12-1 with an amendment to keep the information of statewide and federal elected and appointed officials public.

The committee rejected a related bill requested by the governor. It would have created a felony crime to punish people who maliciously publicize private information about elected officials, law enforcement officers and judges with the intent to place them in fear of death or injury — a practice sometimes described as "doxing," when private documents are involved.

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.

Congress hurtles toward partial shutdown after Alex Pretti killing in Minneapolis

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT

WASHINGTON — White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt on Monday urged Senate Democrats to advance the government funding package that must become law before the weekend to avoid a partial shutdown, rejecting their proposal to remove the Homeland Security funding bill.

Democrats in the upper chamber say they are ready to help pass five of the six bills, but insist the Homeland Security spending measure must be stripped and renegotiated to include more constraints on

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 14 of 78

federal immigration enforcement after officers killed a second American citizen in Minnesota this weekend.

"We absolutely do not want to see that funding lapse and we want the Senate to move forward with passing the bipartisan appropriations package that was negotiated on a bipartisan basis," Leavitt said.

Negotiators in Congress have reached bipartisan consensus on each of the dozen full-year government spending bills during the last few months, though the final bills still need to clear the Senate and become law.

Funding for hundreds of programs in those measures lapses Friday at midnight, when the stopgap spending law Congress approved at the end of the last shutdown expires.

A partial shutdown would affect the Departments of Defense, Education, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, Labor, State, Transportation and Treasury. The Executive Office of the President, Supreme Court and judicial branch would also go without funding if a solution cannot be reached in time.

Leavitt said during the briefing that "policy discussions on immigration in Minnesota are happening" and pointed to the phone call that President Donald Trump and Minnesota Democratic Gov. Tim Walz had earlier in the day.

"But that should not be at the expense of government funding for the American people, which would include FEMA funding," Leavitt said. "And we are in the midst of the storm that took place over the weekend and many Americans are still being impacted by that."

The Homeland Security appropriations bill funds numerous programs in addition to Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Protection. The Coast Guard, Federal Emergency Management Agency, National Flood Insurance Fund, Secret Service and Transportation Security Administration are among the other agencies that rely on the bill for budget authority.

Schumer demands removal of DHS bill

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., wrote in a statement that Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., should remove the Homeland Security funding bill from the larger package before the deadline to avoid a lapse in funding.

"The responsibility to prevent a partial government shutdown is on Leader Thune and Senate Republicans," he wrote. "If Leader Thune puts those five bills on the floor this week, we can pass them right away. If not, Republicans will again be responsible for another government shutdown."

Senate Appropriations Chairwoman Susan Collins, R-Maine, in a brief floor speech urged lawmakers from both political parties to vote to advance the full funding package, calling the possibility of another shutdown "harmful, unnecessary and disastrous."

"I hope we can come together in a constructive way to get this done and to ensure that we do not lurch into a dangerous and detrimental government shutdown," she said.

Collins did acknowledge the killing of Alex Pretti over the weekend, saying his "tragic death" had "refocused attention on the Homeland Security bill and I recognize that and share the concerns."

"I do want to point out to my colleagues that there are many safeguards that have been put in this bill that I would encourage them to review," Collins added without going into detail. "And that the vast majority of the funding in this bill, more than 80%, is for non-immigration and non-border security functions."

A Senate Republican aide, who wasn't authorized to speak publicly, said GOP leaders are "determined to not have another government shutdown."

"We will move forward as planned and hope Democrats can find a path forward to join us," the aide added.

A Senate Democratic leadership aide said that "Republicans and the White House have reached out but have not yet raised any realistic solutions."

'Government shutdowns do not help anyone'

Senate Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee Chairwoman Katie Britt, R-Ala., wrote in a

social media post that the array of programs in that bill "are critical to keeping Americans safe and must be funded."

"We know from recent history that government shutdowns do not help anyone and are not in the best interest of the American people," Britt wrote, referring to the shutdown of historic length that ended Nov. 12. "As we approach a government funding deadline, I remain committed to finding a pathway forward."

Senate Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee ranking member Chris Murphy, D-Conn., said Sunday on CNN's "State of the Union with Jake Tapper & Dana Bash" that he couldn't "vote to fund this lawless Department of Homeland Security."

"And remember, it's not just in Minnesota. They're violating the law all over the country," Murphy said. "I spent last week in Texas where they are locking up 2-year-old and 3-year-old kids who are here in the United States legally, just for the purpose of traumatizing them."

Fetterman, Shaheen part ways

Pennsylvania Democratic Sen. John Fetterman appeared to be the only member of his party in that chamber to support the entire package, writing in a statement he "will never vote to shut our government down, especially our Defense Department."

"I reject the calls to defund or abolish ICE. I strongly disagree with many strategies and practices ICE deployed in Minneapolis, and believe that must change," Fetterman wrote. "I want a conversation on the DHS appropriations bill and support stripping it from the minibus. It is unlikely that will happen and our country will suffer another shutdown."

New Hampshire Democratic Sen. Jeanne Shaheen backed the strategy of pulling out the Homeland Security spending bill and allowing the other five government funding bills to become law before the shutdown deadline.

"The Senate then needs to have a real bipartisan discussion about what additional reforms we need to put in place to prevent tragedies like Minneapolis from happening across the country," Shaheen wrote in a social media post. "I will vote against DHS's funding until additional reforms are in place."

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.

Overdose death at Springfield prison draws 11 indictments for drug distribution

BY: JOHN HULT

Eleven people, including a former prison food service contract worker, inmates alleged to be gang members and non-inmates have been indicted in Bon Homme County on a host of drug-related charges tied to a November overdose death at Mike Durfee State Prison in Springfield.

South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley announced the charges at a Monday press conference in Pierre. The charges flow from an inquiry led by the state Division of Criminal Investigation into the November death of inmate Timothy Tyree, one of eight men who died of drug overdoses in the state's prisons last year.

All but one of those deaths has been linked to K2, a synthetic drug typically sprayed on paper and smoked. To the naked eye, paper soaked in K2 is indistinguishable from untainted paper.

In addition to the charges, investigators seized three sheets of K2 with 61 stamp-sized doses, said Jackley. The day Tyree was found unresponsive, Jackley said, "numerous individuals" at Durfee were "sick from K2."

Last year, Jackley's office charged inmates, a former correctional officer and others outside the prison walls in connection with other overdose deaths at the state penitentiary in Sioux Falls and the penitentiary's Jameson Annex.

"I think we're slowing it down," he said of drug trafficking in the state's prisons.

The distribution ring in Springfield that was broken up in the current investigation hinged on the alleged

cooperation of a now-former contract worker in the Durfee kitchen. People outside the prison would deliver the K2 to her, Jackley explained, and she would hand it off to inmates inside the prison for distribution from there.

The most serious charge faced by the 11 is distribution of controlled substances resulting in death. Each person was indicted on that charge, which carries a penalty of up to 25 years in prison.

Two of the inmates indicted in the Tyree case have detainment orders from Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Jackley said, meaning they'd have been handed off to ICE upon parole.

Jackley said his office intends to pursue the state-level charges in the indictments, but he would defer to the federal agency on what happens when the parole dates arrive later this year.

"To the extent it makes more sense to have ICE take further action, I will be supportive of that and will work with them on those decisions," Jackley said.

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.

Paying ballot-question petition circulators would be banned by bill advancing to SD House

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

Paying ballot-question petition circulators would be prohibited in South Dakota by a bill the House State Affairs Committee approved Monday at the Capitol in Pierre.

Rep. Travis Ismay, R-Newell, introduced House Bill 1087 in response to several questions that appeared on the 2024 general election ballot with help from paid petition circulators.

"This bill that I am bringing honors the will of the people and not out-of-state interests," Ismay said.

Petitioners in South Dakota need 17,508 signatures from registered voters to propose a law, which is known as an initiative, and the same number of signatures to put a bill passed by legislators on hold for consideration by voters, which is known as a referendum. The number of signatures required to propose a state constitutional amendment is 35,017.

Under Ismay's bill, if a court determines a campaign compensated a petition circulator — with money or gifts — the petition would be declared invalid.

The bill passed with a 9-4 vote, which means it will go to the full House of Representatives.

Opponents said the bill would trigger a legal challenge if enacted and cost thousands of taxpayer dollars to defend. Opponents included the American Civil Liberties Union of South Dakota, South Dakota Advocacy Network for Women, and the South Dakota Education Association.

Rep. Tim Reisch, R-Howard, echoed their concerns.

"We're not going to give our teachers a pay raise, we're out of money, and we're going to pass a bill that we know is going to cost the taxpayers millions of dollars," Reisch said. "I'm going to be a 'no' on this."

Rep. Spencer Gosch, R-Glenham, said the cost of potential legal battles would be worth the attempt to level the playing field, rather than allowing the ballot measure process to be a "money game."

"I am limiting one person's ability to have more speech over mine just because they have more money," Gosch said. "That one individual could hire multiple entities because they can afford to do so. I could not. Therefore, my vote is less important than their vote."

The committee also approved Senate Bill 5, which would require the state attorney general's official ballot-question explanations to include whether a ballot question was placed on the ballot by legislators or by citizen petitioners.

Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan who regularly reports on the intersection of politics and policy with health, education, social services and Indigenous affairs. Her work with South Dakota Searchlight earned her the title of South Dakota's Outstanding Young Journalist in 2024, and she was a 2024 finalist for the national Livingston Awards.

Homan heads to Minneapolis as White House, under siege, softens tone

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA

WASHINGTON — U.S. border czar Tom Homan is expected in Minneapolis by Monday evening, President Donald Trump said, amid increasing criticism of the administration's immigration enforcement methods following the second fatal shooting of a U.S. citizen by immigration officers in Minneapolis already this year.

The move was part of an apparent toning down of the administration's rhetoric against the city as a growing number of members of Congress from both parties raised concerns about the Saturday shooting death of 37-year-old Alex Jeffrey Pretti by federal immigration agents.

Trump reported a notably civil call with Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, a Democrat with whom the president has often clashed, around midday Monday.

"It was a very good call, and we, actually, seemed to be on a similar wavelength," Trump said of the conversation. "The Governor, very respectfully, understood that, and I will be speaking to him in the near future. He was happy that Tom Homan was going to Minnesota, and so am I!"

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said during an afternoon briefing that Gregory Bovino, the U.S. Border Patrol commander-at-large, would "continue to lead" immigration agents across the country, but did not address whether he would be active in Minneapolis once Homan arrived.

CNN reported Monday afternoon Bovino and some of his agents were set to depart the city.

The Atlantic reported late Monday that Bovino would be removed from his position of commander-at-large and return to his former job as chief of Border Patrol's El Centro, California, sector ahead of an imminent retirement. The New York Times also reported Bovino was being reassigned.

Homan "has not been involved in that area, but knows and likes many of the people there," Trump wrote on social media. "Tom is tough but fair, and will report directly to me."

Leavitt repeated throughout a 20-minute White House press briefing the administration's position that Democratic state and local officials were responsible for the situation in Minneapolis, but declined to endorse the harshest descriptions of Pretti that administration leaders, including top White House aide Stephen Miller and Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, have used.

Border czar

Early in his second administration, Trump tasked Homan with carrying out the president's mass deportation campaign, which has faced significant pushback in Minneapolis.

Homan, who is expected to be in Minnesota by the evening, is the former ICE head of removal operations during the Obama administration and served as acting ICE director during the first Trump administration.

Leavitt said Monday that Homan will be "the point person for cooperating with state and local authorities in corresponding with them, again, to achieve this level of cooperation to subdue the chaos on the streets of Minneapolis."

Homan's arrival comes while thousands of Minnesotans mourn and protest Saturday's killing of Pretti, an intensive care nurse who appeared to be acting as a legal observer when Border Patrol agents tackled him to the ground, pinned him and shot him multiple times.

His was the second fatal shooting of a U.S. citizen by immigration officers in Minneapolis this year. Federal immigration officer Jonathan Ross killed 37-year-old Renee Nicole Good, a mother and poet, Jan. 7.

Multiple videos captured the killings of both Good and Pretti, further sparking outcry from the community.

Investigation underway

Leavitt said an investigation into Pretti's killing is underway with the FBI, Customs and Border Protection and Homeland Security Investigations. Noem, who oversees HSI and CBP, labeled Pretti "a domestic terrorist," the same term she applied to Good.

"The administration is reviewing everything with respect to the shooting, and we will let that investiga-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 18 of 78

tion play out," Leavitt said.

Bovino said on CNN Sunday that the agents involved in the shooting of Pretti, are still on duty and while they will be taken off the streets of Minneapolis, they will still be allowed to conduct immigration enforcement.

The top Democrat on the House Committee on Homeland Security, Bennie Thompson of Mississippi, said in a statement Monday that those officers still being on duty is contrary to CBP's use-of-force policy, which requires three days of paid leave after an agent uses deadly force either on duty or off.

"It defies commonsense – and is completely inexcusable – that the agent who killed Alex Pretti Saturday is already back in the field terrorizing our communities and believing – as Greg Bovino has so wrongly asserted – that he is the victim," he said. "At a minimum, the agent should be on Administrative Leave."

Congressional response

Saturday's killing could have far-reaching consequences on Capitol Hill.

Several congressional Democrats over the weekend coalesced to oppose any funding for the Department of Homeland Security's immigration enforcement, increasing the chances of a partial government shutdown at the end of the week.

The shooting also appeared to prompt a handful of congressional Republicans to adjust their position on Trump's year-long immigration crackdown.

The chair of the Senate Committee on Homeland and Governmental Affairs, Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky, called Monday for the heads of ICE, CBP and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to testify for a hearing by Feb. 12.

House Homeland Security Committee Chairman Andrew Garbarino, a New York Republican, also called on the same officials to testify in front of his committee.

Sen. John Curtis of Utah was the latest of a handful of Senate Republicans calling for a thorough investigation into the killing and for "those responsible—no matter their title—" to be held accountable.

"I disagree with Secretary Noem's premature DHS response, which came before all the facts were known and weakened confidence," he wrote on social media. "I will be working with a bipartisan group of senators to demand real oversight and transparency, including supporting calls from @RandPaul for leaders of these operations to testify, so trust can be restored and justice served."

White House's terms for Minnesota

For nearly two months, 3,000 federal immigration officers have descended on Minneapolis, dwarfing the city's police force of roughly 600. The Trump administration deployed the officers for immigration enforcement after right-wing media influencers resurfaced instances of fraud in Minnesota's social service programs.

Leavitt said Monday the Trump administration would only end immigration operations if state and local leaders instructed police to cooperate closely with federal immigration officers.

Immigration enforcement is a federal responsibility, and states and localities are not required to assist.

Some localities and states have agreements that local police will notify federal immigration officers if a person they arrest is an immigrant without legal authorization.

But some jurisdictions don't participate because the practice can divert resources or can open law enforcement up to lawsuits for unlawfully detaining an individual for an immigration violation, unless there is a judicial warrant.

Attorneys representing the state of Minnesota and city of Minneapolis argued to Judge Kate M. Menendez on Monday that the Trump administration was trying to bend the state to the federal government's will, a violation of the Constitution's 10th amendment.

The suit, in the U.S. District Court in Minnesota, is attempting to block the ICE surge in the state.

Trump, in his Monday social media post, blamed the massive protests in Minnesota on "Welfare Fraud that has taken place in Minnesota, and is at least partially responsible for the violent organized protests going on in the streets."

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

Native Americans are dying from pregnancy, and they want a voice to stop the trend

BY: JAZMIN OROZCO RODRIGUEZ, KFF HEALTH NEWS

Just hours after Rhonda Swaney left a prenatal appointment for her first pregnancy, she felt severe pain in her stomach and started vomiting.

Then 25 years old and six months pregnant, she drove herself to the emergency room in Ronan, Montana, on the Flathead Indian Reservation, where an ambulance transferred her to a larger hospital 60 miles away in Missoula. Once she arrived, the staff couldn't detect her baby's heartbeat. Swaney began to bleed heavily. She delivered a stillborn baby and was hospitalized for several days. At one point, doctors told her to call her family. They didn't expect her to survive.

"It certainly changed my life — the experience — but my life has not been a bad life," she told KFF Health News.

Though her experiences were nearly 50 years ago, Swaney, a member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, said Native Americans continue to receive inadequate maternal care. The data appears to support that belief.

In 2024, the most recent year for which data for the population is available, Native American and Alaska Native people had the highest pregnancy-related mortality ratio among major demographic groups, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In response to this disparity, Native organizations, the CDC, and some states are working to boost tribal participation in state maternal mortality review committees to better track and address pregnancy-related deaths in their communities. Native organizations are also considering ways tribes could create their own committees.

State maternal mortality review committees investigate deaths that occur during pregnancy or within a year after pregnancy, analyze data, and issue policy recommendations to lower death rates.

According to 2021 CDC data, compiled from 46 maternal mortality review committees, 87% of maternal deaths in the U.S. were deemed preventable. Committees reported that most, if not all, deaths among Native American and Alaska Native people were considered preventable.

State committees have received federal money through the Preventing Maternal Deaths Act, which President Donald Trump signed in 2018.

But the money is scheduled to dry up on Jan. 31, when the short-term spending bill that ended the government shutdown expires.

Funding for the committees is included in the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations bill for fiscal year 2026. That bill must be approved by the House, Senate, and president to take effect.

Native American leaders said including members of their communities in maternal mortality review committee activities is an important step in addressing mortality disparities.

In 2023, tribal leaders and federal officials met to discuss four models: a mortality review committee for each tribe, a committee for each of the 12 Indian Health Service administrative regions, a national committee to review all Native American maternal deaths, and the addition of Native American subcommittees to state committees.

Whatever the model, tribal sovereignty, experience, and traditional knowledge are important factors, said Kim Moore-Salas, a co-chair of the Arizona Maternal Mortality Review Committee. She's also the chairperson of the panel's American Indian/Alaska Native mortality review subcommittee and a member of the Navajo Nation.

"Our matriarchs, our moms, are what carries a nation forward," she said.

Mental health conditions and infection were the leading underlying causes of pregnancy-related death among Native American and Alaska Native women as of 2021, according to the CDC report analyzing data from 46 states.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 20 of 78

The CDC found an estimated 68% of pregnancy-related deaths among Native American and Alaska Native people happened within a week of delivery to a year postpartum. The majority of those happened between 43 days and a year after birth.

The federal government has a responsibility under signed treaties to provide health care to the 575 federally recognized tribes in the U.S. through the Indian Health Service. Tribal members can receive limited services at no cost, but the agency is underfunded and understaffed.

A study published in 2024 that analyzed data from 2016 to 2020 found that approximately 75% of Native American and Alaska Native pregnant people didn't have access to care through the Indian Health Service around the time of giving birth, meaning many likely sought care elsewhere. More than 90% of Native American and Alaska Native births occur outside of IHS facilities, according to the agency. For those who did deliver at IHS facilities, a 2020 report from the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Inspector General found that 56% of labor and delivery patients received care that did not follow national clinical guidelines.

The 2024 study's authors also found that members of the population were less likely to have stable insurance coverage and more likely to have a lapse in coverage during the period close to birth than non-Hispanic white people.

Cindy Gamble, who is Tlingit and a tribal community health consultant for the American Indian Health Commission in Washington, has been a member of the state's maternal mortality review panel for about eight years. In the time she's been on the state panel, she said, its composition has broadened to include more people of color and community members.

The panel also began to include suicide, overdose, and homicide deaths in its data analysis and added racism and discrimination to the risk factors considered during its case review process.

Solutions need to be tailored to the tribe's identity and needs, Gamble said.

"It's not a one-size-fits-all," Gamble said, "because of all the beliefs and different cultures and languages that different tribes have."

Gamble's tenure on the state committee is distinctive. Few states have tribal representation on maternal mortality review committees, according to the National Indian Health Board, a nonprofit organization that advocates for tribal health.

The National Council of Urban Indian Health is also working to increase the participation of Urban Indian health organizations, which provide care for Native American people who live outside of reservations, in state maternal mortality review processes. As of 2025, the council had connected Urban Indian health organizations to state review committees in California, Kansas, Oklahoma, and South Dakota.

Native leaders such as Moore-Salas find the current efforts encouraging.

"It shows that state and tribes can work together," she said.

In March 2024, Moore-Salas became the first Native American co-chair of Arizona's Maternal Mortality Review Committee. In 2025 she and other Native American members of the committee developed guidelines for the American Indian/Alaska Native subcommittee and reviewed the group's first cases.

The subcommittee is exploring ways to make the data collection and analysis process more culturally relevant to their population, Moore-Salas said.

But it takes time for policy changes to create widespread change in the health of a population, Gamble said. Despite efforts around the country, other factors may hinder the pace of progress. For example, maternity care deserts are growing nationally, caused by rapid hospital and labor and delivery unit closures. Health experts have raised concern that upcoming cuts to Medicaid will hasten these closures.

Despite her experience and the ongoing crisis among Native American and Alaska Native people, Swaney hopes for change.

She had a second complicated pregnancy soon after her stillbirth. She went into labor about three months early, and the doctors said her son wouldn't live to the next morning. But he did, and he was transferred about 525 miles away from Missoula to the nearest advanced neonatal unit, in Salt Lake City.

Her son, Kelly Camel, is now 48. He has severe cerebral palsy and profound deafness. He lives alone but has caregivers to help with cooking and other tasks, said Swaney, 73.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 21 of 78

He “has a good sense of humor. He’s kind to other people. We couldn’t ask for a more complete child.”
KFF Health News is a national newsroom that produces in-depth journalism about health issues and is one of the core operating programs at KFF—an independent source of health policy research, polling, and journalism. Learn more about KFF.

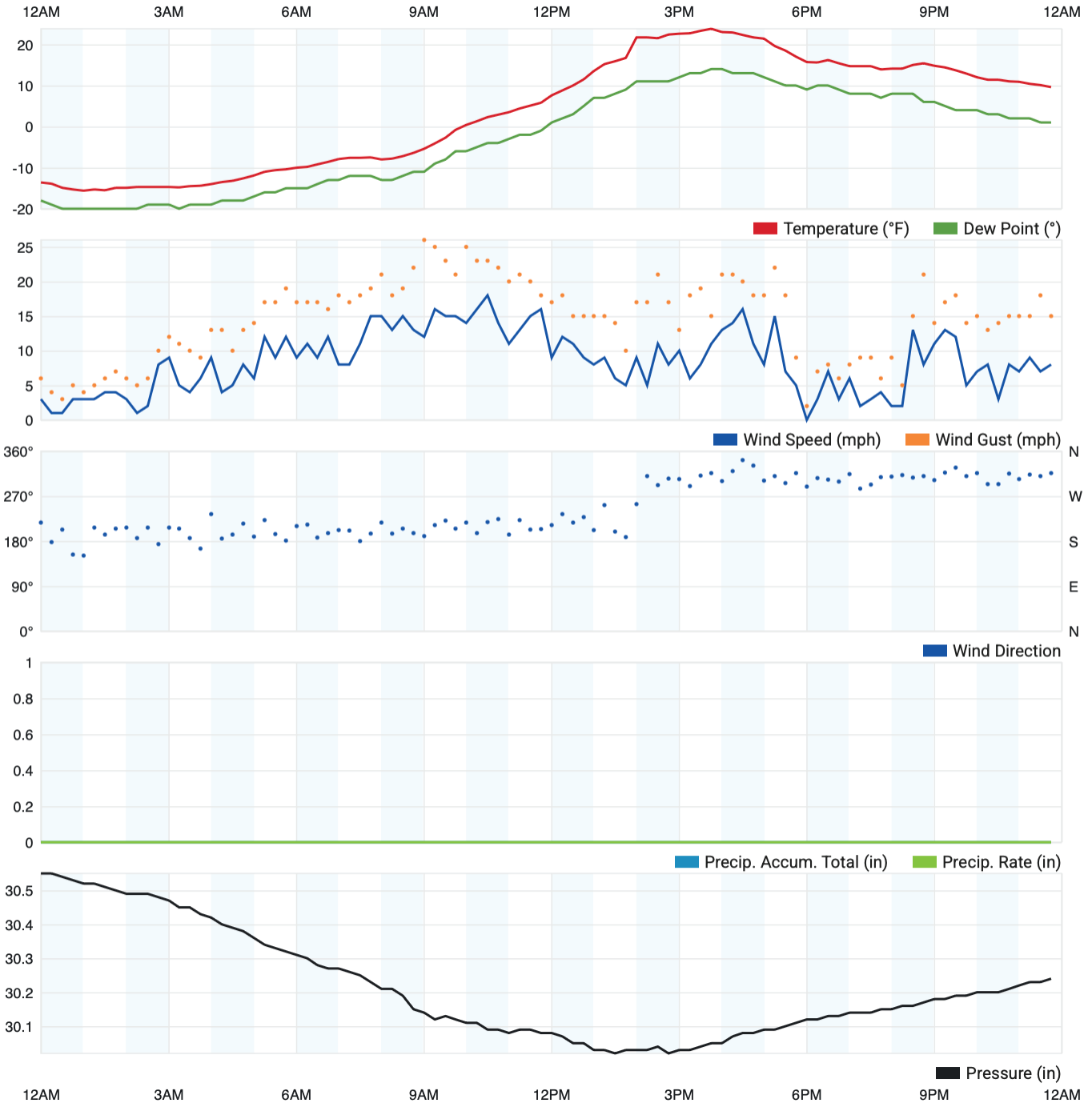
Jazmin Orozco Rodriguez is a Nevada correspondent for KFF Health News.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 22 of 78

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

January 26, 2026



Broton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 23 of 78

Today



High: 11 °F

Sunny

Tonight



Low: 0 °F

Mostly Cloudy

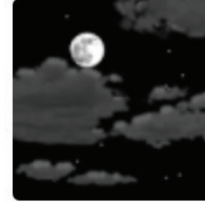
Wednesday



High: 13 °F

Mostly Sunny

Wednesday
Night



Low: -6 °F

Partly Cloudy

Thursday



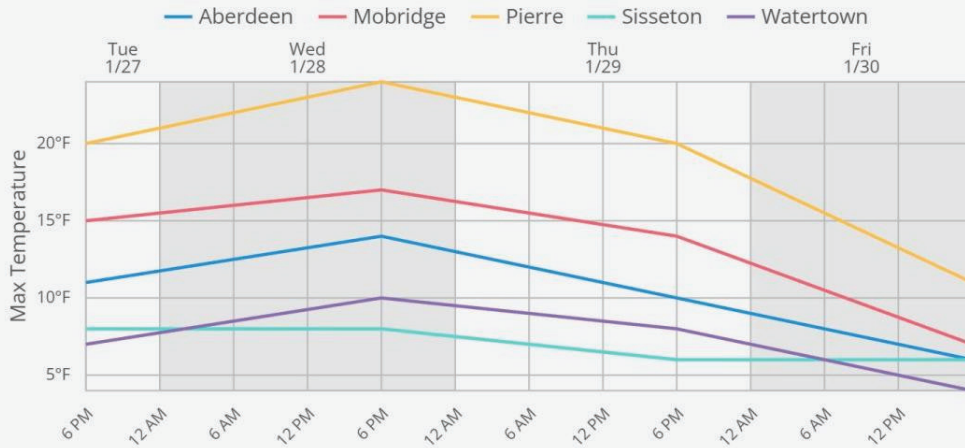
High: 8 °F

Cold



Max Temperatures

Tuesday Evening, Jan 27 - Friday Evening, Jan 30



Information:

The line chart shows the weather element values based on model predictions from the National Blend of Models.

Additional Details



Below Average Temps

- Highs through the rest of the work week will be 10-20° below average
- Wind Chills Tuesday morning will be in the -15 to -25° range. This is the coldest wind chills for the next few days.



Weekend Temps?

- Temperatures going into the weekend look to be much closer to normal

Valid: Tue 06 pm CST - Fri 06 pm CST

Issued: Tue, Jan 27, 2026, 2 am CST



Highs through the rest of the work week will be 10-20° below average. Wind chills this morning will be in the -15 to -25° range, and the coldest for the next few days. Temps going into the weekend look to be much closer to normal. For your specific forecast visit: www.weather.gov/abr

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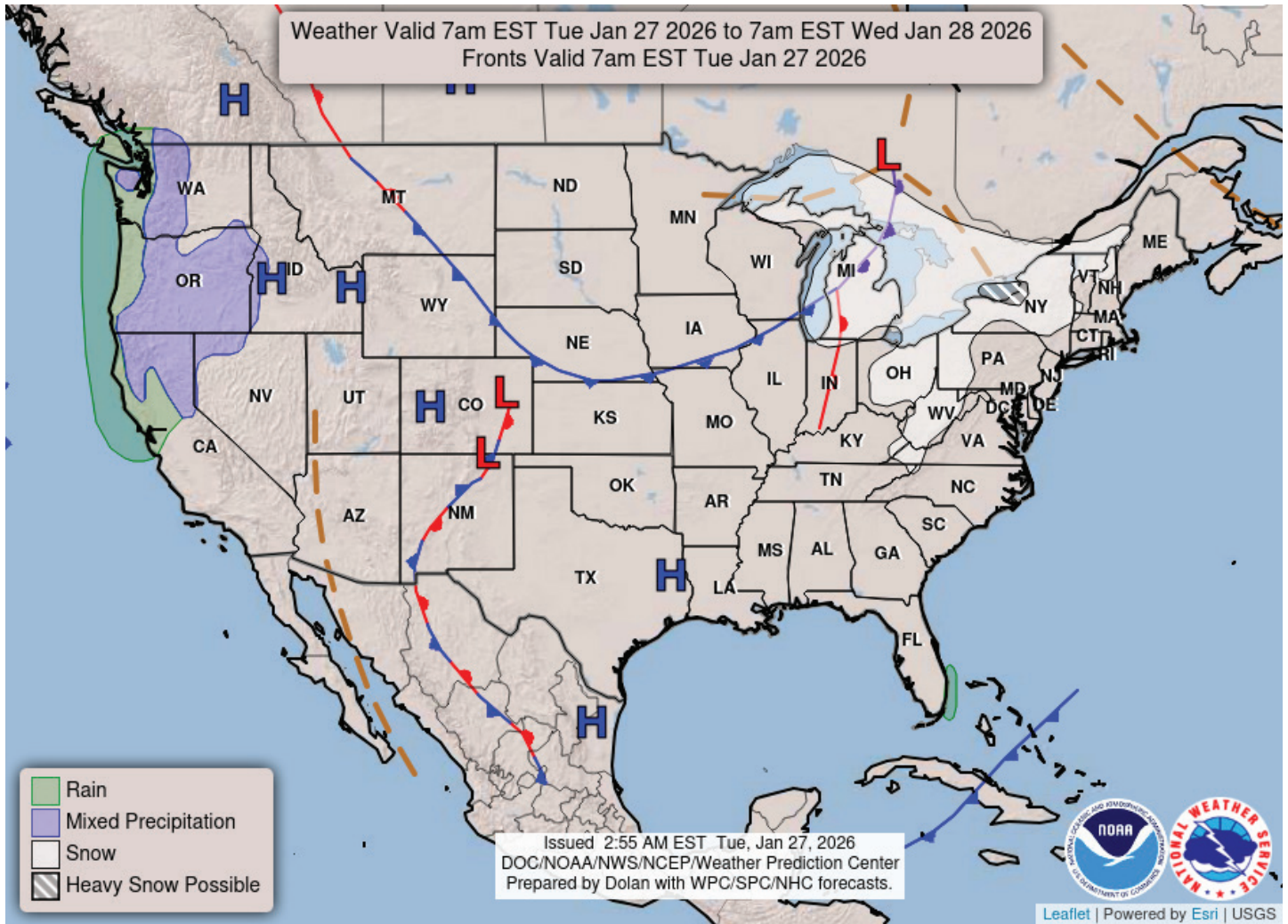
Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 24 of 78

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 24 °F at 3:47 PM
Low Temp: -16 °F at 1:27 AM
Wind: 27 mph at 8:57 AM
Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 53 in 1934
Record Low: -34 in 1915
Average High: 24
Average Low: 2
Average Precip in Jan.: 0.49
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.49
Precip Year to Date: 0.00
Sunset Tonight: 5:31 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:57 am



Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 25 of 78

Today in Weather History

January 27th, 1969: Snowfall of 7 to 10 inches combined with winds of 15 to 30 mph caused widespread low visibilities and heavy drifting from the 27th to the 29th across Minnesota. Many roads were blocked or remained blocked. Many schools were closed with many accidents.

1772 — The "Washington and Jefferson Snowstorm" occurred. George Washington reported three feet of snow at Mount Vernon, and Thomas Jefferson recorded about three feet at Monticello. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1922: On this date through the 29th, a significant snowstorm struck the East Coast from South Carolina to southeastern Massachusetts. Washington, DC, reported 28 inches of snow. The heavy snow on the Knickerbocker Theater's flat roof put a significant strain on the structure. On the evening of the 28th, during a showing of the silent comedy "Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford," the building collapsed, killing 98 people and injuring 130 others.

1966 — Oswego, NY, was in the midst of a five day lake effect storm which left the town buried under 102 inches of snow. (David Ludlum)

1967: Residents of Chicago, Illinois, began to dig out from the storm of the 26th and 27th, which produced 23 inches of snow in 29 hours, their worse snowstorm. The snow paralyzed the city and suburbs for days, and business losses were enormous.

1987 — A powerful storm moving into the western U.S. produced 13 inches of snow at Daggett Pass NV, and 16 inches in the Cascade Mountains of Oregon. Winds gusted to 63 mph at Reno NV, and wind gusts in Oregon exceeded 80 mph. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — The nation got a breather from winter storms, however, cold arctic air settled into the southeastern U.S. Hollywood FL reported a record low reading of 39 degrees. (National Weather Summary)

1989 — The last half of January was bitterly cold over most of Alaska. Nearly thirty stations established all-time record low temperatures. On this date Tanana reported a low of -76 degrees. Daily highs of -66 degrees were reported at Chandalar Lake on the 22nd, and at Ambler on the 26th. (The Weather Channel)

1989 — Low pressure in north central Alaska continued to direct air across northern Siberia and the edges of the Arctic Circle into the state. The temperature at Fairbanks remained colder than 40 degrees below zero for the eighth day in a row. Lows of 68 below at Galena, 74 below at McGrath, and 76 below at Tanana, were new records for the date. Wind chill readings were colder than 100 degrees below zero. (National Weather Summary)

1990 — Another in a series of cold fronts brought high winds to the northwestern U.S., and more heavy snow to some of the higher elevations. The series of vigorous cold fronts crossing the area between the 23rd and the 27th of the month produced up to 60 inches of snow in the Cascade Mountains of Washington State. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2005 — Month-to-date snowfall at Boston Logan International Airport totaled 43.1 inches, making January the snowiest month on record.

Life After Death

For the believer, death is just the doorway to our eternal home with our Father.

Luke 12:16-20: 16 And He told them a parable, saying, ``The land of a rich man was very productive.
17 ``And he began reasoning to himself, saying, `What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?'
18 ``Then he said, `This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.
19 `And I will say to my soul, ``Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.'"
20 ``But God said to him, `You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?'

The thought of death frightens many people. But believers have no reason to fear. Jesus' empty tomb proves that there is life after the physical body dies.

Those who aren't believers often have one of two different approaches to life. The first group piles up wealth, good deeds, or worldly success. They expect to "live on" in the memories of those who benefit from their hard work. The other group chooses to laugh in the face of death. Their philosophy is "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (1 Corinthians 15:32). Their existence seems pleasurable, but ultimately it will always fall short of providing true contentment. That's because God does not intend for our life to be meaningless.

For all of us who are in Christ, fulfilling our unique God-given purpose is the key to significance. In this life, we neither labor to leave a physical legacy nor waste our days pursuing pleasure. Instead, we help those in need, influence our culture, and reach out to share the good news of God's love.

For the believer, death is not an end. It is the doorway to a new life of serving the Lord in heaven. Our days on earth are just the beginning of our existence; they will seem like only a few minutes compared to an eternity spent in His presence.

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

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 27 of 78

The Groton Independent

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Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 28 of 78



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.23.26

30 42 49 53 66 4

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$285,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 31 Mins 25 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.26.26

2 12 15 27 48 9

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$14,050,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 46 Mins 25 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.26.26

3 21 22 42 44 9

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 1 Mins 25 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.24.26

1 2 4 24 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$222,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 1 Mins 25 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.26.26

8 25 27 46 67 21

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 30 Mins 25 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.26.26

21 31 51 60 63 18

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$43,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 30 Mins 25 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 29 of 78

News from the **AP** Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Clark-Willow Lake 64, Great Plains Lutheran 26
Ethan 60, Canistota 34
Hamlin 59, Lennox 53
Harrisburg 72, Sioux Falls Jefferson 69
Hay Springs, Neb. 56, Oelrichs 46
Iroquois-Lake Preston 82, Arlington 63
Tri-State, N.D. 54, Langford 45
Wolsey-Wessington 65, Tiospaye Topa 40

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

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Baltic 50, Madison 42
Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 74, Dupree 45
Corsica/Stickney 63, Emery 51
Ethan 77, Canistota 22
Hamlin 59, Lennox 57
Hay Springs, Neb. 70, Oelrichs 27
Herried-Selby 76, Wakpala 26
Langford 64, Tri-State, N.D. 41
Mobridge-Pollock 68, Todd County 30
Sisseton 72, Great Plains Lutheran 33
Timber Lake 62, McLaughlin 51
Waverly-South Shore 51, Webster 48
Winner 68, Crow Creek Tribal School 35

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

Sabalenka beats 18-year-old Jovic to reach Australian Open semifinals. Svitolina stuns Gauff

By JOHN PYE AP Sports Writer

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Aryna Sabalenka beat 18-year-old Iva Jovic 6-3, 6-0 to reach the semifinals of the Australian Open on Tuesday before searing heat on Day 10 forced matches to be played under cover.

Elina Svitolina stunned third-seeded Coco Gauff 6-1, 6-2 in a 59-minute night match to move into the semifinals in Australia for the first time.

Weeks into a tour return from a mental health break, the 12th-seeded Svitolina dominated the two-time major winner from the outset. Gauff struggled with her serve and recorded five double-faults in the first set, when she was broken four times.

She finally held in the fourth game of the second set, but by then it was too late. After leaving the court, Gauff smashed her racket into the ground seven times in the player area.

The 21-year-old American said she tried to find a place where there was no cameras to let out her frustrations, and went to the quietest area she could find.

No such frustration for Svitolina, the 31-year-old Ukrainian who lost quarterfinals here in 2018, 2019 and last year. She's now on a 10-match winning streak after starting the season with a title in Auckland, New

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 30 of 78

Zealand.

"Very pleased with the tournament so far and, of course, always been my dream to come back here after maternity leave in the Top 10," said Svitolina, who is playing her 12th major tournament since taking a maternity break in 2022. She and Gael Monfils, the popular French player who is retiring this year, are parents to Skai.

In an afternoon match, Alexander Zverev got the benefit of playing under a roof at Rod Laver Arena and advanced to the final four with a 6-3, 6-7 (5), 6-1, 7-6 (3) win over 20-year-old Learner Tien.

The No. 3-ranked Zverev, last year's runner-up in Australia, reached his 10th Grand Slam semifinal on the back of 24 aces and just a single double-fault — which he served when he had six match points in the deciding tiebreaker.

Top-ranked Sabalenka, also a runner-up in Melbourne last year, is aiming for her third Australian Open title in four years. She won back-to-back titles here in 2023 and 2024 and lost the final a year ago to Madison Keys.

The first of the four quarterfinals scheduled on Day 10 was played outdoors, despite predictions of the temperature peaking at 45 degrees Celsius (113 F).

"I guess, yeah, as a woman, we are stronger than the guys," Sabalenka said at her news conference, laughing. "They had to close the roof for the guys so they don't suffer!"

Sabalenka went up 3-0 in the first set and established her dominance early against the 29th-seeded Jovic.

Jovic had three breakpoint chances in the ninth game, which lasted 10 minutes, but wasn't able to convert against the world's No. 1-ranked woman. In the last game, Sabalenka served an ace on break point and clinched it with another ace on match point. She saved all five break points she faced.

It gave her back-to-back wins over up-and-coming teenagers following her fourth-round victory over 19-year-old Canadian Vicky Mboko.

"These teenagers have tested me in the last couple of rounds -- incredible player," Sabalenka said of Jovic in an on-court interview. "It was a tough match. Don't look at the score. She played incredible tennis and pushed me to a one-step better level. It was a battle."

Jovic was born in California and is the daughter of parents who emigrated to the United States. Her father is Serbian and Jovic, naturally, has sought tips from none other than Novak Djokovic.

Chang's influence

Zverev said Tien's level had increased dramatically since last year, when the young American reached the fourth round.

He credited the recent work Tien has done with Michael Chang, the 1989 French Open champion, as coach. Chang won that major at the age of 17, which remains the youngest for a male to have lifted a Grand Slam singles title.

"Yeah, he's a very good player. Very different than last year, for sure," Zverev said of Tien, the only player outside the Top 10 to reach the quarterfinals. "It was incredible to see how he played from the baseline. I thought he was playing unbelievable."

"For me to win, I think, the serve was very important for me, because on the baseline, again, he was playing amazing."

The temperature topped 42 Celsius (108 F) at 5 p.m. local time, but started to drop ahead of the night session. Play was suspended on outside courts all afternoon.

Nightcap

Top-seeded Carlos Alcaraz faced Alex de Minaur in the last match of the day. Alcaraz has lifted six Grand Slam titles but has never won the Australian Open and has lost in the quarterfinals here the last two years.

ICE agents will have a security role at Milan-Cortina Olympics, US sources say

MILAN (AP) — U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents will have a security role during the upcoming Milan Cortina Winter Games, according to sources at the U.S. embassy in Rome.

The sources who confirmed ICE participation on Tuesday said that federal ICE agents would support diplomatic security details and not run any immigration enforcement operations.

Workers from Bangladesh sought jobs in Russia but instead got sent to combat in Ukraine

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

LAKSHMIPUR, Bangladesh (AP) — A labor recruiter persuaded Maksudur Rahman to leave the tropical warmth of his hometown in Bangladesh and travel thousands of miles to frigid Russia for a job as a janitor. Within weeks, he found himself on the front lines of Russia's war in Ukraine.

An Associated Press investigation found that Bangladeshi workers were lured to Russia under the false promise of civilian work, only to be thrust into the chaos of combat in Ukraine. Many were threatened with violence, imprisonment or death.

AP spoke with three Bangladeshi men who escaped from the Russian military, including Rahman, who said that after arriving in Moscow, he and a group of fellow Bangladeshi workers were told to sign Russian documents that turned out to be military contracts. They were taken to an army camp for training in drone warfare techniques, medical evacuation procedures and basic combat skills using heavy weapons.

Rahman protested, complaining that this was not the work he agreed to do. A Russian commander offered a stark reply through a translation app: "Your agent sent you here. We bought you."

The three Bangladeshi men shared harrowing accounts of being coerced into front-line tasks against their will, including advancing ahead of Russian forces, transporting supplies, evacuating wounded soldiers and recovering the dead. The families of three other Bangladeshi men who are missing said their loved ones shared similar accounts with relatives.

Neither the Russian Defense Ministry, the Russian Foreign Ministry nor the South Asian country's government responded to a list of questions from AP.

Rahman said the workers in his group were threatened with 10-year jail terms and beaten.

"They'd say, 'Why don't you work? Why are you crying?' and kick us," said Rahman, who escaped and returned home after seven months.

The workers' accounts were corroborated by documents, including travel papers, Russian military contracts, medical and police reports, and photos. The documents show the visas granted to Bangladeshi workers, their injuries sustained during battles and evidence of their participation in the war.

How many Bangladeshis were deceived into fighting is unclear. The Bangladeshi men told AP they saw hundreds of Bangladeshis alongside Russian forces in Ukraine.

Officials and activists say Russia has also targeted men from other African and South Asian countries, including India and Nepal.

Overseas work supports Bangladeshi families

In the lush greenery of the Lakshmipur district in southeast Bangladesh, nearly every family has at least one member employed as a migrant worker overseas. Job scarcity and poverty have made such work essential.

Fathers embark on yearslong journeys for migrant work, returning home only for fleeting visits, just long enough to conceive another child, whom they will likely not see again for years. Sons and daughters support entire families with income earned abroad.

In 2024, Rahman was back in Lakshmipur after completing a contract in Malaysia and seeking new work. A labor recruiter advertised an opportunity to work as a cleaner in a military camp in Russia. He promised \$1,000 to \$1,500 a month and the possibility of permanent residency.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 32 of 78

Rahman took out a loan to pay the fee of 1.2 million Bangladeshi taka, about \$9,800, to the broker as a fee. He arrived in Moscow in December 2024.

Basic training, then the battlefield

Once in Russia, Rahman and three other Bangladeshi workers were presented with a document in Russian. Believing it was a contract for cleaning services, Rahman signed.

Then they went to a military facility far from Moscow, where they were issued weapons and underwent three days of training, learning to fire, advance and administer first aid. The group went to a barrack near the Russia-Ukraine border and continued training.

Rahman and two others were then sent to front-line positions and ordered to dig pits inside a bunker.

"The Russians would take a group of say, five Bangladeshis. They would send us in front and stay at the back themselves," he said.

The men stayed in a leaky bunker in the rain as bombs fell a few kilometers away. Missiles flew overhead.

One person was serving food. "The next moment, he was shot from a drone and fell to the ground right there. And then he was replaced," Rahman said.

Promises of jobs far from the front

Some Bangladeshi workers were lured into the army with promises of positions far from the front line.

Mohan Miajee enlisted in the Russian army after the job that initially brought him to Russia — serving as an electrician for a gas-processing plant in the remote far east — was plagued by harsh working conditions and relentless cold.

While searching for employment online, Miajee was contacted by a Russian army recruiter. When he expressed his reluctance to kill, the recruiter said his skills as an electrician made him an ideal candidate for an electronic warfare or drone unit that would be nowhere near combat.

With his military papers in order, Miajee was taken in January 2025 to a military camp in the captured city of Avdiivka. He showed the camp commander documents describing his experience and explained that his recruiter had instructed him to ask for "electrical work."

"The commander told me, 'You have been made to sign a contract to join the battalion. You cannot do any other work here. You have been deceived,'" he said after returning to his village of Munshiganj.

Miajee said he was beaten with shovels, handcuffed and tortured in a cramped basement cell, and held there every time he refused to carry out an order or made a small mistake.

Because of language barriers, for example, "if they told us to go to the right and we went to the left, they would beat us severely," he said.

He was made to carry supplies to the front and collect dead bodies.

Meanwhile in Rahman's unit, some weeks later, they were instructed to evacuate a Russian soldier with a wounded leg. The men carried him, but no sooner had they left the position than they saw a Ukrainian drone buzzing above. It fired at them. Then more drones came in a swarm.

Rahman could not advance or return to the bunker. A Russian soldier guiding them said land mines were everywhere.

He was stuck, and the Russian commander fled.

Rahman eventually suffered a leg wound that sent him to a hospital near Moscow. He escaped from the medical center and went directly to the Bangladeshi embassy in Moscow, which prepared a travel pass for him to leave the country.

Some months later, Rahman helped his brother-in-law Jehangir Alam, who also spoke with AP, run away using the same method — leaving the hospital after being wounded and appealing to the embassy.

Families long to learn about missing men

Families in Lakshmipur hold tightly to the documents of their missing loved ones, believing that one day, when presented to the right person, the papers might unlock the path to their return.

The documents included photos of Russian business visas, military contracts and army dog tags. The papers were sent by the missing men, who urged relatives to complain to recruiting agents.

The contracts were verified by two Russian groups helping men evade or get out of military service. Maj.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 33 of 78

Vladimir Yaltsev, head of the Kostroma regional recruitment center for contract military service, is listed as signing the contracts on behalf of the Russian military.

In their final messages, these husbands, sons and fathers conveyed to relatives that they were being forcibly taken to the front lines in Ukraine. After that, all communication ceased.

The families filed a complaint with police in Dhaka and traveled on three occasions to the capital to pressure the government to investigate.

Salma Akdar has not heard from her husband since March 26. In their last conversation, Ajar Hussein, 40, told her he had been sold to the Russian army. The couple has two sons, ages 7 and 11.

Hussein left in mid-December 2024, believing he was being offered a job as a laundry attendant in Russia, his wife said. He had recently returned from Saudi Arabia and planned to stop working overseas for a spell, she explained. But believing Russia offered opportunities to make money, he left again. He sold some of his land to pay the agent's fees.

For two weeks, he was in regular touch. Then he told his wife he was being taken to an army camp where they were trained to use weapons and carry heavy loads up to 80 kilograms (176 pounds). "Seeing all this, he cried a lot and told them, 'We cannot do these things. We have never done this before,'" his wife said.

For two months after that, he was offline. He reappeared briefly to explain they were being forced to fight in the war.

Russian commanders "told him that if he did not go, they would detain him, shoot him, stop providing food," she said.

Families in the village confronted the recruiting agent, demanding to know why their loved ones were being trained for war. The agent replied dismissively, saying that it was standard procedure in Russia, insisting that even launderers had to undergo similar training.

Hussein left a final audio note for this wife: "Please pray for me."

Son expected to work as a chef

Mohammed Siraj's 20-year-old son, Sajjad, departed believing he would be working as a chef in Russia. He needed to support his unemployed father and chronically ill mother.

Siraj wept as he described his son begging him to ask the agent why he was being made to undergo military training. Sajjad fought with his Russian commanders, insisting he had come to be a chef, not to fight. They threatened him with jail if he did not comply. Then someone else threatened to shoot him, his father recalled.

Sajjad called the family and said he was being taken to battle. "That is the last message from my son," he said.

In February, Siraj learned through a Bangladeshi man serving with Sajjad that his son had been killed in a drone attack. Unable to bear telling his wife the truth, Siraj assured her that their son was doing well. But word spread through the village.

"You lied to me," Siraj recalled her saying as she confronted him. Soon after, she died, calling out for her son in her final moments.

Investigation uncovers network of intermediaries

In late 2024, families approached BRAC, an organization that advocates for Bangladeshi workers, and said they could no longer reach their relatives in Russia. That prompted the organization to investigate. It uncovered at least 10 Bangladeshi men who are still missing after they were lured to fight.

"There are two or three layers of people who are profiting," said Shariful Islam, the head of BRAC's migration program.

Bangladesh police investigators uncovered a trafficking ring in Russia after a Bangladeshi man returned in January 2025, alleging he had been deceived into fighting. The police believe that similar networks, operated by Bangladeshi intermediaries with connections to the Russian government, are responsible for facilitating the entry of Bangladeshis into Russia.

Another nine people were discovered to have been lured into fighting based on that police investigation, according to investigator Mostafizur Rahman. The Associated Press reviewed the police report filed by

one victim's wife, who said he went to Russia expecting to work in a chocolate factory. A middleman, a Bangladeshi with Russian citizenship who was residing in Moscow, has been charged.

It's not clear how many Bangladeshis were lured to Russia. The investigator told AP that about 40 Bangladeshis may have lost their lives in the war.

Some go willingly, knowing they will end up on the front lines because the money is too good, he said.

In Lakshmipur, investigators learned that the local agent has been funneling recruits to a central agent associated with a company called SP Global. The company did not respond to AP's calls and emails. Investigators found it ceased operations in 2025.

Families of the missing individuals said they have not received any money earned by their loved ones. Miajee too said he was never paid.

"I don't want money or anything else," Akdar said. "I just want my children's father back."

India and EU clinch the 'mother of all deals' in a historic free trade agreement

By RAJESH ROY and SAM McNEIL Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — After nearly two decades of negotiations, India and the European Union announced Tuesday they have reached a free trade agreement to deepen economic and strategic ties. The accord — dubbed the "mother of all deals" — could impact as many as 2 billion people.

The deal is also one of the biggest bilateral engagements on commerce and comes as Washington targets both India and the EU with steep import tariffs.

"This agreement will bring major opportunities for the people of India and Europe," India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a virtual address to an energy conference. "It represents 25% of the global GDP and one-third of global trade."

India and the EU also agreed on a framework agreement for deeper defense and security cooperation, and a separate pact aimed at easing mobility for skilled workers and students, signaling their partnership extends beyond commerce.

US pressure propels India-EU trade deal

Speaking at a joint news conference in New Delhi with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President António Costa, the Indian leader said the partnership with the EU "will strengthen stability in the international system" at a time of "turmoil in the global order."

Washington is targeting both India and the EU with steep tariffs, disrupting established trade flows and pushing major economies to seek alternate partnerships.

The negotiations for the India-EU deal got a new impetus after U.S. President Donald Trump's strong-arm tactics over tariffs and Greenland.

"Europe and India are making history today. We have concluded the mother of all deals," von der Leyen said in a post on X.

In a speech later, she said the accord was a tale of "two giants" — the world's second and fourth largest economies — "who chose partnership, in a true win-win fashion." She also said it sends "a strong message that cooperation is the best answer to global challenges."

The deal, further integrating supply chains and strengthening joint manufacturing power, will also cut up to 4 billion euros (\$4.7 billion) in annual tariffs for exporters and create jobs for millions of workers in India and in Europe.

Deal to cut tariffs and ease regulatory barriers

A formal signing of the deal could come later this year after a legal scrubbing of the text while it is expected to go into effect sometime early next year, after ratification by the EU Parliament.

India is expected to reduce or eliminate tariffs for 96.6% of EU exports, while Brussels will reciprocate with similar reduction covering nearly 99% of India's shipments by trade value in a phased manner, according to statements from both sides.

India's sectors poised to gain from the deal include textiles, apparel, engineering goods, leather, handi-

craft, footwear and marine products while the EU's gains will be in wine, automobiles, chemicals and pharmaceuticals, among others.

A quota system for automobiles, wines and whisky has been agreed on, bringing down steep duties.

The European Commission said tariffs charged by India on cars will gradually go down from 110% to as low as 10%, while they will be fully abolished for car parts after 5-10 years. Tariffs ranging up to 44% on machinery, 22% on chemicals and 11% on pharmaceuticals will also be mostly eliminated, it added.

On European wine, the tariffs in India would come down from 150% to 20% for the premium range.

New Delhi has excluded from the deal dairy products such as milk and cheese along with cereals citing "domestic sensitivities" about those products. The EU for its part won't allow concessional tariffs on imports of Indian sugar, meat, poultry and beef products, officials at Indian Trade Ministry said.

Offsetting impact of higher US tariffs

India is looking to diversify its export destinations as part of a strategy to offset the impact of higher U.S. tariffs, including an extra 25% levy on Indian goods for its unabated purchases of discounted Russian oil, bringing the combined tariffs imposed by the United States on its Asian ally to 50%.

For the EU, the deal offers the bloc expanded access to one of the world's fastest-growing major economies, and helps European exporters and investors reduce their reliance on more volatile markets.

Bilateral trade between India and EU stood at \$136.5 billion in 2024-25. The two sides hope to increase that to about \$200 billion by 2030, Indian officials said.

"Ultimately, the agreement is about creating a stable commercial corridor between two major markets at a time the global trading system is fragmenting," said Indian trade analyst Ajay Srivastava.

The EU is still reeling from the aggressive approach of its once-stalwart ally across the Atlantic. There's a widespread sense of betrayal across the 27-nation bloc from Trump's onslaught of higher tariffs, embrace of far-right parties, and belligerence over Greenland.

Brussels has accelerated its outreach to markets around the world. Over the past year, von der Leyen has signed deals with Japan, Indonesia, Mexico, and South America under the catchphrase "strategic autonomy," which in practice is akin to decoupling from a U.S. seen by most European leaders as erratic.

UK's Starmer heads to China seeking a thaw in relations but risking a rift with Trump

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer is heading to China, seeking a thaw in relations with Beijing at a time of strained ties with the United States.

He's hoping for an economic boost to Britain, but risks the wrath of China hawks at home — and of U.S. President Donald Trump, who's already heaping tariffs and criticism on America's closest allies.

Starmer is due to meet China's President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang during the visit to Beijing and Shanghai that starts Wednesday, the first by a U.K. leader since 2018. He is expected to be accompanied by Business Secretary Peter Kyle and dozens of corporate chiefs as Britain seeks Chinese technology and investment, alongside greater access to the world's second-largest economy for U.K. financial services, cars and Scotch whisky.

"China is no longer just the world's factory; it is also becoming a global market," said Zhao Minghao, a professor in the Institute of International Studies at Shanghai's Fudan University.

The key word stressed by both sides is "pragmatic." As Trump roils the world order, both London and Beijing are looking for a more stable relationship.

China's government said it sees the visit as an opportunity to enhance political trust and deepen "pragmatic cooperation."

"In the current complex and volatile international situation, it is in the common interest of both peoples of China and the U.K., as permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, to maintain communication and strengthen cooperation," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said Tuesday at a daily briefing in Beijing.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 36 of 78

From golden era to big chill

Kerry Brown, director of the Lau China Institute at King's College London, said the trip comes as dramatic shifts in geopolitics create new opportunities for U.K.-Chinese relations.

But he said "Starmer is going to be talking to a very skeptical audience.

"Britain has not been very consistent in its relations with China. We have been very hot and cold," Brown said.

The relationship has soured since the short-lived "golden era" proclaimed in 2015 by Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron, who took Xi to a traditional English pub during a state visit. Beijing's crackdown on civil liberties in Hong Kong, China's support for Russia in the Ukraine war and growing concern about espionage and economic interference have widened the gap between London and Beijing.

Cameron's Conservative successors barred Chinese investment in sensitive telecoms infrastructure and squeezed China out of investment in new U.K. nuclear power plants.

Starmer's center-left Labour Party government carried out a review of relations with Beijing after it was elected 18 months ago. It says its approach is one of hard-headed pragmatism — protecting national security from Chinese espionage and interference while keeping up diplomatic dialogue and economic cooperation with the Asian superpower.

Both Britain's economy — the world's sixth largest — and Starmer's popularity could use a boost.

His government has struggled to deliver the economic growth it promised and ease a cost-of-living crisis for millions of households. Labour lags behind hard-right Reform UK in opinion polls, and nervous Labour lawmakers openly mull whether it would be better to ditch Starmer for a more charismatic leader, such as Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham.

America's allies look to China

Starmer's visit to China comes as cracks are starting to appear in his attempt to strike up a warm relationship with Trump — efforts rewarded with a trade deal that reduced U.S. tariffs on Britain's key auto and aerospace industries.

For months Starmer refrained from public criticism as Trump attacked the mayor of London, slammed British immigration policy and sued the BBC for \$10 billion.

But in recent days, Starmer has spoken out against Trump's desire to take over Greenland — calling it "completely wrong" — and condemned Trump's disparaging comments about the role of U.K. and other NATO troops in Afghanistan, which Starmer called "insulting" and "appalling."

Starmer says Britain does not need to choose between the U.S. and China. But he travels to Beijing days after Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney. Next month it's the turn of German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, as some of America's strongest allies hedge their bets against the unpredictable Trump.

Zhao said growing unease among U.S. allies over Washington's recent policy moves, including on tariffs, Greenland and the war in Ukraine, "have triggered a wave among allies to recalibrate their policies to 'de-risk' from the United States."

But rapprochement with Beijing brings the risk of a rift with Washington. Trump has threatened to slap a 100% tariff on all Canadian goods after Carney struck a trade deal with China on his trip this month.

Espionage and human rights concerns

Starmer's critics say the government is being naive about China's threat to Britain's security and weak in the face of pressure from Beijing.

The trip follows U.K. approval of a 20,000 square-meter (around 215,000 square-foot) Chinese Embassy near the Tower of London despite strong opposition from critics who say the "mega-embassy" will make it easier for China to conduct espionage and intimidate dissidents.

Starmer also faces criticism over an agreement to hand over the Chagos Islands in the Indian Ocean to Mauritius. The government says the move will secure the future of a key U.K.-U.S. military base against legal challenge, but critics argue it opens the door to Chinese influence. Last week Trump spoke out against the deal, reversing his previous support.

Human rights are another tricky area. Chris Patten, who was governor of Hong Kong from 1992 until the British colony was handed back to China in 1997, said Starmer should be firm in raising disagreements

over issues including the treatment of China's Uyghur minority and the imprisonment of Jimmy Lai, a Hong Kong pro-democracy campaigner and British citizen.

"You have to say with them, without being impolite, exactly what you think," Patten said. "They know we're different, but they want to have a reasonable relationship with us and, particularly given the state of the world with Trump, we should want to have a reasonable relationship with them."

Brown, from King's College, said Starmer will likely consider his trip a success if it secures significant investment and avoids major political pitfalls.

"What they're going to do is basically commit to consistency, a bit more predictability," he said. "Friends where we can be friends, otherwise agree to disagree."

Trump to visit Iowa in an effort to focus on affordability amid fallout from Minneapolis shooting

By SEUNG MIN KIM and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — President Donald Trump is headed to Iowa on Tuesday as part of the White House's mid-term-year pivot toward affordability, even as his administration remains mired in the fallout in Minneapolis over a second fatal shooting by federal immigration officers this month.

While in Iowa, the president will make a stop at a local business and then deliver a speech on affordability, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said. The remarks will be at the Horizon Events Center in Clive, a suburb of Des Moines.

The trip will also highlight energy policy, White House chief of staff Susie Wiles said last week. It's part of the White House's strategy to have Trump travel out of Washington once a week ahead of the mid-term elections to focus on affordability issues facing everyday Americans — an effort that keeps getting diverted by crisis.

The latest comes as the Trump administration is grappling with the weekend shooting death of Alex Pretti, an ICU nurse killed by federal agents in the neighboring state of Minnesota. Even as some top administration officials moved quickly to malign Pretti, the White House said Monday that Trump was waiting until an investigation into the shooting was complete.

Trump was last in Iowa ahead of the July 4 holiday to kick off the United States' upcoming 250th anniversary, which morphed largely into a celebration of his major spending and tax cut package hours after Congress had approved it.

Republicans are hoping that Trump's visit to the state Tuesday draws focus back to that tax bill, which will be a key part of the GOP's pitch as they ask voters to keep them in power in November.

"I invited President Trump back to Iowa to highlight the real progress we've made: delivering tax relief for working families, securing the border, and growing our economy," Rep. Zach Nunn, R-Iowa, said in a statement in advance of his trip. "Now we've got to keep that momentum going and pass my affordable housing bill, deliver for Iowa's energy producers, and bring down costs for working families."

Trump's affordability tour has taken him to Michigan, Pennsylvania and North Carolina as the White House tries to marshal the president's political power to appeal to voters in key swing states.

But his penchant for going off-script has sometimes taken the focus off cost-of-living issues and his administration's plans for how to combat it. In Mount Pocono, Pennsylvania, Trump insisted that inflation was no longer a problem and that Democrats were using the term affordability as a "hoax" to hurt him. At that same event, Trump also griped that immigrants arriving to the U.S. from "filthy" countries got more attention than his pledges to fight inflation.

Although it was a swing state just a little more than a decade ago, Iowa in recent years has been reliably Republican in national and statewide elections. Trump won Iowa by 13 percentage points in 2024.

Still, two of Iowa's four congressional districts have been among the most competitive in the country and are expected to be again in this year's midterm elections. Trump already has endorsed Republican Reps. Nunn and Mariannette Miller-Meeks. Democrats, who landed three of Iowa's four House seats in the

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 38 of 78

2018 midterm elections during Trump's first term, see a prime opportunity to unseat Iowa incumbents.

This election will be the first since 1968 with open seats for both governor and U.S. senator at the top of the ticket after Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds and Republican U.S. Sen. Joni Ernst opted out of reelection bids. The political shakeups have rippled throughout the state, with Republican Reps. Randy Feenstra and Ashley Hinson seeking new offices for governor and U.S. senator, respectively.

Democrats hope Rob Sand, the lone Democrat in statewide office who is running for governor, will make the entire state more competitive with his appeal to moderate and conservative voters and his \$13 million in cash on hand.

Trump's about-face in Minnesota after Pretti's death is latest in pattern of sudden shifts

By AAMER MADHANI and STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump shifted toward a more conciliatory approach with Democratic leaders in Minnesota on Monday, a sudden change in tack following an outcry over the second fatal shooting by federal agents in the state this month during the administration's nationwide crackdown on undocumented immigrants.

The about-face comes after Saturday's shooting death of Alex Pretti by federal agents raised doubts — including from some Republicans — over how the Trump administration has gone about aggressively deporting migrants and confronting protesters opposed to the policy.

But it's just the latest in a string of moments where Trump has first taken a maximalist position only to appear to later retreat.

Earlier this month, Trump repeatedly threatened Iran with military action if his administration found the Islamic Republic was using deadly force to squelch recent antigovernment protests. Human rights groups said thousands were killed, but Trump says he's holding off on acting after he received assurances Tehran was suspending hundreds of planned executions.

Last week, Trump first announced plans to impose new tariffs on European allies that refused to go along with his calls for the U.S. to take control of the Arctic territory of Greenland — only to abruptly cancel the tariffs after saying he'd come to terms of the "framework" of an agreement. The White House offered scant details about the deal, which Trump announced the day after the stock market saw one of its worst days in months in response to his tariff threat.

Then on Monday, Trump's administration changed up oversight of his immigration operation in Minnesota, and the typically bombastic Trump offered a warmer tone toward Gov. Tim Walz after speaking with the Democrat, saying he and Walz were now on a "similar wavelength."

Some Republicans took issue with what happened in Minneapolis

It was a particularly jarring turnabout for Trump, who had promised to be uncompromising on carrying out mass deportations of undocumented migrants during his 2024 campaign — and because Trump has repeatedly scorched Walz and other Minnesota Democrats in personal terms for resisting his policies.

Trump said he had dispatched border czar Tom Homan to take charge. Meanwhile, senior Border Patrol commander Greg Bovino and some agents were expected to leave Minneapolis as early as Tuesday, according to a person familiar with the matter.

Trump declared on social media that Walz "was happy that Tom Homan was going to Minnesota, and so am I!" Later, Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey confirmed that some agents would be leaving the city after he spoke with Trump — and suggested that the president seemed to be coming to the conclusion that the current state of federal operations was unsustainable. Homan and Frey were expected to meet Tuesday.

Trump's change-up in Minnesota came after some Republicans questioned federal agents' tactics in Saturday's shooting as well as the White House's response. Some high-ranking administration officials had branded Pretti a domestic terrorist even as videos of the encounter contradicted their narrative.

Minnesota gubernatorial candidate Chris Madel, a Minneapolis attorney, ended his GOP campaign in a surprise video announcement Monday, calling the recent immigration enforcement operation in the Twin

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 39 of 78

Cities an "unmitigated disaster" and saying he no longer wanted to be a member of the party because of it. Meanwhile, Texas Republican Gov. Greg Abbott, who has been a strong supporter of Trump's crackdown on immigration, offered measured criticism in an interview with conservative radio host Mark Davis, saying the White House needs to "recalibrate" what it was doing in Minnesota. Vermont's Republican Gov. Phil Scott called on Trump to reset and de-escalate.

"At best, these federal immigration operations are a complete failure of coordination of acceptable public safety and law enforcement practices training, and leadership," Scott said. "At worst, it's a deliberate federal intimidation and incitement of American citizens that's resulting in the murder of Americans."

Trump had scorched Walz. Now, they're on a 'similar wavelength'

The president's approach toward Walz, who served as Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris' running mate in 2024, amounted to a sharp U-turn.

Just a day earlier, Trump's deputy chief of staff, Stephen Miller, had derided Walz on social media as trying to "incite attacks on" U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents. The White House social media team in a series of posts called the governor "a truly disturbed, unstable individual" and an "unhinged lunatic" who "rants and raves and lies."

Miller also referred to Pretti, a nurse who worked at a Veterans Affairs hospital, as a "would-be assassin" while Homeland Security Kristi Noem labeled the ICU nurse as committing an act of domestic terrorism.

The White House sidestepped whether Trump agreed with his senior aides' rhetoric or whether the administration would apologize for it.

"This incident remains under investigation," press secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters. "And nobody here at the White House, including the president of the United States, wants to see Americans hurt or killed and losing their lives."

His response has been muted compared to other recent deaths

Trump's response to the deaths of the two U.S. citizens in Minneapolis has been much more muted than reactions to political violence that he's portrayed as targeting his own political movement.

After conservative activist Charlie Kirk was assassinated in September, the president spoke to the nation from the Oval Office and called Kirk's death "a dark moment for America."

In November, Trump gave a national address after two National Guard members were shot in Washington by an Afghan national, one fatally. The guard members had been deployed to the nation's capital as part of a federal mission to assist with local policing, and the president called the shooting "an act of evil, an act of hatred and an act of terror."

But the president has yet to speak directly to the nation about the deaths of Pretti and Renee Good, another U.S. citizen who was killed by federal agents in Minneapolis earlier this month. Trump has so far largely chosen to keep the public informed in the wake of Pretti's death with social media posts.

Even as his comments Monday appeared to be aimed at turning down the rhetoric, Trump's chief spokesperson, Leavitt, continued to blame Walz and other Minnesota Democrats for encouraging "left-wing agitators to stop, record, confront and obstruct federal officers who are just trying to lawfully perform their duties."

"This is precisely what unfolded in Minneapolis on Saturday morning," Leavitt added.

Minnesota killing produces backlash against Trump administration from Second Amendment advocates

By BILL BARROW and NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

Prominent Republicans and gun rights advocates helped elicit a White House turnabout this week after bristling over the administration's characterization of Alex Pretti, the second person killed this month by a federal officer in Minneapolis, as responsible for his own death because he lawfully possessed a weapon.

The death produced no clear shifts in U.S. gun politics or policies, even as President Donald Trump shuffles the lieutenants in charge of his militarized immigration crackdown. But important voices in Trump's

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 40 of 78

coalition have called for a thorough investigation of Pretti's death while also criticizing inconsistencies in some Republicans' Second Amendment stances.

If the dynamic persists, it could give Republicans problems as Trump heads into a midterm election year with voters already growing skeptical of his overall immigration approach. The concern is acute enough that Trump's top spokeswoman sought Monday to reassert his brand as a staunch gun rights supporter.

"The president supports the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding American citizens, absolutely," White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters.

Leavitt qualified that "when you are bearing arms and confronted by law enforcement, you are raising ... the risk of force being used against you."

Videos contradict early statements from administration

That still marked a retreat from the administration's previous messages about the shooting of Pretti. It came the same day the president dispatched border czar Tom Homan to Minnesota, seemingly elevating him over Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem and Border Patrol chief Greg Bovino, who had been in charge in Minneapolis.

Within hours of Pretti's death on Saturday, Bovino suggested Pretti "wanted to ... massacre law enforcement," and Noem said Pretti was "brandishing" a weapon and acted "violently" toward officers.

"I don't know of any peaceful protester that shows up with a gun and ammunition rather than a sign," Noem said.

White House deputy chief of staff Stephen Miller, an architect of Trump's mass deportation effort, went further on X, declaring Pretti "an assassin."

Bystander videos contradicted each claim, instead showing Pretti holding a cellphone and helping a woman who had been pepper sprayed by a federal officer. Within seconds, Pretti was sprayed, too, and taken to the ground by multiple officers. No video disclosed thus far has shown him unholstering his concealed weapon — which he had a Minnesota permit to carry. It appeared that one officer took Pretti's gun and walked away with it just before shots began.

As multiple videos went viral online and on television, Vice President JD Vance reposted Miller's assessment, while Trump shared an alleged photo of "the gunman's gun, loaded (with two additional full magazines!)."

Swift reactions from gun rights advocates

The National Rifle Association, which has backed Trump three times, released a statement that began by casting blame on Minnesota Democrats it accused of stoking protests. But the group lashed out after a federal prosecutor in California said on X that, "If you approach law enforcement with a gun, there is a high likelihood they will be legally justified in shooting you."

That analysis, the NRA said, is "dangerous and wrong."

FBI Director Kash Patel magnified the blowback Sunday on Fox News' "Sunday Morning Futures With Maria Bartiromo." No one, Patel said, can "bring a firearm, loaded, with multiple magazines to any sort of protest that you want. It's that simple."

Erich Pratt, vice president of Gun Owners of America, was incredulous.

"I have attended protest rallies while armed, and no one got injured," he said on CNN.

Conservative officials around the country made the same connection between the First and Second amendments.

"Showing up at a protest is very American. Showing up with a weapon is very American," state Rep. Jeremy Faison, who leads the GOP caucus in Tennessee, said on X.

Trump's first-term vice president, Mike Pence, called for "full and transparent investigation of this officer involved shooting."

A different response from the past

Liberals, conservatives and nonpartisan experts noted how the administration's response differed from past conservative positions involving protests and weapons.

Multiple Trump supporters were found to have weapons during the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol. Trump issued blanket pardons to all of them.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 41 of 78

Republicans were critical in 2020 when Mark and Patricia McCloskey had to pay fines after pointing guns at protesters who marched through their St. Louis neighborhood after the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis. And then there's Kyle Rittenhouse, a counter-protester acquitted after fatally shooting two men and injuring another in Kenosha, Wisconsin, during the post-Floyd protests.

"You remember Kyle Rittenhouse and how he was made a hero on the right," Trey Gowdy, a Republican former congressman and attorney for Trump during one of his first-term impeachments. "Alex Pretti's firearm was being lawfully carried. ... He never brandished it."

Adam Winkler, a UCLA law professor who has studied the history of the gun debate, said the fallout "shows how tribal we've become." Republicans spent years talking about the Second Amendment as a means to fight government tyranny, he said.

"The moment someone who's thought to be from the left, they abandon that principled stance," Winkler said.

Meanwhile, Democrats who have criticized open and concealed carry laws for years, Winkler added, are not amplifying that position after Pretti's death.

Uncertain effects in an election year

The blowback against the administration from core Trump supporters comes as Republicans are trying to protect their threadbare majority in the U.S. House and face several competitive Senate races.

Perhaps reflecting the stakes, GOP staff and campaign aides were reticent Monday to talk about the issue at all.

The House Republican campaign chairman, Rep. Richard Hudson of North Carolina, is sponsoring the GOP's most significant gun legislation of this congressional term, a proposal to make state concealed-carry permits reciprocal across all states.

The bill cleared the House Judiciary Committee last fall. Asked Monday whether Pretti's death and the Minneapolis protests might affect debate, an aide to Speaker Mike Johnson did not offer any update on the bill's prospects.

Gun rights advocates have notched many legislative victories in Republican-controlled statehouses in recent decades, from rolling back gun-free zones around schools and churches to expanding gun possession rights in schools, on university campuses and in other public spaces.

William Sack, legal director of the Second Amendment Foundation, said he was surprised and disappointed by the administration's initial statements following the Pretti shooting. Trump's vacillating, he said, is "very likely to cost them dearly with the core of a constituency they count on."

Trump threatens to hike tariffs on South Korean goods over inaction on trade deal

By JOSH BOAK and HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Monday he is increasing tariffs on South Korean goods because the country's legislature has yet to approve the trade framework announced last year.

Trump said on social media that import taxes would be raised on autos, lumber and pharmaceutical drugs from South Korea with the rate on other goods going from 15% to 25%. The U.S. president previously imposed the tariffs by declaring an economic emergency and bypassing Congress, while South Korea needed legislative approval for the framework announced in July and affirmed during Trump's October visit to the country.

"Our Trade Deals are very important to America. In each of these Deals, we have acted swiftly to reduce our TARIFFS in line with the Transaction agreed to," Trump said. "We, of course, expect our Trading Partners to do the same."

The threat was a reminder that the tariff drama unleashed last year by Trump is likely to be repeated again and again this year. The global economy and U.S. voters might find the world's trade structure constantly being subject to disruption and new negotiations as Trump has already sought to levy tariffs

in order to bend other nations to his will.

Trump has in the past tied his tariffs to commitments by South Korea to invest \$350 billion in the U.S. economy over several years, including efforts to revitalize American shipyards. But the Trump administration's relations with South Korea have at times been rocky with the raid last year by immigration officials at a Hyundai manufacturing site in Georgia in which 475 people were detained.

South Korea's presidential office responded after a meeting of top South Korean officials that it will convey its commitment to implementing last year's deal to the U.S.

The presidential office said that South Korea's Industry Minister Kim Jung-Kwan will travel to the U.S. for talks with Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick, while Trade Minister Yeo Han-koo will travel separately to meet with Trade Representative Jamieson Greer. Kim was on a visit to Canada.

South Korean lawmakers have submitted five bills on implementing South Korea's proposed \$350 billion investment package to the National Assembly. The bills are currently before the assembly's finance committee.

Kim Hyun-jung, a spokesperson for South Korea's governing Democratic Party, said his party will coordinate with the government to organize swift debate and action on the bills.

Assembly officials said the five bills will likely be incorporated into a single proposed law, which will need approval from the finance and judiciary committees before it can go to a floor vote.

Trump's announcement of new tariffs fits a pattern in which Trump plans to continue to deploy tariffs, possibly to the detriment of relations with other countries.

Just last week, the president threatened tariffs on eight European nations unless the U.S. gained control of Greenland, only to pull back on his ultimatum after meetings at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Trump on Saturday said he would put a 100% tax on goods from Canada if it followed through with plans to bolster trade with China.

Trump has bragged about his trade frameworks as drawing in new investment to the U.S., yet many of his heavily hyped deals have yet to be finalized. The European Parliament has yet to approve a trade deal pushed by Trump that would put a 15% tax on the majority of goods exported by the EU's 27 member states.

The United States is poised this year to renegotiate its amended 2020 trade pact with Canada and Mexico. There are also ongoing Section 232 investigations under the 1962 Trade Expansion Act, as well as an upcoming Supreme Court decision on whether Trump exceeded his authority by declaring tariffs under the 1977 International Emergency Economic Powers Act.

Meta, TikTok and YouTube face landmark trial over youth addiction claims

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

Three of the world's biggest tech companies face a landmark trial in Los Angeles starting this week over claims that their platforms — Meta's Instagram, ByteDance's TikTok and Google's YouTube — deliberately addict and harm children.

Jury selection starts this week in the Los Angeles County Superior Court. It's the first time the companies will argue their case before a jury, and the outcome could have profound effects on their businesses and how they will handle children using their platforms. The selection process is expected to take at least a few days, with 75 potential jurors questioned each day through at least Thursday. A fourth company named in the lawsuit, Snapchat parent company Snap Inc., settled the case last week for an undisclosed sum.

At the core of the case is a 19-year-old identified only by the initials "KGM," whose case could determine how thousands of other, similar lawsuits against social media companies will play out. She and two other plaintiffs have been selected for bellwether trials — essentially test cases for both sides to see how their arguments play out before a jury and what damages, if any, may be awarded, said Clay Calvert, a non-resident senior fellow of technology policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 43 of 78

KGM claims that her use of social media from an early age addicted her to the technology and exacerbated depression and suicidal thoughts. Importantly, the lawsuit claims that this was done through deliberate design choices made by companies that sought to make their platforms more addictive to children to boost profits. This argument, if successful, could sidestep the companies' First Amendment shield and Section 230, which protects tech companies from liability for material posted on their platforms.

"Borrowing heavily from the behavioral and neurobiological techniques used by slot machines and exploited by the cigarette industry, Defendants deliberately embedded in their products an array of design features aimed at maximizing youth engagement to drive advertising revenue," the lawsuit says.

Executives, including Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg, are expected to testify at the trial, which will last six to eight weeks. Experts have drawn similarities to the Big Tobacco trials that led to a 1998 settlement requiring cigarette companies to pay billions in healthcare costs and restrict marketing targeting minors.

"Plaintiffs are not merely the collateral damage of Defendants' products," the lawsuit says. "They are the direct victims of the intentional product design choices made by each Defendant. They are the intended targets of the harmful features that pushed them into self-destructive feedback loops."

The tech companies dispute the claims that their products deliberately harm children, citing a bevy of safeguards they have added over the years and arguing that they are not liable for content posted on their sites by third parties.

"Recently, a number of lawsuits have attempted to place the blame for teen mental health struggles squarely on social media companies," Meta said in a recent blog post. "But this oversimplifies a serious issue. Clinicians and researchers find that mental health is a deeply complex and multifaceted issue, and trends regarding teens' well-being aren't clear-cut or universal. Narrowing the challenges faced by teens to a single factor ignores the scientific research and the many stressors impacting young people today, like academic pressure, school safety, socio-economic challenges and substance abuse."

Meta, YouTube and TikTok did not immediately respond to requests for comment Monday.

The case will be the first in a slew of cases beginning this year that seek to hold social media companies responsible for harming children's mental well-being. A federal bellwether trial beginning in June in Oakland, California, will be the first to represent school districts that have sued social media platforms over harms to children.

In addition, more than 40 state attorneys general have filed lawsuits against Meta, claiming it is harming young people and contributing to the youth mental health crisis by deliberately designing features on Instagram and Facebook that addict children to its platforms. The majority of cases filed their lawsuits in federal court, but some sued in their respective states.

TikTok also faces similar lawsuits in more than a dozen states.

More arctic air expected in parts of the South still covered in ice and riddled with power outages

By CHARLOTTE KRAMON and RUSS BYNUM Associated Press

When a massive winter storm descended on the Northeast and parts of the South over the weekend, Lisa Patterson planned to stick it out at her family's home in Nashville.

But after she and her husband lost power, trees fell onto their driveway and their wood stove proved no match for the frigid temperatures, the couple and their dog had to be rescued and taken to a warming shelter.

"I've been snowed in up there for almost three weeks without being able to get up and down my driveway because of the snow. I'm prepared for that. But this was unprecedented," Patterson said.

The family was among many across Tennessee and other parts of the South that have fled to warming shelters as crews worked to restore power to hundreds of thousands of households in the face of a new influx of arctic air expected to spur freezing temperatures Tuesday in places already covered in snow and ice.

At least 30 deaths have been reported in states afflicted with severe cold, including two people run over

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 44 of 78

by snowplows in Massachusetts and Ohio, fatal sledding accidents that killed teenagers in Arkansas and Texas, and a woman whose body was found covered in snow in Kansas. In New York City, officials said eight people were found dead outdoors over the frigid weekend.

The storm had dropped over a foot (30 centimeters) of snow across a 1,300-mile (2,100-kilometer) swath from Arkansas to New England, halting traffic, canceling thousands of flights and triggering wide school closures Monday. The National Weather Service said areas north of Pittsburgh got up to 20 inches (50 centimeters) of snow and faced wind chills as low as minus 25 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 31 degrees Celsius) late Monday into Tuesday.

More widespread record cold temperatures were forecast for Tuesday, with eastern Texas through western Pennsylvania under extreme cold warnings, according to the National Weather Service. In Kentucky, Gov. Andy Beshear warned that the temperatures could be so frigid that as little as 10 minutes outside "could result in frostbite or hypothermia."

And forecasters said it's possible another winter storm could hit parts of the East Coast this weekend.

There were still more than 550,000 power outages in the nation Monday night, according to poweroutage.com. Most of them were in the South, where weekend blasts of freezing rain caused tree limbs and power lines to snap, inflicting crippling outages on northern Mississippi and parts of Tennessee. Officials warned that it could take days for power to be restored.

In Mississippi, Gov. Tate Reeves said Monday at least 14 homes and 20 public roads had major damage in the aftermath of the state's worst ice storm since 1994. The University of Mississippi canceled classes for the entire week as its Oxford campus remained coated in treacherous ice.

New York City saw its snowiest day in years, with neighborhoods recording 8 to 15 inches (20 to 38 centimeters) of snow, forcing the nation's largest public school system to shut down.

Meanwhile, bitter cold followed in the storm's wake. Communities across the Midwest, South and Northeast awakened Monday to subzero weather. The entire Lower 48 states were forecast to have their coldest average low temperature of minus 9.8 F (minus 12.3 C) since January 2014.

Nathan Hoffner sent his 4-year-old son to stay with his son's mother after his rental house in Nashville lost power midday Sunday. He and his roommate layered up with clothes and several blankets overnight and by the next morning the temperature inside the home had dropped dramatically.

"I saw my breath in the house," Hoffner said.

Russia offers cash bonuses, frees prisoners and lures foreigners to replenish its troops in Ukraine

By DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

For average wage earners in Russia, it's a big payday. For criminals seeking to escape the harsh conditions and abuse in prison, it's a chance at freedom. For immigrants hoping for a better life, it's a simplified path to citizenship.

All they have to do is sign a contract to fight in Ukraine.

As Russia seeks to replenish its forces in nearly four years of war — and avoid an unpopular nationwide mobilization — it's pulling out all the stops to find new troops to send into the battlefield.

Some come from abroad to fight in what has become a bloody war of attrition. After signing a mutual defense treaty with Moscow in 2024, North Korea sent thousands of soldiers to help Russia defend its Kursk region from a Ukrainian incursion.

Men from South Asian countries, including India, Nepal and Bangladesh, complain of being duped into signing up to fight by recruiters promising jobs. Officials in Kenya, South Africa and Iraq say the same has happened to citizens from their countries.

Russian numbers in Ukraine

President Vladimir Putin told his annual news conference last month that 700,000 Russian troops are fighting in Ukraine. He gave the same number in 2024, and a slightly lower figure — 617,000 — in December 2023. It's unclear if those numbers are accurate.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 45 of 78

Still hidden are the numbers of military casualties, with Moscow having released limited official figures. The British Defense Ministry said last summer that more than 1 million Russian troops may have been killed or wounded.

Independent Russian news site Mediazona, together with the BBC and a team of volunteers, scoured news reports, social media and government websites and collected the names of over 160,000 troops killed. More than 550 of those were foreigners from over two dozen countries.

How Russia gets new soldiers

Unlike Ukraine, where martial law and nationwide mobilization has been in place since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, Putin has resisted ordering a broad call-up.

When a limited mobilization of 300,000 men was tried later that year, tens of thousands of people fled abroad. The effort stopped after a few weeks when the target was met, but a Putin decree left the door open for another call-up. It also made all military contracts effectively open-ended and barred soldiers from quitting service or being discharged, unless they reached certain age limits or were incapacitated by injuries.

Since then, Moscow has largely relied on what it describes as voluntary enlistment.

The flow of voluntary enlistees signing military contracts has remained strong, topping 400,000 last year, Putin said in December. It was not possible to independently verify the claim. Similar numbers were announced in 2024 and 2023.

Activists say these contracts often stipulate a fixed term of service, such as one year, leading some potential enlistees to believe the commitment is temporary. But contracts are automatically extended indefinitely, they say.

The incentives

The government offers high pay and extensive benefits to enlistees. Regional authorities offer various enlistment bonuses, sometimes amounting to tens of thousands of dollars.

In the Khanty-Mansi region of central Russia, for example, an enlistee would get about \$50,000 in various bonuses, according to the local government. That's more than twice the average annual income in the region, where monthly salaries in the first 10 months of 2025 were reported to be just over \$1,600.

There also are tax breaks, debt relief and other perks.

Despite Kremlin claims of relying on voluntary enlistment, media reports and rights groups say conscripts — men aged 18-30 performing fixed-term mandatory military service and exempted from being sent to Ukraine — are often coerced by superiors into signing contracts that send them into battle.

Recruitment also extends to prisoners and those in pretrial detention centers, a practice led early in the war by the late mercenary chief Yevgeny Prigozhin and adopted by the Defense Ministry. Laws now allow recruitment of both convicts and suspects in criminal cases.

Targeting foreigners

Foreigners also are recruiting targets, both inside Russia and abroad.

Laws were adopted offering accelerated Russian citizenship for enlistees. Russian media and activists also report that raids in areas where migrants typically live or work lead to them being pressured into military service, with new citizens sent to enlistment offices to determine if they're eligible for mandatory service.

In November, Putin decreed that military service was mandatory for certain foreigners seeking permanent residency.

Some reportedly are lured to Russia by trafficking rings promising jobs, then duping them into signing military contracts. Cuban authorities in 2023 identified and sought to dismantle one such ring operating from Russia.

Nepal's Foreign Minister Narayan Prakash Saud told The Associated Press in 2024 that his country asked Russia to return hundreds of Nepali nationals who were recruited to fight in Ukraine, as well as to repatriate the remains of those killed in the war. Nepal has since barred citizens from traveling to Russia or Ukraine for work, citing recruitment efforts.

Also in 2024, India's federal investigation agency said it broke up a network that lured at least 35 of its

citizens to Russia under the pretext of employment. The men were trained for combat and deployed to Ukraine against their will, with some "grievously injured," the agency said.

When Putin hosted Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi for talks in 2024, New Delhi said its nationals who were "misled" into joining the Russian army would be discharged.

Iraqi officials say about 5,000 of its citizens have joined the Russian military along with an unspecified number who are fighting alongside Ukrainian forces. Officials in Baghdad cracked down on such recruiting networks, with one man convicted last year of human trafficking and sentenced to life in prison.

An unknown number of Iraqis have been killed or gone missing while fighting in Ukraine. Some families have reported that relatives were lured to Russia under false pretenses and forced to enlist; in other cases, Iraqis have joined voluntarily for the salary and Russian citizenship.

Foreigners duped into fighting are especially vulnerable because they don't speak Russian, have no military experience and are deemed "dispensable, to put it bluntly," by military commanders, said Anton Gorbatsevich of the activist group Idite Lesom, or "Get Lost," which helps men desert from the army.

A drain on a slowing economy

This month, a Ukrainian agency for the treatment of prisoners of war said over 18,000 foreign nationals had fought or are fighting on the Russian side. Almost 3,400 have been killed, and hundreds of citizens of 40 countries are held in Ukraine as POWs.

If true, that represents a fraction of the 700,000 troops that Putin said are fighting for Russia in Ukraine.

Using foreigners is only one way to meet the constant demand, said Artyom Klyga, head of the legal department at the Movement of Conscientious Objectors, noting Russian recruitment efforts appear to be stable. Most of those seeking help from the group, which assists men in avoiding military service, are Russian citizens, he said.

Kateryna Stepanenko, a Russia researcher at the Washington-based Institute for the Study of War, said the Kremlin has gotten more "creative" in the last two years with attracting enlistees, including foreigners.

But recruitment efforts are becoming "extremely expensive" for Russia, which faces a slowing economy, she added.

NTSB to highlight what led to a deadly midair collision near Washington, DC, at daylong hearing

By JOSH FUNK, GARY FIELDS and ED WHITE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A daylong hearing on Tuesday should make clear what factors played the biggest role in causing last January's midair collision near Washington, D.C., that killed 67 people, and the National Transportation Safety Board will recommend what should be done to prevent similar tragedies.

Everyone aboard an American Airlines jet flying from Wichita, Kansas, and an Army Black Hawk helicopter died when the two aircraft ran into each other and plummeted into the icy Potomac River on Jan. 29, 2025. It was the deadliest plane crash on U.S. soil since 2001.

The Federal Aviation Administration made a number of changes shortly after the crash to ensure that helicopters and planes no longer share the same crowded airspace around the nation's capital, and last week it made those changes permanent. But the NTSB will recommend additional action, and the families of the victims have said they hope that leads to meaningful changes.

"I hope that we see a clear path through the recommendations they offer to ensure that this never happens again," said Rachel Feres, who lost her cousin Peter Livingston and his wife and two young daughters in the crash. "That nobody else has to wake up to hear that an entire branch of their family tree is gone or their wife is gone or the child is gone. That's what I hope coming out of this. I hope we have clarity and urgency."

Whether that happens will depend on how Congress, the Army and the Trump administration respond after the hearing. But the victims' families say they will keep the pressure on officials to act.

Young Alydia and Everly Livingston were among 28 members of the figure skating community who died in the crash. Many of them had been in Wichita for a national skating competition and development camp.

The NTSB has already spelled out many of the key factors that contributed to the crash and detailed what happened that night. That includes a poorly designed helicopter route past Reagan Airport, the fact that the Black Hawk was flying 78 feet (23.7 meters) higher than it should have been, the warnings that the FAA ignored in the years beforehand and the Army's move to turn off a key system that would have broadcast the helicopter's location more clearly.

A number of other high-profile crashes and close calls followed the D.C. collision last year and worried the flying public. But NTSB statistics show that the total number of crashes last year was actually the lowest since the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020 with 1,405 crashes nationwide.

Fed expected to keep rates unchanged as Chair Powell pivots back to economics

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — After two weeks of intense political and legal scrutiny, the Federal Reserve will seek to make this week's meeting about interest rates as straightforward and uneventful as possible, though President Donald Trump probably still won't like the result.

The central bank's interest rate-setting committee is almost certain to keep its key short-term rate unchanged at about 3.6%, after three straight quarter-point cuts last year. Fed Chair Jerome Powell said after December's meeting that they were "well positioned to wait to see how the economy evolves" before making any further moves.

When the Fed lowers its short-term rate, it can over time influence other borrowing costs for things like mortgages, auto loans and business borrowing, though those rates are also affected by market forces.

This week's meeting — one of eight the Fed holds each year — will be overshadowed by the bombshell revelation earlier this month that the Justice Department has subpoenaed the Fed as part of a criminal investigation into testimony Powell gave last June about a \$2.5 billion building renovation. It's the first time a sitting Fed chair has been investigated, and prompted an unusually public rebuke from Powell.

Now, Powell will have to shift from a dispute with the White House to emphasizing that the Fed's decisions around interest rates are driven by economic concerns, not politics. Powell said Jan. 11 that the subpoenas were "pretexts" to punish the Fed for not cutting rates as sharply as Trump wants.

Powell will be "under even more pressure to underscore, 'everything we're doing here ... is all about the economics,'" said Claudia Sahm, a former Fed economist and chief economist at New Century Advisors. "We didn't think about the politics."

Michael Gapen, chief U.S. economist at Morgan Stanley and also a former Fed staffer, said that despite the scrutiny, the Fed can be expected to consider its interest rate policies like it always does.

"The meetings have a regular flow to them," he said. "There are presentations that are made, there are discussions that have to be had. ... Some of these other broader-based attacks on the Fed don't really come up."

Not long after the Justice Department's subpoenas, the Supreme Court last week considered whether Trump can fire Fed governor Lisa Cook over allegations of mortgage fraud, which she denies. No president has fired a governor in the Fed's 112-year history. During an oral argument, the justices appeared to be leaning toward allowing her to stay in her job until the case is resolved.

Other Fed officials have also signaled the central bank is likely to keep rates unchanged at their two-day meeting that ends Wednesday. The Fed's three rate cuts last year were intended to bolster the economy after hiring slowed sharply over the summer and fall in the wake of Trump's April tariffs on dozens of countries.

Yet the unemployment rate ticked lower in December, after picking up for much of last year, and there are other signs the job market may be stabilizing. The number of people seeking unemployment benefits has stayed historically low, a sign layoffs haven't spiked.

Meanwhile, inflation remains elevated and actually ticked higher last year, according to the Fed's preferred measure. Prices rose 2.8% in November from a year earlier, the latest data available. That is up

from 2.6% in November 2024.

Unless businesses start cutting jobs or the unemployment rate rises, the Fed is unlikely to cut rates again for at least a few months, economists say. If inflation slowly declines this year, as economists expect, the Fed may cut again in the spring or summer. Wall Street investors expect just two quarter-point rate reductions this year, according to futures prices.

Many economists expect growth could pick up in the coming months, which would be another reason to forego rate cuts. Gapen estimates that tax refunds could be about 20% higher this spring than last year as the Trump administration's tax cuts take effect. Refunds could average \$3,500, Gapen said.

The economy expanded at a 4.4% annual rate in last year's July-September quarter and may have grown at a similarly healthy pace in the final three months of last year. If such solid growth continues, Fed officials will likely wait to see if hiring picks up as well, further reducing the need for more rate cuts.

Bovino to leave Minneapolis as Trump reshuffles the leadership of his immigration crackdown

By STEVE KARNOWSKI and MIKE BALSAMO Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Border Patrol commander Gregory Bovino is expected to leave Minneapolis on Tuesday, according to a person familiar with the matter, as the Trump administration reshuffles leadership of its immigration enforcement operation and scales back the federal presence after a second fatal shooting by federal officers.

President Donald Trump said he was placing his border czar, Tom Homan, in charge of the mission, with Homan reporting directly to the White House, after Bovino drew condemnation for claiming the man who was killed, Alex Pretti, had been planning to "massacre" law enforcement officers, a characterization that authorities had not substantiated.

Saturday's fatal shooting of Pretti, an ICU nurse, by Border Patrol agents ignited political backlash and raised fresh questions about how the operation was being run.

Bovino's leadership of highly visible federal crackdowns, including operations that sparked mass demonstrations in Los Angeles, Chicago, Charlotte and Minneapolis, has drawn fierce criticism from local officials, civil rights advocates and congressional Democrats.

A person familiar with the matter told The Associated Press that Bovino is among the federal agents leaving Minneapolis. The person was not authorized to publicly discuss details of the operation and spoke to AP on condition of anonymity.

The departure accompanies a softer tone from Trump on the Minnesota crackdown, including the president's touting of productive conversations with the governor and Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey.

The mayor said he asked Trump in a phone call to end the immigration enforcement surge, and Trump agreed the present situation cannot continue. Frey said he would keep pushing for others involved in Operation Metro Surge to go.

Homan will take charge of Immigration and Customs Enforcement operations in Minnesota. Frey said he planned to meet Homan on Tuesday.

Trump has call with Minnesota governor

Trump and Democratic Gov. Tim Walz spoke in a phone call and later offered comments that were a marked change from the critical statements they have exchanged in the past. Their conversation happened on the same day a federal judge heard arguments in a lawsuit aimed at halting the federal immigration enforcement surge in the state.

"We, actually, seemed to be on a similar wavelength," the president wrote in a social media post.

Walz, in a statement, said the call was "productive" and that impartial investigations into the shootings were needed. Trump said his administration was looking for "any and all" criminals the state has in their custody. Walz said the state Department of Corrections honors federal requests for people in its custody.

Meanwhile, attorneys for the administration, the state and the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul appeared

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 49 of 78

Monday before U.S. District Judge Katherine Menendez, who is considering whether to grant requests to temporarily halt the immigration operation.

She said the case was a priority, but in an order later Monday, she told the federal government's attorneys to file an additional brief by 6 p.m. Wednesday. She told them to address, among other things, the assertion by the state and cities that the purpose of Operation Metro Surge is to punish them for their sanctuary laws and policies.

Lawyers for the state and the Twin Cities argued the situation on the street is so dire it requires the court to halt the federal government's enforcement actions.

"If this is not stopped right here, right now, I don't think anybody who is seriously looking at this problem can have much faith in how our republic is going to go in the future," Minnesota Assistant Attorney General Brian Carter said.

Judge questions government's motives

The judge questioned the government's motivation behind the crackdown and expressed skepticism about a letter Attorney General Pam Bondi recently sent to Walz. The letter asked the state to give the federal government access to voter rolls, to turn over state Medicaid and food assistance records, and to repeal sanctuary policies.

"I mean, is there no limit to what the executive can do under the guise of enforcing immigration law?" Menendez asked. She noted that the federal requests are the subject of litigation.

Brantley Mayers, a Justice Department attorney, said the government's goal is to enforce federal law. Mayers said one lawful action should not be used to discredit another lawful action.

Menendez questioned where the line was between violating the Constitution and the executive's power to enforce the law. She also asked whether she was being asked to decide between state and federal policies.

"That begins to feel very much like I am deciding which policy approach is best," she said.

At one point, while discussing the prospect of federal officers entering residences without a warrant, the judge expressed reluctance to decide issues not yet raised in a lawsuit before her.

The state of Minnesota and the cities sued the Department of Homeland Security earlier this month, five days after Renee Good was shot by an Immigration and Customs officer. Pretti's shooting added urgency to the case.

Late Monday, a federal appeals court declined to lift a temporary hold on a ruling Menendez issued in a separate case on Jan. 16. She ruled then that federal officers in Minnesota cannot detain or tear gas peaceful protesters who are not obstructing authorities, including people who follow and observe agents. A three-judge panel of the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals said that ruling was unlikely to hold up on appeal.

Homan to report to Trump

News of Bovino's departure didn't stop dozens of protestors from gathering outside a hotel where they believed Bovino was staying. They blew whistles, banged pots and one person blasted a trombone. Police watched and kept them away from the hotel entrance.

Trump posted Monday on social media that Homan would report directly to him.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said Homan would be "the main point of contact on the ground in Minneapolis" during continued operations by federal immigration officers.

In court Monday, an attorney for the administration said about 2,000 Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers were on ground, along with at least 1,000 Border Patrol officers.

The lawsuit asks the judge to order a reduction in the number of federal law enforcement officers and agents in Minnesota back to the level before the surge and to limit the scope of the enforcement operation.

The case has implications for other states that have been or could become targets of ramped-up federal immigration enforcement operations. Attorneys general from 19 states plus the District of Columbia, led by California, filed a friend-of-the-court brief supporting Minnesota.

In yet another case, a different federal judge, Eric Tostrud, took under advisement a request from the Justice Department to lift an order he issued late Saturday blocking the Trump administration from "destroying or altering evidence" related to Saturday's shooting.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 50 of 78

Attorneys for the state Bureau of Criminal Apprehension told the judge they can't trust the federal government to preserve the evidence, citing the lack of cooperation the state is getting from federal authorities after they said they were blocked from the scene.

But the federal government's attorneys argued that the temporary restraining order should be dissolved because its investigators are already following proper preservation procedures, and they'd object to "micro-managing" from the court what evidence the state can examine while the federal investigation is ongoing.

Arizona still unanimous No. 1 in AP Top 25 poll ahead of showdown with No. 13 BYU

By DAVE SKRETTA AP Basketball Writer

Arizona remained the unanimous No. 1 team in the AP Top 25 men's college basketball poll ahead of Monday night's showdown at No. 13 BYU, while fellow unbeaten Nebraska climbed to a program-best fifth ahead of its big week in the Big Ten.

The Wildcats, riding their best start since the 2013-14 season, received all 60 first-place votes from the national media panel to easily outdistance second-place UConn and third-ranked Michigan, whose places remained unchanged from last week's poll.

Arizona was 20-0 going into the week, just the third 20-game win streak in program history. On Monday, the Wildcats matched the best start in school history at 21-0 with an 86-83 victory over BYU.

"We're just trying to win one game every week, or however many games we have, and I think we're doing a good job of it," Wildcats freshman star Koa Peat said. "Just keep doing what we're doing, and keep getting better as a team."

Duke remained No. 4 ahead of the Huskers, who also are 20-0 and climbed two more spots from last week. Nebraska has won 24 in a row dating to last season, the longest win streak by any Big Ten team since Ohio State won 24 straight to start the 2010-11 season.

Just like Arizona, the path to stay perfect is perilous. The Huskers visit Michigan on Tuesday night and play No. 9 Illinois on Sunday.

"Heck of a team, man," Northwestern coach Chris Collins said after the Huskers beat his own team a couple of weeks ago. "It's really refreshing to watch the purity they play with, the joy they play with, the toughness they play with."

Gonzaga moved up two spots to sixth after narrowly avoiding an upset loss to San Francisco. The Bulldogs were followed by Michigan State, Iowa State, the Illini and Houston, which remained in the top 10 for a 23rd straight poll despite its loss to Texas Tech.

The Red Raiders were right behind at No. 11 following wins over Baylor and their 90-86 triumph over the Cougars on Saturday.

Purdue tumbled eight spots to No. 12 following back-to-back losses to UCLA and Illinois. BYU stayed put at No. 13, Kansas climbed five spots to No. 14 ahead of its matchup with BYU on Saturday, while Arkansas also moved up five spots to round out the top 15.

St. John's, the preseason No. 5, returned to the poll for the first time since dropping out in mid-December following wins over Seton Hall and Xavier, the latter giving coach Rick Pitino his 900th win. Georgia dropped out after a lopsided loss to Texas.

Rising and falling

North Carolina made the biggest climb this week, moving up six spots to No. 15 after wins over Notre Dame and then-No. 14 Virginia. Kansas and Arkansas were just ahead of the Tar Heels after moving up five spots apiece.

Purdue's eight-spot fall to No. 12 dropped the Boilermakers out of the top 10 for the first time this season. Alabama fell six spots to No. 23 following its loss to Tennessee, while Houston and Clemson each fell four spots after losses last week.

Update on the NET

The NET rankings released Monday, which the NCAA uses to help with its tournament selection, largely

mirrors the Top 25, though with a few exceptions. It ranks UConn six spots lower, at No. 8, Texas Tech seven down at 18th and Arkansas five lower at 20th, while Illinois is three spots better at No. 6, Vanderbilt is five spots better at 13th and Florida is three better at 16th.

It also ranks at Iowa at No. 21; the Hawkeyes are fourth among those also receiving votes in the AP poll. Top 25 voters put Miami of Ohio at 24th amid its perfect start to the season, while the NCAA ranking has the RedHawks at No. 48.

Conference watch

The Big 12 and the Big Ten continue to dominate the Top 25. Arizona leads three top-10 teams for the Big 12 and six in the Top 25, while Michigan, Nebraska, Michigan State and Illinois give the Big Ten four in the top 10 while Purdue makes it five in the Top 25.

The ACC also has five ranked teams, the SEC four, the Big East two and the West Coast, Atlantic 10 and Mid-American one apiece.

At least 6,126 people killed in Iran's crackdown on nationwide protests, activists say

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran's bloody crackdown on nationwide protests killed at least 6,126 people while many others still are feared dead, activists said Tuesday, as a U.S. aircraft carrier group arrived in the Mideast to lead any American military response to the crisis.

The arrival of the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier and guided missile destroyers accompanying it provide the U.S. the ability to strike Iran, particularly as Gulf Arab states have signaled they want to stay out of any attack despite hosting American military personnel.

Two Iranian-backed militias in the Mideast have signaled their willingness to launch new attacks, likely trying to back Iran after U.S. President Donald Trump threatened military action over the killing of peaceful protesters or Tehran launching mass executions in the wake of the demonstrations.

Iran has repeatedly threatened to drag the entire Mideast into a war, though its air defenses and military are still reeling after the June war launched by Israel against the country.

Both the Houthis and Kataib Hezbollah sat out from Israel's 12-day war on Iran that saw the United States bomb Iranian nuclear sites. The hesitancy to get involved shows the disarray still affecting Iran's self-described "Axis of Resistance" after facing attacks from Israel during its war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

Activists offer new death toll

The new figures Tuesday came from the U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency, which has been accurate in multiple rounds of unrest in Iran. The group verifies each death with a network of activists on the ground in Iran.

It identified the dead as including at least 5,777 protesters, 214 government-affiliated forces, 86 children and 49 civilians who weren't demonstrating. The crackdown has seen over 41,800 arrests, it added.

The Associated Press has been unable to independently assess the death toll given authorities cutting off the internet and disrupting calls into the Islamic Republic.

Iran's government has put the death toll at a far lower 3,117, saying 2,427 were civilians and security forces, and labeled the rest "terrorists." In the past, Iran's theocracy has undercounted or not reported fatalities from unrest.

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.

The protests in Iran began on Dec. 28, sparked by the fall of the Iranian currency, the rial, and quickly spread across the country. They were met by a violent crackdown by Iran's theocracy, the scale of which is only starting to become clear as the country has faced more than two weeks of internet blackout — the most comprehensive in its history.

Iran's U.N. ambassador told a U.N. Security Council meeting late Monday that Trump's repeated threats to use military force against the country "are neither ambiguous nor misinterpreted." Amir Saied Irvani

also repeated allegations that the U.S. leader incited violence by “armed terrorist groups” supported by the United States and Israel, but gave no evidence to support his claims.

Iranian state media has tried to accuse forces abroad for the protests as the theocracy remains broadly unable to address the country’s ailing economy, which is still squeezed by international sanctions, particularly over its nuclear program.

Some Iranian-backed militias suggest willingness to fight

Iran projected its power across the Mideast through the “Axis of Resistance,” a network of proxy militant groups in Gaza, Lebanon, Yemen, Syria and Iraq, and other places. It was also seen as a defensive buffer, intended to keep conflict away from Iranian borders. But it has collapsed after Israel targeted Hamas, Hezbollah in Lebanon and others during the Gaza war. Meanwhile, rebels in 2024 overthrew Syria’s Bashar Assad after a yearslong, bloody war in which Iran backed his rule.

Yemen’s Houthi rebels, backed by Iran, have repeatedly warned they could resume fire if needed on shipping in the Red Sea, releasing old footage of a previous attack Monday. Ahmad “Abu Hussein” al-Hamidawi, the leader of Iraq’s Kataib Hezbollah militia, warned “the enemies that the war on the (Islamic) Republic will not be a picnic; rather, you will taste the bitterest forms of death, and nothing will remain of you in our region.”

The Lebanese militant group Hezbollah, one of Iran’s staunchest allies, refused to say how it planned to react in the case of a possible attack.

“During the past two months, several parties have asked me a clear and frank question: If Israel and America go to war against Iran, will Hezbollah intervene or not?” Hezbollah leader Sheikh Naim Kassem said in a video address.

He said the group is preparing for “possible aggression and is determined to defend” against it. But as to how it would act, he said, “these details will be determined by the battle and we will determine them according to the interests that are present.”

Experts say the divide between Minnesota and federal authorities is unprecedented

By CLAUDIA LAUER The Associated Press

A new Minnesota website lays out evidence to counter what officials have called federal misinformation after immigration agents fatally shot two residents during the Trump administration’s immigration crackdown, deepening an unprecedented divide, experts said Monday.

Minnesota also went to court to preserve evidence from the Saturday shooting of Alex Pretti after its own investigators were blocked from the scene by federal authorities.

Experts say the line being drawn between Minnesota and the U.S. government goes against years of cooperation between local and federal agencies on law enforcement missions.

But they also said the state’s hand has been forced by an administration that has acted against decades of practice — from declining to allow state officials access to evidence gathered by federal authorities to barring its own Civil Rights division from probing the shootings of Pretti and Renee Good, who was shot to death by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer on Jan. 7.

Former federal prosecutors under Republican and Democratic presidential administrations said the divide was deeply troubling, though a call Monday between Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz and President Donald Trump may signal a way forward after both expressed that progress was made.

An unusual website launch

The Minnesota Department of Corrections launched a website its leaders said was dedicated to combating Department of Homeland Security misinformation after Pretti was killed. The site includes examples where Minnesota officials honored federal requests to hold people under deportation orders to refute the Trump administration claim that those people are routinely allowed to go free.

Department officials also published videos showing peaceful transfers of custody from prison to federal authorities of several individuals the Trump administration had claimed were arrested by immigration

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 53 of 78

agents as part of the ongoing immigration enforcement action.

The department also issued a news release trying to dispel federal claims about the criminal records of people sought by federal agents, including the person at the center of an operation Saturday near where Pretti was shot. The release said the department never had custody of the man and could only find decade-old misdemeanor traffic-related violations. U.S. Border Patrol Chief Gregory Bovino had said at a news conference Saturday that the man had a significant criminal history.

Jimmy Gurulé, a law professor at the University of Notre Dame, said he saw turf battles and other disagreements when he was a federal prosecutor working with local authorities on task forces in Los Angeles, and again when he was an undersecretary at the U.S. Treasury Department overseeing law enforcement operations under George W. Bush. But, he said, the situation in Minnesota is "unprecedented" in his experience.

"The disagreements were always handled behind the scenes. There were never any public statements criticizing other agencies," Gurulé said.

"It's not even a question of collaboration at this point. It's such a broken relationship," he said. "How did it get to this point, where state and local law enforcement have such little trust in the federal agencies they feel they need to go to court?"

Seeking relief in court

The Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension and the Hennepin County Attorney's Office filed a lawsuit in federal court after the shooting Saturday seeking to preserve evidence collected by federal officials from the Pretti shooting. A federal judge granted a motion blocking the Trump administration from "destroying or altering evidence."

Federal officials called the lawsuit and claims the federal government would destroy evidence "ridiculous."

But state officials are not alone in having concern over a departure from decades of standard practice, which has been the Department of Justice and its Civil Rights Division investigating the constitutionality of an officer's use of force, especially when fatal. DHS officials have instead said their own department would investigate the two Minneapolis shootings.

"What you would expect in normal times is the Justice Department would open an investigation into the circumstances of the shooting," said Chris Mattei, a former federal prosecutor in Connecticut under both Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama. "They have been the independent body that would investigate it. But it would seem that this Justice Department and this Civil Rights division have zero interest in enforcing constitutional rights for citizens in the immigration context."

Mattei, now a partner at the Koskoff Koskoff & Bieder law firm that represents several former FBI employees in lawsuits over their terminations, said under Trump it appears the justice department doesn't want to change the wide latitude agents have been given to conduct immigration enforcement.

"These are career investigators," he said. "They may have different opinions on how to pursue an investigation or how certain evidence should be handled. But usually in my experience they have the same objective to conduct a credible investigation."

Gurulé called the state lawsuit, specifically the motion over preserving evidence, "shocking."

"The implication was they are not just keeping evidence from them but possibly destroying it," he said. "Clearly the state attorney general and the Minneapolis police have grave distrust with ICE and DHS. Clearly there are strong disagreements with the tactics that ICE has used."

Signs reconciliation might be possible

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt Monday moved to distance President Trump from statements made by deputy White House chief of staff Stephen Miller characterizing Pretti as an assassin, saying the situation had moved quickly since Saturday and noting Trump had never used those words.

Gurulé said statements like that erode the public's confidence that investigations are impartial.

"You don't express your conclusion before an investigation and make it public. That is unheard of and upside down," he said.

In his call with Trump, Walz's office said the governor made the case for an impartial investigation of the

shootings and that Trump had agreed to talk to DHS about ensuring state investigators would be able to conduct an independent investigation.

Trump and Walz also discussed working in a more coordinated fashion on immigration enforcement. The governor's office reiterated the state would continue honoring requests to hold incarcerated individuals who are not U.S. citizens until federal authorities can take them into custody.

The Latest: Border Patrol commander and some agents expected to leave Minneapolis, AP source says

By The Associated Press undefined

A senior Border Patrol commander and some agents are expected to leave Minneapolis as early as Tuesday, a person familiar with the matter told The Associated Press.

The departure of Border Patrol commander Greg Bovino, who has been at the center of the Trump administration's aggressive immigration enforcement surge in cities nationwide, comes as President Donald Trump dispatched border czar Tom Homan to Minnesota to take charge of Immigration and Customs Enforcement operations.

The person familiar with the matter was not authorized to publicly discuss details of the operation and spoke to AP on condition of anonymity.

Bovino's departure marks a significant public shift in federal law enforcement posture amid mounting outrage over the fatal shooting of 37-year-old ICU nurse Alex Pretti by Border Patrol agents. Criticism has increased around Bovino in the last few days after his public defense of the Pretti shooting and disputed claims about the confrontation that led to his death.

Here's the latest:

Dozens of protesters gather outside hotel where they believe Bovino is staying

People blew whistles, banged pots and one person blasted a trombone. Police watched and kept them away from the hotel entrance.

Matthew Mottl said he and his wife had been feeling "helpless" watching the violence unfolding in the Twin Cities and believed that showing up to make noise outside the hotel where protesters believed Bovino was staying was one small way to signal their opposition.

"It's been a nightmare the last couple of weeks," he said. "The lack of kindness, the lack of compassion, the lack of respect. The total disregard for the law. It's really, really sad to know that there are people like that out there — and that a lot of them are employed by the federal government."

Sister of Alex Pretti says he was kind, generous and lit up every room

The younger sister of Alex Pretti issued a statement Monday memorializing her big brother's kindness and criticizing "disgusting lies" told in the wake of his death.

Micayla Pretti called her brother a hero and thanked everyone who had reached out to the family with messages or posts she described as sharing the overwhelming positivity that reflected his character, work ethic and passions.

"All Alex ever wanted was to help someone — anyone," she said. "Even in his very last moments on this earth, he was simply trying to do just that."

Alex Pretti was an intensive care nurse, and through his work at the Veterans Administration, "he touched more lives than he probably ever realized," his sister said.

She lamented how some have portrayed her brother.

"When does this end? How many more innocent lives must be lost before we say enough?" Micayla Pretti asked. "Hearing disgusting lies spread about my brother is absolutely gut-wrenching."

Minneapolis mayor says some federal agents will begin leaving

Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey said he spoke to Trump about the immigration crackdown in his city and some federal officers will begin leaving.

Frey said he asked Trump in a phone call to end the immigration enforcement surge and that Trump agreed the present situation cannot continue.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 55 of 78

Frey said some agents will begin leaving Tuesday. The mayor said he would keep pushing for others involved in Operation Metro Surge to go.

Trump posted on social media that he had a good conversation with Frey.

"Lots of progress is being made!" he wrote.

Noem expected to appear before Senate Judiciary Committee in March

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem has agreed to testify before the Senate Judiciary Committee for the first time on March 3 after months of negotiations with Republicans, according to a person familiar with the private talks who requested anonymity to discuss them.

The agreement follows the Minneapolis shooting over the weekend. Democrats have criticized Noem and other officials for saying Pretti "approached" immigration officers with a gun and acted violently when video evidence appears to show otherwise.

Senators from both parties had expressed frustration as Noem has so far not appeared for a routine oversight hearing before the Judiciary panel, which oversees the Department of Homeland Security along with several other committees. Republican Sen. Thom Tillis of North Carolina was holding up some department nominees over her refusal to appear.

Illinois Sen. Dick Durbin, the top Democrat on the Judiciary panel, said in a statement that Noem should testify sooner.

"With all of the violence and deaths involving DHS, the Secretary is apparently in no hurry to account for her mismanagement of this national crisis," Durbin said.

Border Patrol commander Bovino and some agents expected to leave Minneapolis

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The departure of Border Patrol commander Greg Bovino, who has been at the center of the Trump administration's aggressive immigration enforcement surge in cities nationwide, comes as Trump dispatched border czar Tom Homan to Minnesota to take charge of Immigration and Customs Enforcement operations.

The person familiar with the matter was not authorized to publicly discuss details of the operation and spoke to AP on condition of anonymity.

Bovino's departure marks a significant public shift in federal law enforcement posture amid mounting outrage over the fatal shooting of 37-year-old ICU nurse Alex Pretti by Border Patrol agents.

His leadership of highly visible federal crackdowns, including operations that sparked mass demonstrations in Los Angeles, Chicago, Charlotte and Minneapolis, has drawn fierce criticism from local officials, civil rights advocates and congressional Democrats.

Criticism has increased around Bovino in the last few days after his public defense of the Pretti shooting and disputed claims about the confrontation that led to his death.

-By Mike Balsamo

Amid calls to end immigration crackdown, congressional Democrats hold hearing on New Orleans operation

Democrats on the U.S. House Homeland Security Committee held a congressional field hearing in New Orleans Monday on a recent federal immigration enforcement operation in south Louisiana.

Residents and city leaders lambasted federal officials over "Catahoula Crunch" – the deployment of hundreds of immigration agents to, and around, the blue city. The operation began in December and largely concluded this month.

Mayor Helena Moreno said while Homeland Security officials described the operation as targeting the "worst of the worst" that was not the case. Moreno said "non-violent individuals" were "overwhelmingly targeted and profiled" by agents, causing "widespread fear." Documents previously reviewed by AP showed the majority of people arrested in the Louisiana crackdown's first days lacked criminal records.

Advocates called for sweeping changes to immigration enforcement, with some suggesting the abolishment of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Many reiterated concerns over the constitutionality of raids and detention – pointing to not only New Orleans but also the immigration crackdown in Minnesota that's led to the fatal shootings of two people by government officers.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 56 of 78

"What we saw here, and now in much more severe fashion, in Minneapolis is no longer an issue of immigration, public safety or even politics," Moreno said. "This is a cruel, divisive agenda lacking humanity."

The Federal Aviation Administration bars drones from flying near immigration enforcement operations. The Federal Aviation Administration has created a no-fly zone for drones near immigration enforcement operations, including moving vehicle convoys.

The agency issued the security notice earlier this month, prohibiting unmanned aircraft from operating within 1,000 feet above or 3,000 feet adjacent to Department of Homeland Security assets, including ground vehicle convoys and escorts.

The no-fly zone also includes Department of Defense, Department of Energy and Department of Homeland Security facilities, and the FAA says violators can face criminal and civil penalties. The area around the immigration enforcement operations is considered "national defense airspace," according to the notice.

The Jan. 16 notice expands nationwide and does not have an end date. It says drone operators should coordinate in advance with the appropriate federal entities, but does not say how drone operators are expected to identify moving no-fly zones when immigration raids or other federal vehicle convoys are not announced in advance.

Senate Homeland Security chairman schedules Feb. 12 hearing with Homeland Security Department officials

The chairman of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee is inviting three top Homeland Security Department officials to testify before Congress after a fatal shooting of a protester in Minneapolis over the weekend.

Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., sent letters Tuesday to the heads of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) and Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) inviting them to a hearing on Feb. 12. His letters come after the GOP chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, New York Rep. Andrew Garbarino, requested a similar hearing over the weekend.

In the letters, Paul wrote that Congress has a duty to oversee taxpayer dollars and "ensure the funding is used to accomplish the mission, provide proper support for our law enforcement and, most importantly, protect the American people."

Republican congressman, Wisconsin gubernatorial candidate says he's not seen Pretti video

Republican U.S. Rep. Tom Tiffany, also a candidate for Wisconsin governor, said Monday he has not seen any of the videos of Alex Pretti being shot and killed by a federal Border Patrol officer in Minneapolis.

"I have not seen the video," Tiffany told reporters at a news conference called to release his property tax plan.

Tiffany said he was also not aware of comments from Trump administration officials alleging that Pretti was a "would-be assassin" who intended to "massacre" federal agents.

"I didn't see those comments, but I'd have to see the context of them," Tiffany said.

Tiffany said he supports a "full investigation" into what happened that includes Minnesota officials working with those from the federal government. He called the loss of life in Minnesota "tragic."

"Let's get all the facts on the table and be sure to make a reasoned decision in what has been a chaotic time," Tiffany said.

Tiffany is a strong supporter of Trump and said that if elected governor of Wisconsin he would work closely with federal immigration officers.

Leavitt says WH doesn't want dispute over Minneapolis to disrupt government funding

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said that Trump wants to see the bipartisan spending package passed this week to avoid the possibility of a government shutdown.

Leavitt said that "policy discussions on immigration in Minnesota are happening" and that Trump as president "is leading those discussions." But she said those conversations "should not be at the expense of government funding for the American people."

"We absolutely do not want to see that funding lapse," Leavitt said. "And we want the Senate to move forward with passing the bipartisan appropriations package that was negotiated on a bipartisan basis."

Minnesota attorney general: Judge's decision on immigration crackdown has 'great ramifications' for nation

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 57 of 78

Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison says a federal judge's decision on whether to halt an immigration crackdown in the state will have major ramifications for the rest of the nation.

"This decision is extremely important to the sovereignty of every single state," Ellison said shortly after the hearing before U.S. District Judge Katherine Menendez came to a close on Monday. State and Twin Cities officials have asked Menendez to order a halt to the crackdown.

"We're asking for preliminary relief," he later continued. "The case will go on. But what is decided in Minnesota, overall, this case, and everything that we're doing to try to protect our state, has great ramifications for the rest of the country."

Menendez' ruling will not weigh in on the merits of the case, but instead determine if the crackdown needs to stop temporarily while the lawsuit moves forward in court.

"We're never going to stop defending Minnesota, If things go our way, great. If they don't, we're right back to the drawing board," Ellison said. "The moment will never arrive when we stop fighting for this state. Full stop."

Leavitt says WH border czar Tom Homan will now be point of contact in Minneapolis

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said that Tom Homan, the administration's border czar, would be "the main point of contact on the ground in Minneapolis" during continued operations by federal immigration officers.

That marks something of a change as Border Patrol Commander Gregory Bovino had been the public face of operations in the city.

Leavitt said that Bovino would "very much continue to lead Customs and Border Patrol, throughout and across the country."

Leavitt says Pretti's decision to bring gun was 'raising the assumption of risk'

"While Americans have a constitutional right to bear arms, Americans do not have a constitutional right to impede lawful immigration enforcement operations," Leavitt said, adding that, when an armed person is confronted by law enforcement, "you are raising the assumption of risk, and the risk of a force being used against you."

Leavitt was asked about FBI Director Kash Patel's remarks that someone could not bring a loaded firearm to a protest.

Family members said Pretti owned a handgun and had a permit to carry a concealed handgun in Minnesota, but that they had never known him to carry it.

The Department of Homeland Security has said Pretti was shot after he "approached" Border Patrol officers with a 9 mm semiautomatic handgun but did not specify if he brandished it.

Leavitt says she hasn't heard Trump commit to release of body camera footage of slain Minneapolis protester

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said at the news briefing that she has not heard Trump commit to release body camera footage from federal immigration officers involved in the shooting and killing of Alex Pretti, who was protesting the administration's actions.

Leavitt later said that the administration is talking with members of Congress about requirements to have federal immigration officers wear body cameras.

Leavitt says Trump still has 'utmost confidence and trust' in Noem

Asked if Noem had made a mistake that led Trump to send border czar Tom Homan to Minnesota, Leavitt said no.

Noting that Noem oversees "the entire Department of Homeland Security," Leavitt stressed that includes the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which is managing response to "a brutal winter storm, where hundreds of thousands of Americans have been impacted by that."

Leavitt said that Homan "is in a unique position to drop everything and go to Minnesota to continue having these productive conversations with state and local officials," adding that he would be "catching a plane in just a few hours to do just that, at the at the request of the president."

Leavitt says she has not heard Trump call killed Minneapolis protester a domestic terrorist

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 58 of 78

White House press secretary says that she has "not heard the president characterize" as a domestic terrorist Alex Pretti, the Minneapolis protester shot and killed on Saturday by a federal immigration officer.

That marks something of a difference with the message of other administration officials. Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem has labeled Pretti as committing an act of domestic terrorism.

Leavitt said she has "heard the president say he wants to get the facts on the investigation" of the shooting. Press secretary puts distance between Trump and 'assassin' rhetoric on Pretti.

Asked about deputy White House chief of staff Stephen Miller's social media characterization of Pretti, without offering any evidence, as "an assassin" who "tried to murder federal agents," Leavitt stressed that Trump hadn't used such words.

"This has obviously been a very fluid and fast moving situation throughout the weekend," Leavitt said, adding that Trump "has said that he wants to let the investigation continue and let the facts lead."

Asked if Miller would apologize to Pretti's family, Leavitt again turned to Trump's position.

"Nobody here at the White House, including the president of the United States, wants to see Americans hurt and losing their lives," she said.

WH blames Minnesota Democrats for the shooting deaths of protesters

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said the shooting and killing by a federal immigration officer of Minneapolis protester Alex Pretti "occurred as a result of a deliberate and hostile resistance by Democrat leaders in Minnesota."

Her remarks showed the administration still seeks to blame the violence on political rivals, despite Trump seeking to ease tensions by saying Monday that he had a productive phone conversation with Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz.

The White House continues to say that resistance to Trump's agenda is what led to the shootings and killings of Pretti and Renee Good after ICE agents have engaged in aggressive operations in Minnesota.

Walz, Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey and other elected Democrats "were spreading lies about federal law enforcement officers," Leavitt said at the White House briefing.

"They have also used their platforms to encourage Left-Wing agitators to stalk, record, confront, and obstruct federal officers who were just trying to lawfully perform their duties, which has created dangerous situations threatening both these officers and the general public and Minnesotans alike," Leavitt said.

White House says 3 federal reviews underway of Pretti shooting

During a briefing on Monday, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said that a trio of "active investigations" and internal probes of the shooting were underway by federal agencies.

Leavitt said that the Department of Homeland Security and FBI were investigating the shooting and that U.S. Customs and Border Protection was "conducting their own internal review."

"As President Trump said yesterday, the administration is reviewing everything with respect to the shooting, and we will let that investigation play out," Leavitt added.

Texas governor says White House needs to 'recalibrate' ICE efforts in Minnesota

Texas Republican Gov. Greg Abbott, who has been a strong supporter of Trump's crackdown on immigration, said Monday the White House needs to "recalibrate" what it is doing in Minnesota.

Abbott spoke with conservative radio host Mark Davis and said immigration agents deserve respect as law enforcement.

Abbott said he believes the White House is working on a "game plan" for immigration agents to "go about their job in a more structured way to make sure that they are going to be able to remove these people, but without causing all the kinds of problems and fighting in communities that they are experiencing right now."

Abbott also blamed Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz and Minneapolis Mayor for not doing enough to calm the situation on the ground.

Massachusetts governor renews call for Noem's resignation

Massachusetts Gov. Maura Healey renewed her calls for Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem to resign when asked by reporters on Monday.

In a lengthy response, Healey accused the head of the FBI of not understanding the Second Amendment and Attorney General Pam Bondi of extorting Minnesota for its voter rolls.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 59 of 78

Healey added that Trump's administration was "doing a huge disservice" to the American public. Hearing on Minnesota's argument's seeking to block immigration enforcement surge ends Monday's hearing in federal court on Minnesota and the Twin Cities' suit aiming to halt the Trump administration's surge of immigration law enforcement has ended without the judge ruling from the bench. U.S. District Court Judge Katherine Menendez emphasized the urgency of the case, saying she plans to issue a written opinion, though didn't specify when.

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz' office says call with Trump was 'productive' A Monday morning call between Trump and Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz about fatal shootings by immigration officers appears to have been well-received by both sides.

Walz' office said the call was "productive." "The Governor made the case that we need impartial investigations of the Minneapolis shootings involving federal agents, and that we need to reduce the number of federal agents in Minnesota," his office wrote in a release.

Renee Good and Alex Pretti, both Minnesota residents and U.S. citizens, were fatally shot and killed by federal immigration officers in separate incidents in Minneapolis.

Trump agreed to talk to the Department of Homeland Security about ensuring the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension is able to conduct an independent investigation, Walz' office said, and also agreed to look into either reducing the number of federal agents in Minnesota or working with the state "in a more coordinated fashion on immigration enforcement regarding violent criminals."

Trump wrote in a social media post earlier Monday that the two "actually" seem to be on the same page in wanting to work together on immigration issues in Minnesota. He said the people the administration is seeking "are any and all Criminals that they have in their possession" and Walz "very respectfully, understood that."

More than 3,000 immigration officers are taking part in Minnesota surge, federal attorney says More than 3,000 federal immigration officers are part of the immigration enforcement surge in Minnesota, a Department of Justice attorney told a federal judge on Monday.

Brantley Mayers, counsel to the DOJ's assistant attorney general, told U.S. District Judge Katherine Menendez that at least 2,000 Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers and at least 1,000 Customs and Border Patrol officers were part of the operation, and that he would provide her with an exact number later.

Minnesota state and Twin Cities officials have asked Menendez to halt the immigration crackdown, which has led to widespread unrest. Two Minnesota residents have been shot and killed by immigration officials since the crackdown began.

Menendez asked Mayers why so many officers were needed. Mayers said it had to do with complications surrounding how immigration officers typically stage for enforcement operations, gathering in parking lots.

Twin Cities officials have taken steps to prohibit city-owned parking lots and garages from being used in immigration enforcement operations. Chicago officials took similar steps after immigration crackdowns in that city last year.

Democratic congressman tells supporters he regrets voting for DHS funding package "I failed to view the DHS funding vote as a referendum on the illegal and immoral conduct of ICE in Minneapolis," Rep. Tom Suozzi posted on social media. "I hear the anger from many of my constituents, and I take responsibility for that. I have long been critical of ICE's unlawful behavior and I must do a better job demonstrating that."

Suozzi was one of the seven moderate Democrats who voted with Republicans last week to pass a tranche of funding for the Department of Homeland Security.

The congressman from New York added that the "senseless and tragic murder of Alex Pretti underscores what happens when untrained federal agents operate without accountability."

He called on Trump to end ICE's enhanced enforcement operation in Minnesota.

30 people dead from effects of winter storm as more freezing cold pummels US

By CHARLOTTE KRAMON and RUSS BYNUM Associated Press

Many in the U.S. faced another night of below-freezing temperatures and no electricity after a colossal winter storm heaped more snow Monday on the Northeast and kept parts of the South coated in ice. At least 30 deaths were reported in states afflicted with severe cold.

Deep snow — over a foot (30 centimeters) extending in a 1,300-mile (2,100-kilometer) swath from Arkansas to New England — halted traffic, canceled flights and triggered wide school closures Monday. The National Weather Service said areas north of Pittsburgh got up to 20 inches (50 centimeters) of snow and faced wind chills as low as minus 25 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 31 degrees Celsius) late Monday into Tuesday.

The bitter cold afflicting two-thirds of the U.S. wasn't going away. The weather service said Monday that a fresh influx of arctic air is expected to sustain freezing temperatures in places already covered in snow and ice. And forecasters said it's possible another winter storm could hit parts of the East Coast this weekend.

A rising death toll included two people run over by snowplows in Massachusetts and Ohio, fatal sledding accidents that killed teenagers in Arkansas and Texas, and a woman whose body was found covered in snow by police with bloodhounds after she was last seen leaving a Kansas bar. In New York City, officials said eight people were found dead outdoors over the frigid weekend.

Hundreds of thousands without power

There were still more than 560,000 power outages in the nation Monday evening, according to power-outage.com. Most of them were in the South, where weekend blasts of freezing rain caused tree limbs and power lines to snap, inflicting crippling outages on northern Mississippi and parts of Tennessee. Officials warned that it could take days for power to be restored.

In Mississippi, officials scrambled to get cots, blankets, bottled water and generators to warming stations in hard-hit areas in the aftermath of the state's worst ice storm since 1994. At least 14 homes, one business and 20 public roads had major damage, Gov. Tate Reeves said Monday evening.

The University of Mississippi, where most students hunkered down without power Monday, canceled classes for the entire week as its Oxford campus remained coated in treacherous ice. Oxford Mayor Robyn Tannehill said on social media that so many trees, limbs and power lines had fallen that "it looks like a tornado went down every street."

A pair of burly, falling tree branches damaged real estate agent Tim Phillips' new garage, broke a window and cut off power to his home in Oxford.

"It's just one of those things that you try to prepare for," Phillips said, "but this one was just unreal."

The U.S. had more than 12,000 flight delays or cancellations nationwide Monday, according to flight tracker flightaware.com. On Sunday, 45% of U.S. flights got cancelled, making it the highest day for cancellations since the COVID-19 pandemic, according to aviation analytics firm Cirium.

The impact extended far beyond the storm's reach because such major hubs as the Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport were clobbered by the storm, stranding planes and flight crews.

More light to moderate snow was forecast in New England through Monday evening.

New York City saw its snowiest day in years, with neighborhoods recording 8 to 15 inches (20 to 38 cm) of snow. Though public schools shut down, roughly 500,000 students were told to log in for online lessons Monday. The nation's largest public school system saw snow days stripped away after remote learning gained traction during the coronavirus pandemic.

Bitter cold grips much of the nation

Meanwhile, bitter cold followed in the storm's wake. Communities across the Midwest, South, and Northeast awakened Monday to subzero weather. The entire Lower 48 states were forecast to have their coldest average low temperature of minus 9.8 F (minus 12.3 C) since January 2014.

In the Nashville, Tennessee, area, electricity returned for thousands of homes and businesses Monday,

while about 146,000 others still didn't have power Monday evening after subfreezing temperatures overnight. Many hotels were sold out overnight to residents escaping dark and frigid homes.

Alex Murray booked a Nashville hotel room for his family to ensure they had a working freezer to preserve pumped breast milk to feed their 6-month-old daughter. Anticipating a long wait until power gets restored at his home, Murray planned to extend their hotel stay through Wednesday.

"I know there's many people that may not be able to find a place or pay for a place or anything like that, or even travel," Murray said Monday. "So, we were really fortunate."

Storm leads to deaths in a number of states

In Emporia, Kansas, police found a 28-year-old teacher dead in the snow after she was seen leaving a bar without her coat and phone.

Police said snowplows backed into two people who died in Norwood, Massachusetts, and Dayton, Ohio. Arkansas and Texas reported two deaths apiece.

The cause of deaths for the eight people found outside in New York City as temperatures plunged between Saturday and Monday morning remained under investigation.

Officials reported four deaths in Tennessee, three deaths apiece in Louisiana and Pennsylvania; two deaths in Mississippi; and one each in New Jersey, South Carolina and Kentucky.

What we know about the investigations into the Minneapolis shooting death of Alex Pretti

By REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The fatal shooting over the weekend of a Minneapolis man has prompted calls for a thorough independent investigation into the second death at the hands of federal immigration officers since the Trump administration began its large-scale operation in the city late last year.

But many of the investigation's details, including the identities of the officers involved and precisely what evidence is being examined, remain unclear even as tensions soar in Minneapolis over the death of Alex Pretti, 37, an ICU nurse.

Any investigation into the details of the shooting will likely be highly scrutinized. The Trump administration has been quick to cast Pretti as an armed instigator, although videos emerging from the scene and local officials contradict that claim.

Here's a look at what's known about the investigation into the shooting and what's not:

Three probes launched

The White House says three federal investigations into the shooting are underway.

During a briefing Monday, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI were investigating the shooting and U.S. Customs and Border Protection was "conducting their own internal review."

"As President (Donald) Trump said yesterday, the administration is reviewing everything with respect to the shooting, and we will let that investigation play out," Leavitt added, without providing additional details on the probes.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation, which normally plays a key role in any case in which a federal law enforcement officer kills a civilian, is instead only lending support in processing physical evidence from the scene, such as Pretti's gun.

Historically, the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department investigates shootings of civilians by law enforcement officers for potential criminal violations, but there's no indication that they intend to do so in Pretti's case. In the case of Renee Good, who was shot and killed by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent in Minneapolis on Jan. 7, Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche said in a statement earlier this month that "there is currently no basis for a criminal civil rights investigation."

Gil Kerlikowske, who headed Customs and Border Protection during the Obama administration, said that when he was at the agency, if a Border Patrol agent used deadly force on the job, it would be "routine"

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 62 of 78

for the FBI to conduct a criminal civil rights investigation, even in cases where the force may have been justified and even if the probe wouldn't necessarily lead to prosecution.

Kerlikowske also questioned why Homeland Security Investigations, an arm within DHS that traditionally probes cross-border issues like drug smuggling and human trafficking, would take a lead role in this investigation.

"This isn't something that HSI has real expertise or does at all," said Kerlikowske. "Shooting and use of force and potential criminal liability is not something that would be in their portfolio."

Videos, firearms and questions about Pretti's phone

FBI Director Kash Patel said Sunday on Fox News that the agency will be assisting HSI by "processing physical evidence."

Patel said they're in possession of "the firearm, which is going to go to our laboratory," in reference to Pretti's gun.

But Patel made no reference to whether the bureau had gathered the firearms of the officers or agents who were on the scene or what other evidence the FBI was processing.

DHS officials did not respond to questions Monday about whether they are in possession of Pretti's phone or whether they have recovered the video he was recording when he was killed.

Pretti's family told The Associated Press they don't have the phone and don't know where it is. Pretti's father, Michael Pretti, said Monday the family had still not been contacted by or provided any information by federal law enforcement.

Investigators also have an extensive array of videos to sift through, including multiple videos shot by activists and protesters at the scene.

Use-of-force experts have said that bystander video undermined federal authorities' claim that Pretti "approached" a group of lawmen with a firearm and that a Border Patrol officer opened fire "defensively." There has been no evidence made public, they said, that supports a claim by Border Patrol senior official Greg Bovino that Pretti, who had a permit to carry a concealed handgun, intended to "massacre law enforcement."

Investigators have video from at least four Border Patrol agents on the scene who were wearing body cameras, said DHS spokeswoman Tricia McLaughlin. Those videos have not been made public.

Neither have the identities of the Border Patrol agents involved. The officer who shot the man is an eight-year Border Patrol veteran, federal officials said Saturday.

State officials say they are being shut out

The incident has shined a light on the increasing mistrust between officials in the state and the Trump administration over who should take the lead in investigating.

Drew Evans, superintendent of Minnesota's Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, which investigates police shootings, told reporters Saturday that federal officers had blocked his agency from the scene of the shooting even after it obtained a signed judicial warrant.

"We will continue to investigate this case and others that we have recently been involved with. But I would be remiss if I didn't state that it would be difficult to obtain all of the evidence and information obtained without cooperation," Evans said Saturday.

A federal judge has already issued an order blocking the Trump administration from "destroying or altering evidence" related to the shooting after state and county officials sued.

Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison said the lawsuit filed Saturday is meant to preserve evidence collected by federal officials that state authorities have not yet been able to inspect.

McLaughlin dismissed the lawsuit, saying claims that the federal government would destroy evidence are "a ridiculous attempt to divide the American people and distract from the fact that our law enforcement officers were attacked — and their lives were threatened."

Minnesota's Democratic Gov. Tim Walz said he called for an impartial investigation in a phone call with Trump Monday.

Trump, in an earlier social media post, said after their call he and Walz "seemed to be on a similar wavelength," although he did not mention the investigations. Later, Leavitt said Trump supports the probes

that are underway.

US stocks rise as gold hits another record and the dollar's value sinks again

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. stock indexes ticked higher Monday, while other markets made louder moves, including another record-breaking rush for the price of gold.

The S&P 500 rose 0.5% and won back its losses from last week's dip. The Dow Jones Industrial Average climbed 313 points, or 0.6%, and the Nasdaq composite added 0.4%.

Baker Hughes helped lead the way and rose 4.4% after delivering a stronger profit for the latest quarter than analysts expected. The energy technology company said it's benefiting from strong momentum in demand for liquefied natural gas, among other things.

CoreWeave climbed 5.7% after Nvidia said it invested \$2 billion in the stock and will help accelerate the buildout of CoreWeave's artificial-intelligence factories, which use Nvidia chips, by 2030 to advance AI adoption. Nvidia slipped 0.6%.

USA Rare Earth rallied 7.9% after saying the U.S. government agreed to provide \$277 million in federal funding to help the company produce heavy rare earths, minerals and magnets. The Trump administration also agreed to a proposed \$1.3 billion loan, while the company separately raised \$1.5 billion through private investors.

Much of the rest of Wall Street was relatively quiet. That included mixed performances for airlines, which had to cancel thousands of flights due to the winter storm that swept much of the United States over the weekend. Delta Air Lines lost 0.7%, and Southwest Airlines added 0.2%.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 34.62 points to 6,950.23. The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 313.69 to 49,412.40, and the Nasdaq composite gained 100.11 to 23,601.36.

The action was stronger in the gold market, where the metal's price rallied another 2.1% and briefly topped \$5,100 per ounce for the first time to set another record. Silver surged even more and settled 14% higher.

Prices for precious metals have been soaring as investors look for safer places to park their money amid threats of tariffs, still-high inflation, political strife and mountains of debt for governments worldwide.

The latest worry to pile atop the swelling list was President Donald Trump's threat to impose a 100% tariff on goods from Canada if it signs a free trade deal with China.

The U.S. dollar's value also continued its recent slide against peers. Last week, it was U.S. tariff threats related to Greenland that drove some global investors away from the dollar. This time, it was the Japanese yen leaping sharply because of expectations that officials in both Japan and the United States may intervene in the market to prop up the Japanese currency's value.

More swings could be ahead for financial markets in a week full of big tests.

The Federal Reserve will announce its latest move on interest rates on Wednesday. It's been lowering its main interest rate and has indicated more cuts may be on the way in 2026 to help shore up the job market and give the economy a boost.

Most economists expect it to hold steady on Wednesday, in part because inflation remains stubbornly above the Fed's 2% target and lower rates could worsen it. Whatever the Fed decides, comments from its chair, Jerome Powell, following the decision could sway stock and bond markets.

Several of Wall Street's most influential stocks are also set to deliver their latest earnings reports this week. That includes Meta Platforms, Microsoft and Tesla on Wednesday and Apple on Thursday.

In the bond market, the yield on the 10-year Treasury eased to 4.21% from 4.24% late Friday.

In stock markets abroad, indexes were mixed amid mostly modest movements in Europe following some sharper swings in Asia. Japan's Nikkei 225 dropped 1.8% for one of the world's bigger moves. A stronger yen could hurt Japanese exporters, and Toyota Motor fell 4.1%.

Israel recovers remains of the last hostage in Gaza. Ceasefire moves into tricky new phase

By JULIA FRANKEL and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel brought home the remains of the last hostage in Gaza on Monday, closing a painful chapter for the country and clearing the way for the next and more challenging phase of its ceasefire with Hamas.

The next step is likely to be the reopening of Gaza's border with Egypt, enabling Palestinians to travel in both directions and eventually allowing more aid to enter the territory devastated by two years of war. The ceasefire's second phase also calls for deploying an international security force, disarming Hamas, pulling back Israeli soldiers and rebuilding Gaza.

The remains of police officer Ran Gvili were found in a cemetery in northern Gaza.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called it "an incredible achievement" for Israel and its soldiers. He said Gvili, who was killed during the Hamas-led attack on Oct. 7, 2023, that sparked the war, was among the first to be taken into Gaza.

Dozens of people, including relatives, military officials and friends from Gvili's police unit, received his coffin at an army post on the Israeli side of the border with Gaza.

Many more Israelis lined nearby roads to pay their respects as a convoy carrying the coffin made its way to Tel Aviv, where it arrived Monday night.

"You should see the honor you're receiving here," Gvili's father, Itzik, said, kissing his son's coffin, which was draped in an Israeli flag. "The entire police is here with you, the entire army is with you, the entire people. I'm proud of you."

The return of all remaining hostages, living or dead, had been a key part of the Gaza ceasefire's first phase. Hamas said it now has met those terms.

Netanyahu's office said Sunday that once the search for Gvili was finished, Israel would open the Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt, which Palestinians see as their lifeline to the world. It has been largely shut since May 2024, except for a short period early last year.

The ceasefire's next phase will confront thornier issues, including transitioning to a new governance structure in Gaza and disarming Hamas, which has ruled the territory for nearly two decades.

"The next phase is disarming Hamas and demilitarizing the Gaza Strip. The next phase is not reconstruction," Netanyahu said Monday while addressing the Israeli parliament.

Palestinians react to recovery of last hostage's remains

Palestinians in Gaza were optimistic that opening the Rafah crossing will allow travel to and from the enclave along with the evacuation of people needing medical care.

"We hope this will close off Israel's pretexts and open the crossing," said Abdel-Rahman Radwan, a Gaza City resident whose mother has cancer and requires treatment outside Gaza.

Ahmed Ruqab, a father who lives with his family of six in a tent in the Nuseirat refugee camp, called for mediators and the U.S. to pressure Israel to allow more aid.

"We need to turn this page and restart," he said over the phone.

An official with the United Nations' children's agency said Monday that there is backlog of supplies in Egypt ready to move into Gaza whenever the crossing opens to aid traffic.

The next phase needs to include bringing not only more humanitarian and commercial supplies but also permanent shelter materials and items to repair infrastructure, said Ted Chaiban, UNICEF's deputy executive director.

Gvili's relatives last week repeated calls for Israel's government and U.S. President Donald Trump to ensure the release of his remains.

"Most thought of it as an impossible thing to do," Trump posted on social media.

Gvili's mother, Talik, thanked the Israeli government and security forces as well as Trump for allowing the family to "achieve closure."

Israel had repeatedly accused Hamas of dragging its feet in the search while Hamas said it had provided

all the information it had, accusing Israel of obstructing the efforts.

How the remains of last hostage were found

Gvili's remains were found right along the "yellow line" dividing Gaza just on the Israeli side, according to a military official, speaking anonymously under army protocol.

The October 2023 attack on Israel that launched the war killed about 1,200 people and saw 251 taken hostage. Gvili, a 24-year-old police officer known affectionately as "Rani," was killed while fighting Hamas militants.

On a call with reporters Monday, two U.S. officials credited Egypt, Qatar and Turkey with helping to get Hamas to release Gvili's body, and said Hamas was very cooperative in making it happen.

The officials, who insisted on anonymity per the rules of a call setup by the White House, said they now expect Israel to help both sides move forward into phase two of the ceasefire and they want Hamas to disarm in accordance with the agreement and believe they will.

Before Gvili's remains were recovered, 20 living hostages and the remains of 27 others had been returned to Israel since the ceasefire, most recently in early December.

Israel has released roughly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners under the ceasefire deal, many who were seized by Israeli troops during the two-year war and held without charge. It also has released the bodies of more than 300 Palestinians back to Gaza, where officials have struggled to identify them.

In a symbolic act, Israeli President Isaac Herzog on Monday removed a yellow pin worn by many to show solidarity with the hostages and their families.

Hundreds of Palestinians killed in Gaza since the ceasefire

Palestinians in Gaza who spoke to The Associated Press in recent weeks questioned whether the ceasefire's next steps will improve conditions, pointing to ongoing bloodshed and challenges securing basic necessities.

Israeli forces on Monday fatally shot two people in Gaza, according to hospitals that received the bodies. One man was close to the area where the military was searching for Gvili, according to Shifa Hospital.

Israel's offensive has killed at least 71,660 Palestinians since 2023, according to Gaza's Health Ministry — with more than 480 Palestinians killed by Israeli fire since the latest ceasefire began. The ministry, which is part of the Hamas-led government, maintains detailed casualty records that are seen as generally reliable by U.N. agencies and independent experts.

Israel's top court considers petition to open Gaza for international journalists

The Foreign Press Association on Monday asked Israel's Supreme Court to allow journalists to enter Gaza freely and independently.

The FPA represents dozens of global news organizations and has been pushing for independent media access to Gaza. Israel has barred reporters from entering Gaza independently since the 2023 attacks by Hamas, saying entry could put journalists and soldiers at risk.

FPA lawyers told the court that the restrictions are not justified and that with aid workers moving in and out of Gaza, journalists should be allowed in. They said tightly controlled visits under strict military supervision are no substitute for independent access. The judges are expected to rule soon.

European Union opens investigation into Musk's AI chatbot Grok over sexual deepfakes

By KELVIN CHAN AP Business Writer

LONDON (AP) — The European Union opened a formal investigation into Elon Musk's social media platform X on Monday after his artificial intelligence chatbot Grok spewed nonconsensual sexualized deepfake images on the platform.

European regulators also widened a separate, ongoing investigation into X's recommendation systems after the platform said it would switch to Grok's AI system to choose which posts users see.

The scrutiny from Brussels comes after Grok sparked a global backlash by allowing users through its AI image generation and editing capabilities to undress people, putting females in transparent bikinis or

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 66 of 78

revealing clothing. Researchers said some images appeared to include children. Some governments banned the service or issued warnings.

The 27-nation EU's executive said it was looking into whether X has done enough as required by the bloc's digital regulations to contain the risks of spreading illegal content such as "manipulated sexually explicit images."

That includes content that "may amount to child sexual abuse material," the European Commission said. These risks have now "materialized," the commission said, exposing the bloc's citizens to "serious harm."

Regulators will examine whether Grok is living up to its obligations under the Digital Services Act, the bloc's wide-ranging rule book for keeping internet users safe from harmful content and products.

In response to a request for comment, an X spokeswoman directed The Associated Press to an earlier statement that the company remains "committed to making X a safe platform for everyone" and that it has "zero tolerance" for child sexual exploitation, nonconsensual nudity, and unwanted sexual content.

The X statement from Jan. 14 also said it would stop allowing users to depict people in "bikinis, underwear or other revealing attire," but only in places where it has been deemed illegal.

"Non-consensual sexual deepfakes of women and children are a violent, unacceptable form of degradation," Henna Virkkunen, an executive vice president at the commission, said in a statement.

"With this investigation, we will determine whether X has met its legal obligations under the DSA, or whether it treated rights of European citizens — including those of women and children - as collateral damage of its service," said Virkkunen, who oversees tech sovereignty, security and democracy.

Musk's artificial intelligence company xAI launched Grok's image tool last summer. But the problem began snowballing only late last month when Grok seemingly granted a large number of user requests to modify images posted by others. The problem was amplified both because Musk pitches his chatbot as an edgier alternative with fewer safeguards than rivals, and because Grok's responses on X are publicly visible, and can therefore be easily spread.

The EU investigation covers only Grok's service on X, and not Grok's website and standalone app. That's because the DSA applies only to the biggest online platforms.

There's no deadline for the bloc to resolve the case, which could end in either X pledging to change its behavior or a hefty fine.

In December Brussels issued X with a 120-million euro (then-\$140 million) fine as part of the earlier ongoing DSA investigation, for shortcomings including blue checkmarks that broke the rules on "deceptive design practices" that risked exposing users to scams and manipulation.

The bloc has also been scrutinizing X over allegations that Grok generated antisemitic material and has asked the site for more information.

Malaysia and Indonesia blocked access to Grok earlier this month in response to the controversy, becoming the first countries to do so.

On Friday, Malaysian authorities said they lifted the temporary restriction after the company implemented additional security and preventive measures, without giving further details. Malaysian regulators said they met last week with X's representatives and would continue to monitor the situation.

X is facing similar pressure in the United States

Last week, attorneys general in 35 states wrote a letter to the company calling for it disclose its plans to prevent Grok from creating nonconsensual sexualized deepfake images, and explain how it will eliminate such existing content from the platform.

"We strongly urge you to be a leader in this space by further addressing the harms resulting from this technology," the attorneys general wrote.

What to know about Tom Homan, Trump's border czar, as he heads to Minneapolis

By SAFIYAH RIDDLE Associated Press

President Donald Trump announced that his border czar, Tom Homan, will go to Minneapolis this week

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 67 of 78

following the fatal shooting of an ICU nurse Saturday in the Midwestern city that has become the epicenter of opposition to the president's controversial immigration crackdown.

Homan's arrival comes as protests across the city have intensified following videos and eye witness accounts of Alex Pretti's fatal shooting that directly contradict the Trump administration's official narrative. Homan's planned trip also coincides with growing calls by Republicans and Democrats alike for an independent investigation into immigration enforcement tactics, which have drawn more scrutiny since agents fatally shot a different Minneapolis resident in her car weeks earlier.

Here is what to know about Homan ahead of his arrival in the Twin Cities.

Homan has been in immigration enforcement for four decades

Homan, 64, started his career in 1984 as a Border Patrol agent before moving to Immigration and Customs Enforcement in 2003 when the agency was created as part of Homeland Security. He was a relatively low-key but influential figure on immigration enforcement in the Obama administration, heading ICE's Enforcement and Removal Operations arm, which was tasked with tracking down people with outstanding deportation orders and removing them from the country.

Despite unwavering enthusiasm for Trump and withering criticism of President Joe Biden, he is seen by some as a voice of restraint and moderation compared with some in the current administration.

Homan, who is widely associated with immigration enforcement actions that separated families, was given a Presidential Rank Award by the Obama administration to tout his efficacy in 2015.

Homan was at his retirement party in January 2017 when Trump's choice for homeland security secretary, John Kelly, asked him to stay at ICE. Homan accepted after taking a weekend to think about it and became a leading figure in the Trump administration through four tumultuous years.

Under Obama, the U.S. carried out 432,000 deportations in 2013, the highest annual total since records were kept. Deportations under the first Trump administration never topped 350,000.

Homan and Trump's ambitious enforcement plans

When he was appointed border czar, Homan was seen as a leader who not only aligned with Trump ideologically, but who also had significant practical experience in immigration policy.

Homan portrays illegal immigration as black-and-white and has made no apologies for Trump's policy of targeting everyone in the country without status, not just those with criminal histories, public safety concerns and recent border crossers.

"If you're in the country illegally, you should be concerned," he said in a 2018 interview with The Associated Press. "That's the way it's supposed to be. Just like if I go speeding down the highway, are you worried about getting a ticket? If you lie on your taxes, are you worried about an audit?"

"People ask me all the time, why did you remove that guy who's been here 12 years and has two U.S. citizen kids. I said because he had his due process," he told the AP. "People think I enjoy this. I'm a father. People don't think this bothers me. I feel bad about the plight of these people. Don't get me wrong, but I have a job to do."

He also said, in a separate interview, that worksite immigration enforcement operations — which the Biden administration largely stopped — would be necessary.

"I will run the biggest deportation operation this country's ever seen," Homan said in 2024.

Homan vowed to target 'worst of the worst' in 'humane manner'

In an appearance on Fox News' "Sunday Morning Futures" in 2024, Homan promised to target — at least initially — people posing a risk to public safety and pushed back on suggestions that the U.S. military would be assisting in finding and deporting immigrants.

"You concentrate on the public safety threats and the national security threats first, because they're the worst of the worst," he said on the show. He also said ICE would move to implement Trump's plans in a "humane manner."

On a separate "60 Minutes" interview before the 2024 presidential elections, Homan called suggestions of mass neighborhood raids or building camps to hold people "ridiculous."

When asked whether there was a way to carry out deportations without separating families, he said, "Families can be deported together."

There are countless recent examples across the country of arrests that don't align with those priorities. In Minnesota, The Associated Press has reported on how ICE agents have detained people with legal immigration status and no criminal records, children and U.S. citizens.

Homan survived bribery accusations

The White House stood behind Homan in September following reports that he accepted \$50,000 from undercover agents posing as businesspeople during an FBI operation, leading to a bribery investigation that was ultimately shut down by Trump's Justice Department.

Homan was accused of accepting the cash during a 2024 encounter with agents posing as businesspeople seeking government contracts that Homan suggested he could help them get in a second Trump term.

Press secretary Karoline Leavitt characterized Homan's encounter with the undercover agents as an effort by the Biden administration to "entrap one of the president's top allies and supporters, someone who they knew very well would be taking a government position."

Iran-backed militias in Iraq and Yemen threaten new attacks as US aircraft carrier arrives

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Two Iranian-backed militias in the Mideast are signaling their willingness to launch new attacks, likely trying to back Iran, as officials acknowledged the arrival of a U.S. aircraft carrier to the region Monday. President Donald Trump ordered the carriers to move to the Middle East as he threatened military action over its crackdown on nationwide protests.

Yemen's Iranian-backed Houthi rebels on Monday hinted they were ready to resume attacks on shipping in the Red Sea. That came just after Iraq's Kataib Hezbollah paramilitary group, long supported by Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, issued a direct threat late Sunday toward any attack targeting Iran, warning a "total war" in the region would be a result.

The statements came as the entire region is mired in a tense waiting game to see if Trump will strike. Both the Houthis and Kataib Hezbollah sat out from Israel's 12-day war on Iran in June that saw the United States bomb Iranian nuclear sites. The hesitancy to get involved shows the disarray still affecting Iran's self-described "Axis of Resistance" after facing attacks from Israel during its war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

US carrier arrives in region

The threats came as the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln and other guided missile destroyers in its strike group arrived in the region to "promote regional security and stability," U.S. Central Command said Monday on social media.

Trump has said the ships are being moved "just in case" he decides to take action against Iran. He has already laid out two red lines for attack — the killing of peaceful protesters and Tehran conducting mass executions of those it has arrested in a massive crackdown over the demonstrations.

A senior Iranian military official who spoke anonymously on Iran's State TV dismissed the American threat as "an exaggeration" and noted that Iran had increased its military presence in response. The official added that the Lincoln's presence was not a deterrent but an accessible target.

Threats from Iraq, Yemen, while Hezbollah stays mum

Iran projected its power across the Mideast through the "Axis of Resistance," a network of proxy militant groups in Gaza, Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, and Iraq, and other places. It was also seen as a defensive buffer, intended to keep conflict away from Iranian borders. But it has collapsed after Israel targeted Hamas, Hezbollah in Lebanon and others during the Gaza war. Meanwhile, rebels in 2024 overthrew Syria's Bashar Assad after a yearslong, bloody war in which Iran backed his rule.

The Lebanese militant group Hezbollah, one of Iran's staunchest allies, refused to say how it planned to react in the case of a possible attack.

"During the past two months, several parties have asked me a clear and frank question: If Israel and America go to war against Iran, will Hezbollah intervene or not?" Hezbollah leader Sheikh Naim Kassem said via a video address to thousands of supporters gathered in Beirut's southern suburbs for a rally

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 69 of 78

backing Iran.

He said the group is preparing for "possible aggression and is determined to defend" against it. But as to how it would act, he said, "these details will be determined by the battle and we will determine them according to the interests that are present."

Iraqi and Yemenite militant groups were much more forthright in their threats, which were interpreted as support for Iran. A short video by the Houthis included images of a ship on fire, with the caption: "Soon." It later aired footage Monday from its January 2024 attack in the Gulf of Aden on the Marshall Islands-flagged tanker Marlin Luanda, one of over 100 ships attacked as part of a campaign the Houthis said pressured Israel over its war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The Houthis halted their fire after a ceasefire in Gaza, though they've repeatedly warned they could resume fire if needed.

Meanwhile, Ahmad "Abu Hussein" al-Hamidawi of Kataib Hezbollah issued his own threat in a statement. "We affirm to the enemies that the war on the (Islamic) Republic will not be a picnic; rather, you will taste the bitterest forms of death, and nothing will remain of you in our region," he said.

The United Arab Emirates announced on Monday that it would not allow its airspace, territory or territorial waters to be used for military action against Iran. The UAE said it would stress dialogue and diplomatic resolutions.

Iran warns America not to attack

Iranian Defense Ministry spokesperson Gen. Reza Talaei-Nik renewed warnings Monday to both Israel and the U.S., saying any attack would "be met with a response that is more painful and more decisive than in the past." Iranian state television quoted Talaei-Nik as saying that threats required Iran "to maintain full and comprehensive preparedness."

Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei separately told journalists: "Regional countries fully know that any security breach in the region will not affect Iran only. The lack of security is contagious."

Iran over the weekend unveiled a new banner in Tehran's Enghelab Square threatening the Lincoln, showing an aircraft carrier strewn with bodies and streaked with blood with the warning: "If you sow the wind, you will reap the whirlwind." However, Iran is still reeling from the 12-day war in June in which its air defense systems were broadly destroyed, top military leaders killed, and its nuclear enrichment sites bombed by the U.S.

As a sign of concern over its airspace, Iran issued a notice to pilots Sunday that banned small private aircraft from flying in the country, with carve-outs for the oil industry and emergency medical flights.

Many Western airlines have started to avoid Iranian airspace entirely due to the tensions, though Gulf Arab carriers flying to Moscow still rely on the route. Iranian air defense troops in 2020 shot down a Ukrainian commercial airliner, killing 176 people on board.

Death toll rises from protest crackdown

The protests in Iran began on Dec. 28, sparked by the fall of the Iranian currency, the rial, and quickly spread across the country. They were met by a violent crackdown by Iran's theocracy, the scale of which is only starting to become clear as the country has faced more than two-week internet blackout — the most comprehensive in its history.

The U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency on Monday put the death toll at 5,973, with the number expected to increase. It says more than 41,813 people have been arrested.

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. The Associated Press has not been able to independently verify the toll.

Iran's government has put the death toll at a far lower 3,117, saying 2,427 were civilians and security forces, and labeled the rest "terrorists." In the past, Iran's theocracy has undercounted or not reported fatalities from unrest.

Talks with US and Ukraine in Abu Dhabi were constructive but major challenges remain, Kremlin says

By The Associated Press undefined

Negotiations aimed at ending Russia's invasion of Ukraine are yielding apparent signs of progress, but major challenges remain on the path to a final settlement, a senior Kremlin official said Monday.

Talks between envoys from Ukraine, Russia and the United States in recent days in Abu Dhabi were constructive and another round is planned for next week, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told journalists.

He reported no major breakthrough so far, however, and added: "The very fact that these contacts have begun in a constructive way can be assessed positively, but there is still serious work ahead."

Officials revealed few details of the talks held on Friday and Saturday, which were part of a yearlong effort by the Trump administration to steer the sides toward a peace deal and end almost four years of all-out war.

While Ukrainian and Russian officials have agreed in principle with Washington's calls for a compromise, Moscow and Kyiv differ deeply over what an agreement should look like.

Meanwhile, the grinding war of attrition along the roughly 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) front line snaking through eastern and southern Ukraine has dragged on, and Ukrainian civilians are enduring another winter of hardship after Russian bombardment of cities in the rear.

Dispute over land is unresolved, Zelenskyy says

U.S. President Donald Trump has set out deadlines for an agreement and threatened additional sanctions on Moscow, but Russian President Vladimir Putin apparently hasn't budged from his public demands.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy also described the Abu Dhabi talks as constructive, although he noted that "addressed complex political issues ... remain unresolved."

A new round of trilateral meetings is expected later this week, Zelenskyy said, without giving a date.

Negotiators will return to the United Arab Emirates on Sunday for more talks, according to a U.S. official, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media. The weekend talks covered a broad range of military and economic matters and included the possibility of a ceasefire before a comprehensive deal, the official said.

Zelenskyy said Sunday that a document setting out U.S. security guarantees for Ukraine in a postwar scenario is "100% ready," although it still needs to be formally signed.

Kyiv has insisted on postwar American security commitments as part of any broader peace agreement with Moscow after Russia's 2014 illegal annexation of Crimea and support for separatist rebels in eastern Ukraine, followed by its full-scale invasion in February 2022.

German diplomat urges Kremlin to be flexible on land issue

Zelenskyy has acknowledged that there are fundamental differences between Ukrainian and Russian positions, though he said last week that peace proposals are "nearly ready."

A central issue is whether Russia should keep or withdraw from areas of Ukraine its forces have occupied, especially Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland called the Donbas, and whether it should get land there that it hasn't yet captured.

German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul on Monday chided Moscow for its "stubborn insistence on the decisive territorial issue."

He said during a visit to Latvia that "if there is no agility here, I am afraid that the negotiations may take a long time or will not be successful now."

Russia's Defense Ministry said Monday that air defenses downed 40 Ukrainian drones late Sunday and early Monday, including 34 over the Krasnodar region and four over the Sea of Azov.

Krasnodar officials said drone fragments fell on two industrial plants in the city of Slavyansk, sparking fires that were extinguished. One person was injured, they said.

Ukraine's general staff said an oil refinery in the Krasnodar region was targeted by Ukrainian forces. The facility supplied the Russian military, it added.

Russian forces launched 138 drones at Ukraine overnight, 110 of which were shot down or suppressed,

Ukraine's air force said, and 21 of them hit targets in 11 locations.

SEC sets record with 10 ranked teams, a 1st in 50-year history of women's AP Top 25; UConn, UCLA 1-2

By DOUG FEINBERG AP Basketball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The Southeastern Conference set a record with 10 teams in The Associated Press women's Top 25 basketball poll released Monday.

Georgia entered at No. 23 after its win over then-No. 11 Kentucky to give the conference the most teams ever in a single week in the 50-year history of the poll. Last season, the SEC had 10 teams in the men's Top 25 for a few weeks.

UConn remained the unanimous No. 1 choice from the 31-member national media panel. The Huskies are the lone undefeated team left in women's college basketball. They have won 37 straight games dating to last season. UCLA moved up to No. 2 after South Carolina lost in overtime to Oklahoma, which jumped six spots to No. 10.

The Gamecocks fell to third, leading a quartet of SEC squads. Texas was fourth, Vanderbilt fifth and LSU sixth. The Commodores suffered their first loss of the season, falling at South Carolina on Sunday.

Louisville and Iowa were seventh and eighth. Michigan dropped two spots to ninth after losing to the Commodores in the Coretta Scott King Classic last week.

Ranked Georgia

The Lady Bulldogs are in the Top 25 for the first time since 2022. They started the season 14-0 in non-conference play for the first time in 16 years and already own victories over No. 17 Ole Miss and No. 18 Kentucky. The team was a staple in the Top 25 for years under former coach Andy Landers. Georgia replaced Nebraska, which fell out of the poll.

Leading the way

The four teams that played in the Women's Champions Classic at Barclays Center in December haven't lost a conference game yet. No. 15 Tennessee leads the SEC, Iowa is atop the Big Ten, Louisville is in front of the ACC and UConn tops the Big East. The four are a combined 35-0 in league play through Sunday.

Conference supremacy

After the SEC's 10 ranked teams, the Big Ten is next with seven. The Big 12 has four teams in the Top 25. The Atlantic Coast Conference has two while the Big East and Ivy League each have one.

Games of the week

No. 15 Tennessee at No. 1 UConn, Sunday. The Lady Vols will try and spoil the Huskies' undefeated season when the two teams get together. This will likely be the final ranked opponent that UConn will face before the NCAA Tournament.

No. 8 Iowa at No. 2 UCLA, Sunday. First place in the Big Ten will be on the line when the Hawkeyes visit the Bruins. UCLA has won 13 consecutive games since its lone loss of the season to Texas. Iowa has won eight consecutive games since a loss to UConn in late December.

What to know about a French ex-senator on trial for drugging a lawmaker to sexually assault her

By SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Over a year ago, France was shaken by a shocking case in which dozens of men were accused of raping a drugged woman, Gisèle Pelicot, with the help of her husband. The country is still grappling with the prevalence of drug-facilitated sexual assault as a former senator goes on trial, accused of slipping MDMA into a fellow lawmaker's drink in order to abuse her.

Joël Guerriau, 68, is accused of putting the drug MDMA, known as ecstasy, in a glass of champagne he served to lawmaker Sandrine Josso in November 2023. He has admitted serving her a drink spiked with MDMA but says it was an accident.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 72 of 78

Josso 50, has since been outspoken about the case and helped lead a parliamentary investigation into drug-related crimes.

The two-day trial that started Monday echoes the landmark drugging-and-rape case that riveted France and turned Gisèle Pelicot into a global icon of the fight against sexual violence.

Here's what to know about the case that brought national attention to drug-facilitated assault in France.

Guerriau accused of spiking drink with MDMA

Guerriau is charged with the use and possession of drugs, and with secretly administering a discernment-altering substance to commit a rape or sexual assault.

According to Josso, a centrist member of parliament, the center-right senator invited her to his apartment in Paris for what she believed to be a reelection celebration. Josso had known Guerriau for years and considered him as a friend.

Josso said she started feeling unwell quickly after drinking champagne, with heart palpitations and her body shivering.

She headed out, took a taxi and went to a hospital, where a substantial quantity of MDMA was found in a blood test, far higher than the level typical of recreational use.

Josso took a leave of absence for medical and psychological reasons. Two months later, when she made her comeback at the National Assembly, she described the scene.

"I went to a friend's house to celebrate his re-election. I came out terrified," she told lawmakers. "I discovered an assailant. I then realized that I had been drugged without knowing it. That's what we call drug-facilitated assault," she added.

Guerriau insisted he had no intention to drug Josso or to assault her.

Ex-senator denies intention to drug lawmaker

Guerriau told the court Monday he made a "very serious" mistake that caused him to serve Josso a drugged drink.

"I feel really sorry for Sandrine, that's something I never wanted ... I hope some day she'll forgive me," he said.

Guerriau said he got the MDMA from another senator, whom he refused to name, to help him as he was suffering from depression and anxiety.

He said he put some of the white powder in a glass meant for himself, but didn't take it. The next day, he offered the glass to Josso by mistake.

"Things happened very, very quickly. I did not think about it," he said, insisting he only realized later what had happened. He acknowledged "ignorance" about MDMA and "stupidity."

Guerriau remained in the Senate for almost two years after being charged despite political pressure to resign. He resigned in October, presenting the move as a political decision with no link to the legal proceedings.

As the trial started in a room packed with journalists and members of the general public, Josso appeared stressed and saddened during the reading by the chief judge of the conclusions of the investigation.

The investigation showed Guerriau searched for information online focusing on use of drugs, including ecstasy, in relation to rape, about a month before the incident.

A verdict is expected to be issued at a later date.

The case echoes landmark Pelicot trial

Less than a year after the senator's case broke out, France was rocked by Gisèle Pelicot's case, which put a worldwide spotlight on drug-facilitated sexual abuse.

Pelicot's ex-husband and 50 other men were convicted of sexually assaulting her while she was under chemical submission between 2011 and 2020 .

The harrowing and unprecedented trial exposed how pornography, chatrooms and men's indifference to — or hazy understanding of — consent is fueling rape culture.

However, even after the Pelicot trial, France is still just starting to reckon with such crimes.

Drugging a person to commit rape or sexual assault is punishable by up to 5 years in prison, compared to a maximum sentence of 10 years for drug possession.

Josso became a major figure in France's fight against drug-related sexual assault, joining an association set up by Gisèle Pelicot's daughter, Caroline Darian.

The lawmaker co-authored a parliamentary report about drug-facilitated sexual abuse which calls for "taking action against the scourge that was ignored for too long."

The report noted a lack of statistics and information on the phenomenon in the country and stressed authorities' failure to provide victims with efficient means to do blood and other analysis especially overnight and in remote areas.

In the wake of the Pelicot trial, France adopted a new law in October 2025 defining rape and other sexual assault as any non-consensual sexual act. Until then, rape was defined under French law as penetration or oral sex using "violence, coercion, threat or surprise."

Increased awareness across the world

In the United States, the Bill Cosby case that surfaced in 2014 raised public awareness about a pattern involving victims — mostly women — being offered pills or drinks, leading them to feel disoriented, semi-conscious or paralyzed.

Cosby, once known as "America's Dad," was convicted of sexual assault and imprisoned. However, in 2021, Pennsylvania's highest court threw out his conviction and ordered his release, in a stunning reversal of fortune. Cosby had previously been convicted of drugging and molesting a woman in 2004 at his home near Philadelphia.

Last month, British authorities charged a man with repeatedly drugging and raping a woman who is now his ex-wife. Five other men have been charged with sexual offenses against the same woman.

Philip Young, 49, has been charged with 56 offences over a 13-year period, including multiple counts of rape and administering a substance with intent to "stupefy" Joanne Young, 48, between 2010 and 2023, the Crown Prosecution Service and Wiltshire Police said.

Investigators will detail causes of the midair collision over Washington, DC, and recommend changes

By JOSH FUNK AP Transportation Writer

So many things went wrong last Jan. 29 to contribute to the deadliest plane crash on American soil since 2001 that the National Transportation Safety Board isn't likely to identify a single cause of the collision between an airliner and an Army helicopter near Washington, D.C., that killed 67 people at its hearing Tuesday.

Instead, their investigators will detail what they found that played a role in the crash, and the board will recommend changes to help prevent a similar tragedy. Last week, the Federal Aviation Administration already took the temporary restrictions it imposed after the crash and made them permanent to ensure planes and helicopters won't share the same airspace again around Reagan National Airport.

Family members of victims hope those suggestions won't be ignored the same way many past NTSB recommendations have been. Tim Lilley, whose son Sam was the first officer on the American Airlines plane, said he hopes officials in Congress and the administration will make changes now instead of waiting until for another disaster.

"Instead of writing aviation regulation in blood, let's start writing it in data," said Lilley, who is a pilot himself and earlier in his career flew Black Hawk helicopters in the Washington area. "Because all the data was there to show this accident was going to happen. This accident was completely preventable."

Over the past year, the NTSB has already highlighted a number of the factors that contributed to the crash including a poorly designed helicopter route past Reagan Airport, the fact that the Black Hawk was flying 78 feet (23.7 meters) higher than it should have been, the warnings that the FAA ignored in the years beforehand and the Army's move to turn off a key system that would have broadcast the helicopter's location more clearly.

The D.C. plane crash was the first in a number of high-profile crashes and close calls throughout 2025 that alarmed the public, but the total number of crashes last year was actually the lowest since the CO-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 74 of 78

VID-19 pandemic hit in 2020 with 1,405 crashes nationwide.

Experts say flying remains the safest way to travel because of all the overlapping layers of precautions built into the system, but too many of those safety measures failed at the same time last Jan. 29.

Here is some of what we have learned about the crash:

The helicopter route didn't ensure enough separation

The route along the Potomac River the Black Hawk was following that night allowed for helicopters and planes to come within 75 feet (23 meters) of each other when a plane was landing on the airport's secondary runway that typically handles less than 5% of the flights landing at Reagan. And that distance was only ensured when the helicopter stuck to flying along the bank of the river, but the official route didn't require that.

Normally, air traffic controllers work to keep aircraft at least 500 feet (152 meters) apart to keep them safe, so the scant separation on Route 4 posed what NTSB Chairwoman Jennifer Homendy called "an intolerable risk to flight safety."

The controllers at Reagan also had been in the habit of asking pilots to watch out for other aircraft themselves and maintain visual separation as they tried to squeeze in more planes to land on what the Metropolitan Washington Airport Authority has called the busiest runway in the country. The FAA halted that practice after the crash.

That night a controller twice asked the helicopter pilots whether they had the jet in sight, and the pilots said they did and asked for visual separation approval so they could use their own eyes to maintain distance. But at the investigative hearings last summer, board members questioned how well the crew could spot the plane while wearing night vision goggles and whether the pilots were even looking in the right spot.

The Black Hawk was flying too high

The American Airlines plane flying from Wichita, Kansas, collided with the helicopter 278 feet (85 meters) above the river, but the Black Hawk was never supposed to fly above 200 feet (61 meters) as it passed by the airport, according to the official route.

Before investigators revealed how high the helicopter was flying, Tim Lilley was asking tough questions about it at some of the first meetings NTSB officials had with the families. His background as a pilot gave him detailed knowledge of the issues.

"We had a moral mandate because we had such an in-depth insight into what happened. We didn't want to become advocates, but we could not shirk the responsibility," said Lilley, who started meeting with top lawmakers in Congress, Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy and Army officials not long after the crash to push for changes.

The NTSB has said the Black Hawk pilots may not have realized how high the helicopter was because the barometric altimeter they were relying on was reading 80 to 100 feet (24 to 30 meters) lower than the altitude registered by the flight data recorder.

Investigators tested out the altimeters of three other Black Hawks of the same model from the same Army unit and found similar discrepancies.

Past warnings and alarming data were ignored

FAA controllers were warning about the risks all the helicopter traffic around Reagan airport created at least since 2022.

And the NTSB found there had been 85 near misses between planes and helicopters around the airport in the three years before the crash along with more than 15,000 close proximity events. Pilots reported collision alarms going off in their cockpits at least once a month.

Officials refused to add a warning to helicopter charts urging pilots to use caution when they used the secondary runway at Reagan the jet was trying to use before the collision.

Rachel Feres said it was hard to hear about all the known concerns that were never addressed before the crash that killed her cousin Peter Livingston and his wife Donna and two young daughters, Everly and Alydia, who were both promising figure skaters.

"It became very quickly clear that this crash should never have happened," Feres said. "And as someone

who is not particularly familiar with aviation and how our aviation system works, we were just hearing things over and over again that I think really, really shocked people, really surprised people.”

Indonesian marines among 42 missing in deadly West Java landslide

BANDUNG, Indonesia (AP) — Nineteen members of Indonesia’s elite marine force are among 42 people missing after being swept away or buried by a deadly weekend landslide that tore through a mountainside in West Java province, officials said Monday.

The marines were training in rugged terrain and heavy rainfall when Saturday’s predawn landslide swallowed their camp and some 34 houses in Pasir Langu village on the slopes of Mount Burangrang. A search operation has grown from 500 to 2,100 personnel using bare hands, water pumps, drones and excavators.

Seventeen people have been confirmed dead, National Disaster Management Agency spokesperson Abdul Muhari said.

Four marines were among the dead, navy Chief of Staff Adm. Muhammad Ali told reporters. They were part of a 23-member unit training for a long-duration border assignment on the Indonesia–Papua New Guinea frontier, he said. The rest are unaccounted for.

“Heavy rain over two nights triggered the slope failure that buried their training area,” Ali said. “Heavy machinery has struggled to reach the site, the access road is narrow and the ground remains unstable.”

Ade Dian Permana, who heads the local search and rescue office, told reporters that 42 people were missing.

“The ground is still very unstable and mixed with water, which limits how far our teams can safely move,” he said.

Rescuers were digging through tons of mud, rocks and uprooted trees in a landslide that stretched more than 2 kilometers (1.2 miles), said Yudhi Bramantyo, the operation director of the National Search and Rescue Agency. He said that in some places the mud reached up to 8 meters (26 feet).

Authorities halted search operations at nightfall because limited visibility and unstable soil posed risks to rescuers, Bramantyo said.

Seasonal rains and high tides from about October to April frequently cause flooding and landslides in Indonesia, an archipelago of more than 17,000 islands where millions of people live in mountainous areas or near fertile flood plains.

A ferry carrying more than 350 people sinks off the Philippines, killing at least 18

By JIM GOMEZ Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — A ferry with more than 350 people on board sank early Monday near an island in the southern Philippines, killing at least 18 people, officials said. Rescuers saved hundreds more, while a fleet of coast guard and naval ships searched for those still missing.

Coast guard officials said the cargo and passenger ferry apparently encountered technical problems and sank after midnight. The steel-hulled vessel abruptly tilted to one side and took on water, hurling people into the sea in the darkness, according to a rescued passenger who lost his 6-month-old baby.

“My wife lost hold of our baby and all of us got separated at sea,” a distraught Mohamad Khan told a volunteer rescuer, Gamar Alih, who posted a video of Khan’s remarks on Facebook.

He said he and his wife, who had been holding their child, were rescued, but the baby drowned. His wife wept by his side as Khan recounted their ordeal.

The M/V Trisha Kerstin 3 was sailing in good weather from the port city of Zamboanga to southern Jolo island in Sulu province with 332 passengers and 27 crew members. It sank about a nautical mile (nearly 2 kilometers) from the island village of Baluk-baluk in Basilan province, coast guard Commander Romel Dua told The Associated Press.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 76 of 78

"There were two coast guard safety officers on board and they were the first to call and alert us to deploy rescue vessels," Dua said, adding that the two safety marshals survived.

Rescuers saved at least 316 passengers and crewmembers retrieved 18 bodies, officials said. Coast guard and navy ships, along with a surveillance plane, an air force Black Hawk helicopter and fleets of fishing boats carried out search and rescue operations for about two dozen people believed missing off Basilan, Dua said.

The cause of the ferry sinking was not immediately clear and there will be an investigation, Dua said. The coast guard had cleared the ferry before it left the Zamboanga port, and there was no sign of overloading, he said.

Officials said they were looking into unverified reports that 15 passengers on the ship's manifest decided not to board at the last minute and refunded their fare. If confirmed, that would reduce the number of missing, Dua said.

Alih, a village councilor from Zamboanga city, told The AP Press that he volunteered to help in the search and rescue because some of his relatives were among the ferry passengers. They all survived.

Basilan Governor Mujiv Hataman said several passengers and two bodies were brought to Isabela, the provincial capital, where he and ambulance vans waited.

Sea accidents are common in the Philippine archipelago because of frequent storms, badly maintained vessels, overcrowding and spotty enforcement of safety regulations, especially in remote provinces.

In December 1987, the ferry Dona Paz sank after colliding with a fuel tanker in the central Philippines, killing more than 4,300 people in the world's deadliest peacetime maritime disaster.

'A Team' of real estate brokers faces sex crimes trial in New York

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The brothers operated in the glitz and glamour of the Hamptons and South Beach. Two were high-end real estate brokers dubbed "The A Team." The third went to law school and ran their family's private security firm, which caters to heads of state and the rich and famous.

They frequented nightclubs, cruised on yachts and flew on private jets. One lived alongside celebrities and corporate titans on Manhattan's Billionaires' Row. The others had multimillion-dollar waterfront mansions in Miami.

But behind their posh, peripatetic facade, prosecutors say, Tal, Oren and Alon Alexander — known collectively as the Alexander Brothers — were predators who sexually assaulted, trafficked and raped dozens of women from 2008 to 2021, often after incapacitating them with drugs and sometimes recording their crimes on video.

The brothers met victims at nightclubs, parties and on dating apps, and recruited others for trips to ritzy locales, paying for their flights and lodging at high-end hotels or luxe vacation rentals before drugging and raping them, prosecutors said. In all, dozens of women have accused them of wrongdoing.

Now, the brothers — Tal, 39, and twins Alon and Oren, 38 — face a reckoning that prosecutors say was more than a decade in the making: a sex-trafficking trial that could put them in prison for the rest of their lives.

Opening statements are slated for Tuesday in the brothers' trial in federal court in Manhattan, after they were delayed a day because of heavy snowfall over the weekend in New York.

Oren and Tal Alexander, the real estate dealers who specialized in high-end properties in Miami, New York and Los Angeles, have pleaded not guilty, along with their brother Alon, who graduated from New York Law School before taking his position with the security firm.

All three have been held without bail since their December 2024 arrests. They were indicted months after several women filed lawsuits alleging sexual misconduct.

A spokesperson for the Alexander Brothers said they "categorically deny that anyone was drugged, assaulted, or coerced, and the government has presented no physical evidence, medical records, contemporaneous complaints, or objective proof to establish those claims."

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 77 of 78

"This case highlights a broader concern about how the federal sex-trafficking statute is being applied," said the spokesperson, Juda Engelmayer. "Congress enacted that law to address force, coercion, and exploitation; not to retroactively criminalize consensual adult relationships through inference or narrative."

"As the defense has consistently said, allegations are not evidence," Engelmayer added.

The brothers' attorneys have promised to show the jury of six men and six women that prosecutors have taken innocent romantic and sexual encounters and converted them into criminal activity through clever lawyering.

Oren Alexander's attorney, Marc Agnifilo, has said the defense plans to prove that witnesses have lied to the government and that their testimony can't be trusted.

Judge Valerie E. Caproni, who will preside over the trial, has rejected defense requests to toss out the charges or send the case to state court. The Alexanders' lawyers have said the allegations against them resemble "date rape" crimes more commonly prosecuted in state courts, but Caproni disagreed.

"That badly misrepresents the nature of the charges," the judge wrote.

Agnifilo has said the jury will hear evidence of group sex, threesomes and promiscuity. During jury selection last week, prospective jurors were asked questions related to sexual activity and sex crimes.

"The case is about sex and sexuality," said Agnifilo, who represented Sean "Diddy" Combs last year as the hip-hop mogul was acquitted of sex trafficking and racketeering conspiracy charges but convicted on lesser prostitution-related counts.

In court papers, the Alexander Brothers' lawyers wrote that among the accusers they expect to testify at trial, they had located evidence "that undermines nearly every aspect of the alleged victims' narratives."

Prosecutors have said their evidence will show that the brothers "have acted with apparent impunity — forcibly raping women whenever they wanted to do so."

Today in History: January 27, Auschwitz and Birkenau concentration camps liberated by Soviet troops

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Tuesday, Jan. 27, the 27th day of 2026. There are 338 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Jan. 27, 1945, during World War II, Soviet troops liberated the Auschwitz and Birkenau Nazi concentration camps in Poland.

Also on this date:

In 1756, composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born in Salzburg, Austria.

In 1880, Thomas Edison received a patent for his incandescent electric lamp.

In 1967, astronauts Virgil I. "Gus" Grissom, Edward H. White and Roger B. Chaffee died in a flash fire during a test aboard their Apollo 1 spacecraft at Cape Canaveral, Florida.

In 1973, the Vietnam peace accords were signed in Paris, ending direct U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War.

In 1984, singer Michael Jackson suffered serious burns to his scalp when pyrotechnics set his hair on fire during the filming of a Pepsi-Cola TV commercial at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles.

In 2002, a series of explosions rocked an armory in Lagos, Nigeria, starting fires in nearby neighborhoods and killing hundreds of people. Many of those who died were area residents who drowned in a canal in darkness while fleeing the blasts.

In 2013, a fire started by pyrotechnics in the Kiss nightclub in Santa Maria, Rio Grande do Sul state, Brazil, killed 242 people and injured over 600.

In 2017, President Donald Trump barred all refugees from entering the United States for four months, declaring the ban necessary to prevent "radical Islamic terrorists" from entering the country.

In 2023, a Palestinian gunman opened fire outside an east Jerusalem synagogue during Jewish observances of the Sabbath, killing seven people and wounded three others before he was shot and killed by

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 237 ~ 78 of 78

police.

Today's birthdays: Actor James Cromwell is 86. Rock musician Nick Mason (Pink Floyd) is 82. Ballet star Mikhail Baryshnikov is 78. U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts is 71. Political and sports commentator Keith Olbermann is 67. Actor Bridget Fonda is 62. Actor Alan Cumming is 61. Country singer Tracy Lawrence is 58. Rock singer Mike Patton is 58. Rapper Tricky is 58. Actor-comedian Patton Oswalt is 57. Actor Freddy Carter is 33. Musician and actor Braeden Lemasters is 30. Country singer Bailey Zimmerman is 26.