

# Groton Daily Independent

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*It's a police and fire truck send-off!*

**Show your support by lining Main Street**  
(even in your pajamas!)  
**for the great send-off for the Lady Tiger Volleyball Team**  
**Wed., Nov. 20th**  
**7:10 am**  
Starting at the south end of Main Street and going north to US12



*Rapid City, Here Comes Groton Area!*

**OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

## Baseball/Softball Foundation to get over \$11,000 from gate receipts

The Groton City Council had a 12-minute meeting followed by an executive session to discuss group health insurance and to review the skating rink applicants.

It was noted that the gate receipts for the baseball program this past summer exceeded \$22,000 with the Groton Baseball/Softball Foundation getting half of the gate receipts. That mean the foundation will receive \$11,437.57.

The first reading of the 2019 supplemental appropriation ordinance was approved, basically transferring \$128,400 to balance the funds for the year-end.

Mayor Scott Hanlon also had a proclamation declaring November 18-22 as Groton Tiger Week for their entry to the State Volleyball Tournament.

After the 40-minute executive session, the council tabled the hiring of skating rink employees until the next meeting.

Also discussed in executive session was the insurance proposal. The council voted to keep with the same company, Allied, as last year. There will be a slight decrease in premiums. The council agreed to match MedFlex contributions up to \$400 on a 2-1 match. In other words, the city will match \$2 for every dollar the employee contributes up to the city's share of \$400. Those on HSAs will continue to receive a match up to \$1,000.

## Water Releases to Increase

**by Scott Meints, Brown County Emergency Management Office**

Water is still going down at state line, Columbia and the Stratford gauge is looking like it might be leveling off now.

We also just got word from the Corp of Eng that mild temps, no significant ice buildup yet. they are going to open both Jamestown and Pipestem dam gates back to a combined release of 2200 CFS.

If you remember they were at 2400 CFS and closed them down to 1800cfs last week. The good thing about this is we will get rid of the water much earlier and hopefully avoid issues later on this winter.

The new release should still be considerably less that what we have recently seen.

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## A Perfect Vision of Fun at the 2020 South Dakota State Fair

HURON, S.D. – The South Dakota State Fair has announced its 2020 State Fair theme, “Perfect Vision of Fun.”

“It’s going to be the 2020 fair, so naturally when this idea was thrown at us, we had to go with it! Of course, it’s true, because when you think about the fair, there’s a lot that pops to mind from food, showing animals, special memories from a prior fair, concerts, carnival rides, or taking a stroll through a vending building, the fair is just plain fun!

The fair offers so much and means so much to people. People come to it to catch up, for a quick getaway, to show animals, the list could go on and on,” commented Peggy Besch, State Fair manager. “In planning and preparing for the State Fair, every step of the way we envision fun. Fun in showing livestock, fun in agriculture education, fun in exhibiting static exhibits, fun in riding rides, fun in sampling fair food, fun in entertaining, and fun in spending time with family and friends. Whatever the case, people come to the Fair to experience the “Perfect Vision of Fun.”

Each year the South Dakota State Fair boasts a variety of events including livestock shows, 4-H exhibits, carnival rides, free entertainment, and top-notch grandstand entertainment. The fair also hosts well over 400 vendors for fairgoers to visit.

An updated State Fair logo has also been designed and can be viewed on the South Dakota State Fair website, [sdstatefair.com](http://sdstatefair.com).

The 2020 South Dakota State Fair will run from Thursday, September 3 through Monday, September 7. Channel Seeds Preview night will be Wednesday, September 2. For more information on State Fair events, contact the fair office at 800.529.0900, visit [sdstatefair.com](http://sdstatefair.com), or find it on Facebook or Twitter.



## November Students of the Month



**Kayla Jensen**  
Senior



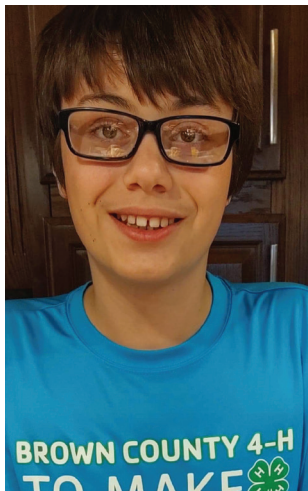
**Alexis Hanten**  
Junior



**Travis Townsend**  
Sophomore



**Elliana Weismantel**  
Freshman



**Axel Warrington**  
8th Grade



**Cameryn Kurtz**  
7th Grade



**Talli Wright**  
6th Grade

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

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

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

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**GHS Region Team- left to right Riley Rosenau, KaSandra Pappas, Allyssa Fordham, Kayla Jensen, Samantha Pappas, Hailey Monson, Camryn Kurtz, Sage Mortenson, Hannah Monson.**

(Courtesy Photo)



**State qualifier and the alternates Samantha Pappas, KaSandra Pappas, Allyssa Fordham, Hailey Monson, Camryn Kurtz.** (Courtesy Photo)



**State qualifiers Samantha Pappas and Camryn Kurtz.** (Courtesy Photo)

## **Pappas, Kurtz advance to State Oral Interp**

The GHS Oral Interpretation Team competed at the Region IV A contest on November 19, 2019 at the NSU Campus. Competing for GHS were the following:

Readers Theater- Kayla Jensen, KaSandra Pappas, Hailey Monson, Sage Mortenson, Riley Rosenau, Allyssa Fordham; Duet Interpretation- Monson and Mortenson; Dramatic Interp- Camryn Kurtz; Humorous Interp- Hannah Monson; Storytelling K Pappas; Poetry and Non-original Oratory- Samantha Pappas

Advancing to the State Oral Interpretation Festival to be held in Yankton on December 6th and 7th are Kurtz in Dramatic Interp and S Pappas in Non-original Oratory. Alternates from GHS are Monson and Fordham in Duet and K Pappas in Storytelling.

## South Dakota PUC reminds consumers to stay informed and exercise caution on National Utility Scam Awareness Day

November 20 is National Utility Scam Awareness Day. To mark the occasion, the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission is reminding consumers that the best way to handle scam calls is to follow the simple adage, "Don't Know? Don't Answer!"

Scam calls have become common. These calls are made by criminals with the purpose of tricking you into giving them money or providing personal information they can use or sell for financial gain. The best way to avoid a negative outcome from these interactions is to avoid interacting at all. Don't answer calls from unknown numbers and if you do answer a call that seems suspicious, hang up immediately.

"You are the first line of defense to stop someone from stealing your money or personal information," said PUC Chairman Gary Hanson. "Do not let the scammers in by giving out ANY information or pressing a number on the phone or sending them Bitcoin, gift cards or money. Just hang up."

The PUC takes their role in educating consumers about the dangers of scam calls seriously. For handling suspicious calls, the commission offers these additional tips:

If you answer the phone and are asked to press a button to stop receiving these calls, hang up. Scammers often use this trick to identify potential targets.

Don't respond to the caller, even to say "yes" or "no."

If you get an unexpected call from someone claiming to represent a company or government agency, hang up and call the number on your account statement, in the phone book, or on the company or agency's official website to verify the authenticity of the request. Do not call the number provided to you by the caller or from the caller ID.

Never give out personal information including account numbers, social security numbers, mother's maiden name, passwords, birth date or other identifying information in response to unexpected calls.

Be cautious when posting private information on social media. Some posts, particularly those including information about your location or upcoming plans, can make you vulnerable. For example, posting photos of your family vacation in real time can let burglars know your home is empty. It's much safer to wait and post about your travels once you're home.

It's important to remember that scammers are criminals who are skilled in deception. They often use technology to mask their location and identity, making it difficult for law enforcement and government agencies to find them and enforce the rules and regulations regarding such practices. Fortunately, progress is being made.

In recent months, some telephone companies have rolled out verification tools to reassure customers that the number showing up on their phone is the number that called, not a fraudulent "spoofed" number. This week, congressional leaders announced they have reached an agreement on an anti-robocall bill that will give government agencies more ability to go after scammers. It will also require telecom companies to verify that phone numbers are real and block numbers for free.

Find more information about avoiding telephone scams on the PUC's website at <https://puc.sd.gov/scamcalls/>.

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Today



Cloudy then  
Chance  
Drizzle

High: 43 °F

Tonight



Blustery.  
Drizzle/Snow  
then Snow  
Likely

Low: 24 °F

Thursday



Becoming  
Sunny

High: 29 °F

Thursday  
Night



Mostly Clear


Low: 18 °F

Friday




Sunny

High: 40 °F



Light Snowfall by Thursday Morning  
Check out the latest forecast at  
[www.weather.gov/abr](http://www.weather.gov/abr)



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Weekend  
Forecast

Dry with Above  
Average  
Temperatures

Today

35 to 45°

Drizzle / Light Rain  
Mainly this Afternoon

Tonight

15 to 25°

Light Snow  
Snowfall an Inch or Less

Published on: 11/20/2019 at 12:08AM

11/20/2019 5:05 AM

An area of low pressure will cross the region today through tonight. The system will bring drizzle or light rain, mainly this afternoon. As the storm moves east tonight, the drizzle will transition over to light, accumulating snow. Snowfall amounts of an inch or less will be possible by Thursday morning.

## Today in Weather History

November 20, 1975: A storm center located in Oklahoma on Tuesday, November 18th, moved northeastward across Kansas into Iowa and Wisconsin on Wednesday the 19th and Thursday the 20th. Light rain began in the eastern half South Dakota on the morning of the 19th. The rain changed to snow during the afternoon and continued through the evening of the 20th. The winds increased, and blizzard conditions were reached by 6 pm CST on Wednesday the 19th. The snow was driven by sustained winds 40 to 50 miles per hour, gusting to 75 mph on some occasions, which reduced visibility to less than one-half mile. Heavy snow ranging from six to fifteen inches fell over an area southeast of a line from Todd to Aurora to Grant County. Traffic came to a standstill by Wednesday evening the 19th. The snow abruptly ended on the night of the 20th, but winds diminished rather slowly that night. Storm total snowfalls included 9 inches at Clear Lake and 7 inches at Watertown.

November 20, 1977: The second blizzard of the month began very early on Saturday, November 19th and continued through most of Sunday, November 20th. Wind speeds exceeding 50 mph caused much blowing and drifting snow. Visibility was reduced to near zero. Most of the roads in the northern and western parts of the state were blocked. Snowfall amounts north of Milbank and Pierre to Ardmore exceeded five inches. Most of the counties in the northwest and a significant portion of those in the north-central parts of the state reported snowfall amounts exceeding ten inches. Some drifts reached 4 to 5 feet. The highest reported snowfall was 20 inches in Eagle Butte. An eastbound train from Milbank had six freight cars derailed near Albee, in Grant County as a result of the storm. Snowfall totals from this blizzard included; 20 inches at Eagle Butte; 14 inches at Leola; 12 inches at Timber Lake and Britton; 11 inches 4NNE Victor and at Mobridge; 10 inches at 6SE McIntosh, 4W Mellette, Sand Lake, and Ipswich; 9.3 inches in Aberdeen; 9 inches 4NW Onida, at Sisseton, and 2N Onaka; 8 inches at Selby; 7 inches at McLaughlin and Waubay; 6 inches at Conde and Faulkton; 5 inches at Summit and Webster; 4 inches at Pierre, Wilmot and Highmore; and 3 inches at Watertown, Clear Lake, Miller, 3NE Raymond, Redfield, and Wheaton. The 9 inches at Sisseton helped to contribute to the snowiest November on record for Sisseton, which recorded 27.5 inches for November 1977.

1900: An unusual tornado outbreak in the Lower Mississippi Valley resulted in 73 deaths and extensive damage across Arkansas, Mississippi, and Tennessee.

1985: Kate intensified to a major Category 3 Hurricane and as she moved west of Key West, Florida with top winds of 115 mph and a minimum central pressure of 954 millibars or 28.17 inches of mercury. The next day Kate made landfall between Panama City and Apalachicola, Florida. Tides ran 8 to 10 feet above normal. Many power poles and lines were downed. Several roads were washed out.

2014: From the NWS Office in Buffalo, New York, "the epic November 17-19th 2014 lake effect event will be remembered as one of the most significant winter events in Buffalo's snowy history. Over 5 feet of snow fell over areas just east of Buffalo, with mere inches a few miles away to the north. There were 13 fatalities with this storm, hundreds of major roof collapses and structural failures, 1000s of stranded motorists, and scattered food and gas shortages due to impassable roads. Numerous trees also gave way due to the weight of the snow, causing isolated power outages. While this storm was impressive on its own, a second lake effect event on Nov-19-20 dropped another 1-4 foot of snow over nearly the same area and compounded rescue and recovery efforts. Storm totals from the two storms peaked at almost 7 feet, with many areas buried under 3-4 feet of dense snowpack by the end of the event."

2015: Season's first snow is Chicago's largest November snowfall in 120 years starting on November 20 and ending on the 21st. The season's first snowfall dropped as much as 17 inches across Chicago's northern suburbs, and the total of 11.2 inches at O'Hare International Airport made it the largest November snowfall in 120 years.







## RECOGNIZING REALITY

For several weeks a radiologist had suffered from a painful stomach ache. Noting his discomfort, his associate suggested that he have a series of x-rays to rule out any problems.

He agreed to this plan and was assigned a number by the clinic. The next day he was examining a nameless but numbered x-ray. He did not realize that it was his. Suddenly he cried out, "Contact this person immediately. He has inoperable cancer."

Unfortunately, many of us have feelings of discomfort. We are "dis-eased" and troubled, anxious and afraid. We hear sermons, read Scripture and even pray but get no satisfaction or relief. Only more anxiety. We wonder what is going on.

Peter wrote to encourage us to keep our "conscience clear." When we experience moments or days of "dis-ease," it may be God's spirit reaching out to warn us. When we feel no relief or peace or quiet or joy or satisfaction, no doubt He is saying – "Take an x-ray of your heart and you will discover the problem. Look carefully for the sin that is causing your pain." If we examine our lives carefully, God will reveal the cause of our "dis-ease."

Prayer: Thank You, Lord, for all the warning signs You give us to let us know when we need to repent. May we be sensitive to the work of Your Spirit. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: 1 Peter 3:16 But do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ.

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## 2019 Groton SD Community Events

- 09/07/2019 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 09/08/2019 Sunflower Classic at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 09/12/2019 St. John's Lutheran Luncheon
- 09/20/2019 Presbyterian Luncheon
- 09/28/2019 Granary Living History Fall Festival
- 10/11/2019 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
- 10/12/2019 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
- 10/31/2019 Trunk or Treat/Halloween on Main (Halloween)
- 11/09/2019 Legion Post #39 Turkey Shoot (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
- 12/07/2019 Olive Grove Golf Course Holiday Party
- 12/07/2019 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services
- Bingo: every Wednesday at the Legion Post #39

## 2020 Groton SD Community Events

- 01/26/2020 Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)
- 04/04/2020 Groton Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt, 10 a.m. Sharp (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- 04/25/2020 Fireman's Stag (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- 05/02/2020 Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales, 8 a.m.-3 p.m. (1st Saturday in May)
- 05/25/2020 Groton American Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
- 06/8-10/2020 St. John's VBS
- 07/04/2020 Firecracker Golf Tourney (4th of July)  
Groton Hosting State B American Legion Baseball Tournament
- 07/12/2020 Summer Fest/Car Show
- 09/12/2020 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales, 8 a.m.-3 p.m. (1st Sat. after Labor Day)
- 10/10/2020 Pumpkin Fest
- 10/31/2020 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat (Halloween)
- 11/14/2020 Groton American Legion Post #39 Annual Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)

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## News from the Associated Press

### SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Tuesday:

Mega Millions

22-43-44-47-66, Mega Ball: 22, Megaplier: 3

(twenty-two, forty-three, forty-four, forty-seven, sixty-six; Mega Ball: twenty-two; Megaplier: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$192 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$80 million

### Key, Dentlinger run send S. Dakota St. past N. Alabama 78-73

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — Brandon Key scored 18 points and Matt Dentlinger scored 17 with 11 rebounds and South Dakota State beat North Alabama 78-73 on Tuesday night.

Douglas Wilson and Noah Freidel each scored 13 and Wilson grabbed nine rebounds and helped the Jackrabbits (4-2) end a two-game skid.

North Alabama led 33-32 at halftime before the Jackrabbits used an 11-5 run and never trailed again. Jamari Blackmon's jumper with 11:03 left brought the Lions within 52-51, but Key followed with a 3-pointer and a layup and Dentlinger made two foul shots and a layup for a 61-51 lead. The Lions couldn't get closer than five the rest of the way.

Blackmon scored a career-high 26 points, James Anderson II scored 16 and Payton Youngblood scored 11 for the Lions (2-3).

The Jackrabbits now have won 11 straight at home and are currently tied for the ninth-longest active streak in Division I.

It was the first-ever meeting between the two schools.

For more AP college basketball coverage: <https://apnews.com/Collegebasketball> and [http://twitter.com/AP\\_Top25](http://twitter.com/AP_Top25)

### In South Dakota, meth fighters welcome any help they get

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota's new anti-drug campaign drew plenty of mockery on social media this week for its "Meth: We're on it" slogan, but according to local police, the attention couldn't have come at a better time.

Law enforcement agencies in South Dakota are contending with a drug that is now cheaper and more potent, leading to a surge of use in the state and across the Midwest. Officers said preventing people from ever taking the highly addictive drug — a key goal of the campaign — is essential to stopping the surge.

In South Dakota, the Drug Enforcement Administration said meth seizures are up a third over last year. Other agencies have made their own seizures and seen similar jumps.

The drug is known for being especially addictive and police said it's often tied to violent crime. In Minnehaha County, which had more than 1,000 meth arrests last year, Sheriff Mike Milstead said meth is involved in many of the homicides he works. Both dealers and users carry guns to protect themselves in drug deals that can lead to violence, he added.

"I've been in this business a long time, and I would say I've never been more concerned about the safety of my officers and highway patrol officers of encountering dangerous individuals," Milstead said.

After Congress passed laws aimed at clamping down on over-the-counter medications that could be

used to make meth, the supply evolved from home-grown labs to Mexican cartels shipping in the drug. According to the DEA, meth today is 71% cheaper than in 2005, with local police saying that meth is going for as little as \$5 on the street.

Meth is especially problematic in the areas surrounding the two largest cities in the state, Sioux Falls and Rapid City. The DEA has designated those areas as high-intensity drug trafficking areas and awarded grants for special drug task forces. City and county agencies coordinate with federal law enforcement, including the DEA and the Department of Homeland Security.

Officers interviewed by The Associated Press on Tuesday said they felt they had the resources needed and that the focus should be put on prevention.

That's where Gov. Kristi Noem's "Meth. We're on it" campaign is trying to step in.

The state is spending nearly \$1.4 million on the campaign that includes TV ads, billboards and a website to direct people to prevention and addiction recovery. The state's Department of Social Services is also planning to run educational classes in every middle school by next year, to address an increase in meth use among teenagers.

While several officials did not want to comment on the awareness campaign, at least one sheriff said it is doing its job.

"Some will suggest it was a bad idea, some will say it's sheer brilliance," said Pennington County Sheriff Kevin Thom. "In 24 hours, that campaign has raised awareness of meth more than we've been able to do in the last several years."

## Body of missing fisherman recovered from Belle Fourche River

VALE, S.D. (AP) — Searchers have found the body of a missing fisherman in western South Dakota.

The body of 67-year-old Glen Shay of Vale was found Tuesday in the Belle Fourche River.

The Butte County Sheriff's Office says Shay was last seen Monday afternoon walking with two fishing poles and a folding camp stool to a fishing hole north of Vale.

Sheriff Fred Lamphere says a search began when Shay did not return.

Searchers found Shay's body in the water. Lamphere says Shay likely slipped on the river bank and drowned.

The Rapid City Journal reports the sheriff said the river banks are unstable because of high water.

## Flandreau Santee, Oglala Sioux apply to grow hemp

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Two Sioux tribes in South Dakota, the Flandreau Santee and Oglala, have filed applications with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to grow industrial hemp.

KELO-TV reports the applications come as Gov. Kristi Noem maintains a hard stance against growing the crop in the state. However, state law doesn't apply to sovereign nations.

The Flandreau Santee and Oglala are among 11 tribes and 11 states in the U.S. that have filed applications with the federal agency since it opened the process in late October.

States or tribes will have to adhere to a number of federal guidelines, including plans to comply with enforcement and inspection procedures.

Information from: KELO-TV, <http://www.keloland.com>

## Sioux Falls man uninjured after firing gun in pants pocket

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Sioux Falls police say an intoxicated man escaped injury when he accidentally fired his gun inside his pants pocket.

The 24-year-old Sioux Falls man was arrested Monday for reckless discharge of a weapon and possession a gun while intoxicated. Police say officers heard a gunshot and responded to a parking ramp about 2:30 a.m.

The Argus Leader reports they found the man who had a blood alcohol content of 0.25, which is more than three times the legal limit to drive. Police spokesman Sam Clemens says the man wasn't injured, but had a hole in his pants.

Information from: Argus Leader, <http://www.argusleader.com>

## Israel heads toward unprecedented 3rd election in 12 months

By ARON HELLER Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli kingmaker Avigdor Lieberman on Wednesday refused to endorse a candidate for prime minister, virtually guaranteeing the country will be forced into a new election, the third in less than a year.

Lieberman's comments came ahead of a midnight deadline for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's rival, Benny Gantz, to form a coalition.

A September election left both Netanyahu and Gantz short of securing a required parliamentary majority to form a government, with Lieberman holding the decisive votes.

But after weeks of negotiations, Lieberman said he could not endorse either side.

"I made every effort. I turned over every stone," he said.

Lieberman had called for a national unity government between Netanyahu's Likud party and Gantz's Blue and White. But the two leaders could not agree on a power-sharing agreement.

Gantz has until midnight to try to seek other partners, but without Lieberman, that appears impossible.

Gantz was given the opportunity to form a government last month after Netanyahu failed in the task.

## A Hong Kong protester on why he won't surrender to police

By ALICE FUNG Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Pale and thin, a teenager wandered the nearly deserted campus of Hong Kong Polytechnic University at about 1 a.m. Wednesday. He hugged his body with his arms, whether because of the chill in the air or gnawing worry he felt was unclear.

Only a handful of protesters remain at "Poly U," which hundreds occupied for several days, fighting pitched battles with police in the surrounding streets. Now, authorities have cut off the campus and are arresting anyone who comes out.

The teen, who wouldn't give his exact age but said he is under 18, is one of the holdouts. He figured he had slept about 10 hours in total since arriving at the campus about five days earlier. He said he had eaten only two biscuits all day because his mind was too distracted, obsessed with one thought: How am I going to get out?

He arrived at Polytechnic late last week, heeding a call for support from protesters who were occupying five major universities in Hong Kong. It was Thursday or Friday — the days and nights have become such a blur that he kept asking an interviewer what day it currently was.

Like many of the protesters, he spoke on condition of anonymity, fearing arrest, and would only appear on camera with his face covered.

The campus takeovers were the latest escalation in an anti-government movement that has divided the city for more than five months. The protesters' demands include fully democratic elections and an investigation into alleged police brutality in cracking down on the demonstrations.

In the mind of the teen, as for many, the police have become as big a problem as the government.

Riot officers began raining tear gas on their defense line outside the university on Saturday night, before battering them repeatedly with water cannons and tear gas on Sunday afternoon.

The teen jumped into the fray. He joined others wielding umbrellas — they call them "shields" — and taking the full brunt of the often pepper-spray-laced bursts of water.

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Three times he faced the barrages, dashing inside the campus stronghold after each attack to wash off the stinging water, change his clothes and return for the next round.

"I was at the very front," he said. "It hit me straight on and I was soaked. If I hadn't been wearing a jacket, my whole body would have felt like it was burning. Just my lower body really stung, and the water also got all over my face and into my eyes."

It's one of the roles of the front-line protesters, those who engage the police directly. Wearing gas masks, they throw homemade gasoline bombs and snuff out tear gas canisters to try to keep the police at bay.

He acknowledges that others are likely see their actions as aggressive — the police call them law-breaking rioters — but he says their role is important because the government didn't back down when hundreds of thousands of people peacefully marched in the streets in the summer.

"If it was just the peaceful protests, it wouldn't succeed," he said. "Already back in June, we saw that it was just peaceful protests, and the government wouldn't listen."

By Sunday evening, the police had begun to approach from all directions, setting up a cordon around the area. They warned that everyone inside would be subject to arrest.

Some protesters tried escaping on Monday and Tuesday; most were caught or repelled. The government offered to let those under 18 leave without facing immediate arrest, though their identification information would be taken down and they could be charged later.

Worried family members reached out to their children. The teen got WhatsApp messages from his parents, his stepmother and others asking him to give up. Police allowed religious leaders onto the campus to make similar pleas.

Others turned themselves in. The teenager wasn't swayed. He said he prefers to fight with all the strength he has. Surrendering would show that he had given up the fight and agrees with the government and the police, he said.

"Even if you get arrested or die, you know that you've tried your best and you've got no regrets," he said. And so he waits, as the hours turn into days, with less and less company around him.

## Malta arrests 'person of interest' in journalist slaying

VALLETTA, Malta (AP) — Authorities in Malta on Wednesday arrested a prominent Maltese businessman who appears to be a "person of interest" in the assassination of a leading investigative reporter.

Yorgen Fenech was on a yacht intercepted on a northward course away from Malta by the Maltese military early Wednesday and forced back to port.

In remarks to reporters, Prime Minister Joseph Muscat did not directly tie the arrest to the murder of 53-year-old Daphne Caruana Galizia in a powerful car bomb in October 2017.

But he did say that it appeared to result from comments he made a day earlier on the possibility of a pardon for an alleged middleman who had offered to identify the mastermind of the killing.

The slain journalist's three sons were more direct in their comments on Twitter, making a direct link between the arrest and their mother's assassination.

Muscat said he instructed police to be on the lookout for unusual actions by "people of interest" in the long-unsolved murder, after announcing Tuesday that a pardon would be possible for the middleman if information he provided could stand up in court.

"If I had not given these instructions, maybe today we might be speaking of persons of interest who might have escaped," Muscat told reporters.

He declined to comment further out of concern that any comments might prejudice a case.

The prime minister said that no politician is tied to Caruana Galizia's murder. However, tweets by Caruana Galizia's sons ties the arrested businessman directly to Muscat's chief of staff and a former energy minister.

No details of charges against Fenech have been revealed, but authorities would have 48 hours to decide on them.

Fenech is a very prominent hotelier and director of the Maltese power company. His name was on leaked documents as a source of income for companies named in the Panama papers.

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Caruana Galizia alleged on her blog eight months before her violent death that a company called 17 Black Ltd. was connected to Maltese politicians, but provided no specific evidence.

That reporting was picked up by the Daphne Project after her murder. It reported in April 2018 that Malta's anti-money laundering watchdog had identified Fenech, the chief executive of a Maltese property developer, as the owner of 17 Black.

The Daphne Project followed a paper trail to two Panama companies in the names of two people close to Muscat — his chief of staff and the former energy minister — that stood to receive payments from 17 Black for unspecified services. There is no evidence the payments went ahead.

## 7 key questions heading into the 2020 Democratic debate

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Political Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — New uncertainty hangs over the Democratic presidential primary as 10 candidates meet on the debate stage once again.

No longer is there a clear front-runner. The fight for African American voters is raging. And there are growing concerns that impeachment may become a distraction from the primary. Those issues and more will play out Wednesday night when the Democratic Party's top 10 face off in Atlanta just 75 days before primary voting begins.

Seven big questions heading into the debate, to be carried on MSNBC:

### WHO IS THE FRONT-RUNNER?

Turbulent polling across the early voting states has created a murky picture of the top tier of the 2020 class. As much as Joe Biden is still a front-runner, so are Elizabeth Warren, Pete Buttigieg and Bernie Sanders. The question is who gets the front-runner treatment in Wednesday's debate. Warren was under near-constant attack last month as a new leader. Will Warren continue to face the heat, or will the ascendant Buttigieg or weakening Biden take more hits?

### HOW WILL OBAMA PLAY?

Former President Barack Obama, the most popular Democrat in America, inserted himself into the 2020 primary in recent days by warning candidates against moving too far to the left. His comments create a challenge for Warren and Sanders and an opening for moderates Buttigieg, Biden and Amy Klobuchar to attack. At the same time, Obama's involvement offers a powerful reminder of the massive role African Americans will play in the presidential nomination process. As we know, all candidates not named Biden have serious work to do when it comes to winning over the black vote. Race and Obama's legacy could play a major role in shaping the action.

### WHAT SAY YOU, IMPEACHMENT JURY?

They have all come out in favor of impeachment — some more aggressively than others — but it's noteworthy that five of the 10 Democrats on stage will serve as jurors in the Senate impeachment trial should the House vote to impeach President Donald Trump. It's a complicated topic for Democrats. Some senators worry that a prospective impeachment trial will interfere with their ability to court voters early next year. Others fear that impeachment could hurt their party's more vulnerable candidates in down-ballot elections next year. Either way, what the prospective jurors do or don't say on the debate stage could be relevant if and when the Senate holds an impeachment trial, which is increasingly likely.

### WILL THEY BASH THE BILLIONAIRES?

Never before has wealth been under such aggressive attack in a presidential primary election. And with one billionaire onstage and another likely to join the field in the coming days, the billionaire bashing could reach new heights. Tom Steyer has largely gone under the radar, but the even wealthier Michael Bloomberg has generated tremendous buzz as he steps toward a run of his own. Of the two, only Steyer will be on



stage, but expect Bloomberg's shadow in particular to generate passionate arguments about wealth and the role of money in politics.

## WILL SOMEONE STAND UP FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT?

Biden continues to be the favorite of many establishment Democrats, but his underwhelming candidacy has created an opening for another pragmatic-minded Democrat to step up. That's why former Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick and Bloomberg are moving into the race. Buttigieg stepped aggressively into the establishment lane in the last debate, but many donors and elected officials remain skeptical of the 37-year-old small-city mayor's chances. The opportunity is there for lower-tier candidates including Kamala Harris, Klobuchar and Steyer.

## DOES SHE HAVE A PLAN FOR THAT?

No single issue has dominated the initial Democratic primary debates more than health care, and it's safe to assume that will be the case again Wednesday night. And no one has more riding on that specific debate than Warren, who hurt herself last month by stumbling through questions about the cost of her single-payer health care plan. Given that policy specifics make up the backbone of her candidacy, she can't afford another underwhelming performance on the defining policy debate of the primary season. Expect the policy-minded senator to have a new strategy this time around.

## CAN THEY SAVE THEMSELVES?

New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker, Hawaii Rep. Tulsi Gabbard, businessman Andrew Yang and Steyer are under enormous pressure to break out given their status as the only candidates onstage who haven't yet qualified for the December debate. They likely won't have the same number of opportunities to speak as their higher-polling rivals, but these are dire times for the underdogs. They need to do something if they expect to stay relevant in the 2020 conversation.

Catch up on the 2020 election campaign with AP experts on our weekly politics podcast, "Ground Game."

## 10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press

Your daily look at late-breaking news, upcoming events and the stories that will be talked about today:

### 1. 'I NOW DO RECALL'

Ambassador Gordon Sondland is likely to be unpredictable when he faces questions in the impeachment inquiry about his evolving accounts of the Trump administration's dealings with Ukraine.

### 2. NEW UNCERTAINTY AS DEMOCRATS DEBATE IN ATLANTA

No longer is there a clear front-runner, the fight for African American voters is raging and concerns are growing that impeachment may become a distraction from the primary.

### 3. WHERE WORRY IS RIFE DURING A LAST STAND

A teenage protester in Hong Kong is obsessed with one thought: How am I going to get out? He is one of a shrinking number of holdouts at a university campus who won't surrender to police.

### 4. WHAT POPE AIMS TO DO ON ASIAN VISIT

Francis begins a mission in Thailand and Japan to boost the morale of these countries' tiny minority Catholic communities and speak about issues of concern including human trafficking and peacemaking.

### 5. ISRAEL STRIKES IRANIAN TARGETS IN SYRIA

The "wide-scale" assault comes in response to rocket fire on the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights the day before and a war monitoring group says 11 people were killed.

### 6. AP: OXY SALES IN CHINA DRIVEN BY MISLEADING ADDICTION CLAIMS

Purdue Pharma's international affiliate, Mundipharma, pushed OxyContin in China with the same misleading claims that allegedly fed the deadliest drug abuse epidemic in U.S. history, AP finds.

### 7. CALIFORNIANS BRACE FOR MORE BLACKOUTS

Pacific Gas & Electric Co. is set to begin shutting off power to some 375,000 people in 18 Northern and central California counties as the region again faces extreme fire weather.

## 8. 'THEIR LIVELIHOOD IS IN DANGER'

Iconic singer Angelique Kidjo is helping the African Development Bank launch an effort to help close a \$42 billion financing gap in a region where one in four women starts or manages a business.

## 9. EMIRATES MAKES BIG SPLASH AT AIRSHOW

The Middle East's biggest airline announces a firm order for 30 Boeing 787 Dreamliners in a deal valued at \$8.8 billion.

## 10. ISLES BEAT PENS TO MAKE NHL HISTORY

The New York Islanders became the first team ever to win consecutive games in which they trailed by multiple goals with less than seven minutes left in regulation.

## UK Tories under fire for Twitter name switch during debate

By **DANICA KIRKA and JILL LAWLESS** Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Britain's Conservative Party was accused Wednesday of trying to deceive voters by changing the name of its press office Twitter account to "factcheckUK" during a televised election debate between Prime Minister Boris Johnson and opposition Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn.

Rebranded to resemble a neutral fact-checking account, it posted a series of tweets supporting Johnson during Tuesday's debate. It later reverted to the name "CCHQ Press" and restored the party logo to its profile.

Organizations that seek to combat political misinformation cried foul.

"It was an attempt to mislead voters," Will Moy, chief executive of the London-based fact-checking website Full Fact, told the BBC. "And I think it is inappropriate and misleading for a serious political party to behave that way."

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab defended the party's actions, saying the Twitter account was clearly linked to the Conservatives.

"We make no apology for having an instant rebuttal to all the nonsense and lies put out," Raab told the BBC.

Twitter pledged to take "decisive corrective action" against similar strategies in the future. But the manipulation of the account in a high-profile event put the issue of the rise of digital campaigning squarely in the public eye.

All political parties are devoting much of their campaign spending to the digital realm as they battle to win the U.K.'s Dec. 12 election.

Despite parliamentary reports urging new regulations to combat misinformation or regulate the way digital ads are targeted at voters, officials in Britain have made no significant changes to laws governing online ads, social media and election disinformation.

In a reflection of the confusion, the Electoral Commission, which regulates campaign finances, issued a statement warning that "voters are entitled to transparency and integrity from campaigners in the lead-up to an election." Critically, however, it pointed out that it doesn't have "a role in regulating election campaign content."

With the absence of law, campaigns have already been pressing the boundaries to get attention. The Conservative Party became embroiled in controversy earlier this month when it posted a video on social media containing a misleading edit of a television interview with Keir Starmer, a senior Labour Party figure. The video had been altered to show Starmer failing to answer a question about Brexit, when, in fact, he responded quickly. The chairman of the Conservative Party described the doctored video as lighthearted satire.

In their first TV debate of the election on Tuesday, Johnson and Corbyn attacked each other's policies on Brexit, health care and the economy.

But the debate likely failed to answer the question that has dogged the campaign: Who can voters trust?

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The two leaders sidestepped tricky questions about their own policies in the hourlong encounter and drew derisive laughter from the studio audience at several points.

Both Johnson and Corbyn are trying to overcome a mountain of mistrust as they try to win over a Brexit-weary electorate.

Johnson is under fire for failing to deliver on his often-repeated vow that Britain would leave the EU on Oct. 31.

Audience members laughed when he urged voters, "Look what I have said I'm going to do as a politician and look what I've delivered."

Corbyn, a stolid socialist, is accused by critics of promoting high-tax policies and of failing to clamp down on anti-Semitism within his party. His refusal to say which side he would be on in a Brexit referendum was also met with hoots of laughter.

Televised debates are a relatively new phenomenon in British elections — the first took place in 2010 — and they have the power to transform campaigns. A confident 2010 appearance by former Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg sparked a wave of "Cleggmania" that helped to propel him into the deputy prime minister post in a coalition government with the Conservatives. Clegg now works for Facebook.

Follow AP's full coverage of Brexit and British politics at <https://www.apnews.com/Brexit>

## Unpredictable Sondland faces questions about Trump, Ukraine

By **LISA MASCARO, MARY CLARE JALONICK and ERIC TUCKER** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ambassador Gordon Sondland, the most anticipated witness in the impeachment inquiry, is likely to be unpredictable when he faces questions about his evolving accounts of the Trump administration's dealings with Ukraine and a newly revealed summertime phone call with President Donald Trump.

Sondland, a wealthy hotelier Trump tapped as his ambassador to the European Union, is more directly entangled than any witness yet in the Republican president's efforts to get Ukraine to investigate political rival Joe Biden and Democrats in the 2016 election. Yet Sondland has already amended his testimony once — "I now do recall," he said, talking to Ukraine about investigations.

Sondland's appearance at Wednesday morning's hearing, and his closeness to Trump, is of particular concern to the White House as the historic impeachment inquiry reaches closer to the president, pushing through an intense week with nine witnesses testifying over three days in back-to-back sessions.

Trump has recently tried to suggest that he barely knows his hand-picked ambassador, but Sondland has said he has spoken several times with the president and was acting on his direction.

The envoy is likely to face tough questions from lawmakers of both parties about Trump's July 25 call when he asked Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskiy for the political investigations at the same time as U.S. military aid for the ally was being stalled.

Sondland routinely bragged about his proximity to Trump and drew alarm from the foreign service and national security apparatus as part of an irregular channel of diplomacy led by the president's lawyer Rudy Giuliani.

Last week State Department official David Holmes revealed one of those interactions to impeachment investigators, saying he recalled it "vividly."

The political counselor was having lunch with Sondland in Kyiv when the ambassador dialed up the president on his cellphone and Holmes could hear Trump's voice.

"I then heard President Trump ask, quote, 'So he's going to do the investigation?'" Holmes testified. "Ambassador Sondland replied that 'He's going to do it,' adding that President Zelensky will, quote, 'do anything you ask him to.'"

Sondland was known for telling others "he was in charge of Ukraine" despite being the U.S. envoy in Brussels, said another witness in the impeachment probe, former White House Russia adviser Fiona Hill.

"And I asked, well, on whose authority?" said Hill, who will testify Thursday. "And he said, the President."

Sondland's appearance follows the testimony Tuesday of four national security and diplomatic officials, including a career Army officer who described Trump's call with Zelenskiy as "improper."

Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman told lawmakers it was his "duty" to report his concerns about the call, as he deflected Republican attacks, including from the White House on his loyalty and career in public service.

It wasn't the first time Vindman had registered his concerns over Ukraine policy. He testified about a July 10 meeting at the White House when Sondland told visiting Ukraine officials they would need to "deliver" before the administration would agree to a meeting Zelenskiy wanted with Trump.

"Ambassador Sondland referred to investigations into the Bidens and Burisma in 2016," Vindman testified, referring to the gas company on whose board Hunter Biden had a seat.

At the White House, Trump said he had watched part of the day's testimony and slammed the ongoing impeachment hearings as a "disgrace." Over the weekend, Trump assailed Williams as part of the "Never Trumpers" who oppose his presidency, though there is no indication she has shown any partisanship.

Former National Security Council official Timothy Morrison told investigators that he witnessed a key September conversation in Warsaw between Sondland and a top aide to Zelenskiy. Afterward, Sondland said he had relayed to the Ukrainian that U.S. aid might be freed if the country would announce the investigations, Morrison testified.

Another diplomat, former special envoy to Ukraine Kurt Volker, shifted his own account of the July 10 meeting to say Sondland did, in fact, discuss investigations with the visiting Ukrainians.

"I think all of us thought it was inappropriate; the conversation did not continue and the meeting concluded," Volker said.

A series of text messages Volker provided to lawmakers showed conversations between him, Sondland and other leaders in which they discussed a need for Ukraine to launch investigations, including into Burisma.

Volker said meeting with Giuliani was just part of the dialogue, and he had one in-person meeting with him, in which Giuliani "raised, and I rejected, the conspiracy theory that Vice President Biden would have been influenced in his duties as vice president by money paid to his son."

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Associated Press writers Alan Fram, Zeke Miller, Laurie Kellman, Colleen Long, Eric Tucker, Lolita Baldor and Jill Colvin contributed to this report.

## 'I now recall': What to watch in Trump impeachment hearings

By LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Exactly what is Gordon Sondland's story?

Certainly it's full of international mystery, which House impeachment investigators are sorting through as they probe President Donald Trump's pressure on Ukraine to investigate Joe Biden. But the intrigue is largely due to other witnesses recalling conversations with Sondland that he did not mention to impeachment investigators.

Trump's ambassador to the European Union, an Oregon hotelier and million-dollar Trump donor, Sondland has said he cannot recall many of the episodes involving him that others have recounted in colorful detail. What he does recall he sometimes remembers differently.

The discrepancies with other witnesses, and Sondland's with himself, matter as he testifies Wednesday under oath and penalty of perjury.

What to watch when the hearings open at 9 a.m. EST:

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### AT ISSUE

Listen for how Sondland describes his role in Trump's Ukraine policy and whether that policy was to hold up military aid until Ukraine made a public announcement that it was investigating Biden's son Hunter Biden.

Former White House national security aide Fiona Hill testified in private that Sondland informed her that he was in charge of Ukraine policy because the Republican president said so.

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Asked about that conversation during a deposition, Sondland said: "I don't recall. I may have; I may not have. Again, I don't recall."

Besides, he says now that he viewed his role on Ukraine as one of support rather than leadership.

## JULY 10 MEETINGS

Testimony from multiple witnesses have described a pair of pivotal, sometimes tense, meetings at the White House on July 10 involving combinations of U.S. and Ukrainian leaders. Several of those present say Sondland explicitly connected a coveted White House visit to a public announcement by Ukraine of corruption investigations.

Army Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman remembers Sondland saying that day that the Ukrainians would have to deliver an investigation into the Bidens.

Sondland tells a different version, saying he doesn't recall mentioning Ukraine investigations or Burisma, the gas company on whose board Hunter Biden served. The only conflict he describes from that day is a disagreement on whether to promptly schedule a call between Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy. Sondland was in favor.

## EVERYTHING'

William Taylor, the acting U.S. ambassador in Ukraine, told lawmakers that Sondland said that "everything" Ukraine wanted — a White House visit for its new leader and the release of military aid — was contingent on a public announcement of investigations into the 2016 election and into Burisma.

Sondland tells a more complex story.

In his closed-door testimony, Sondland stated that he wouldn't have withheld military aid for any reason.

Not only that, he said he didn't recall any conversations with the White House about withholding military assistance in return for Ukraine helping with Trump's political campaign. Even then, though, he left himself some wiggle room, saying a text message he sent to Taylor reassuring him that there was no quid pro was simply what he had heard from Trump.

Weeks later, after testimony from Taylor and National Security Council official Tim Morrison placed him at the center of key discussions, Sondland revised his account in an extraordinary way, saying "I now recall" more details. He amended his testimony to confirm that Taylor's account was correct.

Among the conversations Sondland now recalled was telling an aide to Zelenskiy in September that military aid likely would not occur until Ukraine made public announcements about corruption investigations.

## HOW INVOLVED WAS MULVANEY?

Multiple witnesses describe a cozy relationship between Sondland and Mick Mulvaney, the White House acting chief of staff.

Vindman, a National Security Council official, says Sondland cited a discussion with Mulvaney when pushing Ukrainian officials to open the investigations that Trump wanted into the 2016 presidential election and Biden.

Fiona Hill, another White House national security official, says the then-national security adviser, John Bolton, told her he didn't want to be part of "whatever drug deal Sondland and Mulvaney are cooking up."

Sondland suggests he knows Mulvaney only well enough to wave and say hello.

## TRUMP, REPUBLICANS?

Of the nine witnesses testifying over three days this week, White House officials are concerned most about Sondland — because they aren't sure what he's going to say.

If Sondland's name-dropping is accurate, he may have had direct conversations with Trump.

It'll be hard for the president to attack his own EU ambassador, or for Republicans aware of the president's expectation of loyalty, to do so.

## HOW SONDLAND IS SEEN OVERSEAS

He calls himself a “disruptive diplomat.”

Sondland may not be missed on the Continent as he testifies in Washington. Even before he got involved in Ukraine, Sondland’s caustic style had already created problems in Brussels, where he is the U.S. ambassador to the 28-nation EU.

He visited Ukraine twice, even though it is not part of the EU and not part of his formal responsibilities. He also gave an interview with Ukrainian television boasting of his closeness to Trump and laying out his views of Ukraine, almost like instructions: “They’re Western and they’re going to stay Western.”

Sondland is known for the grand gesture. At a party for diplomats and journalists last month at the ornate Cercle Gaulois club between the Belgian parliament and royal palace, he highlighted his close links with Trump and the president’s confidants. He spoke of a three-hour “family dinner” in Manhattan with two incoming EU leaders, Trump’s daughter Ivanka and her husband, Jared Kushner.

There was also a special guest: comedian Jay Leno, who is said to be among Zelenskiy’s heroes.

Follow Kellman on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/APLaurieKellman>

## Israel strikes Iranian targets in Syria; 11 reported killed

By TIA GOLDENBERG and BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — The Israeli military said it struck dozens of Iranian targets in Syria on Wednesday, carrying out a “wide-scale” strike in response to rocket fire on the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights the day before.

A Britain-based war monitoring group said the Israeli airstrikes killed 11 people, including seven non-Syrians who are most likely Iranians. Syrian state media only reported that two civilians were killed.

The Israeli military said its fighter jets hit multiple targets belonging to Iran’s elite Quds force, including surface-to-air missiles, weapons warehouses and military bases. After the Syrian military fired an air defense missile, the Israeli military said a number of Syrian aerial defense batteries were also destroyed.

The death toll of 11 was reported by Rami Abdurrahman, who heads the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition activist group with a network of activists across Syria.

The Observatory said the airstrikes targeted arms depots belonging to the Quds Force in the Damascus suburbs of Kisweh and Qudsaya. Abdurrahman added that several other areas were targeted in Wednesday’s strikes, including the Mazzeh airbase in western Damascus where air defense units are stationed.

Syria’s state SANA news agency said the two civilians were killed by shrapnel when an Israeli missile hit a house in the town of Saasaa, southwest of Damascus. It said several others were wounded, including a girl in a residential building in the suburb of Qudsaya, also west of the Syrian capital.

It claimed that Syrian air defenses destroyed most of the Israeli missiles before they reached their targets.

Wednesday’s strikes on Syria were the most intense since Jan. 21, when Israel claimed responsibility for a series of airstrikes on Iranian military targets in the Arab country, including munition storage facilities, an intelligence site and a military training camp, in response to an Iranian missile attack the previous day.

Israel had said the missile, fired by Iranian forces in Syria, was intercepted over a ski resort on the Golan Heights and that there were no injuries. The Iranian launch followed a rare Israeli daylight air raid near the Damascus International Airport.

The latest strikes further burst into the open what’s been a long shadow war between Israel and its archenemy Iran. The two foes have increasingly clashed over what Israel says is Iran’s deeper presence along its borders.

“Yesterday’s Iranian attack towards Israel is further clear proof of the purpose of the Iranian entrenchment in Syria, which threatens Israeli security, regional stability and the Syrian regime,” the military said in a statement, adding that it would “continue operating firmly and resolutely” against Iran in Syria.

Lt. Col. Jonathan Conricus, a military spokesman, said the significance of the operation was the “multitude of targets” hit.

Several important targets were struck, he said, including what he described as the Iranian headquarters

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at Damascus airport where senior Iranian officials are based and which is used to coordinate shipments from Iran to its allies in Syria and beyond. He added that Israel also holds Syria responsible for hosting the Iranians.

Tuesday's rocket fire on the Golan was the sixth attempt by Iran to attack Israeli targets since February 2018, and all have been thwarted, Conricus said.

While Israel faces tensions with Iranian proxies along its borders, Iran's regional influence is also being challenged by unprecedented, economically-driven mass protests in Iraq and Lebanon — two countries where Tehran wields major influence. The protests are creating unrest that Tehran fears would spark a backlash against Iran-backed proxy militias in those countries.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has issued a series of warnings recently about Iranian aggression throughout the Middle East and has vowed to respond firmly.

"I made it clear: whoever harms us, we will harm them. That's what we did tonight," he said early Wednesday. "We will continue to aggressively protect Israel's security."

Israel's new hard-line defense minister, Naftali Bennett, issued an equally firm statement.

"The rules have changed: whoever fires on Israel during the day will not sleep at night," he said. "Our message to the leaders of Iran is simple: you are no longer immune. Any place you dispatch your tentacles, we will chop them off."

The rare rocket fire came a week after an Israeli airstrike against a top Palestinian militant based in Syria. Akram al-Ajouri, a member of the leadership of the militant Islamic Jihad group who is living in exile, survived the attack but his son and granddaughter were killed.

Israel frequently strikes Iranian interests in Syria. But last week's airstrike appeared to be a rare assassination attempt of a Palestinian militant in the Syrian capital. It came the same day as another Israeli airstrike killed a senior Islamic Jihad commander in Gaza, settling off the fiercest round of fighting there in years.

Iran has forces based in Syria, Israel's northern neighbor, and supports Hezbollah militants in Lebanon. In Gaza, it supplies Islamic Jihad with cash, weapons and expertise.

Netanyahu also has claimed Iran is using Iraq and far-off Yemen, where Tehran supports Shiite Houthi rebels at war with a Saudi-led coalition backing the government, to plan attacks against Israel. Hamas also receives some support from Iran.

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Mroue reported from Beirut. Associated Press writers Aron Heller in Jerusalem and Albert Aji in Damascus, Syria, contributed to this report.

## **AP: Oxy sales in China driven by misleading addiction claims**

**By ERIKA KINETZ Associated Press**

SHANGHAI (AP) — Thousands of lawsuits across the United States have accused a drug company owned by the billionaire Sackler family of using false claims to push highly addictive opioids on an unsuspecting nation, fueling the deadliest drug epidemic in U.S. history.

Yet, even as its U.S. drugmaker collapses under the charges, another company owned by the family has used the same tactics to peddle its signature painkiller, OxyContin, in China, according to interviews with current and former employees and documents obtained by the Associated Press.

The documents and interviews indicate that representatives from the Sacklers' Chinese affiliate, Mundipharma, tell doctors that time-release painkillers like OxyContin are less addictive than other opioids—the same pitch that Purdue Pharma, the U.S. company owned by the family, admitted was false in court more than a decade ago.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The Associated Press, supported by a grant from the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, is investigating the global spread of opioids and its consequences.

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Mundipharma has pushed ever larger doses of the drug, even as it became clear that higher doses present higher risks, and represented the drug as safe for chronic pain, according the interviews and documents.

These tactics mirror those employed by Purdue Pharma in the U.S., where more than 400,000 people have died of opioid overdoses and millions more became addicted. An avalanche of litigation over the company's marketing has driven Purdue Pharma into bankruptcy in the U.S.

In China, Mundipharma managers have required sales representatives to copy patients' private medical records without consent, in apparent violation of Chinese law, current and former employees told AP. Former reps also said they sometimes disguised themselves as medical staff, putting on white doctor's coats and lying about their identity to visit patients in the hospital. As in the U.S., marketing material in China made claims about OxyContin's safety and effectiveness based on company-funded studies and outdated data that has been debunked.

The AP examined more than 3,300 pages of training and marketing materials used by Mundipharma staff, as well as internal company documents and videos. These files came from three independent sources and were verified by cross-checking. AP also spoke with one current and three former OxyContin sales representatives who worked at the company last year.

Mundipharma has promoted its blockbuster product, OxyContin, in questionable ways in other countries, including Italy and Australia. But the company has particularly high hopes for China — the world's most populous nation and second largest economy— where it has said it wants sales to surpass those in the U.S. by 2025.

Though Mundipharma and Purdue are separate legal entities, both are owned by the Sackler family. Today, Mundipharma is a bargaining chip in negotiations to settle sweeping U.S. litigation. The Sackler family agreed to cede ownership of Purdue, but wants to keep Mundipharma for now to sell OxyContin abroad. They have discussed eventually selling Mundipharma to fund the family's contribution to a nationwide settlement in the U.S.

Mundipharma said it was taking immediate action to investigate the allegations uncovered by AP. In a statement, the company did not respond to specific allegations but said it has rigorous policies in place "to ensure that our medicines are marketed responsibly and in accordance with China's strict regulatory framework governing analgesics."

In response to detailed questions, Purdue said Mundipharma is an independent entity, operating in a different country, under different laws and regulations. Representatives of the Sackler family did not respond to detailed requests for comment.

In the United States, Purdue stopped promoting OxyContin to doctors in 2018 and got rid of its entire opioid sales staff.

Meanwhile, Mundipharma is hiring in China.

## A CELESTIAL CHALLENGE

Mundipharma China was born in 1993 in a signing ceremony at the Great Hall of the People on Tiananmen Square. Just as in the U.S., the Sackler family's business interests in China coincided with their philanthropy.

The month after Mundipharma's creation, the Arthur M. Sackler Museum of Art and Archeology opened its doors at Peking University in Beijing. Outside the museum is a statue dedicated to Arthur Sackler and his wife by the China Medical Tribune, a journal he helped found that now claims a readership of more than a million Chinese doctors.

These seeds of philanthropy and political alliances would bear fruit for the Sacklers just as opioid prescriptions began to fall in the U.S.

China was a tantalizing market for the Sacklers. The country's per capita consumption of opioids was low and it had millions of new cancer cases every year.

But if convincing U.S. doctors in America that opioids are safe was a hard sell, in China, it would be even more difficult.

China fought two wars in the 19th century to beat back British ships dumping opium that fueled widespread addiction. Today, the cultural aversion to taking drugs — in Chinese, literally "sucking poison" — is



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so strong addicts can be forced into police-run treatment centers. The country does not appear to have an opioid crisis anything like in the U.S.

Two decades ago, as stories of OxyContin abuse began to circulate in the United States, foreign pharmaceutical companies helped spread a new gospel of pain treatment across China, recasting pain as the fifth vital sign—alongside blood pressure, heart rate, respiratory rate, and temperature—and pain treatment as a human right.

Dr. Yu Buwei, director of anesthesiology at Shanghai's prestigious Ruijin Hospital, was skeptical. Philosophical and soft-spoken, Yu was deeply grounded in traditional Chinese medicine. During China's Cultural Revolution he used acupuncture as anesthesia on patients undergoing major surgery.

"It is necessary to treat pain," Yu said. "We agree with this. But raising it to a human right and the fifth vital sign, we think is controversial."

Many of his younger colleagues, however, appeared in thrall of these foreign ideas. They believed the best medical practices came from the United States. Few understood how deeply the Western consensus about pain had been shaped by the financial self-interest of pharmaceutical companies.

"In China, doctor's groups, especially the young doctors, show their respect to American doctors or the European doctors," Yu said. "What they say, that's truth. What you say, that's interfering."

## DESPERATELY SEEKING SALES

In 2007, Purdue and three executives pleaded guilty in U.S. court to misrepresenting OxyContin as less addictive than other opioid painkillers, and paid \$635 million in penalties, one of the largest settlements in pharmaceutical company history.

Sackler family members began to worry about a "dangerous concentration of risk" in their U.S. business, and trained their sights on the global market. Not long after, Mundipharma helped launch a campaign to improve cancer pain care in China called Good Pain Management, or GPM, according to interviews and company documents.

Today, the program is portrayed as a government public health initiative. But Zhang Li, director of internal medicine at Sun Yat-sen University Cancer Center in Guangzhou, said GPM "got the energetic support of Mundipharma during the launch process."

According to Zhang, the GPM campaign was started in 2009 under his leadership, by a group within the Guangdong Provincial Anti-Cancer Association, a non-profit that accepts corporate funding. Pharmaceutical companies helped by covering the cost of training and educational materials, he said.

Two years later, the Chinese government launched the campaign nationwide. On February 22, 2011, Mundipharma won a contract to implement the program with an initial target of establishing model GPM wards in 150 key hospitals within three years.

It was a watershed moment for the company.

Mundipharma was responsible for helping train doctors and educate patients, as well as distributing pamphlets and placards to raise awareness about pain. "Mundipharma will eventually become your best supporter and partner in creating a demonstration ward," proclaimed a PowerPoint assembled in 2009.

The program was a three-way alliance among the then-Ministry of Health, the Chinese Society of Clinical Oncology and Mundipharma, according to Zhang and presentations used by Mundipharma sales staff.

Mundipharma's initial contract with the oncology society gave it a seat on the GPM leadership team and barred the company from using the program to market its products, according to sections of the contract obtained by AP. In internal company documents, however, Mundipharma treated the program as part of its marketing strategy and used it to tout the superiority of its own products.

"We were definitely talking about OxyContin ninety percent of the time," said a former sales rep who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of retribution.

The oncology society declined to answer questions. China's Ministry of Health, which was reorganized as the National Health Commission, said it hadn't designated a company to provide assistance for the program.

One GPM presentation that Mundipharma employees said was still being used last year suggested OxyContin is the preferred option for cancer pain treatment under World Health Organization and other guidelines, before detailing why competing painkillers such as acetaminophen, fentanyl patches and im-

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mediate release morphine aren't recommended.

The WHO does not recommend OxyContin as superior to other drugs for cancer pain care.

In a statement to AP, the company said its role in GPM is only to assist with implementation. "The Program is independently initiated and managed with the goal of improving the medical community's understanding of cancer pain management treatments," the company said.

Mundipharma told AP that all marketing materials undergo multi-level approval. But current and former employees acknowledged that they sometimes altered the officially-vetted presentations. The messages contained in all three sets of documents were consistent and contained information that Purdue Pharma has used in the United States.

In the years after GPM rolled out, from 2012 through 2018, sales of Mundipharma's oxycodone, the active ingredient in OxyContin, at nearly 700 of China's major hospitals rose five-fold, according to previously unreported data from the government-linked China National Pharmaceutical Industry Information Center.

During that same period, sales of morphine, widely considered an affordable "gold standard" for pain treatment, remained flat at those same hospitals. By early 2017, OxyContin had captured roughly 60 percent of the cancer pain market in China, up from just over 40 percent in 2014, company documents show.

Tony Chen, a former OxyContin sales rep who spoke on condition that he be identified by his English name, for fear of retribution, said he loved GPM because the government backing got him high-level access at hospitals and helped drive sales.

"We didn't need to bribe," he said. "That's why I liked it."

The pressure to perform was intense. Chen and other reps said quarterly sales targets rose by as much as 30 percent. If he surpassed them, he could more than double his take home pay. If he didn't, he could lose his job.

He said he was prepared to "get fired up" about driving growth. He wasn't prepared to break the law.

One current and three former sales reps who worked in different parts of China told the AP that managers required them to upload patients' medical records, obtained without consent, to a company chat group each day.

AP was shown snapshots of prescription records staff said were sent to managers. Handwritten on pink slips of paper, they included the patient's full name, age, phone number, ID number, diagnosis and prescription.

The more precise the information, the better Mundipharma could plan sales targets, as well as guide doctors to increase dosages and switch to OxyContin from rival drugs, former sales reps explained.

Chen knew he had no legal right to copy personal information, and at first scribbled over patients' names before uploading the documents. He and his colleagues said they used to discreetly snap photos of patient records during the night shift, or during lunch breaks.

Ultimately, Chen said, he decided his effort to protect privacy was a waste of time because other people in his group were uploading full patient records. He told himself it was OK because the information wouldn't circulate outside Mundipharma.

When it was time for hospital rounds, Chen sometimes slipped on a white doctor's coat and mingled with medical staff. If anyone asked who he was, he lied and told them he was a doctor or an intern. He said he sometimes asked patients directly if they felt sore, swollen or numb and how they were sleeping.

Two other former OxyContin sales reps said they also disguised themselves in doctor's coats and sat in on patient meetings.

The key to this access was good relationships with doctors. Just as Purdue was accused of doing in the U.S., Mundipharma cultivated doctors with paid speaking gigs, dinners, event sponsorships and expense-paid trips to meetings, sometimes routing payments through third parties, sales reps said. Speakers, who sometimes delivered presentations created by or with Mundipharma sales staff, could earn 500 yuan (\$70) to several thousand yuan per speech, current and former employees said.

Two of Chen's former colleagues said they also used gift cards to encourage doctors to prescribe more. It was easy to fake receipts for company expense reports and get cash to fund under-the-table payments,

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they claimed.

Mundipharma told AP it promotes ethical behavior and compliance with Chinese law through internal monitoring as well as external audits. "We have detailed policies covering interactions with healthcare professionals, grants and donations, and sponsorships and incentives," the company said, adding that a compliance team monitors expense claims and meetings.

China has some of the strictest regulation in the world on the use of opioids. Opioid painkillers like OxyContin are not available at pharmacies. They are stored under double-lock at hospitals and governed by so-called "red prescriptions," which only specially certified doctors can write.

But as pain treatment expanded in China, with the establishment of pain clinics beginning in 2007 and the rollout of GPM, more doctors became certified to prescribe opioids. Pain management ceased to be the purview of anesthesiologists like Ruijin Hospital's Dr. Yu. It became a matter for surgeons, pain clinicians and cancer doctors.

"Patients, or drug abusers, can get these kinds of drugs much more easily compared with 10 years ago," Yu said. "That's a problem."

Yu read about what was happening in the U.S. and worried for China. "There is already a quite enormous group of drug users in this society," he said.

Yu resisted the notion that opioid painkillers weren't addictive and could be safely used, at any dose, for all kinds of pain. He checked the scientific references on clinical presentations and often found them unconvincing. He barred sales reps from his department.

Yu said he tried to persuade colleagues that some of the new notions about pain were silly, even risky. "I remember I argued with them, muscle pain or joint pain is not a good indication for opioid drugs," he said. "But they said, it's a human right. You have to relieve the pain."

## A FAMILIAR PLAYBOOK

When Chen started work at Mundipharma, he was taught that OxyContin was a good drug, and widely used in America.

The company gave him hundreds of pages of documents to study. Chen read that the risk of getting addicted to opioid painkillers was virtually non-existent and that OxyContin's slow-release formulation made it even safer. He didn't bother to check the references Mundipharma cited as proof. Neither did most doctors at China's notoriously overburdened hospitals. And the legal sanctions Purdue faced in the U.S. didn't apply in China, where some people had never heard of the company or its troubles.

"I considered this a problem in terms of humanistic care for patients," Chen said. "This is a really good product."

In the 2007 lawsuit filed by U.S. prosecutors, Purdue conceded that some of its employees had falsely claimed that long-acting opioids are less addictive because they have fewer "peak and trough" effects and cause less euphoria. Purdue entered into a legally binding agreement with the U.S. government to ensure that their staff never made such claims again.

"Purdue accepted responsibility for the misconduct in 2007 and has since then strived never to repeat it," the company said again in a legal filing in September.

Yet, three current and former employees of Purdue's international affiliate in China made the same claim to AP that OxyContin reduces the risk of addiction because it is released slowly into the bloodstream, causing fewer "peaks and troughs" than immediate-release drugs. This argument has no scientific basis, according to a 2016 U.S. Centers for Disease Control report.

Sustained-release technology "further reduces the incidence of addiction," reads a Mundipharma PowerPoint slide staff said was still in use last year. It referenced a study in the scientific journal *Cancer* from 1989 funded by Purdue and co-authored by a Purdue employee, and a brief 2004 Chinese study.

Neither paper actually examined addiction risk.

Some influential doctors in China also continue to make Mundipharma's argument.

"The prolonged release formulation doesn't easily give rise to drug dependence," Dr. Fan Bifa, the director of the pain clinic at the China-Japan Friendship Hospital in Beijing, told the AP in May.

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Dr. Fan has spoken at Mundipharma-funded conferences and appeared in a pain awareness video alongside Mundipharma China's general manager, other prominent doctors and celebrities. The China-Japan Friendship Hospital was among the first to obtain certification under the Good Pain Management program in Beijing.

Fan told AP he has never taken money directly from Mundipharma.

When AP told Fan about Purdue's 2007 guilty plea, he seemed shocked. He said he had never looked for scientific evidence to prove that sustained release opioids are less likely to cause addiction.

Other Mundipharma materials echoed a brief 1980 letter in the New England Journal of Medicine that has been repeatedly and incorrectly cited to suggest that opioids aren't as addictive as everyone had long thought. Even after the journal "for reasons of public health" took the unusual step of publishing a cautionary editor's note above the letter, it continued to be used in China.

"In the last 40 years, clinical studies at home and abroad have shown that the danger of opioid dependence occurring is less than 3/10,000," proclaimed a Sept. 2017 press release for a Mundipharma-backed cancer pain awareness campaign.

Three current and former OxyContin sales reps repeated similar statistics to AP.

In a statement to AP, Mundipharma said that it "mandates warnings of addiction risk" in material used by sales representatives, but did not provide further detail. The package insert for OxyContin in China warns that it has the potential for abuse but also says "concerns about abuse, addiction, and diversion should not prevent proper use for pain treatment."

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control says that as many as 1 in 4 people prescribed opioids for long-term use struggles with addiction.

The Mundipharma sales reps told AP they had a pitch for doctors worried about addiction: If used properly, the risks of addiction to opioid painkillers are virtually non-existent. Patients who seem addicted may just need more drugs to control pain, staff PowerPoints explained.

"Based on my experience, that's like a joke," Dr. Yu said.

He said patients could slip into addiction within a few days. "They came to you and started talking repeatedly about pain and asked you to prescribe medicine," Yu said. "We call this drug-seeking behavior."

Mundipharma called it "pseudoaddiction."

It is a notion first popularized by Dr. J. David Haddox, who coined the term "pseudoaddiction" in a 1989 paper. Haddox went on to spend nearly two decades as an executive at Purdue Pharma.

OxyContin's FDA-approved label warns that even if taken as prescribed, OxyContin carries potentially lethal risks of addiction and abuse. Purdue now faces multiple U.S. lawsuits for spreading ideas about pseudoaddiction, as well as claiming the risk of opioid addiction is low and that doses can be increased without risk.

The idea that patients can safely take as much OxyContin as they want was great for Chen's bottom line. Mundipharma sometimes offered special bonuses for selling 40 mg OxyContin, the largest, most expensive dose sold in China, internal documents and interviews show.

But Chen said cramming people full of pills "would lay heavy on my conscience."

Chen flipped through a PowerPoint presentation on high-dose opioids he said he got from his boss at Mundipharma and pointed to an example of a patient taking 1500 mg twice a day.

"It's terrifying," he said.

A year after the CDC said that taking more than 33mg of OxyContin a day at least doubles the risk of overdose, Mundipharma came out with a marketing plan pushing its 40mg pill.

Mundipharma said its training covers "appropriate dosage levels for cancer patients" and provides information "in accordance with current best practice."

As Chen looked back over his training documents, he found presentations touting opioid painkillers as a safe and effective treatment for chronic pain, citing outdated studies with authors linked to Mundipharma and other companies.

The co-author on a 2006 study of visceral pain went on to serve as a paid consultant for Mundipharma. One of the authors on another study, from 2003, cited as evidence that OxyContin is "ideal" for neuropathic pain, was a Mundipharma Canada employee. Mundipharma sourced OxyContin's effectiveness for

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osteoarthritis pain to the American Academy of Pain Medicine, a professional society that attorneys general allege, in multiple lawsuits, is a paid front group for corporate interests.

In the U.S., Purdue also set out to change the culture of pain by first focusing on cancer. But from the beginning, Purdue was after the far larger non-cancer pain market, according to budget documents released by the Florida Attorney General's office and published by Kaiser Health News.

The CDC says there are risks of "serious harms" from taking opioids long-term for chronic pain, but evidence for the potential benefits is lacking.

In a statement to AP, Mundipharma said that OxyContin "is used in practice only for the treatment of cancer pain in China."

But under Chinese regulations, OxyContin can be used to treat moderate to severe pain, whether it's caused by cancer or not. Government guidelines published in 2002 specify that strong opioids like OxyContin can be used after other methods have failed for non-cancer patients who are over 40 years of age and suffer from a handful of painful conditions.

But the guidelines are not rigorously followed. AP spoke with three doctors who said they prescribed OxyContin for a range of chronic pain conditions, though all said the numbers of non-cancer pain patients on OxyContin in China are small.

China's National Health Commission, the National Medical Products Administration, the State Administration for Market Regulation and the National Development and Reform Commission all declined to comment on detailed questions from the AP.

## AN UNCERTAIN LEGACY

If the U.S. has entered an endgame in its battle with prescription painkillers, China is somewhere near the beginning. While some people believe China's painful history with opium and strict regulations will protect it against a U.S.-style outbreak, others fear for the future.

"Why am I afraid of a drug epidemic?" Dr. Yu said. "If our doctors can't stand temptation and want to make tens or hundreds of thousands of yuan a month, it is easy to be manipulated by other people."

Sitting in a large, Spartan office at Ruijin's campus in suburban Shanghai, Yu had an air of resignation. His beliefs about how to shepherd people through suffering had fallen out of fashion in China. But Yu seemed at peace with his lost prestige.

In the end, he said, "it relies on the doctor's conscience."

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Associated Press researcher Chen Si in Shanghai contributed to this report.

Follow Kinetz on Twitter at: <https://twitter.com/ekinetz>

Online: A selection of Mundipharma China documents, U.S. court filings and regulatory guidelines <https://www.documentcloud.org/search/projectid:46816-munipharma-china-documents>

## Last campus protesters hold out as Hong Kong schools reopen

By KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Hong Kong schools reopened Wednesday after a six-day shutdown but students and commuters faced transit disruptions as the last protesters remained holed up on a university campus.

City officials tried to restore a sense of normalcy as primary and secondary classes resumed. Workers began cleaning up debris blocking a major road tunnel, but it was unclear how soon it could be reopened.

A small group of protesters refused to leave Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the remnants of hundreds who took over the campus for several days. They won't leave because they would face arrest. Police have set up a cordon around the area to prevent anyone from escaping.

The occupation of Polytechnic capped more than a week of intense protests, the latest flareup in the often violent unrest that has gripped the semi-autonomous Chinese city for more than five months.

Since a police siege of the campus began Sunday, more than 1,000 people have been arrested and hundreds of injured treated at hospitals, authorities said.

It was unclear how many protesters remained, but they appeared to number less than 100. About two

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dozen scrounged through supplies in the cafeteria looking for food in the morning.

Trash litters public areas, and a stench permeates the campus.

One protester, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he fears arrest, remained adamant.

"I think if you go out and surrender, it just shows you agree with what the police and that government are doing or have given up the fight," he said.

There were scattered incidents of protesters stopping trains by opening emergency doors and blocking traffic Wednesday but on a much smaller scale than last week.

Television footage showed long lines at some stations because of train delays. A few stations remained shut because of damage from earlier protests.

A group of protesters, joined by students in uniform, blocked traffic at one intersection. Others in the area argued with them, removing some of the metal barriers that protesters carried into the street.

Even as the latest violence wound down, a fundamental divide suggests the protests in the former British colony are far from over.

Office workers joined protesters at lunch time in the central business district to show support for the movement, as they have every day since last week. Police kept the crowds on the sidewalks, so they wouldn't block traffic.

Hong Kong's protests began over an extradition bill that would have allowed suspects to be sent to China to face trial. Opponents saw it as a threat to the "one country, two systems" framework that gives Hong Kong its relative autonomy.

The bill has been withdrawn, but protesters are now demanding fully democratic elections and an independent investigation into police actions in suppressing the protests. City leaders have rejected these demands, and said violence must stop before meaningful dialogue can begin.

The city sent inspectors to examine the damage to the Cross-Harbour Tunnel, as workers used heavy equipment to remove the debris left on the approach road.

Protesters set fire to the toll booths during their occupation of Polytechnic University, which overlooks the approach. The road tunnel is one of three connecting Hong Kong Island with the rest of the city.

The Hong Kong government joined China in condemning passage of legislation by the U.S. Senate that mandates sanctions on Chinese and Hong Kong officials who commit human rights abuses and requires an annual review of the favorable trade status that the U.S. grants Hong Kong.

"The passage of this bill is an important step in holding accountable those Chinese and Hong Kong government officials responsible for Hong Kong's eroding autonomy and human rights violations," said Sen. Marco Rubio.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said in a statement that the aim of the bill was to "bolster anti-China, extremist and violent radicals who attempt to disrupt Hong Kong (and) damage Hong Kong's prosperity and stability" as part of a plot to contain China's development.

A Hong Kong government statement called the legislation "unnecessary and unwarranted" and said it would "harm the relations and common interests between Hong Kong and the U.S."

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Associated Press journalist Alice Fung contributed to this story.

## **Pope arrives in Thailand to encourage Catholic minority**

**By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press**

BANGKOK (AP) — Pope Francis arrived in Bangkok on Wednesday to begin a tour of Thailand and Japan, beginning a mission to boost the morale of those countries' tiny minority Catholic communities and speak about issues of concern including human trafficking and peacemaking.

He is expected to highlight his admiration in Thailand for the community's missionary ancestors who brought the faith to this Buddhist nation centuries ago and endured bouts of persecution as recently as the 1940s.

Francis was greeted by Surayud Chulanont, former prime minister and head of King Maha Vajiralong-

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korn's Privy Council.

His warmest welcome, however, came from his second cousin, Sister Ana Rosa Sivori, who has been a missionary in Thailand since the 1960s and will serve as his translator during his time here. On stepping down from the plane, the first thing Francis did — even before his official welcome from Surayud — was to hug his cousin.

He also met about a dozen children in traditional hilltribe attire. One wearing an elaborate headdress came forward with a huge smile on her face and hugged him. He also received an artillery salute.

Francis' three-day visit to Thailand, followed by three days in Japan, will be a welcome break for the 82-year-old pope. He is enduring fresh opposition from Catholic conservatives in the U.S. over his just-concluded meeting on the Amazon as well as a new financial scandal at home.

Leaving those concerns behind, Francis will meet with Thailand's supreme Buddhist leader, Thai authorities as well as all the Catholic bishops of Asia — a rare chance for him to address some of the major challenges facing the Catholic Church in the region and the men responsible for dealing with them.

On the eve of the trip, the Vatican secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, said interfaith relations and emphasizing the dignity of every person are likely to be raised.

Francis has made the fight against human trafficking a hallmark of his papacy. He is expected to raise this issue in Thailand, which is a key transit point for victims of human trafficking, forced labor and the sex trade.

Francis is also expected to encourage the Catholic community, which represents just 0.58 percent of its 69 million people, as well as encourage the largely Buddhist country to continue welcoming migrants and showing tolerance to people of other faiths. That message is also intended to reach the country's small Muslim community amid a persistent insurgency in the far south bordering Malaysia.

Thirty-five years after St. John Paul II became the first pope to visit Thailand, Francis is marking the 350th anniversary of the creation of a stable apostolic vicariate in Thailand, then known as Siam, after Dominican missionaries first brought the faith in 1567, followed by members of Francis' own Jesuit order.

Francis will pray at the tomb of Nicholas Bunkerd Kitbamrung, known as the Rev. Benedikto Chunkim, who became the first martyred priest of modern Thailand when he was killed in 1944. Francis is also likely to refer to seven other martyrs killed in 1940 as a nationalistic government sought to convert all Thais to Buddhists.

In the morning ahead of the Pope's arrival, members of the Catholic community continued preparations for his activities

At the National Stadium, where Francis will be celebrating Mass before tens of thousands of people, students gathered with their band instruments for a costume rehearsal as their parents looked on with excitement.

Eight-year-old Jiraroj Panyam, who will be playing the saxophone, said he hoped to tell the pope to "keep on working hard, have faith and be cheerful."

"I think this is a once in a lifetime opportunity for anyone, not just him, but for everyone no matter what nationality or religion they are," said Mongkol Devapradipa, whose son will also be performing on Thursday.

## **Amnesty: At least 106 dead in protests, which Iran disputes**

**By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press**

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Days of protests over rising fuel prices and a subsequent government crackdown have killed at least 106 people across Iran, Amnesty International said Tuesday, adding that the real figure may be much higher.

Iran's government has not released a toll of those arrested, injured or killed in the protests that began Friday and spread quickly across at least 100 cities and towns. But it disputed Amnesty's report through its mission to the United Nations, calling it "baseless allegations and fabricated figures."

However, a U.N. agency earlier said it feared the unrest may have killed "a significant number of people."

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Amnesty cited "credible reports" for its tally and said it "believes that the real death toll may be much higher, with some reports suggesting as many as 200 have been killed."

Iranian authorities shut down internet access to the outside world Saturday, an outage has left only state media and government officials able to say what is happening in the nation of 80 million.

State television showed video Tuesday of burned Qurans at a mosque in the suburbs of the capital, Tehran, as well as pro-government rallies, part of its efforts to both demonize and minimize the protests.

Absent in the coverage was an acknowledgement of what sparked the demonstrations. The jump in gasoline prices represents yet another burden on Iranians who have suffered through a painful currency collapse, following President Donald Trump's unilateral withdrawal of the United States from Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, and the reimposition of crippling U.S. economic sanctions.

Relatively moderate President Hassan Rouhani has promised the fuel price increase will fund new subsidies for poor families. But the decision has unleashed anger among Iranians, like Maryam Kazemi, a 29-year-old accountant in the southern Tehran suburb of Khaniabad, who said the new cost of fuel was "putting pressure on ordinary people."

"It was a bad decision at a bad time. The economic situation has long been difficult for people, and Rouhani unexpectedly implemented the decision on fuel," she said.

Amnesty said it gathered its figures from interviewing journalists and human rights activists, then cross-checked the information. In its breakdown, it showed the hardest-hit areas as the western Kermanshah province and its oil-rich southwestern province of Khuzestan. Many online videos released before the internet outage had shown unrest there.

"Video footage shows security forces using firearms, water cannons and tear gas to disperse protests and beating demonstrators with batons," Amnesty said. "Images of bullet casings left on the ground afterwards, as well as the resulting high death toll, indicate that they used live ammunition."

Amnesty, citing eyewitnesses corroborated by video footage, said snipers also shot into crowds of people from rooftops and, in one case, a helicopter.

So far, scattered reports in state-run and semiofficial media have reported only six deaths.

The office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights earlier issued a statement saying it was "deeply concerned" about reports of live ammunition being used against demonstrators. It also urged protesters to demonstrate peacefully.

"We are especially alarmed that the use of live ammunition has allegedly caused a significant number of deaths across the country," spokesman Rupert Colville said in a statement.

Colville added that it has been "extremely difficult" to verify the overall death toll.

Alireza Miryousefi, a spokesman for Iran's U.N. mission, told The Associated Press that "any casualty figures not confirmed by the government are speculative and not reliable, and in many cases part and parcel of a disinformation campaign waged against Iran from outside the country."

"The baseless allegations and fabricated figures by biased Western entities do not shake government's determination in making prudent economic decisions," he said.

Meanwhile, an article published Tuesday in the hard-line Kayhan newspaper suggested that executions loomed for those who led violent protests. Though the state-owned newspaper has a small circulation, its managing editor Hossein Shariatmadari was personally appointed by Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

"Some reports say that the judiciary considers execution by hanging for the riot leaders a definite punishment," Kayhan said, without elaborating.

It also repeated an allegation that protest leaders came from abroad. Khamenei on Sunday specifically named those aligned with the family of Iran's late shah, ousted 40 years ago, and an exile group called the Mujahedeen-e-Khalq. The MEK calls for the overthrow of Iran's government and enjoys the support of Trump's personal lawyer, Rudy Giuliani.

Police and security forces were on Tehran's streets on Tuesday in fewer numbers. Traffic also appeared to be flowing better, after part of the demonstrations saw people abandon their cars on major roadways.

Authorities postponed four soccer matches in different parts of the country scheduled for Thursday and



Friday, the Iranian weekend, according to the semiofficial ISNA news agency. With the internet outage and phone services spotty, it remained difficult to know the situation in some regions.

The protests were prompted by a plunging economy. Many Iranians have seen their savings evaporate amid scarce jobs and the collapse of the national currency, the rial, since Trump withdrew Washington from the nuclear deal over a year ago and imposed sanctions. The rial now trades at over 123,000 to \$1, compared to 32,000 to \$1 at the time the deal took effect.

Cheap gasoline is practically considered a birthright in Iran, home to the world's fourth-largest crude oil reserves despite decades of economic woes since its 1979 Islamic Revolution. Gasoline remains among the cheapest in the world, with the new prices jumping 50% to a minimum of 15,000 rials per liter. That's 12 cents a liter, or about 50 cents a gallon. A gallon of regular gas in the U.S. costs \$2.59 by comparison.

The U.N. rights office addressed that background of economic anger across Iran in its statement.

"Protests of this nature and on this scale are an indication of deep-rooted and often well-founded grievances that cannot simply be brushed aside," Colville said.

Those grievances could be heard in Khaniabad and elsewhere around Tehran. Several described taking part in peaceful protests later hijacked by violent masked demonstrators. Others heard gunfire.

"We were out to protest the gasoline price on Saturday," said Reza Nobari, a 33-year-old car mechanic. "Suddenly a group of six or seven who covered their faces appeared together and started to break the windows of a bank. This wasn't what we were out for."

Jafar Abbasi, a 58-year-old who runs a dairy, said he saw another group of people who arrived in a van smash the windows of nearby shops.

"Some looted the place and some other quickly disappeared," he said.

He added: "This is all the result of Rouhani's decision to increase the price of fuel."

## AP Explains: How have the protests in Chile evolved?

By EVA VERGARA and PATRICIA LUNA Associated Press

SANTIAGO, Chile (AP) — It's been nearly five weeks since the most potent civil unrest in Chile's recent history broke out, bringing mass protests across the South American nation. Most of the demonstrators are peaceful as they push a broad range of demands intended to bring more equality to their society. But a much smaller group of masked protesters has used street violence, wreaking havoc in many cities. Twenty-six people have died and thousands more have been injured.

### WHO IS PARTICIPATING IN THE PROTESTS?

The hundreds of thousands of people who have taken part in demonstrations across Chile, but especially in the capital of Santiago, cut across a wide swath of society. They are young and old. Students and professionals. Parents with their children, retirees, working class laborers and salaried employees all make up part of a movement that so far has not had a single leader at its helm.

They carry placards that outline a range of social and economic demands for changing a country that is prosperous yet has one of the region's widest disparities in income. They wave black flags along with the flags of Chile and of the Mapuche, the country's biggest indigenous community that has been resisting Spanish colonization for some 300 years.

The most dramatic mobilization came Oct. 25, when an estimated 1.2 million people jammed into central Santiago for a rally on Plaza Italia, which has become a rallying point for the protests. Since then, demonstrations have gradually gone down in size, while the number of masked or hooded protesters who attack buildings and police has gone up. Despite these confrontations, most demonstrators remain peaceful and carry on with a festive atmosphere of singing and whistling.

Sergio González, a psychologist and anthropologist at the University of Santiago de Chile, said that "the hooded protesters are a product of our system ... they have been generated by the exclusion, marginality, and the lack of social sensibility in our economic system." He said this group numbers between 1,500 and 2,000 people in each city in Chile, and he does not think the police can control them because of

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insufficient intelligence work.

## HOW HAS THE STREET UNREST EVOLVED?

When the uprising began Oct. 18, initially with a student protest over a subway fare increase, hundreds of masked vandals smashed most of the subway stations in Santiago and looted grocery stores and pharmacies.

Huge, peaceful protests subsequently flourished. But recently the hooded contingent has displayed greater organization, using shields made of metallic containers that are painted orange and helmets of the same color. They also carry tools to chip out pieces of sidewalk that are thrown at police. Statues of historical figures have also been damaged, along with the exteriors of shops, houses, churches and many institutional buildings. Gasoline bombs have destroyed stores and a few hotels.

In early November, the hooded protesters set their sights on an affluent neighborhood of Santiago, which is home to the city's tallest building and dozens of restaurants, shops and offices -- but their attacks were repelled by a strong police response. The next day, they took over some of the main streets of a middle-class neighborhood, looting, setting fires and destroying property over several hours.

The vandalism has stretched the length of Chile. In the coastal city of Valparaíso, much of the commerce has been destroyed. Other urban centers have seen institutional and government buildings set on fire, along with residential buildings. In general, shop owners are closing their stores several hours earlier than normal. In cities from north to south, it's common to see storefronts encased in metal and wooden boards for protection.

Treasury minister Ignacio Briones has predicted that 300,000 people will lose their jobs because of the damage inflicted on stores. Small business owners say 50,000 already have.

## HOW HAVE AUTHORITIES RESPONDED?

President Sebastián Piñera, a center-right politician, has sought to calm Chileans' anger by dribbling out a series of modest proposals for social improvements. In addition, he and other political leaders have agreed to hold a plebiscite in April on whether Chile should rewrite its constitution, and who should draft it.

In the streets, police have reacted with force, firing pellet guns at faces of protesters, unleashing tear gas and using water cannons. That response has drawn intense criticism, with human rights groups saying authorities are using a disproportionate level of force against protesters. Piñera early this week acknowledged that abuses have been committed by security forces, and on Tuesday the head of the national police force said it was suspending the broad use of pellet guns that have blinded more than 200 demonstrators in one eye.

## WHAT HAVE PROTESTERS ACHIEVED?

Four days after protests broke out, Piñera announced a package of measures that would raise by 20% the pension provided to the poorest segment of society (currently, on average, \$146 a month), increase the minimum wage of \$400 a month by 16%, cancel a 9.2% hike in electricity rates, and reduce the cost of medicine.

The president also has proposed slashing the pay and parliamentary allowance for legislators, which range between \$27,000 and \$44,000 a month, and he promised to increase taxes on people who earn more than \$11,000 a month. The proposals have yet to be approved by the Congress.

Last week, Piñera added a reduction in the cost of public transit for elderly who live in poverty and for university students who have taken out loans to pay for school.

Nearly all of Chile's political parties have agreed on a roadmap that could lead to the writing of a new constitution, which has also been demanded by demonstrators. Protesters insist the document be drafted by select citizens and not by politicians or people elected with that goal.

## WHAT OTHER DEMANDS ARE DEMONSTRATORS MAKING?

They are looking for an increase in pensions for the poorest segment of society that is above the poverty line, which in Chile is \$217. The government has promised to study the demand.

Protesters also are calling for an end to the two-tier system of education and health care in Chile, which has created one level of service for the poor and another for the rich. And they want to abolish a pension system run by private funds that delivers meager earnings for retirees.

They further demand more social housing and a higher minimum wage.

Richard Estuardo, 26, says Chile's inequalities justify the violence of the hooded protesters. "We should keep going until a real change is made," he says.

Ronaldo Riquelme, an 81-year-old retiree who once earned \$1,000 a month and now survives on just \$300, is equally militant. "I'll protest until I die," he says.

Associated Press writers Mauricio Cuevas and Marcos Sepúlveda contributed to this report.

## Republicans assail security aide who reported Trump call

By LISA MASCARO and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A career Army officer on Donald Trump's National Security Council testified Tuesday he was duty-bound to object to the president's clearly "improper" phone call seeking Ukrainian investigations of U.S. Democrats. Republicans answered him with doubts about his loyalty to the United States.

Arriving on Capitol Hill in military blue with medals across his chest, Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman told impeachment investigators he felt no hesitation in reporting the president's request of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Vindman, a 20-year military officer who received a Purple Heart for being wounded in the Iraq War, was among the officials who listened in to the July 25 call when Trump asked Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for "a favor" -- investigations of Democrat Joe Biden and other issues.

"It was inappropriate, it was improper for the president to request, to demand an investigation into a political opponent," Vindman told the House Intelligence Committee.

His testimony launched a pivotal week as the House's historic impeachment investigation reaches further into Trump's White House.

Democrats say Trump's pressure on Ukraine to investigate former Vice President Joe Biden while withholding U.S. military aid to Kyiv may be grounds for removing the 45th president. Republicans have argued both that there was no linkage between the two matters and that there would be nothing inappropriate even if there was.

In a remarkable day of back-to-back hearings, Vindman testified alongside Jennifer Williams, an adviser in Vice President Mike Pence's office. Both said they had concerns as they listened to Trump speak with the newly elected Ukrainian president about political investigations into Biden.

Trump insists Zelenskyy did not feel pressured and has cast the impeachment probe as a partisan affair aimed at pushing him from office. The White House lashed out at the Army officer.

It wasn't the first time Vindman was alarmed over the administration's push to have Ukraine investigate Democrats, he testified.

He highlighted a July 10 meeting at the White House when Ambassador Gordon Sondland told visiting Ukraine officials they would need to "deliver" before next steps — a meeting Zelenskyy wanted with Trump.

"Ambassador Sondland referred to investigations into the Bidens and Burisma in 2016," he testified, referring to the gas company in Ukraine where Joe Biden's son Hunter served on the board.

On both occasions, Vindman said, he took his concerns about the shifting Ukraine policy to the lead counsel at the NSC, John Eisenberg.

An immigrant who came to the U.S. as a toddler from Ukraine, Vindman opened his testimony by assuring his father that in America he would be "fine for telling the truth."

Yet Vindman spent long stretches fielding Republican attacks on his loyalty and his career in public service. The Republicans' lead counsel asked at one point about an offer he got from a Ukrainian official to

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become the country's defense minister.

Vindman called it "comical" and said he swiftly reported it up his chain of command.

"I'm an American," Vindman said. "And I immediately dismissed these offers."

Later Tuesday, the House committee heard from former NSC official Timothy Morrison and Kurt Volker, the former Ukraine special envoy, who said he hadn't understood the scope of the investigations Sondland and Rudy Giuliani, the president's personal attorney, were pursuing for Trump.

Sondland, the U.S. ambassador to the European Union, is to appear Wednesday as the most-anticipated witness yet.

At the White House, Trump said he watched part of the day's testimony and slammed the ongoing impeachment hearings as a "disgrace." Over the weekend, he had assailed Williams as part of the "Never Trumpers" who oppose his presidency, though there is no indication she has shown any partisanship.

Vindman was ready to defend his loyalty to the United States. When the top Republican on the committee, Rep. Devin Nunes, addressed him as "Mr. Vindman," the colonel reminded him to address him by his rank.

He also deflected Republican efforts to get him to divulge everyone he told about the Trump call -- thwarting Trump allies' attempts to identify the anonymous whistleblower who spurred the impeachment probe.

Nunes bore down once Vindman acknowledged one person he talked to was from the intelligence community. The whistleblower is a CIA official, according to people with knowledge of the matter.

Vindman said he does not know who the whistleblower is. He has previously said it is not him.

Trump ally Jim Jordan asked if he ever leaked information. "Never did, never would," Vindman answered.

Republicans were eager to hear during the afternoon from Morrison, who had supervised Vindman at the NSC. "He had concerns about Vindman's judgment," the White House tweeted.

But Morrison, who has since left the administration, told lawmakers he was not there to question his former colleagues' "character or integrity" and did not intend to out the whistleblower.

Morrison, who was also listening to Trump's call, worried its disclosure would not play well in polarized Washington, and reported it to the NSC's top lawyer. He testified about his sinking feeling after Sondland told him Trump wanted Zelenskiy to announce the investigations before releasing the military aid. A colleague warned him of "the Gordon problem," he said.

Vindman is being provided security by the U.S. Army and local law enforcement, according to a U.S. official. The official said the Army is prepared to take additional steps, if needed, including moving Vindman and his family to a more secure location on a base.

Williams, a career State Department official who has worked for three presidential administrations and counts former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice a "personal hero," said the Trump phone call was the first time she had heard anyone specifically seeking investigations from Ukraine.

The reference to Biden and his son Hunter "struck me as political in nature."

Williams testified the call was unlike about a dozen others she had heard from presidents over her career. When the White House produced a rough transcript later that day, she put it in Vice President Pence's briefing materials. "I just don't know if he read it," she testified earlier in her closed-door House interview.

Pence's role throughout the impeachment inquiry has been unclear.

The vice president's national security adviser, Lt. Gen. Keith Kellogg, issued a statement saying he "heard nothing wrong or improper on the call."

Vindman said Trump's remarks on the call strayed from the talking points prepared for him. And both witnesses said Zelenskiy had mentioned "Burisma" but it was missing from the rough transcript released by the White House.

At the time of the call, the officials were just beginning to make the link with the stalled military aid — \$391 million approved by Congress — that Ukraine was relying on as it confronts neighboring Russia.

Vindman said the uneven power dynamic between the presidents of the East European ally and the U.S. made the demand obvious.

"The culture I come from, the military culture, when a senior asks you to do something ... it's not be taken as a request, it's to be taken as an order," he said.

Associated Press writers Alan Fram, Zeke J. Miller, Laurie Kellman, Colleen Long, Eric Tucker, Lolita Baldor and Jill Colvin in Washington contributed to this report.

## Deval Patrick takes nascent 2020 campaign to South Carolina

By MEG KINNARD and ERRIN HAINES Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — About a dozen black female small-business owners were gathered in a South Carolina shared workspace on Tuesday night for a networking event when they were told the newest 2020 Democratic presidential hopeful, Deval Patrick, would be stopping by to introduce himself.

When Patrick walked into the back of the room mid-meeting, the women turned around as he sheepishly apologized for his tardiness and short stay.

“Don’t mind me!” he told them.

But the black former Massachusetts governor is eager to get their attention — and their vote.

Launching his bid for president less than three months before the Iowa caucuses, Patrick is betting that he can make his case to a broad coalition of voters, including many who remain undecided or uncommitted to anyone in the crowded field of candidates. To win South Carolina, which holds the first Southern primary of 2020, he would need a base of support from the black voters who comprise roughly two-thirds of the state’s Democratic electorate.

“I’m running for president because those values of community, that we have a stake in each other and of generational responsibility, I think, are frayed in the country,” Patrick said Tuesday night in Columbia. “I come in humbly. ... I want to be a listener.”

Arguing that voters are just now beginning to tune in, with the first votes less than 100 days away, Patrick has said he will have visibility when the populace is really paying attention. His late entry, though, makes it that much tougher to raise the awareness that his campaign will need to meet the polling and fundraising thresholds for future debates.

This week, Patrick launched a tour of early-voting states, visiting Nevada and Iowa before South Carolina. It’s a state where former Vice President Joe Biden has maintained a significant polling lead for months, both across all spectrums and with black voters specifically.

It’s also a place where the two other major black candidates in the race — Sens. Cory Booker and Kamala Harris — have struggled to gain momentum, despite months of campaign events.

Eyamba Sowers didn’t know Patrick was coming to Tuesday’s networking gathering but saw his visit as a pleasant surprise. The real estate agent said she related to him as someone who was also raised in a single-parent home, and she was impressed with his status as the country’s second elected black governor.

“He has me thinking now,” said Sowers, who is also considering Bernie Sanders and Joe Biden. She said if Patrick can get his message out, he’s someone voters could see defeating President Donald Trump in 2020 — her top priority.

Beth Ruffin said she didn’t know much about Patrick before Tuesday’s event, but he left her intrigued and wanting to learn more. A former Beto O’Rourke supporter, she is a voter back on the market since his departure from the presidential race.

“It sounded like strong black women raised him,” said Ruffin, who owns a diversity and inclusion consulting firm and headed out for Patrick’s second stop at a nearby restaurant, where he was warmly greeted by a crowd of several dozen. “I want to see how he translates that into policy.”

Reach the reporters on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/MegKinnardAP> and <http://twitter.com/emaravelous>

## As Epstein died, guards allegedly shopped online and slept

By MICHAEL BALSAMO, LARRY NEUMEISTER and TOM HAYS Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Two jail guards responsible for monitoring Jeffrey Epstein the night he killed himself were sleeping and browsing the internet instead, according to an indictment released Tuesday charging

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the guards with lying on prison records to cover themselves.

The grand jury indictment provides a damning glimpse of safety lapses inside a high-security unit at the Metropolitan Correctional Center in New York, where Epstein had been awaiting trial on sex trafficking charges.

The indictment, leaning in part on images from security cameras on the cell block, also contains new details reinforcing the idea that, for all the intrigue regarding Epstein and his connections to powerful people, his death was a suicide and possibly preventable.

"The defendants had a duty to ensure the safety and security of federal inmates in their care at the Metropolitan Correctional Center," U.S. Attorney Geoffrey S. Berman said. "Instead, they repeatedly failed to conduct mandated checks on inmates, and lied on official forms to hide their dereliction."

Instead of making required rounds every 30 minutes, guards Tova Noel and Michael Thomas sat at their desks just 15 feet from Epstein's cell, shopped online for furniture and motorcycles, and walked around the unit's common area, the indictment said. During one two-hour period, it said, both appeared to have been asleep.

Prosecutors said security footage confirmed that no one entered the area where Epstein was housed on the night he died — evidence that might also dampen conspiracy theories by people who have questioned whether he really took his own life.

A lawyer for Thomas, Montell Figgins, said both guards are being "scapegoated."

"We feel this is a rush to judgment by the U.S. attorney's office," he said. "They're going after the low man on the totem pole here."

Noel's lawyer, Jason Foy, said he hoped to "reach a reasonable agreement" with the government that could avoid a trial.

Both correctional officers pleaded not guilty Tuesday afternoon and were released on \$100,000 bond. The defendants, hiding their faces with clothing, left the courthouse in separate cars waiting for them in the shadow of the jail where they had worked and Epstein died.

Epstein's death was a major embarrassment for the U.S. Bureau of Prisons.

The cell where he died was in a high-security unit, famous for having held terrorists and drug cartel kingpins. Epstein's death, though, revealed the jail was suffering from problems including chronic staffing shortages that lead to mandatory overtime for guards day after day and other staff being pressed into service as correctional officers.

Attorney General William Barr had previously said investigators found "serious irregularities" at the jail.

Epstein had been placed on suicide watch after he was found July 23 on the floor of his cell with a strip of bedsheet around his neck, according to the indictment.

After 24 hours, he was transferred to the facility's hospital wing for a psychological observation, where he remained under close watch.

Epstein was moved back to a regular cell July 30 where he was required to have a cellmate, but he was left with none after his cellmate was transferred out of the MCC on Aug. 9, the day before his death, the indictment said.

The indictment said that Epstein was found unresponsive in his cell when the guards went to deliver breakfast. Noel confessed to a supervisor then that they hadn't done either their 3 a.m. or 5 a.m. rounds, according to the indictment.

According to the indictment, Thomas said: "We messed up." And then added, "I messed up, she's not to blame, we didn't do any rounds."

Prosecutors had wanted the guards to admit they falsified the prison records as part of a plea offer that they rejected, according to people familiar with the matter. They spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not permitted to publicly discuss the investigation.

Marc Fernich, a lawyer for Epstein, said: "It would be a shame if minor scapegoats — classic low-hanging fruit, the softest targets — were made to take the fall for this tragedy on what amounts to a coverup theory. Unless it prompts genuine self-reflection from all major participants and stakeholders in our criminal

justice system and those who cover it, Mr. Epstein's death in federal custody — senseless and sad as it is — will have been entirely for naught."

The city's medical examiner ruled Epstein's death a suicide.

Dr. Michael Baden, the forensic pathologist hired by Epstein's family to observe his autopsy, recently suggested some of Epstein's injuries were more consistent with homicide rather than suicide, though other experts disputed that.

Baden said Tuesday the arrested officers could have information that's "going to be critical in determining whether it's homicide or suicide."

Kathleen Hawk Sawyer, the new director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, told the Senate Judiciary Committee on Tuesday there is "no evidence to suggest" anything other than suicide.

Falsification of records has been a problem throughout the federal prison system.

Sawyer, who was named director of the Bureau of Prisons after Epstein's death, disclosed in an internal memo earlier this month that a review of operations across the agency found some staff members failed to perform required rounds and inmate counts but logged that they had done so anyway. A copy of the memo was obtained by the AP.

Epstein's death ended the possibility of a trial that would have involved prominent figures and sparked widespread anger that he wouldn't have to answer for the allegations.

He had pleaded not guilty and was preparing to argue that he could not be charged because of a 2008 deal he made to avoid federal prosecution on similar allegations.

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Associated Press writers Michael R. Sisak and Jim Mustian contributed to this report. Balsamo reported from Washington.

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This story has been corrected to fix the spelling of the name of one of the accused guards. She is Tova Noel, not Toval Noel.

## **GOP-requested witness rejects Trump 'conspiracy theories'**

**By COLLEEN LONG and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sought by Republicans to testify, the former U.S. special envoy to Ukraine spoke up instead for Democrat Joe Biden in Tuesday's impeachment hearings, rejecting "conspiracy theories" embraced by President Donald Trump and some of his allies.

Kurt Volker said he has known Biden as an honorable man for more than two decades, rebuffing debunked corruption allegations that Trump is said to have wanted the Ukrainians to investigate in exchange for military aid to hold off Russian aggression.

"The allegations against Vice President Biden are self-serving and non-credible," Volker declared.

Broader corruption in Ukraine was "plausible," but corruption by Biden wasn't, he said.

Volker testified alongside former White House national security official Tim Morrison in the second hearing of the day in the House's impeachment inquiry, only the fourth in history against a U.S. president.

Morrison, also requested by GOP members on the House Intelligence Committee, said at the outset that he was not there to question the "character or integrity" of any of his colleagues, though earlier Tuesday Republican lawmakers used his prior comments to try to discredit another witness, Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman. The White House even circulated a tweet that was an earlier quote by Morrison questioning Vindman's judgment.

Democrats say there may be grounds for impeachment in Trump's push for Ukraine's new leadership to investigate his Democratic rival and the 2016 U.S. election as he withheld military assistance approved by Congress.

Trump says he did nothing wrong and dismissed the hearings as a "kangaroo court."

Volker was the first person to come behind closed doors in the inquiry that started in September, resigning his position shortly before he did so.

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Since then, a parade of witnesses has testified publicly and privately about what they recalled about the July 25 phone call between Trump and Ukraine's new leader, Volodymyr Zelenskiy. Many of those statements cast doubt on Volker's account that he didn't know the Ukraine gas company Burisma was tied to Biden, and that he wasn't aware of a possible quid pro quo offered by Trump.

A number of White House and State Department officials were listening to the call, but Volker was not.

On Tuesday, he said he opposed any hold on security assistance. And he said, "I did not understand that others believed that any investigation of the Ukrainian company, Burisma, which had a history of accusations of corruption, was tantamount to investigating Vice President Biden. I drew a distinction between the two."

Even though, he said, he understood that Biden's son Hunter had been a board member -- and he himself had been deeply involved with Ukrainian officials on a statement, never released, that would have committed the country to investigating Burisma and the 2016 U.S. election.

Volker himself requested a meeting on July 19 with Rudy Giuliani, Trump's personal lawyer, at which Giuliani mentioned accusations about the Bidens as well as the discredited theory that Ukraine interfered in the 2016 U.S. election.

He said he believes now, thanks to hindsight and the testimony of other witnesses, that Trump was using the aid to pressure Ukraine to investigate Hunter Biden and his role on the company's board.

"In retrospect I should have seen that connection differently, and had I done so, I would have raised my own objections," Volker testified.

Yet he also acknowledged that Trump never told him he was withholding aid for Ukraine unless there were investigations. He also said Ukrainians never told him that they wouldn't get a White House visit or military aid without committing to investigations. He said he would have objected had the president asked him to get Ukraine to do investigations.

Morrison, who stepped down from Trump's National Security Council shortly before he appeared behind closed doors last month, said he was not concerned that anything illegal was discussed on Trump's July 25 call with Ukraine's leader, testimony that Republicans have repeatedly highlighted.

"As I stated during my deposition, I feared at the time of the call on July 25th how its disclosure would play in Washington's political climate," he said Tuesday. "My fears have been realized."

He told lawmakers Tuesday that the transcript of the call was incorrectly placed in a highly secure location.

Democrats have seen ill intent in that action, but he said, "It was a mistake ... an administrative error."

Morrison has confirmed to investigators that he witnessed a key September conversation in Warsaw between Gordon Sondland, the U.S. ambassador to the European Union, and a Ukrainian official. Sondland told the official that U.S. aid might be freed if the country's top prosecutor "would go to the mike and announce that he was opening the Burisma investigation," Morrison said in previous closed-door testimony.

Volker shifted his account of a pivotal July 10 interaction at the White House. In his closed-door interview last month, he said there was no discussion of Giuliani's activities in Ukraine or investigations sought by the president.

But on Tuesday, he said the meeting was essentially over when Sondland made a "general" comment about investigations.

"I think all of us thought it was inappropriate; the conversation did not continue and the meeting concluded," Volker said.

A series of text messages Volker provided to lawmakers showed conversations between him, Sondland and another envoy in which they discussed a need for Ukraine to launch investigations, including into Burisma.

Volker said meeting with Giuliani was just part of the dialogue, and he had one in-person meeting with him, in which Giuliani "raised, and I rejected, the conspiracy theory that Vice President Biden would have been influenced in his duties as vice president by money paid to his son."

Volker also said a senior aide to Zelenskiy approached him last summer to ask to be connected to Giuliani. He said he made clear to the Zelenskiy aide, Andriy Yermak, that Giuliani was a private citizen and not a representative of the U.S. government.

He testified he wasn't part of an irregular foreign policy channel led Giuliani, as others have testified.



He also rejected the idea that Trump dubbed him, Sondland and Energy Secretary Rick Perry the “three amigos” in charge of Ukraine policy.

“My role was not some irregular channel, but the official channel,” Volker said.

Associated Press Writers Mary Clare Jalonick, Matthew Daly, Alan Fram, Lisa Mascaro and Laurie Kellman contributed to this report.

## Impeachment hearings takeaways: Firsthand witnesses appear

By **ERIC TUCKER, ZEKE MILLER and JILL COLVIN** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — There were attacks on the credibility of a witness in uniform, and hand-wringing by another witness on all that he knows now that he says he didn't know then. Vice President Mike Pence was name-dropped, and lawmakers heard expressions of concern about the July phone call between President Donald Trump and Ukraine's leader.

The third day of impeachment hearings was the longest yet, bringing to the forefront four witnesses in two separate hearings. All were steeped in national security and foreign affairs.

Some takeaways from Tuesday's testimony:

### 'CONCERNED BY THE CALL'

Republicans consistently criticize the House impeachment inquiry by saying witnesses didn't have firsthand knowledge of Trump's role in trying to persuade Ukraine to investigate a chief political rival.

On Day 3 of the proceedings, that posture became more difficult to maintain.

The two witnesses in Tuesday morning's hearing each listened to the July 25 phone call in which Trump prodded his Ukrainian counterpart to investigate Democrat Joe Biden.

Jennifer Williams, an adviser to Pence, said she considered the call “unusual” since it “involved discussion of what appeared to be a domestic political matter.”

Army Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman, who arrived for the hearing in military uniform adorned with medals, went even further. He considered it “improper,” and, acting out of “duty,” reported his alarm to a lawyer for the National Security Council.

“My intent was to raise these concerns because they had significant national security implications for our country,” Vindman said. “I never thought that I'd be sitting here testifying in front of this committee and the American public about my actions.”

For his part, Tim Morrison, who recently left his National Security Council post, said he did not believe that anything illegal occurred on the call but was worried about the political ramifications if the contents leaked.

### ATTACKS ON VINDMAN

Republicans frequently attacked Vindman's credibility, even lacing an occasional nicety with a not-so-veiled barb.

Republican Rep. Chris Stewart called Vindman's uniform a good reminder of his military service but also questioned why Vindman, a Purple Heart recipient, felt it necessary to wear it rather than a suit to the hearing.

He wanted to know, too, if Vindman always insisted on being referred to by military rank rather than “Mr.” as he did in an exchange earlier with Rep. Devin Nunes, the committee's top Republican. In that moment, he corrected Nunes and asked to be called “Lt. Col. Vindman, please.”

The committee attacks mirrored the combative approach of the White House, which used its official Twitter account to retweet attacks on Vindman, who continues to work at the White House.

Some Republican attacks struggled to land. After Rep. Jim Jordan suggested that Vindman's peers questioned his judgment, Vindman read from a glowing performance review that called him “brilliant” and “unflappable.”

Some attacks, including from the White House's director of social media, sought to imply that Vindman,

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a naturalized American citizen who was a toddler when his family fled Ukraine, may have dual loyalties. Under questioning from GOP impeachment counsel Steve Castor, Vindman revealed that he was offered three times the post of Ukraine's defense minister while attending Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's inauguration, but "immediately dismissed these offers."

He says two American officials witnessed the exchange with a top adviser to Zelenskyy, and that he notified his chain of command and counterintelligence officials upon returning to the U.S.

Castor questioned whether that created the impression of a conflict, to which Vindman replied, "It's more important what my American chain of command thinks."

## IN HINDSIGHT

There's a lot that Kurt Volker, the former special envoy to Ukraine, contends he didn't know at the time.

He says he didn't know that security aid to Ukraine was linked to the country pursuing investigations.

He says he didn't know that when U.S. officials spoke about investigating Burisma, the Ukraine gas company, that this referred to Biden. He says he should have made that connection much earlier, and had he done so, would have raised objections.

He says he didn't know that then-national security adviser John Bolton had "strong concerns" about discussions of investigations by NSC staff. And he insists that at no time was he aware of an effort to urge Ukraine to investigate Biden, whom he described as an honorable man.

One detail, though, that he recalled on Tuesday that he did not during his closed-door deposition concerned a pivotal July 10 encounter at the White House involving U.S. and Ukrainian officials.

He initially said there was no discussion that day of investigations, but on Tuesday, recalled that Gordon Sondland, the ambassador to the European Union, made a generic comment about them.

## PENCE ROLE?

Pence has been portrayed largely as out of the loop about Trump's request that Ukraine investigate Biden. Williams' testimony refocused attention on what Pence knew about the events that sparked the House impeachment investigation.

But Pence's office says the vice president and Williams barely interacted.

Williams, a career foreign service officer who was detailed to Pence's office, compiled briefing materials for Pence on Ukraine. She was in the room when he met with Zelenskyy in September and was among the staffers in the White House Situation Room who listened and took notes during the July 25 call.

Katie Waldman, a Pence spokeswoman, noted that Williams' appointment began April 1 and said she "she doesn't directly report to the Vice President."

Pence failed to come to Williams' defense when Trump recently tweeted that she should meet with "the other Never Trumpers, who I don't know & mostly never even heard of, & work out a better presidential attack!"

Williams said she was confused by the attack and "would not" consider herself a "Never Trumper."

## WHITE HOUSE REAL-TIME RESPONSE

The White House reacted to the impeachment inquiry in real time Tuesday, stepping up its engagement after facing complaints from Republican allies that it wasn't doing enough to fight back.

White House press secretary Stephanie Grisham slammed the first hearing Tuesday as further evidence that Democrats are "blinded by their hatred for Donald Trump and rabid desire to overturn the outcome of a free and fair election."

Trump, at a Cabinet meeting, called the proceedings a "disgrace" and "kangaroo court."

The White House sent a steady stream of "rapid response" emails to reporters beginning before the first witnesses were even sworn-in. The messages sought to defend Trump and undermine the credibility of the witnesses.

"The President of the United States determines American foreign policy – not unelected bureaucrats,"

said one email, as the White House argued that the career officials testifying had a policy dispute with Trump about Ukraine. "It's the job of bureaucrats to implement that agenda set by the President – not leak and undermine him at every turn."

Trump was criticized by Democrats for his pushback efforts last week, when he tweeted out an attack on former Ambassador to Ukraine Marie Yovanovitch, as she was testifying.

## **AMA calls for total ban on all e-cigarette, vaping products**

**By LINDSEY TANNER AP Medical Writer**

The American Medical Association on Tuesday called for an immediate ban on all electronic cigarettes and vaping devices.

The group adopted the sweeping stance at a policy-making meeting in San Diego. It aims to lobby for state and federal laws, regulations or legal action to achieve a ban, but the industry is sure to fight back.

The AMA cited a surge in underage teen use of e-cigarettes, which typically heat a solution that contains nicotine.

"It's simple, we must keep nicotine products out of the hands of young people." Dr. Patrice Harris, AMA's president, said in a statement.

The doctors' group said a separate health issue also prompted its action — the recent U.S. outbreak of lung illnesses linked to vaping. Most of those sickened said they vaped THC, the high-inducing ingredient in marijuana, not nicotine. Officials believe a thickening agent used in black market THC vaping products may be a culprit.

The outbreak has "shined a light on the fact that we have very little evidence about the short- and long-term health consequences of e-cigarettes and vaping products," Harris said. About 2,100 people have gotten sick; 42 have died.

The AMA has previously sought bans on e-cigarette flavors and ads.

Some observers say the AMA's position is flawed and has little chance of achieving a sweeping ban.

"I would be 100% with the AMA if they were seeking a ban on all tobacco products that are smoked, including e-cigarettes," said Jonathan Foulds, a tobacco addiction specialist at Penn State University. "But right now, nicotine electronic cigarettes are competing with and replacing the most harmful legal product in this country."

Gregory Conley, president of the American Vaping Association, a pro-vaping advocacy group, said the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has made clear that its focus "is not store-bought nicotine vaping products, but illicit contaminated THC oil cartridges sold by drug dealers."

"It would be a mistake for adult smokers and their families to listen to these misguided prohibitionists, as the evidence continues to indicate that adult smokers who switch to nicotine vaping products greatly improve their health," Conley said.

The AMA policy calls for a ban of vaping products not approved to help people quit. But so far, none have been reviewed or approved for that use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Stephanie Caccamo, an FDA press officer, said the agency is "committed to doing everything we can to prevent kids from using tobacco products and will continue to develop a policy approach that aligns with that concern."

Juul Labs, the nation's biggest e-cigarette maker, didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

E-cigarettes first appeared in the U.S. more than a decade ago and have grown in popularity despite little research on their long-term effects. The FDA has been widely criticized for repeatedly pushing back its own deadline to begin reviewing thousands of vaping products on the market, at one point until 2022. The deadline is now next May.

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AP writer Matthew Perrone in Washington contributed to this report.

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## Shooting deaths rattle small, tight-knit US Hmong community

By JANIE HAR Associated Press

Fresno has been the heart of California's Hmong community for decades, drawing refugees from war-torn Southeast Asia who built a tight-knit population in the farm town. Now, they're reeling from the shooting deaths of four Hmong American men at a weekend party.

The central California city has the nation's second-largest concentration of the ethnic minority group from East and Southeast Asia — about 34,000 people — and is home to a festive weeklong Hmong New Year's party that draws tens of thousands of Hmong from around the country every year.

"Obviously, everyone's in shock," said Steve Ly, the first Hmong elected mayor in the country in the city of Elk Grove. "Fresno is the old stomping grounds for many of us who are spread all over the state."

Police have not determined a motive, and no suspects were identified in Sunday's shooting that killed four and wounded six others. The gunmen targeted the house where some 16 men had gathered outside to watch football on television, police said. Women and children were inside the house and were not hurt.

The dead include Xy Lee, a Hmong singer and musician whose videos on YouTube have been viewed millions of times. Also killed were Phia Vang, 31; Kou Xiong, 38; and Kalaxang Thao, 40, all of Fresno.

Three others remained hospitalized in serious condition, hospital officials said.

Fresno police say they formed an Asian gang taskforce and were worried about possible retaliatory violence leading up to the Hmong New Year's celebration. But friends and family say the victims had no such ties and are sensitive to the shootings being dismissed as gang-related or promoting stereotypes.

"We don't want this to be a stain on the people," said Bobby Bliatout, 42, the child of Hmong refugees who is now campaigning for the seat of U.S. Rep. Devin Nunes.

Hmong fought for the United States during the Vietnam War. Recruited by the CIA in Laos to fend off communist forces, they guided U.S. bombing missions and rescued downed American pilots, often at risk to their own lives.

After the war, Hmong refugees moved to Minnesota, California and Wisconsin. In California, they settled in the Central Valley, where sponsors hoped they could find work given their agricultural background.

There are about 300,000 Hmong in the U.S. — California has the most of any state, while Minneapolis-St. Paul in Minnesota has the most of any metro area. About 72,000 Hmong live in the Twin Cities, about 34,000 in Fresno and about 31,000 in Sacramento, according to a 2017 Pew Research Center report.

"They're a very humble and respectful community, and it's a tragic situation to experience," said Miguel Arias, a Fresno city councilman. "They literally ran away from a war-torn country and sought refuge here, and for them to experience the same tragedy they ran from is heartbreaking."

Arias was an aide in Congress in the 2000s when he was tasked with helping relocate a last wave of Hmong refugees from Thailand. He worked with the elders, who serve as the community's spiritual and cultural leaders and who fought in the Vietnam War.

The Hmong community in Fresno has flourished, Arias said, with children growing up to be doctors, lawyers, teachers and elected leaders. The community has done better than other ethnic groups in graduating from high school and avoiding gangs, he said.

Hmong Americans struggle with poverty more so than most other Asian American ethnic groups, said Karthick Ramakrishnan, associate dean of the University of California, Riverside, School of Public Policy. But the community also has a strong sense of solidarity and high rates of political participation, he said.

"This shooting, this killing, is having reverberations not only in Fresno or in the Central Valley, but throughout the country. It is a significant population," he said.

Paula Yang, a community advocate who is serving as a family spokeswoman for two of the four victims, said the deaths are devastating.

"I can't get over what happened. These are innocent people who wanted to do better," Yang said.

She was among the initial wave of refugees who came to the country as a young child in 1976.

Yang said her father had served with the famous Hmong general Vang Pao and that when the general told him to move to the Central Valley, the family left Orange County for Merced, 60 miles (96 kilometers) north of Fresno. They tended a strawberry farm, she said.

"We live like sheep herders. You go from one town to the next, and everybody sticks together," Yang said. Fresno, which has about 525,000 people, is only 5% Hmong but has numerous markets, retail stores and other businesses catering to the broader Hmong community in the region.

And every year, tens of thousands of Hmong flock to Fresno for the annual New Year's celebration from Dec. 26 to Jan. 1. They wear traditional dress bursting with colors and dance and sing. They have soccer and volleyball tournaments and a beauty pageant.

Arias, the councilman, said it appears no group of Americans can escape the terror of mass shootings. "The sad irony of this tragedy is they were doing the most American of traditions: Watching a Sunday night football game over a barbecue," he said.

Har reported from San Francisco.

## Drive behind occupation of Alcatraz lingers 50 years later

By **FELICIA FONSECA** and **TERRY TANG** Associated Press

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — On a chilly November night 50 years ago, a 7-year-old Peter Bratt, his four siblings and their single mother left their San Francisco home for the pier. From there, they joined a group of indigenous activists on a small boat, bobbing in fog and rolling over what felt like tidal waves.

They eventually landed at their destination — Alcatraz Island. At first, all the young boy could see was a vast, "magical" playground. He and other children roamed the beaches, literally blazing their own trails. They explored buildings that once housed prisoners, including Native Americans incarcerated there nearly a century earlier.

Despite his age, Bratt quickly comprehended that the adventure was the start of a movement. The adults banded together to take back a body of land that they felt didn't belong to the U.S. government to begin with.

"I remember seeing these young Indian people from all over the country shouting to the world, 'Red Power! You're on Indian land,'" said Bratt, 57, and the older brother of actor Benjamin Bratt. "Whoa, that was a game changer. I felt like I was finally home."

The 19-month occupation of Alcatraz, which started Nov. 20, 1969, is widely seen as a seminal event that reinvigorated tribes to organize in the face of a U.S. government steamrolling over their land, their rights and their identities. Many Native American activists today say they are still struggling to have their voices not only heard but respected. They point to recent examples like their ongoing fight against a proposed oil pipeline near the Standing Rock Indian Reservation in North Dakota that they argued would contaminate water. President Donald Trump's administration approved a final permit for it early in his term.

Alcatraz was the beginning of something, according to Bratt. His mother, who is indigenous to Peru, was among those keeping the momentum going. Their San Francisco home became a haven for Native American activists who were fighting for issues including sovereignty and treaty recognition. It also provided heroes for younger Natives beyond figures in history books.

"I think movements and events like Alcatraz and the Wounded Knee standoff, I think they gave us new role models and new warriors to look up to," said Bratt, who visited Alcatraz earlier this month.

The 21-acre (8-hectare) rock in the middle of San Francisco Bay was a military prison before it served as a maximum-security federal penitentiary. Some of its earlier prisoners included 19 Hopi men incarcerated in 1895 after resisting cultural assimilation, according to the National Park Service.

Occupiers argued they had a right to Alcatraz under an 1868 treaty the U.S. government signed with the Sioux that said abandoned government land would be returned to indigenous people. After the federal prison there closed in 1963, it was declared surplus property, a necessary step in selling it or transferring ownership.

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Donations came in from around the world, and the occupiers set up a clinic, a live broadcast and a school system for children on the island.

But the coalition of tribes knew it likely wouldn't get what it wanted: the deed to Alcatraz, a museum, cultural center and university built there, sustained federal funding and a seat at the table in administering national parks.

Over time, the occupiers dwindled. Students returned to college. One of the main organizers, the late Richard Oakes, left after a few weeks when his daughter was killed in an accidental fall from a stairwell. Infighting among demonstrators created factions, and Alcatraz eventually became more of a place for transients looking for food and shelter. Armed federal officials removed the last of the occupiers in June 1971.

Still, the occupation marked a pivotal moment — the start of Indian activism during the civil rights movement, said John Echohawk, founder of the Native American Rights Fund.

"It really kind of showed what the focus of Native American people was and, basically, our rights as sovereign nations," he said. "Treaty rights as opposed to civil rights, equal rights that the other minorities were pushing."

It was to be a continuous push that exists today through protests and court battles centered on treaty rights. Under a list of things to do while on Alcatraz, the occupiers wrote: "Set stage for next action! (Win one battle first ... then move again!!)"

After the occupation, American Indian Movement members asserted treaty rights in the takeover of a U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs building in the nation's capital, at the site of an 1890 massacre on a South Dakota reservation, and on the road as hundreds of tribes caravanned across the U.S. in what was called the "Trail of Broken Treaties."

The Alcatraz occupation also helped spur a shift in federal policy toward self-determination, allowing tribes to take over federal programs on their land — and a shift away from policies that sought to rid them of their culture, language and traditions.

Although then-President Richard Nixon increased the budget for the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, it's underfunded today. The agency that oversees schools, police forces and road maintenance on reservations can't meet the needs of the more than 2 million Native Americans across the country. Its funding also isn't shielded during government shutdowns, and neither is the Indian Health Service, responsible for primary health care for Native Americans.

Those services are supposed to be guaranteed through various treaties, tribes say.

LaNada War Jack, a member of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, was in her 20s when she helped plan the Alcatraz takeover. She points to recent decisions by the federal government to relax environmental laws and policies that don't fully allow Native Americans to oversee public safety on their reservations as signs these battles are ongoing, and much work remains to be done.

"We're really digressing rapidly, and we need to speak up and say something again and try to get some unity and some support and wake up the people in America," she said.

Robert Free also participated in the occupation, leading the raising of a teepee that became a demonstrators' meeting spot. He revisited the island over Veterans Day weekend.

Just like 50 years ago, Peter Bratt helped Free put up a teepee with the help of several Native teens. It will remain there until early January. But Free wants it to be a permanent monument to the beacon it became for subsequent protests.

"The Alcatraz occupation drew people from across the country and inspired people across the north continent and south continent and central America," said Free, now 70. "All these people came and gave us lost souls direction. We were rediscovering ourselves."

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Tang reported from Phoenix. Fonseca and Tang are members of The Associated Press' race and ethnicity team. Follow them on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/ttangAP>.

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Check out the AP's complete coverage of the occupation of Alcatraz.

## 'I am an American,' Vindman reminds Trump allies in hearing

By LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — "It's Lt. Col. Vindman."

With that, the Iraq War veteran, his chest flush with ribbons and commendations, tersely reminded Republican lawmakers questioning his judgment and loyalty just whom they were trying to discredit as the impeachment drive against President Donald Trump veered into the personal.

Alexander Vindman: Purple Heart recipient, career diplomat, Army infantry officer. And this: "I am an American."

Vindman, a Soviet Jewish immigrant, felt it necessary to state his allegiance as he batted away Republican questions about the offers he got to work for Ukraine's government. "I immediately dismissed these offers," he said. Still, the queries carried an implicit suggestion of disloyalty.

When the senior Republican on the House Intelligence Committee, Rep. Devin Nunes, looked down from the dais Tuesday and addressed the witness as "Mr. Vindman," the pushback was unmistakable.

"Ranking member, it's Lt. Col. Vindman please," he said.

The exchange highlighted the extent to which identity politics are playing a role in the impeachment investigation against the 45th president on the cusp of the 2020 election year. Trump has fueled the who-are-you nature of American politics ever since he announced his candidacy in 2015 with a declaration that some Mexicans are criminals and rapists.

Trump and his allies tried to identify Vindman and fellow witness Jennifer Williams, an adviser to Vice President Mike Pence, as "Never Trumpers."

"I'm not sure I know an official definition of a 'Never Trumper,'" Williams said, but she rejected the label.

"I'd call myself never partisan," Vindman said.

Vindman, with his military bearing and increasingly confident performance, presented a special challenge for Republicans struggling to defend Trump's pressure campaign to get Ukraine to investigate Hunter Biden, the son of Trump's Democratic rival Joe Biden. Some GOP lawmakers thanked Vindman for his service even as they questioned his loyalty, to the president and the nation.

Even Trump seemed somewhat restrained Tuesday.

"I don't know him. I don't know, as he says, 'Lieutenant Colonel.' I understand somebody had the misfortune of calling him 'Mister' and he corrected them," Trump said. "I never saw the man."

But before Vindman finished testifying, the White House was raising fresh questions about him on its official Twitter feed.

Vindman was 3 years old in 1979 when his family fled Ukraine for the U.S. Earlier in his Army career, Vindman served as an infantry officer and did tours in South Korea, Germany and Iraq. In October 2004, he was wounded by a roadside bomb and awarded the Purple Heart.

Since 2008, he's served as a foreign area officer specializing in Eurasia, leading him to stints in Kyiv and Moscow. Vindman also served as a political-military affairs officer for Russia for the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He moved to the Trump White House in July 2018 after being tapped to serve on the National Security Council. Voting records show Vindman was previously registered as a Democrat.

"Dad, I'm sitting here today in the U.S. Capitol talking to our elected professionals ... proof that you made the right decision 40 years ago to leave the Soviet Union and come here to the United States of America in search of a better life for our family," Vindman said in his opening statement. "Do not worry. I will be fine for telling the truth."

Testifying in full uniform, he was unafraid to call out his commander in chief: Trump's lean on Ukraine to gain information on a Democratic rival was "improper," Vindman said.

"Without hesitation, I knew I had to report this," Vindman testified. "It was inappropriate, it was improper for the president to demand an investigation into a political opponent."

As Republicans questioned his dedication and his service, Vindman shifted from visibly nervous to steady and even defiant.

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Utah Republican Rep. Chris Stewart, a retired Air Force pilot, brought up Vindman's uniform and his exchange with Nunes.

"Lt. Col. Vindman, I see you're wearing your dress uniform," Stewart said, thanking Vindman and his brothers for their service. "Do you always insist on civilians calling you by your rank?"

Vindman said he wore his uniform because he had been subjected to Twitter "attacks" that seemed to "marginalize me as a military officer."

"I just thought it was appropriate to stick with that," Vindman said of his uniform.

Stewart replied that Nunes "meant no disrespect to you."

But Democrats weren't ready to let the matter go.

"Your loyalty is being questioned ... because you are an immigrant," said Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi, D-Ill., himself an immigrant.

Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney, D-N.Y., said the questions echoed an old trope about Jews having "dual loyalty."

"There's been a lot of complaints and there's been a lot of insinuations and there's been a lot of suggestions maybe that your service is somehow not to be trusted," Maloney said. "We've had a lot of dust kicked up."

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Follow Kellman on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/APLaurieKellaman>

## White supremacist manifesto reportedly shared at Syracuse U

SYRACUSE, N.Y. (AP) — A white supremacist manifesto that appeared to be a copy of one linked to a man accused of attacking two mosques in New Zealand was circulated electronically at Syracuse University, campus law enforcement said Tuesday, adding to a string of racist episodes that have shaken the upstate New York campus.

Federal Investigators and local authorities were working to determine the origin of the document after receiving reports that it was posted in an online forum and that attempts were made to send it to the cellphones of students at a campus library Monday night via AirDrop, a file-sharing service that allows iPhone users to send pictures or files to other iPhones or iPads near them when devices are within Bluetooth and Wi-Fi range of each other.

Officials said the manifesto appeared to be copied from one written by the man accused of killing 51 people at two mosques in New Zealand in March.

"We don't know the author. We don't know what the intent of it was. It's a very disturbing document if you read it," Syracuse Police Chief Kenton Buckner said at a news conference with campus and state police and the FBI.

Department of Public Safety Chief Bobby Maldonado said, based on a preliminary investigation, there appeared to be no direct threat.

"We know that this is an unsettled time and our community is anxious," he said, adding that students and the campus are safe.

He said officers would increase patrols and their presence on campus.

Authorities have fielded about 10 reports of racist vandalism, graffiti and shouted slurs targeting Jews, Asians and black students at the private university since Nov. 7.

Students have staged a sit-in at the student wellness center since Nov. 13 with a list of demands that includes the expulsion of students for hate crimes and stronger diversity training for students and staff. The university's international students also have listed concerns.

Chancellor Kent Syverud on Tuesday said the university would commit more than \$1 million toward responses identified as priorities, including student safety, clarifying the code of conduct, making curriculum changes and hiring staff.

"As we undertake this important work, we face real challenges here and we operate in a fraught national climate," he said in a statement.

Syverud on Sunday suspended one fraternity along with social events for the others after a black student



complained she was verbally harassed as she walked by a group of people identified as fraternity members and their guests the night before.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo on Tuesday called on the university's board of trustees to hire an independent monitor to investigate the racism.

"Despite his efforts, I do not believe Chancellor Syverud has handled this matter in a way that instills confidence," Cuomo said.

The Board of Trustees responded with a statement supporting Syverud and praising his response to the student concerns.

"This is a deeply painful and unsettling time for our students and our whole Orange community. We have been attacked — from inside our home and from the outside world," Board of Trustees Chairwoman Kathy Walters said. "While it's easy to spread words of hatred, Chancellor Syverud has been relentlessly focused on the safety of our community, and the well-being of our students, driving action and effecting real change on our campus."

## Democratic debate: Rising Buttigieg could face attacks

By **BILL BARROW** Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Pete Buttigieg's dramatic rise from little-known Indiana mayor to a leading Democratic presidential candidate faces its toughest test on Wednesday, with rivals poised to lob debate-stage attacks in an effort to stall his momentum.

The debate in Atlanta marks the first time Buttigieg will face other White House hopefuls as an undisputed member of the top tier.

The 37-year old mayor of South Bend, Indiana, gained significant ground in recent months in Iowa, which holds the nation's first caucuses in February. He is bunched at the top of most polls in Iowa with candidates who have much longer political resumes: former Vice President Joe Biden and Sens. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and Bernie Sanders of Vermont.

Some surveys are beginning to show him taking a more convincing lead in the race.

Buttigieg still faces plenty of hurdles to clinching the Democratic nomination, particularly winning over black and other minority voters. But his Iowa rise means he could come under fire from his rivals like never before.

"Anytime a candidate pops up above the pack, there's a vigorous effort to vet them," said Democratic strategist Zac Petkanas. "Buttigieg is going to have to prove that his recent rise is not just a flash in the pan."

Biden, Warren and Sanders have all faced similar scrutiny in previous debates, and those attacks did little to change the trajectory of the race.

The debate will unfold at a moment of uncertainty about the Democratic field, with some in the party, particularly donors, worried there's no one positioned to defeat President Donald Trump. Former President Barack Obama took the unusual step last week of warning the party against moving too far to the left.

Speaking to that anxiety, former Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick entered the Democratic race last week. Billionaire Michael Bloomberg, the former New York City mayor, is openly flirting with a bid.

Neither Patrick nor Bloomberg will be onstage Wednesday.

With less than three months before voting, much of the nation's political attention would typically be focused on the primary. Instead, the focus is on the impeachment inquiry against Trump.

Hours before the debate, Gordon Sondland, the U.S. ambassador to the European Union, will testify before Congress in an appearance that will be closely watched for new evidence that Trump pressured leaders in Ukraine to find damaging information about Biden.

Some campaigns have privately questioned whether a debate against the backdrop of impeachment would have much impact. Still, for the candidates at the bottom of the polls who face increasingly dire prospects, nothing provides the opportunity for a breakout moment like two hours of exposure on national television.

"We're at the phase in the campaign where voters are beginning to make decisions, and they're begin-

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ning to see which of these candidates can go up against Trump and which can serve as president," said Jesse Ferguson, who worked for Hillary Clinton's campaign in 2016. "This is the time period where people start making decisions and locking in, regardless of what's going on in Washington."

New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker faces especially intense pressure. He's yet to meet the Democratic National Committee's polling requirements for the December debate, and his campaign acknowledges that he needs to capitalize on the national spotlight.

Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar offered the model last month by repeatedly calling for a "reality check" on Warren and her sweeping progressive agenda. Klobuchar's campaign said the subsequent few days were her best fundraising period yet. But it still hasn't shown up in national or most early state polls.

For California Sen. Kamala Harris, it's the first debate since cutting her operation in New Hampshire, the first primary state, and concentrating on Iowa. Like Klobuchar, Harris has qualified for the December stage but needs more than the minimum polling performance to make any serious play for the nomination.

That trio of senators could see Buttigieg's resume as a prime target, with his political experience limited to running a city of about 100,000 residents.

The Buttigieg campaign expects the scrutiny and has taken an increasingly tough posture. The mayor was noticeably more aggressive during the October debate, joining Klobuchar with a more moderate argument against Warren's and Sanders' policy pitches for single-payer government health insurance, among other ideas.

This is the first debate since Warren said she would gradually guide the country to a "Medicare for All" system if elected president. The move prompted criticism from Sanders, who is arguing for a more immediate shift to a single-payer system, and has left her open to skepticism from moderates who say her plan is unworkable and could feed into Trump's criticism of Democrats as socialists.

Warren and Biden, meanwhile, have been viewed as national front-runners in recent months but have yet to take each other on directly enough to define previous debates. They have, however, ratcheted up their rhetoric toward each other in recent weeks — often without naming the other.

At a major Democratic gathering in Iowa this month, Warren suggested that rivals who disagreed with her call for "big structural change" might be running in the "wrong" party's primary. Biden took umbrage, defending his proposals as "bold" and "ambitious," while accusing Warren of being dishonest about the cost of her agenda and the likelihood she could get it through a divided Congress.

Ferguson, the Democratic strategist, downplayed the idea that the details of Warren's or anyone else's health care plan will determine the primary outcome.

"Democrats are arguing over Coke vs. Pepsi, while Donald Trump is selling arsenic," he said, referring to GOP efforts to roll back the 2010 Affordable Care Act.

The debate airs on MSNBC from 9 p.m. to 11 p.m. EST.

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Associated Press writers Thomas Beaumont in Des Moines, Iowa; Sara Burnett in Chicago; Kathleen Ronayne in Sacramento, Calif.; and Will Weissert in Washington contributed to this report.

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Follow Bill Barrow on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/BillBarrowAP>

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Catch up on the 2020 election campaign with AP experts on our weekly politics podcast, "Ground Game."

## Warm ocean water delays sea ice for Alaska towns, wildlife

By DAN JOLING Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — The U.S. research vessel Sikuliaq can break through ice as thick as 2.5 feet (0.76 meters). In the Chukchi Sea northwest of Alaska this month, which should be brimming with floes, its limits likely won't be tested.

University of Washington researchers left Nome on Nov. 7 on the 261-foot (79.5-meter) ship, crossed through the Bering Strait and will record observations at multiple sites including Utqiagvik, formerly Bar-

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row, America's northernmost community. Sea ice is creeping toward the city from the east in the Beaufort Sea, but to find sea ice in the Chukchi, the Sikuliaq would have to head northwest for about 200 miles (322 kilometers).

In the new reality of the U.S. Arctic, open water is the November norm for the Chukchi. Instead of thick, years-old ice, researchers are studying waves and how they may pummel the northern Alaska coastline.

"We're trying to understand what the new autumn looks like in the Arctic," said Jim Thomson, an oceanographer at the UW Applied Physics Laboratory.

Sea ice in the Chukchi Sea every day since mid-October has been the lowest on record, said Rick Thoman, a climate expert at the University of Alaska Fairbanks' International Arctic Research Center and a former National Weather Service forecaster.

For example, the National Snow and Ice Data Center on Nov. 7 recorded sea ice at 39,382 square miles (102,000 square kilometers), about one-sixth of the typical ice extent for that date from 1981 to 2010, Thoman said.

Low ice is a problem for people of the coast. Communities north and south of the Bering Strait rely on near-shore ice to act as a natural sea wall, protecting land from erosion brought on by winter storms.

Sea ice is a platform from which to catch crab or cod in Nome, a transportation corridor between villages in Kotzebue Sound and a work station on which to butcher walrus near Gambell.

Sea ice is also one of the most important physical elements of the Chukchi and Bering seas. The cold, salty water underneath ice creates structure in the water column that separates Arctic species from commercially valuable fish such as Pacific cod and walleye pollock. When sea ice melts, it creates conditions important for the development of microorganisms at the base of the food web.

And then there's wildlife. Sea ice is the prime habitat for polar bears and the preferred location for dens where females give birth. Female walrus with young use sea ice as a resting platform and follow the ice edge south as it moves into the Bering Sea.

The formation of sea ice requires the ocean temperature to be about 28 degrees (-1.8 C), the freezing point of saltwater. Historically, ice has formed in the northernmost waters and been moved by currents and wind into the southern Chukchi and Bering seas, where it cools the water, allowing even more ice to form, said Andy Mahoney, a sea ice physicist at the University of Alaska Fairbanks' Geophysical Institute.

Forecasters 20 years ago took it as a given that the water temperature would be cold enough to form sea ice.

"Even at the end of summer you couldn't get enough heat into the ocean to raise the water temperature significantly above freezing," Mahoney said. "So it didn't take much cooling to cool the ocean down to the freezing point."

Climate warming has brought a harsh new reality. High summer temperatures have warmed the entire water column in the Bering and Chukchi seas. Water temperatures from the surface to the ocean bottom remain above normal, delaying ice formation.

"We've got a cold atmosphere. We've got a strong wind. You'd think we'd be forming ice, but there's just too much heat left in the ocean," Mahoney said.

The water potentially is warm enough to melt ice moving south from northern locations.

"I haven't seen any direct observations where ice has been transported into the Chukchi Sea and then melted," Mahoney said. "But the water temperature maps that I've seen, they're still significantly positive in Celsius. And you can't grow ice, even if you bring ice in, if the water temperature is above freezing, that ice is ultimately going to experience melting from the water temperature."

Thomson and other scientists on the Sikuliaq will look at how the changes could affect coastlines, which already are eroding. Less ice and more open water translate to a significant threat. Ice acts as a smothering blanket, keeping down the size of waves. Open water increases fetch, the distance over which wave-generating winds blow.

"We know from other projects and other work that the waves are definitely on the increase in the Arctic," Thomson said.

That means even more erosion, the chance of winter flooding in villages and increased danger to hunt-

ers in small boats and longer distances for them to travel to find seals and walruses.

Forecasting sea ice is notoriously difficult but Thoman, the ex-weather forecaster, said he expects a less than robust year for sea ice.

"Maybe the horizontal extent conceivably gets up to normal, but it has to be extremely thin and it will be subject to rapid melting if we get into a stormy period in the winter or spring," Thoman said. "And even if that doesn't happen, because it's thinner, it means it's going to melt out sooner come next spring."

## No clear champ as Johnson, Corbyn spar in UK election debate

By JILL LAWLESS and DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn attacked each other's policies on Brexit, health care and the economy Tuesday in a televised election debate that likely failed to answer the question troubling many voters: Why should we trust you?

The two politicians hammered away at their rival's weaknesses and sidestepped tricky questions about their own policies in the hourlong encounter, which was the first-ever head-to-head TV debate between a British prime minister and a chief challenger.

It was a chance for Corbyn to make up ground in opinion polls that show his Labour Party trailing Johnson's Conservatives ahead of the Dec. 12 election. For Johnson, the matchup was an opportunity to shake off a wobbly campaign start that has seen the Conservatives thrown on the defensive by candidates' gaffes and favoritism allegations involving Johnson's relationship with an American businesswoman while he was London's mayor.

Both men stuck to safe territory, with Corbyn touting Labour's plans for big increases in public spending and Johnson trying to keep the focus on his promise to "get Brexit done."

Speaking in front of a live audience at the studios of broadcaster ITV in Salford, in northwest England, the two men traded blows over Britain's stalled departure from the European Union — the reason the election is being held. The U.K. is due to leave the bloc on Jan. 31, after failing to meet the Oct. 31 deadline to approve a divorce deal.

Johnson pushed to hold the election more than two years ahead of schedule in an effort to win a majority in the House of Commons that could pass his departure agreement with the EU. He blamed the opposition for "dither and delay, deadlock and division" and said a Conservative government would "end this national misery" and "break the deadlock."

Corbyn said a Labour government would also settle the Brexit question by negotiating a new divorce deal before holding a new EU membership referendum within six months. A lifelong critic of the EU and lukewarm advocate of Britain's membership in the bloc, Corbyn did not answer when asked repeatedly by Johnson whether he would support leaving or remaining in a new referendum.

The Labour leader, meanwhile, slammed Johnson's claim that he would negotiate a new trade deal with the EU by the end of 2020 as a fantasy, saying such deals usually take years to complete.

"You're not going to get it done in a few months, and you know that perfectly well," Corbyn said.

The Labour leader also repeated his allegation that Johnson planned to offer chunks of Britain's state-funded health system to American medical firms as part of future trade negotiations with the U.S.

Johnson branded that claim "an absolute invention."

All 650 seats in the House of Commons are up for grabs in the election. Smaller parties in the race include the pro-EU Liberal Democrats, who want to cancel Brexit; the Scottish National Party, which seeks Scotland's independence from the U.K.; the anti-EU Brexit Party led by Nigel Farage; and the environmentalist Greens.

The debate featured only two candidates after the High Court in London rejected a legal challenge from the Liberal Democrats and the Scottish National Party over ITV's decision to exclude their leaders from the debate. The court decided it was a matter of "editorial judgment" to limit the format to the leaders of Britain's two largest political parties, one of whom will almost certainly be the country's next prime minister.

Later in the campaign, the leaders of smaller parties will take part alongside Labour and the Conservatives in two seven-way debates, and Corbyn and Johnson are due to square off again in a BBC debate on Dec. 6.

The stakes are high for both Johnson and Corbyn as they try to win over a Brexit-weary electorate. Both are trying to overcome a mountain of mistrust.

Neither delivered the kind of performance to silence their critics.

Johnson — who shelved his customary bluster in favor of a more muted, serious approach — is under fire for failing to deliver on his often-repeated vow that Britain would leave the EU on Oct. 31.

He drew derisive laughter from the audience when he urged voters, "Look what I have said I'm going to do as a politician and look what I've delivered."

Corbyn, a stolid socialist, is accused by critics of promoting high-tax policies and of failing to clamp down on anti-Semitism within his party. His refusal to say which side he would be on in a Brexit referendum was also met with laughter.

Pushed by moderator Julie Etchingham to pledge to tone down the angry rhetoric that has poisoned British politics since the country's 2016 Brexit referendum, the two men awkwardly agreed and shook hands.

There was another awkward moment when they were asked about Prince Andrew's friendship with American sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. Andrew gave a televised interview last week in which he denied claims that he had sex with Virginia Giuffre, a woman who says she was trafficked by Epstein as a teenager.

Asked if the British monarchy was "fit for purpose," Corbyn replied, "Needs a bit of improvement." Johnson said "the institution of the monarchy is beyond reproach."

Both expressed sympathy for Epstein victims — something Prince Andrew failed to do in his interview.

Televised debates are a relatively new phenomenon in British elections — the first took place in 2010 — and they have the power to transform campaigns. A confident 2010 appearance by former Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg sparked a wave of "Cleggmania" that helped to propel him into the deputy prime minister post in a coalition government with the Conservatives.

During Britain's last election in 2017, then-Prime Minister Theresa May refused to take part in any TV debates. The decision reinforced the view that she was a weak campaigner, and the election turned out to be a debacle for her Conservative Party, which lost its majority in Parliament.

Tim Bale, professor of politics at Queen Mary University of London, said Tuesday's debate was "a pretty messy score draw, although Corbyn may just have snuck a win in the dying minutes."

"Hardly two men at the top of their game, though," he said.

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## Letter shows psychologist broke rules with Iowa sex predator

By RYAN J. FOLEY Associated Press

IOWA CITY, Iowa (AP) — A psychologist in charge of treating Iowa's most dangerous sex offenders violated policies by developing an improperly close relationship with a violent predator who became obsessed with her, The Associated Press has learned.

Shannon Smith Sanders, who directed the treatment program at the Civil Commitment Unit for Sex Offenders in Cherokee, did special favors for the patient — sharing secrets with him, bending the rules for him and lying to protect him, according to a Sept. 16 termination letter obtained under Iowa's open records law.

Sanders also failed to report that the patient was having personal feelings for her. The letter said Sanders' actions constituted "boundary violations," meaning they crossed the line into unethical behavior that potentially exploited the patient.

They also created potential security concerns for the institution, which houses about 120 sexually violent predators who have been ordered by the courts to be locked up for treatment following completion of their prison terms.

The letter did not identify the patient. But attorney Jason Dunn told the AP that it was his client, Jeffrey Goodwin, who has been locked up since committing a 1988 sexual assault in Keokuk. In custody, Goodwin has a record of expressing sexually violent fantasies and threats toward female guards and assaulting other patients and staff.

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Dunn alleged that Sanders encouraged Goodwin, 55, to masturbate in front of her and that they watched pornography together at least once. He said Goodwin grabbed her buttocks a couple times and that they developed an "emotional affair" that included sexual discussions. He said his client frequently sent Sanders notes written in code.

"She had Jeff so wound up that he was willing to kill himself or someone else if he dishonored her or someone else dishonored her," Dunn said in an interview. "He was really going crazy."

The Iowa Department of Human Services, which operates the program, allowed Sanders to resign in lieu of termination after a three-month investigation into the complaint, documents show.

Sanders, 38, declined to comment about the investigation's findings or Dunn's allegations.

Dunn recently asked the FBI to investigate, saying the relationship may have violated an Iowa law barring therapists from sexually exploiting their patients. He said Goodwin intends to pursue a lawsuit.

The Cherokee Police Department is investigating "claims that have been brought to our attention," according to police Chief Nate James, who declined to elaborate.

Buena Vista University in Storm Lake, Iowa on Tuesday swiftly cut ties with Sanders after learning of her alleged misconduct from AP, a college spokeswoman said. Sanders had been teaching an online course this semester and was named its adjunct graduate faculty member of the year in 2018.

Sanders may avoid other professional consequences. Psychologists who work for government agencies in Iowa are exempt from licensing requirements, which means she cannot face investigation or public discipline from the Iowa Board of Psychology.

Dunn said he fears that Sanders will not be held accountable and that she could get another job at a similar facility.

Goodwin filed his complaint against Sanders in June after coming to believe that he was being manipulated by the psychologist, who told him she would deny everything to protect herself if they were caught, Dunn said.

Their relationship developed this year after Goodwin returned to the program following completion of a prison sentence at the Anamosa State Penitentiary.

He has been in and out of the treatment program for most of its 20-year existence. The Iowa Supreme Court in 2004 upheld a jury's ruling that Goodwin is a sexually violent predator who needs to be committed for treatment for sexual sadism, exhibitionism and anti-social personality disorder.

Sanders had been the program's treatment director for four years after previously working at a state hospital in Kansas, earning nearly \$98,000 last year, records show.

The investigation revealed "boundary/security issues" that she failed to report, violating numerous program and department policies, according to the termination letter signed by DHS administrator Rick Schults. Sanders refused to sign the letter and resigned immediately.

Her husband also worked for DHS at the Cherokee Mental Health Institute, which houses the treatment program. Trevor Sanders was in charge of overseeing surveillance cameras and other electronic security systems. It's unclear whether any video of his wife's alleged misconduct exists.

Trevor Sanders also recently left his state job, and the couple's Cherokee home is listed for sale. Shannon Sanders would not say whether they have moved.

"I don't want anyone to know my whereabouts, for obvious reasons," she said.

## AP FACT CHECK: Trump stretches in assailing witnesses

By HOPE YEN and CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Tuesday accused witnesses at the House impeachment hearings of spreading word-of-mouth information about matters they have no knowledge of themselves. But the testimony of Lt. Col Alexander Vindman and Jennifer Williams did not come from a rumor mill.

Both listened directly to Trump's phone conversation with Ukraine's president in July and had their own concerns about his request for a politically beneficial "favor."

At the hearing, Republicans tried to defend Trump by pushing a widely discredited claim that former Vice

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President Joe Biden pressed Ukraine's government to shut down a corruption investigation of Burisma, the energy company where Biden's son Hunter served on the board.

A look at some of the remarks in the second round of public hearings in the impeachment inquiry by the House Intelligence Committee and Trump's response:

TRUMP: "All these people are talking about — they heard a conversation of a conversation of another conversation that was had by the president." — Cabinet meeting.

THE FACTS: Trump is wrong that the witnesses testifying Tuesday only had thirdhand information about the call at the center of the whistleblower complaint.

Both Vindman, a National Security Council expert on Ukraine, and Williams, an aide to Vice President Mike Pence, directly listened to the July call between Trump and Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskiy.

CALIFORNIA REP. DEVIN NUNES, the top Republican on the committee, speaking of the news media: "You'd think they would be interested in Joe Biden threatening to withhold U.S. loan guarantees unless the Ukrainians fired a prosecutor who was investigating Burisma. That would be a textbook example of bribery."

THE FACTS: Nunes is incorrect to say Joe Biden pressed to have the prosecutor fired while he was investigating Burisma. In fact, by the time Biden came out against the prosecutor, the investigation was dormant.

Trump and his personal lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, have defended their actions in asking Ukraine to investigate the Bidens by citing a video of Joe Biden from 2018. Speaking on a public panel, Biden recounted threatening to withhold a \$1 billion loan guarantee from Ukraine's government unless it fired the prosecutor who the U.S. and other countries said was failing to fight corruption.

But officials in the U.S. and Europe wanted Ukraine to do a broader, more aggressive investigation of corruption in the country. Biden was among the international leaders who considered the prosecutor ineffective.

TRUMP: "Right now you have a kangaroo court headed by little shifty Schiff, where we don't have lawyers, we don't have witnesses, we don't have anything." — Cabinet meeting.

THE FACTS: Depends on the meaning of "we." Republicans on the committee have a lawyer asking questions of the witnesses, so it's not true that they have no legal representation. And several witnesses were invited at the request of Republicans on the committee.

It's also true, though, that Trump himself does not have a lawyer speaking for him at the hearings. That's not unusual. The inquiry is meant to be a fact-finding process and the president is not charged with anything.

He will have legal representation if the House Judiciary Committee moves ahead to draft articles of impeachment against him.

REP. JIM JORDAN, R-Ohio: "The call leaks, the whistleblower goes to Chairman Schiff's staff. Then he runs off to the lawyer, the same lawyer who said in January of 2017 the coup has started against President Trump."

THE FACTS: Jordan's chronology is problematic. The whistleblower didn't go running to lawyer Mark Zaid, who more than two years ago did tweet about a "coup" against Trump after the acting head of the Justice Department refused to defend Trump's travel ban on visitors from some majority Muslim countries.

The whistleblower's original, and lead, attorney is Andrew Bakaj. Zaid joined the team weeks later.

Jordan's timeline about the call leaking also may be confusing.

Details of the call had not yet been leaked to the public when the whistleblower contacted the House Intelligence Committee for guidance, speaking to an aide who counseled the official to contact the inspector general.

The details emerged publicly in the whistleblower's complaint itself.

When Jordan spoke of the call leaking, he may have meant that those who heard the conversation spread the word to others inside the administration.

NUNES: "Now that the whistleblower has successfully kickstarted impeachment, he has disappeared from the story, as if the Democrats put the whistleblower in their own witness protection program."

THE FACTS: The whistleblower hasn't "disappeared." That person has offered to submit written testimony; Republicans have rejected that.

Trump and his GOP allies are suggesting that the whistleblower's complaint is false, and so the person has vanished. But key details have been corroborated by people with firsthand knowledge of the events who have appeared on Capitol Hill.

The rough transcript of the July 25 phone call between Trump and Ukraine's leader also showed that the whistleblower had accurately summarized the conversation in the complaint sent to the acting director of national intelligence.

The whistleblower has offered through the whistleblower's lawyers to answer questions directly from Republicans on the committee "in writing, under oath & penalty of perjury." But Republicans, who are interested in exposing the whistleblower's identity, want that official to appear at the public hearings.

U.S. whistleblower laws exist to protect the identity and careers of people who bring forward accusations of wrongdoing by government officials. Lawmakers in both parties have historically backed those protections.

Trump himself refused to provide anything but written answers in response to limited questions during the special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russian interference during the 2016 election. Trump this week suggested he may submit written answers for the impeachment inquiry as well.

Associated Press writers Eric Tucker and Mark Sherman contributed to this report.

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## Tom Hanks didn't want to be Mr. Rogers. Then he met Marielle

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Tom Hanks has never played a superhero. But when the actor recently donned a very simple cardigan sweater, and the slacks to go with it, he felt like one.

"I felt like Batman. It felt like I was wearing the cape and the cowl of the Dark Knight detective," Hanks says. "There's only one person you can be when you put those things on, and that's Fred Rogers."

Since it was first announced, Hanks' casting as the beloved children's television host in "A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood" has had the feeling of kismet. Here was an actor nearly synonymous with affability, with "niceness," playing one of the friendliest faces to ever flicker across a TV screen. Hanks might as well have been answering a Bat Signal in the sky.

But as inevitable as Hanks playing Mr. Rogers may have seemed, it never would have happened without Marielle Heller, the filmmaker of the literary forger drama "Can You Ever Forgive Me?" and the '70s coming of age tale "The Diary of a Teenage Girl." The film's script, by Noah Harpster and Micah Fitzerman-Blue, had been floating around for years before Heller got attached. Hanks had already passed on it, more than once.

"I didn't pass on you," Hanks said in an interview alongside Heller. "I just passed on a thing."

It would probably please Mr. Rogers that the first big-screen fiction film about him was based, from the start, on a newfound friendship. Hanks and Heller met at a backyard birthday party for Hanks' son Colin. Hanks had just read a New York Times article about female filmmakers and mentioned it to Heller after learning she was a director.

"And she said, 'I'm in it,'" recalls Hanks. "And I said, 'Well, of course you are and I have to remove my shoe from my mouth.'"

Hanks, newly resolved to work more with female directors, promised to watch "Diary of a Teenage Girl."



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"I thought, 'Sure, Tom Hanks. I'm sure you'll run right out and watch my movie,'" says Heller. "And you did!"

Within days, Hanks called to set up a meeting, and that led to "A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood." Sony Pictures releases it in theaters this weekend. Based loosely on an Esquire Magazine article by Tom Junod, the film's protagonist is a New York journalist named Lloyd Vogel (Matthew Rhys) assigned to profile Rogers. Heller and Hanks view Rogers as the movie's antagonist — the agent of change in Lloyd's life, whose sincerity and caring disarm the cynical reporter.

Getting close to Rogers also altered Hanks and Heller. The production had the blessing of Joanne Rogers, Fred's widow, and much of it was shot on location in Pittsburgh. Hanks wore Rogers' old ties. He swam the same laps in a local pool. They collectively tried to live the kindness preached by Rogers, an ordained Presbyterian minister. The movie impresses the point that Rogers wasn't a saint; he had to work at being good.

"At one point early on, Tom said to me, 'I get the feeling none of us are going to be the same after making this movie,'" Heller says.

That meant trying to slow down not just the tempo of the scenes but the entire workings of a movie set. Heller's son, 2-years-old when they started, was often on set, and occasionally in the director's chair. Heller shortened the day-to-day schedule so that everyone, including herself, could be home by their children's bedtime on most nights.

"For me, as a mom of a little kid, that's the difference between being able to keep making movies or not being able to keep making movies," says Heller. "How do we think about our humanity while making movies? Would Fred Rogers have wanted us to make a movie about him where we all abandoned our kids in order to make the movie? I don't think so."

Both were relatively new disciples to Rogers. As a kid, the 40-year-old Marin County-raised Heller dismissed him as too schmaltzy. But now a parent, she found herself gravitating toward Mr. Rogers as a guide to explaining the world to her son. Hanks, 63, hadn't raised his four now-grown children watching "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood," so the dozens of hours he spent watching it to prepare for the role was eye-opening.

"I almost feel silly talking about it," says Hanks. "This movie has actually made me think a lot about myself as a man and a father. When I saw Mari, I said, 'Hey, thanks putting me in this movie, because you kind of changed my life, boss.'"

For Hanks, the greatest lesson from playing Rogers has to do with listening. As an actor and a celebrity, it's part of his job to be entertaining, to be glib. And he is extraordinarily good at it. Few people in person live up to their reputation more than Hanks does, who began the interview delighted at the idea of drinking from "a box of water." Quietude doesn't exactly come naturally, nor would most around Hanks want it to.

"There is a thing that I do: W-A-I-T. It stands for 'Why Am I Talking?'" explains Hanks. "I wrote that down in a notebook that I keep to remind myself that listening, for me anyway, is a disciplinary art. I have to force myself to listen because I love the sound of my own voice and because I'm a movie star I've been infantilized by everybody I come across who says I'm just wonderful. 'Look at you! You can stand up so good and you can eat with a fork! What a special, special, special movie star you are!'"

Slowing down took effort for Hanks, and for Rhys. At one point, they met to rehearse a lengthy scene at Rhys' New York apartment. "I said, 'Are you as exhausted by this as I am?'" says Hanks. "He said, 'Tom, I'm confounded by how much silence we have to have in this movie.'"

The movie called on Hanks to learn how to earnestly — not out of habit — ask questions like "How are you?" Heller would tell Hanks to thank Lloyd, "but this time mean it." In her three richly textured films, Heller has shown an uncommon talent for coaxing three-dimensional performances out of her actors, including Melissa McCarthy and Bel Powley, that radiate humanity and humor while omitting sentimentality.

"I'm sort of like the authenticity police," says Heller. "I'm there to make sure what we're capturing is true. So much of my job is to be the one on set going, 'Did I feel that? Did it feel true?'"

In Hanks' Mr. Rogers, Heller wasn't interested in an impression. A wig and some eyebrows were OK, but that was it. And, of course, the cardigan. The first time Hanks stepped onto set at WQED's Fred Rogers Studio in character, sweater-to-sneakers, Heller says, "the room gasped."

"It was like coming in as Elvis into Graceland," says Hanks, a little sheepishly. "I had no sense of self. I really felt like I was having an out-of-body experience of watching this other guy be Fred Rogers."

Having recently explained death to her now 5-year-old son, Heller was concerned he'd be confused. She didn't have to worry.

"He said, 'Mom, I know that's Tom Hanks,'" says Heller, laughing.

Hanks smiles. "Hip kid, man."

On their way out of the interview, Heller leans against Hanks and says how much she enjoys talking about the film with him. He's preoccupied with Heller's batting average as a director. "Mari 'three-for-three Heller,'" he says, liking the sound of it. He turns to her. "You know," Hanks says, "none of these movies should have worked." They walk out arm in arm.

Follow AP Film Writer Jake Coyle on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/jakecoyleAP>

## Jury awards \$58M in lawsuit against body donation firm

By JACQUES BILLEAUD Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — A civil jury has awarded \$58 million Tuesday to 10 people who alleged a now-closed body donation facility mishandled the donated remains of their relatives and deceived them about how the body parts would be used.

The trial against Stephen Gore, owner of the Biological Resource Center of Arizona, ended with jurors finding in favor of 10 of 21 plaintiffs, awarding \$8 million in compensatory damages and \$50 million in punitive damages.

An attorney for donor families said he believes jurors did not rule in favor of 11 other plaintiffs because they didn't testify at trial.

Gore's business was accused of fraud by claiming the donated bodies would be used for medical research, when it knew some of the remains would be sold for military testing, such as crashes and explosions. A woman whose son's remains were sold for military testing was awarded \$6.5 million.

Donor families also said they were promised the cremated remains of relatives and received boxes with what they thought were their loved ones, only to later discover the bodies were sold to third parties or were still at the facility.

The families contended they were weren't told the bodies would be used in ways they would not have approved. Jurors were shown the business' price list, showing, for instance, that a torso without a head sold for \$4,000.

Timothy O'Connor, an attorney for Gore, declined to comment on the verdict. He had argued that clients signed consent forms granting permission to dissect donated bodies, and that it was legal for the facility to make a profit.

Gwendolyn Aloia, who was awarded \$5.5 million, said the verdict shows that the body donation industry needs more government regulation.

Her husband's remains were donated after his 2013 cancer death, but she testified she wouldn't have allowed it had she known his remains would be sold for profit. She doubts the cremated remains that she was given were his.

Lawyers representing the donor families had asked for \$13 million for each plaintiff but acknowledged ahead of the verdict that Gore wasn't likely to be able to pay a large award. They said they brought the case to trial to hold Gore and his business accountable.

Cadaver donation companies distribute remains to universities, medical device manufacturers and drug companies. The companies pay the associated costs and use the bodies for medical education and research, and families save burial or cremation costs.

Gore's business was raided in January 2014 by FBI employees wearing hazardous-material suits and breathing through respirators. A retired FBI agent testified that body parts were piled on top of each other and had no identification.

He said he saw one torso that had its head removed and a smaller head sewn on, comparing the dis-

covery to a character from Frankenstein. The retired agent also said the horrific discoveries during the raid led some FBI employees to undergo counseling.

Gore pleaded guilty in October 2015 to a felony charge for his role in mishandling the donated parts.

Though Gore denied the allegations in the lawsuit, he acknowledged when pleading guilty to illegally conducting an enterprise that his firm provided vendors with human tissue that was contaminated and used the donations counter to the wishes of the donors.

In a letter to the sentencing judge, Gore said he should have been more involved in the supervision of his employees and could have been more open about the donation process.

Michael Burg, an attorney representing donor families, said the industry will learn from the verdict that there are consequences for deceptive practices. "It sends a message to others that don't want to be honest or trick people into doing this," Burg said.

This story has been corrected to reflect the amount of punitive damages that were awarded was \$50 million, not \$10 million.

Follow Jacques Billeaud at [twitter.com/jacquesbilleaud](https://twitter.com/jacquesbilleaud).

## Netanyahu celebrates US settlement decision in West Bank

ALON SHVUT, West Bank (AP) — Israel's prime minister traveled to the West Bank on Tuesday to celebrate the U.S.'s announcement that it does not consider Israeli settlements to violate international law.

Benjamin Netanyahu called the Trump administration's declaration, which stepped back from four decades of U.S. policy and reversed the policies of President Barack Obama, a "huge achievement" that "fixed a historic wrong."

"I think it is a great day for the state of Israel and an achievement that will remain for decades," he said.

Netanyahu spoke at a gathering of ecstatic supporters and settler leaders in Alon Shvut, a settlement outside of Jerusalem.

Israeli right-wing leaders welcomed Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's announcement. Although it is largely symbolic, it fueled calls from settler supporters for increased construction or even the annexation of parts of the West Bank.

Later Tuesday, Netanyahu said the U.S. decision "gives us a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity" to annex the Jordan Valley, an area in the West Bank seen as the breadbasket of a Palestinian state. In a video, he called on his political rivals, with whom he is currently in coalition talks, to form a unity government and make annexing the area its first priority.

Netanyahu has previously vowed to annex the area, a move that would swallow up most of the West Bank territory sought by the Palestinians, leaving them with little more than isolated enclaves. Israel sees the territory as a security asset.

The Palestinians, who claim the West Bank as part of a future state, condemned the U.S. decision. They and other countries said the move undercuts any chances of a broader peace deal.

Over 400,000 settlers now live in the West Bank, in addition to more than 200,000 settlers in east Jerusalem, the Palestinian's hoped-for capital.

The Palestinians and the international community say that settlements are illegal and prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state. Israel says the fate of the settlements should be determined in negotiations.

The head of the Arab League joined the large number of critics, condemning the Trump administration's latest decision "in the strongest terms."

The league's secretary-general, Ahmed Aboul Gheit, said the decision would result in "more violence and cruelty" against the Palestinians at the hands of the Israeli settlers and "undermines any possibility" of achieving peace.

The White House says it has developed a Mideast peace plan, but it has not yet unveiled it. The Palestinians already have rejected the plan, accusing the U.S. of unfair bias in favor of Israel.

The Trump administration has made a number of moves in favor of Israel, recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital, recognizing Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights and shuttering the Palestinian diplomatic offices in Washington.

## US, Australian hostages freed by Taliban in prisoner swap

By KATHY GANNON Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — The Taliban on Tuesday freed an American and an Australian held hostage since 2016 in exchange for three top Taliban figures — a move that the insurgent group asserted could help rekindle talks to end Afghanistan's 18-year war.

The hostages — American Kevin King and Australian Timothy Weeks — were released in an area of southern Afghanistan heavily controlled by the Taliban, ending more than three years of captivity since they were abducted outside the American University in Kabul, where both had been professors.

A Taliban statement that followed the swap, which freed the younger brother of Sirajuddin Haqqani, the head of the fearsome Haqqani network, called the exchange a "confidence-building measure" that could help bring an end to Afghanistan's endless war.

Anas Haqqani, along with an uncle, Hajji Malik Khan, and a Haqqani lieutenant, Hafiz Rashid Khan, were released by the Afghan government on Monday and flown to Qatar, where the extremist group has a political office in the capital, Doha.

The U.S. State Department said in a statement that King and Weeks were in the care of the U.S. military, where they were recovering and would soon be reunited with their loved ones.

The two were released in southern Zabul province's Naw Bahar district, a region largely under Taliban control, according to a Taliban official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to talk to the media. King and Weeks were handed over to U.S. forces and transported from the area in a U.S. helicopter.

"We are so happy to hear that my brother has been freed and is on his way home to us," said King's sister, Stephanie Miller. "This has been a long and painful ordeal for our entire family, and his safe return has been our highest priority. We appreciate the support we have received and ask for privacy as we await Kevin's safe return."

Their freedom came hours after the Afghan government released the three Taliban prisoners, presumably after securing assurances from the Qatar government that they will remain in Qatar and not return to the battlefield.

In 2014 the Qatar government accepted five senior Taliban who were released from Guantanamo Bay prison by U.S. President Barak Obama in exchange for U.S. Sgt. Bowe Berdahl.

The five, including some accused of crimes that included orchestrating the slayings of 2,000 Shiite Muslims in northern Afghanistan, were forbidden from leaving Doha.

However, they were allowed to join the Taliban team negotiating directly with Washington's peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad. Anas Haqqani's name was also put on the negotiation team even as he languished in an Afghan prison.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison expressed gratitude for the hostages' release, saying on Twitter that Weeks' family had "asked the Australian government to convey their relief that their long ordeal is over, and their gratitude to all those who have contributed to Tim's safe return."

Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan also welcomed the men's release, saying he appreciates "steps taken by all involved to make it possible." Pakistan wields some influence over the Taliban and has played a behind-the-scenes role in trying to restart peace talks.

Last week, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani announced what he called the "conditional release" of the three Taliban figures, saying in a live broadcast on state television that it was a difficult decision he felt he had to make in the interest of the Afghan people.

King's family noted the "behind the scenes" efforts made by special envoy Khalilzad, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien to get Ghani on board with the prisoner

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swap. Pompeo and O'Brien made separate calls to Ghani on Monday, the Afghan government said.

In 2017, several months after their abduction, the Taliban released two videos showing the captives. A January 2017 video showed them appearing pale and gaunt. In a later video, King and Weeks looked healthier and said a deadline for their release had been set for June 16 that year.

Both said they were being treated well by the Taliban and appealed to their governments to help set them free. It was impossible to know whether they were forced to speak.

Subsequently, U.S. officials said that American forces had launched a rescue mission to free the two, but the captives were not found at the raided location.

In a statement on Tuesday, Pompeo called the prisoner exchange that led to the men's release a "hopeful sign" that Afghanistan's relentless war can soon come to an end.

The United States had been close to an agreement with the Taliban in September that would have paved the way for a U.S. troop withdrawal as well as direct talks between the Taliban and prominent Afghans, including representatives of the Afghan government, to negotiate an end to the war and map out a framework for a post-war Afghanistan. But a fresh wave of violence in the Afghan capital that killed a U.S. soldier brought those talks to a halt.

Ghani, in his discussions with Pompeo and O'Brien on Monday, said he wanted the prisoner swap to result in a reduction in violence and an all-out cease-fire, his spokesman said.

According to a U.S. State Department statement Tuesday, Pompeo told Ghani the United States was "committed to work closely together to address violence if the president's decision does not produce the intended results."

Southern Zabul province, where the two hostages were freed, is heavily controlled by the Taliban and vast parts of it have long been a no-go area for the government.

But according to the Taliban, an unofficial cease-fire is now being observed in three districts of the province — Shahjoy, Shahmatzo and Naw Bahar — possibly to facilitate the release of the two hostages.

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Associated Press writers Abdul Khaliq in Lashkar Gah, Afghanistan; Tameem Akhgar in Kabul, Afghanistan, and Matthew Lee in Washington contributed to this report.

## Nerf gun, Power Rangers claw cited by toy safety watchdog

BOSTON (AP) — A Nerf dart gun, ice cream-scented Nickelodeon slime and a plastic Power Rangers claw are among the toys topping a consumer safety group's list of worst toys for the holidays.

World Against Toys Causing Harm unveiled its annual list Tuesday at a Boston children's hospital.

A realistic toy machine gun, a "pogo trick board," a yeti teddy bear and a pull-along caterpillar toy for infants also made the list.

The Massachusetts nonprofit has been releasing the list for more than 40 years.

It says many of the products present choking, eye and other safety hazards frequently found in poorly designed toys. It also cites the products for having inconsistent and inadequate warnings labels.

The organization says the Nerf Ultra One gun, which is billed as firing soft darts up to 120 feet (37 meters), shoots the projectiles with enough force to potentially cause eye injuries.

It also says the warning label on Flybar's Pogo Trick Board tells children to wear protection, but the product's packaging features a child using the device without a wearing a helmet or other protection.

And the association notes that Nickelodeon's Frozen Treats Slime includes mint chocolate chip, berry smoothie, and snow cone-scented versions of the goo even as it warns the products are made of harmful chemicals and shouldn't be eaten.

The Toy Association, a toy industry trade group that represents most of the toy makers named on the list, dismissed the annual list as misleading. It suggests parents always purchase toys from reputable stores and online sellers.

"By law, all toys sold in the United States must meet 100+ rigorous safety tests and standards," the organization said in a written statement. "On the other hand, W.A.T.C.H. does not test the toys in its report

to check their safety; their allegations appear to be based on their misrepresentation or misunderstanding of the mandatory toy standards.”

## Disney Plus user accounts already found on hacking sites

By MATT O'BRIEN AP Technology Writer

Disney says its new Disney Plus streaming service doesn't have a security breach, but some users have been shut out after hackers tried to break into their accounts.

The news site ZDNet found stolen account usernames and passwords selling for \$3 on underground hacking forums. Disney's streaming service costs \$7 a month or \$70 a year.

Disney Plus comes as Disney and other traditional media companies seek to siphon the subscription revenue now going to Netflix and other streaming giants. Disney is hoping to attract millions of subscribers with its mix of Marvel and Star Wars movies and shows, classic animated films and new series.

Helped by promotions, including a free year for some Verizon customers, the new service attracted 10 million subscribers the day it launched last week. The popularity led to some technical difficulties in the opening hours. Those problems have largely been resolved.

Disney says there's no indication of a security breach compromising passwords. It says it takes the privacy and security of users' data seriously. Disney Plus hasn't said how many subscribers have had security problems.

It's likely hackers found email and password combinations re-used by Disney Plus subscribers after they'd previously been stolen from other online services.

Paul Rohmeyer, a professor at the Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, New Jersey, said he's surprised that streaming services haven't yet implemented better security such as multi-factor authentication, in which users must enter a code sent as a text message or email when logging in from a new device. The code helps ensure that people using stolen passwords or guessing them can't use a service without also having access to the legitimate user's phone or email account.

Rohmeyer says services may be hesitant to implement tougher security because they don't want to be seen as more inconvenient than competitors.

Multi-factor authentication is an option for many non-streaming services, including Google, Facebook and Apple, but the extra security must be turned on. Disney Plus does require codes sent by email when changing account passwords, but it doesn't use them for logging in from new devices.

## Despite free-flowing kombucha, WeWork tenants feel unease

By ALEXANDRA OLSON AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The kombucha and beer on tap flow freely. The milk-and-cookie happy hours, yoga sessions and waffle Mondays continue as usual.

WeWork's stock market fiasco has yet to reverberate much for its more than 600,000 tenants, spread across a global empire of gracefully designed co-working offices. But beneath the work-and-play cheer, there's unease as WeWork embarks on a painful restructuring that will include thousands of layoffs as early as this week.

WeWork is slashing the lavish spending that fueled the office-sharing company's breakneck growth and contributed to unsustainable losses that ultimately turned off Wall Street investors, forcing it to shelve its initial public offering.

Shannon Wilkinson, CEO of a small online reputation management firm, says her clients rave about the vibe at her WeWork in midtown Manhattan, where visitors walk into a loft-like space with cozy leather couches and a large sign reading "fortune favors the brave." Floor-to-ceiling windows offer views of a neighborhood known as billionaire's row, but Wilkinson pays just \$95 a month for a basic WeWork membership.

"Despite WeWork's bad rap in the markets right now, it is very convenient, and I believe it will stick around a long time," Wilkinson said.

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Not far away, though, Lanny Grossman doesn't get the same vibe from the WeWork near Grand Central station, where the owner of public relations firm EM50 Communications shares a two-person office.

Emptier than other WeWorks just blocks away, the space is sometimes dark because too few people show up to trigger enough automatic lighting sensors, he said. At some point, the grab-and-go market disappeared. Recently, Grossman has noticed a slowdown in cleaning, with dirty coffee mugs still there the next day.

WeWork says there has been no change to cleaning schedules at that location, but Grossman said the issues have deepened his skepticism about the future of his landlord.

"It's weird. I come in and have my computer and my office and wonder if it's going to be there the next day," Grossman said.

Japanese tech conglomerate Softbank, which took an 80% stake in the company, has sent one of its executives, Marcelo Claire, to oversee WeWork's restructuring. Claire told employees in an email Monday that layoffs would start this week, summoning employees to an all-company meeting Friday to discuss the changes.

WeWork has said that the layoffs will not include the small "community teams" that work inside the shared offices spaces, and that many job cuts will come from sides businesses the company is selling.

Meanwhile, cleaning, pantry and facilities maintenance employees in the U.S. and Canada are being offered jobs at JLL, a real estate services company that will then contract those workers back to WeWork. Arik Benzino, WeWork's managing director for U.S. and Canada, told the affected employees in an email last week that their pay would remain the same and their shift assignments "will not change for the time being."

Behfar Jahanshahi, whose tech consultancy uses WeWork around the world, says he is eager to stick with the company but is watching the developments warily.

"What are they going to change that is going to impact us? Are they going to chip away at perks? Only clean every two days?" said Jahanshahi, CEO of Oklahoma-based tech consultancy InterWorks, who credits WeWork with helping him expand globally and says a company his size would have a hard time providing similar amenities on its own.

Jahanshahi is the sort of member Claire has vowed not to alienate, promising employees at a meeting last month that he would be "maniacally crazy focused to make sure that the experience that we offer our members is second to none."

"There's nothing more that I want than to prove all of the detractors that are writing articles about us that they're completely wrong, that there's magic to this business," Claire said, according a transcript of the meeting published by Recode, which WeWork confirmed was accurate.

The road to profitability remains a herculean challenge for a company that was posting up nearly \$2 billion in losses a year. A \$9.5 billion bailout from Softbank saved WeWork from possible bankruptcy, but the company now needs to reduce its reliance on venture capital and acquisitions that accounted for most of its explosive revenue growth.

WeWork is saddled with \$47.2 billion in future lease obligations, and the cost of building out newly acquired spaces. The company is locked into mostly 15-year leases that are difficult to renegotiate, with rates expected to rise over time. Adding to that, WeWork is temporarily not paying rent on many locations under deals the company has negotiated with landlords. Those rent-free periods are set to expire in the coming months, meaning WeWork will have to start paying that rent.

Experts and people in the industry are skeptical that WeWork can achieve meaningful cost reductions without somehow squeezing tenants.

"They have been living in Never-Never Land, an unsustainable paradise that is now going to get ratcheted back," said Allen Adamson, an adjunct professor at New York University's Leonard N. Stern School of Business. "They are not going to be able offer fewer cups of coffee to close the gap. It's too big a gap. This is going to draconian in term of what has to be done."

WeWork says it intends to move away from traditional lease agreements in favor of partnerships, in

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which landlords shoulder some renovation costs. The company is also shifting its focus from freelancers and start-ups to companies with more than 500 employees that sign longer leases and provide more stable revenue.

The trouble is WeWork faces growing competition from rival flexible office space providers pursuing those same strategies. Some traditional real estate companies, meanwhile, have launched their own flexible office space offerings, trying to tap into a market that WeWork helped jumpstart.

There are more than 700 companies that offer flexible office leases in the U.S., according to real estate service firm CBRE. WeWork, for now, is a dominant player, accounting for 33% of flexible office space supply.

Jonathan Wasserstrum, whose company SquareFoot helps businesses find office space, said WeWork tenants have called to ask if they can get better rates in exchange for sticking with the company. He said that might be unlikely at a time when WeWork is trying to cut costs.

Bill Baldwin, managing principle of the global real estate advisory firm Cresa, said that for the moment, he prefers not to direct clients to WeWork, saying he is not convinced the company can avoid defaulting on leases.

"That's a pretty scary situation to put a client of ours in," said Baldwin, whose firm represents occupiers in real estate transactions.

Major real estate companies that lease to WeWork have emphasized the high occupancy rates of its established offices, while sounding more cautious about the prospects for newer spaces.

For instance, two WeWork subsidiaries that had planned to move into a building on Madison Avenue in Midtown Manhattan may no longer do so, according to Nelson Mills, CEO of Columbia Property Trust, which owns the building and leases its office space to WeWork. WeWork will consequently have to fill the space with other tenants.

For now, many of WeWork's members are rooting for the company, including Axel Hellman, whose tech start-up OurBus found its branding designer at the WeWork office space on Manhattan's Upper East Side.

"It's easy to poke fun at the motivational signage and fruit water," Hellman said. "But in reality, it's the network available to us through WeWork and the flexibility they offer that makes the company valuable to us."

## Asian shares retreat on poor Japan trade data, China news

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Shares retreated in Asia on Wednesday after Japan reported its worst monthly decline in exports in three years, putting pressure on the economy as growth slows following a sales tax hike.

Adding to regional jitters, the U.S. Senate passed a resolution overnight to support human rights in Hong Kong after months of increasingly violent protests.

Japan's Nikkei 225 index declined 0.7% to 23,119.59 after customs data showed the country's exports falling 9.2% in October from a year earlier, with sharp declines in shipments to China, South Korea and the U.S.

The tariff war between China and the U.S. has stretched for over a year, hammering manufacturers and farmers on both sides and sapping demand for exporters in other Asian countries.

Japan's exports to the U.S. dipped 11% in October, including autos and auto parts, marking the third straight month of declines. And imports from the U.S. fell 17%, the Finance Ministry said Wednesday.

Exports were also hit by trade tensions with South Korea, with relations between the two U.S. allies at their worst in decades over longstanding historic antagonisms and Japanese allegations that Seoul is not providing adequate protections for sensitive technologies. That prompted Tokyo to impose controls on exports of certain materials used to make computer chips, a critically important industry for South Korea.

The Senate on Tuesday easily approved the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act was passed by voice vote. It now goes to the House, which has already passed similar legislation.

That decision could foil efforts by President Donald Trump's administration to forge a trade deal with



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Beijing, analysts say.

"Now that the 'HK bill' has passed by an overwhelming majority in the Senate, it will be difficult for the White House to hold out against this bipartisan pressure, which could to put another snag in the trade talk lines," Stephen Innes of AxiTrader said in a commentary.

In Hong Kong, a small band of anti-government protesters, their numbers diminished by surrenders and failed escape attempts, were still holed up at a Hong Kong university early Wednesday as they braced for the endgame in a police siege of the campus.

Police were waiting the demonstrators out after 10 days of some of the most intense protests the city has seen in more than five months of often-violent unrest. Since the siege began Sunday, more than 1,000 people were arrested and hundreds of injured treated at hospitals, authorities said.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng dropped 0.7% to 26,916.85. The Shanghai Composite index declined 0.4% to 2,923.59.

Australia's S&P ASX 200 fell 1.3% to 6,727.80 as energy and financial companies declined. Banks were hit by allegations by regulators that Westpac, a bank, is suspected of violating anti-money laundering laws. Shares also fell in Taiwan and Southeast Asia.

On Wall Street, shares were mostly lower Tuesday, as losses in energy companies and department store operators edged out gains elsewhere in the market.

A solid showing for technology sector stocks helped lift the Nasdaq composite to another all-time high, while the S&P 500 index finished less than 2 points below the record close it reached on Monday.

Energy sector stocks took the heaviest losses as the price of U.S. crude oil dropped 3.2%.

The S&P 500 index slipped less than 0.1% to 3,120.18 and the Dow Jones Industrial Average declined 0.4% to 27,934.02. The Nasdaq climbed 0.2% to 8,570.66.

Benchmark crude oil picked up 11 cents to \$55.46 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It fell \$1.84 to settle at \$55.21 a barrel on Tuesday. Brent crude oil, the international standard, was flat at \$60.91 per barrel after dropping \$1.53 overnight.

The dollar fell to 108.51 Japanese yen from 108.54 yen on Tuesday. The euro weakened to \$1.1074 from \$1.1077.

AP Business Writers Alex Veiga and Damian J. Troise contributed.

## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Wednesday, Nov. 20, the 324th day of 2019. There are 41 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 20, 1985, the first version of Microsoft's Windows operating system, Windows 1.0, was officially released.

On this date:

In 1789, New Jersey became the first state to ratify the Bill of Rights.

In 1910, the Mexican Revolution of 1910 had its beginnings under the Plan of San Luis Potosi issued by Francisco I. Madero.

In 1945, 22 former Nazi officials went on trial before an international war crimes tribunal in Nuremberg, Germany. (Almost a year later, the International Military Tribunal sentenced 12 of the defendants to death; seven received prison sentences ranging from 10 years to life; three were acquitted.)

In 1947, Britain's future queen, Princess Elizabeth, married Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, at Westminster Abbey.

In 1966, the musical play "Cabaret," set in pre-Nazi Germany, opened on Broadway with Jill Haworth as Sally Bowles and Joel Grey as the Master of Ceremonies.

In 1967, the U.S. Census Bureau's Population Clock at the Commerce Department ticked past 200 million.

In 1969, the Nixon administration announced a halt to residential use of the pesticide DDT as part of a

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total phaseout. A group of American Indian activists began a 19-month occupation of Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay.

In 1975, after nearly four decades of absolute rule, Spain's Generalissimo Francisco Franco died, two weeks before his 83rd birthday.

In 1984, pop star Michael Jackson was inducted into the Hollywood Walk of Fame with the unveiling of his star in front of a horde of screaming fans.

In 1998, forty-six states embraced a \$206 billion settlement with cigarette makers over health costs for treating sick smokers.

In 2000, lawyers for Al Gore and George W. Bush battled before the Florida Supreme Court over whether the presidential election recount should be allowed to continue.

In 2003, Michael Jackson was booked on suspicion of child molestation in Santa Barbara, Calif. (Jackson was later acquitted at trial.) Record producer Phil Spector was charged with murder in the shooting death of an actress, Lana Clarkson, at his home in Alhambra (al-HAM'-bruh), California. (Spector's first trial ended with a hung jury in 2007; he was convicted of second-degree murder in 2009 and sentenced to 19 years to life in prison.)

Ten years ago: Scientists in Geneva restarted the Large Hadron (HAD'-ruhn) Collider, the world's largest atom smasher, after a year of repairs. A Chinese national killed four people and wounded nine in a shooting rampage on the Pacific island of Saipan before taking his own life. Holding back tears, Oprah Winfrey told her studio audience that she would end her talk show in 2011 after a quarter-century on the air.

Five years ago: Spurning furious Republicans, President Barack Obama unveiled expansive executive actions on immigration during a televised address that would spare nearly 5 million people who were in the U.S. illegally from deportation and refocus enforcement efforts on "felons, not families." MLB Commissioner Bud Selig announced that baseball owners had unanimously approved a five-year term for his successor, Rob Manfred.

One year ago: President Donald Trump declared that he would not further punish Saudi Arabia for the murder of U.S.-based columnist Jamal Khashoggi (jah-MAHL' khahr-SHOHK'-jee), dismissing reports from U.S. intelligence agencies that Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman must have at least known about the plot to kill the writer. Trump said a judge who had ruled against his bid to deny asylum to migrants who enter the country illegally was an "Obama judge" on an appeals court that he said was biased against him. Health officials in the U.S. and Canada told people to stop eating romaine lettuce because of a new E. coli outbreak. Ray Chavez, the oldest U.S. military survivor of the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, died in southern California at the age of 106.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Estelle Parsons is 92. Comedian Dick Smothers is 81. Singer Norman Greenbaum is 77. Former Vice President Joe Biden is 77. Actress Veronica Hamel is 76. Broadcast journalist Judy Woodruff is 73. Actor Samuel E. Wright is 73. Singer Joe Walsh is 72. Actor Richard Masur is 71. Opera singer Barbara Hendricks is 71. Former national security adviser John Bolton is 71. Actress Bo Derek is 63. Former NFL player Mark Gastineau is 63. Reggae musician Jimmy Brown (UB40) is 62. Actress Sean Young is 60. Pianist Jim Brickman is 58. Rock musician Todd Nance (Widespread Panic) is 57. Actress Ming-Na is 56. Actor Ned Vaughn is 55. Rapper Mike D (The Beastie Boys) is 54. Rapper Sen Dog (Cypress Hill) is 54. Actress Callie Thorne is 50. Actress Sabrina Lloyd is 49. Actor Joel McHale is 48. Actress Marisa Ryan is 45. Country singer Dierks (duhkr's) Bentley is 44. Actor Joshua Gomez is 44. Actress Laura Harris is 43. Olympic gold medal gymnast Dominique Dawes is 43. Country singer Josh Turner is 42. Actress Nadine Velazquez (veh-LAHZ'-kehz) is 41. Actor Jacob Pitts is 40. Actress Andrea Riseborough is 38. Actor Jeremy Jordan is 35. Actor Dan Byrd is 34. Actress Ashley Fink is 33. Rock musician Jared Followill (Kings of Leon) is 33. Actress Jaina Lee Ortiz is 33. Actor Cody Linley is 30. Pop musician Michael Clifford (5 Seconds to Summer) is 24.

Thought for Today: "No man remains quite what he was when he recognizes himself." — Thomas Mann, German author (1875-1955).

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