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Chicken Soup
for the Soul

“SOMETIMES YOU
DON'T REALIZE
YOUR OWN
STRENGTH UNTIL
YOU COME FACE TO
FACE WITH YOUR
GREATEST
WEAKNESS.”

-SUSAN GALE


Purina

From our family
to your family . . .
*Have a blessed
Christmas!*

**Professional
Management
Services**
111 N Main
Downtown Groton
605/397-FEED (3333)

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

© 2019 Groton Daily Independent



Super Thick Frost

The trees will have a super thick layer of frost on them this morning, making for a picturesque view when the sun comes up. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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S & S Lumber
HARDWARE HANK
Peace on Earth will come to stay
when we live Christmas every day!
- Helen Steiner Rice
*Have a
Merry Christmas!*
201 East Hwy 12 • 605/397-2361



MERRY CHRISTMAS
Enjoy the holidays more with Subway Platters!
SUBWAY
1202 N 1st St. - Ste. D, Groton (605) 397-7827 (SUBS)

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Merry Christmas.

MAY YOUR CHRISTMAS SPARKLE
WITH MOMENTS OF LOVE,
LAUGHTER AND GOODWILL,
AND MAY THE YEAR AHEAD BE FULL
OF CONTENTMENT AND JOY.

 **WEBER**
LANDSCAPING
605/380-7811
Groton

May you and
those you love find true
happiness and peace
this Christmas!



 **Weismantel Agency**
Marty Weismantel ~ 605/396-7341 ~ weisag@nvc.net

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Hazardous Weather Outlook

National Weather Service Aberdeen SD
307 AM CST Thu Dec 26 2019

This Hazardous Weather Outlook is for west central Minnesota, central South Dakota, north central South Dakota and northeast South Dakota.

.DAY ONE...Today and tonight.

Light snow lingers in northeastern SD and light patchy fog may continue in the overnight hours, otherwise no hazardous weather is expected at this time.

.DAYS TWO THROUGH SEVEN...Friday through Wednesday.

A stronger storm system is expected to move into the region over the weekend. Snowfall amounts of 6 inches or more are possible. Strong gusty winds can also be expected after the front moves through the area, creating blowing snow and little to no visibility at times.

Travel could become difficult or impossible.

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Today



Mostly Cloudy

High: 27 °F

Tonight



Decreasing
Clouds

Low: 11 °F

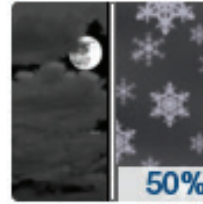
Friday



Mostly Sunny

High: 28 °F

Friday
Night



Mostly Cloudy
then Chance
Snow

Low: 19 °F

Saturday



Snow Likely

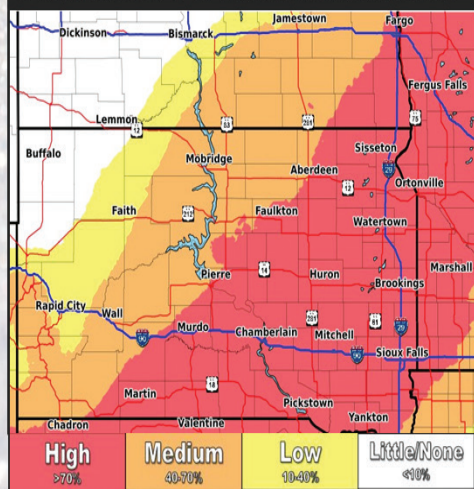
High: 28 °F



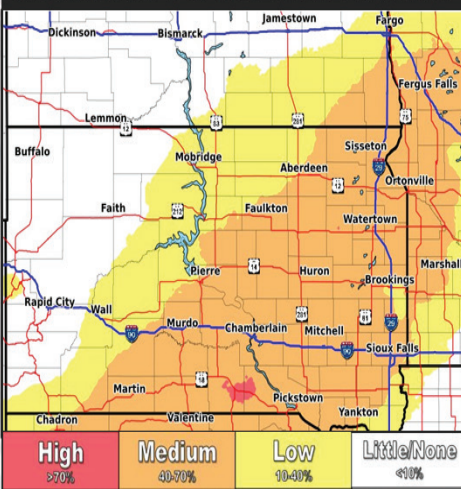
Snow Friday Night Through Sunday

A significant winter storm is taking aim at the area, and hazardous to impossible travel conditions are possible. Moderate to sometimes heavy snowfall is expected with winds gusting 35-45 mph. Prepare accordingly if you're doing holiday travel!

Potential for 2 or more inches of snow



Potential for 6 or more inches of snow



Visit www.weather.gov/abr for a detailed local forecast

Updated: 12/26/2019 4:20 AM CT

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

A strong system approaches the area over the weekend, bringing measureable snow throughout the region. While there is still some uncertainty on the track and snowfall amounts, falling snow along with gusty winds 35 to 45 mph may make weekend travel difficult if not impossible at times. Please plan ahead if you're traveling this weekend!

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Today in Weather History

December 26, 1988: Moderate to heavy snow fell across western and northern South Dakota, as well as across most of Minnesota, from the evening of the 25th through the morning of the 27th. Much of the northern one-half to two-thirds of Minnesota and the western and northern sections of South Dakota were blanketed with 6-12 inches of new snow. Numerous accidents and minor injuries were indirectly related to the snowy conditions. Several snowfall amounts in South Dakota included 12 inches at Timber Lake; 10 to 12 inches at Seneca and Hoven; 11 inches at Aberdeen; 8 inches at Pierre, Eureka and Blunt; 7 inches at Chelsea, Redfield, Cottonwood, and Rapid City; and 6 inches at Ferney, Huron, and Eden. In Minnesota, 8 inches fell in Browns Valley, 6 inches fell at Wheaton, and 5 inches accumulated at Artichoke Lake.

December 26, 1776: George Washington crossed the ice-clogged Delaware River. He marched on Trenton in the midst of snow and sleet thus surprising and captured many of the British garrisons.

December 26, 2004: A magnitude 9.1 earthquake near Sumatra, Indonesia generated a tsunami that caused tremendous devastation throughout the Indian Ocean. The quake, which is the third largest in the world since 1900, caused severe damage and casualties in northern Sumatra, Indonesia, and in the Nicobar Islands, India. The tsunami that followed killed more people than any other tsunami in recorded history, with 227,898 dead or missing. The total estimated material losses in the Indian Ocean region were \$10 billion, and insured losses were \$2 billion.

1776 - George Washington crossed the ice clogged Delaware River. He marched on Trenton in the midst of snow and sleet thus surprising and capturing many of the British garrison. (David Ludlum)

1947 - New York City received a record 26.4 inches of snow in 24 hours, with as much as 32 inches reported in the suburbs. The heavy snow brought traffic to a standstill, and snow removal cost eight million dollars. Thirty thousand persons were called upon to remove the 100 million tons of snow. The storm claimed 27 lives. (26th-27th) (David Ludlum)

1983 - Miami, FL, established a December record with a morning low of 33 degrees. Just three days earlier, and again three days later, record warm temperatures were reported in Florida, with daytime highs in the 80s. (The National Weather Summary)

1987 - Freezing rain plagued parts of the south central U.S., from northwest Texas to southwestern Missouri. Southwestern Missouri was turned into a huge skating rink as roads became sheets of ice. Damage to tree limbs and power lines compared to a hundred tornadoes, and half of the city of Springfield was left without electricity for 24 hours. Snow, sleet and ice covered the northwest two thirds of Oklahoma. 75,000 homes were left without electricity as ice accumulated one to two inches in a 40-mile band from Duncan to Norman to Tulsa to Miami. 25,000 of those homes were still without power a week later. The storm claimed the lives of seven persons. (24th-27th) (The Weather Channel) (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Low pressure produced heavy snow from North Dakota to western sections of the Great Lakes Region, with up to fourteen inches reported in the Chicago area. Cold arctic air hovered over the Plateau Region. Temperatures in the Big Smokey Valley of Nevada plunged to 31 degrees below zero. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Strong northerly winds behind an arctic cold front produced snow squalls in the Great Lakes Region and dangerous wind chill temperatures in the northeastern U.S. Wind chill readings as cold as 40 degrees below zero were reported in New York State. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2003 - A major snow storm in Utah caused several fatalities due to avalanches. As much as 2 ft of snow fell in parts of the state, particularly south of Salt Lake City. Three people that were seen snowboarding in the Aspen Grove recreational area have been presumed dead, all others managed to escape or be rescued (Reuters).

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 24 °F at 2:26 PM

Low Temp: 20 °F at 1:14 AM

Wind: 12 mph at 1:14 AM

Day Rain: 0.00

Record High: 53° in 2011

Record Low: -29° in 1990

Average High: 23°F

Average Low: 3°F

Average Precip in Dec.: 0.41

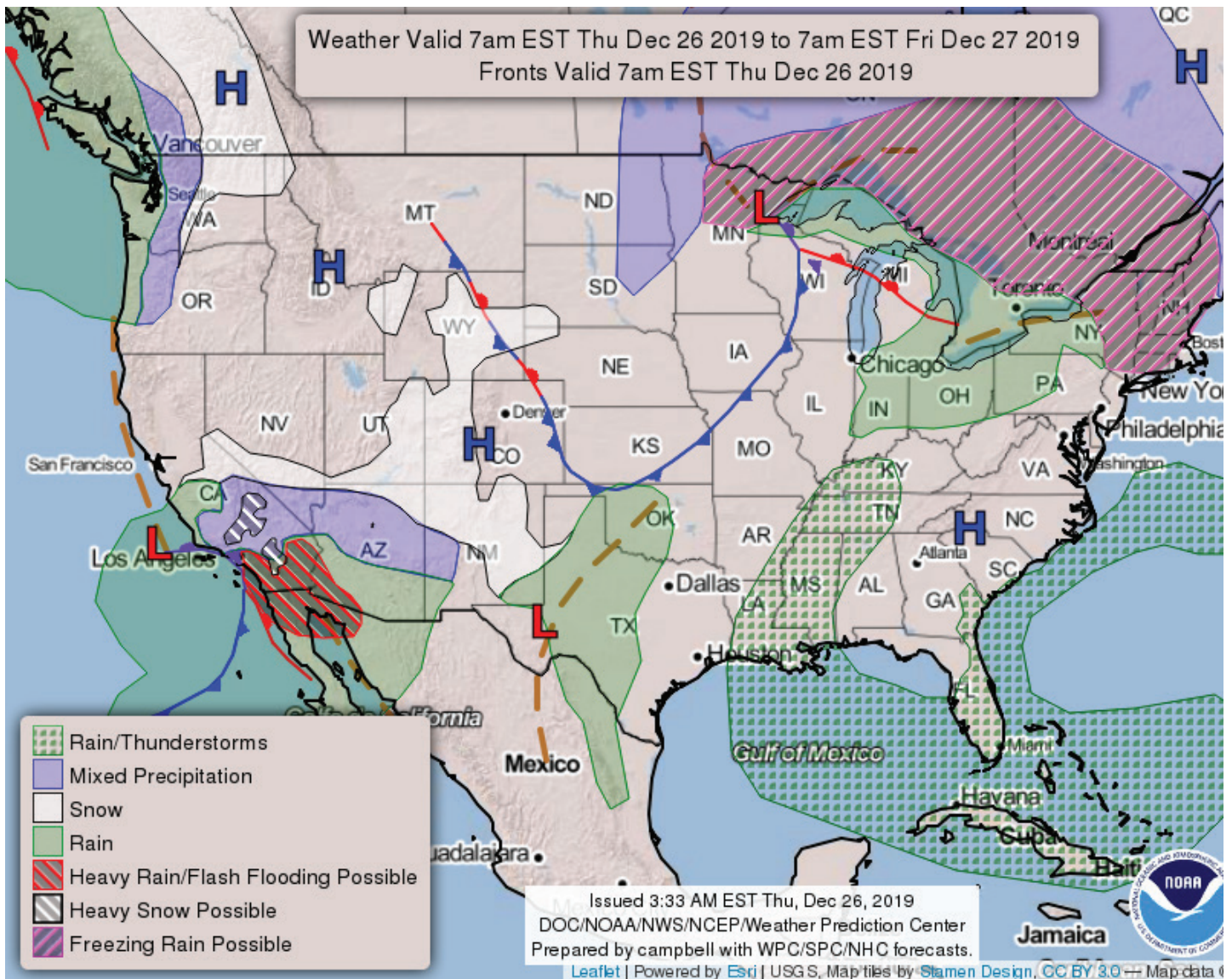
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.11

Average Precip to date: 21.61

Precip Year to Date: 28.06

Sunset Tonight: 4:56 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:13 a.m.





WHY MOTHERS MATTER

One of the most beautiful passages in Scripture is found in Luke's Gospel. It is called "The Magnificat." We have Mary proclaiming, "My soul magnifies the Lord." The word "soul" is a special word and in Hebrew is used to reveal or describe a person's entire identity. It is the very essence – or being or character or the "sum total" – of a person. In this one word, Mary reveals that all of her is committed to the Lord. The sum and substance of her life was to worship God in all of His Majesty!

If we want to study the smallest particle of God's creation we put it under a microscope to magnify it. This enlarges, or expands, every detail of the particle so we can discover its intricacies, its subtleties, and its structure. Mary was determined to put God under her "microscope" so she could understand Him personally, intimately, and completely.

In her "song" she magnified her Lord – not her Son. Often we become overly concerned about the way our children look rather than what they look at. Not so with Mary. She recognized her responsibility as a mother and knew that if God were first in her life, He would be first in her child's life. She had her priorities right.

God entrusted Mary with the Messiah because He was at the center of her life and knew that her Son would be nurtured in what matters most in the life of a child: knowing, understanding and following His will.

Prayer: We ask, Lord, that all mothers everywhere will recognize the importance of being a mother and the trust You place in them to raise children to know You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Luke 1:46-55 "My soul magnifies the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.

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2019 Groton SD Community Events

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)
- 04/26/2020 Father/Daughter dance.
- 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

Christmas typhoon leaves 20 dead in Philippines

By **JIM GOMEZ** Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — A strong typhoon that barreled through the central Philippines left at least 20 people dead and forced thousands to flee their homes, devastating Christmas celebrations in the predominantly Catholic country.

Typhoon Phanfone stranded many people in sea and airports at the peak of holiday travel, set off landslides, flooded low-lying villages, destroyed houses, downed trees and electrical poles and knocked out power in entire provinces. One disaster response officer described the battered coastal town of Bataad in Iloilo province as a “ghost town” on Christmas Day.

“You can’t see anybody because there was a total blackout, you can’t hear anything. The town looked like a ghost town,” Cindy Ferrer of the regional Office of the Civil Defense said by phone.

The storm weakened slightly on Thursday as it blew into the South China Sea with sustained winds of 120 kilometers (74 miles) per hour and gusts of 150 kph (93 mph) after lashing island after island with fierce winds and pounding rain on Christmas Day, the weather agency said.

Most of the 20 deaths reported by national police and local officials were due to drowning, falling trees and accidental electrocution.

A father, his three children and another relative were among those missing in hard-hit Iloilo province after a swollen river inundated their shanty, officials said.

The typhoon slammed into Eastern Samar province on Christmas Eve and then plowed across the archipelago’s central region on Christmas, slamming into seven coastal towns and island provinces without losing power, government forecasters said.

Provincial officials, army troops, police and volunteers spent Christmas away from home to tend to thousands of displaced residents in town gymnasiums and schools turned into emergency shelters. Many more people spent Christmas Eve, traditionally a time for family reunions, in bus terminals.

More than 25,000 people were stranded in sea ports across the central region and outlying provinces after the coast guard prohibited ferries and cargo ships from venturing into dangerously choppy waters. Dozens of international and domestic flights to and from the region were canceled, including to popular beach and surfing resorts.

About 20 typhoons and storms batter the Philippines each year. The Southeast Asian nation is also located in the Pacific “Ring of Fire,” where earthquakes and volcanic eruptions often occur, making the country of more than 100 million people one of the world’s most disaster prone.

Phanfone, a Laotian word for animal, traveled along a path similar to that of Typhoon Haiyan, one of the most ferocious storms on record, which left more than 7,300 people dead and missing, flattened entire villages, swept ships inland and displaced more than 5 million people in the central Philippines in 2013.

Israeli lawmaker aims to oust Netanyahu in Likud primary

By **TIA GOLDENBERG** Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel’s governing Likud party was holding a primary vote on Thursday in the first serious internal challenge to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in his more than a decade in power.

Veteran politician Gideon Saar hopes to unseat Netanyahu, arguing that he will be better placed to form a government in national elections in March after Netanyahu failed to do so in two repeat elections this year.

Despite the shadow of corruption indictments hanging over him, Netanyahu remains popular among Likud members and the fiercely loyal party — which has only had four leaders since its inception in the 1970s — has stood firmly behind the long-serving leader. He is expected to defeat Saar handily and a win could strengthen his hand going into the next national vote.

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"For years I have been working for you for the sake of our beloved country. Now I am asking for your support," Netanyahu wrote on Facebook. "A big victory for me in the primaries will ensure a huge victory in the Knesset elections."

Saar, who has garnered support from a handful of Likud backbenchers, had seen a bump in support in the lead-up to the vote and he could benefit from stormy weather that may keep turnout low. If he wins, he would become Likud's candidate for prime minister in the March polls.

"We can win today, to set forth on a new path that will allow us to form a strong and stable government, that will allow us to unite the people of Israel which is probably the most important thing right now," Saar told reporters.

Netanyahu has portrayed Saar as inexperienced, while depicting himself as a security buff and master of international diplomacy. In what was seen as an embarrassment at a critical moment a day before the primary, Netanyahu was rushed off stage after a rocket was fired from Gaza, setting off an air raid siren, at a campaign rally in the southern city of Ashkelon on Wednesday. A similar incident happened in September when Netanyahu was in the nearby city of Ashdod campaigning for the second general Israeli election of the year.

The polls close at 11 p.m. and results are expected early Friday.

Netanyahu faces charges of bribery, fraud and breach of trust in three corruption cases in which he is accused of trading legislative or regulatory favors in exchange for lavish gifts or favorable media coverage. He denies wrongdoing and has waged an angry campaign against the media and law enforcement officials he said are bent on ousting him from office. His supporters have tried to paint Saar as part of the same conspiracy.

The indictments against Netanyahu came amid months of political deadlock in Israel, which after two inconclusive elections is headed toward a third unprecedented national vote in less than a year.

Netanyahu's main rival, former military chief Benny Gantz was also unable to form a government and while the two professed eagerness to form a unity government, they differed on its composition and who would lead it, deepening the stalemate.

Recent polls show that with Saar as leader, Likud would make a more powerful bloc with its natural ultra-Orthodox and nationalist allies. Saar would also be in an easier position to create a national unity government with the centrist Blue and White party if, as expected, the upcoming March election produces a deadlock like the previous two rounds have.

Indonesia, Thailand mark 15th anniversary of massive tsunami

By YAYAN ZAMZAMI and NINIEK KARMINI Associated Press

BANDA ACEH, Indonesia (AP) — Thousands of people knelt in prayer in Indonesia's Aceh province at ceremonies Thursday marking the 15th anniversary of the Indian Ocean tsunami, one of modern history's worst natural disasters.

The massive Dec. 26, 2004, tsunami was triggered by a magnitude 9.1 earthquake off Sumatra island. The giant wall of water killed about 230,000 people in a dozen countries as far away as East Africa. Indonesia's Aceh province, which was closest to the earthquake, was hit first and hardest.

More than 170,000 people died in Indonesia alone, about three-quarters of the overall death toll.

"No words can describe our feelings when we tearfully saw thousands of corpses lying on this ground 15 years ago," acting Aceh Gov. Nova Iriansyah said at a ceremony in Sigli, a town in Pidie district, "And now, we can see how people in Aceh were able to overcome suffering and rise again, thanks to assistance from all Indonesians and from people all over the world."

Weeping survivors and others attended religious services and memorial ceremonies. Relatives of the dead and religious and community leaders presented flowers at mass graves of victims in the provincial capital, Banda Aceh.

Shops and offices were closed, boats were not allowed to sail and flags were being flown at half staff throughout Aceh on Thursday and Friday.

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Disaster-prone Indonesia, a vast archipelago of more than 17,000 islands that is home to 260 million people, lies along the "Ring of Fire," an arc of volcanoes and fault lines in the Pacific Basin.

Thursday's commemoration came four days after the anniversary of last year's Sunda Strait tsunami, which followed the eruption and partial collapse of the Anak Krakatau volcano. That tsunami struck coastal regions of Banten on Indonesia's main island of Java and parts of southern Sumatra island, leaving more than 400 people dead and 14,000 injured.

In Thailand, hundreds of people attended a tsunami memorial ceremony at Ban Nam Khem, a small fishing village that lost about half of its population of 5,000 when the waves rolled in.

More than 8,000 people in Thailand died or went missing in the disaster, and the bodies of almost 400 victims remain unidentified and unclaimed.

Western visitors and local residents attended the service at the Ban Nam Khem Tsunami Memorial Park in Phang Nga province, where they viewed a photo display of victims. A Thai woman handed over an offering of food for Buddhist monks presiding over the proceedings.

The lucrative tourist industry centered around the island of Phuket was devastated by the disaster — as many as half of the victims were foreigners — but quickly bounced back and has grown much bigger.

Many local residents had their houses rebuilt and jobs restored, but still have to cope with the loss of friends and family.

Niwan Chantharawong left a floral offering at a commemorative wall in Ban Nam Khem. She recalled the horror of losing two children in the tragedy.

"I think they didn't die on the day that the tsunami hit. We couldn't find them until the 28th and their bodies hadn't decomposed at all," she told Thai PBS television, with tears welling up. "I often imagine how much they would have thought about me before taking their last breaths. But we could not find them, and we couldn't help them. This has stuck with me. And every time I think about it, it hurts."

Officially, there are between 8,200 and 8,300 dead in Thailand, but about a third of that total are missing, with no confirmation of their fate. An unknown number of bodies were swept out to sea, and the ad hoc evacuation of foreign tourists meant that at least some survivors were never accounted for. Also unclear was what happened to thousands of undocumented workers from Myanmar who did low-wage labor in the area, coming from poor, remote areas with little way to plug into the effort to account for casualties.

According to police Col. Kittipong Thongthip, there are 394 unclaimed bodies at the Bang Maruan tsunami victim cemetery in Phang Nga, where white gravestones are marked with numbers, not names.

Kittipong, who as local police chief oversees the cemetery, said 25 bodies had been confirmed to be migrant workers from Myanmar, but could not be further identified. There are no clues as to the identities of the other 369.

"I don't think we will be able to prove who those bodies are," he said by phone. "It's 15 years now and nobody comes to see their missing loved ones here anymore."

Karmini reported from Jakarta, Indonesia. Associated Press writer Busaba Sivasomboon in Bangkok contributed to this report.

Thousands in Asia marvel at 'ring of fire' solar eclipse

BANDA ACEH, Indonesia (AP) — People along a swath of southern Asia gazed at the sky in marvel on Thursday at a "ring of fire" solar eclipse.

The so-called annular eclipse, in which a thin outer ring of the sun is still visible, could be seen along a path stretching from India and Pakistan to Thailand and Indonesia.

Authorities in Indonesia provided telescopes and hundreds of special glasses to protect viewers' eyes. Thousands of people gazed at the sky and cheered and clapped as the sun transformed into a dark orb for more than two minutes, briefly plunging the sky into darkness. Hundreds of others prayed at nearby mosques.

"How amazing to see the ring of fire when the sun disappeared slowly," said Firman Syahrizal, a resident

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of Sinabang in Indonesia's Banda Aceh province who witnessed the eclipse with his family. The previous annular solar eclipse in February 2017 was also visible over a slice of Indonesia.

West Coast fishery rebounds in rare conservation 'home run'

By GILLIAN FLACCUS Associated Press

WARRENTON, Ore. (AP) — A rare environmental success story is unfolding in waters off the U.S. West Coast.

After years of fear and uncertainty, bottom trawler fishermen — those who use nets to catch rockfish, bocaccio, sole, Pacific Ocean perch and other deep-dwelling fish — are making a comeback here, reinventing themselves as a sustainable industry less than two decades after authorities closed huge stretches of the Pacific Ocean because of the species' depletion.

The ban devastated fishermen, but on Jan. 1, regulators will reopen an area roughly three times the size of Rhode Island off Oregon and California to groundfish bottom trawling — all with the approval of environmental groups that were once the industry's biggest foes.

The rapid turnaround is made even more unique by the collaboration between the fishermen and environmentalists who spent years refining a long-term fishing plan that will continue to resuscitate the groundfish industry while permanently protecting thousands of square miles of reefs and coral beds that benefit the overfished species.

Now, the fishermen who see their livelihood returning must solve another piece of the puzzle: drumming up consumer demand for fish that haven't been in grocery stores or on menus for a generation.

"It's really a conservation home run," said Shems Jud, regional director for the Environmental Defense Fund's ocean program. "The recovery is decades ahead of schedule. It's the biggest environmental story that no one knows about."

The process also netted a win for conservationists concerned about the future of extreme deepwater habitats where bottom trawlers currently don't go. A tract of ocean the size of New Mexico with waters up to 2.1 miles (3.4 kilometers) deep will be off-limits to bottom-trawling to protect deep-sea corals and sponges just now being discovered.

"Not all fishermen are rapers of the environment. When you hear the word 'trawler,' very often that's associated with destruction of the sea and pillaging," said Kevin Dunn, whose trawler Iron Lady was featured in a Whole Foods television commercial about sustainable fishing.

Groundfish is a catch-all term that refers to dozens of species that live on, or near, the bottom of the Pacific off the West Coast. Trawling vessels drag weighted nets to scoop up as many fish as possible, but that can also damage critical rocky underwater habitat.

The groundfish fishery hasn't always struggled. Starting in 1976, the federal government subsidized the construction of domestic fishing vessels to lock down U.S. interests in West Coast waters, and by the 1980s, that investment paid off. Bottom trawling was booming, with 500 vessels in California, Oregon and Washington hauling in 200 million pounds (91 million kilograms) of non-whiting groundfish a year. Unlike Dungeness crab and salmon, groundfish could be harvested year-round, providing an economic backbone for ports.

But in the late 1990s, scientists began to sound the alarm about dwindling fish stocks.

Just nine of the more than 90 groundfish species were in trouble, but because of the way bottom trawlers fished — indiscriminately hauling up millions of pounds of whatever their nets encountered — regulators began to all bottom trawling. Multiple species of rockfish, slow-growing creatures with spiny fins and colorful names like canary, darkspotted and yellow eye, were the hardest hit.

By 2005, trawlers brought in just one-quarter of the haul of the 1980s. The fleet is now down to 75 boats, said Brad Pettinger, former director of the Oregon Trawl Commission who was key in developing the plan to reopen fishing grounds.

"We really wiped out the industry for a number of years," Pettinger said. "To get those things up and going again is not easy."

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In 2011, trawlers were assigned quotas for how many of each species they could catch. If they went over, they had to buy quota from other fishermen in a system reminiscent of a carbon cap-and-trade model. Mandatory independent observers, paid by the trawlers, accompanied the vessels and hand-counted their haul.

Fishermen quickly learned to avoid areas heavy in off-limits species and began innovating to net fewer banned fish.

Surveys soon showed groundfish rebounding — in some cases, 50 years faster than predicted — and accidental trawling of overfished species fell by 80%. The Marine Stewardship Council certified 13 species in the fishery as sustainable in 2014, and five more followed last year.

As the quota system's success became apparent, environmentalists and trawlers began to talk. Regulators would soon revisit the trawling rules, and the two sides wanted a voice.

They met more than 30 times, slowly building trust as they crafted a proposal. Trawlers brought maps developed over generations, alerted environmentalists to reefs they didn't know about, and even shared proprietary tow paths.

"All we could do on our end is make a good-faith offer, and I really credit the guys in the industry for taking that up," said Seth Atkinson, an attorney with the nonprofit Natural Resources Defense Council. "These were tough compromises."

Last year, regulators approved a plan to reopen the 17-year-old Rockfish Conservation Area off Oregon and California, while banning future trawling in extreme-depth waters and making off-limits some habitat dubbed essential to fish reproduction, including a large area off Southern California.

"A fair number of fishermen thought it was a good deal and if it was going to happen, it was better for them to participate than not," said Tom Libby, a fish processor who was instrumental in crafting the agreement. "It's right up there with the best and most rewarding things in my career — and I've been at it 50 years."

Some groups, like Oceana, wanted even more protections from bottom trawling, which it calls the "most damaging fishing method to seafloor habitats off the West Coast." In a news release, the group emphasized that the agreement it did get safeguards 90 percent of the seafloor in U.S. waters off the West Coast.

Even so, with fragile species rebounding, trawlers could harvest as much as 120 million pounds (54 million kilograms) a year, but there's only demand for about half that much. That's because groundfish have been replaced in stores by farmed, foreign species like tilapia.

A trade association called Positively Groundfish is trying to change that by touring food festivals and culinary trade shows, evangelizing to chefs and seafood buyers about the industry's rebound and newfound sustainability. They give out samples, too.

"We are treating this almost like a new product for which you have to build awareness — but we do have a great story," said Jana Hennig, the association's executive director. "People are so surprised to hear that not everything is lost, that not everything is doom and gloom, but that it's possible that you can manage a fishery so well that it actually bounces back to abundance."

Follow Flaccus on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/gflaccus>

Election officials learn military mindset ahead of 2020 vote

By CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY Associated Press

SPRINGFIELD, Va. (AP) — Inside a hotel ballroom near the nation's capital, a U.S. Army officer with battlefield experience told 120 state and local election officials that they may have more in common with the military strategists than they might think.

These government officials are on the front lines of a different kind of high-stakes battlefield — one in which they are helping to defend American democracy by ensuring free and fair elections.

"Everyone in this room is part of a bigger effort, and it's only together are we going to get through this," the officer said.

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That officer and other past and present national security leaders had a critical message to convey to officials from 24 states gathered for a recent training held by a Harvard-affiliated democracy project: They are the linchpins in efforts to defend U.S. elections from an attack by Russia, China or other foreign threats, and developing a military mindset will help them protect the integrity of the vote.

The need for such training reflects how elections security worries have heightened in the aftermath of the 2016 election, when Russian military agents targeted voting systems across the country as part of a multi-pronged effort to influence the presidential election. Until then, the job of local election officials could have been described as something akin to a wedding planner who keeps track of who will be showing up on Election Day and ensures all the equipment and supplies are in place and ready to go.

Now, these officials are on the front lines. The federal government will be on high alert, gathering intelligence and scanning systems for suspicious cyber activity as they look to defend the nation's elections. Meanwhile, it will be the state and county officials who will be on the ground charged with identifying and dealing with any hostile acts.

"It's another level of war," said Jesse Salinas, the chief elections official in Yolo County, California, who attended the training. "You only attack things that you feel are a threat to you, and our democracy is a threat to a lot of these nation-states that are getting involved trying to undermine it. We have to fight back, and we have to prepare."

Salinas brought four of his employees with him to the training, which was part of the Defending Digital Democracy project based at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at the Harvard Kennedy School. The group has been working actively with former and current military, national security, political and communications experts — many of whom dedicate their time after work and on weekends — to develop training and manuals for state and local election officials. Those involved with leading the training asked for anonymity because of their sensitive positions.

The project's latest playbook focuses on bringing military best practices to running Election Day operations, encouraging state and local election officials to adopt a "battle staff" command structure with clear roles and responsibilities and standard operating procedures for dealing with minor issues. The project is also providing officials with a free state-of-the-art incident tracking system.

Eric Rosenbach, co-director of the Belfer Center and a former U.S. Army intelligence officer who served as chief of staff to Defense Secretary Ash Carter in the Obama administration, told the group gathered for the training that it "shouldn't be lost on you that this is a very military-like model."

"Let's be honest about it," Rosenbach said. "If democracy is under attack and you guys are the ones at the pointy end of the spear, why shouldn't we train that way? Why shouldn't we try to give you the help that comes with that model and try to build you up and do all we can?"

Instructors stressed the need for election officials to be on the lookout for efforts to disrupt the vote and ensure that communications are flowing up from counties to the state, down from states to the counties, as well as up and down to the federal government and across states.

Piecing together seemingly disparate actions happening in real-time across geographical locations will allow the nation to defend itself, said Robby Mook, Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton's campaign manager in 2016. Mook co-founded the Defending Digital Democracy project with Matt Rhoades, Republican nominee Mitt Romney's 2012 campaign manager.

"Find a way to input data in a consistent, efficient and reliable way to ensure you know what is going on and prevents things from falling through the cracks," Mook told the election officials. "You got to rise above just putting out fires."

At the training were officials from California, Colorado, Georgia, North Carolina, Oregon, Tennessee, West Virginia and other states. In one exercise, election officials were paired up as either a state or county under an Election Day scenario, charged with logging incidents and trying to piece together what turned out to be four different coordinated campaigns to disrupt voting.

"One of the big takeaways was just how the lack of one piece of information moving up from the counties to the state or moving from the states to counties, if either of those things don't happen, it can have a significant impact," said Stephen Trout, elections director for Oregon.

Trout said he would move quickly to acquire, customize and implement the incident tracking system, which would be an upgrade from the paper process currently in use. Dave Tackett, chief information officer for the West Virginia Secretary of State's Office, said he will recommend some structuring changes at his state operations center, including bringing key personnel into the room and incorporating elements of the incident tracking system like mapping and the ability to assign individuals to specific incidents.

"Events like today are helping us zero in on how to structure ourselves better, how to really think in a different mindset so that we can carry out all the different tasks that have to be done with elections," said Karen Brinson Bell, executive director of the North Carolina Board of Elections. "(It's) the importance of communications, the importance of having standard operating procedures in place so all the i's are dotted and the t's crossed ahead of time and you are prepared for the unknown."

Follow Christina Almeida Cassidy on Twitter at http://twitter.com/AP_Christina.

Election officials learn military mindset ahead of 2020 vote

By **CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY** Associated Press

SPRINGFIELD, Va. (AP) — Inside a hotel ballroom near the nation's capital, a U.S. Army officer with battlefield experience told 120 state and local election officials that they may have more in common with the military strategists than they might think.

These government officials are on the front lines of a different kind of high-stakes battlefield — one in which they are helping to defend American democracy by ensuring free and fair elections.

"Everyone in this room is part of a bigger effort, and it's only together are we going to get through this," the officer said.

That officer and other past and present national security leaders had a critical message to convey to officials from 24 states gathered for a recent training held by a Harvard-affiliated democracy project: They are the linchpins in efforts to defend U.S. elections from an attack by Russia, China or other foreign threats, and developing a military mindset will help them protect the integrity of the vote.

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Rwanda avoids US-style opioids crisis by making own morphine

By CARA ANNA and CLAIRE GALOFARO Associated Press

BUSHEKELI, Rwanda (AP) — It was something, the silence. Nothing but the puff of her breath and the scuff of her slip-on shoes as Madeleine Mukantagara walked through the fields to her first patient of the day. Piercing cries once echoed down the hill to the road below. What she carried in her bag had calmed them.

For 15 years, her patient Vestine Uwizeyimana had been in unrelenting pain as disease wore away her spine. She could no longer walk and could barely turn over in bed. Her life narrowed to a small, dark room with a dirt-floor in rural Rwanda, prayer beads hanging on the wall by her side.

A year ago, relief came in the form of liquid morphine, locally produced as part of Rwanda's groundbreaking effort to address one of the world's great inequities: As thousands die from addiction in rich countries awash with prescription painkillers, millions of people writhe in agony in the poorest nations with no access to opioids at all.

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Companies don't make money selling cheap, generic morphine to the poor and dying, and most people in sub-Saharan Africa cannot afford the expensive formulations like oxycodone and fentanyl, prescribed so abundantly in richer nations that thousands became addicted to them.

Rwanda's answer: plastic bottles of morphine, produced for pennies and delivered to homes across the country by community health workers like Mukantagara. It is proof, advocates say, that the opioid trade doesn't have to be guided by how much money can be made.

"Without this medicine I think I would die," said Uwizeyimana, 22.

____ This story was produced with support from the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting. ____

When Mukantagara arrived, she smiled.

The small-scale production of liquid morphine that began in neighboring Uganda years ago is now being taken significantly further in Rwanda. It aims to be the first low- or middle-income country to make palliative care -- or the easing of pain from life-threatening illness -- available to all citizens, and for free.

As a palliative care worker, Mukantagara has long been a witness to death. She watched her sister die of cancer decades ago, in agony without relief.

The 56-year-old nurse settled on the edge of Uwizeyimana's bed, and they began with prayer. Uwizeyimana was feeling better. "Now I think everything is possible," she said. They held hands and prayed again, in whispers. Uwizeyimana closed her eyes.

As her visitors left Uwizeyimana blessed them, wishing for them what she might never have herself. May you get married, if you are not, she said. May you have children.

"It is hard to estimate how long someone will live," Mukantagara said, walking away. Uwizeyimana is not the youngest among the 70 patients she sees. Many have cancer. Some have HIV. A few have both.

She attends patients' funerals and thanks grieving families for their care. To relax, she sings in her church choir, and in her office by the hospital chapel she hums along with the hymns. A psychologist colleague offers her counseling.

The work is never easy, she said. But with morphine, at least, there is a chance for death with dignity.

Twenty-five years ago, the killing of some 800,000 ethnic Tutsis and moderate ethnic Hutus left this small country with an intimate knowledge of pain. Those who survived, struggled to recover from ghastly machete wounds and the cruelest of amputations.

With the health system shattered, there was little to ease the agony.

As Rwanda rebuilt itself, resilience was essential. Pain was to be endured, ideally without showing suffering; if you did, some said, you were not strong.

But medical advances meant more people were living into old age and facing diseases such as cancer. Some thought their pain was punishment from God for past sins, recalled Dr. Christian Ntuzimira, one of Rwanda's most outspoken advocates for palliative care. At the same time, health workers treating Rwandans in the late stages of AIDS pleaded for a way to ease their pain.

Many doctors were ignorant of morphine or scared to use it. When Ntuzimira was hesitant to prescribe it, early in his career, a mother fell to her knees in front of him and pleaded for mercy for her son. Ntuzimira was ashamed.

"I went home and questioned myself: 'Why study so many years if I can't help someone in pain?'" he recalled. "I didn't sleep that night."

In much of the world, the use of opioids was exploding. Consumption has tripled since 1997, according to the International Narcotics Control Board. But the increase was in expensive formulations that are profitable for pharmaceutical companies, according to an AP analysis of INCB data. The use of morphine, the cheapest and most reliable painkiller, stagnated.

Administration of morphine for hospice patients is undisputed -- in 2016, when the U.S. Centers for Disease Control called on doctors to cut back on the flood of opioid prescriptions that fed the addiction crisis, it specifically exempted end-of-life patients.

But a dying person will only be a customer a few months and will not bolster the pharmaceutical indus-

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try's profits, critics say. The problem in the United States took hold when companies began campaigning to prescribe opioids for patients suffering from chronic conditions like back pain and osteoarthritis -- prospective customers for decades, said Dr. Anna Lembke, a Stanford University professor who wrote a book about how well-meaning American doctors helped facilitate the crisis and has been a witness against pharmaceutical companies.

The campaign changed the culture of opioid prescribing for a generation of doctors: The prescription rate quadrupled between 1999 and 2010. The INCB reported that some 90 percent of opioids are now consumed by the richest nations, where just 17% of people live, primarily the U.S., Canada, Western Europe and Australia.

A major study by the Lancet Commission on Global Access to Palliative Care and Pain Relief recently described the inequality between rich and poor countries as a "broad and deep abyss."

The study estimates it would cost only \$145 million a year to provide enough morphine to ease end-of-life suffering around the globe, yet millions still suffer without pain medication in the poorest places.

"Pain is a torture," said Diane Mukasahaha, Rwanda's national coordinator of palliative care. She described patients without morphine who were near starvation because they couldn't bear to eat. "People should have medication like an American person. We all are human beings. The body is the same."

Stefano Berterame, chief of the narcotic control for the INCB secretariat, said the agency has implored pharmaceutical companies to help.

Commercially made morphine is on average nearly six times more expensive in many low- and middle-income countries than it is in wealthy ones, the INCB has reported, and the price varies wildly from place to place. Experts attribute it in part to small countries with low opioid consumption lacking the negotiating power to import drugs at bulk prices, particularly for controlled narcotics that require international authorizations that tack on cost. Studies have shown that in some countries, a 30-day supply of morphine costs the equivalent of 40 days of minimum wage work.

In 2013, Stephen Connor, executive director of the Worldwide Hospice Palliative Care Alliance, made a list of all the companies that make opioids and invited them to attend a conference. It was a chance, he said, to discuss how they could help address the crushing need for end-of-life pain treatment by producing morphine as a social good.

Of more than 100 companies invited, only five came -- and none of the American companies that mass-market opioids.

And so a growing number of African countries -- Rwanda, Kenya, Malawi -- began to make and distribute morphine on their own, usually in a nonprofit and government collaboration. They looked to Uganda, where the nonprofit Hospice Africa Uganda was making liquid morphine from powder in a process so basic the solution was mixed for nearly two decades at a kitchen sink.

The Ugandan operation, though much praised, remains limited in reach. Its existence outside the government health system is precarious, relying so much on donor support that it nearly shut down this year, founder Dr. Anne Merriman said.

By putting morphine production and distribution under strict government control and covering the costs for patients, Rwanda has quietly become the new model for Africa. The liquid is produced from imported powder three times a week, about 200 bottles at a time, in a single room where a handful of workers in protective scrubs are checked before leaving to prevent the drug being smuggled out, said Richard Niwenshuti Gatera, a pharmacist and director of the production facility.

Before Rwanda's morphine production began in 2014, Gatera watched his aunt make a 12-hour journey by bus to Uganda to obtain the drug. If none was available, she would return home, wait a while and set out again. Last year she died, peacefully, while taking the Rwanda-made drug, he said.

Like all opioids, liquid morphine can be abused, and can be addictive. But the government has direct control over the supply to prevent what happened in the United States, where drug distributors shipped millions of pills to pharmacies in tiny towns, quantities far outside justifiable medical need, said Meg O'Brien, whose Treat the Pain organization helps poor nations produce morphine. The drug is reserved for the sickest people. Only the supplier of morphine powder makes money, so there is no mass

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marketing effort to expand sales.

The bottles of liquid morphine are distributed to hospitals and pharmacies, where they are kept under lock and key until community workers like Mukantagara retrieve them. Then they are carried to the homes of the suffering even in some of Rwanda's most rural areas, along footpaths between rolling bean fields and banana plants.

Mukantagara arrived at the bedside of 89-year-old Athanasie Nyirangirababyeyi. She lives on a mattress in her son's home, sleeping under a poster of Jesus and the words of Psalm 23 — "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want" — though she never learned to read. She has been sick for five years and has taken liquid morphine for three.

"With pain relief I can eat. I can go outside," Nyirangirababyeyi said. "I can greet my neighbors. I can walk slowly, slowly and go to church."

But fear and confusion surrounding opioids persists.

Opioids are among the most addictive drugs on the planet, and many doctors and bureaucrats in the developing world have long hesitated to import or prescribe them. Cost, onerous regulations and cultural aversion have made it harder for patients in the poorest countries to find relief.

Dr. Zipporah Ali, executive director of the Kenya Hospices and Palliative Care Association, said she and colleagues toured the country and were shocked to find expired opioids sitting on shelves in health facilities while patients screamed in pain. After watching her brother die of leukemia without painkillers, she now works with Kenya's government to get locally made liquid morphine into hospitals.

Even in Rwanda, doctors at first were hesitant to prescribe morphine for Ange Mucyo Izere, a 6-year-old girl who is undergoing chemotherapy for bone cancer.

"She was not able to sleep, talk, pray," said her mother, Joselyne Mukanyabyenda.

The girl began sipping doses of the liquid morphine in October and has been transformed. She took a visitor's smartphone and began snapping photos, then struck poses for a camera.

"I miss school. I miss my friends," she said. If the chemotherapy helps, she is expected to return to class.

There have been no reports of abuse from nurses across the country, said Mukasahaha, the nation's palliative care director.

The health workers who prescribe morphine, including nurses and midwives, are taught to differentiate between chronic life-limiting diseases, which can be treated with morphine, and chronic pain, which cannot, at least without risk.

It is a key distinction. Critics say for-profit drug makers have blurred that line, seizing on the good intentions of hospice advocacy to market opioids to patients with common chronic conditions. It is hard for people to tell now when opioids are appropriate and when the risks outweigh the benefits, said Lukas Radbruch, a German doctor and professor of palliative medicine.

"What makes me mad is the confusion this causes," he said. "If you would have asked me two years ago, I would say we're steadily improving. But now I'm really afraid that the crisis in the U.S. is triggering a backlash which leads to rapid deterioration of the global situation."

Earlier this year, the World Health Organization rescinded guidelines that sought to expand opioid access after U.S. lawmakers alleged they were corrupted by Purdue Pharma, the maker of OxyContin.

The congressional investigation found that organizations and people with financial ties to the company had a role in crafting the 2011 document, which stated addiction occurs in less than 1% of patients -- a common marketing claim of the pharmaceutical industry that has been repeatedly debunked. The National Institute on Drug Abuse estimates that up to 29% of patients prescribed opioids for chronic pain misuse them and up to 12% develop addiction.

Rep. Katherine Clark, D-Massachusetts, who authored the report, said she understands the need to address the global scourge of untreated pain. But she said the international health community cannot turn the reins over to the for-profit pharmaceutical industry that is already widely blamed for causing one epidemic.

Purdue wrote in a statement that the report is "riddled with inaccuracies," and the company denies

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influencing the documents. The statement maintained that the marketing of OxyContin was in line with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's approved labeling and that Purdue always complied with the agency's orders to update labels or enhance warnings "to maximize patient safety." Decisions about when to prescribe opioids, the company said, should be up to doctors and their patients.

Dr. Gilles Forte, coordinator of the WHO's essential medicines department, said the agency is putting together a panel to write new guidelines that will include a more detailed accounting of the latest scientific evidence about the risks of opioids and the cause and consequences of the American epidemic. He said they took the congresswoman's allegations seriously but found no evidence the guidelines were tainted by pharmaceutical interests.

In the meantime, poor nations don't know what to do, said Liliana De Lima, executive director of the International Association for Hospice and Palliative Care. The whole world now seems concerned about people suffering and dying from opioid addiction, she said, but not about people suffering and dying in agony without opioids.

"I asked myself, when do patients lose dignity? she said. "It's not just about how long you live. It's about how well you live until you die."

Most countries in the developing world continue to look to for-profit companies for pain relief. It is an inherently broken model, De Lima said, because companies are only interested in selling drugs they can profit from, so the neediest people in agony will never get what they need.

Rwanda offers an alternative, and hope.

The drive to provide homemade morphine is spreading across Africa, though slowly: Twenty-two of the continent's 54 countries now have affordable liquid morphine, according to Hospice Africa Uganda. Use is still badly limited by poor logistics and lack of funding.

Rwanda aimed to reach everyone who needs palliative care by 2020. But as the new year approaches, not everyone receives home visits by community health workers, Mukasahaha said. The training of those workers, thousands in all, goes on.

At a rural home near Lake Kivu, Mukantagara carried a bottle to 52-year-old Faina Nyirabaguiza, who has cancer. Each of her movements signaled pain. She walked slowly. She settled on a wooden bench and folded over herself, rubbing her wrist with her thumb.

Mukantagara increased her morphine dosage on the spot. She poured the green liquid into the bottle cap. Nyirabaguiza drank three, one after another.

"Maybe it will help me," she said, her eyes fixed on a spot in the distance. "My wish is to die. Really, I'm suffering."

Nyirabaguiza closed her eyes and prayed. Mukantagara's hand was on her back, soothing.

On the nurse's ride back to the hospital, her vehicle passed a pickup truck with a coffin in the back. Women ran alongside it, down the winding road, and sang.

The Global Opioids project can be seen here. <https://www.apnews.com/GlobalOpioids>

Israeli PM evacuated from rally after rocket fired from Gaza

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel said a rocket was fired from the Gaza Strip into its southern territory Wednesday, forcing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to be hustled from a stage during an election rally in the city of Ashkelon.

The Israeli military said its air defense system, known as Iron Dome, intercepted the rocket. There were no reports of casualties.

The Israeli newspaper Haaretz posted a video on its website showing Netanyahu being taken to a shelter as he was campaigning hours before the primaries of his Likud party. The video showed Netanyahu and his wife slowly walking off the stage with security guards after sirens went off.

Early Thursday, Israeli fighter jets and helicopters carried out multiple strikes at three military bases for Hamas, the Islamic movement that rules Gaza, according to witnesses in Gaza. No casualties were

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reported as the sites have been empty.

There was no immediate comment from Israel's military.

Netanyahu says he knows how to protect Israel, but opponents accuse him of being soft on handling threats from Gaza.

Gideon Saar, Netanyahu's challenger in Thursday elections, called in a Twitter statement for a "broad national consensus for dismantling the military infrastructure" of Palestinian militant groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

A similar incident happened in September when Netanyahu was in the nearby city of Ashdod. He was campaigning then for the second general Israeli election of the year. That was believed to have triggered Israel's targeted killing of a senior commander in the Islamic Jihad in November. Israel and Gaza militants had their worst round of fighting in months as a result.

No Palestinian group claimed responsibility for Wednesday's attack. Such sporadic launches of rockets and ensuing Israeli airstrikes have happened frequently despite an Egyptian-brokered cease-fire that ended two days of fighting in November.

Hamas seeks "understandings" with Israel to alleviate Gaza's economic and humanitarian crises. The militant group stayed on the sidelines during the November flare-up.

Reenactment of Washington's crossing of Delaware completed

WASHINGTON CROSSING, Pa. (AP) — Thousands turned out Wednesday to watch the annual reenactment of George Washington's daring Christmas Day crossing of the Delaware River in 1776 — the first time the crossing was completed in three years.

The event was scrapped because of bad weather the last two years, but historical interpreter Nancy O'Leary said at Washington Crossing Historical Park that the conditions this year "couldn't be better."

"We had lovely weather, and we probably had record attendance," said Jennifer Martin, executive director of the Friends of Washington Crossing Park. She estimated that 4,500 to 5,000 people were watching the event, the highlight of a historical reenactment that draws people to the banks of the river in Washington Crossing, Pennsylvania, and Titusville, New Jersey.

Other activities include Washington's address to his troops, historical speeches and processions, and staff in period clothing providing public interpretation.

Last year, high water conditions scuttled plans for the crossing in the wooden Durham boats. The year before, high winds prompted cancellation of the event.

In the original crossing, boats ferried 2,400 soldiers, 200 horses and 18 cannons across the river. Washington's troops marched 8 miles (13 kilometers) downriver before battling Hessian mercenaries in the streets of Trenton. Thirty Hessians were killed, and two Continental soldiers froze to death on the march.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Dec. 26, the 360th day of 2019. There are five days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 26, 1996, 6-year-old beauty queen JonBenet Ramsey was found beaten and strangled in the basement of her family's home in Boulder, Colorado. (To date, the slaying remains unsolved.)

On this date:

In 1799, former President George Washington was eulogized by Col. Henry Lee as "first in war, first in peace and first in the hearts of his countrymen."

In 1893, Chinese leader Mao Zedong was born in Hunan province.

In 1917, during World War I, President Woodrow Wilson issued a proclamation authorizing the government to take over operation of the nation's railroads.

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In 1944, during the World War II Battle of the Bulge, the embattled U.S. 101st Airborne Division in Bastogne (bas-TOHN'), Belgium, was relieved by units of the 4th Armored Division. Tennessee Williams' play "The Glass Menagerie" was first performed at the Civic Theatre in Chicago.

In 1947, heavy snow blanketed the Northeast, burying New York City under 26.4 inches of snow in 16 hours; the severe weather was blamed for some 80 deaths.

In 1980, Iranian television footage was broadcast in the United States, showing a dozen of the American hostages sending messages to their families.

In 1985, Ford Motor Company began selling its Taurus and Sable sedans and station wagons.

In 1994, French commandos stormed a hijacked Air France jetliner on the ground in Marseille, killing four Algerian hijackers and freeing 170 hostages.

In 2000, Michael McDermott, an employee at an internet firm in Wakefield, Massachusetts, shot and killed seven co-workers. (McDermott was later convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to life in prison without parole.) Veteran stage and screen actor Jason Robards died in Bridgeport, Connecticut, at age 78.

In 2003, An earthquake struck the historic Iranian city of Bam, killing at least 26,000 people. Three snowboarders were killed in an avalanche in Provo Canyon, Utah.

In 2004, more than 230,000 people, mostly in southern Asia, were killed by a 100-foot-high tsunami triggered by a 9.1-magnitude earthquake beneath the Indian Ocean.

In 2006, former President Gerald R. Ford died in Rancho Mirage, California, at age 93.

Ten years ago: A 23-year-old Nigerian man, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab (OO'-mahr fah-ROOK' ahb-DOOL'-moo-TAH'-lahb), who claimed to have ties to al-Qaida, was charged with trying to destroy a Detroit-bound airliner on Christmas Day. Buddhist monks chanted on white-sand beaches in Thailand and thousands prayed at mosques in Indonesia to mark the fifth anniversary of the Asian tsunami. Percy Sutton, the pioneering civil rights attorney who represented Malcolm X before launching successful careers as a political power broker and media mogul, died in New York at 89.

Five years ago: Mourners gathered to mark the 10th anniversary of the Indian Ocean tsunami. Russia identified NATO as the nation's No. 1 military threat under a new military doctrine signed by President Vladimir Putin. James B. Edwards, South Carolina's first Republican governor since Reconstruction and later energy secretary for two years in the Reagan administration, died at age 87.

One year ago: President Donald Trump made an unannounced trip to Iraq to meet with U.S. troops, landing at an airbase west of Baghdad after dark for a visit that lasted more than three hours. The Dow industrials posted their biggest-ever single-day point gain, surging more than 1,000 points higher; the market remained on track for its worst December since 1931. Serena Williams was voted The Associated Press Female Athlete of the Year for the fifth time, capping a year in which she reached the finals at Wimbledon and the U.S. Open after a remarkable return to tennis. Japan announced that it was leaving the International Whaling Commission in order to resume commercial whale hunts for the first time in 30 years, but said it would no longer go to the Antarctic for annual killings that had been harshly criticized.

Today's Birthdays: Rhythm-and-blues singer Abdul "Duke" Fakir (The Four Tops) is 84. Record producer (and convicted murderer) Phil Spector is 80. "America's Most Wanted" host John Walsh is 74. Country musician Bob Carpenter (The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band) is 73. Funk musician George Porter Jr. (The Meters) is 72. Baseball Hall of Fame catcher Carlton Fisk is 72. Retired MLB All-Star Chris Chambliss is 71. Baseball Hall of Famer Ozzie Smith is 65. Former Sen. Evan Bayh, D-Ind., is 64. Humorist David Sedaris is 63. Rock musician James Kottak (The Scorpions) is 57. Country musician Brian Westrum (Sons of the Desert) is 57. Rock musician Lars Ulrich (Metallica) is 56. Actress Nadia Dajani is 54. Rock musician J is 52. Country singer Audrey Wiggins is 52. Rock musician Peter Dinklage (Candlebox) is 51. Rock singer James Mercer (The Shins; Flake) is 49. Actor-singer Jared Leto is 48. Actress Kendra C. Johnson is 43. Rock singer Chris Daughtry is 40. Actress Beth Behrs is 34. Actor Kit Harington is 33. Actress Eden Sher is 28. Pop singer Jade Thirlwall (Little Mix Actor) is 27. Actor Zach Mills is 24.

Thought for Today: "Little progress can be made by merely attempting to repress what is evil. Our great hope lies in developing what is good." — President Calvin Coolidge (1872-1933).

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