

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Friday, December 6, 2019

State Oral Interp at Yankton High School  
(Rescheduled to 12-13-19) 4:15pm: Basketball: Girls 7th/8th Game (Rescheduled from 11-21-19) hosts Britton-Hecla JH  
7th Grade @ 4:15 and 8th Grade @ 5:15

## Saturday, December 7, 2019

9 a.m. to Noon: Santa Day at Professional Management Services  
11:00am: Basketball: Girls Varsity Jamboree vs. Warner @ Warner High School  
11:00am: Basketball: Boys Varsity Jamboree vs. Warner @ Warner High School  
State Oral Interp at Yankton High School  
10:00am: Wrestling: Varsity Tournament at Clark Junior-Senior High School  
10:00am: Basketball: Girls 7th/8th Jamboree at Groton Area High School  
4 p.m. to 7 p.m.: Olive Grove Tour of Homes  
9:00pm- 11:30pm: FBLA Winter Semi-Formal at the GHS Gymnasium

## Sunday, December 8, 2019

2:00pm- 6:00pm - Open Gym - Groton Area High School Arena  
2:00-4:00 PM Grades JK-8 (Students must be accompanied by an adult) 4:00-6:00 PM Grades 6-12

## **OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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**Cadance Tullis on the marimba.** (Photo from GDLIVE.COM)



**The middle school/high school Christmas concert was held Thursday evening. Cody Swanson (right) is having Superintendent Joe Schwan run the sound system. The sound system is now operated from an ipad.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)



## MS/HS Christmas Concert



The sixth grade choir, under the direction of Kayla Duncan, performed "Santa Makes the Rounds" and "The Biggest Brightest Holiday Lights!" (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



The junior high choir, under the direction of Kayla Duncan, sang, "In Excelsis Deo," "That's Christmas to Me," and "Pat-a-pan." Cody Swanson was also a director. Desiree Yeigh played the piano. (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



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The sixth grade band, under the direction of Desiree Yeigh, performed, "Rockin' St. Nick," "Who Let the Elves Out?" and "Jingle Drums." (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



The junior high band, under the direction of Desiree Yeigh, performed, "Jingle Bell Rock," "Deck the Halls with Chips and Salsa" and "African Bell Carol." (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



Cody Swanson presented Kayla Duncan with a gift. Duncan has been a student teacher in the music department since the start of school. (Photo from GDILIVE.COM)



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The high school choir, under the direction of Cody Swanson, sang, "Have You Seen the Baby?" "All is Well," "Good People, All Rejoice" and "Go Tell It!" (Photo from GDILIVE.COM)



The high school band, under the direction of Austin Fordham, performed, "Canticle of the Saints," "The Nightmare Before Christmas" and "Celtic Holy Night." (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



At the end of the concert there was a sing-a-long as everyone sang, "Deck the Hall," "Jingle Bells," "O Christmas Tree," and "We Wish You a Merry Christmas." (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM)



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Today



Mostly Cloudy

High: 30 °F

Tonight



Mostly Cloudy  
then Patchy  
Fog

Low: 17 °F

Saturday



Patchy Fog  
then Mostly  
Cloudy

High: 32 °F

Saturday  
Night



Mostly Cloudy

Low: 20 °F

Sunday



Mostly Cloudy  
then Chance  
Snow

High: 25 °F



NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE  
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION



Highs Today:  
25-35°

Lows Tonight:  
15-22°

Highs Saturday:  
32-42°

Published on: 12/05/2019 at 11:30PM

Seasonable temperatures are on tap for today and Saturday before a clipper system moves through the region Sunday and Sunday night. Confidence is increasing in light snowfall Sunday and Sunday night followed by frigid temperatures for next week.

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## Today in Weather History

December 6, 1969: An unusual period of almost continuous snow began in southern Minnesota and eastern South Dakota on the afternoon of the 5th and continued until late on the 10th. The Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport reported 88 <sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> consecutive hours of snowfall, which amounted to 14.2 inches total. The snowfall was 3-9 inches in the western half of Minnesota, with slightly lesser amounts in eastern South Dakota. Two inches snow fell at Summit and Sisseton; 2.5 inches at Watertown and Waubay; 3.0 inches at Clear Lake; 3.1 inches at Aberdeen; and 4.0 inches at Artichoke Lake, Webster, and Milbank.

December 6, 1913: A snowstorm from December 1st through the 6th dumps a record total of 45.7 inches in Denver, Colorado. This storm produced the most snow ever recorded in a single Denver snowstorm.

December 6, 1970: The National Christmas tree in 1970 was a 78 foot spruce from South Dakota. On the way to Washington, the train carrying the tree derailed twice in Nebraska. On the weekend before the lighting event, the tree toppled in gusty winds and required new branches to fill it out.

1886 - A great snowstorm hit the southern Appalachian Mountains. The three day storm produced 25 inches at Rome GA, 33 inches at Asheville NC, and 42 inches in the mountains. Montgomery AL received a record eleven inches of snow. Columbia SC received one to two inches of sleet. (4th-6th) (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1970 - A windstorm toppled the National Christmas Tree at the White House. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1987 - Another in a series of storms brought high winds and heavy rain to the northwestern U.S., with heavy snow in some of the higher elevations. In northern California, Crescent City was drenched with 2.58 inches of rain, and winds gusted to 90 mph. Up to fourteen inches of snow blanketed the mountains of northern California, and snow and high winds created blizzard conditions around Lake Tahoe NV. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - The morning low at Bismarck, ND, was eleven degrees warmer than the record low of 25 degrees at Meridian MS, and during the afternoon half a dozen cities in the north central and northwestern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including Alpena MI with a reading of 57 degrees. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Heavy snow blanketed the Central Rocky Mountain Region. Totals in the southern foothills of Colorado ranged up to 17 inches at Rye. Arctic air invaded the north central U.S. Lincoln NE, which reported a record high of 69 degrees the previous afternoon, was 35 degrees colder. International Falls MN was the cold spot in the nation with a morning low of 9 degrees below zero, and temperatures in northern Minnesota hovered near zero through the daylight hours. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

**High Temp: 35 °F at 12:07 PM**

**Low Temp: 22 °F at 5:55 AM**

**Wind: 24 mph at 1:26 PM**

**Day Rain: 0.00**

**Record High: 69° in 1939**

**Record Low: -30° in 1972**

**Average High: 28°F**

**Average Low: 9°F**

**Average Precip in Dec.: 0.09**

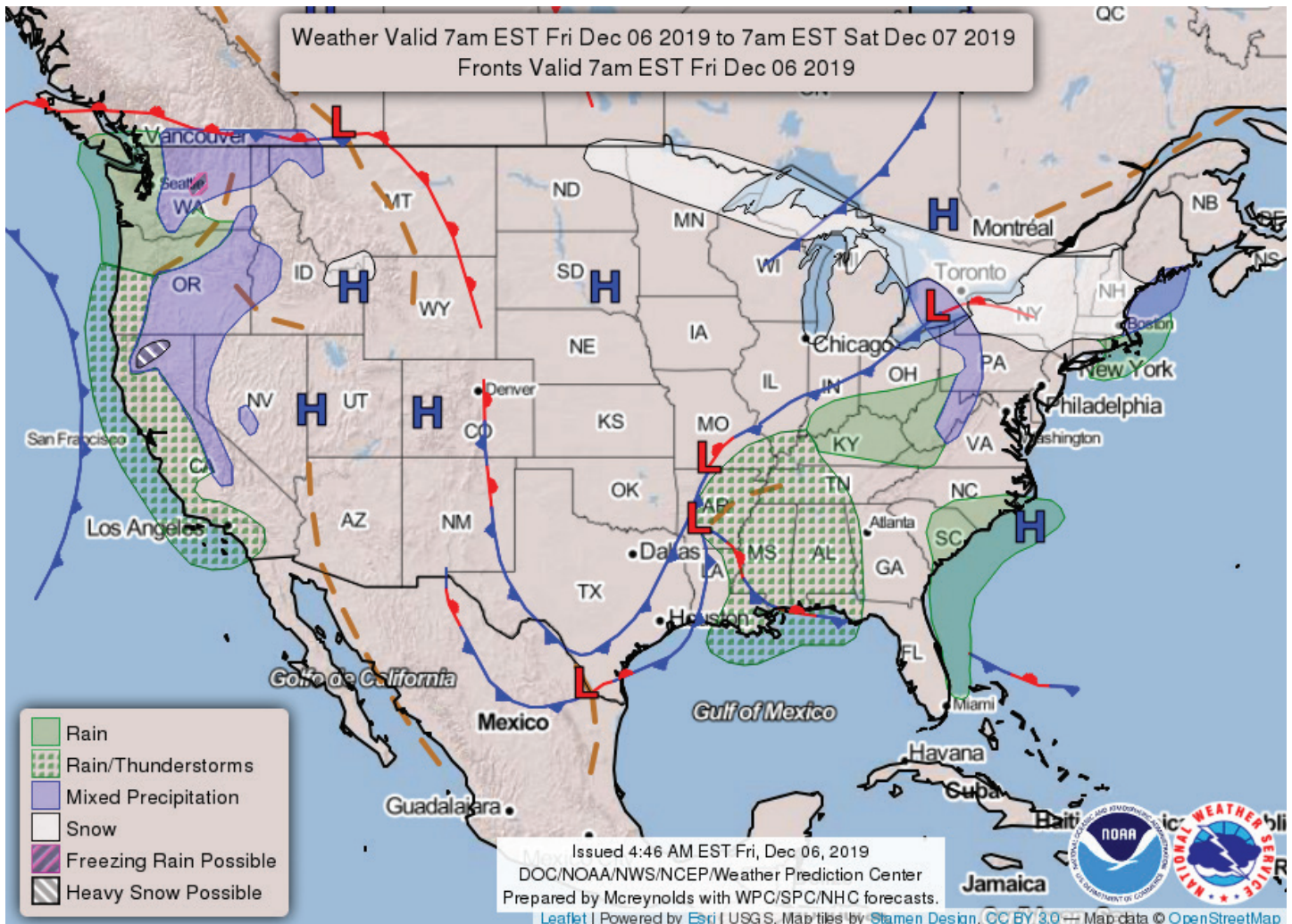
**Precip to date in Dec.: 0.00**

**Average Precip to date: 21.29**

**Precip Year to Date: 27.95**

**Sunset Tonight: 4:51 p.m.**

**Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:59 a.m.**





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## NEVERMIND, SANTA...

Chris was sitting in Santa's lap and going over a long list of presents that he wanted for Christmas. "I want a bicycle," he said, "and I also want a wagon, a chemistry set, a telescope, an electric train, a football, a Kindle FIRE, and a pair of rollerblades."

"That's a long list," said Santa. "I'll have to check carefully to see if you were a good boy."

After thinking for a moment Chris said, "Don't bother, Santa, I'll just settle for the rollerblades."

Not many of us would be able to "pass" a really thorough investigation to discover if we were worthy of receiving a long list of gifts. We'd probably be like Chris and settle very quickly for very little. Nor would many of us want to have someone investigate our lives and then decide if we deserved a gift or not. We would be quite anxious – if not completely frightened.

But God is so very different. He knows everything there is to know about us and still offers us the most precious gift He has: His Son.

"Now, no one is likely to die for a good person," said Paul, "though someone might be willing to die for someone who is especially good. But God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners." Christ: the source of eternal life.

There you have it. It is not about whether or not we are good or deserving of eternal life through Him. It is because of God's great love that we can have the gift of eternal life!

Prayer: May we realize during this season, our Father, the great Gift we have because of Your love. May Your Son be our main interest and attraction this year. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Romans 5:5-11 Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

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## 2019 Groton SD Community Events

- 12/07/2019 – Santa Day 9am-12pm, Professional Management Services
- 12/07/2019 – Tour of Homes 4pm-7pm, Olive Grove Golf Course (Tickets available at Lori's Pharmacy, Groton Ford, Hair & Co (Aberdeen) and Vicki Walter (605) 380-0480)
- 12/19/2019 – Christmas Open House 10am-4pm, Wells Fargo Bank
- 12/20/2019 – Holiday Bake Sale & Open House 9am-4pm, Groton Community Transit
- 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)



## News from the Associated Press

### **Frey leads Montana St. past S. Dakota St. 77-70**

BOZEMAN, Mont. (AP) — Harald Frey had 23 points as Montana State topped South Dakota State 77-70 on Thursday night.

Amin Adamu had 19 points and six rebounds for Montana State (6-3). Ladan Ricketts added 11 points. Mychael Paulo had 10 points for the hosts. Devin Kirby grabbed 15 rebounds.

Douglas Wilson had 16 points and nine rebounds for the Jackrabbits (6-5). Tray Buchanan added 15 points and six rebounds. David Wingett had 13 points. Brandon Key scored 10 points.

Montana State takes on North Dakota State on the road next Monday. South Dakota State takes on Colorado State on the road on Tuesday.

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

This was generated by Automated Insights, <http://www.automatedinsights.com/ap>, using data from STATS LLC, <https://www.stats.com>

### **Jean Rounds, wife of US Sen. Rounds, recovering from surgery**

The wife of South Dakota U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds is recovering from unexpected surgery.

Jean Rounds underwent surgery Wednesday after she experienced pain in her right leg.

She had successful cancer surgery last month. Rounds' office says she and the senator traveled to Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, this week. Doctors found a hematoma, or a mass of clotted blood, at the site of a surgical incision made last month.

According to Rounds' office, the mass was causing pressure on her sciatic nerve, which was likely caused by blood thinners she was taking following the surgery.

The Argus Leader reports she will remain in the hospital for the next several days.

Jean Rounds was diagnosed in June with a malignant high-grade aggressive tumor near her sciatic nerve.

### **Constituent sues over access to senator's Facebook page**

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A constituent is suing Sen. Stace Nelson alleging he violated his constitutional rights by blocking him from commenting on the lawmaker's public Facebook page.

Jeff Church, of Vermillion, alleges Nelson has denied his right to free speech and his right to petition government by preventing him from participating in a public forum.

The two exchanged comments on the senator's Facebook page recently after Church was critical of Nelson and his politics. Nelson commented that "slanderous comments and lies" will be deleted and that Church isn't "entitled to post your lies and propaganda here. You support Socialists. There's nothing constitutional or conservative about you."

Church is also requesting a permanent injunction against Nelson that prevents the senator from denying Church, and any other constituents in the same situation, access to the public forum by blocking them or deleting their comments, the Argus Leader reported.

Nelson, who is retiring from the Senate effective next week, calls the lawsuit is "frivolous" and says no one is blocked on his Facebook page or on Twitter.

Nelson has also blocked and deleted comments written by other Facebook users who have made critical comments on the senator's Facebook page, according to the lawsuit.

## Did Italian priest father two African sons, and walk away?

By KHALED KAZZIHA and NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

NAIROBI (AP) — Steven Lacchin grew up a fatherless boy, but he knew some very basic facts about the man who was his father.

He knew Lacchin, the name on his Kenyan birth certificate, was his dad's name. He knew that Mario Lacchin abandoned him and his mother.

When he was older, he learned that his father was an Italian missionary priest — and that in leaving, he had chosen the church over his child.

What he did not know is that less than 10 kilometers (6 miles) away, another man was on a quest to prove that Mario Lacchin was his father, too.

These two men would find each other thanks to an Associated Press story that appeared on the front page of Kenya's main newspaper. All agreed that they bore a marked resemblance, but they underwent genetic testing to be certain.

Were they indeed half-brothers — sons of the same Father?

The Vatican only publicly admitted this year that it had a problem: Priests were fathering children. And it only acknowledged the problem by revealing that it had crafted internal guidelines to deal with it.

"I don't know how many children of priests there are in the world, but I know that they are all over the planet," said Anne-Marie Jarzac, who heads the French group Enfants du Silence (Children of Silence), which recently opened negotiations with French bishops to access church archives so these children of priests can learn their true identities.

Just as clergy sex abuse victims have long suffered the indifference of the Catholic hierarchy, many of these children of priests endure rejection multiple times over: abandoned by their fathers, deprived of their identities and ignored by church superiors when they seek answers or help.

Steven Lacchin's lineage was no secret. Members of Mario Lacchin's order were well aware of it and exerted pressure on him to choose the church over his young family, according to his letters.

His mother, Madeleine, kept a decade worth of correspondence with the priest, as well as meticulous records of her efforts to seek child support from the Consolata leadership and regional bishops after Steven was born June 21, 1980. (Steven Lacchin asked that his mother be identified only by her first name.)

The two had met two years earlier in Nanyuki, about 200 kilometers north of Nairobi, where Madeleine was a school teacher at an all-girls school and Lacchin would celebrate Mass. Madeleine would later tell the Consolata regional superior that she first went to Lacchin with "a spiritual problem," but that they then eased into a "friendly pastor-parishioner" relationship that grew into love.

On July 28, 1979, Mario Lacchin wrote a birthday card to Madeleine in his neat cursive, promising to spend more time with her and her young daughter from a previous relationship, Josephine, despite the risks their union posed.

"I do really love you with all my heart and body," he wrote. "You are the only one who is giving me, not only physical satisfaction, but a lot more. You are telling me and teaching me how beautiful it is to love and be together no matter the sacrifices we have to make for it."

Soon after, Madeleine became pregnant. A few months before Steven was born, Lacchin wrote from Rome about meetings he held with the Consolata leadership at the order's headquarters about his impending fatherhood.

"I had a little trouble in Rome with my superiors," he wrote Madeleine on March 4, 1980. "It is my impression that nobody is going to help me in the way I would like to go," he wrote, adding: "How is the baby?"

By the end of 1981 — with Steven Lacchin a year old — the priest seemed determined to end his "double life" and devote himself to his family.

"I took a courage to meet with my provincial superior about you, about Steven, about my readiness to leave the priesthood," he wrote. "I want you, and I will fight until I will be with you, Steven and Josephine forever."



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But in that same letter, Lacchin told Madeleine that his superior wasn't at all on board with the plan. "He told me that he wants to save my priesthood, but I told him that I will never be able to continue in such a life knowing I had a child belong to me," he wrote.

Lacchin never left the Consolatas. His letters over the following years speak of his order's "pressure" to remain a priest, as well as his own feelings of "failure" and his apologies for having promised Madeleine "a future which will never come."

While the Vatican was loath in those years to let a priest abandon his vocation, the Consolata's deputy superior, the Rev. James Lengarín, insists that if a priest formally requested to be released from his vows because he had fathered a child, he would have been allowed to go.

By 1985, Madeleine was increasingly unable to care for the children. She was ill, and shunned by her devout Catholic family because of her liaison with Lacchin.

Lacchin, then stationed in Uganda, had left 1.7 million Ugandan shillings for her in the Ugandan diocese of Tororo that year (the equivalent at the time of \$2,500), but in the midst of a civil war, Madeleine couldn't access the money. Due to the upheaval, the money lost nearly all its value.

Two years later, Madeleine wrote to Lacchin's superiors seeking financial and bureaucratic help as she increasingly feared for Steven's future. Who would pay for his education? And the child couldn't get Kenyan citizenship because his father wasn't Kenyan; Steven Lacchin's birth certificate and other identity papers all bore Mario Lacchin's name.

The Consolata's then-regional superior, the Rev. Mario Barbero, replied that he understood Lacchin had left money for Steven's care in Uganda.

"With this I think that Mario has given some contribution towards meeting the expenses for Steven's upbringing, though I know that money is not enough to heal psychological wounds and frustrations you had to go through," Barbero wrote.

A year later, Madeleine took her case directly to Lacchin.

"Even as I write, I find it difficult to believe that you, Mario, could turn me into the helpless beggar I am," she wrote on Jan. 5, 1988.

"I accepted your decision regarding me, and yet I cannot accept your hiding behind the priesthood to refuse to help a child you helped bring into the world," she wrote. "I do not know what you think he will think of you and of your priesthood and other priests when he grows up and learns how you treated him."

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By then, Mario Lacchin had been transferred north and was working at the Consolata mission in Archer's Post, a onetime trading station in the Northern Rift Valley. There, he met Sabina Losirkale, a young girl in her final year at Gir Gir Primary School who cleaned the Consolata priests' quarters after classes.

Impregnated at 16 — before the age of legal consent in Kenya — she would give birth to a boy, Gerald Erebon, on March 12, 1989. He was pale complexioned, unlike his black mother or siblings or the black man he was told was his father.

When Sabina became pregnant, the Consolatas transferred Lacchin out of Archer's Post, and he vanished from her life.

Shortly before her death in 2012, family members say, Sabina told them Lacchin was Gerald's father. The priest has denied it, and refused to take a paternity test. The order acknowledged nothing.

The AP told Gerald Erebon's story in October. That article led Steven Lacchin to reach out to Erebon on Facebook.

"I saw your story and I feel for you," he wrote. "I am letting you know, you are not alone."

Intrigued, but skeptical, Erebon responded. What did the writer want to share?

"He is my dad too," Lacchin replied.

A few days later, the two met in Nairobi. It turns out they are practically neighbors, living in adjacent neighborhoods along Nairobi's main Magadi Road. They marveled at how much they looked alike: two bi-racial men born to black African mothers, soft-spoken and pensive, though Erebon towers over Steven.

Awkwardly, they hugged for the first time and looked over the documentation Steven had brought along

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detailing the years-long relationship between Lacchin and his mother and her efforts to hold him responsible for Steven's upkeep.

They shared the stories of their lives. Like Erebon, Steven Lacchin was brought up in the church and attended seminary for a time. Steven said he was kicked out once his bishop discovered that his father was a Catholic priest. Eventually he was able to put himself through law school, and now is married with three children.

"I wouldn't need a DNA to tell these two are brothers," said Lacchin's wife, Ruth. "If you look at Mario, you look at Steven, you look at Gerald, it's one person. It's one tree. They are brothers!"

Still, they needed to know. The AP arranged for DNA tests.

Two weeks later, the results were in: The findings were "entirely consistent with a direct male-line biological relationship," the lab said.

In other words, the men are almost certainly half-brothers, said Darren Griffin, a geneticist at the University of Kent who reviewed the lab results for AP.

"The only thing I can say is welcome to the family!" Lacchin told Erebon, shaking his hand.

"This is eternal," Lacchin said. "We can't run away from this. We may go our separate ways, but one thing, you know you have a brother out there."

Erebon said he had thought he was alone, and having "a relative, a family, someone you can call your own, makes it a bit easier for me now."

Mario Lacchin, who has taken a leave from his parish work in Nairobi to see his Italian relatives, didn't respond to a request for comment.

Lengarin, the deputy Consolata superior, said he searched the order's Nairobi archives in 2018 after Erebon came forward and turned up no information about Erebon or Steven Lacchin. But he acknowledged that he only looked into the two years surrounding Erebon's 1989 birth, and that the order doesn't keep complete personnel files.

He said AP's inquiry about Steven Lacchin was the first the order in Rome and Nairobi had heard about a possible second son of Mario Lacchin.

But Steven's mother was in touch with the Consolata superiors in the 1980s. Steven sent letters to Consolata officials in Nairobi in 2010 and 2014, seeking financial assistance (he wanted to buy land to build a home for his family) along with help sorting out his citizenship status.

Getting no response, starting in 2016 he made the same requests of Mario Lacchin's bishop, Virgilio Pante — like Mario Lacchin, an Italian member of the Consolata order.

Pante responded with an Oct. 14, 2017, text: "You look for something big. My diocese of Maralal now financially is suffering. True. Can I send you now a Christmas gift 25,000?" (In Kenyan shillings, the equivalent of around \$250.)

Steven still wants the church's help in ironing out his Kenyan and Italian citizenship issues; Erebon wants Mario Lacchin to acknowledge his paternity, so the heritage of his own two children can be recognized and they can obtain Italian citizenship.

"It started very long time ago and our father has to do the right thing, at least once," Erebon said. "He needs to make it right. And the church should not continue with the cover-up. They should just make this right."

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This story has been corrected to show that AP journalist's name is spelled Khaled Kazziha. It has also been corrected to show that Stephen Lacchin has three children, not four.

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Winfield reported from Rome.



## France on strike: Trains stuck, Versailles shut, unions firm

By ANGELA CHARLTON and MSTYSLAV CHERNOV Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Frustrated travelers are meeting transportation chaos around France for a second day on Friday, as unions dig in for what they hope is a protracted strike against President Emmanuel Macron's plans to redesign the national retirement system.

Most French trains were at a halt - including Paris subways - and traffic jams multiplied around the country.

The Chateau of Versailles remained shut for a second day because of the nationwide strike, and the Louvre Museum warned visitors to expect delays and some closed galleries. The Eiffel Tower reopened Friday after an all-day closure Thursday, but tourists from around the world remained challenged by strike-related disruptions.

"I arrived in Paris today, but I have been stuck for around two hours just trying to find a bus or a train," visitor Zaeen Shoi from Pakistan said while at the Gare de l'Est train station. "But everything has been delayed, so I'm just waiting for the next bus now."

Emboldened by the biggest outpouring of public anger in years, unions announced plans for new nationwide, "inter-generational" protests Tuesday over a reform they see as an attack on hard-won workers' rights.

At least 800,000 people young and old marched on Thursday, as strikes shuttered schools and some public services and disrupted hospitals and refineries. Police fired repeated volleys of tear gas and protesters set fires on a rampage around eastern Paris. Most demonstrators were peaceful, however, and the violence by an extremist fringe didn't deter unions from urging people across French society to join the new protests next week.

Macron is determined to push through the changes to France's convoluted and relatively generous retirement system, seeing them as central to his plans to transform the French economy.

Opponents fear the changes to how and when workers can retire will threaten the hard-fought French way of life, and worry that the plan will push them to work longer, for less retirement pay.

Macron's government has been negotiating with unions and others for months about the plan but won't release the details of the changes until next week. The government says it won't change the official retirement age of 62, but the plan is expected to encourage people to work longer.

The uncertainty about what the plan will entail is feeding public worry. Polls suggest most French people support the strike and protest movement, at least for now, in hopes it pushes the government to pay more heed to workers' concerns.

Some seven in 10 French employees work in the private sector, and the strikes are primarily in the public sector. But the retirement changes will affect everyone, and Thursday's demonstrations included private sector workers, too.

Paris region commuters and parents scrambling to get to work and school Friday had mixed feelings about the strikes and the reform. Some walked through a light drizzle on the strike's second day, while others who live outside the city slept overnight in hotels.

"I understand, striking is a constitutional right but there should at least be a partial (subway) service," said Mira Ghaleni as she tried to get her son to school in eastern Paris. "It's really a disaster for the people, and the politicians should do something because we've really had enough. One day, it's OK, but I think it will last longer."

Suburban commuter Eric Dao managed to get one of the few functioning regional trains into the city Friday, though he arrived late. "The strike is justified because it is necessary to find better social solutions," he said.

For Spanish tourist Lidia Barquero, the strike encouraged her and her traveling companions to better appreciate Paris by foot. "We like walking," she said.

Unions declared an open-ended strike and hope to keep up pressure on the government through next week.

Macron says the current system isn't financially sustainable or fair, and he wants to unify France's 42

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different pension schemes into a single one, giving all workers the same general rights. So-called special regimes, linked to certain professions like train drivers, allow workers to get early retirement or other benefits.

But the reform also aims to save money, and teachers are among many who worry it will leave them less money at the end of their careers.

Teachers at the Balzac school, which educates hundreds of students from across Paris, said in a statement Friday they were continuing to strike against a reform "that concerns all employees, in the public and the private sectors, and much later our students."

"Work counts and needs respect," it said. "Retirement pensions should be an enduring and definitive sign of respect for the accomplishment of years of work, often laborious and annoying."

Claire Parker, Alex Turnbull, Sylvie Corbet and Lori Hinnant contributed to this report.

## 10 Things to Know for Today

1. 'DO IT NOW, FAST' President Trump is embracing a new strategy if he gets impeached, focusing on the Senate, where he and his allies see a potential political upside to a public trial on friendlier turf.

2. HOW TINY CLUES HELP SOLVE CHILD SEX CASES Homeland Security Investigations has a victim identification lab where experts comb through the graphic images of child abuse and exploitation to find hidden clues to help identify the children.

3. INDIA GANG RAPE CASE TAKES ANOTHER VIOLENT TURN Police fatally shot four men suspected of raping and killing a woman in southern India, drawing both praise and condemnation in an incident that sparked nationwide protests.

4. CHASE WITH STOLEN UPS TRUCK ENDS WITH SHOOTOUT Four people, including a UPS driver, were killed after robbers stole the driver's truck and led police on a chase that ended in gunfire at a busy South Florida intersection during rush hour.

5. UBER REPORTS THOUSANDS OF SEXUAL ASSAULTS The ride-hailing company reveals that more than 3,000 sexual assaults were reported during its U.S. rides in 2018, noting that drivers and riders were both attacked.

6. PRIEST'S SAGA: A TALE OF A FATHER AND TWO SONS An AP story brings together two Kenyan men -- one who knew that his father was an Italian missionary priest, and another who wanted proof that he was the son of the same priest.

7. CHAOS REIGNS AT LIBYAN MIGRANT CENTER The U.N. has lost control of the EU-funded center in Libya that was intended to be the last stop before migrants were resettled outside a country notorious for trafficking, ransoms and abuse, AP learns.

8. WHAT WILL HAPPEN FOR THE LAST TIME Divers will place the ashes of a 98-year-old survivor from the USS Arizona in Pearl Harbor in the wreckage of his ship, the 44th and last crew member to be interred in such a way.

9. NEW R. KELLY CHARGES HAVE AALIYAH LINK The Grammy winning singer is facing new bribery charges that appear to be related to his 1994 marriage to then 15-year-old R&B singer Aaliyah.

10. LATE RALLY NOT ENOUGH AS COWBOYS LOSE AGAIN Chicago Bears quarterback Mitchell Trubisky accounts for four touchdowns as Dallas loses its third straight, 31-24.

## A locker, a chirp: How tiny clues help solve child sex cases

By COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

FAIRFAX, Va. (AP) — It was the odd-looking locker handles that caught their eye.

Investigators spent hours poring over graphic images of little boys changing in and out of their swimsuits at what looked like a YMCA. They were hunting for any clue to help them identify the location — and ultimately, the victims and the person who exploited them.

Then they noticed that the locker handles had unusual plastic hooks. They scrubbed the photos to

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remove the images of children, then sent the pictures to locker manufacturers. One of them recognized the lockers and said they had been installed at YMCAs. Eventually, investigators matched the photos to a YMCA in Sandusky, Ohio. That led to the suspect, a former Boy Scout leader.

These weren't FBI or local police, but investigators from the agency that's the poster child for President Donald Trump's polarizing immigration policies: U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. ICE's Homeland Security Investigations section, tasked with investigating crime, has a Child Exploitation Investigations lab where agents scour disturbing photos and videos of child sexual abuse.

They look for unlikely clues that help them identify the children and bring their abusers to justice. In one case, it was the loud, persistent chirping of a bird. Another time, it was unusual playground equipment.

"We are looking at the hidden details, the things people aren't looking at," said Special Agent Erin Burke, the section chief.

The work of Homeland Security Investigations agents has led to thousands of child exploitation-related arrests. But being part of ICE has taken a toll. Funding for HSI has fallen as a greater share of ICE's budget is devoted to removing immigrants. And the association with ICE has created friction.

Some cities and police departments refuse to comply with ICE on immigration matters, like alerting them to criminal suspects wanted for crossing the border illegally. Sometimes that bleeds into the HSI investigators' work, too. Just having the email end in "ice.dhs.gov" can cause problems.

"Ninety-nine percent of what we do here has no immigration nexus," Burke said. "But people have a hard time understanding this."

ICE's involvement in child pornography investigations dates back to when hard-copy images were traded over borders. Now it's all online. The internet has made it so investigators around the globe can't keep pace with the tens of millions of graphic materials available today. It's exploded in part thanks to cheaper online storage and easier encryption tools. The dark web gives additional cover to perpetrators. It has made them bolder, their abuse more graphic and disturbing, the work of the investigators more difficult.

The lab was created in 2011 to look for clues within images to help find child victims. It has three analysts and one special agent. They work in a small windowless room in a nondescript office building in the Virginia suburbs outside Washington. A sign on the door says in red bold letters: "Examination of graphic material in progress."

Inside, new technology meets old: Fluorescent office lights are turned down and specialized blue lights glow. Giant, state-of-the-art computers with high-definition screens are set up alongside old police sketches of faces.

The cases come to them from local police, or international investigators who notice American victims. It can take two weeks, two days, two years to identify the children. Some they can't find. Those children haunt them.

In many cases, graphic images are accompanied by everyday shots of the child.

"They want to show they have access to a child," Burke said. "So the 'before' images become a part of the story for them almost as much as the graphic images."

In one case, an analyst examined images he received from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, a clearinghouse and reporting center for issues on the prevention of child victimization.

One photo showed, a girl, maybe 4 years old, from the back. She was scrambling atop a rock, her curly blonde hair in pig tails. The analyst photoshopped the victim out and sent the photo of the rock and the surrounding foliage to a horticulture expert at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History, who narrowed the location down to the southern U.S.

Next, the analyst looked at playground equipment in another "clean" image. He sent the photo to playground manufacturing companies and safety experts who could pinpoint where the equipment was installed, smack in the middle of a Houston neighborhood.

They sent their research to Texas field agents, who went door-to-door, asking schools, neighbors, businesses, anyone, if they'd seen the little girl, and eventually found the victim — and the suspect.

The girl's father pleaded guilty last June and was sentenced to 35 years for exploitation. But by then,



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images of the girl had been widely circulated. They were found in at least 222 collections, officials said. In another case, analysts heard strange bird chirping in an abuse video. They isolated the sound and send it to an ornithologist who identified the bird and its migratory patterns. That led them to three suspects, the last of whom pleaded guilty last month. They are expected to be sentenced to a minimum of 15 years. In the locker room case, a 39-year-old man pleaded guilty last month to sexual exploitation of a children and will be sentenced in January.

"The bad guys will always be smarter," Burke said. "But that doesn't mean we don't have the tools, the expertise and the boots-on-the-ground hard work to make a dent."

The lab is a small part part of HSI, which has 7,000 agents tasked with workplace enforcement, human trafficking investigations, child exploitation investigations, plus drugs and financial crime.

In the budget year that ended Sept. 30, HSI agents and investigators initiated 4,224 child exploitation cases that resulted in 3,771 arrests and identification of 1,066 victims from. Some of those cases came from information gleaned through the victim identification lab.

The previous two budget years each saw about 4,000 investigations but lower arrests and fewer victims identified, according to the data.

The president's budget requests for HSI have declined over the past few years while requests for ICE's for immigration enforcement and removal operations money has increased, a reflection of Trump's intense focus on reducing immigration. For the new 2020 budget year, it's up about to around \$1.7 billion — but in 2018 it was \$2.1 billion. Meanwhile, ICE's removal operations requests have increased from \$4 billion to \$5.1 billion for this budget year.

Burke notes that working in the lab is "not for everyone." Coping can be tough. Some of the team members have children and have become wary of babysitters. They don't want to leave their kids with anyone in a room, especially men.

But they all feel a sense of duty, drawn to the job for the simple fact of saving a child from harm.

"If I don't do it, who will? If not me, who will find these children?" said the analyst who uncovered the locker room link. He didn't want his name publicized out of concern for his investigative work.

The agency has therapists available to help lab staff. Analysts tell each other to step away if something is particularly horrifying. There's no maximum amount of time someone can work in the lab, but when someone suddenly realizes they've had enough, they can transfer quickly to another department.

"It takes a special kind of person to do this work, Burke said. "But when you save a child, when you get the call that a victim has been rescued, it makes everything worth it."

## Independence not on ballot but on voters' minds in Scotland

By RENEE GRAHAM and GREGORY KATZ Associated Press

ST. ANDREWS, Scotland (AP) — Ask voters in this picturesque university town in eastern Scotland how they're voting in next week's election, and they're likely to transition seamlessly from talking about which candidate they want to send to Parliament to discussing whether or not they want another bite at voting for Scottish independence, which voters rejected in 2014.

The question of Scotland's independence from the rest of the United Kingdom is not on the ballot, but it's uppermost in the minds of many voters in St. Andrews, and elsewhere in Scotland, as they make their final choices.

That's because the decision to take the United Kingdom out of the European Union — known as Brexit — has upended the political landscape and exposed old divisions among England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, fraying the ties that bind the U.K. In Scotland, that means talk of independence. In Northern Ireland, it means fears that the sectarian violence that plagued it for decades could return.

These issues, and Brexit itself, are just below the surface in the Dec. 12 general election. Rarely has an election been so fraught with implications for the future of the United Kingdom, a structure often taken for granted because of its familiar symbols — the queen who has reigned for more than six decades, the Parliament that is centuries old — but is vulnerable as it engineers a radical change in its relations with

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the rest of Europe.

Voters in Scotland overwhelmingly chose to remain in the EU in the 2016 referendum, so it's fair to say Scotland is being dragged through Brexit against its will.

The North East Fife district that is home to St. Andrews was the tightest in the United Kingdom's last general election — only two votes meant victory for the Scottish National Party over the Liberal Democrats in 2017 — and the foes are grappling again. While they are united in their rejection of Brexit, they are divided over whether Scotland should vote, again, on its own independence.

The Scottish Nationalists say yes, that Brexit is so dire it merits another vote on whether Scotland, an economic player in its own right, blessed with ample energy resources, natural beauty, and a rich tradition of self-sufficiency, should forge its own way as an independent nation. The Liberals, meanwhile, remain committed to remaining inside the U.K., even if Britain extricates itself from the European Union as scheduled on Jan. 31.

Retired boxer Chris Honess has no doubt where he stands: He's going to vote against the Scottish Nationalists with the hope of quelling talk of another independence referendum. He thinks the whole structure of European defense would be threatened if Scotland breaks away.

"I am 100% against the breakup of the United Kingdom," said Honess, 69. "I think we're very good at complaining, actually the U.K. works very, very well. If the SNP (Scottish Nationalist Party) were to succeed in breaking up the United Kingdom that would definitely weaken NATO, and I'm a huge supporter of NATO."

If no party gets an outright majority in the upcoming vote, SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon had made clear that any party looking for her backing in a coalition government will have to agree to authorize Scotland to hold another independence referendum — and to accept the results.

John Curtice, a professor of politics at the University of Strathclyde, said the debate over independence and Brexit are now closely "interlaced" in Scotland. He says the results in North East Fife and many Scottish districts in the coming election are extremely hard to predict.

"When you're talking about Brexit, you're also tending to talk about independence," he said. "And when you're talking about independence, you're also talking about Brexit."

It's not just in Scotland. In Northern Ireland, some believe the election, if it brings the current Brexit deal to reality, could nudge Northern Ireland away from the U.K. and closer to the Republic of Ireland. That's a fraught issue.

The current Brexit plan, which is expected to win swift approval if Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservatives win a majority, would keep Northern Ireland bound more closely to EU trade rules than the rest of the U.K. in order to avoid border checks with EU member Ireland. That, in turn, could mean new checks on trade between Northern Ireland and other parts of the U.K.

Some who fervently want — or fear— a united Ireland believe that might be a fateful first step toward that end. And any changes, even small ones, to the delicate balance that defines Northern Ireland's status could have big consequences.

Back in Scotland, heavily tattooed hairstylist Craig Boyd, who runs a small salon, says he's backing the Scottish Nationalists next week with hopes of getting a chance to vote on independence again. He says that's far more important to him than the Brexit issue.

"I voted for independence the first time around, and I'll vote for it the second time around," he said. "Whether that is under remaining in the (European) single market and the union, who knows? But either way I'd like to see independence for Scotland."

But Johnnie Balfour, whose family has operated Balbirnie Farm since 1642, is tired of all the back and forth over independence. He remembers that voters were told ahead of the 2014 vote that this was a "once in a generation" decision — he doesn't want to revisit it just five years later.

"It's another form of uncertainty," he said. "The fact that we are still going on about it... Let's run this country in the way that we voted to do it in 2014 and let's not muck about anymore."

Katz reported from London.

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

## Indian police fatally shoot 4 suspects in gang-rape case

By MAHESH KUMAR and EMILY SCHMALL Associated Press

SHADNAGAR, India (AP) — Police on Friday fatally shot four men being held on suspicion of raping and killing a woman in southern India after investigators took them to the crime scene, drawing both praise and condemnation in a case that has sparked protests across the country.

The burned body of the woman — a 27-year-old veterinarian — was found last week by a passer-by near the city of Hyderabad, India's tech hub, after she went missing the previous night.

At around 3 a.m. Friday, police took the suspects, who had not been formally charged with any crime, to the sites where the rape and killing are believed to have taken place and the spot in an underpass where the woman's body was burned about half a kilometer (a third of a mile) away, said V.C. Sajjanar, the local police commissioner.

The police brought the suspects to help them locate evidence, including the victim's phone, Sajjanar said at a news conference.

"The suspects seized some weapons from policemen who had taken them there and started firing," Sajjanar said.

"Even though our officers maintained restraint and asked them to surrender, but without listening to us they continued to fire and continued to attack us," Sajjanar said, adding that police returned fire, killing the suspects.

The woman's death is the latest gruesome case of sexual violence against women to rile India and comes despite efforts to strengthen the penalties for such crimes. Some advocates say those efforts have failed to deter predators.

Hours after the police shootings, the crime scene in Shadnagar, a town in the state of Telangana about an hour southwest of Hyderabad, had the appearance of a fairground.

About 300 people gathered to celebrate the suspects' deaths.

Some hugged officers and lifted them into the air, chanting "Long live police," while others showered them with flowers.

Indians had rallied on the streets of Hyderabad, New Delhi and Mumbai and called on social media for swift justice in a country where sentencing is notoriously delayed by backlogged courts.

After the veterinarian's killing, Swati Maliwal, the head of the Delhi Commission for Women, started an indefinite hunger strike, demanding that the perpetrators be hanged within six months.

Maliwal said Friday that police "had no choice but to shoot."

She said she is continuing her fast to demand swift hangings in other sexual violence cases because she thinks capital punishment will act as a deterrent.

"Hang the rapists!" shouted some of the hundreds of Maliwal's mainly women supporters who gathered Friday at the site of her strike, the mausoleum of Indian independence leader Mahatma Gandhi.

The Congress party and other opposition groups raised the police killings in Parliament, and demanded a probe into the incident.

The National Commission on Human Rights, an autonomous body within India's Parliament, said it was sending a fact-finding mission to the crime scene.

"This type of justice is counterfeit," said Kavita Krishnan, secretary of the All India Progressive Women's Association.

"The killings are a ploy to shut down our demand of accountability from governments, judiciary and police, and dignity and justice for women. We demand a thorough investigation into this," she said.

Maneka Gandhi, a lawmaker from India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party and a former Cabinet minister, accused police of taking the law into their own hands.

"They would've been hanged by court anyway. If you're going to kill the accused before any due process



of law has been followed, then what's the point of having courts, law and police?" she said.

Avinash Kumar, executive director of Amnesty International India, echoed the sentiment in a statement, saying that "extrajudicial killings are not a solution to preventing rape."

After the 2012 gang rape and killing of a 23-year-old student on a New Delhi bus, minimum sentences were raised in cases of sexual violence. The four men convicted in the case have appealed their sentences, which were death by hanging.

Schmall reported from New Delhi. Associated Press writers Mohammed Shafeeq in Hyderabad and Chonchui Ngashangva, Ashok Sharma and Sheikh Saaliq in New Delhi contributed to this report.

## Chase with stolen UPS truck ends with shootout, 4 dead

By **BRYNN ANDERSON** and **TIM REYNOLDS** Associated Press

MIRAMAR, Fla. (AP) — Four people, including a UPS driver, were killed Thursday after robbers stole the driver's truck and led police on a chase that ended in gunfire at a busy South Florida intersection during rush hour, the FBI said.

Both robbers were shot and killed, and the fourth victim was in a nearby vehicle when shots rang out at a crowded intersection in Miramar, about 20 miles (32 kilometers) north of where the incident began, FBI Special Agent in Charge George Piro said during a news conference Thursday night.

Television news helicopters showed first responders tending to at least one person who fell out of the UPS truck, moments after several shots were fired when the chase ended.

"It's very early in the investigative process," Piro said. "There are a lot of questions that are still unanswered."

In Coral Gables, where the incident began, police said a jewelry store worker was also injured but did not say if she had been shot. There was no immediate update on her condition.

It all started shortly after 4 p.m., when police in Coral Gables received a silent alarm at the Regent Jewelers store in the city's Miracle Mile area, about 5 miles (8 kilometers) west of Miami. Coral Gables Police Chief Ed Hudak said during a news conference that two suspects were at the store and that shots were being fired when police, summoned by a silent alarm from inside the store, arrived.

The suspects fled in a truck, then carjacked the UPS delivery truck and its driver not long afterward to start the chase into the southern portion of Broward County, running red lights and narrowly avoiding some crashes along the way. The UPS truck finally stopped in one of the middle lanes of a busy roadway, caught behind a wall of other vehicles waiting for a red light to turn green. Television footage showed several officers on foot, some with guns drawn, approaching the truck from the rear and the driver's side once it stopped.

Katherine Gonzalez said officers were in front of her vehicle, a few feet away from the UPS truck, when the shootout started "out of nowhere."

"It was shocking," she said.

News helicopters were following the chase and at least one showed the conclusion live, with one person falling out of the vehicle's passenger side after several shots were fired. It was unclear if the shots were fired from inside the truck, from law enforcement who were moving in or some combination thereof. The fourth victim, in another car at the intersection, was "an innocent bystander," Piro said.

"This is what dangerous people do to get away," Hudak said. "And this is what people will do to avoid capture."

Piro was asked if there was a chance that either the driver or the bystander may have been hit by a bullet fired by police.

"It is very, very early on in the investigation and it would be completely inappropriate to discuss that," Piro said. "We have just begun to process the crime scene. As you can imagine, this is going to be a very complicated crime scene."

During the robbery, a bullet hit a window at Coral Gables' City Hall, which was locked down, Hudak said.

No one inside City Hall was believed to be injured, Hudak said.

Hudak said officers responded within 90 seconds, including one officer on foot who was involved in a nearby traffic stop. It was not immediately clear if anything from the jewelry store was taken, Hudak said.

Hours after the chase ended, medical gauze, wrappers and other debris remained strewn across the Miramar roadway's middle lane, next to the truck which still had its right rear door open. Traffic remained snarled, and it was not clear how long it would take investigators to clear the scene.

There are multiple crime scenes — the jewelry store, the site where the UPS truck was stolen, and the intersection where the incident ended, adding to the challenge investigators will face in piecing together the details.

UPS spokesman David Graves said the company would cooperate with authorities.

"We are deeply saddened to learn a UPS service provider was a victim of this senseless act of violence," Graves said in a statement. "We extend our condolences to the family and friends of our employee and the other innocent victims involved in this incident."

Reynolds reported from Miami.

## Uber reports more than 3,000 sexual assaults on 2018 rides

By RACHEL LERMAN and BARBARA ORTUTAY Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Uber, as part of a long anticipated safety report, revealed that more than 3,000 sexual assaults were reported during its U.S. rides in 2018.

That figure includes 235 rapes across the company's 1.3 billion rides last year. The ride-hailing company noted that drivers and riders were both attacked and that some assaults occurred between riders.

The Thursday report, which the company hailed as the first of its kind, provides a rare look into the traffic deaths, murders and reported sexual assaults that took place during billions of rides arranged in the U.S. using Uber's service. It is part of the company's effort to be more transparent after years of criticism over its safety record.

In 2017, the company counted 2,936 reported sexual assaults — including 229 rapes — during 1 billion U.S. trips. Uber bases its numbers on reports from riders and drivers, meaning the actual numbers could be much higher. Sexual assaults commonly go unreported.

"I suspect many people will be surprised at how rare these incidents are; others will understandably think they're still too common," Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi tweeted about the report. "Some people will appreciate how much we've done on safety; others will say we have more work to do. They will all be right."

Uber's share price dropped more than 1% in after-hours trading.

Uber and competitor Lyft have faced harsh criticism for not doing enough to protect the safety of their riders and drivers. Dozens of women are suing Lyft, claiming the company should have done more to protect them from driver assaults. A Connecticut woman sued Uber last month, claiming she was sexually assaulted by her driver.

London refused to renew Uber's license to operate in the city in November after the company was plagued with safety issues including concerns about impostor drivers. Uber said it will appeal the decision.

The companies have both formed partnerships with sexual assault prevention networks and other safety groups, and have touted their background check policies for drivers. But many say they haven't gone far enough to protect passengers and drivers, who are contract workers for the companies.

"Keeping this information in the dark doesn't make anyone safer," Uber said in a statement announcing the report. It plans to release its safety report every two years going forward.

Lyft said last year it would also release a safety report. A company spokeswoman confirmed Thursday that it "remained committed" to releasing a report, but did not say when it would be released.

Mike Bomberger, a lawyer representing more than 100 victims of sexual assault in lawsuits against Uber and Lyft, applauded Uber for releasing the numbers. "One of the problems with both of these companies is that they have hidden and have tried to conceal the number of sexual assaults that occur in their ve-

hicles," he said.

In response, an Uber spokesperson pointed to the just-released report. Lyft called Bomberger's charge "baseless."

Bomberger said he believes 80% to 90% of the assaults in the Uber report could have been prevented by measures such as cameras in the cars recording rides and the companies reporting every assault they learn of to the police.

The Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network said it appreciated Uber's transparency.

"This is an issue that affects every institution in America," RAINN press secretary Emily Robinson said in a statement. She added that organizations in every industry, including education, should "make a similar effort to track and analyze sexual misconduct within their communities."

The report stated that Uber rides were involved in 97 reported crashes in 2017 and 2018, resulting in 107 deaths. The company said the figure represents about half of the national rate for fatal crashes.

Sexual assault in the report is defined broadly into categories including non-consensual kissing of a non-sexual body part, attempted non-consensual sexual penetration, non-consensual touching of a sexual body part, non-consensual kissing of a sexual body part and non-consensual sexual penetration.

The company also said Uber rides were involved in nine murders during 2018, and 10 during 2017. Uber noted that the vast majority — 99.9% — of its rides had no reported safety issues.

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This story has been updated to correct the number of rapes reported by Uber in 2018. It is 235, not 229.

## **TB, armed guards, lack of food at UN migrant center in Libya**

**By LORI HINNANT and MAGGIE MICHAEL Associated Press**

TRIPOLI, Libya (AP) — The United Nations center in Libya was opened as an "alternative to detention," a last, safe stop for migrants before they were resettled in other countries. Now, just a year later, it looks increasingly like the notorious Libyan lockups it was supposed to replace.

The facility is jam-packed with nearly 1,200 migrants — about twice the number it was built for — including hundreds who fled from abuse at other detention centers in hopes of sanctuary. Dozens of patients with tuberculosis languish in a room crammed with mattresses. Sewage is overflowing, and armed guards from a local militia have effectively turned the center into a prison.

Unable to cope, the U.N. last week offered migrants the equivalent of \$112 each to leave, and warned that food, already down to emergency rations, would be cut off on Jan. 1 for unapproved arrivals.

"This is very dangerous because among us there are people who are malnourished," said a 27-year-old Sudanese man who arrived at the center in July. "If they cut food, they won't be able to stand it."

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This story is part of an occasional series, "Outsourcing Migrants," produced with the support of the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting.

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He, like the rest of the nearly dozen migrants who spoke with The Associated Press from the compound, asked to withhold his name because of fears of retaliation. Libyan security officials and U.N. and other aid workers confirmed that the U.N. had lost control of the facility.

The conditions at the center underscore the predicament the U.N. finds itself in over migration. The UN has criticized the detention of migrants in Libya - a position it reiterated last month when Italy suggested the U.N. High Commissioner on Refugees run more centers as a solution to rampant abuse in Libyan prisons.

"UNHCR does not and will not run places of detention in Libya," its spokesman, Charlie Yaxley, told the AP. Yet that is effectively what the Tripoli facility has become.

"It's not the best possible scenario," acknowledged Jean-Paul Cavalieri, the head of the UNHCR in Libya.

Cavalieri lamented the chaos that has accelerated as migrants, acting on their own, escape other detention centers with torture, rape, slave labor and trafficking to what they hope will be UN protection. He said the UNHCR is glad they are free of detention but cannot handle them at its center, known as the



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Gathering and Departure Facility, where people supposed to be there for days now spend months, stuck in a bureaucratic limbo.

“What we are trying to do now is to turn the loss of the GDF as a transit center into an opportunity,” Cavalieri said, but he struggled to articulate how. Cavalieri also said there are fears of possible abuse at the U.N. center, including of young girls. UN staff now spend just four hours a day in the compound, migrants and Libyan officials say.

The situation has grown out of Europe’s outsourcing of migration to Libya. Europe has poured nearly 425 million euros into Libya since 2016 to keep migrants from reaching its shores — money that goes mostly to the U.N. and other aid agencies to improve conditions for migrants and Libyans displaced by the country’s civil war. The U.N. runs a vast operation within Libya, registering 40,000 refugees and asylum seekers, with about 6,000 inside the detention system and the rest ensconced in communities in Tripoli and beyond.

But dependence upon European funding and its increasingly restrictive migration policies have left the U.N. in the uncomfortable position of being the arbiter of horror stories. It is the U.N.’s job to decide who has suffered enough to get a coveted resettlement slot in another country.

Many end up waiting months, sometimes years — often in other detention centers — to find out their fate. The U.N. is now threatening to suspend asylum cases altogether for unauthorized migrants who refuse to leave its GDF facility.

The facility, like the UNHCR mission in Libya itself, was funded largely by European countries. The idea was that it would be operated by UNHCR, with cooperation from the Libyan government.

The situation was less than ideal from the outset, Cavalieri acknowledged. Delayed by months of negotiations, UNHCR ultimately agreed to a series of conditions from the Libyan government: armed guards within the compound and Interior Ministry militia at the gates, no freedom of movement for the refugees and asylum seekers, and a single Libyan “partner” for the various lucrative contracts inside.

Those conditions were never publicly spelled out. When the first group of refugees was resettled from the facility in December 2018, the UNHCR described it as “the first centre of its kind in Libya,” and said it was “intended to bring vulnerable refugees to a safe environment” while solutions were found. More than 2,300 people have passed through in the past year.

The influx of unauthorized migrants began in July, when an airstrike hit a detention center in Tripoli, killing 54. Survivors walked through the city to the U.N. center and, once the guards admitted them, they refused to leave.

The latest group to arrive, in late October, included more than three dozen tuberculosis patients among several hundred who walked out of Abu Salim detention center, where they had been imprisoned for the last year without regular meals. Those whose families could spare money paid guards to buy them food; others went hungry.

U.N. officials at the center told the new group, mostly men from sub-Saharan Africa, that there would be no resettlement unless they left — either for another detention center or for the streets of Tripoli. They were given bread and water, and U.N. officials said they had no control over what happened next, according to two Eritrean asylum-seekers. That would be up to the commander of the armed guards at the gates.

The Eritreans, whose government is considered among the world’s most repressive, refused to leave. They also refused to discuss returning home when an Eritrean diplomat unexpectedly showed up at the invitation of a U.N. migration official, according to the asylum-seekers. His arrival forced them to face a representative of the very government from which they are seeking asylum.

The tuberculosis patients, meanwhile, are being treated on-site in a crowded room of their own. They receive medicine from the U.N. But the pills are supposed to be taken on a full stomach, and instead the patients are making do with the same biscuits, bread and water they all have subsisted on since their arrival.

Most of the migrants at the U.N. center fled from worse and are torn between relief and fury — relief to have escaped Libya’s prisons alive, and fury at the impotence of the UN, which they say lacks either the will or the power to make any meaningful decisions about their future, inside the center or out.

“I hate these organizations. They don’t have any humanity,” said a 15-year-old Eritrean who survived the airstrike, fled to the U.N. facility, and is waiting to learn what will happen to him. His group is not al-

lowed outside because they speak no Arabic and are targets for kidnapping. There are no resettlement slots available other than Libya.

"What shall we do?" he asked. "We have no options but to stay. Is there any news?"

The last thing most of those the AP interviewed want is to be turned out into Libyan cities, which are dangerous for everyone — Libyans and foreigners alike — but especially for migrants. They are considered ripe for kidnappings for ransom and for arrest by Libyan authorities who return them to the same detention centers they fled. So migrants inside see few alternatives to their new prison — it's better than the old one or the streets.

"You are not allowed out because it's like you are at the very last stage. You are almost outside Libya. It's for your own safety," said Khaled al-Marghani of LibAid, the Libyan group that operates the facility. "If you leave, I won't be able to let you back in."

Hardly anyone seemed eager to accept the latest offer, which the U.N. said came with guarantees from the Libyan government that they would not be re-arrested on the streets. But it is militias that run the streets, and not the central government.

One Sudanese migrant did agree to leave, seeing little alternative. He said he'll now try to cross to Europe by sea before he is swept up in a Libyan raid to detain migrants.

"Instead of living in Tripoli and getting tortured, the sea is less torturous," he said.

At a hearing late last month before members of the European Parliament, Annabelle Roig Granjon, a senior officer with UNHCR, fielded questions about how European funds were helping migrants inside Libya, especially in the center that opened a year ago to so much hope.

"The nature of the center, which was meant to be a transit center, is changing and this is a challenge right now," she said. "What was meant to be an alternative to detention is turning into something else."

Hinnant reported from Paris. Paolo Santalucia in Rome contributed.

## Mitchell Trubisky helps Bears beat Cowboys 31-24

By **ANDREW SELIGMAN AP Sports Writer**

CHICAGO (AP) — Mitchell Trubisky and the Chicago Bears appear to be hitting their stride, even if it might be too late to salvage their season.

Trubisky threw three touchdown passes and ran for a score in Chicago's 31-24 victory over Dak Prescott and the slumping Dallas Cowboys on Thursday night.

In a matchup between disappointing teams that made the playoffs last season, the Bears (7-6) came away with their fourth win in five games after dropping four in a row. The Cowboys (6-7) have lost seven of 10 since a 3-0 start.

"I think it shows we're resilient," Trubisky said. "We stick together. We believe in each other even when nobody else believes in us. It's a special group in that locker room. We just want to keep this feeling going."

Trubisky shook off an early interception near the goal line to complete 23 of 31 passes for 244 yards. He matched a season high for touchdown throws and set one with 63 yards rushing. That included a 23-yard scoring dash early in the fourth quarter to make it 31-14.

Allen Robinson caught two TD passes and Anthony Miller had one as Chicago tied a season scoring high.

On defense, Khalil Mack had a sack but linebacker Roquan Smith left the game with a pectoral injury on the opening drive, with coach Matt Nagy saying it "doesn't look real good for him." Still, the Bears took out the NFC East leaders after beating the struggling Detroit Lions twice and New York Giants in recent weeks.

"Most teams at some point in time will hit some type of adversity," Nagy said. "We went through that four-game stretch. It was difficult in a lot of different ways. ... Everybody's seeing what type of people we have on this football team. No one's flinched. We've pulled together. We've become even tighter."

**SLUMP CONTINUES**

Facing a top-10 defense for the third week in a row, the Cowboys once again couldn't get their high-powered offense going.

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"I can't put a finger on it," said Prescott, the NFL's passing leader. "I wish I could right now. If I could we wouldn't be in this situation, we would be getting over this and out of this slump, but that's the most frustrating part, we have the skill level, we have the players, we have the chemistry at times, But we're not playing together as a team, complementary enough when we need to, and we need to figure it out."

Prescott was 27 of 49 for 334 yards and a touchdown. Ezekiel Elliott ran for 81 yards — his fifth straight game under 100 — and two scores.

Michael Gallup had 109 yards receiving. Amari Cooper caught six passes for 83 yards and a touchdown, but the Cowboys lost their third straight. They lead Philadelphia by a half-game in the division.

"I know we have the right pieces in place, right players, right talent. Just about doing it instead of talking about it," Cooper said.

## TAKING CONTROL

Kept out of the end zone in a 13-9 loss at New England two weeks ago and then held to two touchdowns in falling 26-15 to Buffalo on Thanksgiving, the Cowboys went 75 yards for a score on the game's opening possession. Elliott lunged in from the 2 to cap a 17-play drive.

Jourdan Lewis then intercepted Trubisky's pass with a neat play near the left pylon, dragging his left foot. He was initially ruled out of bounds, but the call was overturned by a replay review.

But it was all Bears after that.

Chicago tied it early in the second quarter when Trubisky hit Robinson with a 5-yard pass and took a 10-7 lead on a 36-yard field goal by Eddy Piñeiro. Dallas' Brett Maher then missed a 42-yarder wide right. Chicago added to the lead in the closing seconds of the half with Trubisky's 8-yard pass to Robinson, and Miller's 14-yarder in the third made it 24-7.

"I think we stayed ahead of the chains, we scored early, we were able to get the run game going," Robinson said. "All aspects of our offense were working today. We were able to keep them off balance."

## FOR KICKS

Maher is 20 for 30 on field goals this season after going 1 of 2. The 10 misses are more than any other NFL kicker has had in a season the past four years.

## INJURIES

Cowboys: WR Cedric Wilson jammed his left leg trying to catch a long pass in the closing minute. ... LB Leighton Vander Esch (neck), NT Antwaun Woods (knee) and S Jeff Heath (shoulder) were inactive.

Bears: WR Javon Wims (knee) walked off gingerly in the closing seconds of the first half after an awkward landing as he tried to make a leaping catch in the end zone. ... CB Prince Amukamara (hamstring) was inactive after being listed as doubtful. ... WR Taylor Gabriel (concussion), TE Ben Braunecker (concussion) and RT Bobby Massie (ankle) all missed their second straight game.

## UP NEXT

Cowboys: Host the Los Angeles Rams on Dec. 15.

Bears: At the Green Bay Packers on Dec. 15.

More AP NFL: <https://apnews.com/NFL> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_NFL](https://twitter.com/AP_NFL)

## Pearl Harbor vet's interment to be last on sunken Arizona

By AUDREY McAVOY Associated Press

PEARL HARBOR, Hawaii (AP) — On Dec. 7, 1941, then-21-year-old Lauren Bruner was the second-to-last man to escape the burning wreckage of the USS Arizona after a Japanese plane dropped a bomb that ignited an enormous explosion in the battleship's ammunition storage compartment.

He lived to be 98 years old, marrying twice and outliving both wives. He worked for a refrigeration company for nearly four decades.

This weekend, divers will place Bruner's ashes inside the battleship's wreckage, which sits in Pearl Harbor where it sank during the attack 78 years ago that thrust the United States into World War II. The Southern California man will be the 44th and last crew member to be interred in accordance with this rare Navy



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ritual. The last three living Arizona survivors plan to be laid to rest with their families.

The somber ceremony and other events marking the anniversary of the attack come on the heels of a deadly shooting at the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard on Wednesday, when an active duty sailor opened fire on three civilian Department of Defense employees. Two were killed and the third hospitalized in the shooting that ended with the sailor also taking his own life.

Bruner said he wanted to return to his ship because few people go to cemeteries, while more than 1 million people visit the Arizona each year. He also saw it as a way to join old friends who never made it off the warship.

"I thought, well, all my buddies are right here. And there are a lot of people who come to see the ship," Bruner told The Associated Press in an interview in 2016, three years before he died in his sleep in September. Bruner traveled from his La Mirada, California, home to attend Pearl Harbor anniversary events many times.

The Navy began interring Pearl Harbor survivors on their old ships in 1982. The wrecks of only two vessels remain in the harbor — the Arizona and USS Utah — so survivors of those ships are the only ones who have the option to be laid to rest this way. Most of the ships hit that day were repaired and put back into service or scrapped.

Neither underwater archaeologists at the Navy History and Heritage Command or those who handle burials for the Navy Personnel Command were aware of any interments conducted on sunken Navy vessels elsewhere.

Of the 1,177 USS Arizona sailors and Marines killed at Pearl Harbor, more than 900 could not be recovered and remain entombed on the ship, which sank in nine minutes. A memorial built in 1962 sits above the wreckage.

Sixty died on the Utah, and three have been interred there. At least one of the three living Utah survivors wants his ashes placed on his old ship.

Bruner's ashes will be placed aboard the Arizona following a sunset ceremony Saturday, the anniversary of the Japanese attack.

Loved ones will stand on the USS Arizona Memorial's dock and hand an urn to scuba divers in the water. The divers will guide the container to the barnacled wreckage and carefully place it inside.

Servicemen will then perform a gun salute and present an American flag to next of kin.

Daniel Martinez, chief historian for the Pearl Harbor National Memorial, said the Arizona ceremony honors those who survived the bombing while also offering a reminder of the many lives cut short because of it. Much of it is held fronting a white marble wall engraved with the names of the Arizona sailors and Marines who died in the attack.

"It's a celebration of a life well lived," Martinez said.

Also Saturday, the Navy and National Park Service will host their annual public ceremony at Pearl Harbor to remember those killed. It will observe a moment of silence at 7:55 a.m., the exact time the attack began decades ago.

Joseph Langdell's ashes were interred on the Arizona in 2015. One of his two sons, Ted Langdell, said his father asked to be placed there out of regard for those who didn't make it out, as well as for those who survived and worked hard to keep the memory of the Arizona alive.

"It's emotional. It's reverent. And it makes me think not just of him but of the other people. It's hard to imagine that all of the sudden, all of these people are gone," Ted Langdell said.

In all, more than 2,300 Americans died in the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Bruner didn't know who was attacking until the planes got close enough for him to see the red Rising Sun insignia on their sides. The aircraft shot at "everything in sight," he said. Then an explosion tore through his battle station.

He tried to get off the ship as fast as he could, but he couldn't jump because the oil leaking into the water below was on fire.

Bruner and several fellow shipmates shouted to a sailor on the ship moored next to the Arizona to toss over some rope. The six of them used the rope to carry themselves hand-over-hand to the USS Vestal

100 feet (30 meters) away.

"You're like a chicken getting barbecued," he said. All of them made it, becoming six of the 335 sailors and Marines on the Arizona to survive. Bruner spent months recovering from burns.

He later spoke to school groups and others about his ordeal. His friend Ed Hoeschen, who often accompanied him on these visits, said Bruner never did it for the fame and glory.

"It wasn't about him," Hoeschen said. "It was about (people) meeting a member of the USS Arizona. And that's what he wanted people to remember. Just remember the men of the Arizona."

## **GOP Rep. pitches LGBTQ rights bill with religious exemptions**

**By ELANA SCHOR Associated Press**

As Democrats champion anti-discrimination protections for the LGBTQ community and Republicans counter with worries about safeguarding religious freedom, one congressional Republican is offering a proposal on Friday that aims to achieve both goals.

The bill that Utah GOP Rep. Chris Stewart plans to unveil would shield LGBTQ individuals from discrimination in employment, housing, education, and other public services — while also carving out exemptions for religious organizations to act based on beliefs that may exclude those of different sexual orientations or gender identities. Stewart's bill counts support from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but it has yet to win a backer among House Democrats who unanimously supported a more expansive LGBTQ rights measure in May.

But the uphill climb for his plan doesn't daunt Stewart, who sees the bill as a way to "bridge that gap" between preventing discrimination and allowing religion to inform individual decisions.

"I don't know many people who wake up and say 'I want to discriminate'. Most people find that offensive," Stewart told The Associated Press. "There are people who, and I'm included among them, have religious convictions that put them in a bind about how to reconcile those two principles."

The Utah lawmaker's legislation comes as the Supreme Court prepares to rule on cases that touch squarely on the issue of employment discrimination against LGBTQ people, who currently do not receive specific protection in federal civil rights laws. While 21 states have laws that bar employment discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, Democrats in Congress and running for president are pushing for a federal statute that would provide broader protections.

But that more sweeping bill's chances of passage are low unless Democrats take back full control of Congress as well as the White House, given President Donald Trump's opposition and Republican critics who warn of a risk to religious freedom. That prospect has informed Stewart and outside groups' work on a proposal to enshrine rights for the LGBTQ community while also preserving the right for religious groups to act in accordance with their faiths.

Among other faith-based exemptions to anti-discrimination protections in the bill is an allowance for religious groups such as churches and schools to employ those who align with their internal guidelines, according to a summary provided in advance of its release. The bill also would prohibit religious groups that oppose same-sex marriage from having their tax-exempt status revoked.

"We have taken back the religious liberty principle from extremists who I think do want to do harm to LGBTQ people and minority rights," said Tyler Deaton, a senior adviser to the American Unity Fund, a nonprofit supporting Stewart's bill that seeks to build conservative support for LGBTQ rights. Deaton added that some religious conservative groups who were consulted on the bill ultimately chose not to endorse it.

## **Trump on likely impeachment: 'Do it now, fast'**

**By JILL COLVIN Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Just get on with it.

After months of fighting the House impeachment inquiry, blocking witnesses and ignoring subpoenas, the White House is now publicly embracing a strategy it has privately signaled for weeks: It will accept the

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reality that President Donald Trump will likely be impeached by the House and focus instead on a made-for-TV trial on friendlier turf in the Republican-controlled Senate.

Democrats, Trump tweeted Thursday, "have gone crazy. Therefore I say, if you are going to impeach me, do it now, fast, so we can have a fair... trial in the Senate, and so that our Country can get back to business."

It was a message that came even before Democratic Speaker Nancy Pelosi stood before cameras and announced that House committees would draft articles of impeachment. They're virtually sure to accuse the Republican chief executive of violating the Constitution, abusing presidential of power and undermining national security by pressing the president of Ukraine to investigate a Democratic political rival as the White House was withholding crucial security aid.

"The president leaves us no choice but to act," she said.

The Trump reelection campaign and the White House responded with resignation, publicly acknowledging for the first time that Trump is likely to become only the third president in the nation's history to be impeached by the House of Representatives.

"We look forward to a fair trial in the Senate," tweeted Press Secretary Stephanie Grisham.

While Trump has long bristled at having such a distinction attached to his legacy, he and his aides also see a potential political upside in a Democratic attempt to remove him from office, despite considerable risks.

With little chance that Senate Democrats would have the votes to convict him and remove him from office, Trump is now hyping a Senate trial like a Trumpian episode of Court TV, where his lawyers and Republican allies will aggressively defend his conduct while turning the table on Democrats, especially the chairman of the House intelligence committee, Adam Schiff.

"We will have Schiff, the Bidens, Pelosi and many more testify, and will reveal, for the first time, how corrupt our system really is," Trump tweeted.

A trial comes with considerable risks for Trump, including the possibility that Republican senators could break from him or incriminating evidence could be revealed. But Congress' proceedings have so far been a boon.

His campaign has described impeachment as its single most powerful motivator for donors and volunteers. The president told reporters Tuesday that his campaign had its "biggest fundraising month ever" in November as Democrats ramped up their efforts.

Impeaching the president, said campaign manager Brad Parscale, has always been the Democrats' goal, "so they should just get on with it so we can have a fair trial in the Senate and expose the swamp for what it is."

"We're ready," said Tony Sayegh, a former Treasury Department official who is part of a new White House rapid response team.

"If the Democrats are foolish enough to actually pass these frivolous articles of impeachment, of which they have no evidence and factual basis, we want a trial in the Senate," he said on Fox News.

White House legislative affairs director Eric Ueland added, a day after huddling with Republicans on Capitol Hill, that "it's long past time to put the House misery to an end and move to the Senate so the president's full case can be clearly heard and this absurd charade can come to an end."

Ueland said on Wednesday that, unlike in the House, "the underlying impeachment rules of the Senate afford the president a full suite of rights to argue his case on the facts and on the merits."

"That's why we believe quite strongly that in order to make the president's full case ... that we need both a full trial and the opportunity to call witnesses and work a trial over here on the Senate floor."

Beyond the spin, officials say the White House also recognizes that its efforts in the Senate will have to focus extensively on relationship-building to try to keep Republican members on board and drive up political costs for Democrats. To that end, the White House has held multiple meetings with Republican lawmakers, trying to ensure they are in sync.

At the same time, Trump associates say the president is aware of the havoc a Senate trial in January could wreak on the Democratic 2020 presidential field, which includes several senators who would be compelled



to leave the campaign trail to attend the proceedings. He is eager, they say, to cheer on the chaos.

Meanwhile, the president's personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani remains overseas on an in-your-face trip to Ukraine where he is continuing to push the debunked conspiracy theory that Ukraine, not Russia, meddled in the 2016 election.

Ukrainian lawmaker Andrii Derkach, who has previously accused the son of former Vice President and 2020 Democratic candidate Joe Biden of receiving embezzled money from a Ukrainian gas company, said in a Facebook post that he met with Giuliani in Kyiv to discuss the creation of a new group, Friends of Ukraine Stop Corruption.

Biden's son denies any wrongdoing.

Associated Press writers Zeke Miller in London, and Mary Clare Jalonick and Andrew Taylor contributed to this report.

## Democrats say Trump impeachment charges must come swiftly

By LISA MASCARO and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Democrats moved aggressively to draw up formal articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump on Thursday, with Speaker Nancy Pelosi saying he "leaves us no choice" but to act swiftly because he's likely to corrupt the system again unless removed before next year's election.

A strictly partisan effort at this point, derided immediately by Trump and other leading Republicans as a sham and a hoax, it is a politically risky undertaking. Democrats say it is their duty, in the aftermath of the Ukraine probe, while Republicans say it will drive Pelosi's majority from office.

Congress must act, Pelosi said. "The democracy is what is at stake."

"The president's actions have seriously violated the Constitution," she said in a somber address at the Capitol. "He is trying to corrupt, once again, the election for his own benefit. The president has engaged in abuse of power, undermining our national security and jeopardizing the integrity of our elections."

Trump has insisted he did nothing wrong. He tweeted that the Democrats "have gone crazy."

At the core of the impeachment probe is a July phone call with the president of Ukraine, in which Trump pressed the leader to investigate Democrats, including political rival Joe Biden. At the same time the White House was withholding military aid from Ukraine, an ally bordering an aggressive Russia.

Drafting articles of impeachment is a milestone moment, only the fourth time in U.S. history Congress has tried to remove a president, and it intensifies the rigid and polarizing partisanship of the Trump era that is consuming Washington and dividing the nation.

The speaker delivered her historic announcement in solemn tones at the Capitol, drawing on the Constitution and the Founding Fathers in forcefully claiming Congress' oversight of the president in the nation's system of checks and balances. Democrats are already beginning to prepare the formal charges, pushing toward House votes, possibly before Christmas.

"Sadly, but with confidence and humility, with allegiance to our founders and a heart full of love for America, today I am asking our chairmen to proceed with articles of impeachment," Pelosi said.

Seemingly eager to fight, Trump tweeted that if Democrats "are going to impeach me, do it now, fast." Though he has fought the House investigation, trying to bar current and former officials from testifying, he said he now wants to move on to a "fair trial" in the Senate.

Approval of articles of impeachment is considered likely in the Democratic-majority House. Conviction in a following trial in the Republican-dominated Senate seems very unlikely.

Once reluctant to pursue impeachment, warning it was too divisive for the country and needed to be bipartisan, Pelosi is now leading Congress into politically uncertain terrain for all sides just ahead of the election year.

Republican are standing lockstep with Trump, unswayed by arguments that his actions amount to wrongdoing, let alone impeachable offenses. That is leaving Democrats to go it alone in a campaign to

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consider removing the 45th president from office.

At a town hall late Thursday on CNN, Pelosi said she would have no regrets if impeachment ended up helping Trump's re-election effort. "This isn't about politics at all," she said. "It's about honoring our oath of office" — to defend the constitution.

Pelosi has emphasized the Russia connection, from special counsel Robert Mueller's probe into 2016 election interference to the president's phone call this summer with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy that set off alarms in Washington.

Russia and President Vladimir Putin benefited most from Trump's actions toward Ukraine, she said.

"All roads lead to Putin. Understand that," she declared at a morning news conference at the Capitol. "That was the a-ha moment."

She spoke solemnly and calmly, but that changed when she was asked as she was leaving if she hates Trump.

Pelosi stiffened, returned to the podium and responded sharply that the president's views and politics are for the voters to judge at elections but impeachment "is about the Constitution." She said that as a Catholic, she does not hate the president but rather is praying for him daily.

Trump quickly tweeted back that he didn't believe her.

Trump's allies argue that voters, not lawmakers, should decide the president's future. But Democrats say the nation cannot wait for the 2020 election, alleging Trump's past efforts to have foreign countries intervene in the presidential campaign are forcing them to act to prevent him from doing it again. Pelosi said the still-anonymous whistleblower's complaint about Trump's Ukraine call changed the dynamic, creating the urgency to act.

The number of articles and the allegations they will include will be both a legal and political exercise for the House committee chairmen, who will be meeting privately. They must balance electoral dynamics while striving to hit the Constitution's bar of "treason, bribery or other high crimes and misdemeanors."

Pulling from the House's 300-page investigation of the Ukraine matter, Democrats are focusing on at least three areas — abuse of power, bribery and obstruction — that could result in two to five articles, they say.

They argue that Trump abused the power of his office by putting personal political gain over national security interests; engaging in bribery by holding out \$400 million in military aid that Congress had approved for Ukraine; and then obstructing Congress by stonewalling the investigation.

Some liberal Democrats want to reach further into Trump's actions, particularly regarding the findings from special counsel Mueller's report on Russian interference in the 2016 election. That could produce an additional article of obstruction not only of Congress, but also of justice.

But more centrist and moderate Democrats, those lawmakers who are most at risk of political fallout from the impeachment proceedings, prefer to stick with the Ukraine matter as a simpler narrative that Americans can more easily understand.

The GOP Leader of the House, Kevin McCarthy, said Pelosi is more concerned about tearing the president down than building the country up. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., criticized Democrats for focusing on impeachment over other issues, though many House-passed bills are waiting for action in his chamber. "It's all impeachment, all the time," he said.

At the White House, press secretary Stephanie Grisham tweeted that Pelosi and the Democrats "should be ashamed."

House members are preparing to vote on the articles of impeachment in the Judiciary Committee, possibly as soon as next week. The committee set a Monday hearing to receive the Intelligence Committee's report outlining the findings against the president.

The House is expecting a full vote by Christmas. The would send the issue to the Senate for a trial in the new year.

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Associated Press writers Matthew Daly, Zeke Miller, Alan Fram, Andrew Taylor, Colleen Long, Eric Tucker and Padmananda Rama contributed to this report.

## Asian shares advance after meager gains on Wall Street

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — Shares swung higher in Asia on Friday after a wobbly day of trading on Wall Street as investors awaited a U.S. government jobs report and kept an eye out for developments in China-U.S. trade talks.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng rose 0.7% to 26,401.47, while the Nikkei 225 in Japan picked up 0.2% to 23,352.81. South Korea's Kospi jumped 0.9% to 2,078.77, while the Shanghai Composite index was flat, at 2,899.97. Australia's S&P ASX 200 gained 0.2% to 6,697.40. Shares also rose in Taiwan and Southeast Asia.

Investors are hoping that the world's two biggest economies will reach a trade deal before new U.S. tariffs go into effect Dec. 15 on some popular products made in China, including smartphones.

"Whether or not U.S.-China can cut a deal remains the obsession; arguably the only game in town heading into ahead of the 15-Dec deadline for the next round of tariffs fall due," Mizuho Bank said in a commentary.

Chinese officials said Thursday that hinges on whether the U.S. will agree to roll back some of the tariffs imposed by President Donald Trump after he began his effort to win trade concessions from Beijing in mid-2018.

"To be sure, there is still no clarity on the deal. But soothing remarks on 'progress' from those involved in the talks appears to have infused some hope and cut tensions," the Mizuho report said.

Investors will be looking for clues into the state of the U.S. economy from the Labor Department's November tally of hiring by nonfarm employers, to be released later Friday. Economists expect the unemployment rate to hold steady at 3.6%.

"You've had some mixed economic data this week, so the market probably wants to wait and see what we get tomorrow morning," said Willie Delwiche, investment strategist at Baird.

The S&P 500 index rose 0.2% to 3,117.43. Even with the latest gain, the benchmark index is on track for a weekly loss, though it's still up 24.4% for the year. The Dow Jones Industrial Average gained 0.1% to 27,677.79.

The Nasdaq added less than 0.1% to 8,570.70, while the Russell 2000 index of smaller company stocks picked up 0.94 points, also less than 0.1%, to 1,614.83.

Stocks fell early in the week after President Donald Trump said he wouldn't mind waiting for a trade deal beyond the 2020 elections. The indexes rebounded Wednesday on a report that Washington and Beijing could be on track for a trade deal before the new tariffs kick in next week.

Technology stocks were among the biggest gainers Thursday. Apple rose 1.5%. The sector has much to gain, or lose, in trade negotiations because many of the companies rely heavily on China for sales and supplies.

Communication services stocks also rose. ViacomCBS led the sector, climbing 3.6%. It was the first day of trading for the newly combined company.

United Airlines slipped 0.4% after it said CEO Oscar Munoz is stepping down from his post and will become executive chairman. The airline said that President J. Scott Kirby will be its new CEO.

Munoz led the company through a choppy period, and in 2017 gave up his bonus after the forcible removal of a ticketed passenger led to widespread criticism.

Benchmark crude oil lost 21 cents to \$58.22 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It was unchanged at \$58.43 a barrel on Thursday. Brent crude oil, the international standard, shed 28 cents to \$63.11 a barrel.

The dollar fell to 108.69 Japanese yen from 108.74 yen on Thursday. The euro was steady at \$1.1107.

AP Business Writers Alex Veiga and Damian J. Troise contributed.



## R. Kelly charged with paying bribe before marrying Aaliyah

By TOM HAYS Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Federal prosecutors are accusing singer R. Kelly of scheming with others to pay for a fake ID for an unnamed female a day before he married R&B singer Aaliyah, then 15 years old, in a secret ceremony in 1994.

The revised indictment, filed Thursday in New York, accuses Kelly of paying a bribe in exchange for a "fraudulent identification document" for someone identified only as "Jane Doe" on Aug. 30, 1994.

A day later, Kelly, then 27, married Aaliyah in a secret ceremony he arranged at a hotel in Chicago. The marriage was annulled months later because of her age. Aaliyah died in a plane crash in 2001 at age 22.

The U.S. attorney's office declined to comment about whom the fake ID was meant for, and the indictment didn't mention the wedding, but a person familiar with the investigation confirmed the "Jane Doe" was Aaliyah. The person wasn't authorized to discuss details of the new charge and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The new charges mark the first time that Kelly's brief marriage to Aaliyah has been connected to any of the criminal cases against Kelly.

Kelly's attorney, Douglas Anton, called the latest charge against his client "ridiculous and absurd."

The Brooklyn prosecutors had already charged R. Kelly with racketeering, kidnapping, forced labor and sexual exploitation. They alleged he and his employees and assistants picked out women and girls at concerts and groomed them for sexual abuse.

The 52-year-old singer, who is being held without bond, is scheduled to stand trial in federal court in Chicago in April on child pornography and obstruction of justice charges before facing trial in Brooklyn. Kelly, whose given name is Robert Sylvester Kelly, was acquitted in 2008 on charges of videotaping himself having sex with a girl who prosecutors allege was as young as 13.

Kelly's attorneys have long maintained that he was unaware of Aaliyah's age when they married. The Illinois marriage license used for the wedding said she was 18.

The indictment didn't identify the person who was paid the bribe in order to get the fake ID, except to say that the person was a public employee.

Aaliyah, whose full name was Aaliyah Dana Haughton, worked with Kelly, who wrote and produced her 1994 debut album, "Age Ain't Nothing But A Number."

Kelly was arrested in February on 10 counts in Illinois of sexually abusing three girls and a woman. He has pleaded not guilty to those charges.

Then on May 30, Cook County prosecutors in Illinois added 11 more sex-related counts involving one of the women who accused him of sexually abusing her when she was underage.

Then in July, in federal court in Chicago, the R&B singer was indicted on charges of child pornography and obstruction of justice, with prosecutors accusing him of paying off potential witnesses in his 2008 trial to get them to change their story.

At the same time, Kelly was indicted in New York with exploiting five victims, identified only as "Jane Does." According to court papers, they include one he met while she was a radio station intern around 2004 and another at one of his concerts in 2015. Kelly has pleaded not guilty to the original New York charges.

Prosecutors allege Kelly sometimes arranged for some victims to meet him on the road for illegal sex. He had one victim travel in 2017 to a show on Long Island in New York, where he had unprotected sex with her without telling her "he had contracted an infectious venereal disease," in violation of New York law, they say.

A defense filing said Kelly's alleged victims were regulars at his shows who made it known they "were dying to be with him." They only started accusing him of abuse years later when public sentiment shifted in the #MeToo era, his lawyers said.

The accusers "are groupies," Anton said, following an August court hearing on the charges. "There's no way around it."

At the time, his client was merely "leading a touring musician's life," he added.

## Blind inmate executed in Tennessee for woman's 1991 killing

By KIMBERLEE KRUESI Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — A blind prisoner convicted of killing his estranged girlfriend by setting her on fire in her car was put to death Thursday in Tennessee's electric chair, becoming only the second inmate without sight to be executed in the U.S. since the reinstatement of the nation's death penalty in 1976.

Lee Hall, 53, was pronounced dead at 7:26 p.m. at a Nashville maximum-security prison, corrections officials said. He chose the electric chair over Tennessee's preferred execution method of lethal injection — an option allowed inmates in the state who were convicted of crimes before January 1999. He also became the first blind inmate in U.S. modern history to die by electrocution.

Hall was already strapped into the electric chair when the curtains were raised for the witnesses — which included family, attorneys and reporters.

As his head swiveled around the room not appearing to focus on anything, he was asked if he had any final words. Hall initially said he needed a glass of water before talking. He was denied and asked again to make a statement.

"People can learn forgiveness and love and will make this world a better place," Hall said, wearing a white T-shirt and rolled-up white pants.

Hall received two jolts of electricity while in the chair. During the first 20-second burst, his right pinkie became hyper-extended before it slumped and his body collapsed. During both jolts, a small plume of white smoke appeared above the right side of his head.

A spokeswoman for Tennessee Department of Correction later told The Associated Press that it "was steam and not smoke as a result of the liquid and heat."

No media witnesses have reported seeing steam or smoke during the previous three electrocutions since the state began resuming executions in August 2018.

Hall had his vision when he entered death row decades ago, but his attorneys say he later became functionally blind from improperly treated glaucoma. Only one other known blind inmate has been executed in the U.S. since the Supreme Court allowed executions to resume in 1976.

Court documents state that Hall killed Traci Crozier, 22, on April 17, 1991 by setting her car ablaze with a container of gasoline that he lit and tossed in her vehicle while she was inside and trying to leave him. The container exploded and Crozier suffered burns across more than 90% of her body, dying the next day in the hospital.

Crozier's sister, Staci Wooten, and her father, Gene Crozier, watched Hall's execution.

"Hopefully today ending this monster's life will bring some peace within everyone who has had to suffer throughout these 28 years without my beautiful sister," Wooten said after the execution.

Defense attorney Kelly Gleason had asked the federal courts to stop Hall from being put to death after other attempts in state courts and with Tennessee's governor had failed. Those attempts officially came to a halt less than hour before Hall's execution when the U.S. Supreme Court declined to intervene.

Hall's attorney John Spragens read a brief statement from Hall's family. Hall's brother, David, was in attendance with the media witnesses during the execution, as well as Hall's spiritual adviser.

"We are devastated by the loss of Traci and now Lee," the statement read. "Lee loved Traci more than anything and we welcomed her into our family and love her too. We also love Lee and wish that we could have changed the events of that tragic day."

Hall's attorneys had been fighting for months to delay the execution plan, arguing that courts should have had the opportunity to weigh new questions surrounding a possible biased juror who helped hand down the death sentence decades ago against Hall, who was formerly known as Leroy Hall Jr.

The woman — simply known as "Juror A" — acknowledged publicly for the first time this year that she failed to disclose during Hall's jury selection process that she had been repeatedly raped and abused by her former husband. Hall's attorneys argued the omission deprived him of a fair and impartial jury — a right protected in both the Tennessee and U.S. constitutions

However, both the Tennessee Supreme Court and Gov. Bill Lee declined to step in despite pleas from Hall's attorneys for more time to explore the possible legal concerns.

Lee, a Republican, has not intervened in any of the four execution cases that have come across his desk since he became governor in January.

The Supreme Court has never ruled on whether use of the electric chair violates the 8th Amendment ban on cruel and unusual punishment, but it came close about 20 years ago after a series of botched electrocutions in Florida.

Meanwhile, state courts in Georgia and Nebraska have declared the electric chair unconstitutional.

The high court has also neither set an upper age limit for executions nor created an exception for a physical infirmity.

Tennessee is one of six states in which inmates can choose the electric chair, but it's the only state that has used the chair in recent years. Four out of six recent inmates put to death in Tennessee have chosen the chair since the state began resuming executions in August 2018.

## US considers sending several thousand more troops to Mideast

By **MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer**

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Pentagon is considering sending several thousand additional troops to the Middle East to help deter Iranian aggression, amid reports of escalating violence in Iran and continued meddling by Tehran in Iraq, Syria and other parts of the region.

John Rood, defense undersecretary for policy, told senators Thursday that Defense Secretary Mark Esper "intends to make changes" to the number of troops deployed in the region. Other officials said options under consideration could send between 5,000 and 7,000 troops to the Middle East, but they all stressed that there have been no final decisions yet. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

The troop deliberations follow several decisions since spring to beef up the U.S. presence in the Middle East because of a series of maritime attacks and bombings in Saudi Arabia that the U.S. and others have blamed on Iran.

President Donald Trump has approved those increases, even though he also routinely insists that he is pulling U.S. troops out of the Middle East and withdrawing from what he calls "endless wars" against extremists. In October, Trump told his supporters that despite the sacrificing of U.S. lives in Iraq and other parts of the Middle East, the region is less safe and stable today. "The single greatest mistake our country made in its history," he said, "was going into the quicksand of the Middle East."

Asked about a possible troop increase, Trump told reporters Thursday: "We'll announce whether we will or not. Certainly there might be a threat. And if there is a threat, it will be met very strongly. But we will be announcing what we may be doing — may or may not be doing."

Later Thursday, Trump's national security adviser Robert O'Brien said the president was open to sending more troops to the Middle East. "If the troops are needed to deter Iran, we have the capacity to move them into the region — although I don't think that's happening right now," O'Brien said on Fox News Channel's "Special Report with Bret Baier."

Military leaders have argued that the U.S. needs to increase its presence in the region in order to deter Iran from conducting more and broader attacks. Rood provided no details to back up why the additional troops are needed, but said the U.S. is concerned about recent intelligence indications suggesting an increased threat from Iran.

Rood was asked several times about reports that 14,000 more troops could be sent to the region. He repeatedly said Esper hasn't made a decision yet, but didn't specifically confirm or deny the number, so his answers appeared only to confuse senators. Shortly after the hearing, Pentagon press secretary Alyssa Farah sent out a statement flatly denying the 14,000 number, saying Esper told the Senate committee chairman Thursday morning that "we are not considering sending 14,000 additional troops" to the region.

The troop discussions came as the Trump administration on Thursday accused Iranian security forces of



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killing more than 1,000 people in crackdowns against recent protests that have swept the country.

The estimated death toll is significantly higher than previously estimates from human rights groups and others, and the administration did not present documentary evidence to back up the claim. But Brian Hook, the U.S. special representative for Iran, told reporters the tally was based on a variety of reports coming out of Iran as well as intelligence analyses.

Speaking at the State Department, Hook said the U.S. had received and reviewed video of one specific incident of repression in the city of Mahshahr in which the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps had mowed down at least 100 protesters with machine-gun fire.

He said the video was one of tens of thousands of submissions the U.S. has gotten since Secretary of State Mike Pompeo appealed last month for Iranians to submit evidence of atrocities by the authorities in putting down the protests. In it, he said IRGC forces can be seen opening fire on protesters blocking a road and then surrounding those who fled to nearby marshlands where they were sprayed with bullets.

"In this one incident alone the regime murdered as many as 100 Iranians and possibly more," Hook told reporters at the State Department. He did not display the video but said the actions it depicted corresponded to accounts of a brutal nationwide crackdown on the demonstrations, which started in response to gasoline price increases and rationing.

"We have seen reports of many hundreds more killed in and around Tehran," he said. "And, as the truth is trickling out of Iran, it appears the regime could have murdered over 1,000 Iranian citizens since the protests began." The dead include 13- and 14-year-old children, he said.

Speaking at the White House, Trump said Iran had "killed hundreds and hundreds of people in a very short period of time" and called for international pressure to be applied. "They are killing protesters. They turned off their internet system. People aren't hearing what's going on," he told reporters while hosting a lunch for the ambassadors of U.N. Security Council members.

Alireza Miryousefi, a spokesman for Iran's mission at the United Nations, again disputed any casualty figures from abroad as "purely speculative and highly inaccurate." However, Iran's government has so far refused to release any of its own.

"Mr. Hook has already said in public that he is very pleased with the suffering of ordinary Iranians, and that the U.S. has had arrangements in the past two years to maximize what occurred with the recent violence and damages in Iran," Miryousefi told The Associated Press.

There was no known public video that supported Hooks' allegation of a massacre in Mahshahr, although he said the State Department had gotten more than 32,000 responses to Pompeo's appeal for videos and other evidence using the encrypted messaging app Telegram, which is popular in Iran.

Nor has there been any widely accepted claim matching Hook's death toll of more than 1,000. Amnesty International believes at least 208 people have been killed and that the number could be higher. Iran has disputed that figure, but has refused to offer any nationwide statistics of the number of injuries, arrests or deaths from the unrest.

However, Hook's numbers appear to match a figure put out late Wednesday by the Iranian exile group called the Mujahedeen-e-Khalq, which has paid Trump's personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani for speeches at its events in the past.

The MeK alleged late Wednesday that more than 1,000 people had been killed. It published a list of 320 people it said it had identified so far as having been killed but did not provide proof.

Iran has alleged MeK supporters and those backing exiled Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi, the son of the country's late shah, of being behind the unrest alongside foreign powers. It has not offered evidence to support those allegations.

In addition to the deaths, Hook said more than 7,000 protesters had been detained, with many sent to two prisons. Hook said that Pompeo had notified Congress on Thursday that both prisons would be hit with U.S. sanctions for gross human rights abuses. It was not immediately clear when those designations would occur.

Hook's comments come as the U.S. steps up its "maximum pressure campaign" on Iran that it began after

withdrawing from the landmark 2015 nuclear deal last year. That campaign has been highlighted by the imposition of increasingly tough sanctions and an increase in rhetoric critical of Tehran and its leadership.

As part of the pressure campaign, Hook announced that the U.S. is offering a reward of up to \$15 million for information leading to the whereabouts of a top IRGC commander now believed to be supporting rebels in Yemen. He said Abdul Reza Shahalai was responsible for numerous attacks against U.S. forces in Iraq and had been behind a foiled plot to murder the Saudi ambassador to the United States in a Washington restaurant.

Lolita C. Baldor, Robert Burns and Deb Riechmann in Washington and Jon Gambrell in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, contributed to this report.

## House Speaker Pelosi rebukes reporter: 'Don't mess with me'

By LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Finger pointing and voice hoarse, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on Thursday delivered a broadside to a reporter that might well apply to all of impeachment-era Washington: "Don't mess with me."

It was a warning scarcely needed among the official set, least of all by President Donald Trump as he fights Pelosi and the Democrats in their drive to impeach him. Only a few hours earlier, Pelosi had instructed the Judiciary Committee to write articles of impeachment — formal charges — against Trump for pressuring Ukraine to investigate Democrat Joe Biden and resisting Congress' probe.

The House speaker insisted she brought impeachment proceedings because Trump's conduct and the Constitution left the House no choice.

"The president's actions have seriously violated the Constitution," Pelosi said from the speaker's office at the Capitol. "He is trying to corrupt, once again, the election for his own benefit. The president has engaged in abuse of power, undermining our national security and jeopardizing the integrity of our elections."

But as the California Democrat began exiting a news conference two hours later, James Rosen, a reporter for Sinclair Broadcast Group, asked, "Do you hate the president, Madam Speaker?"

What followed was a remarkable display from the famously poised Pelosi.

She stopped near the edge of the podium, jabbed a finger and said tersely: "I don't hate anybody."

Pelosi went on to call Trump a "coward" on gun policy, "cruel" on immigration and "in denial" on climate change.

"This is about the Constitution of the United States and the facts that lead to the president's violation of the oath of office. And as a Catholic I resent your using the word hate in a sentence that addresses me."

Trump tweeted that Pelosi "just had a nervous fit."

"She says she 'prays for the President.' I don't believe her, not even close," he added.

Pelosi, a native of Baltimore, often speaks of her faith as a guide to matters ranging from legislation to life in general. Catholic catechism states that "deliberate hatred is contrary to charity" and urges believers to pray for those who hold animosity toward them, a teaching that Pelosi has invoked by saying that she prays for Trump.

It's not the first time she's confronted the challenging interplay between politics and her faith. In 2009, during her previous stint as House speaker, Pelosi, who supports abortion rights, met with Pope Francis' predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI, for a conversation that the Vatican later said touched on "protecting human life at all stages of its development."

On Thursday, she returned to the podium after the reporter's question about "hate," and finished by pointing a thumb toward herself.

"Don't mess with me when it comes to words like that."

Moments later, Trump and House Republicans lashed out in heated personal tones.

House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy tweeted, "Pelosi and the Democrats are clearly are blinded by their hate for the President."

Pelosi has generally dominated confrontations with Trump all year in her second turn as House speaker, second in line to the presidency.

In January, she forced Trump to re-open the government without the border wall he was demanding. She allowed him into the House chamber to deliver the traditional State of the Union speech, but stole that show by clapping sideways and smirking at Trump from her seat above and behind him.

Trump knows her finger-pointing well. Most recently, during a White House meeting, she stood, pointed at him and said, "all roads lead to Putin," Russia's president — and walked out.

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Associated Press writer Elana Schor contributed to this report.

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

## Panel calls for Virginia to purge dozens of old racist laws

By SARAH RANKIN Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — The laws are still on the books in Virginia: Blacks and whites must sit in separate rail cars. They cannot use the same playgrounds, schools or mental hospitals. They can't marry each other either.

The measures have not been enforced for decades, but they remain in the state's official legal record. A state commission on Thursday recommended that dozens of such discriminatory statutes finally be repealed, in some cases more than a century after they were adopted.

Although "some of these acts were rendered null and void by an amended Virginia Constitution, by landmark civil rights cases or legislation, it's clear that they are vestiges of Virginia's segregationist past that still sit on the books. ... We should not afford them the distinction of that official status," said Chief Deputy Attorney General Cynthia Hudson, who led the panel of attorneys, judges, scholars and community leaders assigned to comb through the laws.

The commission, which issued an interim report Thursday and will continue its work, said the laws should be repealed in the legislative session that begins in January. Gov. Ralph Northam pledged to work with fellow Democrats who will control the General Assembly to do so.

Northam announced the formation of the commission in June, several months after a scandal erupted over a racist photo of someone in blackface and someone in a Ku Klux Klan robe on his medical school yearbook page. He initially acknowledged he was in the photo and apologized, then reversed course the next day, saying he was not in it. Investigators with a law firm said they could not conclusively establish the identities of either person.

The controversy nearly forced him from office. But Northam resisted widespread calls to resign and pledged to focus the remainder of his term on addressing Virginia's long history of racism and racial inequities.

"I want Virginians to know our full and true story. And I also want us to build a Virginia where everyone feels welcome," he said Thursday in remarks that did not directly address the scandal. "Language that discriminates, whether or not that language still has the force of law, is part of our past, not our future."

Del. Lamont Bagby, who heads the legislative black caucus, said the group appreciated the commission's work. Caucus members had been trying to do the same thing for decades in a piecemeal fashion with legislation, he said.

"I also want to make sure it's clear: A lot of people think this is something the black caucus took to the governor. No, the governor brought it to the black caucus," Bagby said, to applause from the audience.

Many of the acts flagged for repeal were intended to enforce the state's strategy of "massive resistance" to federally mandated school integration. One law was called "an act to provide that no child shall be required to attend integrated schools." Another authorized the closure of public schools in the face of federal intervention to enforce desegregation.

Public playgrounds were also segregated. The town of Smithfield was authorized by law to make an



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annual appropriation to an all-white military company. A law enacted in 1920 required that real estate assessments include the race of property owners.

Four of the measures flagged for repeal dealt with Virginia's segregated mental health institutions, called "colonies for the feeble-minded" or "hospitals for the insane," the report noted.

The commission also reviewed laws regarding Confederate statues and other issues related to the Confederacy, but declined to make any specific recommendations about them, citing pending litigation and lawmakers' efforts to deal with those questions during the upcoming session.

A violent white supremacist rally in Charlottesville two years ago renewed the debate over whether Confederate monuments should remain in public spaces. Memorials to war veterans are currently protected by state law.

The commission planned to continue its "careful and deliberate review" and would "await orderly judicial or legislative actions," the report said.

Given the vast scope of the commission's work, it began by examining only the state's Acts of Assembly — the complete written legislative record of the General Assembly — from 1900 to 1960.

Within that period, the report said, the panel focused on three periods: 1900 to 1910, when many states were taking action to undo progress made during Reconstruction; 1918 through the 1920s, marking the second rise of the Ku Klux Klan; and the mid- to late 1950s, when Southern states fought school desegregation following the landmark Supreme Court decision in *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka*.

Undergraduates, law students and staff from the governor's office assisted with the research, which was made more difficult because many of the records exist only on paper, the report said.

The governor and commission members said the work would continue. The panel will next work to identify laws that appear race-neutral or non-discriminatory but "have the effect of perpetuating discrimination and racial inequity," according to a news release from Northam's office.

"We're not going to reverse 400 years of history with one interim report, but what a great beginning this is," Northam said.

## **Bloomberg gun plan: Permits, assault weapon ban, age limits**

**By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Politics Writer**

AURORA, Colo. (AP) — Democratic presidential contender Michael Bloomberg unveiled a gun control policy on Thursday just steps from the site of one of Colorado's worst mass shootings, calling for a ban on all assault weapons, mandatory permits for gun purchasers and a new position in the White House to coordinate gun violence prevention.

"I've been all in on the fight against gun violence for 15 years, and I'm just getting started," Bloomberg declared. "As president, I will work to end the gun violence epidemic once and for all."

Bloomberg, the billionaire former New York City mayor, entered the Democratic presidential primary less than two weeks ago. Gun violence has quickly emerged as a core issue for his presidential bid, as it has been for his political and philanthropic efforts for much of the last decade. Bloomberg is well known to gun control advocates in Colorado and across the country, where he's funneled tens of millions of dollars from his personal fortune to help like-minded candidates while creating and supporting gun control groups such as Mayors Against Illegal Guns and Moms Demand Action.

Despite his dedication to the issue, the former Republican is viewed skeptically by many Democratic primary voters, who look at his ties to Wall Street and vast personal wealth with suspicion. Democratic rivals including Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren in recent days have accused him of trying to buy the election.

At the same time, Bloomberg is pounding the local airwaves in all 50 states with television ads highlighting his work on issues on gun violence and climate change while casting himself as best positioned to defeat Trump next fall. After spending roughly \$40 million on an ad campaign over the first week or so of his campaign, he began running a second ad campaign backed by tens of millions of dollars more on Wednesday.

The 77-year-old New Yorker outlined his plan to combat gun violence before an invitation-only audience of about 40 victims of gun violence and gun control activists at a Christian center, near the movie theater in Aurora where a gunman killed 12 people and wounded nearly 60 others in 2012. The speaking lineup included Democratic state Rep. Tom Sullivan, whose son, Alex, was killed in the attack.

Sullivan formally endorsed Bloomberg while introducing him Thursday.

"I have witnessed the actions Mike has taken since Alex was murdered," Sullivan said, insisting that victims of gun violence would have an ally in the White House should Bloomberg win the election.

The policies Bloomberg outlined Thursday largely mirror those he fought for on the state and federal levels in recent years, though it's the first time he's released his specific prescription for gun violence as a presidential candidate. They are ambitious and would almost certainly face fierce resistance from the NRA and Republicans in Congress, but they are not dramatically different from those of his Democratic rivals.

The difference, Bloomberg said Thursday, is his proven commitment to the issue.

"I promise you I will never back down from this fight," he said. "That's the kind of president this country needs and you deserve."

Among the highlights, Bloomberg's plan would:

- Reinstatement of the federal ban on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines.
- Require every gun buyer to obtain a permit before making a purchase.
- Require point-of-sale background checks on all gun purchases while closing the gun show loophole.
- Institute a new age limit of 21 for those wishing to buy handguns, semi-automatic rifles and shotguns.
- Require a mandatory 48-hour waiting period for all gun purchases.
- Institute a federal "red flag" law to deny permits to "troubled people who pose a danger to themselves or others."
- Institute a temporary ban on gun possession for those convicted of assault or other violent misdemeanors.
- Ban all guns in K-12 schools, colleges, and universities, except for law enforcement.
- Reverse the law that gives gun makers and gun dealers immunity from lawsuits.
- Create the position of White House gun coordinator "to mobilize the public to fight gun violence and launch an inter-agency hub to fight gun violence."

## Biden scrap with voter risks overshadowing critique of Trump

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

NEW HAMPTON, Iowa (AP) — Joe Biden sought to capitalize on President Donald Trump's icy reception from world leaders by portraying himself on Thursday as someone who is well versed in foreign affairs and can restore American prestige abroad. But his moves risked being overshadowed by a testy confrontation with a voter in Iowa.

As he nears the end of an eight-day tour of the state that will open the Democratic contest in February, Biden knocked Trump as a dangerous and erratic commander in chief and head of state. His campaign released an online ad featuring video of other world leaders mocking Trump at a Buckingham Palace reception held alongside the NATO summit this week. John Kerry, the former secretary of state and 2004 Democratic presidential nominee, followed up with an endorsement of Biden.

"I've never before seen the world more in need of someone who on day one can begin the incredibly hard work of putting back together the world Donald Trump has smashed apart," Kerry said in a statement.

Yet before Biden could celebrate Kerry's backing, it became clear foreign affairs isn't a seamless issue for him.

Biden grew angry at his town hall in New Hampton, Iowa, when an 83-year-old retired farmer pressed him about his son Hunter Biden accepting a lucrative post on the board of a Ukrainian energy company while the then-vice president handled U.S.-Ukraine relations. The issue is near the heart of House impeachment proceedings against Trump after disclosures that the president sought Ukraine's help in investigating the Bidens. Ukraine officials have said there was nothing illegal about Hunter Biden's business dealings.

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The voter, who declined to give his name, pressed Biden on why it was acceptable for Hunter Biden to capitalize on his father's power while Democrats assail Trump for self-dealing.

"You're a damn liar, man, that's not true," Biden boomed as the man continued to argue that "you don't have a backbone ... any more than Trump." When the man finally told Biden he wouldn't vote for him, Biden replied, "I knew you weren't voting for me."

Separately, the man told the 77-year-old Biden that he worries the former vice president is too old for the presidency. Biden challenged the man to a pushup contest and an IQ test. The man later told reporters that he prefers Elizabeth Warren, a 70-year-old Massachusetts senator, for president.

Biden drew applause during the exchange from other attendees, a point he noted afterward to reporters.

"I didn't lose my temper," he said. "What I wanted to do was shut this down. You saw the reaction here."

He added that he knows Trump will keep pushing the Hunter Biden story line in a general election campaign that promises "to be even meaner."

Biden has touched on Trump's belligerent style on the world stage repeatedly this week as he travels across Iowa. He believes that international experience — with his six terms as a Delaware senator and two terms as vice president — is a winner for him in a primary and potential general election.

"Foreign policy is a major issue" for voters he encounters, Biden said in an interview. "It's not an issue that they say, well ... I think we should take this number of troops out of there and that number of troops there and I'm worried about what's going on in Ukraine. They just know something's not right. It's uncomfortable. They know."

He added that he not only has a better demeanor and skill set for the job than Trump, but he also has more relevant experience, deeper knowledge and more extensive relationships abroad than his Democratic competitors. "It's not in their wheelhouse," Biden said. "I mean, it doesn't mean they can't learn it, doesn't mean they're not smart as hell."

Biden said he looks forward to Kerry, who won the 2004 Iowa caucuses, joining him in the state Friday. "John's a good friend," Biden said. "He knows what's at stake."

## Paris police arrest scores amid strike over pension reform

By **THOMAS ADAMSON** and **CLAIRE PARKER** Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Paris police fired tear gas at demonstrators Thursday as the Eiffel Tower shut down, France's high-speed trains came to a standstill and hundreds of thousands marched nationwide in a strike over the government's plan to overhaul the retirement system.

At least 90 people were arrested in Paris by evening as the protests wound down.

Police said 65,000 people took to the streets of the French capital, and over 800,000 nationwide in often-tense demonstrations aimed at forcing President Emmanuel Macron to abandon pension reform.

The open-ended walkout by the country's unions represents the biggest challenge to Macron since the yellow vest movement against economic inequality erupted a year ago.

Opponents fear the changes to how and when workers can retire will threaten the hard-fought French way of life. Macron himself remained "calm and determined" to push it through, according to a top presidential official.

In Paris, small groups of masked activists smashed store windows, set fires and hurled flares on the sidelines of a march that was otherwise peaceful. Demonstrators also shot firecrackers at police in body armor. Some journalists were mugged in the street.

The Louvre closed some of its galleries, and the Palace of Versailles shut down. Subway stations across Paris closed their gates, high-speed TGV trains canceled their runs, and nearly 20% of flights at Paris' Orly Airport were reported grounded.

Many visitors, including the U.S. energy secretary, canceled plans to travel to one of the world's most popular tourist destinations.

Some travelers showed support for the striking workers. Others complained about being embroiled in someone else's fight.



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"I had no idea about the strike happening, and I was waiting for two hours in the airport for the train to arrive, and it didn't arrive," said vacationer Ian Crossen, from New York. "I feel a little bit frustrated. And I've spent a lot of money. I've spent money I didn't need to, apparently."

Beneath the Eiffel Tower, tourists from Thailand, Canada and Spain echoed those sentiments.

Paris authorities barricaded the presidential palace and deployed 6,000 police officers. Police ordered all businesses, cafes and restaurants in the area to close and detained 71 people before the demonstration even started.

Authorities banned protests in the more sensitive neighborhoods around the Champs-Elysees avenue, the presidential palace, Parliament and Notre Dame Cathedral.

Health workers showed up to decry conditions in hospitals. Students pointed to recent student suicides and demanded government action. Environmentalists emphasized that climate justice and social justice are one and the same.

And young and old roundly condemned the new retirement plan, which they fear would take money out of their pockets and reduce the leisure period the French expect have come to expect in the last decades of their lives.

Skirmishes broke out between police firing tear gas and protesters throwing flares in the western city of Nantes, and thousands of red-vested union activists marched through cities from Marseille on the Mediterranean to Lille in the north.

Lacking public transportation, commuters used shared bikes or electric scooters despite near-freezing temperatures. Many people in the Paris region worked from home or took a day off to stay with their children, since 78% of teachers in the capital went on strike.

The big question is how long the walkout will last. Transport Minister Elisabeth Borne said she expects the travel troubles to be just as bad on Friday, and unions said they will maintain the Paris subway strike at least through Monday.

Joseph Kakou, who works an overnight security shift in western Paris, walked an hour to get to his home on the eastern side of town.

"It doesn't please us to walk. It doesn't please us to have to strike," he said. "But we are obliged to, because we can't work until 90 years old."

The deeply unpopular Macron is expected to reveal the details of his plan next week. The government has promised not to touch the official retirement age — 62, though lower for certain physically demanding occupations — but the plan will encourage some people to work longer.

To Macron, the retirement reform is central to his plan to transform France so it can compete globally in the 21st century. The government argues France's 42 retirement systems need streamlining.

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Angela Charlton, Sylvie Corbet, Alex Turnbull, Nicolas Garriga, Mstyslav Chernov and Francois Mori in Paris contributed to this report.

## Trump lights National Christmas Tree in holiday tradition

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump helped light the National Christmas Tree on Thursday, taking part in a nearly century-old holiday tradition in the nation's capital.

The lighthearted honor for presidents, going back to Calvin Coolidge, came on an otherwise difficult day in Trump's presidency.

Hours before the ceremony, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi called on Democratic chairmen to bring forward impeachment charges against Trump. House Democrats say Trump abused his presidential powers by pressuring Ukraine's president to open an investigation into Trump's potential 2020 Democratic rival Joe Biden and his son.

The 30-foot (9-meter) tree is decorated with 50,000 lights and 450 giant white star ornaments. The National Park Service planted the tree in President's Park, just south of the White House, in late October.

The previous tree, a Colorado blue spruce from Virginia, was planted in 2012, but it was damaged last year when a man tried to climb it.

It's the 97th straight year that the sitting president has participated in the lighting ceremony.

This year's celebration included performances by Jessie James Decker, Spensha Baker, Colton Dixon, the Air Force rock band Max Impact, Chevel Shepherd, Tucson Boys Chorus, the United States Marine Band and West Tennessee Youth Chorus.

The first tree lighting took place on Christmas Eve in 1923, when Coolidge lit a 48-foot (15-meter) balsam fir in front of 3,000 spectators.

The tree is surrounded by 56 smaller trees featuring ornaments from every state and territory and the District of Columbia.

## Experts split sharply over experimental Alzheimer's drug

By **MARILYNN MARCHIONE AP Chief Medical Writer**

SAN DIEGO (AP) — A company that claims to have the first drug to slow mental decline from Alzheimer's disease made its case to scientists Thursday but left them sharply divided over whether there's enough evidence of effectiveness for the medicine to warrant federal approval.

Excitement and skepticism have surrounded aducanumab since its developers stopped two studies earlier this year because it didn't seem to be working, then did a stunning about-face in October and said new results suggest it was effective at a high dose.

During Thursday's presentation at an Alzheimer's conference in San Diego, the developers convinced some experts that the drug deserves serious consideration. But others were dubious.

Changes made during the study and unusual analyses of the data made the results hard to interpret. And the newly released results showed the drug made only a very small difference in thinking skills in one study and none in the other.

Alzheimer's patients and families are desperate for any help, no matter how small, adding pressure on the Food and Drug Administration to approve something.

But with conflicting results, "I don't see how you can conclude anything other than that another trial needs to be done," said the Mayo Clinic's Dr. David Knopman, who was involved in one of the studies.

Laurie Ryan, a dementia scientist at the National Institute on Aging, agreed: "We need more evidence."

Other doctors who consult for the drug's developers cheered the results. Dr. Paul Aisen, a dementia specialist at the University of Southern California, said they were "consistent and positive" in showing a benefit at a high dose — "a truly major advance."

Aducanumab aims to help the body clear harmful plaques, or protein clumps, from the brain. Cambridge, Massachusetts-based Biogen is developing it with Japan's Eisai Co.

In afternoon trading, the companies' stocks were up roughly 4%.

The stakes are high for approval or denial.

More than 5 million people in the U.S. and millions more worldwide have Alzheimer's. Current drugs only temporarily ease symptoms and do not slow the loss of memory and thinking skills.

But approving a drug that isn't truly effective could expose patients to financial and medical risks and give other drugmakers less incentive to develop better treatments.

The makers of aducanumab undertook two studies, each enrolling about 1,650 people with mild cognitive impairment or mild dementia from Alzheimer's.

Those with a gene that raises their risk of the disease were started on a lower dose because they are more likely to suffer inflammation in the brain from medicines that target plaque.

But as the studies went on and concern about this side effect eased, the rules were changed to let such patients get a higher dose.

A Biogen vice president, Samantha Budd Haeberlein, said more people got the higher dose in one study, and that helps explain why it succeeded and the other one failed.

But the new analyses were done on partial results, and with methods not agreed upon at the outset,

which makes any conclusions unreliable, independent experts said.

Also, the drug's benefits may have looked more impressive than they really were because patients in the placebo group worsened more in the positive study than in the one that failed.

"It's hard to know exactly what happened here," said Dr. Howard Fillit, chief science officer of the Alzheimer's Drug Discovery Foundation. "I don't see how the FDA could approve it."

Questions also arose about the size of any benefit.

The drug did not reverse decline, only slowed the rate of it compared to the placebo group by 22% in one study. Yet that meant a difference of only 0.39 on an 18-point score of thinking skills.

"It's a very small amount," Fillit said.

Still, Maria Carrillo, chief science officer at the Alzheimer's Association, said it was "the largest reduction that we've seen to date," adding: "It may mean that they remember their loved ones a little longer."

The drug "is worthy of significant, rigorous exploration" and review by the FDA, she said. "This is an important moment for the Alzheimer's community."

Some doctors and patients who helped test the drug are convinced it helped.

One was Charles Flagg, 78, a retired minister from Jamestown, Rhode Island, who received aducanumab until the studies were halted in March. Since he was taken off the medicine, "his cognition, his alertness, his interactions have definitely diminished," said his wife, Cynthia Flagg.

Biogen stressed the need for an effective treatment and suggested that delaying access to a drug that may work could deprive many people of help while further study is done.

Dr. John Ioannidis, a Stanford University expert on research methods, said patients' need should not drive the FDA's decision.

"If we go down that path, we're likely to introduce a lot of ineffective treatments for diseases that are really common," he said. "It would be a complete mess."

Marilynn Marchione can be followed on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/MMarchioneAP>

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## PM: Israel has 'full right' to annex strategic Jordan Valley

By ARON HELLER Associated Press

LISBON, Portugal (AP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Thursday that Israel has the "full right" to annex the Jordan Valley if it chose to, even as the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court warned the country against taking the bold step.

Netanyahu said his proposal to annex the strategic part of the occupied West Bank was discussed during a late-night meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. He said they also agreed to move forward with plans for a joint defense treaty.

The longtime Israeli leader, beleaguered by a corruption indictment and political instability at home, is promoting the two initiatives as a justification for staying in office.

The Trump administration has already delivered several landmark victories to Netanyahu, such as recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital and recognizing Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights. Netanyahu says that thanks to his close relationship with Trump, he is singularly positioned to further promote Israeli interests at this junction before the 2020 U.S. election season heats up.

The annexation move would surely draw condemnation from the Palestinians and much of the world and almost certainly extinguish any remaining Palestinian hopes of gaining independence.

The Palestinians seek all the West Bank, captured by Israel in 1967, as the heartland of their hoped-for state. The Jordan Valley comprises some 25% of the West Bank and is seen as the territory's breadbasket and one of the few remaining open areas that could be developed by the Palestinians.

But many Israelis say the area is vital to the country's security, providing a layer of protection along its eastern flank.



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In her annual report, ICC chief prosecutor Fatou Bensouda said her office was following the Israeli annexation proposal "with concern."

When asked by reporters about the warning, Netanyahu insisted that it is Israel's "full right to do so, if we chose so."

Netanyahu's visit with Pompeo was their first since the secretary of state announced last month that the U.S. no longer considers Israeli settlements illegal under international law. Israeli nationalists have interpreted that policy change as a green light to begin annexing parts or all of the West Bank.

Netanyahu called their 1 hour and 45 minute-meeting in Lisbon "critical to Israeli security."

In particular, he noted the progress they made toward a joint defense pact that would offer Israel further assurance against a future attack from Iran. He said he has informed his chief rival, former military chief Benny Gantz, of the progress in the initiative.

Israeli defense officials, and Gantz as well, have expressed concern that such a pact could limit Israel's freedom to operate militarily. Netanyahu said he was aware of the reservations but assured that it was a "historic opportunity" and Israel would not be limited to act against archenemy Iran.

Mike Makovsky, president and chief executive of the Jewish Institute for National Security of America in Washington, which has been promoting the idea of a narrow defense pact, said the proposal would offer "an extra layer of deterrence" and "mitigate the intensity and scope" of a potential war with Iran.

"Just like every other mutual defense treaty it would be left to the discretion of both parties how it would be implemented," he said. "Mutual defense pacts have been sources for stability."

In Lisbon, Netanyahu also met with Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa and thanked him for adopting the Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of anti-Semitism, which toughens guidelines to include some forms of criticism of Israel. Israeli researchers reported earlier this year that violent attacks against Jews around the world spiked significantly in 2018, with the largest reported number of Jews killed in anti-Semitic acts in decades.

The trip gave Netanyahu a brief respite as he fights for political survival in the wake of two inconclusive elections and a damning corruption indictment. He refused to discuss his future options but vowed to carry on.

Israel's attorney general last month indicted Netanyahu for fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes in three separate cases.

It is the first time in Israeli history that a sitting prime minister has been charged with a crime. Unlike mayors or regular ministers, the prime minister is not required by Israeli law to resign if indicted. Netanyahu is desperate to remain in office, where he is best positioned to fight the charges.

## SpaceX launches beer malt, caring robot and 'mighty mice'

By **MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer**

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — SpaceX launched a 3-ton shipment to the International Space Station on Thursday, including "mighty mice" for a muscle study, a robot sensitive to astronauts' emotions and a miniature version of a brewery's malt house.

The Dragon capsule also is delivering holiday goodies for the six station residents. NASA's Kenny Todd isn't giving any hints, but said, "Santa's sleigh, I think, is certified for the vacuum of space."

The recycled capsule should arrive Sunday.

The Falcon rocket blasted off from Cape Canaveral a day late because of high winds. SpaceX recovered the new booster on a barge just off the coast in the Atlantic several minutes following liftoff so it could be reused. SpaceX employees in Southern California cheered when the booster landed, and again a few minutes later when the capsule reached orbit.

This is SpaceX's 19th supply run for NASA.

Forty mice are aboard, including eight "mighty mice" with twice the muscle mass of ordinary mice, according to the experiment's chief scientist, Dr. Se-Jin Lee of the Jackson Laboratory in Farmington, Connecticut.

Researchers plan to bulk up some of the non-mighty space mice during or after their month-long flight

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in an attempt to build up muscle and bone. This therapy could one day help astronauts stay fit on lengthy space trips, said Lee and Dr. Emily Germain-Lee of Connecticut Children's Medical Center.

Before and after liftoff, the couple sang part of the theme song to the mid-20th century superhero TV cartoon "Mighty Mouse" and even had others joining in at the launch site.

Germain-Lee was too emotional to sing right at liftoff. "I was sobbing so hard that I couldn't even get my breath," she told The Associated Press.

In addition, there are barley grains aboard the Dragon for a beer-malting experiment by Anheuser-Busch. It's the third in a series of Budweiser experiments to look at how barley germination is affected by weightlessness.

The shipment also includes a large, plastic 3-D printed robot head with artificial intelligence, according to its German creators. It's named Cimon, pronounced Simon, the same as the prototype that flew up last year. This upgraded version is designed to show empathy to its human colleagues in orbit.

Cimon will spend up to three years at the space station, three times longer than its recently returned predecessor. The goal, said IBM's Matthias Biniok, is to provide astronauts with constantly updated robotic helpers, especially at the moon and Mars.

The space station currently is home to three Americans, two Russians and one Italian.

Russia plans to launch its own cargo ship to the outpost Friday.

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## Putin offers US an immediate extension to key nuclear pact

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin offered Thursday to immediately extend the only remaining nuclear arms reduction pact with the United States, but a senior U.S. official said Washington wants a broader deal involving China.

Speaking at a meeting with military officials, Putin said that Russia has repeatedly offered the U.S. to extend the New START treaty that expires in 2021 but that it hasn't heard back.

"Russia is ready to extend the New START treaty immediately, before the year's end and without any preconditions," he said.

The pact, which was signed in 2010 by U.S. President Barack Obama and then Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, limits each country to no more than 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads and 700 deployed missiles and bombers. The treaty, which can be extended by another five years, envisages a comprehensive verification mechanism to check compliance, including on-site inspections of each side's nuclear bases.

Its expiration would remove any limits on Russian and U.S. nuclear arsenals for the first time in decades.

Arms control advocates have argued that the failure to extend the pact would be highly destabilizing at a time when Russia-U.S. relations have sunk to the lowest levels since the Cold War.

Putin and other Russian officials have repeatedly voiced concern about Washington's reluctance to discuss the treaty's extension.

"Our proposals have been on the table, but we have got no response from our partners," Putin said.

In Washington, a senior Pentagon official suggested the Trump administration is not interested in an immediate extension and sees no rush anyway as New Start doesn't expire until Feb. 2021.

John Rood, the undersecretary of defense for policy, told a Senate committee that the administration's main priority is getting Russia and China to agree to begin negotiations on a broader arms treaty to supplant New START.

"If the United States were to agree to extend the treaty now, I think it would make it less likely that we would have the ability to persuade Russia and China to enter negotiations on a broader agreement," Rood said.

In an apparent bid to encourage the U.S. to extend the treaty, the Russian military last month showed

its latest hypersonic weapon to U.S. inspectors. The Defense Ministry underlined that it demonstrated the Avangard hypersonic glide vehicle as part of transparency measures under the New START.

Putin unveiled the Avangard in 2018 along with other prospective weapons, noting that its ability to make sharp maneuvers on its way to a target will render missile defense useless.

New START is the only remaining U.S.-Russian nuclear arms control treaty after both Moscow and Washington withdrew from the 1987 Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty earlier this year.

The U.S. said it pulled out because of Russian violations, a claim the Kremlin has denied.

Putin reaffirmed Russia's pledge not to deploy missiles banned by the INF treaty until the U.S. and its allies do so.

"Russia isn't interested in unleashing a new arms race," he said.

Robert Burns in Washington contributed to this report.

## 'Once Upon a Time,' 'Portrait' top AP's 2019 best films list

By LINDSEY BAHR and JAKE COYLE AP Film Writers

Associated Press Film Writers Lindsey Bahr and Jake Coyle name their choices for the best films of 2019.

LINDSEY BAHR

1. "Once Upon a Time...in Hollywood": Quentin Tarantino's movie business fairy tale, featuring all-time performances from two of our great living movie stars, and the shadow of one's spirit, is his most warm-hearted and tender and a complete joy to watch and watch again. It's hard to glean whether a film will stand the test of time, but "Once Upon a Time..." has the makings of a modern classic.

2. "Little Women": For a story so rooted in its post-Civil War time, it's an astonishing feat that Greta Gerwig was able to make "Little Women," a book with no shortage of adaptations, into something that's downright modern. With an eye toward warm details and sharp dialogue, Gerwig, along with a terrific cast, makes the maturation of the March sisters more than just wistful nostalgia, but an urgent piece about the economics of being a woman and the worthiness of their stories.

3. "The Farewell": In an industry that favors safe bets (and fewer and fewer of them at that), it's no wonder that a batch of smaller, intensely personal films stood out in 2019. But Lulu Wang's "The Farewell," a sensitive and wry account of the time her family decided to not tell her grandmother that she was dying of cancer, is at the top of the pack. Not only did we get to see Awkwafina in a different light and meet the phenomenal Chinese actress Zhao Shuzhen, but see ourselves and our own relationship with death and grief in the specificity of a different culture.

4. "1917": The whole "one take" construct of Sam Mendes' sumptuous World War I epic "1917" is a neat trick, but that alone isn't exactly a reason to see it. In fact, "1917" works so well because you're so wrapped up in the story of this impossible, real-time mission across across No Man's Land. Soldiers desperately race to stop an attack that the British have learned is doomed to fail. Immersed in their frantic sprint, you don't even notice the gears behind the engine.

5. "Marriage Story": The ugliness of the modern divorce industrial complex gets an achingly human face in Noah Baumbach's tragicomic "Marriage Story," which although it's about the dissolution of a marriage is one of the funniest and most alive perhaps because it is so real — not to mention the wonderful turns from Scarlett Johansson, Adam Driver and a crackling supporting cast.

6. "Maiden": A hidden gem of a documentary, "Maiden" is an exhilarating and uplifting adventure film about the first all-female crew to compete in a 'round the world yacht race with harrowing archival footage and terrific present-day interviews with the women who raced and the men who doubted them.

7. "Honey Boy": I'd wager that the biggest sell of "Honey Boy" is also its biggest deterrent: That it's Shia LaBeouf's story. For those in the latter camp, I have one thing to say: See it anyway. This is a lyrical and immensely moving portrait of a child actor (Noah Jupe) and his complex relationship with his toxic father (LaBeouf) and a stunning fiction debut from director Alma Har'el.

8. "Parasite": Writer-director Bong Joon Ho keeps the audience guessing in this twisty, comedic and

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trenchant film about two families — one working class, one wealthy — whose stories become intertwined in a modernist palace. It's a film that should be seen knowing as little as possible, but also one that gets richer with every view.

9. "Joker": Was "Joker" an agent of chaos? Sure, but not in the way people suspected. It didn't incite violence; It was simply successful. And that's not a bad thing! It's a sneakily elegant film that dared to make something serious and adult out of a comic book character.

10. "The Nightingale": Jennifer Kent's harrowing film about a young Irish woman on a quest for revenge in 1825 Tasmania contains one of the most shocking depictions of violence I've ever seen — so disturbing that I found myself looking for the door — and yet her film, which wants the viewer to be challenged by its violence, hate and ultimately empathy, is one that not only provokes, but sticks.

Honorable Mentions: "Pain and Glory," "I Lost My Body," "Jojo Rabbit," "Portrait of a Lady on Fire," "Luce," "Ad Astra"

## JAKE COYLE

1. "Portrait of a Lady on Fire": In a year defined by mammoth masterworks, nothing took my breath away like Celine Sciamma's exquisite, soul-shattering romance. A female painter (Noémie Merlant) in 18th century France is sent to paint, on the sly, the portrait of a spirited noble woman (Adèle Haenel) before her arranged marriage. The movie assembles itself as a series of stolen glances, as art and love mingle for a blissful but tragically unsustainable moment. The parting shot, a kind of portrait itself, is a devastation I won't soon recover from.

2. "Rolling Thunder Revue" and "The Irishman": A simply astonishing double feature from Martin Scorsese, one consumed with life, the other with death. Scorsese spoke urgently and eloquently about how movies should be more than they often are: a corporate-made product with little of the humanity that makes films worth debating, worth loving. But as well and as passionately as Scorsese argued for cinema, nothing made his case better than these two remarkable, colossal films.

3. "Honeyland": Directors Tamara Kotevska and Ljubomir Stefanov were initially commissioned just to make a video about nature conservation in Macedonia, about one of Europe's last wild-beekeepers. Instead, they spent three years and collected more than 400 hours of footage with Hatidze, a heroically indefatigably middle-aged woman who lives in an abandoned rural village in North Macedonia where she ekes out a meager living for herself and her bedridden mother by sustainably harvesting honey. The filmmakers whittled their footage down to a 85-minute fable of startling intimacy (the candle-lit scenes of Hatidze and her mother are among the most stirring you'll ever see) that reverberates with larger ecological allegory.

4. "Parasite": There's not a misplaced moment in Bong Joon Ho's social satire, a so perfectly and intricately engineered genre contraption that it's downright frightening.

5. "Marriage Story": Noah Baumbach, too, is working at the very top of his game, telling a delicately, even profoundly constructed tale of divorce — a subject not so easy to be clear-eyed about — with a miraculous steadiness and compassion. For a horror story — and with lawyers breathing fire and brimstone to go with it — it's remarkably funny, tender and true. A deeply humane masterpiece.

6. "Pain and Glory": A master filmmaker looks back, rewarding us with one of his richest and most luminous films. Pedro Almodovar's warm spirit vibrates throughout this time-skipping drama of self-reflection. Almodovar has never felt so close at hand, and the film's final image is one of poetic summation.

7. "Little Women": Greta Gerwig's Louisa May Alcott adaptation is a feast of a movie. Every frame is alive. By remixing the book's timelines and expanding Jo's arc to encompass Alcott's, too, Gerwig hasn't just made "Little Women" contemporary, she's made it sing.

8. "Once Upon a Time ... in Hollywood": Quentin Tarantino has said he aims to retire after making 10 films; he's disinterested in becoming an old filmmaker or doing anything to dull the vibrancy of his earlier films. He should rethink that. His radiant and poignant 1960s Hollywood fable suggests that Tarantino, when he slows down and soaks up the California sun, can be even better as he grows older.

9. "Last Black Man in San Francisco": An almost-too-beautiful fable of displacement and gentrification



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that ultimately wins you over with the sincerity of its anguish and the soulful performances of Jimmy Falls, Jonathan Majors and Rob Morgan.

10. "Atlantics": Writer-director Mati Diop's feature debut is preternaturally assured. It's a ghost story, set in Senegal among grieving women after a boat of emigrating young men has disappeared into the sea. The film's mythic power is heightened by Diop's already fully-formed cinematic language.

Honorable Mentions: "Dolemite Is My Name," "Apollo 11," "Booksmart," "Knives Out," "High Flying Bird," "Amazing Grace," "Uncut Gems," "The Nightingale," "1917"

Follow Lindsey Bahr on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/ldbahr> and Jake Coyle at <http://twitter.com/jake-coyleAP>

## As 58 migrants drown off Africa, a call to stop smugglers

By **ABDOULIE JOHN, AHMED MOHAMED and CARLEY PETESCH** Associated Press

NOUAKCHOTT, Mauritania (AP) — The drowning of at least 58 migrants in the Atlantic Ocean off Mauritania sent despair through tiny Gambia on Thursday while some demanded a crackdown on human traffickers after one of this year's deadliest disasters among young Africans trying to reach Europe.

At least 83 survivors swam through rough seas to shore after their boat capsized Wednesday. They had been trying to reach Spain's Canary Islands but diverted toward Mauritania as fuel and food ran low, the U.N. migration agency said.

The boat, which the U.N. said was carrying an estimated 150 migrants, including children, had tossed on the Atlantic Ocean for a week.

As the survivors, 10 of them children, recovered from shock, authorities continued to search for an unknown number of missing people. Mauritanian officials said 10 people were receiving "urgent" hospital treatment.

All were being cared for in accordance with "human solidarity, fraternity and African hospitality," Interior Minister Mohamed Salem ould Merzoug said, adding that Mauritania will investigate those responsible for "this drama" including possible trafficking networks.

A doctor from the U.N. migration agency was arriving in Nouakchott Thursday to support local medical efforts and the agency is providing first aid kits, blankets and other supplies, U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

Gambia's President Adama Barrow expressed "great sadness" as his government said most of the survivors were Gambian. Six of the 19 Senegalese passengers survived.

Tens of thousands of young people have set off from Gambia in recent years in hopes of reaching Europe, many fleeing former President Yahya Jammeh's oppressive rule that severely affected the country's economy. Since Jammeh fled into exile in January 2017 after a surprise election loss, European countries have been pushing to return asylum seekers.

But the exodus from the coastal West African nation continues. The collapse of British travel company Thomas Cook this year led to an emergency meeting by Gambia's government as some said the sudden drop in tourists could be devastating for the economy.

Survivors said the boat that capsized had left Gambia on Nov. 27.

Back home, there was outrage and despair.

"It is just sad. There is nothing we can do," said Pa Sallah, a shopkeeper outside the capital, Banjul. Sallah's son, Momodou Sallah, left Gambia two years ago for Europe but it is believed he took the "back way" through the Sahara Desert instead. That route carries the risk of being sold into slavery in Libya, the last stop before a Mediterranean crossing on which thousands have died.

Many of those departing from Gambia leave from the nearby community of Barra, where fishing boats now carry young migrants instead.

While thousands once died off Mauritania's coast in attempts to reach the Canary Islands between 2005 and 2010, that later calmed, the country's interior minister said. But in recent months authorities have

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detained boats that mostly carry hundreds of migrants from Senegal, Gambia's neighbor.

Gambia's National Youth Council chairman Lamin Darboe said it was high time to investigate the people who benefit from what he called a macabre business.

"Government must take deliberate measures to crack down on smugglers and traffickers profiting from these criminal operations," he said.

The latest deaths show that the problems pushing Gambians to migrate are still not fully addressed, he said, calling for more employment and other opportunities to "fully restore their hopes."

Petesch reported from Dakar, Senegal. Associated Press writer Samy Magdy contributed from Cairo.

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## Historic US towns endured wars, storms. What about sea rise?

By JEFFREY COLLINS Associated Press

SWANSBORO, N.C. (AP) — Historic cities and towns along the Southeastern U.S. coast have survived wars, hurricanes, disease outbreaks and other calamities, but now that sea levels are creeping up with no sign of stopping, they face a more existential crisis.

With a total annual budget of \$225 million, Charleston, South Carolina, can't afford the billions of dollars to save itself without federal help. It's counting on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to help surround its downtown peninsula with seawalls, harkening to the barriers the city built when it was founded 350 years ago.

Keeping water off the streets and buildings is even more difficult for smaller towns like Swansboro, North Carolina, with 3,200 people and a \$4 million budget that doesn't account for climate-related sea rise.

The most vulnerable coastal communities sit only a few feet above sea level and are already getting wet at some high tides. Scientists estimate the sea will rise another 2 feet (61 centimeters) to 4 feet (122 centimeters) in the next 50 years.

Municipal leaders say they need billions of state and federal dollars to save block after city block of low-lying homes and businesses. And while even climate change-denying politicians are beginning to acknowledge the inevitable onslaught, city officials worry that those who control the purse strings won't see the urgency of a slowly unfolding catastrophe that's not like a tornado or earthquake.

Founded in 1783, Swansboro became the center of North Carolina's steamboat industry. In 1862, it saw Union troops burn down a Confederate fort guarding the nearby Bouge Inlet to the Atlantic Ocean. Across its quaint downtown on the White Oak River, almost every building boasts a city seal with the date it was built. Most are much older than the gray-haired tourists strolling around, and can't forever withstand the kind of flooding they suffered last year, when Hurricane Florence's sea surge topped 30 inches (76 centimeters) of rain.

Stunned, the town commissioned a report for the future. It said the water's edge may end up a block or two inland from the historic waterfront, and soberly suggested: "Consider retracting services or strategically abandoning infrastructure in areas that are likely to be risky or dangerous."

Local leaders recognize the importance of Swansboro's charm, but its future is largely out of their hands. "We're going to be very, very dependent on outside funding," new Town Manager Chris Seaberg said. "We're trying to preserve the history, but trying to accommodate these new issues that weren't there 100, 200 years ago."

North Carolina passed a law in 2012 preventing the state from forming coastal polices based on sea rise predictions. But Republican control of the legislature is waning, and local leaders say hurricanes Matthew in 2016, Florence in 2018 and Dorian in 2019 — along with changing attitudes toward climate science — appear to be shifting the state's outlook. North Carolina created an Office of Recovery and Resiliency this year to plan for floods and other extreme weather events.

"There will need to be political stressors to get people to understand the importance of climate change,"

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said Beaufort, North Carolina, Mayor Rett Newton.

An Air Force retiree who is getting his PhD in marine science, Newton sweeps his arm across the Beaufort Channel. One spot is where the pirate Blackbeard scuttled some of his ships 300 years ago. Nearby is where blockade runners hid from British ships while helping supply the U.S. in the War of 1812. And on the horizon is where freed slaves helped Union troops defeat Confederates in 1862.

The historic buildings along Beaufort's waterfront are gleaming now, reflecting millions in new investment. It wasn't like that when Newton grew up in the 1960s amid grimy seafood shops, rundown shacks and fish plants. People wealthy enough to buy waterfront property can always move, Newton said, but escaping the seas will be much harder for poorer residents, who often live on low-lying land handed down through generations, are already beset by social and economic problems.

"I can't tax anyone else. At the local level, we can't tax our way out of this," Newton said, noting his town of 4,200 people collects about \$3.5 million a year in taxes.

Charleston, with state and federal help, is spending \$64 million to raise the lowest part of the seawall guarding its downtown Battery, which should keep that part of the city safe even if the ocean rises more than 6 feet (2 meters) in the next century, Chief Resilience Officer Mark Wilbert said. The city also is spending hundreds of millions of dollars to modernize its storm water system.

But these measures alone probably can't save a city that was once the most heavily fortified in North America, with a system of walls, moats and drawbridges to keep out the Spanish, French, Native Americans, and occasionally the ocean as well.

The city's 7 million visitors each year come looking for old charm along the water, but probably not underfoot. Downpours regularly cause flooding these days, and more than once a week on average, Charleston gets "sunny day" flooding when tides push water onto city streets.

Four of the seven highest water levels recorded in Charleston Harbor have happened in the past four years, pushed by Hurricane Matthew in 2016, Hurricane Irma in 2017 and nor'easter type storms that hit in 2015 and 2018.

"What used to only happen occasionally is happening more often," Wilbert said.

Charleston is working with the Army Corps on solutions, and everyone agrees sea walls aren't the only answer. Also under consideration are flood gates, enhanced pumps and other potential fixes, and the city hopes for plenty of state and federal help to pay for it.

South Carolina highway funds are already going to raise the downtown sea walls, and Republican Gov. Henry McMaster created the South Carolina Floodwater Commission, which is studying freshwater and ocean flooding and exploring the use of artificial reefs to blunt massive waves in hurricanes.

Charleston also plans to seek at least some of the state's tourism taxes on hotel rooms and restaurant meals for flood control. Currently, that money must be spent on tourism.

"You are not going to reverse this. The sea level is going to keep rising," Wilbert said. "It's not something where you can say how much it will cost or when it will end."

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Follow Jeffrey Collins on Twitter: @ JSCollinsAP

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## Today in History By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, Dec. 6, the 340th day of 2019. There are 25 days left in the year.

Today's Highlights in History:

On Dec. 6, 1865, the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, abolishing slavery, was ratified as Georgia became the 27th state to endorse it.

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On this date:

In 1790, Congress moved to Philadelphia from New York.

In 1907, the worst mining disaster in U.S. history occurred as 362 men and boys died in a coal mine explosion in Monongah, West Virginia.

In 1917, some 2,000 people were killed when an explosives-laden French cargo ship, the Mont Blanc, collided with the Norwegian vessel Imo at the harbor in Halifax, Nova Scotia, setting off a blast that devastated the Canadian city. Finland declared its independence from Russia.

In 1923, a presidential address was broadcast on radio for the first time as President Coolidge spoke to a joint session of Congress.

In 1957, America's first attempt at putting a satellite into orbit failed as Vanguard TV3 rose about four feet off a Cape Canaveral launch pad before crashing down and exploding.

In 1962, 37 coal miners were killed in an explosion at the Robena No. 3 Mine operated by U.S. Steel in Carmichaels, Pa.

In 1973, House minority leader Gerald R. Ford was sworn in as vice president, succeeding Spiro T. Agnew.

In 1989, 14 women were shot to death at the University of Montreal's school of engineering by a man who then took his own life.

In 1998, in Venezuela, former Lt. Col. Hugo Chavez (OO'-goh CHAH'-vez), who had staged a bloody coup attempt against the government six years earlier, was elected president.

In 2001, the House of Representatives, by a one-vote margin, gave President George W. Bush more power to negotiate global trade deals. President Bush dedicated the national Christmas tree to those who had died on Sept. 11 and to service members who had died in the line of duty.

In 2007, President George W. Bush announced a plan to freeze interest rates on subprime mortgages held by hundreds of thousands of homeowners.

In 2017, President Donald Trump declared Jerusalem to be Israel's capital, defying warnings from the Palestinians and others around the world that he would be destroying hopes for Mideast peace. Time magazine named as its Person of the Year the "Silence Breakers" - those who had shared their stories about sexual assault and harassment.

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama visited the U.S. Senate during a rare Sunday session to rally Democrats behind closed doors on a health care overhaul. The Kennedy Center Honors lauded jazz great Dave Brubeck, rocker Bruce Springsteen, actor Robert De Niro, comic genius Mel Brooks and opera singer Grace Bumbry.

Five years ago: Officials announced that American photojournalist Luke Somers and a South African teacher, Pierre Korkie, were killed during a high-risk U.S. raid to free them from al-Qaida-affiliated militants in Yemen. In a runoff in Louisiana, Republican Rep. Bill Cassidy defeated Democratic Sen. Mary Landrieu, denying her a fourth term and extending the GOP's domination of the 2014 midterm elections.

One year ago: Flag-waving crowds lined the tracks as a special funeral train carried the flag-draped casket of former President George H.W. Bush from the Houston area to College Station, Texas, for burial on the grounds of his presidential library. Kevin Hart announced that he had stepped down as Oscars host following an outcry over anti-gay tweets and comments he had made in the past. The Dick Cheney biopic "Vice" led the way with six Golden Globe nominations, including nods for best comedy picture and best actor for Christian Bale.

Today's Birthdays: Comedy performer David Ossman is 83. Actor Patrick Bauchau is 81. Country singer Helen Cornelius is 78. Actor James Naughton is 74. Former Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood is 74. Rhythm-and-blues singer Frankie Beverly (Maze) is 73. Former Sen. Don Nickles, R-Okla., is 71. Actress JoBeth Williams is 71. Actor Tom Hulce is 66. Actor Wil Shriner is 66. Actor Kin Shriner is 66. Actor Miles Chapin is 65. Rock musician Rick Buckler (The Jam) is 64. Comedian Steven Wright is 64. Country singer Bill Lloyd is 64. Singer Tish Hinojosa is 64. Rock musician Peter Dinklage (R.E.M.) is 63. Rock musician David Lovering (Pixies) is 58. Actress Janine Turner is 57. Rock musician Ben Watt (Everything But The Girl) is 57. Writer-director Judd Apatow is 52. Rock musician Ulf "Buddha" Ekberg (Ace of Base) is 49. Writer-director Craig Brewer is 48. Actress Colleen Haskell is 43. Actress Lindsay Price is 43. Actress Ashley Madekwe is 38.



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Actress Nora Kirkpatrick is 35. Christian rock musician Jacob Chesnut (Rush of Fools) is 30. Tennis player CoCo Vandeweghe is 28. Football quarterback Johnny Manziel is 27. NBA star Giannis Antetokounmpo is 25.

Thought for Today: "Americans have always been able to handle austerity and even adversity. Prosperity is what is doing us in." — James Reston, American journalist (born 1909, died this date in 1995).

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