

# Groton Daily Independent

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**We also can raise  
concrete with foam.  
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The advertisement features a dark blue header with white text. To the right of the header is a glowing '2020' graphic. Below the header is a photograph of a worker in a Santa suit on a yellow scissor lift applying white spray foam to a corrugated metal ceiling. To the right of the photo is contact information for Bahr Spray Foam, including a Facebook icon and a social media name. At the bottom right, there is a bold statement about raising concrete with foam and a 100% warranty.

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

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

## Thaler leads Tigers with 15 points in win over Britton-Hecla

The Groton Area girls' basketball team had a nine-point run in the first half and continued to pull away for a 42-22 Northeast Conference win over Britton-Hecla.

The game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Allied Climate Professionals, Blocker Construction, Groton Dairy Queen, Jark Real Estate, John Sieh Agency, Milbrandt Enterprises, Tyson DeHoet Trucking.

The game was tied twice early on before the Tigers took a 10-5 lead at the end of the first quarter and a 22-9 lead at half time. Groton Area led, 35-14, at the end of the third quarter.

Alyssa Thaler led the Tigers with 15 points, three rebounds, one assist and led the team in steals with five. Gracie Traphagen had nine points, 10 rebounds, two assists, one steal and block. Brooke Gengerke scored all nine of her points in the second half, was five of six from the line, had three assists and four steals. Kaycie Hawkins had six points, two rebounds, one assist and two steals. Madeline Flihs had two points, two rebounds and three steals. Alyssa Locke had one free throw, four rebounds, three assists and one steal. Trista Keith had five rebounds, one assist and two steals. Shallyn Foertsch had one rebound and one steal and Aspen Johnson had one steal.

Groton Area made 15 of 55 field goals for 27 percent, was 10 of 16 from the line for 63 percent off of Britton-Hecla's 13 team fouls, had 34 rebounds, 11 assists and one block. Groton Area had 21 turnovers. Britton-Hecla had 27 turnovers, 19 of which were steals.

Britton-Hecla was nine of 44 in shooting for 20 percent and was three of nine from the line for 33 percent off of Groton Area's 11 team fouls.

Groton Area is now 2-2 on the season and will host Aberdeen Roncalli on Tuesday. Britton-Hecla falls to 0-5 on the season. Both the junior varsity and varsity games will be broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM.

The Braves were led by Sterling Brassfield, Emma Storley and Jayden Bender with six points apiece while Jenna Werner and Alyssa James each had two points.

There was no junior varsity game.



**Brooke Gengerke dribbles past Britton-Hecla's Sterling Brassfield.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)



**Kaycie Hawkins looks for an open player to pass off the ball.**

(Photo by Paul Kosel)

- Paul Kosel



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## The Cultural Heritage Center: More than a Museum

The Cultural Heritage Center is a magnificent building in Pierre. In its underground setting, South Dakota history has been carefully interpreted and the state's historical documents and objects have been safely protected and stored for 30 years.

Gov. George S. Mickelson, First Lady Linda Mickelson and other dignitaries broke ground for the 63,000-square-foot center on May 1, 1987. It was completed in early 1989 and dedicated in November of that year as a lasting legacy of South Dakota's centennial. South Dakota became a state on Nov. 2, 1889.

Many people associate the Cultural Heritage Center with a world-class museum, but it offers more than that. It houses a whole team of people dedicated to preserving South Dakota's past in a variety of ways.

As headquarters of the South Dakota State Historical Society, the Cultural Heritage Center houses administrative, research and publishing, archives, historic preservation, and museum operations. The South Dakota Historical Society Foundation, the fundraising arm of the Society, also maintains offices in the Cultural Heritage Center. The Archaeological Research Center, operated by the State Historical Society, is located in Rapid City.

The South Dakota Historical Society Press publishes award-winning books on the history and heritage of the Northern Great Plains -- from scholarly works to picture books designed to engage children with the past. The Press' biggest popular success thus far was the publication of "Pioneer Girl: The Annotated Autobiography of Laura Ingalls Wilder," which made the New York Times Best Seller list.

The Press also publishes the State Historical Society's journal, "South Dakota History," which members of the Society receive quarterly.

The State Archives collects and makes available records which have permanent historical and research value. Genealogists visit the archives to use the records to learn their family history. Researchers and scholars use the archival collections to write articles, books and theses. Business owners, students and authors use historical photographs from the archives in their buildings' décor, school projects and books. The records have also been instrumental in court cases, resolving land ownership disputes and ensuring that citizens receive the benefits to which they are entitled.

The archives contains 20,000 cubic feet of records, including private collections, state and local government documents, rare books, audio and video recordings, 1.2 million photographs, 12,000 maps and more than 2 million files of digital materials.

Business owners and homeowners sometimes have questions about their historic properties. "How can I protect my grandparents' homestead from being destroyed?" "I hear preserving my old wood windows is better than replacing them with vinyl windows. Why is that and how can it be done?" "The porch on my 1932 house is collapsing. Do you have any money to help me fix it?" "Family stories say American Indians used to camp in what is now our pasture. Now some stranger wants to dig it up. What should we do?"

The State Historic Preservation Office or SHPO in the Cultural Heritage Center can help.

The SHPO implements the National Historic Preservation Act in South Dakota. The basis of the Act is the

SOUTH DAKOTA  
  
HISTORY & HERITAGE



**A rainbow over the Cultural Heritage Center.** (Courtesy Photo)

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National Register of Historic Places, a program of the National Park Service which helps protect America's historic resources. The SHPO staff helps owners determine if their property is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and, if so, can assist them in getting it listed. Those properties listed are eligible for a variety of financial incentives such as Deadwood Fund grants, the state property tax moratorium program and federal Historic Tax Credits.

SHPO is also responsible for protecting South Dakota's historical properties and sites by reviewing any federal, state, or locally supported project which may have the potential to damage these important cultural and historical resources.

Most people think of the Cultural Heritage Center as the museum. It is the most evident aspect of the building. It features temporary exhibits in the Hogen and Observation galleries, along with the primary exhibit "The South Dakota Experience." They bring to life South Dakota's history from earliest inhabitants to current day. The museum collection contains more than 34,000 objects that focus on South Dakota's history -- from the Great Sioux Horse Effigy to political buttons.

"History Explorer" backpacks for youngsters make for a fun, family-friendly museum experience. The monthly Family Fun Saturday programs are a way children and adults can come to the Cultural Heritage Center to make a history-related craft together.

Although the Cultural Heritage Center is in Pierre, the State Historical Society offers services throughout the state. In addition to a catalog of books on South Dakota history, the Society presents off-site programming to groups and provides field service consultation and training for those needing professional assistance. Through [www.history.sd.gov](http://www.history.sd.gov), nearly 35,000 photographs and maps are available on-line and instant access is provided to collection indexes. Businesses, community groups and schools can rent suitcase education kits and traveling exhibits. A fourth-grade South Dakota history curriculum is accessible at [www.sd4history.com](http://www.sd4history.com) and is available to anyone interested in learning more about the state's history.

This moment in South Dakota history is provided by the South Dakota Historical Society Foundation, the nonprofit fundraising partner of the South Dakota State Historical Society at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre. Find us on the web at [www.sdhsf.org](http://www.sdhsf.org). Contact us at [info@sdhsf.org](mailto:info@sdhsf.org) to submit a story idea.

**It's Boys' Basketball Action on GDILIVE.COM**



**Britton-Hecla  
Braves**

**VS**



**Groton Area Tigers**

**8:00 p.m., Friday, Jan. 3, 2020**

**at Britton**

**Broadcast Sponsored by Aberdeen Chrysler Center**



## News from the Columbia Legion Auxiliary



Doris Dennert was honored as a "Member to Remember" in our ALA Legionette publication in January. We knew in advance about the award and gave Doris a plaque at our December meeting by Cara Dennert. (Courtesy Photo)



### *A Member to Remember*

Auxiliary Unit - Roy L. Hall Post #58 from Columbia nominated Doris Dennert as "A Member to Remember."

Doris has been a member of the Legion Auxiliary for 38 years - joining in 1981! She is a strong member of the ALA organization - always at every event willing to do her part! She is a very involved member of the community - in her church as well as helping with the organization - The Orphan Grain Train. Through this service, the unit is inspired to do more! She is present at every event in our community - whether it is a funeral, fundraiser, or holiday party for area children - always providing a wonderful pan of bars. She is an integral part of our Auxiliary unit. We would be lost without her!

This was the article in the January issue of The South Dakota Legionette.

Caitlynn Barse and Kayla Jensen were present at the Columbia Legion Auxiliary's December meeting - they gave us a review of their time at Girls' State last spring.

(Courtesy Photo)



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## **Hazardous Weather Outlook** **National Weather Service Aberdeen SD**

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

.DAY ONE...Today and tonight.

Snow accumulations of 1 to 3 inches possible today with light icing from freezing rain early this morning.

.DAYS TWO THROUGH SEVEN...Saturday through Thursday.

Strong winds possible Saturday night into Sunday with gusts up to 50 mph that could produce some drifting snow.

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## Upcoming Events

### Friday, January 3, 2020

Big Question Debate

No School-Christmas Break

5 p.m.: 7th/8th grade wrestling tournament at Milbank

6:30 p.m.: Boys' Basketball at Britton. Junior varsity at 6:30 p.m. followed by varsity game.

### Saturday, January 4, 2020

9:30 a.m.: Wrestling Tournament at Webster

### Sunday, January 5, 2020

2:00pm- 6:00pm: Open Gym at GHS Arena

### Monday, January 6, 2020

School resumes

6:30 p.m.: Boys' Basketball hosts Webster Area. JV starts at 6:30 p.m. followed by varsity game.

### Tuesday, January 7, 2020

7 p.m.: City Council Meeting at the Groton Community Center

UDFL Student Congress at Groton Area High School

6 p.m.: Wrestling Tri-angular at Oakes, N.D.

6:30 p.m.: Girls' Basketball hosts Aberdeen Roncalli. JV starts at 6:30 p.m. followed by varsity game.

(This game has a date change - it was originally scheduled for January 24th.)

### Thursday, January 9, 2020

6:00 p.m.: Wrestling at Redfield

### Friday, January 10, 2020

Basketball double header hosting Hamlin (Girls junior varsity at 4 p.m., Boys junior varsity at 5 p.m., Girls varsity at 6:30 p.m., Boys varsity to follow)

### Saturday, January 11, 2020

12:30 p.m.: Girls' Varsity Basketball Classic at Redfield. Groton Area vs. St. Francis Indian School

Boys at Varsity Classic at the Sanford Pentagon

10 a.m.: Wrestling at Miller Tournament

### Sunday, January 12, 2020

2:00pm- 6:00pm: Open Gym at GHS Arena

### Monday, January 13, 2020

6 p.m.: Junior high basketball games at Warner. 7th grade at 6 p.m., 8th grade at 7 p.m.

6 p.m.: Junior high wrestling tournament in Groton

7 p.m.: School Board Meeting

### Tuesday, January 14, 2020

5:15 p.m.: Combined 7th/8th grade boys basketball game vs. Aberdeen Christian at the Aberdeen Civic Arena

6:30 p.m.: Boys' basketball game at Aberdeen Christian High School. Junior varsity at 6:30 p.m. followed by varsity game.

### Wednesday, January 15, 2020

8:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.: MathCounts at Aberdeen Simmons Middle School

### Thursday, January 16, 2020

6:30 p.m.: Girls' Basketball hosts Sisseton. JV game at 6:30 p.m. followed by varsity game.

### Friday, January 17, 2020

Silver Bowl Debate at Sioux Falls

No School - Faculty Inservice

6 p.m.: Boys' basketball at Sisseton. JV game at 6 p.m. followed by varsity game.



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Friday



Snow then  
Mostly Sunny

High: 32 °F ↓↓

Friday  
Night



Partly Cloudy

Low: 7 °F

Saturday



Decreasing  
Clouds

High: 33 °F

Saturday  
Night



Mostly Cloudy  
then Partly  
Cloudy and  
Windy

Low: 25 °F

Sunday

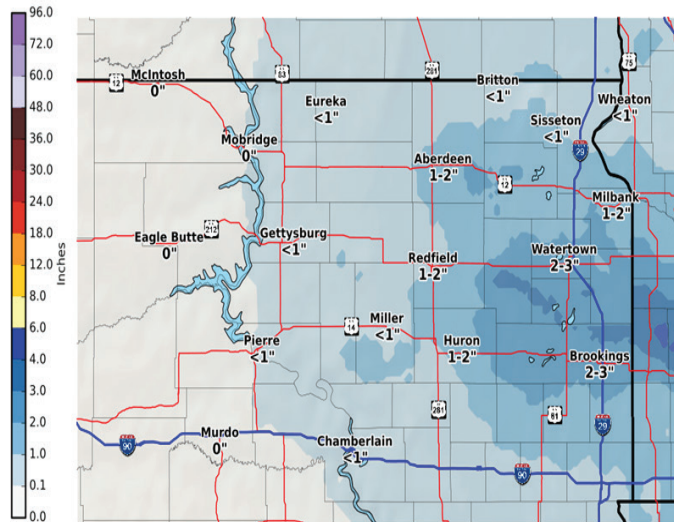


Sunny and  
Windy

High: 37 °F

## Light Snow Today

Expected Snowfall - Official NWS Forecast  
Valid: 01/03/2020 06:00 AM - 01/04/2020 06:00 AM CST



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen SD  
01/03/2020 03:36 AM CST

Follow Us:   
weather.gov/Aberdeen



Visit [www.weather.gov/abr](http://www.weather.gov/abr) for a detailed forecast for your specific location Updated: 1/3/2020 4:17 AM CT



A clipper system will bring some light snow to the region today. Early this morning some freezing rain may be mixed in, as well, mainly across the east. Greatest accumulations are expected from Watertown to Brookings with around 3 inches possible. Snow will end from west to east by evening.



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## Today in Weather History

January 3, 1997: A powerful area of low pressure and deep Arctic high pressure brought almost all winter elements to central and northeast South Dakota as well as west central Minnesota from the afternoon of the 3rd to the morning of the 5th. The storm began with widespread freezing rain, mainly over northeast South Dakota and west central Minnesota, where significant accumulations of ice occurred on roads, trees, and power lines. Late in the evening of the 3rd, the freezing rain changed to sleet and then snow, with substantial snowfall accumulations of 6 to as much as 27 inches by late on the 4th. As the Arctic high pressure pushed in through the morning and afternoon of the 4th, northwest winds increased to 25 to 45 mph gusting to 55 mph creating widespread blizzard conditions, drifts up to 20 feet, and wind chills from 40 to 70 below. The massive accumulation of ice and snow across parts of central and mainly across northeast South Dakota resulted in the roof collapse of over 150, mostly rural, buildings. The roofs collapsed onto farm machinery and livestock with a lot of the machinery damaged and a lot of animals injured or killed. The collapse of so many buildings from snow and ice was believed to be the first in this area. On most other buildings, the snow had to be shoveled or blown off. One man was killed in west central Minnesota as he was trying to shovel snow off the roof of a building. One roof collapse near Lake Poinsett, seven west of Estelline, killed four horses, damaged a boat, and flattened a car. The significant snow drifts buried a few homes during the storm. Many power outages also occurred across parts of central and northeast South Dakota as power lines and poles were downed from the heavy ice accumulation. Some people were without power for several days in the extreme cold conditions. The cities of Miranda, Rockham, Zell, Garden City, Bryant, Vienna, Glenham, Hazel as well as other cities were without power for many hours. Some of the communities were out of power for up to 2 days.

In Aberdeen, heavy snow blocking a furnace exhaust vent sent three family members to the hospital for carbon monoxide poisoning. Also, in Aberdeen, the snowmobile club, the drift busters, were called upon for the first time in several years to deliver medicine, take patients to the hospital, and carry essential workers to work and home. Emergencies were challenging to respond to, making many hours to short distances. Throughout central and northeast South Dakota, many businesses and grocery stores were closed. Interstates 29 and 90 were both closed for a few days along with most state highways. The rest of the roads were either blocked by huge drifts or had one-lane traffic. Snow plows were called off the streets until conditions improved and when they did start to clear the roads, they worked 12 to 18 hour days. Many vehicles went into the ditch, with mainly minor injuries. Some people had to be rescued. Travelers and truckers were stranded for several days until the roads opened. When Interstate-29 re-opened, there was a logjam of vehicles for 3 miles. One Watertown policeman said he has never seen a logjam as bad as this in 28 years. Area airports were closed or flights were canceled or delayed. The mail was delayed for several days, most activities were canceled or postponed, and many schools closed on the 6th. The heavy snowfall from this storm brought the widespread snowpack up to 2 to 5 feet. For the winter season so far, the area had record snowfall and recorded cold. Some of the snowfall amounts include 6 inches at McLaughlin, 8 inches 22 SSW Keldron and 4 NW Onida, 9 inches at Pollock, Timber Lake, Highmore, Mobridge, and Kennebec, 10 inches at Castlewood, Clear Lake, Miller, Fort Thompson, and Clark. Snowfall amounts of 1 to over 2 feet include, 12 inches at Eureka, and Redfield, 13 inches at Selby and Aberdeen, 14 inches at Pierre and Roscoe, 15 inches at Ortonville MN, 16 inches at Mellette and Browns Valley, MN 18 inches at Faulkton and 1 ENE Stephan, 20 inches at Webster, 22 inches at Britton, 24 inches at Sisseton, 26 inches 10 NW Britton, and 27 inches at Wheaton.

1883: A remarkably brilliant meteor display occurred on the night of January 3rd. The phenomenon was observed at stations in Wisconsin, Michigan, Missouri, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. This meteor was described as having resembled a large, bright ball of fire.

1886: A severe ice storm struck portions of northeastern Iowa when heavy accumulations of freezing rain brought down trees and branches across the area. An observer near Garnavillo in Clayton County wrote that "the rain... mostly froze as it fell, and coated twigs of trees with ice an inch thick, and many trees were seriously broken. Our telephone wires were broken in many places. Large old trees and large limbs broken. In the woods, many trees bent their tops so the ground and the roads were impassible until the treetops were cut off." In Fayette County, it was reported that "ice formed on the trees so thick that many limbs, from four to eight inches through, were broken and the tops of the trees, thirty feet high, rested on the ground in many instances blockading the roads." An observer at Waukon noted that "ice formed on the trees to such an extent that in very many cases our shade trees were ruined. All the afternoon and night it was a continual crash."

1949: During the late afternoon hours, an estimated F4 tornado destroyed the town of Warren, Arkansas. This tornado killed 55 people and injured more than 250 others. The destruction of the Bradley mill displaced 1,000 employees.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

**High Temp: 35 °F at 12:00 AM**

**Low Temp: 29 °F at 8:15 AM**

**Wind: 17 mph at 4:15 AM**

**Day Precip: 0.00**

**Record High: 51° in 1962**

**Record Low: -34° in 2012**

**Average High: 22°F**

**Average Low: 2°F**

**Average Precip in Jan.: 0.04**

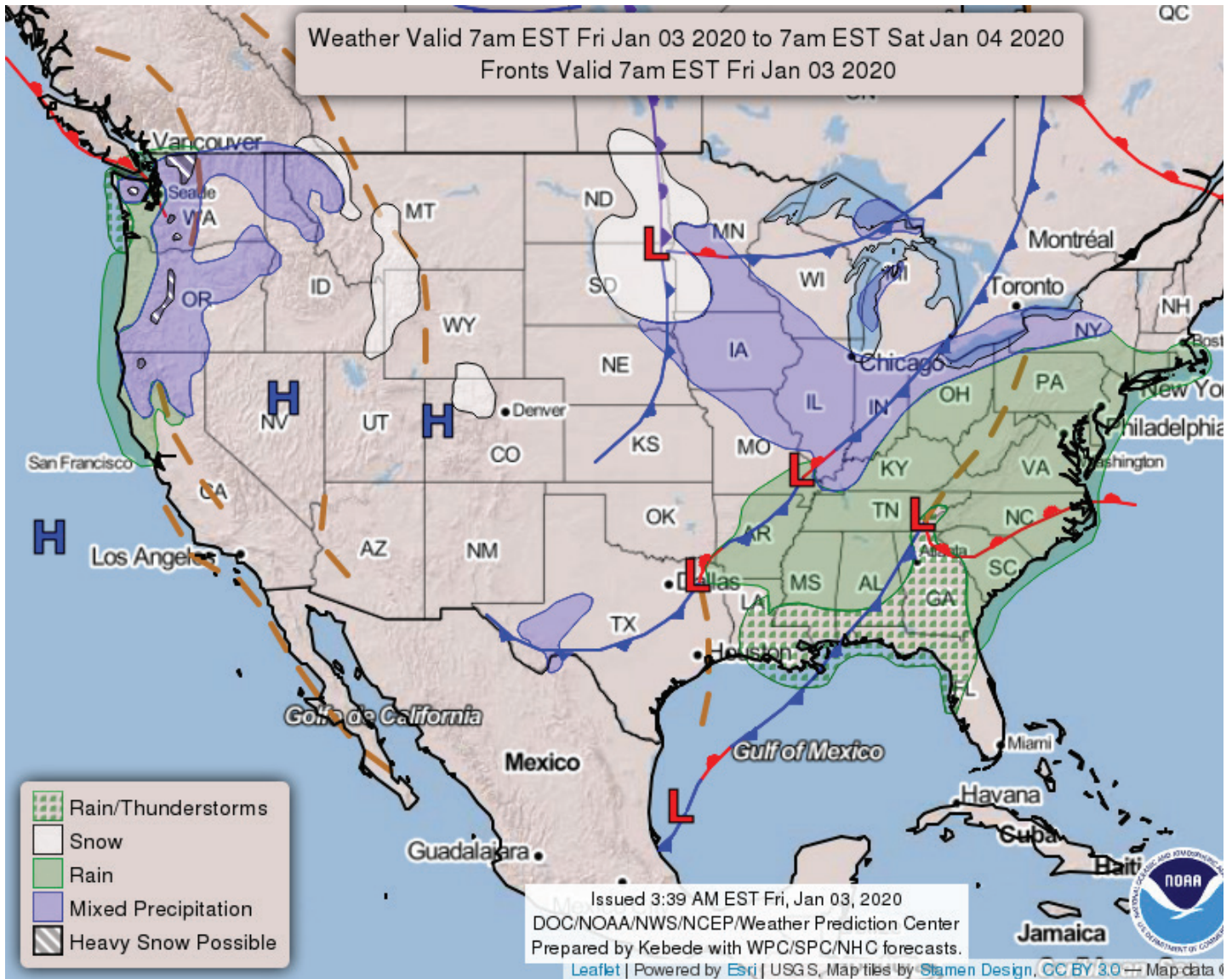
**Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00**

**Average Precip to date: 0.04**

**Precip Year to Date: 0.00**

**Sunset Tonight: 5:03 p.m.**

**Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:14 a.m.**



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## DISQUALIFIED!

It was the day before the most important football game of the season. Sitting in his office, the coach received a phone call from the dean informing him that his quarterback was disqualified from playing. He hurried to the dean's office to protest the news.

As he sat across from the dean, frustrated and angry, he questioned the decision. The dean said, "He sat next to an honor student in an exam, and his answers were identical to hers – word for word."

"Maybe," said the coach, "the honor student copied the quarterback's answers."

"No," answered the dean. "The honor student wrote 'I don't know the answer' for the final question, and your quarterback wrote, 'I don't know either.'"

There is no room for opinions in honesty. We either are or are not honest. There are some who try a little "sleight of hand" by deceiving others to gain an edge or advantage. They may call it "clever," "smooth," "slick," or say "it's OK this time." That is not how God sees things. He sets clear standards and easy-to-understand rules to guide us and guard us in every area of life especially this one: His Word says, "Good people will be guided by honesty."

Prayer: Help us, Father, when we are in threatening situations, to have the courage to be honest! May we honor You, and "speak the truth in love!" In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Proverbs 11:1 The Lord detests the use of dishonest scales, but he delights in accurate weights.



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## 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)
- Bingo: every Wednesday at the Legion Post #39

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## News from the Associated Press

### Wilson sparks South Dakota St past Oral Roberts 96-79

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — Douglas Wilson scored 25 points and grabbed 10 rebounds for his fourth double-double of the season and South Dakota State rolled to a 96-79 victory over Oral Roberts on Thursday night.

Wilson also blocked four shots for the Jackrabbits (10-7, 1-1), who made 40 of 64 shots from the floor (62.5%). Freshman Noah Freidel scored 23 on 9-of-11 shooting, including 4 of 6 from 3-point range. Matt Dentlinger added 18 points and seven boards, while Alex Arians scored 17 on 6-of-7 shooting.

Deondre Burns paced the Golden Eagles (7-7) in their Summit League opener with 23 points and eight assists. Kevin Obanor and Max Abmas both scored 14. Emmanuel Nzekwesi pitched in with 12 points and 13 rebounds for his third straight double-double and fifth of the season.

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

### Thursday's Scores By The Associated Press

#### BOYS BASKETBALL

Brandon Valley 51, Mitchell 48  
Clark/Willow Lake 68, Hamlin 61  
Dell Rapids 67, Dell Rapids St. Mary 64  
Faulkton 48, Iroquois 33  
Freeman Academy/Marion 71, Colome 35  
Lower Brule 74, Philip 45  
Milbank 56, Webster 54  
Northwestern 54, Waverly-South Shore 42  
Parker 61, Elk Point-Jefferson 45  
Red Cloud 50, Todd County 43  
Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 69, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 42  
Sioux Falls Washington 60, Huron 58  
Sioux Valley 85, Bridgewater-Emery 57

#### GIRLS BASKETBALL

Chester 56, Iroquois 28  
Colman-Egan 52, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 12  
Colome 51, Freeman Academy/Marion 14  
DeSmet 38, Arlington 17  
Dell Rapids St. Mary 46, Estelline/Hendricks 41  
Deubrook 68, Lake Preston 29  
Elk Point-Jefferson 50, Parker 32  
Faulkton 63, Lyman 34  
Groton Area 42, Britton-Hecla 22  
Hamlin 63, Clark/Willow Lake 35  
Lennox 53, Parkston 38  
Milbank 48, Webster 27  
Miller 42, James Valley Christian 25  
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 54, Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 35  
Philip 64, Lower Brule 56

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Red Cloud 73, Todd County 48  
Sioux Falls Washington 63, Huron 43  
Waverly-South Shore 47, Northwestern 37

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

## Tribal leaders plan alternative to State of Tribes Address

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Leaders from several Sioux tribes in South Dakota announced Thursday they will be holding their own event rather than participate in the annual State of the Tribes speech, which is scheduled to be delivered by Gov. Kristi Noem's secretary of tribal relations.

Representatives from the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe sent an invitation for the first "Great Sioux Tribal Nation" address on Jan. 16 in Ft. Pierre where chairmen and presidents from the tribes will each have a chance to speak and answer questions from the media. The event was organized in response to the plan to have a member of Noem's administration give the State of the Tribes address and is currently scheduled for the same time as the speech.

The State of the Tribes has been given in each of the last four years in January by a chairman or president of one of South Dakota's tribes to inform the Legislature on developments with the tribes and promote cooperation with the state. This year, it was announced that Dave Flute, the secretary of tribal relations, would give the address. Flute was previously chairman of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe and joined Noem's cabinet last year.

Tribal leaders were rankled by the change in precedent of having a current leader deliver the speech.

Remi Bald Eagle, intergovernmental affairs coordinator for the Cheyenne Sioux Tribe, said tribal leaders organized the event because they wanted people to hear "from the tribes themselves and not spun to any party rhetoric or interests outside the tribes."

After the issue arose at a legislative committee meeting in December, Kristin Wileman, a spokeswoman for the Republican governor, said the Legislature's Executive Board had requested that Flute give the address. She said he has a "broad perspective on the issues facing tribes across the state" and asked the tribal chairmen and presidents for input on the address.

Flute said in an emailed statement, "I respect the tribal leadership's desire to gather" and added that he would be meeting with tribes' elected leaders and the governor next week to discuss upcoming legislation.

So far, the Cheyenne River, Crow Creek, Lower Brule, Yankton and Oglala Sioux tribes are planning to participate, according to Bald Eagle. He said the event could be rescheduled to be immediately after the State of the Tribes to allow lawmakers to attend.

## Montana coal power plant closing two units built in 1970s

By **MATTHEW BROWN** Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — One of the largest coal-fired power plants in the western U.S. will close two of its four units in coming days as the Montana facility edges toward an eventual total shutdown.

Colstrip Units 1 and 2 — built in the 1970s when massive strip mines were being developed across Montana and Wyoming — will close by Jan. 5 or as soon as they run out of coal to burn, Talen Energy spokeswoman Taryne Williams said Thursday.

The plant employs about 300 people and is the main driver of the economy for the surrounding town of Colstrip, which has about 2,300 people. But it's been unable to compete with surging investments into renewable energy and cheap natural gas, as the coal plant's operating costs have risen with the need for better pollution controls.

Some employees for now will be re-assigned to decommissioning work that will last through mid-2020, Williams said. She said there are "no hard and fast numbers or timelines" as the company considers how many workers will be needed for the remaining two units.

The closure of Units 1 and 2 was long anticipated as demand for U.S. coal collapsed in recent years, and



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came despite vows by elected officials in Montana to find ways to keep it open.

The two closing units are operated by Pennsylvania-based Talen, which co-owns them with Puget Sound Energy of Washington state.

Sen. Duane Ankney, who represents Colstrip in the Montana Legislature, said the impending closure was a "prime example" of how out-of-state interests were hurting the coal industry to the detriment of Montana.

"Coal does so much more than power our homes. Coal funds our public schools, infrastructure, parks and libraries," the Republican lawmaker said in a statement.

A representative of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 1638, which represents most of the plant's union employees, could not be reached immediately for comment.

Williams said Talen was "committed to doing what is right by our employees" and will help affected workers to transition to a new job.

The doors to the two units are to be welded shut on Saturday, according to Ankney. But there are no plans to dismantle them because of their proximity to the two remaining units, Williams said.

The large volumes of ash generated by burning coal at Colstrip has contaminated underground water supplies with toxic materials and is expected to cost hundreds of millions of dollars to clean up. Plans for that cleanup are pending with the Montana Department of Environmental Quality.

Six utilities own shares of Colstrip's remaining two units built in the 1980s. Most of the owners are making preparations for operations to cease as early as 2025.

However, one of the owners, Northwestern Energy, plans for Colstrip to keep running past 2040 and announced in December that it wants to acquire part of Puget Sound Energy's interest in Colstrip Unit 4 for \$1 .

That would boost South Dakota-based NorthWestern's ownership interest in the power plant to 55% even as many other utilities across the U.S. have been getting out of the coal power market in recent years.

## **Tribal leaders plan alternative to State of Tribes Address**

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Leaders from several Sioux tribes in South Dakota announced on Thursday they will be holding their own event rather than participate in the annual State of the Tribes speech, which is scheduled to be delivered by Gov. Kristi Noem's secretary of tribal relations.

Representatives from the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe sent an invitation for the first "Great Sioux Tribal Nation" address on Jan. 16 in Ft. Pierre where chairmen and presidents from the tribes will each have a chance to speak and answer questions from the media. The event was organized in response to the plan to have a member of Noem's administration give the State of the Tribes address and is currently scheduled for the same time as the speech.

The State of the Tribes has been given in each of the last four years in January by a chairman or president of one of South Dakota's tribes to inform the Legislature on developments with the tribes and promote cooperation with the state. This year, it was announced that Dave Flute, the secretary of tribal relations, would give the address. Flute was previously chairman of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe and joined Noem's cabinet last year.

Tribal leaders were rankled by the change in precedent of having a current leader deliver the speech.

Remi Bald Eagle, intergovernmental affairs coordinator for the Cheyenne Sioux Tribe, said tribal leaders organized the event because they wanted people to hear "from the tribes themselves and not spun to any party rhetoric or interests outside the tribes."

After the issue arose at a legislative committee meeting in December, Kristin Wileman, a spokeswoman for the Republican governor, said the Legislature's Executive Board had requested that Flute give the address. She said he has a "broad perspective on the issues facing tribes across the state" and asked the tribal chairmen and presidents for input on the address.

So far, the Cheyenne River, Crow Creek, Lower Brule, Yankton and Oglala Sioux tribes are planning to participate. Bald Eagle said the event could be rescheduled to be immediately after the State of the Tribes to allow lawmakers to attend.

## Police to remove 70 deer in Sioux Falls in annual harvest

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Sioux Falls police have started their annual culling of the city's deer population. This year the city has requested a permit from the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks for removing 70 deer. It is the sixth year that Sioux Falls has harvested deer to reduce property damage and improve the health of the city's deer population.

Officials say high deer populations lead to increased competition among deer for food and a higher potential of spreading disease.

In 2019, a total of 60 deer were removed from southeastern and northeastern Sioux Falls. This year's removal will focus on southeastern, western and northeastern parts of the city.

Authorities say traffic crashes involving deer in the southern area of Sioux Falls increased this past year. Meat from harvested deer will be donated to area food banks. The harvest will be completed by Feb. 29.

## 1 man shot dead after altercation near Aberdeen

Authorities are investigating the fatal shooting of a man after an altercation near Aberdeen., the Brown County Sheriff's Office said.

The shooting happened early Thursday in rural Aberdeen. No arrests have been made, but Chief Deputy Dave Lunzman told the Aberdeen News that authorities are interviewing the other man involved in the incident.

An autopsy is planned. The name of the man who died was not released. For now, authorities are treating the death as a homicide.

## Slight minimum wage increase for South Dakota workers

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota's minimum wage is increasing slightly with the the start of the new year

The state's minimum wage will now be \$9.30 per hour — an increase of 20 cents from 2019. Workers who receive tips are seeing their minimum wage rise to \$4.65 per hour.

The increases are part of a voter-approved measure in 2014 to raise the minimum wage, which was \$7.25 an hour at the time, to \$8.50 an hour. KELO-TV reports the minimum wage will continue to increase at the rate of the cost of living measured in the consumer price index.

The state's minimum wage was below \$4 until 1992. The \$7.25 minimum wage was set in 2010.

## Midwest Economy: December state-by-state glance

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — The Institute for Supply Management, formerly the Purchasing Management Association, began formally surveying its membership in 1931 to gauge business conditions.

The Creighton Economic Forecasting Group uses the same methodology as the national survey to consult supply managers and business leaders. Creighton University economics professor Ernie Goss oversees the report.

The overall index ranges between 0 and 100. Growth neutral is 50, and a figure greater than 50 indicates growth in that factor over the next three to six months.

Here are the state-by-state results for December:

Arkansas: The state's overall index climbed to 53.0 from November's 49.7. Index components were new orders at 54.2, production or sales at 51.4, delivery lead time at 55.3, inventories at 57.2 and employment at 46.7. "Based on recent surveys, I expect the Arkansas economy, for the first half of 2020, to rank third in the region in terms of economic performance with overall annualized inflation-adjusted GDP growth at 2.84%," said Goss.

Iowa: After falling below growth neutral, the state's overall index rose above the threshold in December to hit 50.9 , compared with 49.2 in November. Index components for Iowa were new orders at 50.8, pro-

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duction or sales at 48.2, delivery lead time at 54.6, employment at 45.8 and inventories at 55.1. "Based on recent surveys, I expect the Iowa economy, for the first half of 2020, to rank sixth in the region in terms of economic performance with overall annualized inflation-adjusted GDP growth at 1.5%," Goss said.

Kansas: The state's overall index increased to 52.1 from November's 51.0. December index components for Kansas were new orders at 54.1, production or sales at 47.3, delivery lead time at 55.3, employment at 46.7 and inventories at 57.2. "Based on recent surveys, I expect the Kansas economy, for the first half of 2020, to rank third in the region in terms of economic performance with overall annualized inflation-adjusted GDP growth at 2.84%," he said.

Minnesota: Minnesota's overall index slipped to 50.7 last month from 50.9 in November. Index components were new orders at 49.5, production or sales at 48.1, delivery lead time at 54.7, inventories at 55.4 and employment at 45.9. "Based on recent surveys, I expect the Minnesota economy, for the first half of 2020, to rank fifth in the region in terms of economic performance with overall annualized inflation-adjusted GDP growth at 1.7%," Goss said.

Missouri: The state's overall index rose to 50.5 in December from November's 48.4. Index components were new orders at 49.8, production or sales at 48.5, delivery lead time at 54.3, inventories at 54.4 and employment at 45.5. "Based on recent surveys, I expect the Missouri economy, for the first half of 2020, to rank seventh in the region in terms of economic performance with overall annualized inflation-adjusted GDP growth at 1.1%," said Goss. Nebraska: Nebraska's overall index climbed above growth neutral after falling below the threshold. The state's overall index jumped to 52.1 in December, compared with 48.2 in November. Index components were new orders at 54.2, production or sales at 47.2, delivery lead time at 55.3, inventories at 57.3 and employment at 46.7. "Based on recent surveys, I expect the Nebraska economy, for the first half of 2020, to rank second in the region in terms of economic performance with overall annualized inflation-adjusted GDP growth at 2.9%," he said.

North Dakota: The state's overall index sank to 48.2 last month from November's 50.0. Index components were new orders at 42.1, production or sales at 49.5, delivery lead time at 53.6, employment at 44.5 and inventories at 52.1. "Based on recent surveys, I expect the North Dakota economy, for the first half of 2020, to rank eighth in the region in terms of economic performance with overall annualized inflation-adjusted GDP growth at 0.9%," Goss said.

Oklahoma: Oklahoma's overall index rose slightly last in December, hitting 48.4, compared with 47.8 in November. Index components were new orders at 42.1, production or sales at 49.5, delivery lead time at 53.6, inventories at 52.1 and employment at 44.5. "Based on recent surveys, I expect the Oklahoma economy, for the first half of 2020, to rank last in the region in terms of economic performance with overall annualized inflation-adjusted GDP growth at minus 0.2%," said Goss. South Dakota: The state's overall index jumped to 52.3 last month from November's 48.9. Index components were new orders at 54.5, production or sales at 47.2, delivery lead time at 55.4, inventories at 57.5 and employment at 46.8. "Based on recent surveys, I expect the South Dakota economy, for the first half of 2020, to rank first in the region in terms of economic performance with overall annualized inflation-adjusted GDP growth at 3%," he said.

## Oil price jumps on fear of Iranian retaliation against US

By CARLO PIOVANO Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The price of oil surged Friday on concerns that Iran might respond to the killing of its top general by the United States by disrupting global supplies of energy from the Middle East.

News that Gen. Qassem Soleimani, head of Iran's elite Quds Force, was killed in an air attack at the Baghdad international airport prompted expectations of Iranian retaliation against U.S. and Israeli targets.

Amid past flare-ups with the U.S., Iran threatened the supply of oil that travels from the Persian Gulf to the rest of the world. About 20% of oil traded worldwide goes through the Strait of Hormuz, where the shipping lane is only 3 kilometers (2 miles) wide and tankers have come under attack this year.

The international benchmark for crude oil jumped 4.5%, or \$2.98, to \$69.23 a barrel in London trading. The U.S. contract was up 4.3%, or \$2.60, to \$63.78.



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"Revenge will come, maybe not overnight, but it will come and until then we need to increase the geopolitical risk premium," said Olivier Jakob, head of consultancy Petromatrix, in a note to investors.

He noted that Iran's response may not be limited to the Strait of Hormuz.

In September, Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels launched drone attacks on the world's largest oil processing facility in Saudi Arabia. The strike briefly took out about half of the supplies from the world's largest oil exporter. The U.S. directly blamed Iran, which denied involvement.

Launching attacks that can't be easily linked back to Iran limits the chances of direct retaliation.

However, Iran has also directly targeted tankers. This year it seized a British-flagged tanker, the Stena Impero, for several weeks. And it has shot down a U.S. military drone.

About 80% of the crude oil that travels through the Strait of Hormuz goes to countries in Asia, including China, Japan, India and South Korea.

But the rise in the global price of oil will have a wider effect, particularly in oil-importing countries with big manufacturing sectors like Germany and Italy. Those countries fared worst in the stock market on Friday, with their main indexes falling 1.4% and 1.1% respectively.

The economic damage could be limited given that the energy market is flush with oil while the growth in demand has softened as major economies have slowed. And crude-producing countries - particularly the United States - have been pumping oil at a high rate.

The OPEC cartel and key ally Russia agreed last month to cut their oil production, but many countries have been pumping above their limits.

That has so far kept the price of oil in check. On Friday, the Brent benchmark rose to its highest since May after largely hovering around \$60 a barrel.

A gradual rise in renewable energy production could also limit the economic damage from a jump in crude prices. But experts note that fossil fuels like oil continue to provide the vast majority of energy that drives industry, transportation and heating, among other things.

## 'A more dangerous world': Iran killing triggers global alarm

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Global powers warned Friday that the world has become a more dangerous place and urged restraint after the U.S. assassinated Iran's top general, although Britain and Germany also suggested that Iran shared blame for provoking the targeted killing that dramatically ratcheted up tensions in the Mideast.

China, Russia and France, all permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, took a dim view of the U.S. airstrike near Baghdad's airport early Friday that killed Gen. Qassem Soleimani.

The White House said in a tweet that Soleimani, who led the elite Quds Force responsible for Iran's foreign campaigns, "was actively developing plans to attack American diplomats and service members in Iraq and throughout the region."

"We are waking up in a more dangerous world. Military escalation is always dangerous," France's deputy minister for foreign affairs, Amelie de Montchalin told RTL radio. "When such actions, such operations, take place, we see that escalation is underway."

Russia likewise characterized the deadly U.S. strike as "fraught with serious consequences." A Foreign Ministry statement warned that "such actions don't help resolve complicated problems in the Middle East, but instead lead to a new round of escalating tensions."

China described itself as "highly concerned."

"Peace in the Middle East and the Gulf region should be preserved," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said. "We urge all parties concerned, especially the United States, to maintain calm and restraint and avoid further escalation of tensions."

But while echoing the concerns of other Security Council members about spiraling tensions, Britain and Germany broke ranks, voicing qualified understanding for the U.S. position.

German government spokeswoman Ulrike Demmer described the U.S. strike as "a reaction to a whole series of military provocations for which Iran bears responsibility," pointing to attacks on tankers and a

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Saudi oil facility, among other events.

"We are at a dangerous escalation point and what matters now is contributing with prudence and restraint to de-escalation," she said. Germany currently sits on the U.N. Security Council but is not a permanent member.

The British foreign secretary, Dominic Raab, said "we have always recognized the aggressive threat posed by the Iranian Quds force led by Qasem Soleimani."

"Following his death, we urge all parties to de-escalate," he said. "Further conflict is in none of our interests."

Montchalin, the French minister, indicated urgent reconciliation efforts are being launched behind the scenes. French President Emmanuel Macron and his foreign minister were reaching out to "all the actors in the region," she said.

In the Mideast, the strike provoked waves of shock, fury and fears of worse to come.

Iraq's most powerful Shiite religious leader, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, said in a speech during Friday prayers that the country must brace for "very difficult times."

In Iran, a hard-line adviser to the country's supreme leader who led Friday prayers in Tehran likened U.S. troops in Iraq to "insidious beasts" and said they should be swept from the region.

"I am telling Americans, especially Trump, we will take a revenge that will change their daylight into to a nighttime darkness," said the cleric, Ayatollah Ahmad Khatami.

Gregory Katz in London, Christopher Bodeen in Beijing, Geir Moulson in Berlin, Daria Litvinova in Moscow and Amir Vahdat in Tehran contributed.

## Iran vows 'harsh' response to US killing of top general

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA and ZEINA KARAM Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iran has vowed "harsh retaliation" for a U.S. airstrike near Baghdad's airport that killed Tehran's top general and the architect of its interventions across the Middle East, as tensions soared in the wake of the targeted killing.

The killing of Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the head of Iran's elite Quds Force, marks a major escalation in the standoff between Washington and Iran, which has careened from one crisis to another since President Donald Trump withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal and imposed crippling sanctions.

The United States urged its U.S. citizens to leave Iraq "immediately." The State Department said the embassy in Baghdad, which was attacked by Iran-backed militiamen and other protesters earlier this week, is closed and all consular services have been suspended.

Around 5,200 American troops are based in Iraq, where they mainly train Iraqi forces and help to combat Islamic State militants.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei warned that a "harsh retaliation is waiting" for the U.S. after the airstrike, calling Soleimani the "international face of resistance." Khamenei declared three days of public mourning for the general's death, and appointed Maj. Gen. Esmail Ghaani, Soleimani's deputy, to replace him as head of the elite Quds force.

Iran also summoned the Swiss charges d'affaires, who represents U.S. interests in Tehran, to protest the killing. Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif called the strike "an act of state terrorism and violation of Iraq's sovereignty."

The killing, and any forceful retaliation by Iran, could ignite a conflict that engulfs the whole region, endangering U.S. troops in Iraq, Syria and beyond. Over the last two decades, Soleimani had assembled a network of heavily armed allies stretching all the way to southern Lebanon, on Israel's doorstep.

However, the brazen killing may itself act as a deterrent, with fears of an all-out war leading Iran and its allies to delay or restrain any potential response.

Oil prices surged on news of the killing and markets were mixed.

The Defense Department said it killed Soleimani because he "was actively developing plans to attack

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American diplomats and service members in Iraq and throughout the region." It also accused Soleimani of approving the orchestrated violent protests at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad earlier this week.

The airport strike also killed Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, deputy commander of Iran-backed militias in Iraq known as the Popular Mobilization Forces. A PMF official said the strike killed a total of eight people, including Soleimani's son-in-law, whom he did not identify.

Trump was vacationing on his estate in Palm Beach, Florida, but sent out a tweet of an American flag.

The dramatic attack comes at the start of a year in which Trump faces both a Senate trial following his impeachment by the Congress and a re-election campaign. It marks a potential turning point in the Middle East and represents a drastic change for American policy toward Iran after months of tensions.

Tehran shot down a U.S. military surveillance drone and seized oil tankers last year. The U.S. also blames Iran for a series of other attacks targeting tankers, as well as a September assault on Saudi Arabia's oil industry that temporarily halved its production.

The tensions are rooted in Trump's decision in May 2018 to withdraw the U.S. from Iran's nuclear deal with world powers, struck under his predecessor, Barack Obama.

The 62-year-old Soleimani was the target of Friday's attack on an access road near the airport, which was conducted by an armed American drone, according to a U.S. official.

A senior Iraqi security official said the airstrike took place near the cargo area after Soleimani had disembarked from a plane arriving from either Syria or Lebanon. PMF officials said the bodies of Suleimani and al-Muhandis were torn to pieces. A senior politician said Soleimani's body was identified by the ring he wore.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to reporters.

It's unclear what legal authority the U.S. relied on to carry out the attack. American presidents claim broad authority to act without the approval of the Congress when U.S. personnel or interests are facing an imminent threat. The Pentagon did not provide evidence to back up its assertion that Soleimani was planning new attacks against Americans.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said the "highest priority" was to protect American lives and interests, but that "we cannot put the lives of American service members, diplomats and others further at risk by engaging in provocative and disproportionate actions." She said Congress was not consulted on the strike and demanded it be "immediately" briefed on the next steps.

Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden said Trump had "tossed a stick of dynamite into a tinderbox," saying it could leave the U.S. "on the brink of a major conflict across the Middle East." Other Democratic White House hopefuls also criticized Trump's order.

But Trump allies were quick to praise the action. "To the Iranian government: if you want more, you will get more," tweeted South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham.

The killing promised to strain relations with Iraq's government, which is closely allied with both Washington and Tehran. Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi condemned the strike as an "aggression against Iraq" and a "blatant attack on the nation's dignity."

He also called for an emergency session of parliament to take "necessary and appropriate measures to protect Iraq's dignity, security and sovereignty" on Saturday, when funerals will be held in Baghdad for al-Muhandis, the militia commander, and the other slain Iraqis.

Russia condemned the killing, and fellow Security Council member China said it was "highly concerned." Britain's Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab acknowledged the "aggressive threat" posed by the Quds force but urged restraint, saying "further conflict is in none of our interests."

Iraq has been gripped by massive anti-government protests since October, partly against Iran's influence over the country. But at least one protester, who asked not to be named for security concerns, said they "do not celebrate" the killing of Soleimani.

"America and Iran should solve their problems outside Iraq," he said. "We do not want them to solve it inside Iraq, because this will not serve our cause."

The Syrian government, which has received key support from Iran throughout the civil war, also condemned the strike, saying it could lead to a "dangerous escalation" in the region.



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Hassan Nasrallah, head of the Iran-backed Hezbollah militant group in Lebanon, called on "the resistance the world over" to avenge Soleimani's killing.

In the Gaza Strip, the ruling Hamas militant group offered its "sincerest condolences" to Iran, saying Soleimani had "played a major and critical role in supporting Palestinian resistance at all levels."

There was no immediate reaction from Israel, which views Iran as its greatest threat. Authorities closed the Mount Hermon ski resort near the borders with Lebanon and Syria as a precaution but didn't announce any other security measures. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said he was cutting short a trip to Greece to return home and follow "ongoing developments."

Yoel Guzansky, an expert on Iran at the Institute for National Strategic Studies, a prestigious Tel Aviv think tank, said the killing restored America's deterrence powers in the Middle East.

"I think the Iranians are shocked now, the Russians, the Chinese, no one would believe Trump would do that," he said, adding that Iran, in the short run, was likely to retaliate against the U.S. or its allies, and possibly against Israel. But he said in the long run, the loss of Soleimani — who had also been on Israel's radar for some time — would weaken Iran's capabilities across the region.

For Iran, the killing represents the loss of a cultural icon who represented national pride and resilience while facing U.S. sanctions. While careful to avoid involving himself in politics, Soleimani's profile rose sharply as the U.S. and Israel blamed him for Iranian proxy attacks abroad.

While Iran's conventional military has suffered under 40 years of American sanctions, the Guard has built up a ballistic missile program. It also can strike asymmetrically in the region through forces like Lebanon's Hezbollah and Yemen's Houthi rebels.

As the head of the Quds, or Jerusalem, Force of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, Soleimani led all of its expeditionary forces and frequently shuttled between Iraq, Lebanon and Syria. Quds Force members have deployed into Syria's long war to support President Bashar Assad, as well as into Iraq in the wake of the 2003 U.S. invasion that toppled dictator Saddam Hussein, a longtime foe of Tehran.

Soleimani rose to even greater prominence by advising forces fighting the Islamic State group in Iraq and in Syria.

U.S. officials say the Guard under Soleimani taught Iraqi militants how to manufacture and use especially deadly roadside bombs against U.S. troops after the invasion of Iraq. Iran has denied that.

Soleimani's killing follows the New Year's Eve protests orchestrated by Iran-backed militias at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, which were not related to the anti-government demonstrations.

The two-day embassy attack, which ended Wednesday, prompted Trump to order about 750 U.S. troops deployed to the Middle East. No one was killed or wounded in the protests, which breached the compound but appeared to be mainly a show of force.

The breach at the embassy followed U.S. airstrikes Sunday that killed 25 fighters of Kataeb Hezbollah, an Iran-backed militia operating in Iraq and Syria. The U.S. military said the strikes were in retaliation for last week's killing of an American contractor in a rocket attack on an Iraqi military base that the U.S. blamed on the militia.

U.S. officials have suggested they are prepared to engage in further retaliatory attacks in Iraq.

"The game has changed," Defense Secretary Mark Esper said Thursday.

Karam reported from Beirut. Associated Press writers Robert Burns and Zeke Miller in Washington; Jon Gambrell in Dubai, United Arab Emirates; Nasser Karimi and Amir Vahdat in Tehran, Iran; Bassem Mroue and Sarah El Deeb in Beirut; and Joseph Krauss and Josef Federman in Jerusalem contributed to this report.

## AP Explains: Rising Iran, US tension after general's killing

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The U.S. airstrike that killed a prominent Iranian general in Baghdad raises tensions even higher between Tehran and Washington, after months of trading attacks and threats

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across the wider Middle East.

How Iran will respond remains in question as well, though its supreme leader warned that a "harsh retaliation is waiting" for those who killed Revolutionary Guard Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani early Friday morning. That could include anything, from challenging U.S. warships in the Persian Gulf, firing ballistic missiles or deploying the asymmetrical proxy forces Iran has cultivated to cover for its long-sanctioned conventional forces.

Soleimani's death is the latest in a series of escalating incidents traces back to President Donald Trump's decision in 2018 to unilaterally withdraw America from Iran's nuclear deal with world powers. However, overall enmity between Iran and the U.S. date back to its 1979 Islamic Revolution, as well as a 1953 U.S.-backed coup in Tehran that cemented the power of its ruling shah over an elected prime minister.

Here's where things stand now:

## THE GENERAL'S KILLING

A U.S. airstrike near Baghdad's international airport killed Soleimani, 62, as well as Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy commander of Iran-backed militias in Iraq known as the Popular Mobilization Forces, and five others. The Defense Department said it killed Soleimani because he "was actively developing plans to attack American diplomats and service members in Iraq and throughout the region." It also accused Soleimani of approving the attacks on the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad earlier this week. Soleimani led the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard's Quds, or Jerusalem, Force. That included overseeing forces fighting in Syria, as well as militias that targeted U.S. forces in Iraq with deadly bomb attacks after the 2003 invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein.

## MONTHS OF ATTACKS

Citing an unspecified threat from Iran, the White House in May ordered a U.S. aircraft carrier to rush to the Persian Gulf. Soon after, explosions the U.S. blames on Iranian-laid mines targeting oil tankers near the crucial Strait of Hormuz, through which 20% of all oil passes. Iran denied being involved, though it did seize oil tankers in response to one of its tankers being seized off Gibraltar. Iran also shot down a U.S. military surveillance drone. Trump pulled back from retaliating for the attack. Meanwhile, attacks on Saudi Arabia's energy industry escalated to a missile-and-drone strike in September temporarily halving its oil production. Israel meanwhile has repeatedly struck Iran-linked targets in Syria in recent years and has warned against any permanent Iranian presence on the frontier. The attacks culminated with American airstrikes hitting Iranian-backed militias in Iraq and those militiamen attacking the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad.

## IRAN'S FALTERING NUCLEAR DEAL

The attacks came after Trump's decision in May 2018 to withdraw America from Iran's nuclear deal with world powers. The 2015 accord saw Iran agree to limit its enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions. Trump re-imposed American sanctions and levied even harsher ones, crippling its crucial oil industry. Iran initially proposed a policy called "strategic patience," hoping to wait Trump out. But as Europe largely hasn't been able to offer Tehran a way around American sanctions, Iran has begun taking steps away from the deal. That has included breaking enrichment, stockpile and centrifuge limitations, as well as restarting its program at an underground facility. Tehran appears poised to take a new step away from the deal beginning from Sunday.

## IRAN'S MEANS OF RETALIATION

Iran's conventional military force is limited. The backbone of its air power remains pre-revolution American F-4s, F-5s and F-14s, with a mix of other Soviet, French and aging aircraft. That fleet is outgunned by the modern U.S.-supplied fighter jets flown by Israel and the Gulf Arab states. To counter that, Iran has put much of its money toward developing a ballistic missile program operated by the Guard. Iran could fall back on its regional militant allies or proxies to launch an attack, like Iraqi militiamen, Lebanon's Hezbollah or Yemen's Houthi rebels. The U.S. has blamed car bombs and kidnappings never claimed by Iran on Tehran as well. The Guard also routinely harasses U.S. Navy vessels in Persian Gulf and surrounding waterways, while Iran has surface-to-sea missile batteries along its coast as well.

## AMERICA'S BROAD MIDEAST PRESENCE

The Persian Gulf hosts a series of major American military installations. The U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet, which

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oversees the region, is based in Bahrain, an island nation off the coast of Saudi Arabia that is home to over 7,000 American troops. Kuwait hosts over 13,000 American troops and the U.S. Army's Central forward headquarters. Dubai in the United Arab Emirates is the largest port of call for the U.S. Navy outside of America. The UAE hosts 5,000 U.S. military personnel, many at Abu Dhabi's Al-Dhafra Air Base, where American drones and advanced F-35 jetfighters are stationed. The forward headquarters of the U.S. military's Central Command is at Qatar's sprawling Al-Udeid Air Base, home to some 10,000 American troops. In Oman, the sultanate allows thousands of overflights and hundreds of landings a year, while also granting access to ports and its bases. Meanwhile, U.S. forces are in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria.

## A HISTORY OF ENMITY

Tensions between Iran and the U.S. trace back decades. For Iranians, they point to the 1953 CIA-backed coup that toppled Mohammad Mosaddegh and cemented the power of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. Pahlavi served as a key U.S. ally for decades after, buying billions of dollars of weapons and allowing America to spy on the Soviet Union from his country. Over time, however, he eliminated all political opposition and seized all power in the country. By 1979, the fatally ill shah fled the country. The 1979 Islamic Revolution and the hostage crisis soon followed, a history the two countries remain captive to until today.

Follow Jon Gambrell on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/jongambrellAP](http://www.twitter.com/jongambrellAP).

## Indonesia capital floods leave 43 dead, 397,000 displaced

By NINIEK KARMINI Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — The death toll from floods in Indonesia's capital rose to 43 of Friday as rescuers found more bodies amid receding floodwaters, disaster officials said.

Monsoon rains and rising rivers submerged at least 182 neighborhoods in greater Jakarta and caused landslides in the Bogor and Depok districts on the city's outskirts as well as in neighboring Lebak, which buried a dozen people.

National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesman Agus Wibowo said the fatalities also included those who had drowned or been electrocuted since rivers broke their banks Wednesday after extreme torrential rains throughout New Year's Eve. Three elderly people died of hypothermia.

It was the worst flooding since 2013, when 57 people were killed after Jakarta was inundated by monsoon rains.

Floodwaters started receding in some parts of the city on Thursday evening, enabling residents to return to their homes.

Wibowo said about 397,000 people sought refuge in shelters across the greater metropolitan area as at their peak floodwaters reached as high as 6 meters (19 feet) in places.

Those returning to their homes found streets covered in mud and debris. Cars that had been parked in driveways were swept away, landing upside down in parks or piled up in narrow alleys. Sidewalks were strewn with sandals, pots and pans and old photographs. Authorities took advantage of the receding waters to clear away mud and remove piles of wet garbage from the streets.

Electricity was restored to tens of thousands of residences and businesses.

Jakarta's Halim Perdanakusuma domestic airport reopened Thursday after its runway was submerged. Nearly 20,000 passengers had been affected by the closure.

The head of the Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics Agency Dwikorita Karnawati said more downpours were forecast for the capital in coming days and the potential for extreme rainfall will continue until next month across Indonesia.

The government on Friday kicked off cloud seeding in an attempt to divert rain clouds from reaching greater Jakarta. Authorities warned that more flooding was possible until the rainy season ends in April.

The flooding has highlighted Indonesia's infrastructure problems.

Jakarta is home to 10 million people, or 30 million including those in its greater metropolitan area. It is prone to earthquakes and flooding and is rapidly sinking due to uncontrolled extraction of ground water.



Congestion is also estimated to cost the economy \$6.5 billion a year.

President Joko Widodo announced in August that the capital will move to a site in sparsely populated East Kalimantan province on Borneo island, known for rainforests and orangutans.

## Iran can call on powerful friends if conflict engulfs region

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — If Iran decides to follow through on its vow of harsh retaliation for the killing of its top general, it can call upon heavily armed allies across the Middle East that are within easy striking distance of U.S. forces and American allies.

It's a network that was developed over nearly two decades by Gen. Qassem Soleimani, who was killed along with senior Iraqi militants in a U.S. airstrike near Baghdad's international airport overnight. He enjoyed the fierce loyalty of tens of thousands of fighters in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and the Gaza Strip who received aid, arms and training from Tehran.

Iran has used such groups in the past to strike its regional foes, including Israel, and could mobilize them if the killing of Soleimani ignited an armed conflict — dramatically expanding the battlefield.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei warned that a "harsh retaliation is waiting" for the U.S. after the airstrike, calling Soleimani the "international face of resistance."

Here's a look at Tehran's allies in the Mideast:

### IRAQ MILITIAS

Iran has trained, financed, and equipped Shiite militias in Iraq that battled U.S. forces in the years after the 2003 invasion and remobilized to battle the Islamic State group a decade later.

The groups include Asaib Ahl al-Haq, Kataeb Hezbollah and the Badr Organization, all three led by men with close ties to Soleimani, the leader of Iran's elite Quds Force.

The leader of Kataeb Hezbollah, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, was killed in the strike that felled Soleimani. The U.S. blamed his group for a rocket attack on an Iraqi military base last week that killed a U.S. contractor. It responded with airstrikes over the weekend that killed 25 of his fighters.

The militias fall under the umbrella of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces, a collection of mostly Shiite militias that were incorporated into the country's armed forces in 2016. Together they number more than 140,000 fighters, and while they fall under the authority of Iraq's prime minister, the PMF's top brass are politically aligned with Iran.

U.S. forces and the PMF fought side-by-side against Islamic State militants after Iraq's parliament invited the U.S. back into the country in 2014. But in recent months militia leaders have called on U.S. troops to leave again, threatening to expel them by force if necessary.

### HEZBOLLAH

The militia, whose Arabic name translates into "Party of God," was established by Iran's Revolutionary Guard during Lebanon's civil war in the 1980s. Today it is among the most effective armed groups in the region, extending Iran's influence to Israel's doorstep.

Hezbollah was formed to combat Israel following its invasion of Lebanon in 1982. It waged an 18-year guerrilla war against Israeli forces, eventually forcing them to withdraw from Lebanon in 2000. Six years later, it battled Israel to a bloody stalemate in a month-long war.

Today, the group has an arsenal of tens of thousands of rockets and missiles that can reach deep into Israel, as well as thousands of highly disciplined and battle-hardened fighters. Hezbollah has fought alongside government forces in Syria for more than six years, gaining even more battlefield experience and expanding its reach.

At home, the group's power exceeds that of the Lebanese armed forces, and it is part of a political alliance that now leads the government and parliament.

Hezbollah has said it is not seeking another war with Israel, and it is not likely to join in any regional confrontation — at least not in the early stages — unless provoked. Hezbollah has lost hundreds of fight-

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ers in Syria, exacting a heavy toll on the Shiite community from which it draws most of its support.

## YEMEN'S HOUTHIS

Yemen's Shiite rebels, known as Houthis, swept down from the north and captured the capital, Sanaa, in 2014. A Saudi-led coalition entered the conflict on the side of the government the following year. The war has since killed tens of thousands of people and generated the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

Saudi Arabia views the Houthis as an Iranian proxy, and along with Western nations and U.N. experts has accused Tehran of providing arms to the rebels, including the long-range missiles they have fired into Saudi Arabia. Iran supports the rebels but denies arming them.

The Houthis have given up little ground since the coalition entered the war, and have targeted the Saudi capital, Riyadh, with long-range missiles. Last year they claimed a drone attack that shut down a major oil pipeline in Saudi Arabia, which responded with airstrikes on Yemen's rebel-held capital that killed civilians.

## GAZA MILITANTS

Iran has long supported Palestinian militant groups, including Gaza's Hamas rulers and particularly the smaller Islamic Jihad group.

Hamas fell out with Iran after the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings, losing millions of dollars in monthly assistance, but Tehran is said to have continued its military support to Hamas' armed wing.

Tensions have run high in Gaza since Israel's targeted killing of an Islamic Jihad commander last month, which set off a brief two-day bout of fighting. Hamas, which has been negotiating a period of calm with Israel through Egyptian mediators, stayed on the sidelines.

Hamas is in a severe financial crisis and appears to get most of its aid from Qatar, making it less likely that it would rally to Tehran's side in a regional conflict. But Islamic Jihad, still smarting from the recent fighting, could be keen to join in any regional conflict by firing rockets.

## 3 crashes, 3 deaths raise questions about Tesla's Autopilot

TOM KRISHER AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — Three crashes involving Teslas that killed three people have increased scrutiny of the company's Autopilot driving system just months before CEO Elon Musk has planned to put fully self-driving cars on the streets.

On Sunday, a Tesla Model S sedan left a freeway in Gardena, California, at a high speed, ran a red light and struck a Honda Civic, killing two people inside, police said.

On the same day, a Tesla Model 3 hit a parked firetruck on an Indiana freeway, killing a passenger in the Tesla.

And on Dec. 7, yet another Model 3 struck a police cruiser on a Connecticut highway, though no one was hurt.

The special crash investigation unit of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is looking into the California crash. The agency hasn't decided whether its special-crash unit will review the crash that occurred Sunday near Terre Haute, Indiana. In both cases, authorities have yet to determine whether Tesla's Autopilot system was being used.

NHTSA also is investigating the Connecticut crash, in which the driver told police that the car was operating on Autopilot, a Tesla system designed to keep a car in its lane and a safe distance from other vehicles. Autopilot also can change lanes on its own.

Tesla has said repeatedly that its Autopilot system is designed only to assist drivers, who must still pay attention and be ready to intervene at all times. The company contends that Teslas with Autopilot are safer than vehicles without it, but cautions that the system does not prevent all crashes.

Even so, experts and safety advocates say a string of Tesla crashes raises serious questions about whether drivers have become too reliant on Tesla's technology and whether the company does enough to ensure that drivers keep paying attention. Some critics have said it's past time for NHTSA to stop investigating and

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to take action, such as forcing Tesla to make sure drivers pay attention when the system is being used.

NHTSA has started investigations into 13 Tesla crashes dating to at least 2016 in which the agency believes Autopilot was operating. The agency has yet to issue any regulations, though it is studying how it should evaluate similar "advanced driver assist" systems.

"At some point, the question becomes: How much evidence is needed to determine that the way this technology is being used is unsafe?" said Jason Levine, executive director of the nonprofit Center for Auto Safety in Washington. "In this instance, hopefully these tragedies will not be in vain and will lead to something more than an investigation by NHTSA."

Levine and others have called on the agency to require Tesla to limit the use of Autopilot to mainly four-lane divided highways without cross traffic. They also want Tesla to install a better system to monitor drivers to make sure they're paying attention all the time. Tesla's system requires drivers to place their hands on the steering wheel. But federal investigators have found that this system lets drivers zone out for too long.

Tesla plans to use the same cameras and radar sensors, though with a more powerful computer, in its fully self-driving vehicles. Critics question whether those cars will be able to drive themselves safely without putting other motorists in danger.

Doubts about Tesla's Autopilot system have long persisted. In September, the National Transportation Safety Board, which investigates transportation accidents, issued a report saying that a design flaw in Autopilot and driver inattention combined to cause a Tesla Model S to slam into a firetruck parked along a Los Angeles-area freeway in January 2018. The board determined that the driver was overly reliant on the system and that Autopilot's design let him disengage from driving for too long.

In addition to the deaths on Sunday night, three U.S. fatal crashes since 2016 — two in Florida and one in Silicon Valley — involved vehicles using Autopilot.

David Friedman, vice president of advocacy for Consumer Reports and a former acting NHTSA administrator, said the agency should have declared Autopilot defective and sought a recall after a 2016 crash in Florida that killed a driver. Neither Tesla's system nor the driver had braked before the car went underneath a semi-trailer that had turned in front of the car.

"We don't need any more people getting hurt for us to know that there is a problem and that Tesla and NHTSA have failed to address it," Friedman said.

In addition to NHTSA, states can regulate autonomous vehicles, though many have decided they want to encourage testing.

In the 2016 crash, NHTSA closed its investigation without seeking a recall. Friedman, who was not at NHTSA at the time, said the agency determined that the problem didn't happen frequently. But he said that argument has since been debunked.

Friedman said it's foreseeable some drivers will not pay attention to the road while using Autopilot, so the system is defective.

"The public is owed some explanation for the lack of action," he said. "Simply saying they're continuing to investigate — that line has worn out its usefulness and its credibility."

In a statement, NHTSA said it relies on data to make decisions, and if it finds any vehicle poses an unreasonable safety risk, "the agency will not hesitate to take action." NHTSA also has said it doesn't want to stand in the way of technology given its life-saving potential.

Messages were left Thursday seeking comment from Tesla.

Raj Rajkumar, an electrical and computer engineering professor at Carnegie Mellon University, said it's likely that the Tesla in Sunday's California crash was operating on Autopilot, which has become confused in the past by lane lines. He speculated that the lane line was more visible for the exit ramp, so the car took the ramp because it looked like a freeway lane. He also suggested that the driver might not have been paying close attention.

"No normal human being would not slow down in an exit lane," he said.

In April, Musk said he expected to start converting the company's electric cars to fully self-driving vehicles in 2020 to create a network of robotic taxis to compete against Uber and other ride-hailing services.



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At the time, experts said the technology isn't ready and that Tesla's camera and radar sensors weren't good enough for a self-driving system. Rajkumar and others say additional crashes have proved that to be true.

Many experts say they're not aware of fatal crashes involving similar driver-assist systems from General Motors, Mercedes and other automakers. GM monitors drivers with cameras and will shut down the driving system if they don't watch the road.

"Tesla is nowhere close to that standard," he said.

He predicted more deaths involving Teslas if NHTSA fails to take action.

"This is very unfortunate," he said. "Just tragic."

## Democrats call US killing of Iranian general 'reckless'

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden said Thursday that President Donald Trump has "tossed a stick of dynamite into a tinderbox" with the targeted killing of Iran's top general in an airstrike at Baghdad's international airport.

The former vice president joined other Democratic White House hopefuls in criticizing Trump's order, saying it could leave the U.S. "on the brink of a major conflict across the Middle East."

The Pentagon said the U.S. military killed Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the head of Iran's elite Quds Force, in Baghdad Friday at the direction of Trump. The attack is expected to draw severe Iranian retaliation against Israel and American interests. The Defense Department said Soleimani "was actively developing plans to attack American diplomats and service members in Iraq and throughout the region."

Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders released a statement saying, "Trump's dangerous escalation brings us closer to another disastrous war in the Middle East that could cost countless lives and trillions more dollars."

Democrats acknowledged the threat posed by Soleimani, with Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren calling him "a murderer, responsible for the deaths of thousands, including hundreds of Americans."

However, she added, Trump's "reckless move escalates the situation with Iran and increases the likelihood of more deaths and new Middle East conflict."

Entrepreneur Andrew Yang tweeted: "War with Iran is the last thing we need and is not the will of the American people. We should be acting to deescalate tensions and protect our people in the region."

The attack also drew criticism from Democrats who aren't running for president. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said the administration conducted the airstrike without consultation of Congress or an authorization for use of military force against Iran. She said it "risks provoking further dangerous escalation of violence."

But Republicans on Capitol Hill stood behind Trump. South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham said: "I appreciate President Trump's bold action against Iranian aggression. To the Iranian government: if you want more, you will get more."

And Sen. James Inhofe, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said: "America does not and should not seek war, but it will respond in kind to those who threaten our citizens, soldiers and friends — as the President has long promised. De-escalation is preferable and possible — but only if our adversaries choose it."

## Sudan's women pursue soccer dream, challenging conservatives

By MARIAM FAM Associated Press

OMDURMAN, Sudan (AP) — All her life, Elham Balatone wanted to play soccer — like her brothers, like the boys on her street. But in the Sudan where she grew up, women could be flogged for wearing pants, let alone soccer shorts. She heard all the reasons why she had to give up her dream. It's a Muslim country; the uniform is inappropriate; the sport was meant for men.

She played anyway, wearing pants or putting on leggings underneath shorts.

"There's nothing in this world that I love more than soccer. Please let me play," she says she told her family. For years, she and other women played largely in the shadows, sometimes on dirt pitches they

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cleaned themselves, often bouncing from one spot to another.

The women finally took center stage when the world watched them play at a Khartoum stadium as the youth and sports minister and others celebrated Sudan's new, officially recognized women's soccer league. Balatone even had her family's blessings.

But it's more than just a game. The women's league became a field of contention as Sudan grapples with the transition from three decades of authoritarian rule that espoused a strict interpretation of Islamic Shariah law and, activists say, disenfranchised women in particular.

Transitional authorities have taken some steps to roll back the legacy of ousted President Omar al-Bashir. In November, they overturned a notorious "public order" law that the prime minister said had been used as a "tool of exploitation, humiliation," resulting in "atrocities" against women and youth. Rights defenders call it a step in the right direction, but say the fight is far from over.

Some ultraconservatives, however, have been pushing back. Preacher AbdulHay Yousif and others have painted soccer as part of a battle for Sudan's identity.

"What religion, what Shariah, what manhood would allow a Muslim woman to appear before men ... with her arms, legs and some of her thighs exposed and then run before them," Yousif told worshippers in October, shortly after the league, made up of 20 teams, started.

"By God, these people have not come ... for economic development or social prosperity or scientific elevation. They have come to destroy religion and morals."

He also denounced the youth and sports minister, a woman, saying she "doesn't believe in what we believe in" and is a follower of "an apostate" — comments that sparked a legal battle between him and the minister.

A pro-Shariah group that backs Yousif urged preachers "to use their pulpits to make the truth victorious and to defend the constants of Shariah ... and expose the government's secularization plots."

Critics argue some conservatives are using an old playbook in Sudan: weaponizing stringent religious views to target political opponents, control women and thwart change.

"Clearly this is part of an effort by Yousif to undermine the new government by stimulating a 'moral panic' regarding the subversion of gender roles. Partly it's about his religious views, but it is predominantly a patriarchal form of gender politics," said Willow Berridge, a lecturer in history at Newcastle University who has written about Sudanese Islamists.

Yousif and his supporters "tend to occupy the most uncompromising end of the religious spectrum in Sudan."

The preacher's diatribe has had little direct impact on the league. But Taghreed Awoda, an administrator with one of the teams, al-Difaa, and a feminist, said the showdown was part of a larger fight for change.

"To have a women's soccer league play in Sudan, this dismantles many of the main pillars underpinning the last regime," she said.

Under al-Bashir, laws like those restricting attire were inconsistently applied and disproportionately targeted the poor and less educated, as well as anti-regime activists, Awoda said. Women players were generally left alone if they kept a low profile, although one group was once briefly arrested, she said.

Preparations for the league began more than a year ago in line with the objectives of the international soccer federation FIFA, said Mervat Hussein, head of the women's soccer committee at the Sudan Football Association. The efforts accelerated after al-Bashir's removal, she said. FIFA, which sets criteria for developing women's soccer, says member associations have objectives to meet to obtain funding.

Women were at the forefront of the protests that eventually pushed the military to overthrow al-Bashir in April.

Hala Al Karib, regional director of the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, said this should have translated into more rights, but many laws discriminating against women remain in place even after the public order law was reversed.

She said some hardline Islamists are fighting for their interests after losing clout in al-Bashir's fall, arguing their rhetoric finds little resonance. Women's issues usually "get turned into bargaining chips" and risk

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being sacrificed to appease hardline groups, she said.

In the midst of all the wrangling is the story of women who say they just want to play soccer.

"These are people who have struggled, toiled and have pressed ahead in the face of so many attempts to destroy their talents," said Amany Anas, a player for al-Tahadi team. "Now the moment has come when they can show people that women could play just like men."

Al-Difaa player Fatima Gadal said in the past players sometimes used their own money to buy balls and gear. At times, she skipped buying food to afford bus fare to go play. "We were very much so on the margins."

Some things are still austere. After a recent game in Omdurman, Khartoum's twin city, the al-Difaa team squeezed into a minibus with cracked windows, rusty interiors and not enough seats. The engine soon quit and team members pushed the bus, cheering when the engine restarted.

The players hope official recognition will now result in more opportunities. Some families asked to enroll their daughters after they saw the league, said Anas.

At the Omdurman game, the players picked up fans — men and women.

One spectator, Akram Abdel-Aziz, said he didn't expect to see women play soccer in Sudan.

"It's a lovely thing that I hope will continue. I love the courage of the women on the field," he said. "I pray and I am a believer ... and I can see that women are covered up and dressed modestly."

On the field, most players wear leggings under their shorts, but otherwise are in regular soccer kit, and many don't cover their hair.

Some are not convinced. After praying at the mosque where Yousif preaches, a woman who gave her name only as Balqis said she wouldn't allow her daughters to follow in the players' footsteps, stressing the need for modest attire.

"We're Muslim people and we love our Islam and how religious we are," she said. Women sports were fine in closed areas, she said.

The players say there's no conflict between their faith and their sport.

Gadal said she once heard men at the stadium saying women playing the game was "haram," or religiously forbidden, and the players belonged at home. She ignored them.

"I fast, I pray and I perform my Islamic duties. I see no problem," she said, pointing out that numerous Muslim countries field women's soccer teams.

Balatone, who was raised in a conservative household that is "religious but not extremist," said she once explained to her brother why she was so determined to play.

She had already given up a lot. She had three passions: singing, soccer and English. She couldn't afford college, she dropped singing because she was told it's haram.

"When it came to soccer, I said 'Excuse me, I cannot let soccer go,'" she said. "We live and breathe soccer."

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Associated Press writer Samy Magdy in Cairo contributed.

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## **Iraqi militant killed by US worked with Iran for decades**

**By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA and BASSEM MROUE Associated Press**

BAGHDAD (AP) — Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, a veteran Iraqi militant who was closely allied with Iran and rose to be a senior militia commander during the war against the Islamic State group, was killed overnight Friday in a U.S. strike that also felled Iran's top general.

Al-Muhandis was the deputy commander of the Popular Mobilization Forces, an umbrella group of mostly Shiite paramilitaries. He was also the founder of the Kataeb Hezbollah, or Hezbollah Brigades. The U.S. blamed the group, which is separate from the Lebanese Hezbollah movement, for a rocket attack in northern Iraq last week that killed a U.S. contractor.

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The militias, many of which are backed by Iran and trace their roots back to the Shiite insurgency against U.S. forces following the 2003 invasion, mobilized in 2014 when the Islamic State group swept across northern and western Iraq.

Al-Muhandis, who had spent much of his life as a secretive operative in Iran's regional shadow wars, emerged as a public face of the force, a tall man with a gray beard and thick glasses who was often seen on the front lines directing his fighters by radio.

He was killed in an American airstrike near Baghdad's international airport around midnight along with Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the commander of Iran's elite Quds Force and the architect of its regional military alliances. Also killed was al-Muhandis' son-in-law Mohammed Rida al-Jaberi.

The PMF said in a statement that al-Muhandis' body was destroyed beyond recognition.

The 56-year-old militant, born Jamal Jaafar Ebrahimi but best known by his nom de guerre, began his political life with the Dawa party, a Shiite Islamist group that was crushed by Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein in the 1970s. Like others in the party, including the future Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, al-Muhandis fled abroad and joined forces with Iran.

Al-Muhandis spent the next few decades in Kuwait and Iran, working closely with the Revolutionary Guard, especially during the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war. During his stay in Iran in the 1980s and 1990s, al-Muhandis worked with the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq and its military wing, the Badr Brigades.

After the U.S.-led invasion in 2003 that toppled Saddam, al-Muhandis like many other Shiite leaders, returned to Iraq and played role in politics, at one point serving as a member of parliament. Under Soleimani's direction, Iran steadily expanded its influence, forging close ties with Shiite militant groups as well as major political factions. Al-Muhandis operated independently at first before founding Kataeb Hezbollah.

In 2009, the U.S. Treasury targeted al-Muhandis and Kataeb Hezbollah with sanctions, saying they "committed, directed, supported, or posed a significant risk of committing acts of violence against Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces."

He was also convicted of planning the 1983 bombings against the U.S. and French embassies in Kuwait in which five Kuwaitis were killed. He was sentenced to death in absentia in Kuwait over the case. He was also linked to a 1985 assassination attempt against the emir of Kuwait.

When Kuwait raised the case of the bombings with Iraqi officials in the mid-2000s, al-Muhandis relocated to Iran. He did not return until after the U.S. withdrawal in 2011.

He re-emerged during the war against the Islamic State group, when his forces battled the Sunni extremists across western Iraq and eastern Syria. Those efforts also helped Iran to carve out a corridor of influence stretching across the Middle East to Lebanon and Israel's doorstep.

Al-Muhandis used to give speeches in Arabic and Farsi.

In one of his speeches, al-Muhandis thanked Iran and specifically Soleimani for joining the fight against IS and sending weapons and ammunition by land and air.

"They gave what they could immediately," al-Muhandis said. "This courage and generosity came at a critical time."

"When people speak about American and Russian weapons we ask them where were they in June 2014," al-Muhandis said. That was the month IS seized large parts of Iraq, pushing all the way to the outskirts of Baghdad.

Today the PMF and allied militias control large parts of Iraq and neighboring Syria, where they are allied with President Bashar Assad and the Lebanese Hezbollah. Israel and the U.S. view the groups as part of an aggressive Iranian campaign to dominate the region.

Over the summer, PMF groups blamed Israel for mysterious drone attacks that targeted their positions in Iraq. The strikes eventually lead to the restructuring of the PMF to integrate them into the Iraqi military. The restructuring was approved by Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi.

On Sunday, U.S. airstrikes hit Kataeb Hezbollah posts in eastern Syria and western Iraq, killing 25 fighters and wounding dozens. Washington said the strikes were in retaliation for an attack on a base in northern Iraq that killed an American contractor and wounded four others.

Shiite militiamen and supporters retaliated by holding violent protests outside the U.S. Embassy for two



days, causing damage to the entrances of the embassy. They withdraw on Wednesday following request from Iraqi officials.

In a recent interview, al-Muhandis was asked whether he sees himself one day outside the Popular Mobilization Forces. "It's possible," he replied. "God willing, as a martyr."

Al-Muhandis is survived by his Iranian wife and two daughters.

Mroue reported from Beirut.

## Castro's exit is latest blow to diversity of 2020 field

By PAUL J. WEBER and COREY WILLIAMS Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — The 2020 Democratic presidential primary initially featured the most racially diverse field in history. Now, with one month until voting begins, the top tier of candidates is all white.

Candidates of color have rapidly seen their fortunes fall over the past month. On Thursday, Julián Castro, the only Latino in the race, called it quits. Sen. Kamala Harris, a black woman, exited the race in December. Sen. Cory Booker, another black candidate, failed to qualify for the last debate, and both he and Andrew Yang, an Asian American entrepreneur, are at risk of missing out on the next forum.

The trajectory has frustrated and confounded Democrats, a party that counts on broad support from minority voters in presidential elections. It's also raised concerns that issues facing minority voters could be marginalized during the White House race.

"When the field becomes less diverse, there's going to be a shift from poor folks and voters of color and the need to engage them and get them excited about the Democratic ticket," said Sonja Diaz, founding director of UCLA's Latino Policy and Politics Initiative. "It leaves a gap in the party's capacity to meaningfully address the policy issues that are relevant to voters of color."

Castro, 45, ran as an unabashed liberal who courted the party's ascendant left wing, and he was one of the most vocal candidates when addressing issues affecting the nation's poor. He pushed his rivals to embrace decriminalizing border crossings, and the former Obama housing secretary was the first to call for President Donald Trump's impeachment.

But Castro left less of a mark on voters: He languished around 1% in polls throughout much of his year-long campaign and by October had raised less than \$8 million total.

The remaining candidates of color have sought to raise the alarm about the declining diversity of the Democratic field.

When Harris dropped out of the race last month, Castro said the California senator had been held to a different standard by the media — one that he called "grossly unfair." He said women and candidates of color were being pushed aside in the race because of what he called "the media's flawed formula for 'electability.'" He also ran an ad in majority-white Iowa, arguing that the state should no longer vote first in Democrats' nominating process because it doesn't reflect the diversity of the party.

After Castro ended his campaign on Thursday, Booker sent his supporters a fundraising appeal, bemoaning "yet another person of color exiting a field of candidates that began as the most diverse in our nation's history."

Yang, a political novice, has had some unexpected success. He announced Thursday that he had raised \$16.5 million in the final three months of 2019, a formidable sum that could allow him to stay in the race for months to come.

Hawaii Rep. Tulsi Gabbard, who's American Samoan and Hindu, and Deval Patrick, who was the first black governor of Massachusetts, also remain in the race.

Jeronimo Cortina, a political science professor and associate director of the Center for Mexican American Studies at the University of Houston, said the remaining candidates of color still have an opportunity to engage minority voters in a way that "will be completely different than how they engage middle-aged white male or white female voters ... bread and butter issues, being able to pay kids' way through college

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and not lose your house, and this is how we are going to do it.”

And minority voters say they are eager for that perspective.

“I think that it helps to give a different viewpoint of what’s happening in our country to have a ... person of color or a woman in that role, and I think it’s important in the long run as a country,” said Zuri Finlayson, 31, a manager of a Milwaukee coffee shop who is black.

To Mabel Tucker, a retired surgery aide from Milwaukee, having a person of color or woman on the ticket isn’t as important as having someone who represents her views.

“Health care, the minimum wage needs to be raised,” said Tucker, who also is black. She said most candidates aren’t talking enough about those issues.

Williams reported from Detroit. Associated Press writer Ivan Moreno contributed from Milwaukee.

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

## As 2020 dawns, Trump looks to boost evangelical support

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and ELANA SCHOR Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — In his first campaign move of the 2020 election year, President Donald Trump on Friday will visit a mega-church in Miami to highlight his support among evangelicals as he aims to shore up and expand support from an influential piece of his political base.

The president will host the kickoff meeting of “Evangelicals for Trump” just days after he was the subject of a scathing editorial in the Christianity Today magazine that called for his removal from office. But Trump’s campaign believes that his record in office, including the installation of two Supreme Court justices, will cement the votes of religious conservatives this year.

“I think his record in the past three years is rock-solid in things that the faith community cares about him,” said Jentezen Franklin, a pastor to a megachurch in Georgia. “We used to see politicians once every four years but this one is totally different in constantly reaching out to the faith community and we even get a chance to tell him when we disagree.”

Campaign officials said the Miami event was in the works well before the Christianity Today op-ed which raised fresh questions about the durability of his support among the conservative evangelicals who have proven to be a critical component of his political base.

The magazine’s editorial, written by editor-in-chief Mark Galli, envisions a message to those evangelical Christians who have remained stalwart Trump backers “in spite of his blackened moral record.”

“Remember who you are and whom you serve,” Galli’s editorial states. “Consider how your justification of Mr. Trump influences your witness to your Lord and Savior. Consider what an unbelieving world will say if you continue to brush off Mr. Trump’s immoral words and behavior in the cause of political expediency.”

The piece, which comes in a magazine founded by the late Rev. Billy Graham, was denounced by Trump, who tweeted “No president has done more for the evangelical community.”

Graham’s son, Franklin Graham, a major Trump supporters, also criticized his father’s former magazine. But most political observers doubt it will cause many evangelicals to desert Trump, who received more than 80 percent of their vote in 2016.

Still, the campaign is taking few chances, citing the president’s support for Israel, installation of federal judges and prison reform as way to further jolt evangelical turnout that could help them secure wins in states like Michigan, Florida, Pennsylvania, North Carolina and Georgia.

More than 5,000 people are expected to attend the event at the El Rey Jesús church. The kickoff of “Evangelicals for Trump,” which will be followed in the weeks ahead by the launches of “Catholics for Trump” and “Jewish Voices for Trump,” also comes days after Trump and his wife went to an evangelical Christmas Eve service in West Palm Beach rather than the liberal Episcopalian church in which they were married and often attend holiday services.

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Advisers believe that emphasizing religious issues may also provide inroads with Latino voters, who have largely steered clear of supporting the president. In particular, even a slight uptick with faith-focused Latinos could help Trump carry Florida and provide some needed breathing room in states like Texas.

"President Trump has appointed well over 180 solid, conservative federal judges, including two exemplary Supreme Court justices. He has defended religious freedoms and has stood as the most pro-life president we've ever had," said campaign press secretary Kayleigh McEnany. "Evangelicals for Trump will engage the Christian community nationwide to overwhelmingly re-elect President Trump in 2020."

)The event comes just day after a new poll revealed that white evangelical Protestants stand noticeably apart from other religious people on how the government should act on two of the most politically divisive issues at play in the 2020 presidential election.

Asked about significant restrictions on abortion -- making it illegal except in cases of rape, incest or to threats to a mother's life -- 37% of all Americans responded in support, according to the poll conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Those abortion limits drew 39% support from white mainline Protestants, 33% support from nonwhite Protestants and 45% support from Catholics, but 67% support from white evangelical Protestants.

A similar divide emerged over whether the government should bar discrimination against people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender in workplaces, housing or schools. About 6 in 10 Catholics, white mainline Protestants and nonwhite Protestants supported those protections, compared with about a third of white evangelical Protestants.

White evangelicals were also more likely than members of other faiths to say religion should have at least some influence on policy-making.

Rev. Franklin Graham pointed to Trump's record on abortion as a key driver of the president's support from his religious community.

"I don't think evangelicals are united on every position the president takes or says, but they do recognize he is the most pro-life-friendly president in modern history," Graham said in a recent interview. "He has appointed conservative judges that will affect my children and grandchildren's lives, long after he's gone."

But Democrats have shown strong interest in connecting with voters of faith, even evangelicals whom Trump is often assumed to have locked down. And some religious leaders believe people of faith may be turned off by Trump's personal conduct or record.

"Friday's rally is Trump's desperate response to the realization that he is losing his primary voting bloc — faith voters. He knows he needs every last vote if he wants a shot at re-election, as losing just 5% of the faith voters ends his chances," Pastor Doug Pagitt, the executive director of Vote Common Good. "In addition, he is trying to use this part of his base to give cover for his broken promises and immoral policies."

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Schor reported from New York. AP Polling director Emily Swanson contributed from Washington.

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The AP-NORC poll of 1,053 adults was conducted Dec. 5-9 using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 4.0 percentage points. Respondents were first selected randomly using address-based sampling methods and later were interviewed online or by phone.

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Online:

AP-NORC Center: <http://www.apnorc.org/>

## What's known and not known about Ghosn's case after escape

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Former Nissan Motor Co. Chairman Carlos Ghosn fled Japan this week while awaiting

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trial on financial misconduct charges and appeared in Lebanon. A look at the unfolding case of the fallen superstar of the auto industry:

## WHERE HE IS

Ghosn, who is Lebanese and also holds French and Brazilian passports, arrived in Lebanon Monday using a private plane via Turkey. Lebanese Justice Minister Albert Serhan told The Associated Press that Ghosn entered the country with a legal passport. Ghosn, who has not appeared in public, issued a statement saying he left to avoid a "rigged Japanese justice system." He later denied his family members' role in the escape, stressing he did it alone. He said he will talk to reporters next week. Serhan said Lebanese prosecutors will question Ghosn, but there are no charges pending against him in Lebanon.

## HOW HE GOT OUT

Little is known about how Ghosn was able to leave Japan. He picked a time where security lapses are more likely — government offices are closed all week for New Year holidays. But his whereabouts were closely monitored, including by 24-hour security camera coverage, and his lawyers supposedly had all his passports. He was able to use the internet only in his lawyer's office, and he was forbidden from seeing his wife, Carole Ghosn. They were recently allowed video calls, but only in the presence of his lawyer. His chief lawyer Junichiro Hironaka said he had no knowledge of the escape and was stunned by it. The dramatic disappearance has set off wild speculation he was carted off inside a musical instrument case.

## GHOSN AS FUGITIVE

Interpol issued a wanted notice Thursday for Ghosn. Lebanon, which does not have an extradition treaty with Japan, must now decide how to respond. Expectations are low that Lebanon would hand over Ghosn. Interpol's Red Notice is a non-binding request for law enforcement agencies to locate and provisionally arrest a fugitive. The notice is not an arrest warrant. Legal experts say Ghosn's ability to travel will be restricted.

## JAPAN'S RESPONSE

Japanese prosecutors raided Ghosn's Tokyo home Thursday. Prosecutors had opposed his release on bail. Turkey made several arrests as part of an investigation into how he passed through the country. Japanese government officials have not said anything in public about Ghosn's escape but they revoked the 1.5 billion yen (\$14 million) bail. Trying someone in absentia is rare in Japan. A trial dealing with allegations against Nissan as a company and Greg Kelly, another Nissan executive, will continue. A date has not been set.

## THE CHARGES

Ghosn, first arrested in November 2018, has repeatedly denied the charges against him. Part of the allegations centers around Ghosn failing to report in official documents compensation promised to him. Ghosn has said those payments were never decided on. Nissan filed additional papers concerning the compensation after his arrest. Other charges of breach of trust involve Nissan money allegedly diverted to Ghosn for personal gain, including payments in Oman and Saudi Arabia. Ghosn has said those payments were for legitimate services. Prosecutors have released few specifics, saying they will do so at the trial. If convicted on all counts, Ghosn could face the maximum penalty of 15 years in prison. The conviction rate in Japan is higher than 99%.

## GHOSN AS STAR

Ghosn built a stellar reputation for his managerial acumen in transforming Nissan over the last two decades from near-bankruptcy to one of the biggest global auto brands. Several of his books on management were translated in Japanese, and one depicts him as a manga comic book character. Especially in his early years, he was cheered as a celebrity, admired for his hard work, and dubbed "7-11" after the convenience-store chain for the hours he kept. He is still a national hero in Lebanon, with close ties to senior politicians. After his arrest, he has become a symbol of protest against Japan's so-called "hostage justice" system, which human rights advocates have long criticized as unfair and too reliant on confessions. Ghosn was held in detention for 130 days before posting bail.

## OTHER TWISTS

Two Lebanese lawyers have submitted a report to the Public Prosecutor's Office in Beirut against Ghosn, saying he violated Lebanese law by visiting Israel. The two countries are in a state of war. Ghosn visited



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Israel in 2008 to launch electric cars, and met the prime minister and the president. Journalists, including those from Japan, are flocking to Ghosn's rose-colored house in Beirut's affluent neighborhood of Ashrafieh. A Lebanese lawyer who said he worked for Nissan told reporters the building belonged to Nissan, which Ghosn also confirmed. Nissan officials have pointed to Ghosn's extravagant lifestyle, including expensive chandeliers and a sarcophagus buried beneath transparent walkways at the Beirut residence.

## NISSAN'S FUTURE

Nissan's brand has been seriously tarnished, and its sales and profits are tumbling. Ghosn was such a key figure for the brand in Japan, where foreign executives are still relatively rare, that it would be a challenge for anyone to fill his shoes. His successor, Hiroto Saikawa, resigned in September after financial misconduct allegations related to a dubious income surfaced against him. Nissan picked Makoto Uchida, who used to head its China business, as its new chief executive. What happens to Nissan's alliance with Renault SA of France, engineered by Ghosn, is a bigger question. Experts say the alliance is irreversible because so much is shared between the automakers, including model development, manufacturing sites and vehicle parts. Ghosn has said his arrest was prompted by those who opposed a fuller merger between Nissan and Renault. Renault owns 44% of Nissan, but in recent years, until Ghosn's downfall, Nissan had grown more profitable than Renault. Nissan has been historically closely associated with Japanese pride. Uchida has affirmed the importance of the alliance and promised to restore Nissan's credibility.

Associated Press writers Bassem Mroue and Aj Naddaff in Beirut, Lebanon, contributed to this report.

Follow Yuri Kageyama at <https://twitter.com/yurikageyama> and Bassem Mroue at <https://twitter.com/bmroue>

## US kills Iran's most powerful general in Baghdad airstrike

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA and ZEINA KARAM Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — The United States killed Iran's top general and the architect of Tehran's proxy wars in the Middle East in an airstrike at Baghdad's international airport early on Friday, an attack that threatens to dramatically ratchet up tensions in the region.

The targeted killing of Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the head of Iran's elite Quds Force, could draw forceful Iranian retaliation against American interests in the region and spiral into a far larger conflict between the U.S. and Iran, endangering U.S. troops in Iraq, Syria and beyond.

The Defense Department said it killed Soleimani because he "was actively developing plans to attack American diplomats and service members in Iraq and throughout the region." It also accused Soleimani of approving the attacks on the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad earlier this week.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei warned that a "harsh retaliation is waiting" for the U.S.

Iranian state TV carried a statement by Khamenei also calling Soleimani "the international face of resistance." Khamenei declared three days of public mourning for the general's death.

Also, an adviser to Iran's President Hassan Rouhani warned President Donald Trump of retaliation from Tehran. "Trump through his gamble has dragged the U.S. into the most dangerous situation in the region," Hessameddin Ashena wrote on the social media app Telegram. "Whoever put his foot beyond the red line should be ready to face its consequences."

Iranian state television later in a commentary called Trump's order to kill Soleimani "the biggest miscalculation by the U.S." in the years since World War II. "The people of the region will no longer allow Americans to stay," the TV said.

The airport strike also killed Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, deputy commander of Iran-backed militias in Iraq known as the Popular Mobilization Forces, and five others, including the PMF's airport protocol officer, Mohammed Reda, Iraqi officials said.

Trump was vacationing on his estate in Palm Beach, Florida, but sent out a tweet of an American flag.

The dramatic attack comes at the start of a year in which Trump faces both a Senate trial following his impeachment by the U.S. House and a re-election campaign. It marks a potential turning point in the

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Middle East and represents a drastic change for American policy toward Iran after months of tensions.

Tehran shot down a U.S. military surveillance drone and seized oil tankers. The U.S. also blames Iran for a series of attacks targeting tankers, as well as a September assault on Saudi Arabia's oil industry that temporarily halved its production.

The tensions take root in Trump's decision in May 2018 to withdraw the U.S. from Iran's nuclear deal with world powers, struck under his predecessor, Barack Obama.

The 62-year-old Soleimani was the target of Friday's U.S. attack, which was conducted by an armed American drone, according to a U.S. official. His vehicle was struck on an access road near the Baghdad airport.

A senior Iraqi security official said the airstrike took place near the cargo area after Soleimani left his plane and joined al-Muhandis and others in a car. The official said the plane had arrived from either Lebanon or Syria.

Two officials from the PMF said Suleimani's body was torn to pieces in the attack, while they did not find the body of al-Muhandis. A senior politician said Soleimani's body was identified by the ring he wore.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to give official statements.

It's unclear what legal authority the U.S. relied on to carry out the attack. American presidents claim broad authority to act without the approval of the Congress when U.S. personnel or interests are facing an imminent threat. The Pentagon did not provide evidence to back up its assertion that Soleimani was planning new attacks against Americans.

Democratic Connecticut Sen. Richard Blumenthal said Trump owes a full explanation to Congress and the American people. "The present authorizations for use of military force in no way cover starting a possible new war. This step could bring the most consequential military confrontation in decades," Blumenthal said.

But Trump allies were quick to praise the action. "To the Iranian government: if you want more, you will get more," tweeted South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham.

For Iran, the killing represents more than just the loss of a battlefield commander, but also a cultural icon who represented national pride and resilience while facing U.S. sanctions. While careful to avoid involving himself in politics, Soleimani's profile rose sharply as U.S. and Israeli officials blamed him for Iranian proxy attacks abroad.

While Iran's conventional military has suffered under 40 years of American sanctions, the Guard has built up a ballistic missile program. It also can strike asymmetrically in the region through forces like Lebanon's Hezbollah and Yemen's Houthi rebels. The U.S. long has blamed Iran for car bombings and kidnappings it never claimed.

As the head of the Quds, or Jerusalem, Force of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, Soleimani led all of its expeditionary forces and frequently shuttled between Iraq, Lebanon and Syria. Quds Force members have deployed into Syria's long war to support President Bashar Assad, as well as into Iraq in the wake of the 2003 U.S. invasion that toppled dictator Saddam Hussein, a longtime foe of Tehran.

Soleimani rose to prominence by advising forces fighting the Islamic State group in Iraq and in Syria on behalf of the embattled Assad.

U.S. officials say the Guard under Soleimani taught Iraqi militants how to manufacture and use especially deadly roadside bombs against U.S. troops after the invasion of Iraq. Iran has denied that. Soleimani himself remains popular among many Iranians, who see him as a selfless hero fighting Iran's enemies abroad.

Soleimani had been rumored dead several times, including in a 2006 airplane crash that killed other military officials in northwestern Iran and following a 2012 bombing in Damascus that killed top aides of Assad. Rumors circulated in November 2015 that Soleimani was killed or seriously wounded leading forces loyal to Assad as they fought around Syria's Aleppo.

Soleimani's killing follows the New Year's Eve attack by Iran-backed militias on the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. The two-day embassy attack, which ended Wednesday, prompted Trump to order about 750 U.S. soldiers deployed to the Middle East.

It also prompted Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to postpone his trip to Ukraine and four other countries "to continue monitoring the ongoing situation in Iraq and ensure the safety and security of Americans in

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the Middle East," State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus said Wednesday.

The breach at the embassy followed U.S. airstrikes Sunday that killed 25 fighters of the Iran-backed militia in Iraq, the Kataeb Hezbollah. The U.S. military said the strikes were in retaliation for last week's killing of an American contractor in a rocket attack on an Iraqi military base that the U.S. blamed on the militia.

U.S. officials have suggested they were prepared to engage in further retaliatory attacks in Iraq.

"The game has changed," Defense Secretary Mark Esper said Thursday, telling reporters that violent acts by Iran-backed Shiite militias in Iraq — including the Dec. 27 rocket attack that killed one American — will be met with U.S. military force.

Karam reported from Beirut. Associated Press writers Robert Burns and Zeke Miller in Washington, Jon Gambrell in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Nasser Karimi in Tehran, Iran, and Bassem Mroue in Beirut contributed reporting.

## Backlog of toxic Superfund clean-ups grows under Trump

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER, MATTHEW BROWN AND ED WHITE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration has built up the biggest backlog of unfunded toxic Superfund clean-up projects in at least 15 years, nearly triple the number that were stalled for lack of money in the Obama era, according to 2019 figures quietly released by the Environmental Protection Agency over the winter holidays.

The accumulation of Superfund projects that are ready to go except for money comes as the Trump administration routinely proposes funding cuts for Superfund and for the EPA in general. The four-decade-old Superfund program is meant to tackle some of the most heavily contaminated sites in the U.S. and Trump has declared it a priority even while seeking to shrink its budget.

"There hasn't been a sense of urgency," said Violet Donoghue, who has lived for 31 years on Bon Brae Street in St. Clair Shores, Michigan. Toxic PCBs have poisoned some local soil, water and fish at nearby Lake St. Clair, and the neighborhood is one of the 34 Superfund sites where clean-up projects languished for lack of money in 2019.

"I feel many people have been harmed, but that's only my opinion," Donoghue said. She said the last word from the EPA was that soil would be removed from the front of her house. "Now when they say they're cleaning it, I say, 'OK, give me the date,'" she said.

The unfunded projects are in 17 states and Puerto Rico. They range from abandoned mines that discharged heavy metals and arsenic in the West to an old wood pulp site in Mississippi and a defunct dry cleaner that released toxic solvents in North Carolina.

Congress created the Superfund program in 1980 after the Love Canal episode and other notorious pollution cases. Its intent is to hold polluters responsible for cleanup costs or provide taxpayer money when no responsible party can be identified.

Trump "is focused on putting Americans first," EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler told a Senate environment committee early 2019. "There may be no better example than our success in the Superfund program."

"We are in the process of cleaning up some of the nation's largest, most complex sites and returning them to productive use," Wheeler said then.

But two former EPA officials whose work dealt with Superfund oversight said the growing backlog of stalled Superfund projects under the Trump administration, and steady or ebbing numbers of clean-up construction projects completed, point to a different picture.

"They're misleading Congress and the public about the funds that are needed to really protect the public from exposure to the toxic chemicals," said Elizabeth Southerland, who worked for 30 years at EPA, including as director of science and technology in the water office, before retiring in 2017. "It's detrimental."

This is a "regulatory failure," said Judith Enck, who served as the EPA's regional northeastern U.S. administrator under President Barack Obama.

Given the growing numbers of unfunded clean-up projects, "EPA should be knocking on the door of

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Congress and saying, give us more money to deal with the sites," Enck said.

Asked what the EPA spent money on instead, and why the agency didn't ask Congress for more to deal with the growing backlog, EPA spokeswoman Maggie Sauerhage offered few specifics Thursday.

The EPA's Superfund program "will continue to prioritize new construction projects based on which sites present the greatest risk to human health and the environment," Sauerhage said in an email. "Further, the agency maintains the authority to respond to and fund emergencies at these sites if there is an imminent threat to human health and the environment."

She pointed to some areas where Trump's Superfund effort was more on par with that of his predecessors. Long-term remedial efforts to make sure contamination didn't rebound at existing Superfund sites, for example, averaged 64 a year under Trump. That compares with an average of 60 a year in Obama's last five years.

But overall, the backlog of 34 unfunded projects is up from only 12 in 2016, Obama's last year.

At the site of another of 2019's unfunded Superfund projects, Montana's Upper Tenmile mining region, which includes the community of Rimini and a subdivision downstream, the EPA has been providing bottled water to residents for the past decade in response to water supplies polluted by about 150 abandoned gold, lead and copper mines.

Pollution still flows from the mines and into Upper Tenmile Creek more than 20 years after the area was added to the Superfund list.

About 6 miles from Rimini in the rural Landmark subdivision is a huge pile of contaminated soil that was removed from residential yards. It was supposed to be hauled away but now has weeds growing over it after sitting untouched for several years, said Patrick Keim, who lives nearby.

"It's a sword of Damocles hanging over us," Keim said. "It just seems counterproductive they would spend two or three million dollars re-mediating this piece of property, haul it off and stockpile it across the road and then run out of money and leave this big pile for everybody to look at."

Montana environmental regulators also are involved in the cleanup but say they need the EPA to come through with money for the work to resume, since the federal agency is providing 90 percent of funding.

Under Trump, the EPA has pointed to a different yardstick in declaring it was making progress on Superfund clean-ups — the number of cleaned-up sites officially deleted from the roster of more than 1,300 Superfund sites.

In 2019, for instance, the EPA said it had deleted all or part of 27 sites from the official Superfund list, saying that was the most deletions since the George W. Bush administration. But deletions from the list typically reflect clean-up work done over decades and often completed on the ground years ago, meaning Trump is sometimes taking credit for work done under his predecessors.

In 2018, for example, the EPA cited the seven Superfund sites fully or partially removed from the list in the previous year as a signature accomplishment of the Trump administration. Records showed the physical work was completed before Trump took office, The Associated Press reported at the time.

Sauerhage, the EPA spokeswoman, did not directly respond to questions about the backlog of 34 unfunded Superfund clean-up projects. The EPA posted the total on its website without fanfare the day after Christmas. Some of the projects that are ready to start have languished for lack of money since Trump's first year in office.

EPA has been one of the main focuses of Trump's efforts to cut federal regulations and oversight that he sees as burdening businesses. Trump each year has asked Congress for nearly one-third cuts in EPA's budget, and has sought much smaller cuts for Superfund.

Congress has kept both levels of funding roughly even.

White contributed from St. Clair Shores, Michigan, and Brown from Billings, Montana.

**Calls to loved ones reveal rough conditions before sinking**  
By BECKY BOHRER and MARTHA BELLISLE undefined



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JUNEAU, Alaska (AP) — Calls to loved ones in the lead-up to the sinking of a crab boat in the cold waters off Alaska revealed the rough conditions the crew faced, including icing that did not seem to rattle the boat's captain.

Gary Cobban Jr., the captain, was among five fishermen missing and feared dead after the Scandies Rose sank late Tuesday. Two others aboard were rescued. The Coast Guard did not release details Thursday on a possible cause, saying that talking to the survivors is part of the investigation.

Cobban's ex-girlfriend, Jeri Lynn Smith, told the Anchorage Daily News he called her in North Carolina about two hours before the boat sank to wish her a happy new year. She said the conditions hadn't seemed to worry him.

"When I talked to him, he told me the boat was icing and it had a list to it, but he didn't sound alarmed. He didn't sound scared," Smith said. "The boat ices. The boat ices every winter. It's just something they deal with. I didn't worry about it."

Smith said she wouldn't have hung up if she thought he was in a crisis.

Others listed as missing were David Lee Cobban, Arthur Ganacias, Brock Rainey and Seth Rousseau-Gano, according to the Coast Guard. The Coast Guard said it used helicopters, planes and a boat as part of a search effort that covered 1,400 square miles and ended Wednesday evening.

Ashley Boggs of Peru, Indiana, said Rainey called her shortly before the ship sank and said conditions were bad. The two had planned to marry after Rainey returned.

"I'm just praying and hoping they find him on land or something," Boggs told The Associated Press on Thursday.

Those rescued told authorities they were the only ones who made it into a life raft, the Anchorage Daily News reported. Dean Gribble Jr., who's appeared on the Discovery Channel documentary series "Deadliest Catch," and John Lawler suffered hypothermia but were released from a hospital.

The boat was carrying a load of crabbing pots for the start of the winter season, Dan Mattsen, a partner in the vessel managed by Seattle-Based Mattsen Management, told the Seattle Times.

Crabbing boats endure perilous conditions in Alaska waters that have been immortalized in "Deadliest Catch." Workers face dangers like huge waves, harsh weather and massive crab pots that could crush them.

Commercial fishing is one of the country's most dangerous occupations, according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. It said there were 179 deaths in Alaska fisheries between 2000 and 2014, the most recent numbers available.

From 2010 to 2014, there were 66 vessel disasters in Alaska waters, including sinkings and fires, that killed 15 people, the agency said. The leading causes of fatal disasters were instability and being hit by large waves, it said. Many of the fatal incidents involved small boats known as skiffs.

Different fisheries have different risks, said Samantha Case, an epidemiologist in the agency's Commercial Fishing Research Program.

Case said steps have been taken aimed at making the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands crab fishery safer, including Coast Guard stability checks for vessels; changes in fisheries management that reduced some operational risk, such as a "race to fish" competitiveness; and increased marine safety training.

In a high-profile incident in 2017, six people died in the capsizing and sinking of the vessel Destination in the Bering Sea, which Coast Guard Rear Admiral J.P. Nadeau called a "tragic and preventable accident." An investigative report found stability, weight issues and excess ice accumulation from freezing spray as contributing factors.

A study Case was a part of looked at survival factors for crew on vessels in Alaska that sank and found use of life rafts and immersion suits increased chances for survival when a boat had to be abandoned. Immersion suits, which provide a bit of flotation and can help keep someone awaiting rescue warm, are critical for people who will be in water for longer periods, Case said.

The 130-foot (40-meter) Scandies Rose was traveling in an area with warnings about strong winds and heavy freezing spray, said Louise Fode, a warning coordination meteorologist with the National Weather Service.

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Its last known position was 170 miles (270 kilometers) southwest of Kodiak Island, and it sank about 10 p.m. Tuesday, the Coast Guard said. The vessel had sent out a mayday call.

Rescue crews battled winds of more than 40 mph (64 kph), 15- to 20-foot (4.5- to 6-meter) seas and visibility that was limited to a mile (1.5 kilometers), Petty Officer 2nd Class Melissa McKenzie said.

"That's rough conditions," she said.

The Coast Guard said it suspended the search after "exhausting all leads and careful consideration of survival probability."

McKenzie said the air temperature was about 10 degrees (12 below zero Celsius). The estimated water temperature was 43 degrees (6 degrees Celsius), the weather service said.

Rescuers saw a faint light in one life raft, but a medic lowered from a helicopter found it empty, the Anchorage Daily News reported. Another faint light was spotted about a half-mile (1 kilometer) away, where searchers found the two survivors.

The men told rescuers they were able to get into survival suits and didn't know if the other five crew members did, the newspaper reported.

David Otness, a retired crab fisherman in Cordova, Alaska, who spent more than 50 years in the industry, said it's dangerous work.

"It's known for its loss," he said. "We can count the years when that isn't the case. It's quite a life, but it's a labor of love and fear and respect for the world around you."

The size of the crab pots, which weigh about 700 pounds each, can pose problems in stormy weather, Otness said. They can get covered with ice, which causes the boat to be top heavy, he said.

"It's a dance, a ballet that transpires," Otness said. "Your center of gravity is so quickly disrupted."

Bill Rose of Seattle, who used to work on fishing boats in Alaska, said the conditions can be brutal — even "terrifying for someone who had never done it. But if it's all you can do to make a living and you're out there and you're used to it, you really don't think much of it."

He said on the right boat, a fisherman could make \$150,000 a year. "I mean, why wouldn't you do it?" he said.

Bellisle reported from Seattle. Associated Press writer Mark Thiessen in Anchorage, Alaska, photographer Ted Warren in Seattle and researcher Randy Herschaft in New York contributed to this report.

## Lebanon receives Interpol notice for ex-Nissan fugitive

By **BASSEM MROUE** and **AJ NADDAFF** Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Interpol issued a wanted notice Thursday for former Nissan chairman Carlos Ghosn, who jumped bail in Japan and fled to Lebanon rather than face trial on financial misconduct charges in a dramatic escape that has confounded and embarrassed authorities.

Lebanese Justice Minister Albert Serhan told The Associated Press in an interview that Lebanon "will carry out its duties," suggesting for the first time that the automotive titan may be brought in for questioning. But he said Ghosn entered the country on a legal passport, and he appeared to cast doubt on the possibility Lebanon would hand Ghosn over to Japan.

The Interpol notice is the latest twist in Ghosn's daring escape, which spanned three continents and involved private planes, multiple passports and international intrigue. Turkey made several arrests Thursday as part of an investigation into how he passed through the country.

Ghosn's arrival in Lebanon jolted the nation, already in the midst of a crippling political impasse and its worst economic crisis in decades.

Lebanon must now decide how to deal with the Interpol-issued Red Notice, which is a non-binding request to law enforcement agencies worldwide that they locate and provisionally arrest a fugitive. A Red Notice is not an arrest warrant and does not require Lebanon to arrest Ghosn.

Shortly afterward, Ghosn issued a statement — his second this week — seeking to distance his Lebanese wife and family from any role in his escape.

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"The allegations in the media that my wife Carole and other members of my family played a role in my departure from Japan are false and misleading. I alone organized my departure. My family played no role," he said.

Ghosn, who is Lebanese and also holds French and Brazilian passports, was set to go on trial in Japan in April. He arrived in Lebanon on Monday via Turkey and hasn't been seen in public since. In a statement Tuesday, he said he fled to avoid "political persecution" by a "rigged Japanese justice system."

How he was able to flee Japan, avoiding the tight surveillance he was under while free on 1.5 billion yen (\$14 million) bail, is still a mystery, though Lebanese authorities have said he entered the country legally on a French passport.

His lawyer in France, Francois Zimeray, told Japanese public broadcaster NHK TV that he was in frequent contact with Ghosn since he arrived in Lebanon, and Ghosn appeared to be filled with "a fighting spirit." Ghosn was eager to start clearing his name at the news conference next week, Zimeray said.

Ghosn, who grew up in Beirut and frequently visited, is a national hero to many in this Mediterranean country with close ties to senior politicians and business stakes in a number of companies. People take special pride in the auto industry executive, who is credited with leading a spectacular turnaround at Nissan beginning in the late 1990s and rescuing the automaker from near-bankruptcy.

Even as he fell from grace internationally, politicians across the board mobilized in his defense after his arrest in Japan in November 2018, with some suggesting his detention may be part of a political or business-motivated conspiracy. Lebanon's foreign minister repeatedly called for his release.

Serhan said prosecutors will summon Ghosn and listen to him, and "at a later stage if there are any measures to be taken, then the precautionary measures will be taken."

"We are a country of law and respect the law and ... I can confirm that the Lebanese state will implement the law," the justice minister said.

At the same time, Serhan said that Lebanon has not received an official extradition request from Japan, and he noted that the two countries do not have an extradition treaty.

"Mr. Ghosn arrived to Lebanon as any ordinary citizen. ... Lebanese authorities have no security or judiciary charges against him. He entered the border like any other Lebanese using a legal passport," he added.

There were mixed reactions in Lebanon to Ghosn's return, with some cheering his freedom and others lamenting his arrival as yet another "corrupt" Lebanese to contend with.

"I like this man. He has a brain and he developed Nissan and Renault from the ground up. He came back to his mother country which embraced him," said Ghassan al-Baba, a 52-year-old taxi driver and former employee of General Motors in Kuwait.

"He is a part of the corrupt, but the corrupt from the outside. Here, he didn't do anything wrong. On the contrary, he is going to bring money to Lebanon," he said, reflecting a longstanding Lebanese hope that Ghosn would one day help rescue Lebanon's failing economy.

Sadiq Taher, a 42-year-old contractor among anti-government protesters who have been demonstrating against corrupt Lebanese politicians for weeks, said Ghosn is crooked on a global level and Lebanon does not need more "financial whales."

In Turkey, the state-run Anadolu Agency said Turkish authorities detained seven people as part of an investigation into how Ghosn fled to Lebanon via Istanbul. The private DHA news agency reported that those detained are four pilots, a cargo company manager and two airport workers.

Meanwhile, prosecutors in Japan raided Ghosn's Tokyo home.

Japanese public broadcaster NHK TV, without identifying sources, reported Thursday that Ghosn had two French passports.

Japanese news reports said that there were no official records in Japan of Ghosn's departure but that a private jet had left from a regional airport to Turkey. The Hurriyet newspaper said the plane carrying Ghosn landed at Istanbul's Ataturk Airport at 5:30 a.m. on Dec. 29. Ghosn was not registered upon landing and was smuggled onto another plane that left for Lebanon, the paper reported.

Ghosn, who is charged in Japan with under-reporting his future compensation and breach of trust, has

repeatedly asserted his innocence, saying authorities trumped up charges to prevent a possible fuller merger between Nissan Motor Co. and Renault.

In another twist, two Lebanese lawyers submitted a report to the Public Prosecutor's Office against Ghosn Thursday, saying he violated Lebanese law by visiting Israel. "The two countries are in a state of war. Ghosn visited Israel in 2008 and met officials including the prime minister and the president. At the time he announced the launch of electric cars in Israel.

In Beirut's affluent residential neighborhood of Ashrafieh, several security guards stood outside Ghosn's rose-colored mansion Thursday along with about two dozen journalists. Since news of his arrival, journalists, including many from the Japanese media, have flocked outside the building, trying to capture any proof of his presence.

At one point, a Lebanese lawyer who said he worked for Nissan appeared, claiming the building belonged to the auto company, not to Ghosn.

One of Ghosn's neighbors, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said they are "split as to whether they are with or against his return."

"It sounds like his escape could be the new Netflix show," his wife joked.

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Associated Press writers Yuri Kageyama in Tokyo, Suzan Fraser in Ankara, Turkey, John Leicester in Paris and Zeina Karam in Beirut contributed reporting.

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Yuri Kageyama is on Twitter <https://twitter.com/yurikageyama>

Bassem Mroue is on Twitter <https://twitter.com/bmroue>

## **Attack on US Embassy exposes widening US-Iraq divide on Iran**

**By ROBERT BURNS AP National Security Writer**

WASHINGTON (AP) — The New Year's Eve attack on the U.S. Embassy compound in Baghdad has exposed a deepening divide between the United States and Iraq over Iran's role there, even as the Pentagon embarks on a more aggressive mission to counter Iranian influence across the Mideast.

"The game has changed," Defense Secretary Mark Esper said Thursday, telling reporters that violent acts by Iran-backed Shiite militias in Iraq will be met with U.S. military force.

Esper spoke before Iraqi TV and three Iraqi officials said Friday that Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the head of Iran's elite Quds Force, had been killed in an airstrike at Baghdad's international airport.

The officials said the strike also killed Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy commander of Iran-backed militias known as the Popular Mobilization Forces. The PMF blamed the United States for the attack, but there was no immediate comment from the U.S. or Iran.

The U.S. had previously retaliated to a Dec. 27 rocket attack, which killed one American, by launching air strikes that killed 25 fighters of an Iran-back militia.

And on Wednesday, upwards of 700 U.S. Army paratroopers arrived in Kuwait from their base at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Esper said they are "defensive support" that can be used if there is more trouble in Baghdad or elsewhere in the region. Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said additional forces are on alert to deploy, although he said no decision has been made yet to augment the battalion of paratroopers.

Milley, who has combat experience in Iraq, said Iraqi security forces are capable of preventing Iran-backed groups from threatening U.S. interests in Iraq.

"It's a question of political will," he said, alluding to the central issue of whether Iraq will choose to sustain its U.S. partnership, which many Iraqis see as an infringement on their sovereignty.

Parts of Iraqi society, on the other hand, detest Iran's influence, including the role of Iran-backed militias in the PMF, an auxiliary of the Iraqi security forces and nominally under Iraqi government control. The political influence of the PMF has risen in recent years, and their allies dominate the parliament and government. That has made them the target of anti-government protesters, who have attacked Iranian



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diplomatic missions and the local headquarters of parties affiliated with the militias across southern Iraq.

The U.S.-Iraq relationship, shaped in large part by the 2003 U.S. invasion to topple President Saddam Hussein, has been shaky for years. The invasion unleashed Sunni insurgent violence that had abated by 2011 but was followed in 2014 by the rise of the Islamic State extremist group, which swept across the Syrian border to capture wide swaths of Iraqi territory. U.S. forces returned to help Iraq regain control, but Iranian influence since has grown more overt.

The tensions in Iraq are amplified by the Trump administration's campaign to squeeze Iran. In 2018 it withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal and imposed economic sanctions, hoping to compel Tehran to negotiate a new and broader nuclear agreement. Iran in response has targeted military, diplomatic and economic interests of the United States and its Gulf allies through proxy forces like the group that attacked the U.S. Embassy compound in Baghdad.

The U.S. has about 5,200 troops in Iraq, mainly to train and advise Iraqi security forces fighting Islamic State remnants. Esper said the Pentagon has been studying a possible scaling down of that force, but he stressed that this is distinct from determining the type and number of combat forces that are needed to deal with Iran-related attacks like Tuesday's. The U.S. has thousands of forces elsewhere in the Gulf, including in Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain.

In his remarks at the Pentagon, Esper said the Iraqi government has fallen short of its obligation to defend its American partner. While saying the government's effort has "greatly improved" since Tuesday's storming of the U.S. Embassy compound by members of Kataeb Hezbollah, or KH, an Iran-supported militia proxy, Esper made clear his disappointment.

Asked by a reporter whether the Trump administration is asking the Iraqi government to disband or disarm Iran-backed militias, Esper said, "I don't think it's up to us to prescribe the steps they should take." He added, however, that the government needs "to double down" on efforts, thus far unsuccessful, to bring these groups more directly under government control. Some of them played significant roles in fighting the Islamic State group in northern and western Iraq.

In an interview Tuesday with CBS Evening News, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo spoke less directly about U.S. disappointment with Baghdad, saying the Iraqis had been "reminded" of their responsibility to protect the embassy compound. "And we told them where we thought there was risk that things weren't happening the way we needed it to happen," he said.

On Thursday, Pompeo spoke by phone with Mohammed al-Halbousi, the speaker of Iraq's Council of Representatives, and thanked him for his condemnation of the Dec. 31 attack on the U.S. Embassy compound, according to State Department spokesperson Morgan Ortagus. She said al-Halbousi agreed Iraq is obliged to prevent further attacks.

Esper said that for months the Iraqi government was urged "over and over" by senior American officials to do more to control the Iran-sponsored militia groups, such as KH, and to investigate those who instigate attacks on U.S. targets.

"We haven't seen sufficient action on their part," he said, adding that Iraqi leaders must "get the Iranian influence out of the country."

The defense chief said Baghdad also must hold the militia's leaders to account for recent violent acts, including the rocket assault last week on an Iraqi base near Kirkuk where about 100 U.S. troops were present and one American contractor was killed.

American retaliatory airstrikes on KH-linked facilities on Sunday were followed Tuesday by a protest demonstration in Baghdad that culminated in a breaching of the outer perimeter of the U.S. Embassy compound.

Esper said Iran or its proxy forces may be planning further strikes on American interests in the Middle East. Without providing details, he said the U.S. has "indications" that more Iranian provocations may be in the offing. If that happens, he said, the U.S. will take action — preemptively, if it has enough warning.

Separately, in a written statement Thursday, Esper said the U.S. is certain the attack on the embassy compound was carried out by Iran-supported Iraqi Shiite militias because key leaders of them were seen

in the crowd. He specifically referred to Kataeb Hezbollah.

Asked specifically about the likelihood of further provocations by Kataeb Hezbollah following the embassy attack, Esper said: "Do I think they may do something? Yes, and they will likely regret it."

Milley, the Joint Chiefs chairman, said the U.S. now has sufficient forces at the Baghdad Embassy to defend it.

"We are very confident that the integrity of that embassy is strong, and it is highly unlikely to be physically overrun by anyone," Milley said. "There is sufficient combat power there, air and ground, that anyone who attempts to overrun that will run into a buzz saw."

## 5 crew members feared dead after Alaska fishing boat sinks

By BECKY BOHRER and MARTHA BELLISLE Associated Press

JUNEAU, Alaska (AP) — Five fishermen missing after a crab boat sank in the frigid waters off Alaska were feared dead after authorities called off a search for those working in the one of the most dangerous industries in the U.S.

Two other crew members were rescued after the disaster Tuesday, telling authorities they were the only ones who made it into a life raft, the Anchorage Daily News reported. Dean Gribble Jr., who's appeared on the Discovery Channel documentary series "Deadliest Catch," and John Lawler suffered hypothermia but have been released from a hospital.

The Coast Guard said it used helicopters, planes and a boat to look for the missing crew members for 20 hours before ending the search late Wednesday because they were not likely to have survived.

The agency didn't release any details Thursday on what caused the boat to sink, saying that talking to the survivors is part of the investigation.

The boat, named the Scandies Rose, was carrying a load of crabbing pots for the start of the winter season, Dan Mattsen, a partner in the vessel managed by Seattle-Based Mattsen Management, told the Seattle Times.

Crabbing boats endure perilous conditions in Alaska waters that have been immortalized in "Deadliest Catch." Workers face dangers like huge waves, harsh weather and massive crab pots that could crush them.

Gary Knagin of Kodiak, Alaska, the brother-in-law of the boat's captain, Gary Cobban Jr., told The Associated Press that he doesn't think the five crew members will be found alive.

"We know the risks involved in this profession, and I'm not holding out hope," said Knagin, who worked on a crab boat for 30 years in Alaska's Bering Sea. "I've seen this too many times. There's a 13-hour window in those conditions, and they passed that."

Also missing are the captain's son David Lee Cobban, Arthur Ganacias, Brock Rainey and Seth Rousseau-Gano, the Coast Guard said.

The boat was traveling in an area with warnings about strong winds and heavy freezing spray, said Louise Fode, a warning coordination meteorologist with the National Weather Service.

The conditions didn't seem to worry the boat's captain, his ex-girlfriend told the Anchorage Daily News. Jeri Lynn Smith said Gary Cobban called her in North Carolina about two hours before the boat sank to wish her a happy new year.

"When I talked to him, he told me the boat was icing and it had a list to it, but he didn't sound alarmed. He didn't sound scared," Smith said. "The boat ices. The boat ices every winter. It's just something they deal with. I didn't worry about it."

Ashley Boggs of Peru, Indiana, also said Rainey, her fiance, called her New Year's Eve and said the conditions were bad. She hasn't given up hope.

"I'm just praying and hoping they find him on land or something," Boggs told AP.

The 130-foot (40-meter) boat sent a mayday distress call, and the Coast Guard launched a rescue.

The vessel's last known position was 170 miles (270 kilometers) southwest of Kodiak Island, near the southern tip of Alaska, and it sank about 10 p.m. Tuesday, the agency said.

Rescue crews arrived about 2 a.m. Wednesday and battled winds of more than 40 mph (64 kph), 15- to

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20-foot (4.5- to 6-meter) seas and visibility that was limited to a mile (1.5 kilometers), Petty Officer 2nd Class Melissa McKenzie said.

"That's rough conditions," she said.

McKenzie said the air temperature was about 10 degrees (12 below zero Celsius). The estimated water temperature was 43 degrees (6 degrees Celsius), the weather service said.

Rescuers saw a faint light in one life raft, but a medic lowered from a helicopter found it empty, the Anchorage Daily News reported. Another faint light was spotted about a half-mile (1 kilometer) away, where searchers found the two survivors.

The men told rescuers that they were able to get into survival suits and didn't know if the other five crew members did, the newspaper reported. The suits offer some flotation and hypothermia protection.

David Otness, a retired crab fisherman in Cordova, Alaska, who spent more than 50 years in the industry, said it's dangerous work.

"It's known for its loss," he said. "We can count the years when that isn't the case. It's quite a life, but it's a labor of love and fear and respect for the world around you."

The sheer size of the crab pots, which weigh about 700 pounds each, can pose problems in stormy weather, Otness said. They can get covered with ice, which makes the boat top heavy, he said.

"It's a dance, a ballet that transpires," Otness said. "Your center of gravity is so quickly disrupted."

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health calls commercial fishing one of the country's most dangerous occupations. It said there were 179 deaths in Alaska fisheries between 2000 and 2014, the most recent numbers available.

From 2010 to 2014, there were 66 vessel disasters in Alaska waters, including sinkings and fires, that killed 15 people, the agency said. Leading causes of fatal disasters were instability and being hit by large waves, it said.

Samantha Case, an epidemiologist at the agency's commercial fishing research program, said steps have been taken to make crab fishing safer in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands. That includes Coast Guard stability checks for vessels; changes in fishery management that reduced some risks like competitiveness; and increased marine safety training.

Rosseau-Gano has been fishing for years, traveling to Alaska from Washington state, said his sister-in-law, Ann Marie Rosseau.

"He loves the sea, and he loved fishing," she said.

Rosseau said the family spent time with him on Christmas, the day before he left for Alaska.

"He just had a light and energy about him," she said. "That just made everything better."

Bellisle reported from Seattle. Associated Press writer Mark Thiessen in Anchorage, Alaska, and researcher Randy Herschaft in New York contributed to this report.

## As Jewish enclaves spring up around NYC, so does intolerance

By MARY ESCH and RYAN TARINELLI Associated Press

MONSEY, N.Y. (AP) — For years, ultra-Orthodox Jewish families priced out of increasingly expensive Brooklyn neighborhoods have been turning to the suburbs, where they have taken advantage of open space and cheaper housing to establish modern-day versions of the European shtetls where their ancestors lived for centuries before the Holocaust.

The expansion of Hasidic communities in New York's Hudson Valley, the Catskills and northern New Jersey been accompanied by flare-ups of rhetoric aimed at new development that some say is cloaked anti-Semitism.

Now, a pair of violent attacks on such communities, just weeks apart, worry many that intolerance is boiling over.

On Dec. 10, a man and woman killed a police officer and then stormed into a kosher grocery in Jersey City, fatally shooting three people inside before dying in an hourslong gunfight with police. The slayings

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happened in a neighborhood where Hasidic families had recently been relocating.

And on Saturday, a man rushed into a rabbi's home in Monsey, New York, during a Hanukkah celebration, hacking at people with a machete. Five people were wounded, including one who remains hospitalized. Federal prosecutors said the man charged in the attack, Grafton Thomas, had written journals containing anti-Semitic comments and a swastika and had researched Hitler's hatred of Jews online.

At a meeting Monday hosted by U.S. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand in Rockland County, where Monsey is, some Jewish leaders blamed inflammatory rhetoric on social media and from local elected officials as contributing to an atmosphere ripe for anti-Semitic violence.

Days after the killings in Jersey City, a local school board member there, Joan Terrell-Paige, assailed Jews as "brutes" on Facebook, saying she believed the killers were trying to send a message with the slaughter. "Are we brave enough to explore the answer to their message?" she asked.

A widely condemned political ad last summer created by a local Republican group claimed that an Orthodox Jewish county legislator was "plotting a takeover" that threatens "our way of life."

Whether any of that heated rhetoric was a factor in the recent violence is unclear, but the legislator targeted in the video ad said that kind of hostile language has repercussions.

"In the last few years in Rockland County I have seen a rise in hate rhetoric, and I was able to foresee it would end in violence," said county legislator Aron Wieder. "You have seen on social media where the Orthodox community has been called a cancer, leeches, people who don't pay taxes. It has become normal and accepted to say derogatory and hateful things about Jewish people."

Swastikas have been scrawled around the county, and frightened parents are asking law enforcement for more visible security at synagogues and schools, Wieder said.

Bigoted messages have gone unchecked for years, said Rabbi Yisroel Kahan, administrative director of the Oizrim Jewish Council. He pointed to hateful comments on social media and false online rumors that have spilled over into everyday life.

"It has been tolerated for far too long," he said.

Hasidic families began migrating from New York City to suburban communities in the 1970s, hoping to create the sort of cohesive community some recalled from Europe.

Rockland County, 15 miles (24 kilometers) northwest of Manhattan, now has the largest Jewish population per capita of any U.S. county, with 31%, or 90,000 residents, being Jewish. The ultra-Orthodox population is highly visible in small towns like Monsey, where bearded Hasidic men in black overcoats and fedoras converse in Yiddish along the sidewalks and Orthodox women wear modest black skirts and head scarves as they go about their daily errands.

In small towns everywhere, resentment against newcomers and "outsiders" isn't uncommon. Proposals for multi-family housing complexes in sleepy communities of single-family homes often trigger fervent opposition complete with lawn signs and rowdy town board meeting crowds.

Yet the tone of the debates over growth in some areas where Hasidic families have been moving has been more intense.

In East Ramapo, there were legal fights after Hasidic voters, who generally do not send their children to public schools, elected a majority of members of the local school board.

Some towns have enacted zoning changes forbidding new houses of worship.

In several communities in New Jersey, including Tom's River and Jersey City, officials pushed back against an influx of Jewish families by enacted so-called "no knock" ordinances, barring real estate agents representing the Hasidic community from going door to door, offering to buy homes.

In the small town of Chester, 60 miles north of New York City in Orange County, New York Attorney General Letitia James recently announced action to fight housing rules that she said were being used to improperly prevent an influx of Hasidic Jews. Local officials have denied anti-Semitism was behind opposition to plans to build over 400 homes in the town of 12,000 residents.

Rockland County Executive Ed Day said the arguments over housing density involve legitimate policy issues and are the biggest challenge when it comes to accommodating the growing Orthodox Jewish community.

The Orthodox community has special needs, he said, like housing for large families and residences within



walking distance to a synagogue. That creates "demands that are counter to many of the communities they're residing in," Day said.

Questionable zoning decisions, he said, lead to resentment.

"Now the words start. Now the worst words continue. And this is where you have the problem," Day said.

Authorities haven't offered an explanation yet for what they think motivated the Jersey City attackers or Thomas to select their targets.

Thomas' lawyer and family have said he has struggled for years with mental illness and hadn't previously shown any animosity to Jews. He had grown up in New York City but was living with his mother in a small town about a 30 minute drive from Monsey.

Rabbi David Niederman, executive director of the Brooklyn-based United Jewish Organizations of Williamsburg, said he is offended by references to tensions over housing and population growth in discussions about the Monsey and the Jersey City attacks.

"If you have tensions, what you do is you sit down at a table; that's how you deal with tensions," Niederman said. "You don't go out and murder people. You don't go out with a butcher knife and almost kill a whole congregation."

Those violent attacks, he said, were motivated by "pure hatred."

Esch reported from Albany and Carolyn Thompson in Buffalo contributed to this report.

## US starts sending asylum seekers across Arizona border

By **ASTRID GALVAN** and **CHRISTOPHER SHERMAN** undefined

PHOENIX (AP) — The U.S. government on Thursday began sending asylum-seekers back to Nogales, Mexico, to await court hearings that will be scheduled roughly 350 miles (563 kilometers) away in Juarez, Mexico.

Authorities are expanding a program known as Remain in Mexico that requires tens of thousands of asylum seekers to wait out their immigration court hearings in Mexico. Until this week, the government was driving some asylum seekers from Nogales, Arizona, to El Paso, Texas, so they could be returned to Juarez.

Now, asylum-seekers will have to find their own way through dangerous Mexican border roads.

About 30 asylum seekers were sent to Nogales, Mexico, on Thursday, said Gilda Loureiro, director of the San Juan Bosco migrant shelter in Nogales, Sonora.

Loureiro said the migrants hadn't made it to the shelter yet but that it was prepared and has a capacity of about 400.

"We're going to take up to the capacity we have," she said.

Critics say the Remain in Mexico program, one of several Trump administration policies that have all but ended asylum in the U.S., puts migrants who fled their home countries back into dangerous Mexican border towns where they are often kidnapped, robbed or extorted.

A Human Rights First report released in December documented at least 636 public reports of violence against asylum-seekers returned to Mexico including rape, kidnapping and torture. Human Rights First said that was a steep increase over October, when the group had identified 343 attacks, and noted the latest figure is surely an under-count because most crime victims don't report.

The government calls the program Migrant Protection Protocols.

Nogales is now the seventh border crossing through which U.S. authorities returns migrants to Mexico to await court hearings. The policy was introduced in January 2018 in San Diego.

More than 56,000 people were sent back to Mexico by the end of November, according to Syracuse University's Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse. Of the more than 24,000 cases that have been decided, only 117, or less than 1%, have been granted asylum or some other form relief allowing them to stay in the United States.

But U.S. authorities have lauded the program, saying it's helped to significantly reduce illegal border crossings. The Border Patrol apprehended just over 33,000 people along the Southwest border in Novem-

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ber, compared to 144,000 in May, when border crossings peaked.

In a statement, acting Department of Homeland Security Secretary Chad Wolf said the program has been "an extremely effective tool."

"I am confident in the program's continued success in adjudicating meritorious cases quickly and preventing fraudulent claims," Wolf wrote.

A three-judge appeals court panel heard arguments Oct. 1 in San Francisco on a lawsuit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union to block the policy. The court has yet to rule.

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This story has been corrected to say Nogales is the seventh border city, not the eighth.

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Sherman reported from Mexico City. Associated Press writer Elliot Spagat contributed to this report.

## Q&A: How climate change, other factors stoke Australia fires

By **SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer**

Australia's unprecedented wildfires are supercharged thanks to climate change, the type of trees catching fire and weather, experts say.

And these fires are so extreme that they are triggering their own thunderstorms.

Here are a few questions and answers about the science behind the Australian wildfires that so far have burned about 5 million hectares (12.35 million acres), killing at least 17 people and destroying more than 1,400 homes.

"They are basically just in a horrific convergence of events," said Stanford University environmental studies director Chris Field, who chaired an international scientific report on climate change and extreme events. He said this is one of the worst, if not the worst, climate change extreme events he's seen.

"There is something just intrinsically terrifying about these big wildfires. They go on for so long, the sense of hopelessness that they instill," Field said. "The wildfires are kind of the iconic representation of climate change impacts."

Q: Is climate change really a factor?

A: Scientists, both those who study fire and those who study climate, say there's no doubt man-made global warming has been a big part, but not the only part, of the fires.

Last year in Australia was the hottest and driest on record, with the average annual temperature 2.7 degrees (1.5 degrees Celsius) above the 1960 to 1990, average, according to Australia's Bureau of Meteorology. Temperatures in Australia last month hit 121.8 degrees (49.9 degrees Celsius).

"What would have been a bad fire season was made worse by the background drying/warming trend," Andrew Watkins, head of long-range forecasts at Australia's Bureau of Meteorology, said in an email.

Mike Flannigan, a fire scientist at the University of Alberta in Canada, said Australia's fires are "an example of climate change."

A 2019 Australian government brief report on wildfires and climate change said, "Human-caused climate change has resulted in more dangerous weather conditions for bushfires in recent decades for many regions of Australia."

Q: How does climate change make these fires worse?

A: The drier the fuel — trees and plants — the easier it is for fires to start and the hotter and nastier they get, Flannigan said.

"It means more fuel is available to burn, which means higher intensity fires, which makes it more difficult — or impossible — to put out," Flannigan said.

The heat makes the fuel drier, so they combine for something called fire weather. And that determines "fuel moisture," which is crucial for fire spread. The lower the moisture, the more likely Australian fires start and spread from lightning and human-caused ignition, a 2016 study found.

There's been a 10% long-term drying trend in Australia's southeast and 15% long-term drying trend in the country's southwest, Watkins said. When added to a degree of warming and a generally southward

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shift of weather systems, that means a generally drier landscape.

Australia's drought since late 2017 "has been at least the equal of our worst drought in 1902," Australia's Watkins said. "It has probably been driven by ocean temperature patterns in the Indian Ocean and the long term drying trend."

Q: Has Australia's fire season changed?

A: Yes. It's about two to four months longer, starting earlier especially in the south and east, Watkins said. "The fires over the last three months are unprecedented in their timing and severity, started earlier in spring and covered a wider area across many parts of Australia," said David Karoly, leader of climate change hub at Australia's National Environmental science Program. "The normal peak fire season is later in summer and we are yet to have that."

Q: Is weather, not just long-term climate, a factor?

A: Yes. In September, Antarctica's sudden stratospheric warming — sort of the southern equivalent of the polar vortex — changed weather conditions so that Australia's normal weather systems are farther north than usual, Watkins said.

That means since mid-October there were persistent strong westerly winds bringing hot dry air from the interior to the coast, making the fire weather even riskier for the coasts.

"With such a dry environment, many fires were started by dry lightning events (storms that brought lightning but limited rainfall)," Watkins said.

Q: Are people starting these fires? Is it arson?

A: It's too early to tell the precise cause of ignition because the fires are so recent and officials are spending time fighting them, Flannigan said.

While people are a big factor in causing fires in Australia, it's usually accidental, from cars and trucks and power lines, Flannigan said. Usually discarded cigarettes don't trigger big fires, but when conditions are so dry, they can, he said.

Q: Are these fires triggering thunderstorms?

A: Yes. It's an explosive storm called pyrocumulonimbus and it can inject particles as high as 10 miles into the air.

During a fire, heat and moisture from the plants are released, even when the fuel is relatively dry. Warm air is less dense than cold air so it rises, releasing the moisture and forming a cloud that lifts and ends up a thunderstorm started by fire. It happens from time to time in Australia and other parts of the world, including Canada, Flannigan said.

"These can be deadly, dangerous, erratic and unpredictable," he said.

Q: Are the Australian trees prone to burning?

A: Eucalyptus trees are especially flammable, "like gasoline on a tree," Flannigan said. Chemicals in them make them catch fire easier, spread to the tops of trees and get more intense. Eucalyptus trees were a big factor in 2017 fires in Portugal that killed 66 people, he said.

Q: How can you fight these huge Australia fires?

A: You don't. They're just going to burn in many places until they hit the beach, Flannigan said. "This level of intensity, direct attack is useless," Flannigan said. "You just have to get out of the way... It really is spitting on a campfire. It's not doing any good."

Q: What's the long-term fire future look like for Australia?

A: "The extreme fire season in Australia in 2019 was predicted," said Australian National University climate scientist Nerilie Abram. "The question that we need to ask is how much worse are we willing to let this get? This is what global warming of just over 1 degree C looks like. Do we really want to see the impacts of 3 degrees or more are like, because that is the trajectory we are on."

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Follow Seth Borenstein on Twitter at @borenbears .

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## Co-creator defends suspected UAE spying app called ToTok

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — If the popular ToTok video and voice calling app is a spying tool of the United Arab Emirates, that's news to its co-creator.

Giacomo Ziani defended his work in an interview with The Associated Press and said he had no knowledge that people and companies linked to the project had ties to the country's intelligence apparatus, despite a recent report in The New York Times.

Millions downloaded the ToTok app during the several months it was available in the Apple and Google stores. Its surge in popularity was likely driven by the fact that it allowed users to make internet calls that have long been banned in the UAE, a U.S.-allied nation where the largest city is Dubai.

The ban means Apple iPhones and computers sold in the UAE do not carry Apple's FaceTime calling app. Calls on Skype, WhatsApp and other similar programs do not work.

Ziani, a 32-year-old native of Venice, Italy, said ToTok won rapid approval from UAE telecommunications regulators, something long sought by established competitors that remain banned. He attributed that decision to the monopoly on the telecom market held by two companies that are majority-owned by the government. ToTok's small market share, he said, would not cut as deeply into their business as major firms if allowed access.

In this nation of 9.4 million people where all but a sliver of the population comes from another country, ToTok represented what appeared to be the first government-blessed app that would allow them to connect freely to loved ones back home. That drew everyone from laborers to diplomatic staffers to download it amid a publicity campaign by state-linked and government-supporting media in the Emirates.

Ziani denied that the company collected conversation data, saying the software demanded the same access to devices as other common communication apps. Emirati authorities insisted that they "prohibit any kind of data breach and unlawful interception."

But this federation of seven sheikhdoms ruled by hereditary leaders already conducts mass surveillance and has been internationally criticized for targeting activists, journalists and others. Ziani repeatedly said he knew nothing about that, nor had any knowledge that a firm invested in ToTok included staff with ties to an Emirati security firm scrutinized abroad for hiring former CIA and National Security Agency staffers.

He also said he did not know about alleged ties linking companies involved with ToTok to Sheikh Tahnoun bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Emirates' national security adviser.

"I was not aware, and I'm even not aware now of who was who, who was doing what in the past," Ziani said.

By installing the app, users agreed to allow access to their mobile device's microphone, pictures, location information and other data.

"By using this app, you're allowing your life to be opened up to the whims of national security as seen by the UAE government," said Bill Marczak, a computer science researcher at the University of California, Berkley, who has studied ToTok and other suspected Emirati spying operations. "In this case, you're essentially having people install the spyware themselves as opposed to hacking into the phone."

An American diplomat, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss security matters, said local embassy and consular staff received orders to remove the app from all U.S. government devices. That was only after the Times, citing anonymous U.S. officials, described the app as a "spying tool" of the Emirati government.

Ziani alleged, without providing evidence, that criticism of ToTok came more from professional jealousy and U.S.-China trade tensions than security concerns.

ToTok described itself on Apple as coming from developer Breej Holding Ltd. and on Google as being from ToTok Pte., a Singapore-based firm.

Both ToTok and Breej Holding Ltd. had been registered in a publicly accessible online database of companies operating out of the Abu Dhabi Global Market, an economic free zone set up in the Emirati capital.



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After suspicions emerged about ToTok, records of the two firms no longer appeared online.

Following an inquiry about the firms from an AP journalist, their information reappeared Tuesday night in the database. Market spokeswoman Joan Lew blamed a "data migration" problem for their disappearance.

Information from that database shows ToTok's sole registered shareholder as Group 42, a new Abu Dhabi firm that describes itself as an artificial intelligence and cloud-computing company. Ziani said ToTok has another substantial investor he declined to identify.

Also known as G42, the company's CEO is Peng Xiao, who for years ran Pegasus, a subsidiary of DarkMatter, an Emirati security firm under scrutiny for hiring former CIA and NSA staffers, as well as others from Israel.

"G42 has no connection to DarkMatter, whatsoever," the company told AP in a statement. It did not respond to further queries.

G42's sole director listed in Abu Dhabi Global Market filings is Hamad Khalfan al-Shamsi, whom Marczak identified as the public relations manager of the office of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Tahnoun bin Zayed Al Nahyan. Sheikh Tahnoun is a brother to Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the powerful crown prince of Abu Dhabi who has run the country from day-to-day since its president, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, suffered a stroke in January 2014.

Sheikh Tahnoun has served as the UAE's national security adviser since 2016. The sheikh's adopted son, Hassan al-Rumaithi, is the sole director of Breej Holding Ltd., Marczak said, citing market filings.

Similarly, an executive at Sheikh Tahnoun's company Royal Group, Osama al-Ahdali, is the sole director of ToTok Technology Ltd., Marczak said.

Royal Group did not respond to a request for comment, nor did Emirati officials, Apple and Google.

For now, Ziani said he is focused on getting ToTok back into the Apple and Google app stores. He mentioned plans to have ToTok become like China's all-encompassing app WeChat, handling payments, social media posts and other high-frequency activities. G42 appears to already have filed paperwork for a possible payment company in Abu Dhabi.

That could create an Emirati version of WeChat, a service used by more than 1 billion people in which Chinese government officials routinely censor posts. Dissidents suspect it of allowing surveillance.

Ziani insisted a former NSA hacker named Patrick Wardle, who analyzed ToTok, said the app "simply does what it claims to do."

However, Ziani ignored the next sentence in Wardle's analysis, which described "the genius of the whole mass surveillance operation" the app could represent by offering "in-depth insight" into "a large percentage of the country's population."

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Follow Jon Gambrell on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/jongambrellAP](https://www.twitter.com/jongambrellAP).

## Trump's plan to curb teen vaping exempts some flavors

By **MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer**

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. health officials will begin cracking down on most flavored e-cigarettes that are popular with underage teenagers, but their plan includes major exceptions that benefit vaping manufacturers, retailers and adults who use the nicotine-delivery devices.

The Trump administration announced Thursday that it will prohibit fruit, candy, mint and dessert flavors from small, cartridge-based e-cigarettes favored by high school and middle school students. But menthol and tobacco-flavored e-cigarettes will be allowed to remain on the market.

The targeted flavor ban will also entirely exempt large, tank-based vaping devices, which are primarily sold in vape shops that cater to adult smokers.

Together, the two exemptions represent a significant retreat from President Donald Trump's original plan announced four months ago, which would have banned all vaping flavors — including menthol — from all types of e-cigarettes. The new policy will spare a significant portion of the multibillion-dollar vaping market. And the changes mark a major victory for thousands of vape shop owners who sell the tank-based

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systems, which allow users to mix customized nicotine flavors.

Vape shop owners expressed relief following the announcement.

"We're thankful the guidance doesn't shut down flavors in every aspect," said Spike Babaian, owner of VapeNY in New York City.

Anti-tobacco advocates immediately condemned the decision to permit menthol and exempt tank-based vapes, accusing the administration of caving to industry pressure.

"It's disturbing to see the results of industry lobbying to undermine public health protections, especially the lives and health of our youth," said American Lung Association President and CEO Harold Wimmer. The association and other health groups argue that teenagers who vape will simply shift to using menthol if it remains on the market.

E-cigarettes are battery-powered devices that typically heat a flavored nicotine solution into an inhalable aerosol. They have been pitched to adults as a less-harmful alternative to traditional cigarettes, but there is limited data on their ability to help smokers quit.

The Food and Drug Administration has struggled for years to find the appropriate approach to regulate vaping. No e-cigarettes have yet won FDA approval, but the agency permits their sale under a policy called "enforcement discretion." Under Thursday's policy change, the FDA said it would begin targeting companies that continue to sell the targeted products. Companies will have 30 days after the policy is published to halt manufacturing, sales and shipping.

"We have to protect our families," Trump told reporters on Tuesday, ahead of the announcement. "At the same time, it's a big industry. We want to protect the industry."

The flavor restrictions apply to e-cigarettes that use prefilled nicotine cartridges mainly sold at gas stations and convenience stores. Juul Labs is the biggest player in that market, but it previously pulled all of its flavors except menthol and tobacco after coming under intense political scrutiny. The small, discrete devices are the most popular brand among underage users.

Many smaller manufacturers continue to sell sweet, fruity flavors like "grape slushie," "strawberry cotton candy" and "sea salt blueberry."

The flavor restrictions won't affect the larger specialty devices sold at vape shops, which typically don't admit customers under 21. These tank-based systems allow users to fill the device with the flavor of their choice. Sales of these devices represent an estimated 40% of the U.S. vaping business, with sales across some 15,000 to 19,000 shops.

The new policy still represents the federal government's biggest step yet to combat a surge in teen vaping that officials fear is hooking a generation of young people on nicotine. In the latest government survey, more than 1 in 4 high school students reported using e-cigarettes in the previous month. Late last month Trump signed a law raising the minimum age to purchase all tobacco and vaping products from 18 to 21 nationwide.

Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar said the administration decided to exempt menthol after reviewing new data showing the flavor was not popular with teens.

"As we got better data on the flavors, we modified our thinking," Azar said.

Survey data published in November reported that less than 6% of teens picked menthol as their top choice for vaping. In contrast, mint was the most popular flavor among sophomores and seniors.

Incoming FDA Commissioner Stephen Hahn said the government's approach attempts to balance the problem of underage vaping with "the potential role that e-cigarettes may play in helping adult smokers transition completely away" from regular cigarettes.

When Trump officials first sketched out their plans at a White House event in September, they specifically said menthol would be banned. But that effort stalled after vaping proponents and lobbyists pushed back and White House advisers told Trump that a total flavor ban could cost him votes.

Industry groups including the Vapor Technology Association launched an aggressive social media campaign — #IVapeIVote — contending that the plan would force the closure of vaping shops, eliminating jobs and sending users of e-cigarettes back to traditional smokes.

Trump's initial announcement came amid an outbreak of unexplained lung illnesses tied to vaping. But

since then, health officials have tied the vast majority of the cases to a contaminating filler added to illicit THC vaping liquids. THC is the chemical in marijuana that makes users feel high. Makers of legal nicotine-based vaping products have tried to distance themselves from the problem.

FDA officials said Thursday they will continue targeting vaping products that appeal to underage users in other ways, such as packaging that mimics juice boxes, cereal or kid-friendly snacks.

Administration officials also pledged to work with the industry ahead of a looming deadline that manufacturers say threatens their products. The FDA is scheduled to begin reviewing all e-cigarettes in May. Only those that can demonstrate a benefit for U.S. public health will be permitted to stay on the market.

Officials noted that products submitted by the deadline that don't appeal to kids will be permitted to remain on the market for up to one year pending FDA review. They also clarified that some vape flavors could return to the market if they can win FDA approval.

Trump suggested ahead of the announcement that the flavor restrictions might be temporary.

"Hopefully, if everything's safe, they're going to be going very quickly back onto the market," he told reporters at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida.

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Associated Press writer Amer Madhani contributed to this report

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## Texas judge: Hospital can remove baby from life support

By JAMIE STENGLE Associated Press

DALLAS (AP) — A Texas judge on Thursday sided with a hospital that plans to remove an 11-month-old girl from life support after her mother disagreed with the decision by doctors who say the infant is in pain and that her condition will never improve.

Trinity Lewis had asked Judge Sandee Bryan Marion to issue an injunction in Tarrant County district court to ensure that Cook Children's Medical Center doesn't end her daughter Tinslee Lewis' life-sustaining treatment. Texas Right to Life, an anti-abortion group that is advocating for Tinslee, said the girl's mother will appeal the judge's decision.

Doctors at the Fort Worth hospital had planned to remove Tinslee from life support Nov. 10 after invoking Texas' "10-day rule," which can be employed when a family disagrees with doctors who say life-sustaining treatment should be stopped. The law stipulates that if the hospital's ethics committee agrees with doctors, treatment can be withdrawn after 10 days if a new provider can't be found to take the patient.

In a statement issued by Texas Right to Life, which opposes the "10-day rule," Lewis said she was "heart-broken" over the judge's decision. "I feel frustrated because anyone in that courtroom would want more time just like I do if Tinslee were their baby," she said.

The hospital said in a statement Thursday that in order to keep Tinslee alive, she's on a constant stream of painkillers, sedatives and paralytics. She currently has severe sepsis, which isn't uncommon when patients require deep sedation and chemical paralysis, it said.

"Even with the most extraordinary measures the medical team is taking, Tinslee continues to suffer," the hospital said.

Efforts to find another facility to take her have been unsuccessful. The hospital said it has reached out to more than 20 facilities. Texas Right to Life and Protect TX Fragile Kids have also been trying to find a facility to take her.

Prior to Thursday's ruling, both sides agreed that if Marion denied the injunction request, the hospital would wait at least seven days before taking Tinslee off life-support. In her decision, Marion said the seven-day period would give the girl's mother time to file a notice of appeal and a motion for emergency relief with a state court of appeals.

Tinslee has been at Cook Children's since her premature birth. The hospital said she has a rare heart

defect and suffers from chronic lung disease and severe chronic high blood pressure. She hasn't come off a ventilator since going into respiratory arrest in early July and requires full respiratory and cardiac support.

Lewis testified at a hearing last month that despite her daughter's sedation, she has a sense of the girl's likes and dislikes, describing her as "sassy." She said Tinslee likes getting her nails done but doesn't like having her hair brushed.

"I want to be the one to make the decision for her," Lewis said about removing her daughter from life support.

At the hearing last month, Dr. Jay Duncan, one of Tinslee's physicians, described the girl's complex conditions and Cook Children's efforts to treat her, which have included about seven surgeries. The cardiac intensive care doctor said that for the first five months of Tinslee's life doctors had hope she might one day at least be able to go home.

But Duncan said there came a point when doctors determined they had run out of surgical and clinical options, and that treatment was no longer benefiting Tinslee. Duncan said last month that the girl would likely die within half a year, and noted the hospital has made "extraordinary" efforts to find another facility for her.

"She is in pain. Changing a diaper causes pain. Suctioning her breathing tube causes pain. Being on the ventilator causes pain," he said.

Duncan said there had been "many, many" conversations with Tinslee's family about her dire condition.

Tarrant County Juvenile Court Judge Alex Kim issued a temporary restraining order to stop the removal of life support on Nov. 10. But Kim was removed from the case after the hospital filed a motion questioning his impartiality and saying he had bypassed case-assignment rules to designate himself as the presiding judge.

After his removal, Judge Marion, who is chief justice of Texas' Fourth Court of Appeals, was assigned to hear the request for an injunction in Tarrant County district court.

The case has become a rallying point for Republicans in Texas, with the attorney general stating his opposition to the "10-day rule" and GOP state Rep. Tan Parker saying it "doesn't fit with Texas values."

The 1999 law that shields from lawsuits doctors who follow the process of going through an ethics committee was crafted by a task force that included lawmakers, attorneys, doctors and anti-abortion groups. Supporters of the law passed when George W. Bush, a Republican, was governor include the Texas Alliance for Life, the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops and the Texas Medical Association.

Supporters say the law provides a framework for doctors and hospitals to resolve differences and ensures that doctors can't be forced to perform medical interventions that cause harm or suffering.

## Turkish lawmakers authorize sending troops to fight in Libya

By **SUZAN FRASER** Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — Turkey's parliament on Thursday authorized the deployment of troops to Libya to support the U.N.-backed government in Tripoli that is battling forces loyal to a rival government seeking to capture the capital.

Turkish lawmakers voted 325-184 at an emergency session in favor of a one-year mandate allowing the government to dispatch troops amid concerns that Turkish forces could aggravate the conflict in Libya and destabilize the region.

The Tripoli-based government of Libyan Prime Minister Fayez Sarraj has faced an offensive by the rival regime in the east and forces loyal to commander Gen. Khalifa Hifter. The fighting has threatened to plunge Libya into violent chaos rivaling the 2011 conflict that ousted and killed longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said last month that Sarraj requested the Turkish deployment after he and Sarraj signed a deal that allows Ankara to dispatch military experts and personnel to Libya. That deal, along with a separate agreement on maritime boundaries between Turkey and Libya, has led to anger across the region and beyond.

Ankara says the deployment is vital for Turkey to safeguard its interests in Libya and in the eastern Mediterranean, where it finds itself increasingly isolated as Greece, Cyprus, Egypt and Israel have established



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exclusive economic zones paving the way for oil and gas exploration.

"A Libya whose legal government is under threat can spread instability to Turkey," ruling party legislator Ismet Yilmaz argued in defense of the motion. "Those who shy away from taking steps on grounds that there is a risk will throw our children into a greater danger."

The government has not revealed details about the possible Turkish deployment. The motion allows the government to decide on the scope, amount and timing of any mission.

Erdogan and U.S. President Donald Trump held a telephone conversation and discussed the situation in Syria and in Libya, the Turkish president's office said soon after the vote. A brief statement said they discussed "the importance of diplomacy in solving regional issues."

Egypt's foreign ministry condemned "in the strongest language" the Turkish parliament's authorization to deploy troops, saying Turkey would carry full responsibility for the negative effect it would have on the stability of the Mediterranean region.

Egypt, which neighbors Libya, has backed the regime in the country's east.

The leaders of Greece, Israel and Cyprus denounced the move as a "dangerous threat to regional stability" and a "dangerous escalation" of the Libyan conflict that violates U.N. resolutions and undermines international peace efforts.

"The repercussions of such a reckless move will be dire for the stability and peace of the entire region," Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a joint statement after signing a deal for a pipeline conveying east Mediterranean gas to Europe.

"Ankara should refrain from taking such action, which blatantly violates Libyan national sovereignty and independence."

Numan Kurtulmus, deputy chairman of Turkey's ruling party, welcomed parliament's vote, telling CNN-Turk television the mandate "will ensure that the legal government in Libya remains in place and Turkey's natural rights (in the Mediterranean) are maintained."

He added that the mandate does not mean that "troops will be quickly sent tomorrow to conduct operations."

Turkish Vice President Fuat Oktay told state-run Anadolu Agency that Turkey would send "the necessary number (of troops) whenever there is a need." But he also said it would not dispatch forces if Libya's rival government halts its offensive.

Turkey's main opposition party, CHP, had vowed to vote against the motion arguing that the deployment would embroil Turkey in another conflict and make it a party to the further "shedding of Muslim blood."

Before the vote, CHP leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu called on the government to work for the establishment of a United Nations peacekeeping force in Libya.

Kurtulmus, the ruling party official, said the mandate does not exclude a peacekeeping force. He said, however, the government believes that U.N. peacekeeping missions were not successful in ending conflicts in the past.

Two other opposition parties voted against the motion.

"We cannot throw our soldiers in the line of fire of a civilian war that has nothing to do with our national security," Aytun Ciray, a member of the opposition Good Party, said during the parliamentary debate.

However, Erdogan's ruling party is in an alliance with a nationalist party, and the two held sufficient votes for the motion to pass.

Fighting around Tripoli escalated in recent weeks after Hifter declared a "final" and decisive battle for the capital. He has the backing of the United Arab Emirates and Egypt, as well as France and Russia, while the Tripoli-based government receives aid from Turkey, Qatar and Italy.

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AP writer Menelaos Hadjicostis contributed from Nicosia, Cyprus.

**Study finds 2019 was a 'banner year' for female filmmakers**

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By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Lulu Wang, Lorene Scafaria, Melina Matsoukas and Greta Gerwig led Hollywood to a record year for women in the director's chair. In 2019, women directed more of the most popular movies than any year before.

Women directed 12 of 2019's top 100-grossing films in 2019, according to a study released Thursday by USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative. That percentage of female filmmakers, 10.6%, is greater than researchers have recorded before, suggesting that some measure of change is finally coming to a film industry where inequality behind the camera has remained stubbornly persistent.

It's the most meaningful increase in several decades for female directors. Despite mounting outcry, the rate of female directors helming Hollywood's top productions has long been largely stagnant. The previous high in USC's annual study was 8%, in 2008. In 2018, only 4.5% of the year's top films were directed by women.

"This is the first time we have seen a shift in hiring practices for female film directors in 13 years," said Stacy L. Smith, one of the study's authors. "One notable reason for this jump in 2019 was that Universal Pictures had five films with women directors at the helm in the top 100 movies. Yet there is still much more progress needed to reach parity for women behind the camera."

The high-profile success of several films had already made 2019 a historic one for women. Those include Wang's "The Farewell," one of the year's most popular indie releases, Scafaria's acclaimed "Hustlers" (\$105 million domestically), Matsoukas' "Queen & Slim" (\$40.7 million) and Gerwig's "Little Women," which last week opened strongly with \$29 million in its first five days of release.

"Frozen II," with \$1.2 billion in worldwide ticket sales, is close to setting a new box-office record for a movie directed by a woman. Jennifer Lee, who co-directed the film, set the record with the first "Frozen" film. In 2018, Lee became the chief creative officer of Walt Disney Animation Studios.

Other notable films included Kasi Lemmons' "Harriet," Tina Gordon's "Little" and Jill Culton's "Abominable." USC researchers singled out Universal Pictures, which put forward a slate of films with 26% directed by women. Universal is the only major studio with a female studio chief, Donna Langley.

Netflix also fared well. While the streaming company's films largely bypass theaters — leaving them outside the study's parameters — 20% of Netflix's 2019 movies were directed by women.

Paramount Pictures, however, hasn't released a movie directed by a woman in the last five years.

Four women of color directed one of the top 100 movies in 2019, though the overall statistics for underrepresented directors dipped. Underrepresented filmmakers were behind 16.8% of films in 2019, a decline from last year's 21.4%, a record.

"While 2019 is a banner year for women, we will not be able to say there is true change until all women have access and opportunity to work at this level," said Smith.

Another study released Thursday by the Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film at San Diego State University examined women in the top films as not just directors but writers, producers, executive producers, editors and cinematographers. Women accounted for 20% of all such roles in the year's top films, up from 16% the year before.

But the San Diego State University study, the 22nd annual Celluloid Ceiling authored by Martha Lauzen, found less progress when the movies researched were expanded to the top 500 films. In that metric, Lauzen found women held steady at 23%.

"While the numbers moved in a positive direction this year, men continue to outnumber women 4 to 1 in key behind-the-scenes roles," Lauzen said in a statement. "It's odd to talk about reaching historic highs when women remain so far from parity."

Despite gains, female filmmakers have been largely overlooked in this awards season. Sunday's Golden Globes, presented by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, includes no women nominated for best director. None of the 10 films nominated for best picture were directed by women, either.

Rebecca Goldman, Time's Up chief operating officer, earlier said those results were unacceptable.

"This year, there have been twice as many women-led features than ever, with more films by female directors on the way," Goldman said. "Women — and especially women of color — continue to be pushed

to the sidelines by a system that holds women back, onscreen and off.”

Follow AP Film Writer Jake Coyle on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/jakecoyleAP>

## Video edited to suggest Biden made racist remark

By BEATRICE DUPUY Associated Press

A video of Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden that was selectively edited to falsely suggest he made racist remarks during a recent speech made the rounds Thursday on social media, raking in more than a million views on one tweet alone.

Experts have been warning about the dangers of selectively edited videos being used as a misinformation tactic ahead of the 2020 presidential election. They are easier to make and do not require the sophisticated technology needed to produce deepfake videos, which are fabricated to look realistic.

In the edited clip, which was less than 20 seconds long, Biden says, “Our culture is not imported from some African nation or some Asian nation.” Social media users paired the video with comments like “It’s almost like Joe Biden is a Racist.” Posts with the video surfaced across social media platforms on Wednesday.

The clip was taken from ABC News coverage of Biden speaking for more than an hour in Derry, New Hampshire, on Dec. 30, 2019. A review of the full video shows that Biden was commenting on changing the culture around violence against women. In discussing the difficulty victims face reporting sexual assault on college campuses, he said, “Folks, this is about changing the culture, our culture, our culture, it’s not imported from some African nation or some Asian nation. It is our English jurisprudential culture, our European culture that says it is all right.”

Earlier in the discussion, Biden, when asked about his work with women and sexual assault victims, talked about the need to change an entrenched “cultural problem,” that dates back centuries, noting that in the 1300s many wives were being beaten to death by their husbands without repercussions.

Biden’s campaign confirmed to The Associated Press that the presentation in the edited video was inaccurate.

It’s not the first time Biden has spoken out about how violence against women dates back to English common law.

On March 26, 2019, Biden spoke at a New York event where he honored young people working to fight against sexual assault on college campuses.

“It’s an English jurisprudential culture, a white man’s culture,” he said at the March event. “It’s got to change.”

## Sanders and Trump surge, Biden rebounds in fundraising race

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Bernie Sanders announced Thursday that his campaign had raised an impressive \$34.5 million in the final three months of last year, solidifying him as the quarter’s top fundraiser in the crowded Democratic presidential field. Former Vice President Joe Biden rebounded from a summer slump to take in a respectable \$22.7 million over the same period.

And, still looking to play political spoiler, businessman Andrew Yang collected \$16.5 million in 2019’s fourth quarter.

Each of the three candidates celebrated his latest fundraising for different reasons. Sanders’ shows that a recent heart attack hasn’t slowed him as primary voting looms. Biden trails the Vermont senator in the money race but topped his third quarter fundraising total of \$15.2 million by nearly 50%. Yang’s haul is enough to prove he remains very much in the race despite joining it as a political unknown.

The announcements came a day after the strong \$24.7 million that Pete Buttigieg, the former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, announced raising from October through December.

While notable, the amount of money pouring into Democratic campaigns could be a mixed blessing. It suggests the party’s primary may feature a long and protracted fight at a time when some would like to

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see a clear front-runner emerge. The lead-off Iowa caucuses are barely a month out, and Sanders, Biden and Buttigieg have been among the leaders of the crowded field, along with Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, the one top candidate whose latest fundraising may not be as strong.

Like Sanders, Warren has relied heavily on small donations coming primarily online. Her campaign raised \$24.6 million in the third quarter, but it acknowledged in a recent fundraising email collecting around only \$17 million with a few days to go — hoping to persuade supporters to open their wallets and improve the final totals.

Warren hasn't released her fourth quarter numbers but said while campaigning in New Hampshire on Thursday that they'd be out soon.

All Democrats, meanwhile, may need as much cash as they can get. President Donald Trump's reelection campaign announced Thursday that it had raised \$46 million in the fourth quarter and had a campaign bank account of \$102.7 million. How much cash those trying to unseat Trump have on hand likely won't be clear until federal reporting deadlines later this month.

Biden has generally relied on more traditional fundraising methods than Sanders and Warren have, including frequent events with large donors. But the former vice president's campaign said it invested almost \$5.2 million in tech and digital outreach in recent months, which helped it double the amount of money raised online in the fourth quarter versus the third.

The campaign also said that 57% of Biden's fourth quarter donors were new and that it saw a bump in fundraising compared to previous weeks while impeachment proceedings against the president were being held in the House.

"Today's announcement is just the latest evidence of Joe Biden's growing strength and momentum heading into the early contests of 2020," Biden campaign manager Greg Schultz said in a statement, adding that the haul serves as "a constant reminder to Democratic primary voters that Trump is terrified by the idea of facing Joe Biden in a general election."

Sanders' campaign said its funds came from more than 1.8 million donations, including from 40,000 new donors on the final day of the year alone.

"Bernie Sanders is closing the year with the most donations of any candidate in history at this point in a presidential campaign," his campaign manager, Faiz Shakir, said in a statement.

Sanders' 2020 bid has now raised more than \$96 million built on 5 million-plus individual donations worth an average of about \$18. That's a testament to the senator's consistent campaign strength, despite facing questions when he started running about whether he could recreate the momentum from his unlikely rise to formidable primary challenger to Hillary Clinton in 2016 — and a serious health scare that might have derailed other candidates.

Sanders' campaign said that more than 99% of his donors have not reached federal donation limits, meaning they can contribute again. Its overall announced total does not include the \$12.7 million Sanders transferred from other campaign accounts as part of his presidential run.

Sanders suffered a heart attack while campaigning in Las Vegas on Oct. 1. The 78-year-old has released three letters from doctors saying that he had suffered "modest heart muscle damage" but has since recovered well and is fit enough for the rigors of the presidential campaign and the White House should he win.

Sanders' campaign said its best fundraising month came in December, when it took in more than \$18 million from 900,000-plus donations. It said that the most common occupation listed by its donors was teacher and that the five most common employers were Amazon, Starbucks, Walmart, the U.S. Postal Service and Target.

In an email to supporters, Sanders vowed that there will be more where that came from.

"Against Trump, I believe we will have 50 million individual contributions, at least. And at \$27 a piece, that would be more than \$1 billion," Sanders wrote. "It's absolutely obscene and outrageous that an election would cost that much money, but our campaign has proven we will be able to raise more than enough money to win."

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



## Golden Globes will serve plant-based meal at awards ceremony

By JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr. AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Golden Globes, known as the “party of the year,” is going with a meatless menu for its 77th annual awards show.

Guests will be served a 100% plant-based meal just ahead of showtime Sunday. The Hollywood Foreign Press Association said Thursday that it wants the initiative to raise environmental awareness about food consumption and waste.

“If there’s a way we can, not change the world, but save the planet, maybe we can get the Golden Globes to send a signal and draw attention to the issue about climate change,” HFPA president Lorenzo Soria said. “The food we eat, the way we grow the food we eat, the way we dispose of the food is one of the large contributors to the climate crisis.”

The annual awards ceremony will air on NBC from The Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, California.

Soria said there was some initial push back about changing the menu just about two weeks before the show, but the hotel eventually agreed on the new menu.

“People were basically saying it’s too late, we’re ready with all the orders, the holidays and all that,” he said. “But after we began discussions, meeting for one or two days, (the hotel) accepted the change completely. They started to experiment with how to do plant-based meals that was not just their symbolic steps, but also something that guests will enjoy.”

Matthew Morgan, executive chef at The Beverly Hilton, called the menu change initially surprising. But he ultimately understood it would send a positive message.

“It was a little shocking when first mentioned, because of being very close to the actual Globes and having already decided on a menu,” he said. “But once we thought about it and the message that it sent, we were really excited about it. That’s something I stand behind myself.”

Items on the main entree include king oyster mushrooms scallops and wild mushroom risotto, along with roasted baby purple and green Brussels sprouts and carrots. A chilled golden beet soup will be served as an appetizer.

HFPA partnered with Icelandic Glacial, a naturally alkaline and sustainably-sourced natural spring water. The water will be served in glass bottles to eliminate plastic waste in the ballroom and red carpet, which is reused at other events throughout the year.

Soria called the food “excellent” after a recent taste-testing.

Morgan said making the change wasn’t too difficult. He said the first course was already vegan and the main course was a vegan alternate in which they enhanced the dish to add some “pop and color to the plate.”

## Australian prime minister is jeered in wildfire-ravaged zone

By TRISTAN LAVALETTE Associated Press

PERTH, Australia (AP) — Prime Minister Scott Morrison was confronted by angry residents who cursed and insulted him Thursday as he visited a wildfire-ravaged corner of the country.

Locals in Cobargo, in New South Wales, yelled at him, made obscene gestures and called him an “idiot” and worse, criticizing him for the lack of equipment to deal with the fires in town. They jeered as his car left. In the New South Wales town of Quaama, a firefighter refused to shake hands with him.

“Every single time this area has a flood or a fire, we get nothing. If we were Sydney, if we were north coast, we would be flooded with donations with urgent emergency relief,” a resident said in Cobargo.

The outpouring of anger came as authorities said 381 homes had been destroyed on the New South Wales southern coast this week. At least eight people have died this week in New South Wales and the neighboring state of Victoria.

More than 200 fires are burning in Australia’s two most-populous states. Blazes have also been burning in Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania.

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"I'm not surprised people are feeling very raw at the moment. And that's why I came today, to be here, to see it for myself, to offer what comfort I could," Morrison said, adding, "There is still, you know, some very dangerous days ahead. And we understand that, and that's why we're going to do everything we can to ensure they have every support they will need."

Morrison, who has also been criticized over his climate change policies and accused of putting the economy ahead of the environment, insisted that Australia is "meeting the challenge better than most countries" and "exceeding the targets we set out."

Cooler weather since Tuesday has aided firefighting and allowed people to replenish supplies, with long lines of cars forming at gas stations and supermarkets. But high temperatures and strong winds are forecast to return on Saturday, and thousands of tourists fled the country's eastern coast Thursday ahead of worsening conditions.

New South Wales authorities ordered tourists to leave a 250-kilometer (155-mile) zone. State Transport Minister Andrew Constance called it the "largest mass relocation of people out of the region that we've ever seen."

New South Wales Premier Gladys Berejiklian declared a seven-day state of emergency starting Friday, which grants fire officials more authority. It's the third state of emergency for New South Wales in the past two months.

"We don't take these decisions lightly, but we also want to make sure we're taking every single precaution to be prepared for what could be a horrible day on Saturday," Berejiklian said.

The early and devastating start to Australia's summer wildfires has led authorities to rate this season the worst on record. About 5 million hectares (12.35 million acres) of land have burned, at least 17 people have been killed, and more than 1,400 homes have been destroyed.

The crisis "will continue to go on until we can get some decent rain that can deal with some of the fires that have been burning for many, many months," the prime minister said.

In Victoria, where 83 homes have burned this week, the military helped thousands of people who fled to the shoreline as a wildfire threatened their homes in the coastal town of Mallacoota. Food, water, fuel and medical expertise were being delivered, and about 500 people were going to be evacuated from the town by a naval ship.

"We think around 3,000 tourists and 1,000 locals are there. Not all of those will want to leave, not all can get on the vessel at one time," Victoria Premier Daniel Andrews told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

Smoke from the wildfires made the air quality in the capital, Canberra, the worst in the world, according to a ranking Thursday.

## Conservatives seek immediate purge of voters in Wisconsin

By SCOTT BAUER Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — A conservative law firm on Thursday asked a judge to find the Wisconsin Elections Commission in contempt and impose \$12,000 a day in fines until it immediately purges more than 200,000 voters from the rolls, a move Democrats are fighting in the key battleground state.

A judge last month ordered the purge of voters who may have moved and didn't respond within 30 days to notification sent by the elections commission in October. The bipartisan commission has deadlocked twice on attempts by Republicans to do the purge immediately while an appeal to the court order is pending.

Rick Esenberg, leader of the conservative Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty that brought the lawsuit, said the commission must purge the voters now. The judge in December ruled that the commission was breaking state law by not removing voters who did not respond to the October mailing asking that they confirm their address.

"Court orders are not suggestions," Esenberg said on WISN-AM. "They are not rendered inoperative by the fact that you filed an appeal."

Esenberg filed a motion Thursday in Ozaukee County Court asking the judge to fine the commission and five of the six commissioners \$2,000 each, or \$12,000 total each day, for being in contempt of the

order. The motion does not name one of the three Republicans on the commission who was not on the panel when the legal fight began.

Democratic Attorney General Josh Kaul, who is representing the elections commission in the case, said it "strongly disagrees" with arguments in the contempt motion.

"This case should not effectively be ended before the appeals process plays out," Kaul said in a statement.

The affected voters come more heavily from Democratic areas of Wisconsin, a key state in the 2020 presidential election. President Donald Trump narrowly won the state in 2016 by fewer than 23,000 votes and Wisconsin is expected to again be one of the most hotly contested states this year.

Democrats fear forcing voters whose registration was nullified to re-register would create a burden on them and hurt turnout. Republicans argue that removing the voters would ensure that the rolls are not full of people who shouldn't be voting.

Esenberg's group has asked that the conservative-controlled Wisconsin Supreme Court immediately take the state's appeal of the case. The case is currently before a state appeals court. The commission has asked the appeals court to put the original ruling on hold, but it has not yet acted. The Supreme Court has not said yet whether it will take the case.

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin also has filed a federal lawsuit to stop the purge. That lawsuit argues that it would be a violation of constitutional due process rights to deactivate the registrations of the voters without proper notice.

The elections commission in October mailed about 232,500 voters to tell them records indicated they had moved and they needed to verify that the address where they were registered to vote was current. Of those, about 209,000 have not requested continuation at their current address or re-registered at another one.

Follow Scott Bauer on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/sbauerAP>

## 2020 brings higher labor costs for small businesses

By JOYCE M. ROSENBERG AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Small business owners have plenty of changes to deal with as 2020 begins — higher labor costs for many companies, and some owners will discover that they have to comply with new laws that aren't on the books in their own states.

As of Jan. 1, there are higher minimum wages in a quarter of the states, and new federal overtime rules. The IRS has new W-4 forms owners will need to get used to. Plastic bags are on their way out at stores and other businesses in a growing number of places around the country. And California has new laws on freelancers and consumer privacy that can affect out-of-state companies.

A look at a handful of the 2020 changes in federal, state and local laws and regulations:

### MINIMUM WAGES GO UP

The minimum wage is higher in 13 states as of Jan. 1, including New York, where the minimum rose Dec. 31. The increases in California, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey and New York are steps toward an eventual \$15 minimum approved by state legislatures.

Increases are planned later in the year in states including Connecticut, New York, Oregon and Washington, D.C., and some counties and cities are raising their minimums as well.

While many businesses pay hourly workers above the minimum, when there's an increase in the wage, many owners give all their staffers a raise to stay competitive amid a tight labor market.

### NEW OVERTIME RULES

The Labor Department's long-awaited revamp of its overtime rules are now in effect, giving an estimated 1.3 million workers a raise. Workers earning under \$684 per week or \$35,568 must now be paid overtime, up from the previous threshold of \$455 per week or \$23,660 annually.

Retailers, restaurants and manufacturers are most likely to be affected, with shift supervisors and assistant managers among the positions that must now be paid overtime after 40 hours a week. While all

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employers are subject to the rules, the higher threshold is likely to have the greatest impact on small companies that lack the revenue cushion that larger businesses have against higher costs.

Employers are expected to limit the hours of some workers so they don't incur overtime, or raise some staffers' pay to a level above the threshold, making them exempt from the new rules.

More information about the overtime rules can be found on the Labor Department's website, [www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/overtime/2019/index](http://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/overtime/2019/index).

## NEW W-4 FORMS

The IRS has issued new W-4 forms for 2020, changing the way tax is withheld from employees' pay. The new forms reflect changes required by the tax law that went into effect in late 2017; they do away with the allowances long used to calculate how much money should be withheld from paychecks. Instead, the new forms use information that can be found on employees' tax returns.

Current employees don't need to fill out new W-4 forms, but new staffers or employees who want to change their withholding do need to complete them. The IRS has created a calculator to help small businesses compute withholding for the new forms if they don't use automated payroll software or providers. It can be found on the IRS website, [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov). Search for "new Form W-4."

## PLASTIC BAG BANS

A growing number of states, counties and cities have passed legislation prohibiting or restricting retailers and other businesses from giving customers single-use plastic bags to carry purchases. Oregon's ban went into effect Jan. 1, and Maine, New York state and Vermont have similar prohibitions going into effect later in the year.

There are variations among the laws and some exceptions — in New York, for example, pharmacies are exempt if the purchase is for a prescription drug, and restaurants can give diners bags for takeout food. Some of the laws also require a 5 cent charge if a customer wants a paper bag.

While the laws have been passed out of environmental concerns, small retailers might see a benefit from not having to buy and supply plastic bags. And those that sell reusable shopping tote bags could get a small revenue uptick.

## CALIFORNIA CHANGE

A new California law gives consumers more control over the personal information companies collect and share with other businesses. While the law aims to exempt very small companies, those that do business with California residents, including out-of-state firms, can find themselves required to comply.

Under the law, companies must be able to tell consumers what information they have and what they do with it. Consumers must have the option to have their information deleted from companies' computer systems. Businesses that handle information collected by others — for example, payment processors — can also find themselves subject to the law.

Companies are subject to the law if they have worldwide revenue above \$25 million, collect or receive the personal information of 50,000 or more California consumers, households or electronic devices; or those who get at least half their revenue from selling personal information. Small businesses can reach the 50,000 threshold for collecting or receiving information — an individual who has a phone, tablet, PC at home and one at work counts as four users, not one.

A separate law puts strict limits on who can work as an independent contractor or freelancer. The law is aimed at ensuring that workers in the gig economy like Uber and Lyft drivers get the protections that labor laws give employees. It will force business owners to decide whether to hire these workers as employees, even for temporary assignments, or look for help in other states.

The law also affects out-of-state companies if they have been using independent contractors or freelancers in California.

Changes in California laws are also noteworthy because the state can be a trailblazer when it comes to employee, consumer and environmental issues. The nation's first laws requiring paid sick leave for workers and banning plastic bags were enacted in California.

Follow Joyce Rosenberg at [www.twitter.com/JoyceMRosenberg](http://www.twitter.com/JoyceMRosenberg). Her work can be found here: <https://>



apnews.com

## **Poll: White evangelicals distinct on abortion, LGBT policy**

**By ELANA SCHOR and EMILY SWANSON Associated Press**

White evangelical Protestants stand noticeably apart from other religious people on abortion restrictions and LGBT discrimination protections, two of the most politically divisive issues at play in the 2020 presidential election, according to a new poll.

The findings point to an evangelical Protestant constituency that's more firmly aligned with President Donald Trump's agenda than other Americans of faith. White evangelicals were also more likely than members of other faiths to say religion should have at least some influence on policymaking.

Rev. Franklin Graham, son of the late Rev. Billy Graham and one of Trump's most stalwart evangelical allies, pointed to the president's record on abortion as a key driver of support from his religious community.

"I don't think evangelicals are united on every position the president takes or says, but they do recognize he is the most pro-life-friendly president in modern history," Graham said in a recent interview. "He has appointed conservative judges that will affect my children and grandchildren's lives, long after he's gone."

Asked about significant restrictions that would make abortion illegal except in cases of rape, incest or to threats to a mother's life, 67% of white evangelical Protestants responded in support. Those abortion limits drew 39% support from white mainline Protestants, 33% support from nonwhite Protestants, 45% support from Catholics and 37% of all Americans, according to the poll of more than 1,000 American adults from various faith backgrounds conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

A similar divide emerged over whether the government should bar discrimination against people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender in workplaces, housing or schools. About 6 in 10 Catholics, white mainline Protestants and nonwhite Protestants supported those protections, compared with about a third of white evangelical Protestants.

The differences between white evangelicals and other religious Americans, as well as the non-religious, were less stark on other policy issues examined in the poll.

Indeed, white evangelical Protestants' preference for a religious influence on abortion policy surpassed most other issues examined in the poll. About 8 in 10 white evangelicals said religion should have at least some influence on abortion policy. A similar share said that of poverty, compared with about 7 in 10 saying the same about education and roughly 6 in 10 saying that about income inequality, immigration and LGBT issues.

Trump has embraced a staunch anti-abortion agenda, and his administration has opposed legislation supported by Democrats seeking to challenge him in 2020 that would extend broad anti-discrimination protections for LGBT individuals.

"There is nobody, except a few wackos who are one-half of 1%, that would ever want to discriminate against some of these groups," said Stephen Strang, founder of the Christian magazine Charisma and author of a forthcoming book backing Trump's reelection.

"But what happens is, this legislation is criminalizing long-held beliefs that we believe are scriptural," Strang added, referring to conservative evangelicals' opposition to same-sex marriage.

About 8 in 10 white evangelical Protestants approve of the president's job performance, according to the poll, which asked respondents to self-identify as born-again or evangelical.

Trump's reelection campaign plans to showcase that support Friday in Miami, where the president is set to unveil an "Evangelicals for Trump" coalition.

But not every Trump-backed policy found strong support in the poll from white evangelical Protestants. A majority of white evangelicals opposed an immigration policy that separates children from parents who are detained entering the country illegally, although nonwhite Protestants and white mainline Protestants opposed that policy by slightly larger margins.

"I disagree with the president on that one," said Dorothy Louallen, 87, of Dunlap, Tennessee, who described herself as a born-again Christian opposed to abortion. "I really don't think government and churches

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should be involved.”

The poll also showed a majority of white evangelical Protestants supporting higher taxes on the wealthy, albeit by smaller margins than the other major religious groups surveyed, as well as the non-religious. Trump signed a GOP tax bill in 2017 that cut taxes for the middle class but delivered a larger tax break for the wealthiest Americans.

Similarly, about half of white evangelicals showed support for increasing government aid to the poor, comparable to that policy's support from Catholics and white mainline Protestants. About 7 in 10 nonwhite Protestants supported more government assistance for the poor. More than 600,000 low-income Americans are set to lose access to food stamps under new work requirements proposed by the Trump administration.

In addition, about 6 in 10 white evangelicals supported regulating the levels of carbon dioxide that power plants can emit, a climate change-fighting measure that Trump has weakened and that majorities of other religious groups also support, as well as those without a religious affiliation.

Americans without any religious affiliation registered stronger opposition in the poll than people of specific faiths to abortion restrictions (72%) and stronger support than people of specific faiths for government action to shield people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender from discrimination (83%). About one-quarter of Americans currently align with no religious faith, a figure that's risen notably over three decades, according to the General Social Survey.

However, some Americans of faith continue to defy easy characterization — a trend that promises to scramble the political calculus heading into a 2020 campaign where Democrats have shown strong interest in connecting with voters of faith, even evangelicals whom Trump is often assumed to have locked down.

Courtney Lester, 29, of Macon, Georgia, said she was baptized in the Baptist faith but “can't say I'm in one set religion.”

Once policymakers “mix religion with politics, that's when things get very mixed up,” Lester added, noting that she is “not here to judge anyone” of a different sexual orientation and praising immigrants for making America “great the first time.”

Lester, who is undecided in the election, said faith should play the same role in politics that it does in medicine: Doctors, she said, prioritize health rather than asking “Who is your God?” before they “see if you have the flu.”

The AP-NORC poll of 1,053 adults was conducted Dec. 5-9 using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 4.0 percentage points. Respondents were first selected randomly using address-based sampling methods and later were interviewed online or by phone.

Online:

AP-NORC Center: <http://www.apnorc.org/>

## Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Friday, Jan. 3, the third day of 2020. There are 363 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 3, 1961, President Dwight D. Eisenhower announced the United States was formally terminating diplomatic and consular relations with Cuba.

On this date:

In 1777, Gen. George Washington's army routed the British in the Battle of Princeton, New Jersey.

In 1833, Britain seized control of the Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic. (Almost 150 years later, Argentina seized the islands from the British, but Britain took them back after a 74-day war.)

In 1868, Japan's Meiji (may-jee) Restoration re-established the authority of the emperor and heralded

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the fall of the military rulers known as shoguns; the upheaval paved the way for Japan's drive toward becoming a modern power.

In 1892, J.R.R. Tolkien, author of the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy, was born in Bloemfontein (BLOOM'-fahn-tayn), South Africa.

In 1938, the March of Dimes campaign to fight polio was established by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who himself had been afflicted with the crippling disease.

In 1959, Alaska became the 49th state as President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed a proclamation.

In 1967, Jack Ruby, the man who shot and killed Lee Harvey Oswald, the accused assassin of President John F. Kennedy, died in a Dallas hospital.

In 1977, Apple Computer was incorporated in Cupertino, California, by Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak and Mike Markkula (MAHR'-kuh-luh) Jr.

In 1990, ousted Panamanian leader Manuel Noriega surrendered to U.S. forces, 10 days after taking refuge in the Vatican's diplomatic mission.

In 2000, the last new daily "Peanuts" strip by Charles Schulz ran in 26-hundred newspapers.

In 2008, Illinois Sen. Barack Obama won Democratic caucuses in Iowa, while Mike Huckabee won the Republican caucuses.

In 2013, students from Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, reconvened at a different building in the town of Monroe about three weeks after the massacre that had claimed the lives of 20 first-graders and six educators. The new 113th Congress opened for business, with House Speaker John Boehner (BAY'-nur) re-elected to his post despite a mini-revolt in Republican ranks.

Ten years ago: The U.S. closed its embassy in Yemen, citing ongoing threats by the al-Qaida branch linked to the failed Christmas Day bombing attempt of a U.S. airliner headed to Detroit; Britain also shuttered its embassy. A Rutgers University doctoral student breached security at Newark Liberty Airport to kiss his girlfriend goodbye, prompting a six-hour shutdown. (Haisong Jiang (hy-song gee-ong) later pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor, and was fined.)

Five years ago: Boko Haram (BOH'-koh hah-RAHM') extremists kidnapped about 40 boys and young men and killed scores of soldiers in a bold attack on a multinational military base in northern Nigeria. Former U.S. Sen. Edward W. Brooke, a liberal Republican who became the first black person in U.S. history to win popular election to the Senate, died in Coral Gables, Florida, at age 95.

One year ago: China's space program achieved a lunar milestone by landing a probe on the mysterious "dark" side of the moon; a side that had been observed many times from lunar orbit but never up close. On their first day in the House majority, Democrats passed a plan to reopen the government without funding President Donald Trump's border wall. Saudi Arabia said it would seek the death penalty against five suspects in the slaying of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi (jah-MAHL' khahr-SHOHK'-jee). Seven people, including five Louisiana children in a church van who had been headed for Disney World, were killed in a fiery crash on Interstate 75 in Florida.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Dabney Coleman is 88. Journalist-author Betty Rollin is 84. Hockey Hall of Famer Bobby Hull is 81. Singer-songwriter-producer Van Dyke Parks is 77. Musician Stephen Stills is 75. Rock musician John Paul Jones (Led Zeppelin) is 74. Actress Victoria Principal is 70. Actor-director Mel Gibson is 64. Actress Shannon Sturges is 52. Actor John Ales is 51. Jazz musician James Carter is 51. Contemporary Christian singer Nichole Nordeman is 48. Musician Thomas Bangalter (Daft Punk) is 45. Actor Jason Marsden is 45. Actress Danica McKellar is 45. Actor Nicholas Gonzalez is 44. Singer Kimberley Locke (TV: "American Idol") is 42. Actress Kate Levering is 41. NFL quarterback Eli Manning is 39. Actress Nicole Beharie is 35. Pop musician Mark Pontius (Foster the People) is 35. Rhythm-and-blues singer Lloyd is 34. Pop-rock musician Nash Overstreet (Hot Chelle (shel) Rae) is 34. Actor Alex D. Linz is 31.

Thought for Today: "Not all who wander are lost." — J.R.R. Tolkien, English author (born this date in 1892, died in 1973).

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