

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Monday, Feb. 23

Senior Menu: Goulash, corn, fruit, breadstick.  
School Breakfast: Eggs.  
School Lunch: Oriental chicken, rice.  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.  
Senior Citizens meet at noon with potluck at Groton Community Center  
1st Grade Boys Basketball Practice, 1:30 p.m., Arena  
JH Boys Basketball at Clark (7th at 5 p.m., 8th at 6 p.m.)  
Kindergarten Boys Basketball, 6 p.m., elementary gym  
5th Grade BBB, 6 p.m., HS Gym  
5th/6th Volleyball Practice. 6 p.m. Arena

## Tuesday, Feb. 24

Senior Menu: Bean and ham soup, 1/2 chicken salad sandwich, fruit.  
School Breakfast: Scones.  
School Lunch: Tater tot hot dish, cooked carrots.  
United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.  
Biogirls, 3:45 p.m., Elementary gym  
Pickleball, 6 p.m., elementary gym  
Region 1A GBB



## Wednesday, Feb 25

Senior Menu: Cheeseburger, tater tots, tomato spoon salad, fruit.  
School Breakfast: Breakfast pizza.  
School Lunch Chicken alfredo, spudsters.  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.; soup supper, 6 p.m. (Host Emmanuel Men; Lenten Service, 7 p.m.)  
St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.; Lent Service at St. John's, 7 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.

## Thursday, Feb. 26

Senior Menu: Turkey, sweet potatoes, green beans, fruit, whole wheat bread.  
School Breakfast: Cereal.  
School Lunch: Sloppy joes, fries.

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# 1440

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

## Blizzard Slams Northeast

More than 63 million Americans are under winter storm alerts, including 26 million under blizzard warnings, as a nor'easter struck the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast overnight. Cities including Philadelphia, Boston, and New York City are expecting between 9 and 20 inches of snow.

The storm formed off the coast of North Carolina and moved northward causing a rapid drop in air pressure known as a bomb cyclone. Its shape has been likened to a swirling "comma" as bands of snow move northwestward. More than 1 inch of snow per hour is expected in some parts of the Northeast today before snowfall ends in the evening. The storm is expected to be especially severe in New York City, which is under a state of emergency. It marks the city's first official blizzard since 2016.

More than 3,300 flights have been canceled as of this writing.

## Winter Olympics End

The US men's hockey team captured the gold medal in thrilling fashion yesterday, beating rival Canada 2-1 during a 3-on-3 overtime period. Forward Jack Hughes scored the golden goal less than two minutes into extra play, while goalie Connor Hellebuyck stopped 41 shots on goal—including a save just 10 seconds before Hughes' winning shot. It marks the third gold medal in men's team history and its first since the 1980 "Miracle on Ice" over the Soviet Union.

The match was the final gold medal competition of the Olympics, with the closing ceremonies held in the 2,000-year-old Arena di Verona. Norway finished the games atop the medal count (18 gold medals, 42 total), followed by the US, Netherlands, and host Italy.

Despite falling short in some high-profile events, the US delegation broke the country's record for winter gold medals with 12 (33 total medals).

## Giant Tortoises Return

Giant tortoises were released on Ecuador's Floreana Island in the Galápagos archipelago Friday. Their arrival is part of a phased attempt to repopulate the volcanic landmass with an extinct species.

Floreana was once home to around 20,000 tortoises of the species *Chelonoidis niger*. The island's subspecies went extinct in the 1840s as a result of human activity, including hunting. In 2000, researchers discovered tortoises on a nearby island with saddleback shells—a feature associated with Floreana tortoises. It turns out, these tortoises with hybrid lineages of the extinct native species. Scientists began selectively breeding the tortoises, and last week released 158 on the island, each carrying between 40% and 80% of DNA from the Floreana lineage. In all, 700 tortoises will be released as they grow old enough to survive, between 8 and 13 years old.

Charles Darwin was among the last people to see the tortoises, visiting Floreana in 1835.

## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

"One Battle After Another" dominates UK's BAFTA film awards, winning six prizes including best film; see full list of winners.

Major League Soccer kicks off 31st season with seven-week break scheduled to start in May amid World Cup in the US.

NFL wide receiver and former Purdue star Rondale Moore dies of an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound at age 25.

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## Science & Technology

NASA delays launch of lunar mission Artemis II until at least April after identifying issues with the launch vehicle's helium flow to propellant tanks.

Paleontologists develop technique to more accurately date dinosaur fossils by analyzing isotopes trapped in nearby fossilized eggshells.

Cancer detection startup Grail fails in large-scale clinical trial to see whether its blood analysis technology can reduce late-stage cancer diagnoses.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close up Friday (S&P 500 +0.7%, Dow +0.5%, Nasdaq +0.9%) following Supreme Court decision striking down President Donald Trump's global tariffs.

Trump signs 15% global tariffs under separate authority, will require congressional extension after 150 days.

Microsoft head of gaming Phil Spencer retires after four decades; Spencer helped launch the original Xbox in 2001; current head of company's CoreAI division, Asha Sharma, to take over.

President Donald Trump pushes Netflix to remove former UN ambassador and national security adviser Susan Rice from board; call comes amid Justice Department probe of Netflix's \$72B acquisition of parts of Warner Bros. Discovery.

## Politics & World Affairs

Mexican security forces kill drug lord Nemesio Oseguera, also known as "El Mencho," the country's most-wanted cartel boss who led the Jalisco New Generation Cartel; US contributed intelligence leading to his death.

Secret Service kills armed 21-year-old man who attempted unauthorized entry to President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach, Florida.

Iranian students hold antigovernment protests after deadly crackdown last month; fresh round of US-Iran nuclear talks scheduled for Thursday.

Thousands of people protest in Lyon, France, after the death of nationalist-populist activist allegedly killed by left-wing activists.

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

T H I S   W E E K   I N  
**TIGER SPORTS**  
F E B R U A R Y   2 3 <sup>R D</sup>   -   2 8 <sup>T H</sup>



**Monday, February 23rd:**

- JH BB @ Clark/Willow Lake (in Clark - 7th grade @ 4pm, 8th grade @ 5pm)

**Tuesday, February 24th:**

- Girls Basketball First Round Region 1A (#7 Britton-Hecla @ #2 Groton Area - 7pm)

**Thursday, February 26th:**

- STATE B WRESTLING @ Sioux Falls
- Girls Basketball Second Round Region 1A (TBD)

**Friday, February 27th:**

- STATE B WRESTLING @ Sioux Falls
- Boys Basketball vs. Aberdeen Christian (7th grade @ 4pm, 8th grade @ 5pm, JV @ 6pm, Varsity to follow)

**Saturday, February 28th:**

- STATE B WRESTLING @ Sioux Falls
- JH BB @ Britton-Hecla Jamboree (8th grade @ 8:30am, 10:10am, 1:30pm / 7th grade @ 9:20am, 12:40pm, 1:30pm)

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There isn't a football article this week. Instead, I wanted to take a moment to remember Vikings wide receiver Rondale Moore, who tragically passed away on Saturday at the age of 25.

Moore was a four-star prospect coming out of high school. He received offers from 35 colleges, including powerhouse programs like Alabama, Georgia, and Texas. Moore ultimately chose to attend Purdue University.



In 2018, as a true freshman, Moore had 114 receptions (led the nation) for 1,258 yards and 12 touchdowns. His list of accomplishments that season was truly impressive. According to the Purdue Athletic website:

- Paul Hornung Award recipient as the nation's most versatile player.
- First true freshman consensus All-American in Big Ten history.
- First-team All-America by the Associated Press, Football Writers Association of America, ESPN.com, Sports Illustrated, and CBS Sports
- Second-team All-America by the Sporting News.
- First-team Freshman All-America by the Associated Press.
- Big Ten Wide Receiver of the Year.
- Big Ten Freshman of the Year.
- First-team All-Big Ten (wide receiver and special teams).
- Four-time Big Ten Freshman of the Week.
- Broke the school record for most all-purpose yards in a season (2,215)
- Broke the school record for most all-purpose yards in a game (313).
- Tied the school record for most 100-yard receiving games (7).
- Caught 11 or more passes in a game six times.
- Is merely the third player in Big Ten history with 100 or more receptions (114) in a season.

Unfortunately, injuries limited him to only seven games total in the 2019 and 2020 seasons. Despite that, Moore was still a 2nd-round pick by the Arizona Cardinals in 2021.

Moore signed with the Vikings last offseason after missing the entire 2024 season due to injury. On his first kick return in the Vikings' first preseason game, Moore injured his knee and subsequently missed the entire season.

Following the devastating news on Saturday, Vikings Head Coach Kevin O'Connell released the following statement:

"I am devastated by the news of Rondale's death. While Rondale had been a member of the Vikings for a short time, he was someone we came to know well and care about deeply. He was a humble, soft-spoken, and respectful young man who was proud of his Indiana roots. As a player, he was disciplined, dedicated and resilient despite facing adversity multiple times as injuries sidelined him throughout his career. We are all heartbroken by the fact he won't continue to live out his NFL dream, and we won't all have a chance to watch him flourish. My prayers are with Rondale's family, friends, teammates and coaches as we all deal with this tragic news."

Please make sure to check in with your friends and family regularly. Everybody has their own private battles going on, so it's important to remind those close to us how much we love them. And please, if you are suffering and the world starts to seem too heavy, reach out to someone. You are not alone. If you aren't comfortable talking to friends or family, you can call 988 any time, day or night. You can also email me ([WeeklyVikingsRoundup@gmail.com](mailto:WeeklyVikingsRoundup@gmail.com)). We can chat about life, the Vikings, or anything else you want to talk about. I'd be honored to help you carry the weight.

You are not alone.

## “The Not-So Silent Struggle of Sleep Apnea”

Take a moment to breathe. Close your eyes. Slowly inhale through your nose, pause, and gently exhale through your mouth. After a few steady breaths, you likely feel more relaxed and ready for the day.

Now imagine plugging your nose and trying to breathe with your tongue pressed against the roof of your mouth, blocking the airway. You would quickly feel stressed and uncomfortable. Now imagine that happening over and over again, all night long.

That is what occurs with obstructive sleep apnea.

Obstructive sleep apnea happens when relaxed throat muscles and soft tissues collapse and block the airway during sleep. These temporary pauses in breathing—called apneas—cause lower oxygen levels. The brain senses the drop and briefly arouses the body to reopen the airway. This cycle can repeat dozens, even hundreds, of times per night. The result is fragmented sleep, low oxygen, and a body that never truly rests.

Sleep is when the body resets and restores itself. It supports immune function, heart health, metabolism, memory, mood, and emotional regulation. When sleep suffers, so does overall health. Poor sleep increases the risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cognitive decline, and even dementia. People who are chronically tired are also less likely to make healthy choices.

The gold standard treatment for sleep apnea is CPAP—continuous positive airway pressure. A bedside machine delivers steady air through a mask, keeping the airway open during sleep. Some patients benefit from BiPAP, which provides different pressures when breathing in and out. When used consistently, these therapies can dramatically improve sleep quality, energy, focus, hormone balance, and cardiovascular health.

Other treatments may help in selected cases. Weight loss, dental appliances, side sleeping, and certain surgeries can reduce airway obstruction. For patients who cannot tolerate CPAP, hypoglossal nerve stimulation (often known by the brand Inspire) is an option. This implanted device stimulates the nerve controlling the tongue, helping maintain an open airway during sleep.

Although sleeping with a mask may not sound appealing at first, some people feel better quickly and do well with it. Others improve once they are used to it. It often takes patience—trying different masks, adjusting pressure settings, or adding humidification. With proper support and follow-up, most people adapt well.

The benefits of treating sleep apnea far outweigh the risks of ignoring it. Restful sleep improves energy, protects the heart and brain, and enhances overall quality of life.

If you or someone you love snores loudly, stops breathing during sleep, or feels tired despite a full night's rest, consider visiting your medical provider. Restoring healthy breathing at night may be one of the most important steps toward better health.

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



Andrew Ellsworth, MD

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## Tuff Tigers Wrestling Tourney held Sunday

A crowd filled the arena at Groton Area High School for the 35th annual Groton Youth Tuff Tiger Wrestling Tournament on Sunday. The tournament reached full capacity as registration hit its 350-wrestler cap before the event. Organizers said demand continued even after registration closed, with more families attempting to sign up and walk-in wrestlers hoping to compete on tournament day. Organizers estimate approximately 1,700 people attended the tournament.

Wrestlers represented teams from throughout the region, including from Aberdeen, Belles Fourche, Beresford, Clark/Willow Lake, Clear Lake, Doland, Faulkton, Kingsbury County, McCook Central/Montrose, Milbank, Miller, Redfield, Sisseton, Watertown and Webster. There were even wrestlers from area in North Dakota, including Lamoure, Lisbon and Oakes. (Photo

by Elizabeth Varin)

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**Groton Tuff Tigers wrestler Kruz Khali pushes against 8U 60-66 pound weight class opponent Westen Lechner of the Aberdeen Wrestling Club during a bout Sunday at the Groton Youth Tuff Tigers Tournaments. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)**



**Referee Ryan Scepaniak raises Groton Tuff Tigers wrestler's Maya Anderson hand in victory over opponent Webster wrestler Anna Bloom after their 10U 64-66 pound match at the Tuff Tigers Tournament on Sunday afternoon. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)**



**Groton Tuff Tigers wrestler Maya Anderson reaches for opponent Webster wrestler Anna Bloom's leg during a 10U 64-66 pound match at the Tuff Tigers Tournament on Sunday afternoon. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)**



**Groton Tuff Tigers wrestler Charli Erickson eyes opponent Warner/Northwestern wrestler Maverick Logan during a 6U 35-39 pound bout at the Groton Youth Tuff Tigers Wrestling Tournament on Sunday. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)**

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**Groton Tuff Tigers wrestler Charli Erickson jumps toward opponent Warner/Northwestern wrestler Maverick Logan during a 6U 35-39 pound bout at the Groton Youth Tuff Tigers Wrestling Tournament on Sunday.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



**Groton Tuff Tigers wrestler Hayden Perkins looks up while wrestling Clark-Willow Lake wrestler Tyce Irlbeck in a 6U 39-43 pound bout at the Youth Tuff Tigers Wrestling Tournament on Sunday.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



**Groton Tuff Tigers wrestler Laiken Neigel pushes against opponent Ipswich Area wrestler Lorena Geditz during an 8U 50-55 pound match on Sunday afternoon. Neigel took second in his bracket.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



**Groton Tuff Tigers wrestler River Anderson looks up while Webster wrestler Dylan Sattler tries to pin her during an 8U 53-54 pound match at the Youth Tuff Tigers Wrestling Tournament on Sunday.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

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**Groton Tuff Tigers wrestler Alex Clark faces off against Britton Hecla Wrestling Club wrestler Zachariah Kanizar in a 10U 71-75 pound match during the 35th annual Groton Youth Tuff Tigers Wrestling Tournament on Sunday afternoon.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)



**Groton Tuff Tigers Landry Johnson pushes the legs of opponent Anthony Bergeson of the Pierre Governors team up during a match Sunday afternoon. Johnson won the 10U 59-62-pound match in a 7-6 decision.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

## EARTHTALK

### Using Bacteria To Break Down Plastic Waste by Grace Lee

Dear EarthTalk: Couldn't we use bacteria to break down plastic in the environment so it isn't such an ecosystem hazard?

-- Patricia S., via email

Since 2001, the world has generated over 2.5 billion tons of plastic, an amount expected to triple by 2060. Plastic pollutes beaches and landfills as well as the ocean. In fact, a patch of plastic rubbish as large as Great Britain now exists in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. In addition to traditional bottles or straws causing damage, microplastic particles are also found in fruits, vegetables and water sources such as lakes or rivers. Despite the severity of this issue, only around nine percent of plastic enters a recycling plant and the alternate solution of incinerating plastic releases carbon dioxide that contributes to global warming. The use of bacteria has emerged as an innovative method to mitigate plastic waste. Comamonas bacterium commonly breaks down plastic for food; Ideonella sakaiensis breaks down Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET) plastics. And Japanese scientists have found bacteria consuming plastic in a garbage dump there.

Scientists initially hoped bacteria would simply attack the plastic surfaces, but the bacteria proved capable of doing much more, going so far as to break plastic down fully and process it into basic nutrients. "We have systematically shown, for the first time, that a wastewater bacterium can take a starting plastic material, deteriorate it, fragment it, break it down and use it as a source of carbon," Ludmilla Aristilde, an environmental chemistry researcher at Northwestern University, told Northwestern Now.

Despite the benefits, the practice of using bacteria for plastic degradation has downsides. Bacteria often degrade plastic into nanoplastics, tiny plastic particles that could potentially cause serious health effects in the human body. Nanoplastics can be found in food, vegetables and water. Thus, if bacteria continue to produce nanoplastics when degrading waste, they may contribute to greater risks to humans, wildlife and ecosystem health. Furthermore, the use of bacteria has significant limitations. Some types of bacteria are much too slow; scientists have also determined that bacteria effectively degrade only softened, pre-treated plastic.

Many scientists are working to improve and develop bacteria for plastic waste mitigation. National Renewable Energy Laboratory researcher Elizabeth Bell enhanced enzymes to degrade plastic much faster with genetic engineering after testing thousands of mutant bacteria. And the French biochem company Carbios processes 250 kilograms of PET plastic daily with bacterial enzymes, creating 51 percent fewer emissions compared to if they were creating new plastic. The European Union is also currently funding research into microbes that can fully biodegrade plastic. Ultimately, while bacteria as a plastic waste mitigative method is still in development, recent progressions have demonstrated its strong potential.



**Bacteria can help combat pollution by breaking down harmful plastic waste, but can it scale?** Credit:

Pexels.com.



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **Chlorine-free pools may become reality for small lodges with legislative approval**

**Water cleaned by biological systems would need to meet existing safety standards**

**BY: JOHN HULT**

PIERRE — Small lodges would be able to offer their guests a chlorine-free swimming experience under the terms of a bill approved Friday by the South Dakota House of Representatives.

House Bill 1299, sponsored by Rapid City Democrat Nicole Uhre-Balk, would allow establishments with 15 or fewer sleeping rooms to install biofilters for their pools. A biofilter is defined by the bill as a system that uses natural filtration processes to clean water, rather than chlorine.

Such systems use areas of plants, soil and rocks, physically separate from the pool, to clean water in a manner that mimics natural processes. Water flows through these regeneration zones, where microorganisms and beneficial bacteria in the soil leach out harmful contaminants, much like they do when water seeps through layers of soil on its way to aquifers.

The systems have caught on in other parts of the country and have grown popular in Europe, according to supporters who spoke in favor of the bill in the House Ag and Natural Resources Committee on Thursday. No one testified against the bill. The first natural pools opened in Europe in 1980 and in the United States in 2015.

One supporter owns a small vacation lodge in Spearfish, and told the committee he hopes to offer a natural pool amenity for his guests.

Under the bill, establishments like his that wish to use such systems could get an annual permit from the state Department of Health. The systems would need to be approved by the department, which would be required to promulgate rules on water quality testing standards, maintenance requirements and application procedures prior to issuing permits.

The filtration system would need to be inspected by the department once a year.

Uhre-Balk called it a "small step" to test the viability of a technology that reduces reliance on chemicals for commercial pools and offer chlorine-free options for the visitors who choose to stay in the small lodges scattered across the Black Hills.

Rep. Bobbi Andera, R-Sioux Falls, spoke in favor of the bill in the House by citing her own experience in a friend's chlorine-free pool.

"It was amazing," Andera said.

It passed 66-1. The lone no vote came from Rep. Spencer Gosch, R-Glenham. He also opposed the bill when it was presented in committee on Thursday. He did not speak in committee or on the House floor about why.

Via text message, he told South Dakota Searchlight he has concerns about efficiency and cleanliness, pointing to committee testimony about how it can take a day or two to clear out fecal accidents.

Uhre-Balk offered a nod to that issue in her testimony in the House. In committee, a biopool installer said shutdowns of a day or so are also normal for fecal emergencies in chlorinated pools.

All existing health and safety standards would need to be met for any non-chlorine pool, Uhre-Balk said, and the requirement to close a pool after such a situation until water quality returns would be the same.

"No filtration system, chemical or biological, changes the fact that kids will be kids," Uhre-Balk said in the House.

The bill now moves to a state Senate committee.

## Armed North Carolina man fatally shot after entering secure perimeter of Mar-a-Lago

BY: CLAYTON HENKEL

The U.S. Secret Service says a North Carolina man entered a secured area of Mar-a-Lago early Sunday morning armed with a shotgun and a can of gas. The suspect, identified as Austin Tucker Martin from Cameron, N.C., was ordered by law enforcement to put down his weapons. The 21-year-old reportedly put down the gas can, but was shot when he moved to raise the shotgun to a shooting position, according to Palm Beach County Sheriff Ric Bradshaw.

Bradshaw says two Secret Service agents and a sheriff's deputy fired their weapons "to neutralize the threat."

According to posts on social media, Martin's family was asking for help locating him after reporting him missing Feb.21, 2026.

President Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump were not on the Florida property when the incident took place. Both were in Washington, D.C. for a dinner attended by the nation's governors.

The FBI is now the lead agency investigating the case. FBI Director Kash Patel said on social media the agency is dedicating "all necessary resources" in the investigation of this morning's incident.

Agents have asked people who live near the Florida property to check their security cameras for additional video that might be helpful in the moments prior to the event.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt described the suspect as "a crazy person" who intruded on President Trump's home.

"Federal law enforcement are working 24/7 to keep our country safe and protect all Americans. It's shameful and reckless that Democrats have chosen to shut down their Department," Leavitt wrote on X.

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

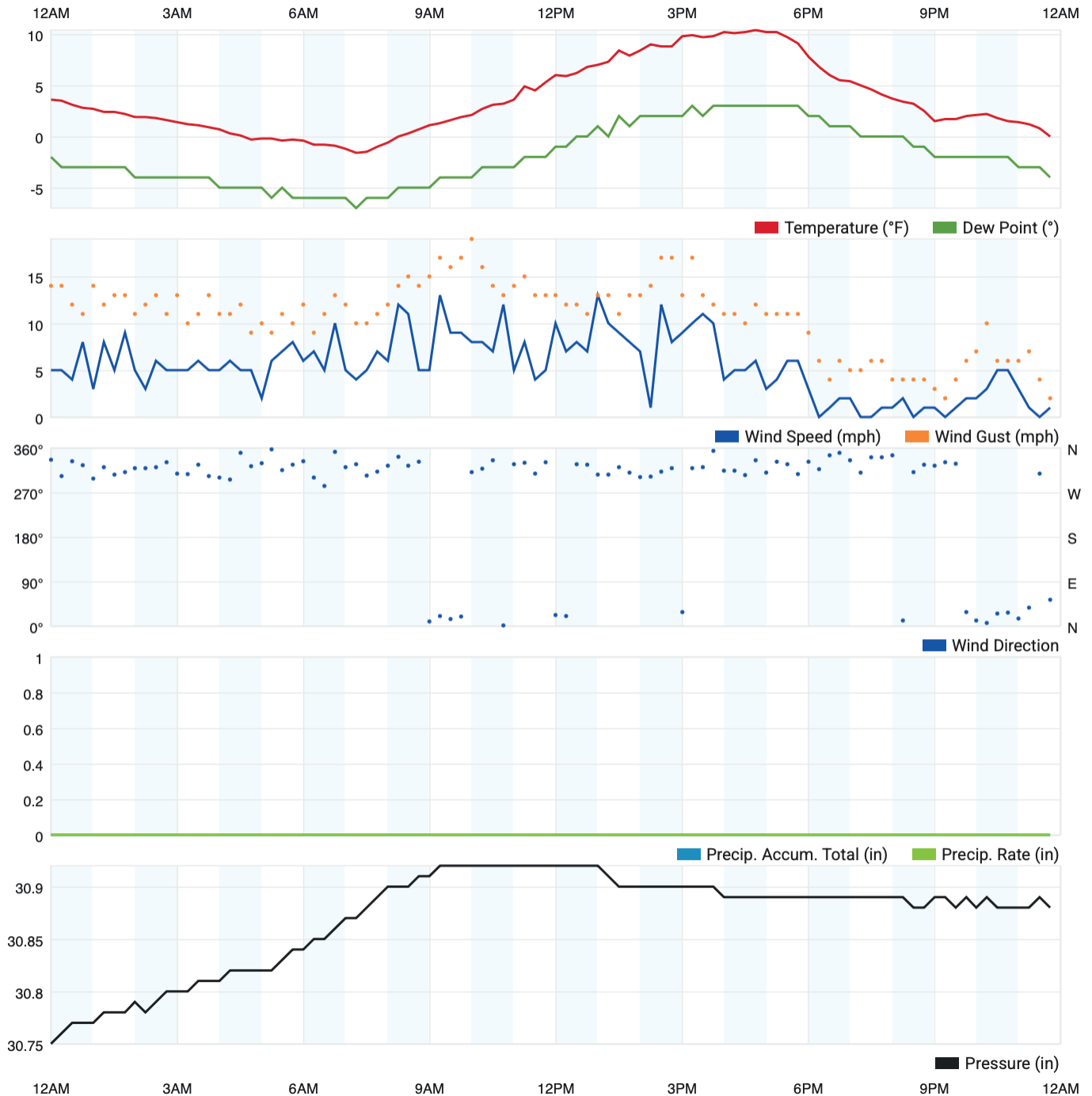
*Deputy Editor Clayton Henkel manages the NC Newsline website and daily newsletter, while also producing the weekly News and Views radio program/podcast.*

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

February 22, 2026



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Today

Tonight

Tuesday

Tuesday Night

Wednesday



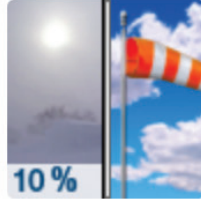
High: 29 °F

Sunny then  
Patchy  
Blowing Snow



Low: 22 °F

Mostly Cloudy  
then Slight  
Chance  
Freezing Rain



High: 39 °F

Breezy.  
Patchy  
Blowing Snow  
then Mostly  
Sunny



Low: 7 °F

Mostly Clear



High: 27 °F

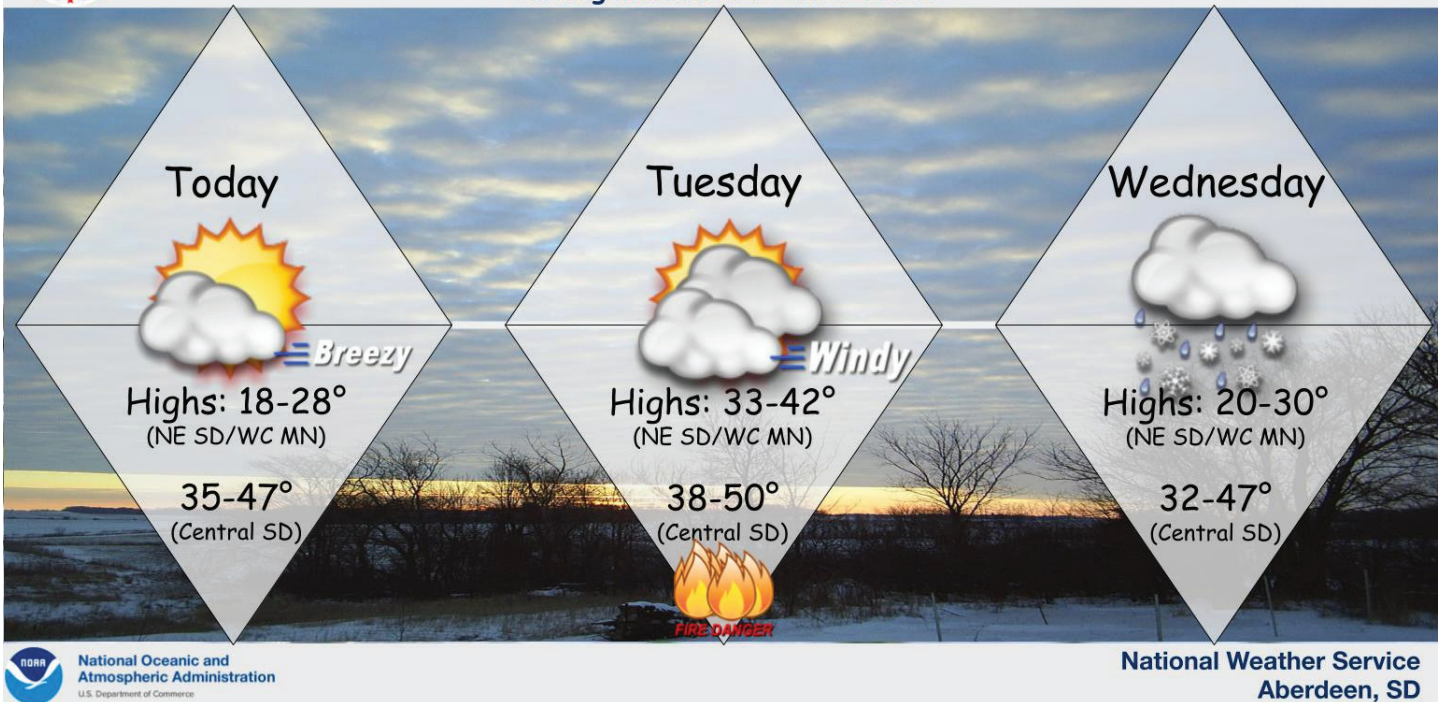
Chance Snow



## 3 Day Outlook

February 23, 2026  
3:33 AM

turning warmer and more active



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

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

A warmer air mass will begin to work back into central South Dakota today as southerly breezes increase. Temperatures will continue to stay coolest across snow covered areas of north central and northeast SD and west central MN. The combination of strong northwest winds and dry fuels across central and south central SD on Tuesday will lead to high to very high grassland fire danger. Continuing to monitor the potential for snow and/or a rain/snow mix on Wednesday. Accumulating snow will be possible across parts of the area.

## Winter Storm Possible Wednesday

### What We Know

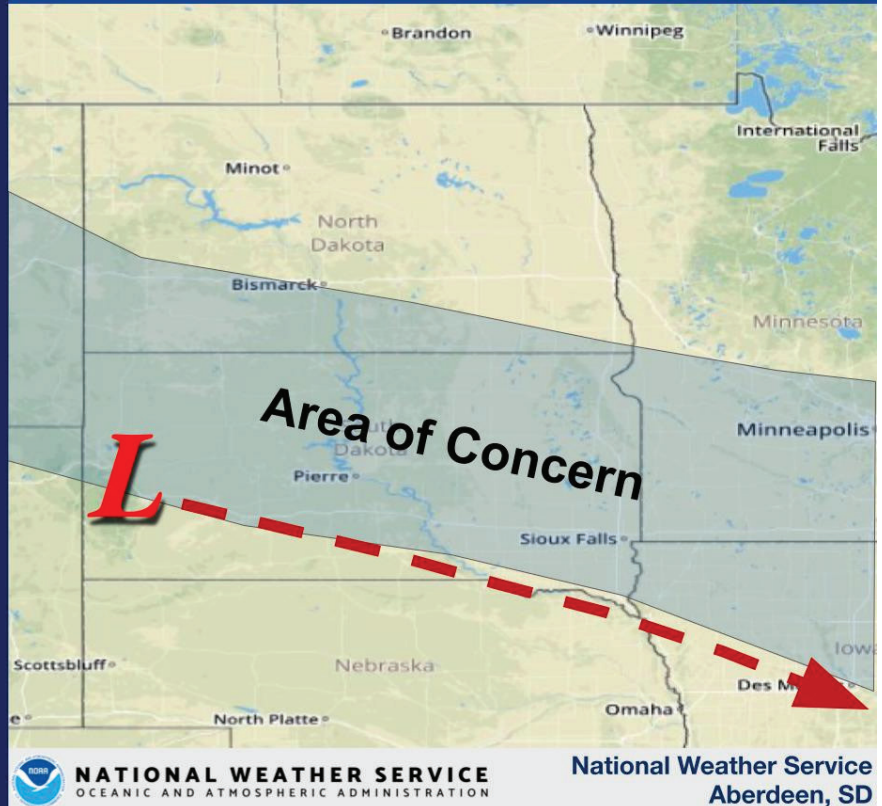
- Increasing potential for banded snowfall event

### What We Don't Know

- Where the rain/snow line will set up
- Total snow amounts
  - Highest accumulations highly dependent on the exact track of low pressure

### Actions You Can Take

- Keep an eye on the forecast from a reliable/reputable source, especially if you have travel plans



The potential for snow on Wednesday continues to remain a part of the forecast. However, many uncertainties remain such as the track of the low pressure system and where the rain/snow line will set up. Snowfall accumulations will be possible but it remains difficult to share any details because of the uncertainties leading to a low confidence in the forecast at this time. Best to keep a closer eye on the forecast from reliable sources the next couple days.



## The Challenges of "Banded Snow"

February 23, 2026  
3:56 AM CST

Small Shifts in Track, Timing & Intensity = Considerable Differences in Snow Totals

### Key Messages: What is Banded Snowfall

- A narrow corridor of heavier snowfall within a broader area of light snow
- Usually has very tight gradients in snow amounts on the edges of the heavier band
- Very difficult to forecast, especially more than 12 to 24 hours prior to arrival
- What Should You Do:



◦ Continue to monitor the latest forecast from reliable/reputable sources... especially if you have travel plans!

**City A**  
Light Snow Totals

**City B**  
High Snow Accumulation - Travel Heavily Impacted

**City C**  
Moderate Snow Total - Potential For Hazardous Travel

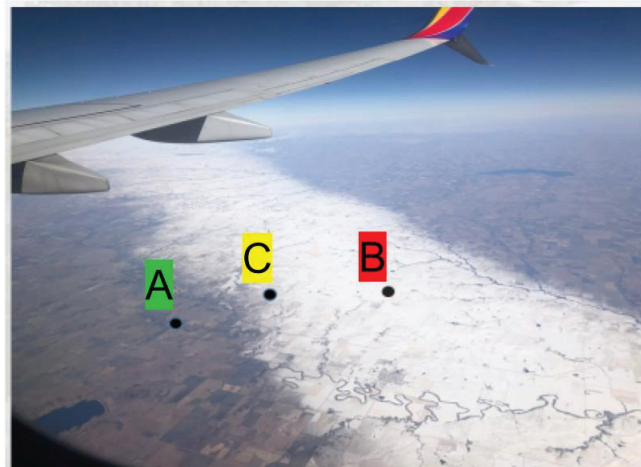


Photo taken by Leigh Marts (via NWS Wichita, KS)

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 10 °F at 4:43 PM

Low Temp: -2 °F at 7:12 AM

Wind: 21 mph at 9:51 AM

Precip: : 0.00

## Today's Info

Record High: 64 in 2025

Record Low: -25 in 1910

Average High: 31

Average Low: 10

Average Precip in Feb.: 0.49

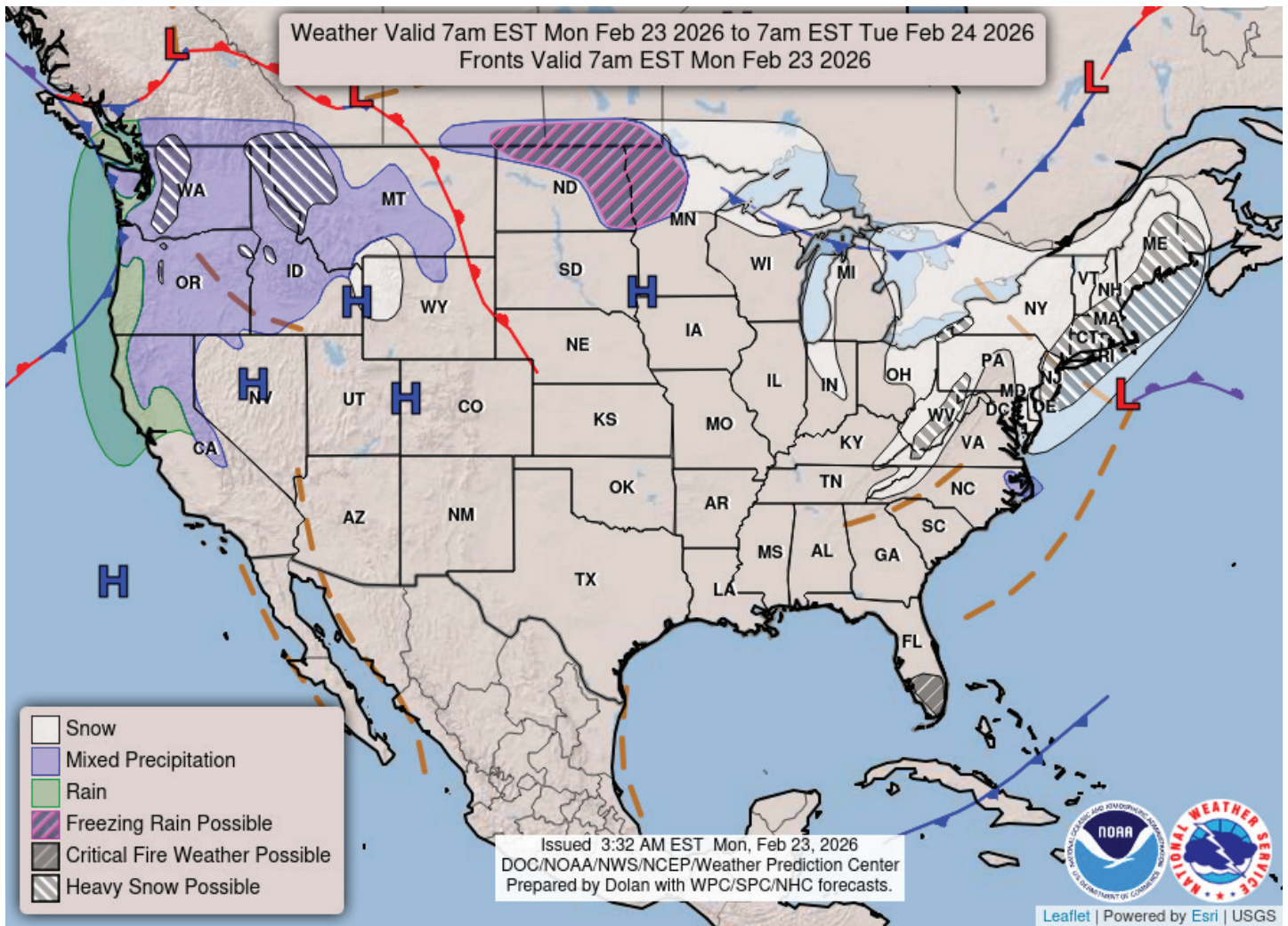
Precip to date in Feb.: 0.96

Average Precip to date: 1.04

Precip Year to Date: 0.96

Sunset Tonight: 6.10 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:19 am



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## Today in Weather History

February 23, 1977: A storm center developed over Colorado the morning of the 22nd and moved to southeast Nebraska by midnight Wednesday the 23rd, with snow and rain entering southern Minnesota. The low-pressure center advanced to Iowa by sundown and weakened somewhat with precipitation across Minnesota. Snow fell over the north, and a combination of rain and freezing rain was in the south. The low then intensified over southeast Minnesota during the nighttime of Thursday the 24th before continuing northeast into Wisconsin with snow and blowing snow over much of the state before ending on the 26th. There was a combination of rain, freezing rain, and the winds over southern Minnesota, with 4 to 12 inches of snow in the north. Freezing rain and the heavy icing on power lines caused the worst power failure in a decade in the twin cities, with 125,000 homes affected. Power outages occurred over numerous areas of southern and central Minnesota. Many roads were ice-covered with multiple vehicle accidents and cars in the ditch. Many roads were blocked or closed, with numerous schools closed. The ice storm also damaged many trees.

February 23, 2007: A strong area of low pressure tracking across the central plains brought widespread snowfall to parts of central and much of northeast South Dakota along with west-central Minnesota. The precipitation initially began as freezing rain and sleet late in the evening of the 23rd as it lifted across the area through the morning of the 24th. The freezing rain and sleet then changed over to snow during the morning of the 24th. Thundersnow also occurred at some locations across the area. Snowfall amounts of 6 to 15 inches occurred by the end of the storm. Travel conditions became tough when the roads were slippery from the freezing rain and then the heavy snow. The South Dakota State Emergency Management, Highway Patrol, and Department of Transportation issued a travel advisory for no travel for Interstate-90 and many highways in central South Dakota. There were numerous accidents along the interstate. Some snowfall amounts included 7 inches at Browns Valley, 9 inches at Bryant, Webster, Wheaton, Artichoke Lake, and Tintah, 10 inches at Toronto, Roy Lake, Garden City, and Ortonville, 11 inches at Faulkton, 12 inches at Watertown, and 15 inches at Clear Lake.

February 23, 2010: Pierre sets a new record with a streak of 84 consecutive days with high temperatures failing to reach 40 degrees.

February 23, 2012: An area of low-pressure sliding across the region brought heavy snow to much of central and north-central South Dakota. As a result, travel became difficult, with many schools canceled.

1802 — A great snowstorm raged along the New England coast producing 48 inches of snow north of Boston. Three large ships from Salem were wrecked along Cape Cod. (David Ludlum)

1887: The Central Bureau of Meteorology of Rome began receiving the first reports of a massive earthquake from northern Italy Observers. The estimated magnitude earthquake of 6-7 killed at least 600 people in southern France and northern Italy.

1936 — A severe blizzard in the Sierra Nevada Range closed Donner Pass. It stranded 750 motorists and claimed seven lives. (David Ludlum)

1977: A rare February tornado touched down briefly in Mason City, Iowa, inflicting F1 damage on a home and injuring one person inside. This is the only known February tornado on record in Iowa.

1987 — A winter storm buried the Middle Atlantic Coast Region under heavy snow. Totals ranged up to 24 inches at Lancaster PA, with 23 inches at Coatesville PA. During the height of the storm Philadelphia PA received five inches of snow in just one hour. The Washington D.C. area was blanketed with up to 15 inches of snow. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — Strong northwesterly winds ushered arctic air into the central U.S., and temperatures in Missouri were thirty degrees colder than the previous day. The strong winds produced squalls along the shore of Lake Superior, with up to 15 inches of snow reported over the Keweenaw Peninsula of Upper Michigan. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Nineteen cities in the central U.S. reported new record low temperatures for the date, including Lincoln NE with a reading of 19 degrees below zero. (The National Weather Summary)

1995: Cyclone Bobby slams into the Western Australia coast, causing widespread flooding on February 23-24th, 1995. Some areas report up to 12 inches of rain from the storm.

## Seeing Jesus in Our Circumstances

**Our difficult circumstances may be God's chosen tool for accomplishing His will through us.**

Philippians 1:12-25: 12 Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel,

13 so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else,

14 and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.

15 Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will;

16 the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel;

17 the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment.

18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice,

19 for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

20 according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

22 But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose.

23 But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better;

24 yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.

25 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith,

If you had the power to change your circumstances, would you? Most of us would quickly say yes. But the reality is, we must learn to live with some hard situations, since only God has the power to alter them. And in His wisdom, He's allowed them to remain.

Consider Paul, who desired to preach the gospel in Rome but didn't anticipate the route God would use. It began with false accusations in Jerusalem, an appeal to Caesar, a sea voyage, a shipwreck, and time spent in prison. But as he sat chained to a Roman guard, he wrote that his "circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel" because the "cause of Christ" was widely known to be the reason for his imprisonment and emboldened many to speak as witnesses (Phil. 1:12-14).

What looks like a shipwreck or detour in our plans could actually be God's ordained path for us. It may include financial challenges, health issues, or relational conflicts, but there is one certainty to which we can cling: Jesus Christ is our life, and He never changes.

Conditions around us will fluctuate, but if we belong to Christ, He'll use every situation to accomplish His will in and through us. May we share Paul's desire—that Jesus would be exalted in us, no matter what.

*We all need the encouragement, comfort, and peace that comes through God's grace. Our daily devotionals, known as Seeds of Hope, have been a means through which thousands of people have experienced this grace. Each devotional comes from God's Word and we pray this good "seed" finds good soil in your heart. Our aim is that the Seeds of Hope will be a great source of daily encouragement to you and that God will use them to draw you near to Him*

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## MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
02.22.26

1 30 48 54 58 4

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$1,000,000/year**

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 26 Mins 57 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

## MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
02.20.26

15 40 48 58 63 2

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$438,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 11 Mins 57 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

## LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
02.21.26

5 14 21 24 34 7

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$16,070,000**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 26 Mins 58 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

## LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
02.20.26

10 24 30 36 42 11

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 41 Mins 58 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

## DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
02.21.26

8 12 22 25 33

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$20,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 41 Mins 58 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

## POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
02.21.26

3 17 21 24 35 9

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 10 Mins 58 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

## POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
02.21.26

27 28 36 48 49 21

Power Play: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$203,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 10 Mins 58 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

## News from the **AP** Associated Press

### **US futures slip and world markets are mixed after the Supreme Court nixes Trump's tariffs**

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — U.S. futures slipped and world markets were mixed on Monday after the Supreme Court struck down most of President Donald Trump's sweeping tariffs.

Despite the ruling, tariffs aren't going away. Trump said Friday he would use other avenues to tax imports, such as an executive order imposing a 10% global tariff that he later raised to 15%. He said he's looking at other tariffs, including ones that would require Commerce Department investigations.

Trump administration officials said they expect other countries to abide by trade agreements based on the tariffs that have been overturned. But the reaction to the latest developments has been tentative given uncertainty over what he will do.

The mixed reactions are "highlighting the winners-and-losers effect of shifts in tariff policy that has just delivered a boost to countries who previously had a comparatively bad deal," Benjamin Picton of Rabobank said in a commentary.

"U.S. tariff policy will continue to be a source of uncertainty for markets as traders attempt to price in the implications of what is still a movable feast," he wrote.

Bitcoin tumbled as much as 5% early Monday, dropping below \$65,000, though it recovered about half of that decline later in the day. The sell-off has been driven by investors pulling out of speculative assets and concerns about future cryptocurrency regulation.

The original cryptocurrency, pitched as "digital gold," has lost nearly half of its value since Oct. 6, when it hit a record high of \$126,210.50.

Germany's DAX fell 0.5% to 25,137.69 and the CAC 40 in Paris was unchanged at 8,515.65. Britain's FTSE 100 was also nearly unchanged at 10,685.10.

The future for the S&P 500 lost 0.2% and that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 0.3%. The future for the Nasdaq composite index was down 0.3%.

Markets in Japan and mainland China were closed for holidays.

Hong Kong led regional gains as its Hang Seng index surged 2.5% to 27,081.91.

In South Korea, the Kospi gained 0.7% to 5,846.09.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 shed 0.6% to 9,026.00.

Taiwan's Taiex added 0.5% and the Sensex in India was up 0.6%. The SET in Bangkok ended nearly flat.

On Friday, Wall Street kept calm after the Supreme Court's ruling against the tariffs, which had triggered panic in financial markets when they were announced last year. The S&P 500 rose 0.7%, while the Dow added 0.5% and the Nasdaq composite rose 0.9%.

Discouraging reports Friday showing slowing U.S. economic growth and accelerating inflation drew a relatively muted response.

The reports highlight the Federal Reserve's dilemma over interest rates, but did not change traders' expectations much for what the Fed will ultimately do. Traders are still betting that the Fed will lower rates at least twice this year, according to data from CME Group.

Lower interest rates would give the economy and investment prices a boost, but they also risk worsening inflation. Fed officials said at their last meeting that they want to see inflation fall further before they would support cutting rates further.

In other dealings early Monday, U.S. benchmark crude oil lost 33 cents to \$66.15 per barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, gave up 34 cents to \$70.96 per barrel.

The U.S. dollar slipped to 154.85 Japanese yen from 154.94 yen. The euro rose to \$1.1799 from \$1.1797.

The price of gold rose 1.8%, while the price of silver was up 5.2%.

## 4 years into Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, a look at the war by the numbers

By The Associated Press undefined

Russia's invasion of Ukraine four years ago launched Europe's biggest conflict since World War II, causing immense suffering for civilians and harrowing ordeals for soldiers while rewriting the post-Cold War security order.

The fighting enters its fifth year on Tuesday, and it shows no signs of stopping any time soon.

The U.S. has brokered talks with delegations from Moscow and Kyiv as part of the Trump administration's yearlong push for peace. But reconciling key differences, such as the future of Russian-occupied Ukrainian land and postwar security for Ukraine, has thwarted progress.

Meanwhile, thousands of each countries' troops have died on the battlefield, and Ukrainian civilians have been battered by Russian aerial strikes that have brought years of power outages and water cuts.

Here's a look at the conflict, by the numbers, since the full-scale invasion on Feb. 24, 2022.

1.8 million

The upper end of the estimated number of soldiers killed, wounded or missing on both sides, according to a report last month by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a think tank.

It estimated that Russia suffered 1.2 million casualties, including up to 325,000 troop deaths, between February 2022 and December 2025 — what it said was the largest number of troop deaths for any major power in any conflict since World War II.

Russia has not released figures on battlefield deaths since January 2023, when it said more than 80 soldiers were killed in a Ukrainian strike, bringing the total military deaths Moscow has confirmed to just over 6,000.

CSIS estimated that Ukraine has seen 500,000 to 600,000 military casualties, including up to 140,000 deaths.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said earlier this month that 55,000 Ukrainian troops have died in the war. Many are missing, he said.

Neither Moscow nor Kyiv gives timely data on military losses. Independent verification is not possible.

14,999

The U.N. Human Rights Monitoring Mission's count for civilian deaths in Ukraine since Russia's all-out invasion, though it says that is likely an underestimate. More than 40,600 civilians were injured over the same period, it said in a December report.

The war has killed at least 763 children, according to the U.N.

Last year was the deadliest for civilians in Ukraine since 2022. The conflict killed 2,514 civilians and injured 12,142 in the country in 2025 — a 31% increase in civilian casualties over 2024, it said.

19.4%

The percentage of Ukrainian land occupied by Russia, according to the Institute for the Study of War.

Over the past year, Russia has gained just 0.79% of Ukraine's territory in the grinding war of attrition, the Washington-based think tank said in calculations provided earlier this month to The Associated Press, underscoring the little progress Moscow's forces have made despite huge costs in troops and armor.

Before Russia's all-out invasion, it controlled nearly 7% of Ukraine, including Crimea and parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in the east, as Moscow-backed separatists fought the Ukrainian army, according to Ukrainian officials and Western analysts.

13%

The percentage drop in foreign military aid to Kyiv last year compared with the annual average between 2022 and 2024, according to Germany's Kiel Institute, which tracks assistance to Kyiv.

U.S. President Donald Trump stopped sending American weapons paid for by the U.S. to Ukraine after he took office just over a year ago. European countries, striving to make up the difference, increased their military aid last year by 67% compared with the 2022-2024 period, the institute said in a report this month.

Foreign humanitarian and financial aid to Ukraine fell by 5% last year in comparison with the average in

the previous three years, it said.

5.9 million

The number of Ukrainian civilians who have left their country.

Some 5.3 million of those people have found refuge in Europe, according to a report this month from the U.N. office in Ukraine.

Additionally, around 3.7 million Ukrainians forced out of their homes have moved elsewhere within the country, the U.N. said in December.

Ukraine's prewar population was more than 40 million.

2,851

The number of Russian attacks that affected the provision of medical care in Ukraine, according to the World Health Organization. The figure covers the period from the full-scale invasion through Feb. 11.

The attacks include 2,347 strikes on health care facilities, as well as ones that damaged vehicles and the storage of medical supplies.

## EU diplomats set to meet Board of Peace director over Gaza's future

By SAM McNEIL Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — The European Union's top diplomats are set to meet Monday with the director of the Board of Peace in Brussels after a shaky and controversial embrace of U.S. President Donald Trump's efforts to secure and rebuild the war-ravaged Gaza Strip.

Nikolay Mladenov, a former Bulgarian politician and U.N. diplomat chosen by Trump to manage the Board of Peace, will meet the EU's foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas and foreign ministers from across the 27-nation bloc. The EU diplomats are also expected to discuss the war in Ukraine and fresh sanctions on Russia.

"We want to be part of the peace process in Gaza and also contribute with what we have," Kallas said ahead of the meeting.

Just across the Mediterranean Sea from the Middle East, the EU has deep links to Israel and the Palestinians. It now plays a crucial oversight role at Gaza's Rafah border crossing with Egypt, and is the top donor to the Palestinian Authority.

The question of whether to work with the Trump-led board has split national capitals from Nicosia to Copenhagen. The EU is supportive of the United Nations' mandate in Gaza.

EU members Hungary and Bulgaria are full members of the board, as are EU candidate countries Turkey, Kosovo and Albania.

Twelve other EU nations sent observers to the inaugural meeting in Washington on Thursday: Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. The EU flag was displayed at the event alongside EU observer and member nations.

European leaders like French President Emmanuel Macron and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen turned down invitation to join, as did Pope Leo XIV. But von der Leyen did send European Commissioner for the Mediterranean Dubravka Šuica to the meeting in Washington as an observer.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot said sending Šuica without consulting the European Council, the group of the bloc's leaders, broke EU regulations.

"The European Commission should never have attended the Board of Peace meeting in Washington," Barrot said in a post on X. "Beyond the legitimate political questions raised by the 'Board of Peace,' the Commission must scrupulously respect European law and institutional balance in all circumstances."

"It is in the remit of the commission to accept invitations," von der Leyen spokesperson Paula Pinho said Friday.

While the executive is not joining the board, it is seeking to influence reconstruction and peacekeeping in Gaza beyond being the top donor to the Palestinian Authority, she said.

Trump's ballooning ambitions for the board extend from governing and rebuilding Gaza as a futuristic metropolis to challenging the U.N. Security Council's role in solving conflicts. But they could be tempered

by the realities of dealing with Gaza, where there has so far been limited progress in achieving the narrower aims of the ceasefire.

## **International Criminal Court opens hearings into former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte**

By MOLLY QUELL Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — The International Criminal Court began pre-trial hearings on Monday for former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, who is facing three counts of crimes against humanity for deadly anti-drugs crackdowns he oversaw while in office.

Duterte, 80, was not in The Hague courtroom, having waived his right to appear as prosecutors began presenting evidence to support their charges of his alleged involvement in dozens of killings as part of his so-called war on drugs.

The charges date from Duterte's time as mayor of the southern Philippine city of Davao and later as president, and include dozens of killings as part of his so-called war on drugs.

Duterte has described the charges against him an "outrageous lie."

The Hague hearing is not a trial, but allows prosecutors to outline their case in court. After weighing the evidence, judges have 60 days to decide whether or not to confirm the charges.

Last month, judges found the octogenarian was fit to stand trial, after postponing an earlier hearing over concerns about his health.

Rights groups and families of victims hailed Duterte's arrest in March, saying it was a step forward for justice.

"We have waited for this for so long, for years we have waited, but we did not relent," Llore Pasco told reporters at a news conference ahead of the hearing. She said both of her sons left for work in May 2017 and never returned. Their bodies were later found riddled with bullets.

Supporters of Duterte criticized the administration of current Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., Duterte's political rival, for arresting and surrendering the former leader to a court whose jurisdiction they dispute. Detractors include his daughter, current Philippine Vice President Sara Duterte who announced last week that she would seek the presidency in the 2028 elections.

Sheerah Escudero is worried about what will happen if another Duterte comes to power. The body of her 18-year-old brother was found wrapped in packaging tape in 2017. "We know that the same policy of killings will continue," she told reporters ahead of Monday's hearing.

ICC prosecutors announced in February 2018 that they would open a preliminary investigation into the violent drug crackdowns. In a move that human rights activists say was aimed at escaping accountability, Duterte, who was president at the time, announced a month later that the Philippines would leave the court.

Judges rejected a request from Duterte's legal team to throw out the case on the grounds that the court did not have jurisdiction because of the Philippine withdrawal. Countries can't "abuse" their right to withdraw from the court's foundational Rome Statute "by shielding persons from justice in relation to alleged crimes that are already under consideration," the September decision says.

An appeal of that decision is still pending.

Estimates of the death toll during Duterte's presidential term vary, from the more than 6,000 that the national police have reported to up to 30,000 claimed by human rights groups.

## **A packed bus plunges off a Nepal highway, killing 19 and injuring 25**

By BINAJ GURUBACHARYA Associated Press

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP) — A packed bus on its way to Nepal's capital drove off a mountain highway in Nepal early Monday, killing 19 people including a British national and leaving another 25 wounded.

There were dozens of people on board the bus, which was heading from the resort city of Pokhara

to Kathmandu when it drove off the Prithvi highway after midnight, police said. The bus rolled down a mountain slope and landed on the banks of Trishuli river near Benighat, about 80 kilometers (50 miles) west of the capital, Kathmandu.

Among those who died was a 24-year-old British national, according to a statement from the Dhading district police office. Only nine bodies have been identified.

The injured included a Chinese national, who is being treated at the National Trauma Center in Kathmandu, and a 27-year-old woman from New Zealand who received minor injuries and was being treated at a local hospital. China's official Xinhua News Agency, citing the Chinese Embassy in Nepal, reported earlier that one other Chinese national was missing.

Rescuers reached the accident site soon after the accident, and the injured were pulled out of the wreckage and driven to hospitals for treatment, according to government administrator Mohan Prasad Neupane.

Police are investigating the cause of the accident.

Bus accidents in Nepal are common, mostly due to poorly maintained roads and vehicles. Much of the Himalayan country is covered by mountains and connected only by narrow roads.

The bus landed on the banks of the fast flowing mountain river. Two buses with 65 people on board fell into the same river in 2024 and were lost, with most aboard either killed or still missing. Wreckage of one of the buses was found only this year, buried deep in sand.

## Armed man shot and killed after entering secure perimeter of Mar-a-Lago, Secret Service says

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and ALLEN G. BREED The Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — An armed man drove into the secure perimeter of Mar-a-Lago, President Donald Trump's resort in Palm Beach, Florida, before being shot and killed early Sunday morning, according to a spokesman for the U.S. Secret Service.

Although Trump often spends weekends at his resort, he was at the White House when the breach occurred around 1:30 a.m.

The man had a gas can and a shotgun, authorities said. Investigators identified him as 21-year-old Austin Tucker Martin of North Carolina, according to the FBI, and authorities said his family had recently reported him missing.

He's believed to have purchased his shotgun while driving south, Secret Service spokesman Anthony Guglielmi said, and a box for the weapon was later discovered in the man's vehicle.

Investigators have not identified a motive. However, Trump has faced threats to his life before, including two assassination attempts during the 2024 campaign.

The investigation is ongoing

The man entered the north gate of the property as another vehicle was exiting and was confronted by two Secret Service agents and a Palm Beach County sheriff's deputy, according to Palm Beach County Sheriff Ric Bradshaw.

"He was ordered to drop those two pieces of equipment that he had with him. At which time he put down the gas can, raised the shotgun to a shooting position," Bradshaw said at a brief press conference. The two agents and the deputy "fired their weapons to neutralize the threat."

The Moore County Sheriff's Department in North Carolina said a relative of Martin's reported him missing early Sunday morning.

Investigators are working to compile a psychological profile. Asked whether the man was previously known to law enforcement, Bradshaw said "not right now."

The FBI encouraged residents who live near Mar-a-Lago to check any security cameras they may have for footage that could help investigators.

In a post on X, FBI Director Kash Patel said the bureau would be "dedicating all necessary resources" to the investigation.

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Martin was described by family as quiet and averse to guns

On Sunday afternoon, vehicles blocked the entrance to a property listed in public records as an address for Martin at the end of a private road in Cameron, North Carolina.

Braeden Fields, Martin's cousin, reacted with disbelief. He described Martin as quiet, afraid of guns and from a family of avid Trump supporters.

"He's a good kid," Fields, 19, said. He said they grew up together. "I wouldn't believe he would do something like this. It's mind-blowing," Fields said.

He said Martin worked at a local golf course and would send money from each paycheck to charity.

"He wouldn't even hurt an ant. He doesn't even know how to use a gun," Fields said.

He said his cousin didn't discuss politics.

"We are big Trump supporters, all of us. Everybody," Fields said, but his cousin was "real quiet, never really talked about anything."

Trump faced two assassination attempts during his last campaign

Sunday's incursion at Mar-a-Lago took place a few miles from Trump's West Palm Beach club where a man tried to assassinate him while he played golf during the 2024 campaign.

A Secret Service agent spotted that man, Ryan Routh, aiming a rifle through the shrubbery before Trump came into view. Officials said Routh aimed his rifle at the agent, who opened fire and caused Routh to drop his weapon.

Routh was found guilty last year and sentenced this month to life in prison.

Trump also survived an assassination attempt at a campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania. That gunman fired eight shots before being killed by a Secret Service counter sniper. One rally attendee was killed by the gunman.

White House brings in shutdown politics

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said in a post on X that "the United States Secret Service acted quickly and decisively to neutralize a crazy person, armed with a gun and a gas canister, who intruded President Trump's home."

Leavitt used her post to blame Democratic lawmakers in Congress for the partial government shutdown affecting the Homeland Security Department, which began Feb. 14 after Democrats demanded changes to the president's deportation campaign.

The Secret Service is among the agencies where the vast majority of employees are continuing their work but missing a paycheck.

"Federal law enforcement are working 24/7 to keep our country safe and protect all Americans," Leavitt said. "It's shameful and reckless that Democrats have chosen to shut down their Department."

The White House referred all questions to the Secret Service and FBI. Both Trump and his wife posted statements on social media after the incident, but they were unrelated to the shooting.

Numerous recent acts of politically motivated violence

In the past year, there was the assassination of conservative activist Charlie Kirk; the assassination of the Democratic leader in the Minnesota state House and her husband and the shooting of another lawmaker and his wife; and an arson attack at the official residence of Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro.

Five days ago, a Georgia man armed with a shotgun was arrested as he sprinted toward the west side of the U.S. Capitol. Trump is scheduled to deliver his State of the Union address there on Tuesday night.

## Supreme Court decision against Trump's tariffs raises uncertainty, but markets stay calm

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — The Supreme Court's ruling against U.S. President Donald Trump's tariffs has countries like China and South Korea watching for Washington's next steps, while financial markets took the news in stride.

The decision announced Friday could potentially disrupt arrangements worked out in trade negotiations

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since Trump announced sweeping tariffs on dozens of countries in April 2025.

China's Commerce Ministry said it was conducting a "comprehensive assessment of" the ruling against the tariffs Trump imposed under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, or IEEPA.

"China urges the United States to lift the unilateral tariffs imposed on trading partners," an unnamed ministry spokesman said in a statement.

The statement reiterated Beijing's stance that there are no winners in a trade war and that the measures Trump had announced "not only violate international economic and trade rules but also contravene domestic laws of the United States, and are not in the interests of any party," the official Xinhua News Agency cited the spokesperson as saying.

Trump responded to the Supreme Court decision by proposing a new 10% global tariff under an alternative law, Section 122 of the 1974 Trade Act, and later increased it to 15%.

For China and some other countries in Asia that were subject to higher import duties on their exports, that could potentially bring some relief. But for others such as Japan, the United Kingdom and other U.S. allies, tariffs could rise.

The U.S. plans to stand by its trade deals and expects its partners to do the same, U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said in a CBS News interview Sunday.

"The deals were not premised on whether or not the emergency tariff litigation would rise or fall," said Greer, Trump's top trade negotiator. "I haven't heard anyone yet come to me and say the deal's off. They want to see how this plays out."

Uncertainty may worsen if the Trump administration continues imposing new tariffs under alternative laws, South Korea's trade minister, Kim Jung-kwan, said Monday.

The South Koreans have agreed to hold "amicable" discussions with U.S. officials in order to minimize any negative impact on South Korean companies, he said. Major South Korean exports such as autos and steel are subject to tariffs under other trade laws.

"Given the uncertainty over future U.S. tariff measures, the public and private sectors must work together to strengthen our companies' export competitiveness and diversify their markets," Kim said.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent also said Sunday that he believed trading partners would abide by existing deals and that tariff revenues will remain steady.

"Tariff revenues will be unchanged this year and will be unchanged in the future," Bessent said in a Fox News interview, pointing to the new 15% global tariffs Trump has said he wants as a replacement.

The administration would defer to the courts on whether to give companies refunds for the import taxes already collected under the tariffs now declared unlawful, Bessent said.

"It's out of our hands and we will follow the court's orders," he said.

U.S. futures sank early Monday, with the contract for the S&P 500 down 0.6% and that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average falling 0.5%. Oil prices fell and the U.S. dollar weakened against the Japanese yen and the euro.

But share prices in Asia mostly advanced, with Hong Kong's Hang Seng gaining 2.4%.

## Mexico fears more violence after army kills leader of powerful Jalisco cartel

By MEGAN JANETSKY and FABIOLA SÁNCHEZ Associated Press

GUADALAJARA, Mexico (AP) — School was canceled in several Mexican states and local and foreign governments alike warned their citizens to stay inside, as widespread violence erupted following the army's killing of the powerful leader of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel.

Nemesio Rubén Oseguera Cervantes, known as "El Mencho" was the boss of one of the fastest-growing criminal networks in Mexico, notorious for trafficking fentanyl, methamphetamine and cocaine to the United States and staging brazen attacks against government officials who challenged it.

He was killed during a shoot-out in his home state of Jalisco as the Mexican military attempted to capture him. Cartel members responded with violence across the country, blocking roads and setting fire to vehicles.

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President Claudia Sheinbaum urged calm and authorities announced late Sunday they had cleared most of the more than 250 cartel roadblocks across 20 states. The White House confirmed that the U.S. provided intelligence support to the operation to capture the cartel leader and applauded Mexico's army for taking down a man who was one of the most wanted criminals in both countries.

Mexico hoped the death of the world's biggest fentanyl traffickers would ease Trump administration pressure to do more against the cartels, but many remained hunkered down and on edge as they waited to see the powerful cartel's reaction.

Many fear more violence

Guadalajara, the capital of Jalisco state and Mexico's second-largest city, was almost completely shut down on Sunday as fearful residents stayed home.

Passengers arriving to the city's international airport Sunday night were told it was operating with limited personnel because of the burst of violence.

Jacinta Murcia, a 64-year-old nutrition products vendor, was among those nervously walking late Sunday night through the airport, where earlier in the day travelers sprinted and ducked behind chairs fearing violence. Most flights into the city were suspended on Sunday.

Murcia anxiously scrolled through news stories on social media showing the face of "El Mencho" and sent messages to her children, who were tracking her location as she tried to travel across the city to her house after dark.

"My plan today leaving the airport is to see if there are any taxis, but I'm scared of everything. That there are blockades, that there's a curfew, that something could happen," she said. "I'm all alone."

Authorities in Jalisco, Michoacan and Guanajuato reported at least 14 other people killed Sunday, including seven National Guard troops.

Videos circulating on social media showed tourists in Puerto Vallarta walking on the beach with smoke rising in the distance.

In another part of the airport a group of elderly Mexicans gathered, discussing how to get home.

"We better all go together," one said. "Go with God."

A blow against a cartel could be a diplomatic coup

David Mora, Mexico analyst for International Crisis Group, said the capture and outburst of violence marks a point of inflection in Sheinbaum's push to crack down on cartels and relieve U.S. pressures.

U.S. President Donald Trump has demanded Mexico do more to fight the smuggling of the often-deadly drug fentanyl, threatening to impose more tariffs or take unilateral military action if the country does not show results.

There were early signs that Mexico's efforts were well received by the United States.

U.S. Amb. Ron Johnson recognized the success of the Mexican armed forces and their sacrifice in a statement late Sunday. He added that "under the leadership of President Trump and President Sheinbaum, bilateral cooperation has reached unprecedented levels."

But it may also pave the way for more violence as rival criminal groups take advantage of the blow dealt to the CJNG, Mora said.

"This might be a moment in which those other groups see that the cartel is weakened and want to seize the opportunity for them to expand control and to gain control over Cartel Jalisco in those states," he said.

"Ever since President Sheinbaum has been in power, the army has been way more confrontational, combative against criminal groups in Mexico," Mora said. "This is signaling to the U.S. that if we keep co-operating, sharing intelligence, Mexico can do it, we don't need U.S. troops on Mexican soil."

'El Mencho' was a major target

Oseguera Cervantes, who was wounded in the operation to capture him Sunday in Tapalpa, Jalisco, about a two-hour drive southwest of Guadalajara, died while being flown to Mexico City, the Defense Department said in a statement.

During the operation, troops came under fire and killed four people at the location. Three more people, including Oseguera Cervantes, were wounded and later died, the statement said.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said via X that the U.S. government provided intelligence

support for the operation. "El Mencho" was a top target for the Mexican and United States government as one of the top traffickers of fentanyl into our homeland," she wrote. She commended Mexico's military for its work.

The U.S. State Department had offered a reward of up to \$15 million for information leading to the arrest of El Mencho. The Jalisco New Generation Cartel is one of the most powerful and fastest growing criminal organizations in Mexico and began operating around 2009.

In February 2025, the Trump administration designated the cartel as a foreign terrorist organization.

Sheinbaum has criticized the "kingpin" strategy of previous administrations that took out cartel leaders, only to trigger explosions of violence as cartels fractured. While she has remained popular in Mexico, security is a persistent concern and since U.S. President Donald Trump took office a year ago, she has been under tremendous pressure to show results against drug trafficking.

The Jalisco cartel has been one of the most aggressive cartels in its attacks on the military — including on helicopters — and is a pioneer in launching explosives from drones and installing mines. In 2020, it carried out a spectacular assassination attempt with grenades and high-powered rifles in the heart of Mexico City against the then head of the capital's police force and now federal security secretary.

## **New York City hunkers down under blizzard warnings and a travel ban as winter storm hits Northeast**

By ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE, CLAIRE RUSH, JULIE WALKER and ADAM GELLER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Millions of people in New York City and a large swath of the northeastern U.S. were stuck at home under road travel bans and blizzard warnings Monday as a fierce winter storm barreled into the densely populated region with heavy snowfall and high winds.

Cellphones across New York City received wailing push alerts Sunday night announcing a ban on non-emergency travel on all streets through noon Monday because of "dangerous blizzard conditions." Rhode Island and New Jersey implemented similar restrictions. Regional airports saw widespread cancellations and delays, and public transit was suspended in some areas. Even DoorDash announced it was suspending deliveries in New York City overnight.

Blizzard warnings stretched from Maryland to Maine. Snow began falling Sunday as the storm moved north, and the National Weather Service said 1 to 2 feet (30 to 60 centimeters) of snow was possible in many areas, along with low visibility. Officials in several states urged people to avoid venturing out.

Emergencies were declared in New York, Philadelphia and other cities, as well as several states stretching from Delaware to Massachusetts as officials mobilized readiness efforts.

"We expect things to dramatically change here" heading into the overnight, weather service meteorologist Frank Pereira said Sunday. "The storm is continuing to develop, and as it does, as it continues to strengthen and move to the north, we're expecting conditions to rapidly deteriorate."

Pereira added that the storm could possibly become a bomb cyclone, which is when a storm drops at least 24 millibars in pressure in 24 hours.

"We're expecting it to drop by that magnitude at least over the course of the next 24 hours," he said. "I think when all is said and done, it will meet the definition of a bomb cyclone."

Heaviest snowfall forecast overnight

The weather service said some of the heaviest snow was expected to fall overnight, with as much as 2 inches (5 centimeters) of snow per hour accumulating at times in some areas, before tapering off by Monday afternoon.

New York City and Boston canceled public school classes for Monday, while Philadelphia will switch to online learning. New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani called it the "first old-school snow day since 2019."

"And to kids across New York City, you have a very serious mission if you choose to accept it: Stay cozy," he said.

Meanwhile, outreach workers worked to coax homeless New Yorkers off the street and into shelters and

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warming centers.

Various landmarks and cultural institutions announced closures Monday, from New York's Museum of Modern Art to Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, D.C. Broadway shows were canceled Sunday evening.

The weather service said the storm's strong wind gusts could cause whiteout conditions and warned of a "Potentially Historic/Destructive Storm" southeast of the Boston-Providence corridor.

"Winds like that, combined with heavy, wet snow, are a recipe for damaged trees and prolonged power outages," said Bryce Williams, a meteorologist with the weather service's Boston office. "That's what we're most concerned with, is the combination of those extreme snow amounts with that wind."

Preparations for major snow clearing

In addition to their robust plow operations, New York City officials recruited people to shovel snow, with some beginning work Sunday night to get an early start on the first wave of snowfall, Mamdani said.

With the storm zeroing in, John Berlingieri scrapped plans for a family trip to Puerto Rico. Instead he was preparing his company, Berrington Snow Management, for what could well be a mammoth task: Clearing snow from millions of square feet (meters) of asphalt surrounding shopping malls and industrial parks across Long Island.

Employees spent the last few days recharging batteries on the company's 40 front-end loaders and replacing windshield wipers on snow-removal vehicles.

"I'm anticipating at least one week of work around the clock," Berlingieri said. "We're going to work 24 to 36 hours straight, sleep for a few hours and then go back."

## **Josh Shapiro, in his own words, on political violence and antisemitism**

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Political Writer

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro is opening up about his Jewish faith at a pivotal moment in his political rise.

The Democratic governor is marching toward reelection in one of the nation's most important swing states, a victory that could propel him into the very top of his party's presidential nomination fight. But he's also navigating physical and political risks that have threatened his family's life and his standing in a party that's deeply divided by Israel's war in Gaza.

Here are some highlights from a recent interview with Shapiro:

AP: Is the April 13, 2025, attack on your home, as you and your family slept, still something you think about on a regular basis?

SHAPIRO: I'm one of the fortunate ones in that I wasn't killed the way Melissa Hortman was or Charlie Kirk was. I wasn't injured the way Gabby Giffords or Steve Scalise were physically. But I think we also walk around with the emotional scars of it. To me, it's less the dealing with the emotions as governor, to be honest with you, it's far more dealing with it as a dad and a husband and this idea that I'm doing this work that I love, that I find great purpose in that I've dedicated my life to, and that thing I love to do brought my family close to death, and that's a hard thing to work through as a dad, still working through it candidly,

AP: How serious of a problem is antisemitism within the Democratic Party right now?

SHAPIRO: I think antisemitism is a very real problem in both the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. Please don't clip my words there. It is a problem on the political left and the political right, and there should be no place for it when someone like JD Vance allows a Nick Fuentes to have a platform to speak or Tucker Carlson to have a platform to speak, and doesn't condemn it. That just makes antisemitism fester on the right. I have called it out on the political left and the political right. And I think anyone who's trying to lead this country, anyone who's trying to lead a state, lead a community, has a responsibility to call it out no matter which side of the aisle it's on.

AP: What do you say to members of your own party who call you things like "Genocide Josh" and just generally believe that your view on Israel's war in Gaza is deeply wrong?

SHAPIRO: I want to dialogue back with them, and what I say to them is, there's really two conversations here. One on antisemitism and hatred and bigotry, and on that, that's a black and white issue. There's no nuance, and we should all be able to agree on that, that antisemitism is wrong, hatred and bigotry in any form is wrong.

The second conversation is over what should the policy of the United States be in the Middle East. And on that, it's full of nuance, and we can have honest disagreements. I don't think resorting to name calling helps us find common ground, but I'll certainly sit at the table with anybody who wants to have an honest discussion over policy differences. When I analyze Middle East policy, and I explained this to them. I'm focused on what is in the best interest of the United States of America, what advances our national security, what advances our economic interests, what creates more stability in the globe? And in my opinion, that's having a safe and secure Israel side by side with a safe and secure Palestinian state, where Palestinian leadership recognizes Israel's right to exist, and where kids growing up on both sides of the border have an opportunity to grow up with promise and prosperity in their future.

AP: Kamala Harris' team asked you if you were a double agent for Israel. You wrote in your book that the question "said a lot" about some of the people around the VP. What does it say? Are they antisemitic?

SHAPIRO: No, I didn't label it that way. Look, I think the people in that process had a right to ask me whatever questions they wanted, and I was honored and humbled to go through that process. ... I thought it was important to express how I felt during that and that's what I did. As for what their motivations were, I think they're going to have to answer those questions.

AP: Does your faith inform your perspective on President Trump at all?

SHAPIRO: I don't check with my faith as to where I'm going to be on an issue. But I think there's something deeper there, right? I mean, my faith teaches me to love thy neighbor. My faith teaches me to have respect for others. And this is a president who at every turn scapegoats others, disrespects others, attacks others, and I don't think that he's sort of violating the tenants of my faith as an American Jew, I think he's frankly violating the tenants of our shared faith and our shared humanity. And I try and speak to that.

My faith teaches me to feed the hungry and motivates me to help those who are in need. And I frankly think the president could use a little bit more shared faith and shared humanity's life, and maybe he wouldn't be so cruel. This is a president who engages in cruelty and corruption, brings chaos every single day.

AP: Do you confront antisemitism on a day-to-day basis?

SHAPIRO: Yes, if you're looking at it from the standpoint of the threats that are made against me that are motivated by faith, sure.

On Friday, a guy was arrested for terroristic threats and stalking me and my family in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. So I think it is true that there's a rise in threats and a rise in hate directed our way, but it doesn't deter me, and in part, it doesn't deter me because I refuse to live in fear, refuse to back down.

And there's just people bringing a lot of light and joy and and who respect their neighbors no matter what their faith is, respect me, even though we worship differently, and where I connect with people on a really deep level. So in some ways, even though the threats are increasing, the light I see and the joy I find in others is also increasing, and that allows me to frankly ignore the noise and ignore the hate and focus on the goodness in people.

## **Trial begins for Utah mom accused of killing husband then writing a children's book about grief**

By HANNAH SCHOENBAUM Associated Press

PARK CITY, Utah (AP) — A murder trial is set to begin Monday for a Utah mother of three who published a children's book about grief after her husband's death and was later accused of killing him.

Kouri Richins, 35, faces a slew of felony charges for allegedly killing her husband, Eric Richins, with fentanyl in March 2022 at their home just outside the ski town of Park City. Prosecutors say she slipped five times the lethal dose of the synthetic opioid into a Moscow mule cocktail that he drank.

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She is also accused of trying to poison him a month earlier on Valentine's Day with a fentanyl-laced sandwich that made him break out in hives and black out, according to court documents.

Prosecutors have argued that Richins killed her husband for financial gain while planning a future with another man she was seeing on the side. Richins has vehemently denied the allegations.

She faces nearly three dozen counts, including aggravated murder, attempted murder, forgery, mortgage fraud and insurance fraud. The murder charge alone carries a sentence of 25 years to life in prison.

Her defense attorneys, Wendy Lewis, Kathy Nester and Alex Ramos, said they are confident the 12-person jury will allow Richins to return home to her children after hearing her side of the story.

"Kouri has waited nearly three years for this moment: the opportunity to have the facts of this case heard by a jury, free from the prosecution's narrative that has dominated headlines since her arrest," her legal team said in a statement, adding, "What the public has been told bears little resemblance to the truth."

In the months before her arrest in May 2023, Richins self-published the children's book "Are You with Me?" about a father with angel wings watching over his young son after passing away. The book, which she promoted on a local television station, could play a key role for prosecutors in framing Eric Richins' death as a calculated killing with an elaborate cover-up attempt.

Years before her husband's death, Richins opened numerous life insurance policies on Eric Richins without his knowledge, with benefits totaling nearly \$2 million, prosecutors allege. Court documents also indicate she had a negative bank account balance, owed lenders more than \$1.8 million and was being sued by a creditor.

Among the witnesses who could be called to testify throughout the trial are a housekeeper who claims to have sold fentanyl to Richins on three occasions and the man with whom Richins was allegedly having an affair.

The state's key witness, housekeeper Carmen Lauber, told a detective she had sold Richins up to 90 blue-green fentanyl pills that she acquired from a dealer. Lauber is not charged with any crimes in connection to the case, and detectives said at an earlier hearing that she had been granted immunity.

Defense attorneys are expected to argue that Lauber did not actually give Richins fentanyl and was motivated to lie for legal protection. None was ever found in her house, and the dealer has said he was in jail and detoxing from drug use when he told detectives in 2023 that he had sold fentanyl to Lauber. He later said in a sworn affidavit that he only sold her the opioid OxyContin.

Other witnesses could include relatives of the defendant and her late husband, and friends of Eric Richins who have recounted phone conversations from the day prosecutors say he was first poisoned by his wife of nine years.

One friend said in written testimony that they noticed fear in Eric Richins' voice when he called on Valentine's Day and said, "I think my wife tried to poison me."

The trial is slated to run through March 26.

## From bakeries to beauty shops, Russian businesses are feeling the pain from a new wartime tax policy

By DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

Denis Maksimov's bakery in suburban Moscow became famous overnight after he appeared on President Vladimir Putin's annual call-in show in December.

Standing in front of the bakery — called Mashenka, after his oldest daughter — he pleaded with Putin via video to look into new tax reforms that are significantly increasing the burden on small businesses like his.

"We understand very well that it's not an easy situation for the country. We understand that raising taxes is necessary," Maksimov said. "We're looking ahead without optimism, frankly speaking. Many (businesses) will close down."

As Putin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine marks four years, the mounting pressure on Russia's economy is starting to show. Oil revenues are dwindling, the budget deficit is up, and military spending that fueled robust growth has leveled off.

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The Kremlin is now tapping consumers and small businesses for funds. The value-added tax has been raised by 2% and revenue thresholds for requiring businesses to pay it have been lowered drastically.

Ordinary Russians appear to be feeling the pain. Business owners interviewed by The Associated Press described a steady decline in demand for their goods and services, a sudden increase in costs as suppliers adjust to the tax reform, and a tax burden that's now tens of times higher. Some said they downsized to keep operating, while others closed.

A recent video on social media showed the economic fallout: Vacant commercial spaces on St. Petersburg's main street, Nevsky Prospekt, where shop after shop went out of business.

"I've never felt so scared as this year, so unprotected, so anxious," said Darya Demchenko, who owns a chain of beauty salons in Russia's second largest city.

A failed plea

Maksimov's plea to Putin failed to reverse the tax reform, which lowered the threshold for requiring businesses to pay VAT from 60 million rubles, or \$783,000, in annual sales revenue, to 20 million rubles (\$261,000) this year and to 10 million rubles (\$130,500) by 2028.

The revenue threshold was similarly lowered for those using the "patent taxation system," in which small businesses made fixed annual payments — usually only tens of thousands of rubles — instead of a percentage of their revenues or profits. This year, those whose revenues exceed 20 million rubles would need to pay at least a 6% tax on their revenues, and at least a 5% VAT.

In their televised exchange, Maksimov said he had been using the patent system for eight years, and Putin responded by underscoring the need for tax reform to tackle "uncontrolled" illegal imports but promised to look at what can be done.

Maksimov's appearance attracted attention and new customers to Mashenka, which has three bakeries in the Moscow region. It had sent a basket of baked goods to the Kremlin and boasts on its website that Putin "tried our pies."

Russian media quoted Maksimov as saying sales rose for a while, but without a change in tax policy, he contemplated closing.

Putin raised Mashenka's case at a government meeting last month, and Economy Minister Maxim Reshetnikov proposed measures allowing Maksimov's business to be exempt from paying VAT and lower his other taxes. Shortly after, the owner said he wasn't considering closing down.

"I think we will grow, maybe slower than before, but no less confidently, I think," Maksimov told AP this month. He admitted, however, that he's still waiting for authorities to adopt the proposed measures. It's unclear when that will happen.

Others follow suit

Maksimov's case caused an outcry among other small and medium entrepreneurs. In an online campaign "We Are Mashenka," started by the Association of Beauty Industry Enterprises, business owners across Russia raised similar cases, noting that unlike Maksimov, who was lucky to get Putin's ear, they had no one to bail them out.

Demchenko, who supported the campaign, told AP that of four family-oriented beauty salons in her chain — three of her own and one opened through a franchise — she had to close one and sell another to stay afloat due to the dramatically increased taxes and other costs, as well as lagging demand.

The tax reforms meant she was no longer eligible for the patent system and was looking at paying much higher taxes, as well as having to hire a full-time accountant to handle the paperwork, she said. Her costs — such as rent, supplies, security and banking services — spiked 30%, she added, noting suppliers raised their prices well over the 2% VAT increase.

Demand for beauty services, meanwhile, has been falling for months.

Russia's restrictions on social media and messaging platforms deprived her of cheap advertising and easy ways to reach clients, Demchenko said.

The beauty industry weathered the COVID-19 pandemic, she said, with government support like tax breaks and deferments, as well as ways to negotiate with landlords to waive rent for a while.

"This year, we haven't felt any support at all. We feel like they want to shut us down," she said.

## Shuttered businesses

Lyalya Sadykova, president of the Association of Beauty Industry Enterprises, said about 10% of beauty industry businesses in St. Petersburg closed and another 10% sold their companies in December and January. She anticipates more closures this spring.

"People will do the math. The first deadline for taxes is in April, and people will see that they have nothing to pay with, and that's when the collapse will begin," she said. "I think there will be bankruptcies, and mass exodus from the market, because now it seems to me that not everyone has done the math and understood it."

When the tax reforms were adopted last year, pastry shop owners Ilsiya Gizatullina and Railya Shayhieva and decided to shut down their business in Kazan. Like Demchenko, they cited the massive tax increases, rising costs and falling demand.

It was an incredibly hard decision, "like cutting off a body part. Because we lived there, it was our life, 24/7," Gizatullina told AP.

They opened in 2020 and survived the pandemic, which Gizatullina noted was only temporary. The new tax system is here to stay.

"We understand very well that it won't be abolished the day after tomorrow, and there will likely be an even higher tax burden in the future," Gizatullina said.

As part of the reforms, more businesses will be paying increased taxes in 2027 and 2028, since changes will affect those with even lower revenues.

## Growing pressure

Small and medium enterprises account for just over 20% of Russia's economy, but it's still significant, says Chris Weafer, CEO of Macro-Advisory Ltd. Consultancy. Increasing the application of VAT to those businesses will mean "a meaningful amount" of money for the state budget.

It is "a deliberate strategy by the Finance Ministry to create more stable, predictable sources of income" at a time when oil revenues are down and the budget deficit is up, Weafer said.

Small and medium enterprises have been under pressure since 2014, when Russia faced sanctions over its illegal annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, and the government directed most of its support to big companies. The new tax regulations add to the pressure, Weafer said, and while that's unlikely to wreck the economy, it will impede growth when the war ends.

"The one engine of expansion and growth and innovation that you need in an economy is the sector that has suffered most in the last four years and is continuing to suffer today," he said.

## Rob Reiner's son returns to court, may enter plea in the killing of his parents

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Nick Reiner may finally enter a plea Monday in the killing of his parents, Rob Reiner and Michele Singer Reiner, after two previous court hearings that brought some drama but little practical progress in the case.

Reiner is set to appear in a downtown Los Angeles courtroom for his arraignment on two counts of first-degree murder with his new attorney Kimberly Greene, a public defender.

Reiner, 32, the third of Rob Reiner's four children, has been held without bail since his arrest hours after the actor-director and his wife of 36 years were found dead with stab wounds on Dec. 14 at their home in the upscale Brentwood section of Los Angeles.

Reiner's previous attorney, the high-profile private lawyer Alan Jackson, had to quit the case at the previous hearing in January because of what he called circumstances beyond his and his client's control. He said legal ethics would not allow him to say why, but in parting he adamantly declared outside the courthouse that "pursuant to the laws of California, Nick Reiner is not guilty of murder."

Jackson did not elaborate but said the conclusion came after weeks of intensive investigation before his team had to hand the case off. He said he wanted to push back against false reporting on the case.

It's not clear who hired Jackson to represent Reiner or who was paying the bill. Generally, defendants use public defenders when they can't afford a private attorney.

Reiner is expected to plead not guilty, as is common for criminal defendants at this stage of the case, whatever their longer-term plan might be.

Reiner wore a suicide prevention smock at his initial court appearance in December but appeared without it at the hearing in January.

Rob Reiner, 78, and Michele Singer Reiner, 70, died from "multiple sharp force injuries," the LA County Medical Examiner said in initial findings. Authorities said they were killed hours before the bodies were discovered. A court order has prevented the release of more details. Authorities have said nothing about possible motives.

Prosecutors have said they have not yet decided whether to seek the death penalty for Nick Reiner, who is eligible for it under the charges.

Rob Reiner was a prolific director whose work included some of the most memorable and endlessly watchable movies of the 1980s and '90s. His credits included "This is Spinal Tap," "Stand By Me," "A Few Good Men," and "When Harry Met Sally..." during whose production he met photographer Michele Singer and married her soon after.

## How Mexico killed the powerful cartel leader 'El Mencho' and what it means

By MARÍA VERZA Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — The Mexican army killed the country's most powerful cartel leader and one of the United States' most wanted fugitives on Sunday, notching a major victory while cartel members responded with a wave violence across the country.

The killing of Jalisco New Generation Cartel leader Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes during an attempt to capture him in Jalisco state was the highest-profile blow against cartels since the recapture of former Sinaloa cartel boss Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán a decade ago.

Following Oseguera Cervantes' death, gunmen unleashed violence across the country. Cars burned out by cartel members blocked roads in 20 Mexican states and left smoke billowing into the air. People locked themselves in their homes in Guadalajara, Mexico's second-largest city and Jalisco's capital, and school was canceled Monday in several states as security forces were placed on alert all over the country. Even Guatemala reinforced security on its border with Mexico.

The killing could give the government a leg up in its dealings with the U.S. Trump administration, which has been threatening tariffs or unilateral military action if Mexico does not show results in the fight against the cartels.

But the long-term effect on Mexico's security landscape remains unclear.

Here's what to know:

'El Mencho' was the leader of a fast-growing criminal group

Oseguera Cervantes, better known as "El Mencho," was 59 years old and originally from the western state of Michoacan. His ties to organized crime went back at least three decades.

In 1994, he was tried for trafficking heroin in the U.S. and sent to prison for three years. Upon returning to Mexico, he quickly rose through Mexico's drug trafficking underworld.

Around 2009, he founded the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, which became Mexico's fastest-growing criminal organization, moving cocaine, methamphetamines, fentanyl and migrants to the United States, and innovating in violence with the use of drones and improvised explosive devices.

The cartel earned a reputation for brazen attacks on Mexican security forces, including downing a military helicopter in Jalisco in 2015 and attempting a spectacular, but unsuccessful, assassination of Mexico City Police Chief Omar García Harfuch, who is now Mexico's federal security secretary.

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It recruited aggressively, experimenting with new ways to reach potential members online, and generated revenue through fuel theft, extortion and timeshare fraud, among other activities.

Oseguera Cervantes died in a battle with troops sent to capture him

Oseguera Cervantes was killed during an attempt to capture him, as his followers attempted to fight off Mexican troops.

Mexico's Defense Department said in a statement that the army launched an operation in the southern part of Jalisco state to capture Oseguera Cervantes, involving the Mexican Air Force and special forces.

The cartel counterattacked, and in the ensuing confrontation, federal forces killed four members of the criminal group, and wounded three others, including its leader, who died later during transfer by air to Mexico City, according to the statement.

Three soldiers were injured and two people were detained in the action. Rocket launchers capable of shooting down aircraft and destroying armored vehicles were seized at the scene.

Mexico is keen to show Trump results in the fight against cartels

Oseguera Cervantes' will help Mexico's government show results to the U.S., which is pressuring its neighbor to pursue drug cartels more aggressively. Both countries said intelligence collaboration helped lead to Sunday's operation.

Oseguera Cervantes was facing multiple indictments in the United States and the U.S. State Department had offered a \$15 million reward for information leading to his arrest. The Trump administration designated his cartel and others foreign terrorist organizations a year ago.

U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau, who was U.S. ambassador to Mexico during the first Trump administration, applauded the operation via X, writing "The good guys are stronger than the bad guys. Congratulations to the forces of law and order in the great Mexican nation."

Mike Vigil, former chief of international operations for the DEA, said Mexico had sent a "a strong message to Donald Trump's administration that they are fighting aggressively and effectively" against the most powerful cartels. He added that "the majority of the information came from the Mexican armed forces and all credit goes to Mexico."

Cartel leader's death leaves a power vacuum

It's not clear who will succeed Oseguera Cervantes, or if any one person can.

The Jalisco cartel has a presence in at least 21 of Mexico's 32 states and is active in almost all of the United States, according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. But it is also a global organization and the loss of its leader could be felt well beyond Mexico.

"El Mencho controlled everything, he was like a country's dictator," Vigil said.

His absence could slow the cartel's rapid growth and expansion and leave it initially weakened against the Sinaloa cartel on several fronts where they or their proxies are fighting. The Sinaloa is locked in its own internal power struggle, however, between the sons of "El Chapo" and the faction loyal to Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada, who is in U.S. custody.

Vigil said Mexico should seize the moment to launch "an effective frontal assault based on intelligence."

"This is a big opportunity for Mexico and the United States if they work together," he said.

Security analyst David Saucedo said that if relatives of Oseguera Cervantes take control of the cartel, the violence seen Sunday could continue. If others take power, they could be more willing to turn the page and continue operations.

The greatest fear would be that the cartel turns to indiscriminate violence. They could decide to "launch narcoterrorism attacks ... and generate a scenario similar to what Colombia lived in the 1990s," a full on attack against the government "car bombs, assassinations and attacks on aircraft."

## How Trump will use his State of the Union address to sell skeptical midterm voters on his plans

By JOSH BOAK and MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's State of the Union address on Tuesday is likely to be

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a test run of the message that Republicans will give to voters in November's elections for control of the House and Senate.

The president and his party appear vulnerable, with polls showing that much of America distrusts how Trump has managed the government in his first year back in office. In addition, the Supreme Court last week struck down one of the chief levers of his economic and foreign policy by ruling that he lacked the power to impose many of his sweeping tariffs.

Though Trump is expected to focus on domestic issues, his intensifying threats that he may launch military strikes on Iran over its nuclear program are casting a shadow over the address.

Here are a few things to watch as Trump tries to make his case:

The economy and immigration are no longer strengths for Trump

Trump swept back into the White House on promises to bring down prices and restore order to immigration in America. But on both issues, public sentiment has turned against him.

Only 39% of U.S. adults approve of his economic leadership and just 38% support him on immigration, according to the latest AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs survey. Those low numbers show the country is still fretting about the costs of groceries, housing and utilities, a problem compounded by Trump's whipsawing use of tariffs. They also show how the public was disturbed by videos of violent clashes with protesters, including two U.S. citizens killed by federal agents.

Since his party passed a massive tax cut bill last year, Trump has yet to unveil major new policy ideas on the economy. In recent speeches, he has largely offered the public reruns about his tax cuts, plans to reduce mortgage rates and a new government website for buying prescription drugs.

The Supreme Court ruling against many of Trump's far-reaching global tariffs on Friday and the president vowing to use other means to forge ahead with import taxes will only prolong the economic turmoil over trade and prices.

"I think it makes it even more important that the speech really focus on the economy," said Alex Conant, a Republican strategist.

Conant said between the tariff ruling and a Commerce Department report on Friday that showed U.S. economic growth slowed in the final three months of last year, "the president needs to bolster his economic message."

Blame everything on Joe Biden

The administration is trying to make the case that despite Trump's rewiring of global trade and tax cuts, the economy is still struggling because of choices made in 2021 and 2022 by his Democratic predecessor Joe Biden. But Trump is also seeking to take credit for positive signs in the current economy, such as recent stock market gains.

"Watch the State of the Union. We're going to be talking about the economy. We inherited a mess," Trump said at the White House on Wednesday.

Of course, Trump made the same kind of argument in his address to a joint session of Congress last year, invoking the name "Biden" 13 times.

Trump's focus on foreign policy has yet to resonate politically

Despite the president's America First credo, his aggressive approach abroad over the past year has sparked concerns among some of his supporters about whether he should spend more time focusing on voters at home.

Trump, who has made it clear he covets a Nobel Peace Prize, is likely to use the speech to remind Americans of his attempts to try to broker peace accords in global conflicts.

But in many respects, the president hasn't been extending olive branches. Within the past year, his administration has launched strikes in Yemen, Nigeria and Iran, along with an ongoing campaign of lethal military strikes on alleged drug-trafficking vessels near South America. Trump also shocked the world in January with a surprise raid to capture Venezuela's then-leader, Nicolás Maduro, and floated the idea of using force to seize Greenland.

In recent weeks, as he pressures Iran, Trump has bolstered the U.S. military's presence in the Middle

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East. But he has yet to make a clear case to voters about what his actions overseas mean for their lives. He might even minimize foreign policy in his State of the Union despite his belief that it's been a major success.

"For as much as foreign policy has dominated his last year in office, this speech will mostly focus on the economy," Conant predicted.

Vice President JD Vance offered a similar prediction, saying in an interview Saturday on Fox News Channel that in the speech, "you're going to hear a lot about the importance of bringing jobs back into our country, of reshoring manufacturing, of all these great factories that are being built."

He said Trump would also speak about lowering energy costs.

Trump has made the State of the Union his own

The State of the Union used to be about recapping accomplishments and seeking to unite the country, but it increasingly reflects divisions in society.

"What you're going to expect is some version of a campaign speech in which the Democrats are the villains, the Republicans he likes are the heroes, and he is the savior not only of the nation but of the globe," said Kathleen Hall Jamieson, a communications professor at the University of Pennsylvania.

Trump supporters might cherish the moment in 2020 when the president mid-speech reunited a military family. He also bestowed the Presidential Medal of Freedom on Rush Limbaugh, the conservative radio host and author who died in 2021 due to complications from lung cancer. But that moment turned off Democrats who saw Limbaugh as a destructive figure in political media.

The reaction in the room could matter as much as Trump's words

Trump is delivering the speech, but his audience sitting in the House chamber has a big role, too. When Trump delivered his 2020 State of the Union, then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi theatrically ripped up a copy of the speech afterward, overshadowing much of what Trump said.

House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York has said in a letter to colleagues that "it is important to have a strong, determined and dignified Democratic presence in the chamber," indicating that some members might choose not to attend in protest to Trump. But there is also the possibility of Democrats razzing Trump as Rep. Al Green, D-Texas, did in 2025, leading him to be removed from the chamber.

If Trump in his speech lays out a fuller case for why he is using other mechanisms in federal law to continue his tariffs, Conant said it will be interesting to see the reaction from lawmakers.

"I think that any House Republicans that don't applaud his tariffs are going to be featured prominently on the telecast," he said.

State of the Unions have short shelf lives

While some presidential phrases endure, much of the rhetoric in State of the Unions is forgettable. And with Trump — who is known for veering off-script — there's a good chance that a stray comment or a social media post could step on his message.

Matt Latimer, a former Republican speechwriter for then-President George W. Bush, noted in an email that people hear the president talk all of the time, so the State of the Union has lost much of its luster.

A State of the Union "only matters in moments when the country is undergoing a great trauma — a war, an attack, a global crisis — and a president and Congress want to speak in a (mostly) united voice to the country," he said. "That's not what we are experiencing now."

## **Kim reelected to top post of North Korea's ruling party as it hails his nuclear buildup**

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un was reelected to the top post of the ruling Workers' Party, with delegates crediting him for bolstering the country's nuclear arsenal and strengthening its regional standing, state media reported Monday.

The report from the party congress, a major propaganda spectacle where Kim is expected to outline his political and military goals for the next five years, suggests he will double down on accelerating a nuclear

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arsenal already equipped with missiles capable of threatening Asian U.S. allies and the American mainland.

The party also released a new roster for its powerful Central Committee that confirmed a generational shift in Kim's leadership circle, with aging military chiefs and the 76-year-old head of Pyongyang's rubber-stamp parliament among dozens replaced in the 138-member body.

The congress, which began last Thursday, comes as Kim grows increasingly assertive in regional politics, following an aggressive expansion of his nuclear arsenal and closer ties with Russia forged through joint war efforts in Ukraine, which have deepened his standoffs with Washington and Seoul. Kim has also pursued stronger ties with China, traveling to Beijing last September and having his first summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping in six years.

Analysts say Kim will likely use the meeting to unveil new military goals, including strengthening conventional forces and integrating them with nuclear capabilities, while reemphasizing a campaign for economic "self-reliance" through mass mobilization, following gradual post-pandemic gains fueled by rebounding trade with China and arms exports to Russia.

Party credits Kim's leadership as a boost to national pride

North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency said Kim was reelected as the party's general secretary with the "unshakable will and unanimous desire" of thousands of delegates on the fourth day of meetings Sunday.

Under party rules, the congress, which Kim has held every five years since 2016, elects the general secretary to serve as the party's top representative and leader. Kim, 42, has held the party's top post throughout his rule, though the title changed from first secretary to chairman at the congress in 2016 and then to general secretary at the congress in 2021.

The party said in a statement that by building up nuclear forces, Kim has created a military capable of handling "any threat of aggression" and "any form of war," and credited his leadership with "reliably guaranteeing" the country's future and "boosting the pride and self-esteem" of North Koreans.

It also praised Kim's recent foreign policy, which it said raised national prestige. China's state-run Xinhua news agency said Xi congratulated Kim on his reelection.

Party's leadership reshuffle reflects generational shift

KCNA said the congress adopted revisions to party rules during Sunday's meeting but did not immediately provide details. Experts had anticipated that Kim would use the congress to entrench his hard-line stance toward South Korea and possibly rewrite party rules to codify his characterization of inter-Korean relations as between two "hostile" states.

State media so far haven't mentioned any comments by Kim or other senior leaders at the congress directly addressing relations with Washington and Seoul.

Yoon Min Ho, a spokesperson at South Korea's Unification Ministry, described Kim's reelection as a predictable move to further burnish his leadership and that Seoul will closely watch further messages from the congress.

The most notable change to the new Central Committee list was the exclusion of Choe Ryong Hae, chairman of the standing committee of the Supreme People's Assembly, who during an earlier part of Kim's rule was seen as the second most powerful individual in Pyongyang. Also left out were military marshals Pak Jong Chon and Ri Pyong Chol, who had rose in the leadership ranks while Kim sped up his nuclear development over the past decade.

Yoon also noted the removal of senior officials who handled inter-Korean affairs, including Kim Yong Chol and Ri Son Gwon, who served key roles in carrying out Kim Jong Un's diplomacy with then-South Korean President Moon Jae-in and President Donald Trump in 2018 and 2019.

North Korea has suspended all meaningful diplomacy with the United States and South Korea since the collapse of a 2019 summit between Kim Jong Un and Trump over disagreements about exchange sanctions relief for steps to wind down Kim's nuclear and missile program.

Kim's government has rejected dialogue offers from Trump since the American president began his second term, urging Washington to drop its demand for North Korea's denuclearization as a precondition for talks. Inter-Korean relations further deteriorated in 2024 when Kim abandoned the North's long-standing

goal of peaceful reunification and declared the war-divided South a permanent enemy.

## **Mexican army kills leader of powerful Jalisco New Generation Cartel during operation to capture him**

By FABIOLA SÁNCHEZ Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — The Mexican army killed the leader of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, Nemesio Rubén Oseguera Cervantes, “El Mencho,” on Sunday, decapitating what had become Mexico’s most powerful drug cartel and thrusting swaths of the nation into chaos.

The drug lord was the Mexican government’s biggest prize yet to show the Trump administration in its efforts to crack down on the cartels, and his death was met with a forceful reaction from the cartel, known by its Spanish initials CJNG.

Cars burned out by cartel members blocked roads at more than 250 points in 20 Mexican states, authorities said, and left smoke billowing into the air. Jalisco’s capital, Guadalajara, was turned into a ghost town Sunday night as civilians hunkered down. School was canceled Monday in several states. Authorities in Jalisco, Michoacan and Guanajuato reported at least 14 dead, including seven National Guard troops.

Oseguera Cervantes was wounded in an operation to capture him Sunday in Tapalpa, Jalisco, about a two-hour drive southwest of Guadalajara and he died while being flown to Mexico City, the Defense Department said in a statement. The state is the base of the cartel known for trafficking huge quantities of fentanyl and other drugs to the United States.

Cartel a major fentanyl trafficker

During the operation, troops came under fire and killed four people at the location. Three more people, including Oseguera Cervantes, were wounded and later died, the statement said. Two others were arrested and armored vehicles, rocket launchers and other arms were seized. Three members of the armed forces were wounded and receiving medical treatment.

A Jalisco state official who requested anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly said a member of the National Guard died in Tapalpa during the operation, six other National Guard members died in Zapopan beside Guadalajara, a jail guard was killed at a lockup in Puerto Vallarta when prisoners rioted, and an agent from the Jalisco state prosecutor’s office was killed in Guadalajara. Details were not immediately available.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said via X that the U.S. government provided intelligence support for the operation. “‘El Mencho’ was a top target for the Mexican and United States government as one of the top traffickers of fentanyl into our homeland,” she wrote. She commended Mexico’s military for its work.

“Ever since President (Claudia) Sheinbaum has been in power, the army has been way more confrontational, combative against criminal groups in Mexico,” said David Mora, analyst for International Crisis Group in Mexico. “This is signaling to the U.S. that if we keep cooperating, sharing intelligence, Mexico can do it, we don’t need U.S. troops on Mexican soil.”

Roadblocks and burning vehicles

The killing of the drug lord set off several hours of roadblocks with burning vehicles, tactics commonly used by the cartels to block military operations. Videos circulating on social media showed smoke billowing over the tourist city of Puerto Vallarta in Jalisco, and people sprinting through the airport of the state’s capital in panic.

Air Canada announced it was suspending flights to Puerto Vallarta “due to an ongoing security situation” and advised customers not to go to their airport. A number of Mexican and international airlines also canceled flights.

In Guadalajara, burning vehicles blocked roads and businesses shuttered just months before Mexico’s second-largest city is scheduled to host matches during this summer’s soccer World Cup.

The U.S. State Department warned U.S. citizens in Jalisco, Tamaulipas, Michoacan, Guerrero and Nuevo

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Leon states to remain in safe places due to the security operations. Canada's embassy in Mexico warned its citizens in Puerto Vallarta to shelter in place and generally to keep a low profile in Jalisco.

Jalisco Gov. Pablo Lemus told residents to stay at home, suspended public transportation and said that the state was "living through critical hours."

US had offered up to \$15 million for his capture

The U.S. State Department had offered a reward of up to \$15 million for information leading to the arrest of El Mencho. The Jalisco New Generation Cartel is one of the most powerful and fastest growing criminal organizations in Mexico and began operating around 2009.

In February 2025, the Trump administration designated the cartel as a foreign terrorist organization.

Sheinbaum has criticized the "kingpin" strategy of previous administrations that took out cartel leaders only to trigger explosions of violence as cartels fractured. While she has remained popular in Mexico, security is a persistent concern and since U.S. President Donald Trump took office a year ago, she has been under tremendous pressure to show results against drug trafficking.

On Sunday, Sheinbaum applauded Mexican security forces and called for calm in a post on X.

Known as an aggressive cartel

The Jalisco cartel has been one of the most aggressive cartels in its attacks on the military — including on helicopters — and is a pioneer in launching explosives from drones and installing mines. In 2020, it carried out a spectacular assassination attempt with grenades and high-powered rifles in the heart of Mexico City against the then head of the capital's police force and now federal security secretary.

The DEA considers the cartel to be as powerful as the Sinaloa cartel, one of Mexico's most infamous criminal groups, with a presence in all 50 U.S. states. It is one of the main suppliers of cocaine to the U.S. market and, like the Sinaloa cartel, earns billions from the production of fentanyl and methamphetamines. Sinaloa, however, has been weakened by infighting after the loss of its leaders Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada and Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, both in U.S. custody.

Oseguera Cervantes, 59, was originally from Aguililla in the neighboring state of Michoacan. He had been significantly involved in drug trafficking activities since the 1990s. When he was younger, he migrated to the U.S. where he was convicted of conspiracy to distribute heroin in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California in 1994 and served nearly three years in prison.

Following his release from custody, Oseguera Cervantes returned to Mexico and reengaged in drug trafficking activity with drug lord Ignacio Coronel Villarreal, alias "Nacho Coronel." After Villarreal's death, Oseguera Cervantes and Erik Valencia Salazar, alias "El 85," created the Jalisco New Generation Cartel around 2007.

Initially, they worked for the Sinaloa Cartel, but eventually split and for years the two cartels have battled for territory across Mexico.

Indicted several times in the United States

Since 2017, Oseguera Cervantes has been indicted several times in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia.

The most recent superseding indictment, filed on April 5, 2022, charges Oseguera Cervantes with conspiracy and distribution of controlled substances (methamphetamine, cocaine, and fentanyl) for the purpose of illegal importation into the United States and use of firearms during and in connection with drug trafficking offenses. Oseguera Cervantes is also charged under the Drug Kingpin Enforcement Act for directing a continuing criminal enterprise.

Last year, people searching for missing relatives found piles of shoes and other clothing, as well as bone fragments at what authorities later said was a Jalisco cartel recruitment and training site.

## 'One Battle After Another' wins 6 prizes including best picture at Britain's BAFTA film awards

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Politically charged thriller "One Battle After Another" won six prizes, including best pic-

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ture, at the British Academy Film Awards on Sunday, building momentum ahead of Hollywood's Academy Awards next month.

Blues-steeped vampire epic "Sinners" and gothic horror story "Frankenstein" won three awards each, while Shakespearean family tragedy "Hamnet" won two including best British film.

"One Battle After Another," Paul Thomas Anderson's explosive film about a group of revolutionaries in chaotic conflict with the state, won awards for directing, adapted screenplay, cinematography and editing, as well as for Sean Penn's supporting performance as an obsessed military officer.

"This is very overwhelming and wonderful," Anderson said as he accepted the directing prize. He paid tribute to his longstanding assistant director, Adam Somner, who died of cancer in November 2024 a few weeks into production.

"We have a line from Nina Simone that we used in our film, 'I know what freedom is: It's no fear,'" the director said. "Let's keep making things without fear. It's a good idea."

Bookies' favorite Jessie Buckley won the best actress prize for playing grieving mother Agnes Hathaway, wife of William Shakespeare, in "Hamnet." Buckley, 36, is the first Irish performer to win a best actress prize at the awards, known as BAFTAs.

She dedicated her award "to the women past, present and future who taught me and continue to teach me how to do it differently."

In a major upset, Robert Aramayo won the best actor category for his performance in "I Swear," a fact-based British indie drama about a campaigner for people with Tourette syndrome.

The 33-year-old British actor looked stunned and called the victory over Ethan Hawke, Michael B. Jordan, Leonardo DiCaprio and Timothée Chalamet "absolutely mad."

"I absolutely can't believe this," he said. "Everyone in this category blows me away."

"Sinners" took home trophies for director Ryan Coogler's original screenplay, the film's musical score and for Wunmi Mosaku's supporting actress performance as herbalist and healer Annie.

The British-Nigerian actor said that in the role she found "a part of my hopes, my ancestral power and my connection, parts I thought I had lost or tried to dim as an immigrant trying to fit in."

Stars and royalty

Hollywood stars and British celebrities, from Paddington Bear to the Prince and Princess of Wales, gathered at London's Royal Festival Hall for the awards. DiCaprio, Chalamet, Emma Stone, Cillian Murphy, Glenn Close and Ethan Hawke were among the stars walking the red carpet before a black-tie ceremony hosted by Scottish actor Alan Cumming.

Prince William and Catherine, Princess of Wales also attended, three days after William's uncle Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor was arrested by police and held for 11 hours over allegations he sent sensitive government information to the late financier and sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

The scandal has rocked the royal family led by King Charles III, though William and Kate remain popular standard-bearers for the monarchy. William presented an award in his role as president of the British Academy of Film and Television Arts.

Among the biggest receptions from gathered fans was for Paddington, the puppet bear who stars in a musical stage adaptation of the beloved children's classic.

Oscars bellwether

The British prizes, officially called the EE BAFTA Film Awards, often provide hints about who will win at Hollywood's Academy Awards, held this year on March 15. "Sinners" has a record 16 Oscar nominations, followed by "One Battle After Another" with 13.

"One Battle" went into the BAFTAs ceremony with 14 nominations. "Sinners" was just behind with 13, while "Hamnet" had 11.

Ping-pong odyssey "Marty Supreme" also had 11 nominations but went home empty-handed.

Guillermo del Toro's reimagining of "Frankenstein" and Norwegian family drama "Sentimental Value" each got eight nominations.

"Frankenstein" took awards for production design, costume design and for the hair and makeup artists

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who spent 10 hours a day transforming Jacob Elordi into the movie's monstrous creature.

"Sentimental Value" won the prize for the best film not in English.

Cumming told the audience that it had been a strong year for cinema, if not a cheerful one, with nominated films tackling themes including child death, racism and political violence:

"Watching the films this year was like taking part in a collective nervous breakdown," he said. "It's almost as though there are events going on in the real world that are influencing filmmakers."

The ceremony was more glitz than gloom, though, including a performance by Ejae, Audrey Nuna and Rei Ami — the voices of animated band HUNTR/X in box office juggernaut "KPop Demon Hunters" — singing the movie hit "Golden."

Putin critic wins best documentary

The best-documentary prize went to "Mr. Nobody Against Putin," about a Russian teacher who documented the propaganda imposed on Russian schools after the invasion of Ukraine.

The film's American director David Borenstein said that teacher Pavel Talankin had shown that "whether it's in Russia or the streets of Minneapolis, we always face a moral choice," referring to the protests against U.S. immigration enforcement in Minnesota.

"We need more Mr. Nobodies," he said.

It beat documentaries including Mstyslav Chernov's harrowing Ukraine war portrait "2000 Meters to Andriivka," co-produced by The Associated Press and Frontline PBS.

Most BAFTA winners are chosen by 8,500 members of the U.K. academy of industry professionals. The Rising Star award, which is decided by public vote, went to Aramayo.

Donna Langley, the U.K.-born chairwoman of NBCUniversal Entertainment, was awarded the British Academy's highest honor, the BAFTA fellowship.

## Department of Homeland Security suspends Global Entry as the partial government shutdown drags on

By JAMIE STENGLE and ALI SWENSON The Associated Press

DALLAS (AP) — The Department of Homeland Security said Sunday that the Global Entry program would be shut down as long as the partial government shutdown remains in effect.

The announcement comes after the department said Saturday night that it planned to shut down both Global Entry and the Transportation Security Administration's PreCheck program as well, but DHS cancelled the PreCheck closure.

"As staffing constraints arise, TSA will evaluate on a case-by-case basis and adjust operations accordingly," the agency said.

The turmoil at security and customs lanes is tied to a partial government shutdown that began Feb. 14 after Democrats and the White House were unable to reach a deal on legislation to fund the Department of Homeland Security. Democrats have been demanding changes to immigration operations that are core to President Donald Trump's deportation campaign.

The security disruptions come at a time where a major winter storm will hit the East Coast from Sunday into Monday. Nine out of 10 flights going out of John F. Kennedy International Airport, LaGuardia Airport and Boston Logan Airport have been canceled for Monday.

Global Entry is a U.S. Customs and Border Protection program that allows pre-approved, low-risk travelers to use expedited kiosks when entering the United States from abroad. There's no specific government data that shows how much time passengers save at airports or other ports of entry from Global Entry but travel industry experts estimate that Global Entry cuts the amount of time passengers getting through customs from an average of 30 to 90 mins for regular customs lines to 5 to 10 minutes in Global Entry lines.

Those who have Global Entry also receive TSA PreCheck. The Department of Homeland Security said in 2024 that more than 20 million Americans had TSA PreCheck, and millions of those Americans have overlapping Global Entry memberships.

Airport lines seemed largely unaffected through midday Sunday, with security check line wait times listed

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as under 15 minutes for most international airports, according to TSA's mobile app.

Blair Perkins, 39, of Dallas, had seen the news about the shutdown of Global Entry before she left Cancun to return home Sunday morning to Dallas. She said after she and her friends arrived at Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport that the regular line was long but moved fairly fast.

"We went around about four or five different corners to get to the end of the U.S. line," she said.

With Global Entry, it usually takes less than five minutes to get through customs, she said. Sunday, it took about 30 minutes.

Perkins said the shutdown was frustrating. "It feels like Washington is using travelers as a pawn to try to, I guess, persuade the other side to do what they want," she said.

Homeland Security previously said it was taking "emergency measures to preserve limited funds." Among the steps listed were "ending Transportation Security Administration (TSA) PreCheck lanes and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Global Entry service, to refocus Department personnel on the majority of travelers."

"We are glad that DHS has decided to keep PreCheck operational and avoid a crisis of its own making," said Geoff Freeman, president and CEO of the U.S. Travel Association.

Before announcing the PreCheck shutdown, Secretary Kristi Noem said in a statement Saturday night that "shutdowns have serious real world consequences." Noem said she would take away courtesy escorts from members of Congress at airports during the partial government shutdown as well.

Jean Fay, 54, said she had no issues going through TSA PreCheck at the Baltimore airport for her 6 a.m. Sunday flight back home to Texas. She didn't hear about the shutdown until she was changing planes in Austin, Texas, on her way to Dallas Love Field.

"When I landed in Austin I started getting the alerts," she said.

Airlines for America, a trade group representing major carriers, said Saturday night that "it's past time for Congress to get to the table and get a deal done." It also criticized the announcement by saying it was "issued with extremely short notice to travelers, giving them little time to plan accordingly."

"A4A is deeply concerned that TSA PreCheck and Global Entry programs are being suspended and that the traveling public will be, once again, used as a political football amid another government shutdown," the organization said.

Democrats on the House Committee on Homeland Security criticized Homeland Security handling of airport security after the initial announcement on Saturday night. They accused the administration of "kneecapping the programs that make travel smoother and secure."

Sen. Andy Kim, a New Jersey Democrat, said Noem's actions are part of an administration strategy to distract from other issues and shift responsibility.

"This administration is trying to weaponize our government, trying to make things intentionally more difficult for the American people as a political leverage," he told CNN on Sunday. "And the American people see that."

## Never Trump Republicans are still issuing dire warnings. Is anyone listening?

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Political Writer

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. (AP) — Over and over, the Republicans and former Republicans who gathered just outside Washington this weekend warned that President Donald Trump and his allies in Congress are tearing at the very fabric of American democracy.

A former congressman described the president's party as an "authoritarian-embracing cult." A prominent conservative writer said Trumpism is an "existential threat." And a retired Army general, his voice shaking with emotion, cited post-Nazi Germany as a roadmap for the nation's post-Trump recovery.

It's unclear how many people are listening.

The main convention hall at the sixth annual Principles First summit on Saturday and Sunday was half empty. About 750 chairs were set up in a room that could have fit thousands, and many were unfilled.

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Not a single current Republican elected official participated in the two-day program.

This is what remains of the Grand Old Party's Never Trump movement, a coalition of Republicans, former Republicans and independents who banded together as Trump consolidated power. They largely remain political exiles — not quite at home among Democrats yet disgusted by how the president has abandoned Republicans' longstanding commitments to free trade and limited government.

John McDowell, 69, who was a lifelong Republican before Trump's emergence, acknowledged that the diminished group had virtually "zero" political clout within his former party.

"It's just a fact. We're losing good people," said McDowell, a former Capitol Hill staffer and county Republican official from San Carlos, California. "The party is becoming more and more MAGA-fied."

White House spokesperson Abigail Jackson dismissed all the criticism from what she called "a bunch of deranged has-been politicians."

"The only people who will pay attention to this event are the journalists who are forced to cover it," she said.

Virtually everyone who gathered at the hotel in National Harbor, Maryland, said they are rooting for Democratic victories in this fall's midterm elections. One of the only Democrats there was Conor Lamb, a former congressman from Pennsylvania who lost his party's primary to John Fetterman four years ago.

Despite dire concerns, there was a slight sense of optimism among the half-empty convention hall and quiet hotel hallways.

Several people cheered last week's Supreme Court decision to strike down Trump's tariffs, the economic tool he has wielded without congressional approval in his attempt to force friends and foes around the globe to bend to his will. Trump insisted he would implement a new round of tariffs despite the ruling.

Former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, a former Trump adviser, highlighted recent AP-NORC polling showing that 1 in 4 Republicans nationwide do not approve of Trump's job performance.

"It's like any show that's on TV for a long time — the ratings start to go down. And the ratings are going down," Christie said. "I am willing to bet you that by next February, this room is going to be twice the size of what it is now. After the midterms, you watch."

Ex-MAGA diehard Rich Logis, wearing a red "I left MAGA hat," hopes to see "an electoral revolt against MAGA" in the midterms.

"I think there's a shift in our country right now," he said. "It happens slowly."

Logis was promoting support groups for friends and family of Trump loyalists at a table outside the convention hall. Nearby, someone was selling books about how to escape cults.

At the podium, former Republican Rep. Joe Walsh implored Trump's critics not to downplay the seriousness of the threat the president poses to the nation.

"He's everything our founders feared. Say it. Believe it," Walsh said. He said his former party is "an authoritarian-embracing cult" and "a threat to everything I love."

Retired Gen. Mark Hertling, who once commanded the U.S. Army's European forces, said he's "haunted" by allies who ask him "whether American institutions ever can be trusted again."

"Our nation's institutions have been shaken. Our alliances have been strained. Our credibility has been damaged. And our nation's values have been cast aside," Hertling said. He suggested the U.S. should look to the reconstruction of Germany after the defeat of Nazism if it hoped to restore the damage caused by Trump and his allies.

The nation's recovery, he said as his voiced cracked, would be something people have to earn over many years.

Bill Kristol, who worked in previous Republican administrations and helped found the Weekly Standard magazine, described Trump and his Republican supporters in Congress as "an existential threat" to the nation. But he was also optimistic about the upcoming midterm elections.

Kristol said Democrats are "almost certain to win the House," "could possibly win the Senate," and have "a good chance to win the presidency" in 2028.

Brittany Martinez, executive director of the host organization Principles First, also tried to cast an op-

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timistic tone, even after describing the many reasons why she couldn't bear to continue her career as a Republican staffer on Capitol Hill.

"I hope that Republicans continue to wake up," she said. "I do think that those folks exist. And I hope that they exist in greater numbers."

## Winners of the 2026 British Academy Film Awards, or BAFTAs

LONDON (AP) — Winners of the 2026 British Academy Film Awards, announced Sunday:

Film — "One Battle After Another"

British Film — "Hamnet"

Director — Paul Thomas Anderson, "One Battle After Another"

Actor — Robert Aramayo, "I Swear"

Actress — Jessie Buckley, "Hamnet"

Supporting Actor — Sean Penn, "One Battle After Another"

Supporting Actress — Wunmi Mosaku, "Sinners"

Rising Star (voted for by the public) — Robert Aramayo

Outstanding British Debut — Akinola Davies Jr. and Wale Davies for writing and directing "My Father's Shadow"

Original Screenplay — Ryan Coogler, "Sinners"

Adapted Screenplay — Paul Thomas Anderson, "One Battle After Another"

Film Not in the English Language — "Sentimental Value"

Musical Score — "Sinners"

Cinematography — Michael Bauman, "One Battle After Another"

Editing — Andy Jurgensen, "One Battle After Another"

Production Design — "Frankenstein"

Costume Design — Kate Hawley, "Frankenstein"

Sound — "F1"

Casting — Lauren Evans, "I Swear"

Visual Effects — "Avatar: Fire and Ash"

Makeup and Hair — "Frankenstein"

Animated Film — "Zootropolis 2" (released in the U.S. as "Zootopia 2")

British Short Film — "This is Endometriosis"

British Short Animation — "Two Black Boys in Paradise"

Children's and Family Film — "Boong"

Documentary — "Mr. Nobody Against Putin"

Outstanding British contribution to cinema — Clare Binns, Creative Director of PictureHouse Cinemas

BAFTA Fellowship — NBCUniversal Entertainment chairperson Donna Langley

## Next US-Iran nuclear talks are Thursday in Geneva as Washington awaits proposed deal from Tehran

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The United States and Iran will hold their next round of nuclear talks Thursday in Geneva, a facilitator said Sunday, as the Islamic Republic faces both the threat of a U.S. military strike and new protests at home.

Oman's foreign minister, Badr al-Busaidi, confirmed the talks. Oman previously hosted the indirect talks on the Islamic Republic's nuclear program and facilitated the latest round in Geneva last week.

There was no immediate comment from the Trump administration, which has built up the largest U.S. military presence in the Middle East in decades as it pushes its longtime adversary for concessions on its nuclear program and more.

Shortly before Oman's announcement, Iran's top diplomat, Abbas Araghchi, told CBS in an interview that

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he expected to meet U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff in Geneva on Thursday, and said a "good chance" remained for a diplomatic solution on the nuclear issue.

Washington awaits a proposed deal that Araghchi has said would be ready to share within days, and the foreign minister told CBS that Iran was still working on the draft proposal.

The nuclear issue, he added, is the only matter being discussed — even though both the United States and Israel also want to address Iran's missile program and its support for armed proxies in the Middle East.

President Donald Trump warned on Friday that limited strikes against Iran are possible, and both Iran and the U.S. have signaled they are prepared for war if the talks on Tehran's nuclear program fail.

Minutes after Oman's confirmation of the talks, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said on social media that negotiations had involved "the exchange of practical proposals and yielded encouraging signals," but added that Tehran has "made all necessary preparations for any potential scenario."

The U.S. has said Iran cannot have nuclear weapons or the capacity to build them and that it cannot enrich uranium. Araghchi, however, told CBS that Iran has the right to enrich uranium.

On Friday, he said his U.S. counterparts had not asked for zero enrichment as part of the latest round of talks, which is not what U.S. officials have said publicly. He also said talks focused on how to ensure that Iran's nuclear program, including enrichment, "will remain peaceful forever." He said that in return, Iran will implement confidence-building measures in exchange for relief on economic sanctions.

Tehran has long insisted that any negotiations should only focus on its nuclear program, and has refused to discuss wider U.S. and Israeli demands that it scale back its missile program and sever ties to armed groups.

Although Iran insists its nuclear program is peaceful, the U.S. and others suspect it is aimed at eventually developing weapons. Iran says it hasn't been enriching uranium since U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iranian nuclear sites in June.

At that time, Trump said the strikes had "obliterated" Iran's nuclear sites, but the exact damage is unknown because Tehran has barred international inspectors.

Meanwhile, Araghchi asserted to CBS that "we have a very good capability of missiles, and now we are even in a better situation" than before the strikes in June.

Nuclear talks had been deadlocked for years after Trump's decision in 2018 to unilaterally withdraw the U.S. from Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

## New protests in Iran

Confirmation of new talks came as new anti-government protests began in Iran, according to witnesses, as university students in Tehran and another city demonstrated around memorials for thousands of people killed in a crackdown on previous nationwide demonstrations about six weeks ago.

Iran's state news agency said students protested at five universities in the capital, Tehran, and one in the city of Mashhad on Sunday. The scattered protests erupted Saturday at universities following 40-day memorials for people killed in January during anti-government rallies.

Videos posted on social media appeared to show confrontations at two universities between government supporters and anti-government protesters, with some chanting "Death to dictator."

Iran's government has not commented on the latest protests.

Many Iranians have held ceremonies marking the traditional 40-day mourning period in the past week. Most of the protesters are believed to have been killed around Jan. 8 and 9, according to activists tracking the situation.

Iranians across the country are still reeling with shock, grief and fear after the earlier protests were crushed by the deadliest crackdown ever seen under the rule of 86-year-old Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. Thousands of people were killed and tens of thousands are believed to have been arrested.

Although the crackdown tamped down the largest protests, smaller ones are still occurring, according to protesters and videos shared on social media.

During the 1979 Islamic Revolution that toppled the shah and brought the Islamic Republic to power, 40-day memorials for slain protesters often turned into rallies that security forces tried to crush, causing

new deaths. Those were then marked 40 days later, with new protests.

Posts on social media Saturday and Sunday have alleged that security forces tried to restrict people from attending some 40-day ceremonies.

The U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency says at least 7,015 people were killed in the previous protests and crackdown, including 214 government forces. The group has been accurate in counting deaths during previous rounds of unrest in Iran and relies on a network of activists there to verify deaths.

The death toll continues to rise as the group crosschecks information despite disrupted communication with those inside the Islamic Republic.

Iran's government offered its only death toll from the previous protests on Jan. 21, saying 3,117 people were killed. Iran's theocracy in the past has undercounted or not reported fatalities from past unrest.

The Associated Press has been unable to independently assess the death toll, given authorities have disrupted internet access and international calls in Iran.

## US men's hockey gold medal and Eileen Gu's halfpipe victory highlight final day of Winter Olympics

MILAN (AP) — Jack Hughes' overtime goal against Canada gave the United States its first Olympic gold medal in men's hockey since 1980 — and on the 46th anniversary of the "Miracle on Ice" no less.

Hughes, who had lost a tooth or two from a high stick during the game, scored off a pass from Zach Werenski early into 3-on-3 overtime to clinch a 2-1 victory Sunday.

"It doesn't matter about the goal. Just an unbelievable team, unbelievable team win," Hughes said. "We're just so proud to win for our country.

"The best experiences I have are playing for my country, playing to break the golden drought with this group of guys and for us to win gold here at the Olympics, just an unbelievable moment," he added.

There was a hint of sadness amid the joy as Werenski and Matthew Tkachuk carried a Johnny Gaudreau No. 13 jersey around the ice in tribute to the beloved player who died in August 2024 along with his brother when they were struck by an SUV while riding bicycles.

The Americans' victory Sunday was their 12th gold of the Milan Cortina Games. The US women's hockey team had also won gold — also in a 2-1 overtime victory over Canada in the final.

Norway topped the final medal count with 18 golds and 41 medals overall — best in both categories.

Eileen Gu defends Olympic halfpipe title

Eileen Gu is now six-for-six in Olympic medal events after another halfpipe victory.

The 22-year-old Gu, American-born but competing for her mother's homeland of China, is already the most decorated freeskiier in the short history of the sport at the Olympics. She also captured two silver medals at the Milan Cortina Games, to pair with two golds and a silver from the Beijing Games.

Gu won her last event on the strength of her second run, a clean, technically sound pass. She got even better in her final run — pumping his ski poles after landing the final trick — and finished with a score of 94.75. Her teammate, Li Fanghui, took silver and Zoe Atkin of Britain was third.

The event was rescheduled to Sunday following a big snowstorm the night before.

Sweden's big day

First, Ebba Andersson pulled away from the pack to win the 50-kilometer mass start cross-country ski race and earn redemption for her crash that cost Sweden a gold medal in the team relay.

"I've dreamed about this day for a long time now and it's almost unbelievable that everything went as planned," she said.

And then Sweden's curling moms beat Switzerland to give the Scandinavian nation another gold.

Diggins concludes glittering Olympic career

Jessie Diggins finished fifth in the 50-kilometer mass start cross-country ski race. Just a few seconds shy of one more medal.

She's OK with that.

"I can confidently say I could not possibly have tried harder or gotten more out of my body," the 34-year-

old Diggins said.

It marked the final Olympic event for an athlete who transformed American cross-country skiing and became a symbol of endurance.

Lochner's bobsled sweep

In bobsled, Germany's Johannes Lochner added the four-man gold to his two-man title.

Lochner — who announced his retirement months ago — capped his career with his second gold medal of these Olympics, winning the four-man event over two-time defending Olympic champion Francesco Friedrich by 0.57 seconds.

"It's just such a dream. ... It's indescribable," Lochner said. "A moment for eternity. A perfect finish, the most perfect finish ever."

## **Hughes scores in overtime as US beats Canada for first men's hockey gold at the Olympics since 1980**

By STEPHEN WHYNO AP Hockey Writer

MILAN (AP) — The United States is on top of the hockey world for the first time in nearly a half-century. No miracle needed.

Jack Hughes scored less than 2 minutes into overtime and the U.S. beat Canada 2-1 in the gold medal final at the Milan Cortina Olympics on Sunday, earning the nation's third men's title at the Games and its first since the "Miracle on Ice" in 1980 — 46 years to the day of the upset over the mighty Soviet Union, too.

Unlike that ragtag group of college kids that pulled off one of the biggest shockers in sports history in Lake Placid, the Americans in Milan were a machine that rode goaltender Connor Hellebuyck and a roster full of NHL players through the tournament unbeaten.

Still, they were underdogs again against the stacked Canadians and came out on top — again.

"This is all about our country right now," said Hughes, who lost at least one and maybe two of his front teeth taking a high stick during the game. "I love the U.S.A. I love my teammates. It's unbelievable. The USA Hockey brotherhood is so strong."

Early in the three-on-three overtime, Zach Werenski took the puck away from Nathan MacKinnon and passed it to Hughes, who was wide open streaking to the net. Hughes fired a shot past Jordan Binnington 1:41 in to send players into a wild celebration as the rival Canadians watched from the bench.

Asked his favorite moment during his Olympic debut, captain Auston Matthews quipped, "I think when Jack scored. ... I'll definitely remember Jack's goal."

There was a note of sadness amid all the joy as Werenski and Matthew Tkachuk carried a Johnny Gaudreau No. 13 jersey around the ice in tribute to the beloved player who was killed along with his brother in 2024.

Gaudreau's parents, Guy and Jay, his widow, Meredith, and their oldest children were in attendance. It was Johnny Jr.'s second birthday and he was brought on the ice with older sister Noa for the team photo.

"We just wanted to show the Gaudreau family our support," Brady Tkachuk said of the player known as "Johnny Hockey." "He was so near and dear to a lot of us, and we miss him dearly. We did it for him."

Hellebuyck was extraordinary, stopping 41 of the 42 shots he faced as Canada tilted the ice toward him over the final two periods. He made the save of the tournament by getting his stick on the puck on a shot from Devon Toews in the third period, then minutes later denied Macklin Celebrini on a breakaway — something he also did to Connor McDavid earlier.

"He was our best player by a mile," winger Matt Boldy said. "He's an absolute stud. He wants to be in those moments. He wants to make the saves. And he did just that, so he was definitely our MVP."

It was a glorious weekend for Team USA, with the women's hockey team also defeating Canada in overtime to win gold. For the men, it was only fitting the Americans needed to go through Canada, their northern neighbor that beat them at the 4 Nations Face-Off a year ago and has won every international competition over the past 16 years that featured the world's best players.

Not anymore.

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Winning a fast-paced, riveting game that was full of big hits and plenty of post-whistle altercations, the U.S. got a goal from Boldy 6 minutes in and led until Cale Makar tied it late in the second period. Hellebuyck and the penalty kill was a perfect 17 for 17 at the Olympics.

"I can't even believe this," Hughes said. "I mean it's such an unbelievable game, USA-Canada. Such a good game. There's so many great players. We're a great team. That's exactly how we wanted it to go. We're underdogs to Canada, (but we) beat them. It could have gone either way."

Hughes paid a painful price when he took the high stick and wound up face down on the ice. The teeth were out, but the celebration wasn't far away.

"More people are going to be looking at his medal than his teeth," Boldy said.

The U.S. finally came through after generations of churning out talent from the grassroots level like a production line. All but two of the 25 players on the team went through USA Hockey's National Team Development Program.

That group of 23 includes captain Auston Matthews, the top line of Brady and Matthew Tkachuk and Jack Eichel, and the second set of brothers, Jack and Quinn Hughes. Much of the team played together either at the program, under-18s, the world junior championship or some combination of them.

The U.S. winning silenced criticism of general manager Bill Guerin and his management group choosing a roster full of experienced veteran players to fill specific roles and leaving four of the top 10 American goal-scorers in the NHL this season at home. The players they brought got the job done.

"There are whisky drinkers and milk drinkers and we got a lot of whisky drinkers on this team," coach Mike Sullivan said. "One of the things that Billy Guerin and I talked about from the very beginning was trying to build a team in the true sense of the word, so we looked at a deep group of American talent and these decisions were very difficult. They weren't easy. You look at how this group is constructed, there was a thought process that we had players that could play in all situations."

Some decisions were no-doubters, like Sullivan giving the net to Hellebuyck, who stopped 131 of the 137 shots he faced throughout the tournament and was at his best against Canada.

"He was our backbone — today even more so than the rest of the tournament," forward Vincent Trocheck said. "He saved our lives there a couple times in the third. He was unbelievable."

Canada, back-to-back Olympic champions in 2010 and '14 and winners of three of the first five, fell short while playing without injured captain Sidney Crosby. The 38-year-old two-time gold medalist and three-time Stanley Cup champion left the quarterfinal game against Czechia and sat out the semifinal game against Finland.

"It was a tough decision," Crosby said. "Obviously, in your head you always want to be out there and find very way possible. But not at the expense of what needs to be done. And then watching how we played today, the guys played incredible."

McDavid, who wore the "C" in Crosby's absence, suffered another devastating defeat on the doorstep of a title. He and the Edmonton Oilers have lost to Matthew Tkachuk and the Florida Panthers in the Stanley Cup Final each of the past two years.

## It's a quiet box office weekend as 'GOAT' edges 'Wuthering Heights'

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

It was a battle of the holdovers at the North American box office this weekend, with the family friendly film "GOAT" edging out the R-rated "Wuthering Heights."

Sony Pictures Animation's "GOAT" took in \$17 million, while Warner Bros.' "Wuthering Heights" earned \$14.2 million, according to studio estimates Sunday. Both films are in their second weekend.

Overall, it was a quiet weekend at movie theaters around the country, with new offerings all opening under \$10 million. Those results applied to the faith-based sequel "I Can Only Imagine 2," the Glen Powell black comedy "How to Make a Killing" and the horror film "Psycho Killer," which currently has a 0% rating on Rotten Tomatoes. One bright spot in theaters was Baz Luhrmann's immersive documentary "EPiC: Elvis

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Presley in Concert," which earned \$3.3 million from only 325 locations in its limited IMAX release. That film expands to nationwide distribution on Feb. 27.

"These somewhat slower weekends can be a land of opportunity," said Paul Dergarabedian, the head of marketplace trends for Comscore.

"GOAT" dropped a slim 38% in its second weekend in theaters, which the studio attributed to positive word-of-mouth. The Stephen Curry-produced movie, about a small goat with big sports dreams (voiced by "Stranger Things" Caleb McLaughlin) has made over \$58.3 million. Globally, its running total is at \$102.3 million.

"Wuthering Heights" meanwhile fell 57% from its opening last weekend, bringing its domestic total to \$60 million. Internationally it added another \$26.3 million, pushing its global total to \$151.7 million against an \$80 million production budget. The movie's top international market continues to be the U.K., where it has made \$22.5 million alone.

Third place for the weekend went to Lionsgate and Kingdom Story's "I Can Only Imagine 2," a follow-up to the 2018 Dennis Quaid movie that made \$86 million against a \$7 million budget. The sequel opened with \$8 million, a far cry from the first film's \$17 million launch, though that was in line with expectations. It did score a rare A+ CinemaScore.

Amazon and MGM's "Crime 101" fell 59% in its second weekend, bringing in \$5.8 million to take fourth place. The Chris Hemsworth and Mark Ruffalo heist thriller has now made \$24.7 million against a reported \$90 million budget. "Send Help" rounded out the top five with \$4.5 million.

"How to Make a Killing" landed in sixth place with \$3.6 million. A24 released the StudioCanal movie in 1,600 North American theaters. The film, loosely inspired by "Kind Hearts and Coronets," stars Powell as a man who, in a quest to acquire a \$28 billion inheritance, decides to kill off his family members. Directed by John Patton Ford ("Emily the Criminal"), "How to Make a Killing" was not well-received by critics: it's sitting at a "rotten" 47% on Rotten Tomatoes.

"Psycho Killer," released by 20th Century Studios, fared much worse and opened outside of the top 10. The horror-thriller written by Andrew Kevin Walker ("Seven") and directed by Gavin Polone (a notable television and film producer in his directorial debut) tanked in its first weekend in theaters with \$1.6 million in ticket sales from 1,110 theaters. Audiences were not any happier with it than critics; According to PostTrak, only 31% of ticket buyers would "definitely recommend" it.

The year's box office is running about 5% ahead of last year and Dergarabedian expects things will start to pick up when "Scream 7" opens next weekend.

"It's been a kind of rollercoaster ride at the box office," he said.

Top 10 movies by domestic box office

With final domestic figures being released Monday, this list factors in the estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Comscore:

1. "GOAT," \$17 million.
2. "Wuthering Heights," \$14.2 million.
3. "I Can Only Imagine 2," \$8 million.
4. "Crime 101," \$5.8 million.
5. "Send Help," \$4.5 million.
6. "How to Make a Killing," \$3.6 million.
7. "EPiC: Elvis Presley in Concert," \$3.3 million.
8. "Solo Mio," \$2.6 million.
9. "Zootopia 2," \$2.3 million.
10. "Avatar: Fire and Ash," \$1.8 million.

## The Latest: Armed man shot, killed after entering perimeter of Mar-a-Lago, Secret Service says

By The Associated Press undefined

An armed man was shot and killed after entering the secure perimeter of Mar-a-Lago, President Donald Trump's resort in Palm Beach, Florida.

Although Trump often spends weekends at his resort, he was at the White House during this incident. The incident took place at 1:30 a.m. Sunday.

First lady Melania Trump was also with the president at the White House on Saturday night. The name of the person who was shot has not been released.

Palm Beach County Sheriff Rick Bradshaw said there was no immediate indication that the suspect was known to law enforcement. He was identified as Austin Tucker Martin, 21, of North Carolina.

The latest:

Bondi says she spoke to Trump

Attorney General Pam Bondi said in a post on X that she had been speaking with the president.

She added that she is "coordinating with our federal partners throughout the morning regarding the intrusion and shooting at Mar-A-Lago. Grateful that @potus and our law enforcement agents are safe."

FBI to devote 'all necessary resources' to investigate

FBI Director Kash Patel said in post on X that the bureau would be "dedicating all necessary resources" to the investigation.

White House press secretary calls Democrats 'shameful'

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said in a post on X:

"In the middle of the night while most Americans were asleep, the United States Secret Service acted quickly and decisively to neutralize a crazy person, armed with a gun and a gas canister, who intruded President Trump's home. Federal law enforcement are working 24/7 to keep our country safe and protect all Americans. It's shameful and reckless that Democrats have chosen to shut down their Department."

Treasury secretary condemns Democratic rhetoric following Mar-a-Lago incident

Though details of the armed man's motive for entering the Mar-a-Lago perimeter are not yet known, U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent in a Fox News interview on Sunday morning reacted by criticizing Democratic rhetoric.

"This existential threat that's venom from the left really has to stop," said Bessent, who added he had just spoken with Trump.

Suspect identified as Austin Tucker Martin, 21

The man killed was identified by investigators as 21-year-old Austin Tucker Martin, according to a person familiar with the matter. He was from North Carolina.

The person spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly discuss details of the investigation.

- By Alanna Durkin Richer

Suspect was in his early 20s and from North Carolina

The man had a gas can and a shotgun, according to Anthony Guglielmi, a Secret Service spokesman.

Asked whether the suspect was known to law enforcement, Palm Beach County Sheriff Rick Bradshaw said "not right now."

Five days ago, U.S. Capitol Police arrested a Georgia gunman armed with a shotgun as he sprinted towards the west side of the U.S. Capitol.

Sheriff: Secret Service, sheriff's deputy confronted shooter

Palm Beach County Sheriff Rick Bradshaw, speaking at a brief press conference, said the man was confronted by two Secret Service agents and a sheriff's deputy.

"He was ordered to drop those two pieces of equipment that he had with them. At which time he put down the gas can, raised the shotgun to a shooting position," Bradshaw said. The two agents and the

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deputy "fired their weapons to neutralize the threat."

FBI asks neighbors for help

The FBI asked area residents who live near Mar-a-Lago to check any security cameras they may have for footage that could help investigators.

Suspect reported missing by his family

The suspect, who was in his early 20s and from North Carolina, was reported missing a few days ago by his family.

Investigators believe he left North Carolina and headed south, picking up a shotgun along the way, Secret Service spokesman Anthony Guglielmi said.

The box for the gun was recovered in his vehicle, Guglielmi said. The man drove through the north gate of Mar-a-Lago as another vehicle was exiting and was confronted by Secret Service agents, Guglielmi said.

The agents confronted the armed man and he was fatally shot. Investigators are working to compile a psychological profile and a motive is still under investigation.

Trump has faced threats before

Trump has faced threats to his life before. He was wounded during an assassination attempt during a campaign rally in Butler, Pa., on July 13, 2024.

Then on Sept. 15, 2024, a man with a rifle was captured after waiting near Trump's golf course in West Palm Beach while the president played a round. He was sentenced to life in prison earlier this month.

The incident comes as the U.S. has been rocked multiple times in recent years by political violence.

Just last year, that included the assassination of conservative activist Charlie Kirk, the assassination of the Democratic leader in the Minnesota state House and her husband and the shooting of another lawmaker and his wife, and an arson attack at the official residence of Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro.

## EU says US must honor a trade deal after court blocks Trump tariffs

BRUSSELS (AP) — The European Union's executive arm requested "full clarity" from the United States and asked its trade partner to fulfill its commitments after the U.S. Supreme Court struck down some of President Donald Trump's most sweeping tariffs.

Trump has lashed out at the court decision and said Saturday that he wants a global tariff of 15%, up from the 10% he announced a day earlier.

The European Commission said the current situation is not conducive to delivering "fair, balanced, and mutually beneficial" trans-Atlantic trade and investment, as agreed to by both sides and spelled out in the EU-U.S. Joint Statement of August 2025.

American and EU officials sealed a trade deal last year that imposes a 15% import tax on 70% of European goods exported to the United States. The European Commission handles trade for the 27 EU member countries.

A top EU lawmaker said on Sunday he will propose to the European Parliament negotiating team to put the ratifying process of the deal on pause.

"Pure tariff chaos on the part of the U.S. administration," Bernd Lange, the chair of Parliament's international trade committee, wrote on social media. "No one can make sense of it anymore — only open questions and growing uncertainty for the EU and other U.S. trading partners."

The value of EU-U.S. trade in goods and services amounted to 1.7 trillion euros (\$2 trillion) in 2024, or an average of 4.6 billion euros a day, according to EU statistics agency Eurostat.

"A deal is a deal," the European Commission said. "As the United States' largest trading partner, the EU expects the U.S. to honor its commitments set out in the Joint Statement — just as the EU stands by its commitments. EU products must continue to benefit from the most competitive treatment, with no increases in tariffs beyond the clear and all-inclusive ceiling previously agreed."

Jamieson Greer, Trump's top trade negotiator, said in a CBS News interview Sunday morning that the

U.S. plans to stand by its trade deals and expects its partners to do the same.

He said he talked to his European counterpart this weekend and hasn't heard anyone tell him the deal is off.

"The deals were not premised on whether or not the emergency tariff litigation would rise or fall," Greer said. "I haven't heard anyone yet come to me and say the deal's off. They want to see how this plays out."

Europe's biggest exports to the U.S. are pharmaceuticals, cars, aircraft, chemicals, medical instruments, and wine and spirits. Among the biggest U.S. exports to the bloc are professional and scientific services like payment systems and cloud infrastructure, oil and gas, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, aerospace products and cars.

"When applied unpredictably, tariffs are inherently disruptive, undermining confidence and stability across global markets and creating further uncertainty across international supply chains," the commission added.

As primarily a trading bloc, the EU has a powerful tool at its disposal to retaliate — the bloc's Anti-Coercion Instrument. It includes a raft of measures for blocking or restricting trade and investment from countries found to be putting undue pressure on EU member nations or corporations.

The measures could include curtailing the export and import of goods and services, barring countries or companies from EU public tenders, or limiting foreign direct investment. In its most severe form, it would essentially close off access to the EU's 450-million customer market and inflict billions of dollars of losses on U.S. companies and the American economy.

## **US says ambassador's comments on Israel and the Middle East were taken out of context**

By MELANIE LIDMAN and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — An uproar continued Sunday after the U.S. ambassador to Israel, Mike Huckabee, said Israel has a right to much of the Middle East, as more Arab and Muslim countries objected and the U.S. said his comments were taken out of context.

Huckabee spoke in an interview with conservative commentator Tucker Carlson that aired Friday. Carlson said that according to the Bible, the descendants of Abraham would receive land that today would include much of the Middle East, including parts of modern-day Jordan, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon. He quoted from Genesis Chapter 15 and asked Huckabee if Israel had a right to that land.

Huckabee responded: "It would be fine if they took it all."

A spokesperson for the U.S. Embassy said Sunday that Huckabee's comments were taken out of context and that there is no change to U.S. policies on Israel.

In the interview, Huckabee added: "They're not asking to go back and take all of that, but they are asking to at least take the land that they now occupy, they now live in, they now own legitimately, and it is a safe haven for them." He added that Israel isn't trying to take over Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, or Iraq but is trying to protect its own people.

Condemnation by Arab countries

A joint statement Sunday by Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Indonesia, Pakistan, Turkey, Syria, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, the Palestinian Authority and several Arab governing bodies called Huckabee's remarks "dangerous and inflammatory" and ones that endanger the region's stability.

"These statements directly contradict the vision put forward by U.S. President Donald J. Trump ... based on containing escalation and creating a political horizon for a comprehensive settlement that ensures the Palestinian people have their own independent state," the statement said.

Huckabee, an evangelical Christian and strong supporter of Israel and the West Bank settlement movement, has long opposed the idea of a two-state solution for Israel and the Palestinian people.

Carlson has been critical of U.S. support for Israel in the war in Gaza and has come under fire for his own far-right views, including the white-supremacist theory that says whites are being "replaced" by people of color.

Israeli concerns about Iran

Meanwhile, tensions are high in Israel as the country prepares for a possible attack from Iran. Iran previously said it will attack both Israel and U.S. bases in the Middle East if the United States attacks it.

Trump warned on Friday that limited strikes against Iran are possible, even as the country's top diplomat said Tehran expects to have a proposed deal ready in the next few days following nuclear talks with the United States.

The movements of additional U.S. warships and airplanes to the region, with the USS Gerald R. Ford aircraft carrier near the mouth of the Mediterranean Sea, don't guarantee a U.S. strike on Iran, but they bolster Trump's ability to carry out one if he chooses.

Netanyahu warned last week that if Iran attacks Israel, they will risk a "response that they cannot even imagine."

Israel attacked Iran last year during indirect U.S.-Iran talks, sparking a 12-day war. The United States inserted itself in the war by bombing Iranian nuclear sites.

## **New law puts Kansas at vanguard of denying trans identities on drivers licenses, birth certificates**

By JOHN HANNA Associated Press

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) — Kansas is set to invalidate about 1,700 driver's licenses held by transgender residents and roughly as many birth certificates under a new law that goes beyond Republican-imposed restrictions in other states on listing gender identities in government documents.

The new law takes effect Thursday. Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly vetoed the measure but the Legislature's GOP supermajorities overrode it last week as Republican state lawmakers across the U.S. have pursued another round of measures to roll back transgender rights.

The bill prohibits documents from listing any sex other than the one assigned birth and invalidates any that reflect a conflicting gender identity. Florida, Tennessee and Texas also don't allow driver's licenses to reflect a trans person's gender identity, and at least eight states besides Kansas have policies that bar trans residents from changing their birth certificates.

But only Kansas' law requires reversing changes previously made for trans residents. Kansas officials expect to cancel about 1,700 driver's licenses and issue new birth certificates for up to 1,800 people.

"It tells me that Kansas Republicans are interested in being on the vanguard of the culture war and in a race to the bottom," said Democratic state Rep. Abi Boatman, a transgender Air Force veteran appointed in January to fill a vacant Wichita seat.

Kansas' new law enjoyed nearly unanimous GOP support. It is the latest success in what has become an annual effort to further roll back transgender rights by Republicans in statehouses across the U.S., bolstered by policies and rhetoric from President Donald Trump's administration.

Trump and other Republicans attack research-backed conclusions that gender can change or be fluid as radical "gender ideology." GOP lawmakers in Kansas regularly describe transgender girls and women as male and as they say they're protecting women.

Like fellow Republicans, Kansas Senate Majority Leader Chase Blasi said Trump's reelection and other GOP victories in 2024 show that voters want "to return to common sense" on gender.

"When I go home, people believe there are just two sexes, male and female," Blasi said. "It's basic biology I learned in high school."

Kelly supports transgender rights, but GOP lawmakers have overridden her vetoes three of the past four years. Kansas bans gender-affirming care for minors and bars transgender women and girls from female sports teams, kindergarten through college.

Transgender people can't use public restrooms, locker rooms or other single-sex facilities associated with their gender identities, though there was no enforcement mechanism until this year's law added tough new provisions.

Transgender people have said carrying IDs that misgender them opens them to intrusive questions,

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harassment and even violence when they show it to police, merchants, and others.

In 2023, Republicans halted changes in Kansas birth certificates and driver's licenses by enacting a measure ending the state's legal recognition of trans residents' gender identities. Though the law didn't mention either document, it legally defined male and female by a person's "biological reproductive system" at birth.

However, a lawsuit led to state court decisions that last year permitted driver's license changes to resume. Legislators in at least seven other states are considering bills to prevent transgender people from changing one or both documents, according to a search using the bill-tracking software Plural.

But none would reverse past changes.

The extra step by Kansas legislators reinforces a message "that trans people aren't welcome," said Anthony Alvarez, a transgender University of Kansas student who works for a pro-LGBTQ rights group.

Kansas is likely to notify transgender residents by mail that their driver's licenses are no longer valid and they need to go to a local licensing office to get a new one, said Zachary Denney, spokesperson for the agency that issues them.

The Legislature hasn't earmarked funds to cover the cost, so each person will pay it — \$26 for a standard license.

Alvarez already has had four IDs in four years as he's changed his name, changed his gender marker and turned 21.

He's always planned to stay in his native Kansas after getting his history degree this spring.

But, he said, "They're just making it harder and harder for me to live in the state that I love."

## Russian missile and drone barrage hits Kyiv suburbs, killing 1

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia attacked Ukraine with a barrage of missiles and drones, killing one person in the Kyiv region, Ukraine's Emergency Service said on Sunday.

Another eight people, including a child, were rescued from under the rubble of destroyed buildings, the service said.

The attack caused damage and fires to erupt in five districts in the suburbs of Kyiv. In the village of Putrivka in the Fastiv district, emergency first responders worked on saving people buried under debris.

Russia also struck energy infrastructure in Ukraine's southern Odesa region, resulting in significant fires, which were later extinguished, the emergency service said.

During the four years since Russia launched an all-out war on its neighbor, and despite a new push over the past year in U.S.-led peace efforts, Ukrainian civilians have endured constant aerial attacks. Russia has also ramped up attacks targeting the country's energy grid, leaving Ukrainian civilians without electricity and heating amid harsh winter conditions.

Ukraine's Air Force said Sunday that Russia's overnight barrage had included 297 drones and 50 missiles of various types, of which 274 drones and 33 missiles were shot down or neutralized. Of those remaining, 14 missiles and 23 drones struck 14 locations, it said. Three missiles were unaccounted for.

Separately, an explosion in Ukraine's western city of Lviv killed one person and injured 25, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a Telegram post on Sunday. One person has been arrested over the incident, which is unrelated to Russia's aerial attack on Ukraine.

Meanwhile, Russian air defenses destroyed 86 Ukrainian drones overnight, Russia's Ministry of Defense said Sunday.

A security guard was injured and a fuel tank set alight when two Ukrainian drones hit an oil depot in the Russian-occupied Ukrainian city of Luhansk, Moscow-installed leader Leonid Pasechnik said.

## Today in History: February 23, Marines raise flag on Iwo Jima

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Monday, Feb. 23, the 54th day of 2026. There are 311 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Feb. 23, 1945, during World War II, U.S. Marines on Iwo Jima captured Mount Suribachi, where they

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raised two American flags. (The second flag-raising was captured in an iconic photograph by Joe Rosenthal of The Associated Press.)

Also on this date:

In 1836, the siege of the Alamo by Mexican troops began in San Antonio, Texas. Almost all of the nearly 200 heavily outnumbered Texas defenders, including American frontiersman and politician Davy Crockett, were killed in the 13-day assault.

In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt signed an agreement with Cuba to lease land around Guantanamo Bay to the United States. No date was set for termination of the lease and Naval Station Guantanamo Bay continues at the site, along with a high-security detention complex for suspected terrorists.

In 1942, the first shelling of the U.S. mainland during World War II occurred as a Japanese submarine fired on an oil refinery near Santa Barbara, California.

In 1980, American Eric Heiden completed his sweep of the five men's speed skating events at the Winter Olympic Games in Lake Placid, New York, by winning the men's 10,000-meter race in world record time; Heiden was the first athlete to win five gold medals in a single Winter Olympics.

In 2011, in a major policy reversal, President Barack Obama's administration said it would no longer defend the constitutionality of the Defense of Marriage Act, a federal law banning recognition of same-sex marriage.

In 2020, a 25-year-old Black man, Ahmaud Arbery, was fatally shot while running in a coastal Georgia neighborhood after a white father and son armed themselves and pursued him. (Greg and Travis Michael and neighbor William "Roddie" Bryan subsequently drew life sentences for murder convictions and later were convicted of federal hate crimes.)

In 2021, golfer Tiger Woods was seriously injured when he crashed his SUV into a median and rolled over several times on a steep downhill road in suburban Los Angeles.

In 2023, a federal judge handed singer R. Kelly a 20-year prison sentence for his convictions that include producing child sexual abuse materials and federal sex trafficking charges., but said he would serve nearly all of the sentence simultaneously with a 30-year sentence imposed a year earlier on racketeering charges.

Today's birthdays: Football Hall of Famer Fred Biletnikoff is 83. Actor Patricia Richardson is 75. Singer Howard Jones is 71. Japanese Emperor Naruhito is 66. Actor Kristin Davis is 61. Business executive Michael Dell is 61. TV personality-business executive Daymond John is 57. Actor Niecy Nash is 56. Democratic Sen. Angela Alsobrooks of Maryland is 55. Country singer Steve Holy is 54. Actor Kelly Macdonald is 50. Rapper Residente, born René Juan Pérez Joglar, is 48. Actor Josh Gad is 45. Actor Emily Blunt is 43. Actor Aziz Ansari is 43. Actor Dakota Fanning is 32. Star guard Jamal Murray of the NBA's Denver Nuggets is 29. Actor Emilia Jones is 24.