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Chicken Soup
for the Soul

"THERE IS
NOBILITY IN
COMPASSION,
A BEAUTY IN
EMPATHY, A
GRACE IN
FORGIVENESS."



-JOHN CONNOLLY



"Jim of All Trades"
Handyman Service

**Happy New
Year!**

**Jim Lane
605/397-7013**

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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DeHoet has double-double in Groton Area's win over Britton-Hecla

Groton Area went to 3-0 on the season with a 51-44 Northeast Conference win over Britton-Hecla. The boys' basketball game was played Friday in Britton and was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by the Aberdeen Chrysler Center.

Groton Area took a 4-0 lead to start out the game. Britton-Hecla's Cole Fosness scored the first 14 points for Britton-Hecla and helped the Braves in the game. The game was tied five times and the lead changed hands four times. It was an eight-point rally by Groton Area at the end of the second quarter and the first part of the third quarter that gave the Tigers the upper hand. Groton Area led, 14-12, after the first quarter and 21-19 at half time. The Tigers took a 36-29 lead at the end of the third quarter. Groton Area opened up an 11-point lead late in the game at 47-36, but Britton-Hecla's Fosness and Aidan Fredrickson canned a pair of three-pointers and Groton Area's lead was reduced to five, 49-44, with 45 seconds left in the game, but the Tigers went on to win by seven.

Free throws played a big part of the Groton Area win as the Tigers were 14 of 19 from the line for 74 percent off of Britton-Hecla's 21 team fouls. Britton-Hecla made 55 percent of its free throws, making 11 of 20 off of Groton Area's 19 team fouls. Three players fouled out: Jonathan Doeden of Groton Area and Cole Fosness and Stanley Haskins Jr. for Britton-Hecla.

Kaden Kurtz led the Tigers with 18 points, two rebounds and one steal. Brodyn DeHoet had a double-double on the night with 15 points and 10 rebounds, in addition to three steal steals. Jonathan Doeden had 15 points, two rebounds, two assists and one steal. Austin Jones had four points, five rebounds and one assist. Cade Guthmiller had two points, two assists and one blocked shot. Isaac Smith had three rebounds, one assist and one steal. Tristan Traphagen had one rebound and one steal. Jayden Zak had one rebound and two assists.



Jonathan Doeden shoots over Britton-Hecla's Andrew James.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Isaac Smith passed the ball off to a teammate. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Britton-Hecla was led in scoring by Cole Fosness with 25 points followed by Nick Nelson with 10, Stanley Haskins Jr. had four points and Aidan Fredrickson added three points.

Groton Area had nine turnovers, five of which were steals. Britton-Hecla had 11 turnovers, seven of which were steals. Britton-Hecla controlled the boards, 31-23.

The Tigers were 14 of 25 in two-pointers for 56 percent and was three of 16 in three-pointers for 19 percent. Britton-Hecla was 12 of 25 in two-pointers for 48 percent and was three of 12 in three-pointers for 25 percent.

Groton Area led at the quarter stops at 15-9, 24-12 and 35-20 en route to a 46-23 junior varsity game win. Isaac Smith led the Tigers with 13 points followed by Lane Tietz with eight, Chandler Larson and Tristen Traphagen each had six points, Jordan Bjerke had five, Jayden Zak four and Wyatt Hearnen and Jackson Cogley each had two points. Aiden Fredrickson led the Braves with six points.

Groton Area will host Webster Area on Monday with a C game at 5:15 p.m. followed by the junior varsity game and then the varsity game.

- Paul Kosel

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Susan B. Anthony Slept Here

A crusader found refuge in the "Pink Castle."

Susan B. Anthony, a national leader in the woman suffrage movement, found a place to stay and probably friendship when she stayed at the home of John and Alice Pickler in Faulkton in 1890. Anthony was crisscrossing South Dakota in 1889 and 1890 to campaign for women being able to vote.

The Picklers were advocates of women's rights. Major Pickler, a Civil War veteran, came to Faulk County in 1882 and established a law practice and land development business. He was elected to the Dakota Territorial Legislature in 1884, and after the Dakotas were granted statehood, was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives and served there until 1897. Alice was a leader in the Women's Relief Corps of the Grand Army of the Republic, Women's Christian Temperance Union and the South Dakota Equal Suffrage Association.

When South Dakota became a state in 1889, its constitution required that the first legislature submit a constitutional amendment that would give every qualified person the right to vote. This extended the right to vote to most women. The election was to take place on Nov. 4, 1890.

The Picklers traveled to Washington, D.C., in February 1890 to attend a banquet given in honor of Anthony turning 70 years old on Feb. 15 and to attend the National American Woman Suffrage Association Convention.

The status of woman suffrage in South Dakota was discussed at the convention, and Anthony announced the members of a finance committee to work in South Dakota.

Both Picklers spoke briefly at the convention. As reported in the Washington, D.C. Evening Star, Alice said that "one of the facts most regretted in her new state was that the university and agricultural college, in both of which women had equal rights with men, were governed entirely by men." Women should have a hand in the management of public institutions, she concluded.

John thanked those attending for their interest in woman suffrage in South Dakota and delivered a few arguments in favor of women suffrage.

According to Pickler family lore that was told to Faulkton resident Jody Moritz, Anthony stayed with the Picklers for four days resting and speaking in the fall of 1890. The Pickler home wasn't just a home; it was a 20-room, three-story Victorian mansion that was the center of social life for the community. The house was painted a color between salmon and coral, giving the mansion the nickname "The Pink Castle."

A copy of a poster in the Pickler Mansion states that Anthony spoke at the courthouse in Leola on Sept.

SOUTH DAKOTA

HISTORY & HERITAGE



The photograph is of the room in which Anthony stayed when she was a houseguest of the Picklers. (Photo by Dorinda Daniels)

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20, 1890. According to letters from Anthony, she and other leaders in the suffrage movement spoke at Leola and other communities in north central South Dakota in September and October 1890. According to the family, Anthony returned to Faulkton after this tour and rested two days, then went to the Black Hills for two weeks of campaigning for woman suffrage.

She returned to Faulkton and stayed another two nights before going to her brother's home in Kansas. She reportedly found the rose wallpaper in the room in which she stayed restful.

Despite the efforts of Anthony and other national and state speakers, the amendment for woman suffrage in South Dakota was defeated 45,632 to 22,972 in the November 1890 election.

In a letter dated Feb. 27, 1901, Anthony addresses Alice Pickler as "My dear friend" and congratulates Alice Pickler on being elected president of the South Dakota Equal Suffrage Association. "I hope that you will stick to the helm of the ship come what may. We want the right woman in the right place when the next submission comes and you are that woman in my opinion," stated the typed note.

Anthony inquired after Mr. Pickler and the four Pickler children, and requested that Alice Pickler write "and tell me all about yourself and about South Dakota, and what are the chances for getting enfranchisement there."

Anthony added a handwritten note stating, "I see Pierce has died. He cheated us out of suffrage for women in both the Dakotas."

Anthony was referring to Gilbert A. Pierce, who died on Feb. 25, 1901. Pierce served as governor of Dakota Territory from 1884-1887. As a territorial legislator, John Pickler had promoted a bill for woman suffrage which passed both houses of the legislature. It was vetoed by Pierce.

Anthony wrote several more letters to Alice Pickler, which are contained in the Pickler papers at the South Dakota State Historical Society – State Archives, located at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre.

Anthony returned to Faulkton, probably in 1896, and again stayed with the Picklers, according to Pickler family lore.

Anthony died in 1906 and John Pickler in 1910, both without seeing women granted the right to vote. Alice Pickler, however, did live to make her voice heard at the ballot box before her death in 1932. The 19th Amendment to the U.S Constitution was ratified and took effect in 1920, giving most women throughout the country the right to vote. Alice was secretary of the South Dakota Equal Suffrage Association at the time of her death.

The Pickler Mansion still stands in Faulkton. Visitors can tour the mansion in the summer and see the room which Anthony found so restful, now called the Susan B. room, and learn about the history of three people who played roles in the suffragist movement.

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. Contact us at info@sdhsf.org to submit a story idea.

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Northern State Men's Basketball Falls to Upper Iowa in First Game of 2020

Aberdeen, SD - The Northern State men's basketball team (9-4, 5-2 NSIC) was unable to overcome the Upper Iowa Peacocks (7-6, 4-3 NSIC) as they fall 86-95 in their first game of the decade.

Jareese Williams from Upper Iowa was relentless from the 3-point line Friday night. Despite most of his 3-point attempts coming from at least two feet from beyond the arc, Williams still managed to go 6-of-9 and end the night with 22 points.

Upper Iowa shot the ball well to start the game, giving them a quick lead and enough momentum to keep that lead throughout the first half.

The Peacocks proved why they're No. 1 in the conference in turnovers, as seemingly every NSU pass attempt was contested or intercepted, propelling Upper Iowa to a 43-34 halftime lead.

The second half started off much better for the Wolves, as the 9-point deficit was cut down to just three in the opening minutes. However, despite fliting with the lead Northern was never able to take it, eventually falling 86-95 to snap their five-game winning streak.

Northern shot an even 50.0% from the floor while going just 37.5% from the 3-point line and 69.6% from the foul line. The Wolves scored 14 of their points off of turnovers, 48 from the paint and 19 off the bench.

Leading the team in scoring was Parker Fox with 22 points and 11 rebounds, closely followed by Andrew Kallman with five rebounds and a season best 20 points. Cole Dahl was next on the scoresheet, leading the team off the bench with 15 points.

Gabe King scored 13 points with four rebounds as Tommy Chatman scored ten points with three rebounds. Meanwhile, Jordan Belka and Mason Stark rounded out the scoreboard with four and two points respectively.

The loss moves Northern behind Minnesota Duluth in the NSIC North Division, but the Wolves still have a good chance to win the North as the top three teams each have the same conference record.

Northern will try to rebound tonight against the Winona State Warriors. Tip-off is set for 6:00 p.m. from Wachs Arena on January 4.

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Northern State women's basketball get off to a fast start in first game of 2020

Aberdeen, S.D. – Northern State women's basketball runs past the Peacocks as they get off to a fast start in the first game of the decade from Wachs Arena.

HIGHLIGHTS

Northern State got off to a hot start tonight as they did most of their scoring in the first quarter of the game with 23 and holding Upper Iowa to only 18

The Wolves shot 41.18% from the field and 85.71% at the foul line in the first quarter

NSU did their best all-around shooting in the second quarter going 58.33% from the floor and 50.00% from distance

The Wolves help Upper Iowa to a second-quarter shooting percentage of 41.18% from the field

Northern State ran the court outscoring the Peacocks 11-3 in fast breakpoints

The bench chipped in with 22 points and holding UIU's bench to 19 points

Forcing Upper Iowa to turn the ball over 11 times in the game NSU was able to score 14 points as a result

The Wolves outrebounded the Peacocks 42-32

Northern State dished out 17 assists, tallied four blocks, and had eight steals on the night

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Brianna Kusler: 50.0 FG%, 43.0 3-pt%, 7 assists, 4 steals, 16 points

Shariah Smith: 62.0 FG%, 60.0 3-pt%, 13 points

Jessi Marti: 8 rebounds, 4 assists, 3 steals, 10 points

Kennedy Harris: 75.0 FG%, 100.0 FT%, 10 points

Sara Tvedt: 50.0 FG%, 12 rebounds, 7 points

UP NEXT

Northern State women's basketball is back in action today at 4 p.m. as they welcome the Warriors of Winona State to the Barnett Center.

Hazardous Weather Outlook National Weather Service Aberdeen SD

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

DAY ONE...Today and tonight.

Winds will increase this evening as a front moves through the Dakotas. Wind gusts of 50 mph will be possible across the region with some blowing and drifting snow across eastern SD and west central MN.

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Upcoming Events

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

5:15 p.m.: Boys' Basketball hosts Webster Area. C game starts at 5:15 p.m. followed by JV and Varsity.

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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Today



Mostly Sunny

High: 33 °F

Tonight



Freezing Fog
then Slight
Chance
Showers and
Blustery

Low: 31 °F↑

Sunday



Sunny and
Breezy

High: 33 °F↓

Sunday
Night



Mostly Cloudy

Low: 13 °F

Monday



Partly Sunny

High: 33 °F

The complex block contains a weather map on the left and a photograph of wind turbines on the right. The map shows temperature readings for various locations in the Dakotas, with a color gradient from green (warmer) to blue (cooler). The wind turbine image shows several turbines silhouetted against a bright, hazy sky.

Warmer Today

**Windy Overnight-Sunday
Morning
40-50 mph Gusts**

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

Updated: 1/4/2020 4:39 AM Central

A front will move through the Dakotas this weekend. Ahead of the front, temperatures will be warmer today. Winds will increase this evening with gusts to 50 mph. Some patchy blowing and drifting snow will be possible across the east.

Today in Weather History

January 4, 1986: Snowfall amounts of 1 to 3 inches along with winds gusting to around 40 mph produced ground blizzard conditions in western South Dakota. Visibility was near zero in many locations with blowing and drifting snow blocking some roads. Some roads were closed in western South Dakota. Several accidents occurred with many cars ended up in the ditch.

January 4, 2005: Heavy snow of up to 10 inches fell across much of Lyman and Jones counties from the 4th until mid-morning of the 5th.

1641: According to historical records, Mount Parker, a stratovolcano on Mindanao Island in the Philippines erupted on this day. The eruption caused the formation of a crater lake called Lake Maughan.

1917: A tornado with estimated F3 damage cut a 15-mile path and struck a school at Vireton in Pittsburg County, Oklahoma, killing 16 people. It ranks as the 4th worst school tornado disaster in U.S. history.

1888 - Sacramento, CA, received 3.5 inches of snow, an all-time record for that location. The heaviest snow in recent history was two inches on February 5th in 1976. (4th-5th) (The Weather Channel)

1971 - A blizzard raged from Kansas to Wisconsin, claiming 27 lives in Iowa. Winds reached 50 mph, and the storm produced up to 20 inches of snow. (David Ludlum)

1982 - Milwaukee, WI, was shut down completely as a storm buried the city under 16 inches of snow in 24 hours. It was the worst storm in thirty-five years. (David Ludlum)

1987 - A storm moving off the Pacific Ocean spread wintery weather across the southwestern U.S., with heavy snow extending from southern California to western Wyoming. Up to 15 inches of snow blanketed the mountains of southern California, and rainfall totals in California ranged up to 2.20 inches in the Chino area. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Frigid arctic air invading the central and eastern U.S. left Florida about the only safe refuge from the cold and snow. A storm in the western U.S. soaked Bodega Bay in central California with 3.12 inches of rain. (National Weather Summary)

1989 - Up to a foot of snow blanketed the mountains of West Virginia, and strong winds in the northeastern U.S. produced wind chill readings as cold as 60 degrees below zero in Maine. Mount Washington NH reported wind gusts to 136 mph along with a temperature of 30 below zero! (National Weather Summary)

1990 - A winter storm moving out of the southwestern U.S. spread heavy snow across Nebraska and Iowa into Wisconsin. Snowfall totals in Nebraska ranged up to 7 inches at Auburn and Tecumseh. Totals in Iowa ranged up to 11 inches at Carlisle. In Iowa, most of the snow fell between midnight and 4 AM. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1994 - A major winter storm blanketed much of the northeastern U.S. with heavy snow. More than two feet was reported in northwestern Pennsylvania, with 33 inches at Waynesburg. There were ten heart attacks, and 185 injuries, related to the heavy snow in northwest Pennsylvania. Whiteout conditions were reported in Vermont and northeastern New York State. A wind gusts to 75 mph was clocked at Shaftsbury VT. In the Adirondacks of eastern New York State, the town of Tupper reported five inches of snow between 1 PM and 2 PM. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

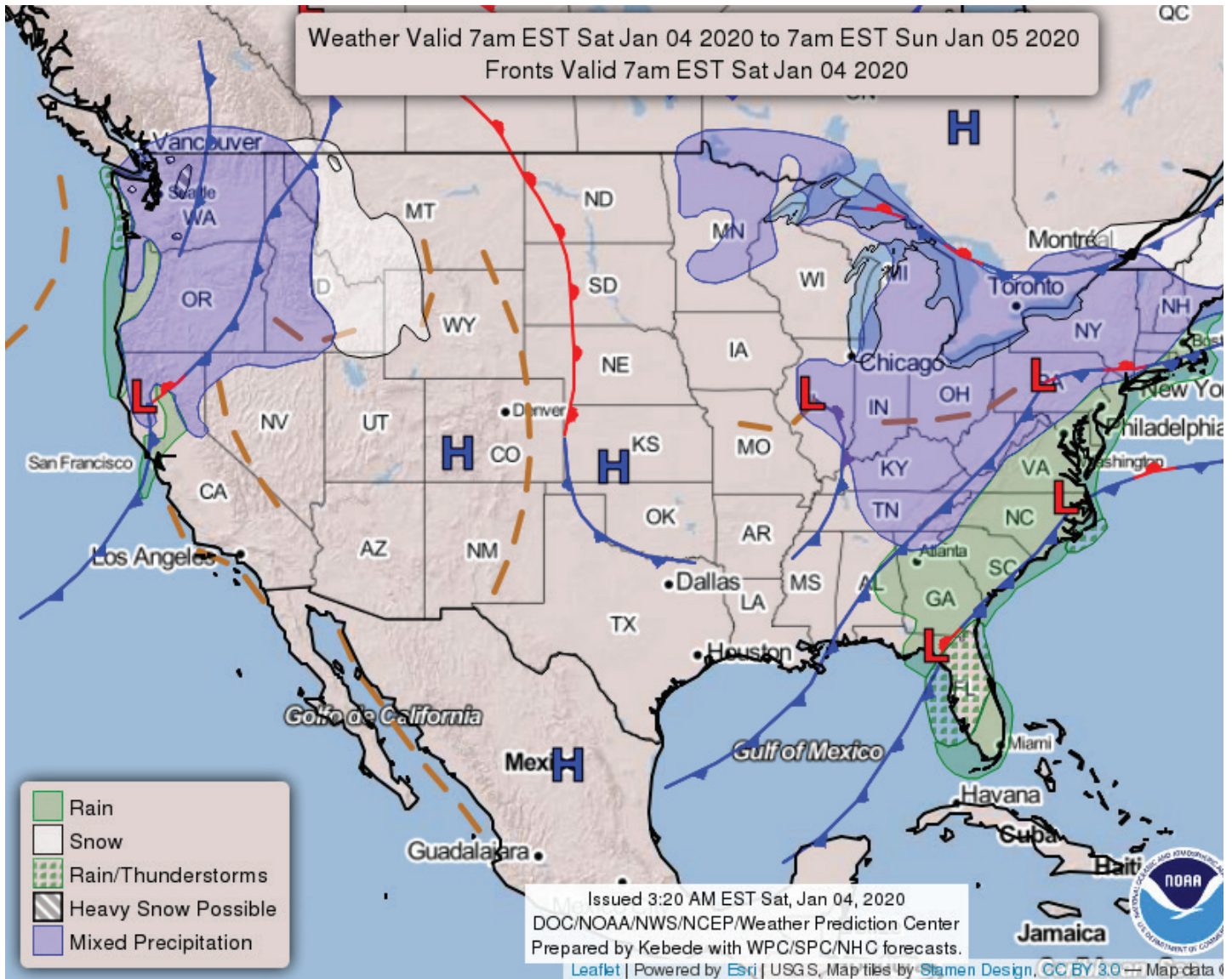
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 32 °F at 6:50 AM
Low Temp: 11 °F at 10:28 PM
Wind: 25 mph at 7:38 AM
Day Precip: 0.00

Record High: 54° in 2012
Record Low: -34° in 1912
Average High: 22°F
Average Low: 2°F
Average Precip in Jan.: 0.06
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.06
Precip Year to Date: 0.00
Sunset Tonight: 5:04 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:13 a.m.



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DO WHAT IS NEEDED

The bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City was a tragedy that struck at the heart of America. The disaster prompted many individuals and teams from across the nation to set aside whatever they were doing, and help meet the needs of the survivors.

One rescue team had been working for hours and finally, after being overcome by fatigue, stopped to rest at 2:00 a.m. Sitting there quietly in the darkness, they heard a strange sound – one they could not identify. When they stood up and turned around, they saw an elderly lady sweeping bits and pieces of debris into a neat pile.

“Where are you from?” asked a member of the rescue team.

“Dallas,” came the reply. “I can’t do very much but when I offered to help, they told me the most important thing I could do was to help clean things up. So I got a broom and started to sweep.”

Life is always filled with opportunities to serve others. Whenever we do what needs to be done, no matter how small or insignificant it may seem, and do the best we can do, we honor God and bless His name. We must not compare our work with the work of others if we are doing what God has called us to do. If our heart is right, our work will be right, and God will bless it.

Prayer: Help us, Father, to honor You by helping others in their times of need. May we use the gifts and skills You have given us to do whatever we can to serve others. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Galatians 6:4 Pay careful attention to your own work, for then you will get the satisfaction of a job well done, and you won’t need to compare yourself to anyone else.

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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

Friday's Scores By The Associated Press

BOYS BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Christian 69, Warner 31
Avon 54, Alcester-Hudson 42
Belle Fourche 58, New Underwood 23
Burke 45, Jones County 42
DeSmet 56, Arlington 40
Garretson 51, Chester 31
Gregory 59, Gayville-Volin 36
Groton Area 51, Britton-Hecla 44
Harding County 79, Hettinger/Scranton, N.D. 56
Howard 88, Freeman 28
Ipswich 61, Ethan 51
Lead-Deadwood 49, Bennett County 47
Lemmon 60, Newell 24
Lennox 80, Canton 70
McIntosh 63, Wakpala 61
Rapid City Christian 80, Hill City 27
Rapid City Stevens 71, Brookings 40
Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 58, Miller 34
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 45, Yankton 40
Sioux Falls Roosevelt 57, Sioux Falls Lincoln 48
Sioux Valley 74, Beresford 34
Sully Buttes 60, Wall 40
Tea Area 54, Vermillion 50
Timber Lake 55, Kadoka Area 48
Watertown 55, Pierre 49
Winner 62, Bon Homme 24
Aberdeen Roncalli Classic=
McLaughlin 72, Aberdeen Roncalli 61
St. Thomas More 72, Sisseton 36

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Avon 52, Alcester-Hudson 26
Brandon Valley 74, Mitchell 33
Burke 39, Jones County 27
Dakota Valley 68, Hartington Cedar Catholic, Neb. 54
Flandreau 72, Dell Rapids 42
Garretson 70, Chester 37
Gregory 50, Gayville-Volin 19
Hettinger/Scranton, N.D. 65, Harding County 32
Highmore-Harrold 54, Wessington Springs 29
Howard 49, Freeman 36
Ipswich 45, Sanborn Central 33
Irene-Wakonda 51, Hanson 42
Lead-Deadwood 47, Bennett County 21

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Lennox 77, Canton 31
Newell 43, Lemmon 42
Pierre 57, Watertown 47
Rapid City Stevens 69, Brookings 27
Sioux Falls Lincoln 53, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 26
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 59, Yankton 26
Sioux Valley 53, Beresford 44
Spearfish 61, Sturgis Brown 56
Tea Area 57, Vermillion 52
Tri-Valley 61, Baltic 32
Wakpala 70, McIntosh 16
Warner 45, Aberdeen Christian 32
Winner 56, Bon Homme 26
Aberdeen Roncalli Classic=
Aberdeen Roncalli 46, Castlewood 40
St. Thomas More 51, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 33
POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS=
Centerville vs. Canistota, ppd. to Jan 18th.

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

Inmate drives away from work site in state-owned pickup

YANKTON, S.D. (AP) — Authorities are looking for a South Dakota inmate who drove away from a work site Friday in a state-owned pickup.

Richard Barela, 28, left the Yankton site in a 2007 Chevy pickup, according to state Department of Corrections officials. He has been placed on escape status.

Barela is serving a six-year prison sentence for possession of a controlled substance out of Hughes County.

Noem: \$21.9 million approved for environmental projects

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Kristi Noem announced on Friday that the state is giving \$21.9 million in loans and grants to towns across the state for environmental projects.

The Board of Water and Natural Resources approved the money that will help fund recycling, landfill, and water management projects. Most of the money will be in low-interest loans. The state gave \$871,000 in grants to the towns of Mitchell, Rapid City, and Yankton.

The towns of Brookings, Elk Point, Sioux Falls, Viborg and Watertown received loans. A Sioux Falls electronics recycling business also received a loan. The towns of Blunt, Irene and Langford received loans that included a total of \$925,000 in principal forgiveness.

Rapid City sets record for value of building permits

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Rapid City set a record last year for the value of building permits, according to city officials.

The Rapid City Journal reports that nearly \$330 million in projects were approved by the city, the fourth straight year it has topped \$300 million. Last year's figure was bolstered by the permit for a new \$111.5 million arena, scheduled to be completed in 2021.

The city issued a total of 3,968 permits, the second-highest since 2014.

City officials said 30 of the permits generated two-thirds of the overall valuation. Other top permits went for a new Fleet Farm Retail Store at more than \$20 million, the Rapid City Economic Development for Ascent Innovation's new facility at more than \$9 million, and Rapid City Regional Hospital renovations

at \$7.5 million.

Ken Young, the Rapid City community development director, says the city has enjoyed consistent activity in recent years for new buildings, expansions and remodeling.

Missouri River power from upstream dams increases in 2019

By JAMES MacPHERSON Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — The wet weather that caused so many flooding problems around the Midwest in 2019 had one small silver lining: electric generation from the Missouri River's six upstream dams was up 5.6 percent, federal officials said.

It was the first time this century that the river had back-to-back years producing surplus power, which is good news for consumers. The Western Area Power Administration relies heavily on energy from the dams for the power it sells and must buy electricity on the open market in years when hydropower is underperforming — a cost that eventually is passed to ratepayers.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which manages dams and reservoirs along the 2,341-mile river, said energy production from the dams in the Dakotas, Montana and Nebraska was 13 billion kilowatt hours last year, up from 12.3 billion in 2018 and more than 38 percent above the long-term average.

A billion kilowatt-hours of power is enough to supply about 86,000 homes for a year, said Mike Swenson, a corps engineer in Omaha, Nebraska.

The WAPA buys and sells power from 56 hydropower plants around the nation. The Missouri River dams are its second-largest producer of energy that is then sold to rural electric cooperatives, municipal utilities, Indian tribes and other customers.

Drought years caused by shallow river levels forced WAPA to spend more than \$1.7 billion since 2000 to fulfill contracts, including \$28.3 million in 2017.

WAPA spokeswoman Lisa Meiman said the agency was able to sell at least \$40 million in excess power over the past two years to help offset those losses.

"Generation was way above average for the past two years," she said.

Oahe Dam near Pierre, South Dakota, which holds Lake Oahe in the Dakotas, and Garrison Dam, which creates Lake Sakakawea in western North Dakota, are typically the biggest power producers in the Missouri River system.

Oahe Dam generated 4.2 billion kilowatt hours last year, up from the long-term average of 2.7 billion kilowatt hours, Swenson said. Garrison Dam also generated 3.2 billion kilowatt hours of electricity last year, up from long-term average of 2.2 billion kilowatt hours, he said.

The plants have generated an average of 9.4 billion kilowatt hours of electricity since 1967, including a high of 14.6 billion kilowatts in 1997, Swenson said.

FBI investigating officer's shooting of South Dakota suspect

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Authorities are investigating a federal agent's shooting of a suspect near Rapid City that began with a car chase on the Pine Ridge Reservation last month.

The Rapid City Journal reported Thursday that the FBI is investigating what prompted the car pursuit and the reason for the shooting. Federal prosecutors will then decide if charges are warranted.

Authorities have released few details of the shooting Dec. 19. The suspect's name, what he or she was wanted for, or the seriousness of the injuries all remain unanswered. The shooting officer's name has not been released, either.

Several agencies were involved in the car chase, including the U.S. Marshals Service, the Highway Patrol, and the Oglala Sioux Tribe police.

Thousands mourn Iranian general as region braces for revenge

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA and SARAH EL DEEB Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — Thousands of militiamen and other supporters chanting “America is the Great Satan” marched in a funeral procession Saturday in Baghdad for Iran’s top general after he was killed in a U.S. airstrike, as the region braced for the Islamic Republic to fulfill its vows of revenge.

Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the head of Iran’s elite Quds Force and mastermind of its regional security strategy, was killed early Friday near the Baghdad international airport along with senior Iraqi militants in an airstrike ordered by President Donald Trump. The attack has caused regional tensions to soar and tested the U.S. alliance with Iraq.

Iran has vowed harsh retaliation, raising fears of an all-out war, but it’s unclear how or when it might respond. Any retaliation was likely to come after three days of mourning declared by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. All eyes were on Iraq, where America and Iran have competed for influence since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion.

Trump says he ordered the strike, a high-risk decision that was made without consulting Congress or U.S. allies, to prevent a conflict. U.S. officials say Soleimani was plotting a series of attacks that endangered American troops and officials, without providing evidence.

The U.S.-led coalition has scaled back operations and boosted “security and defensive measures” at bases hosting coalition forces in Iraq, a coalition official said on condition of anonymity according to regulations. The U.S. has meanwhile dispatched another 3,000 troops to neighboring Kuwait, the latest in a series of deployments in recent months as the standoff with Iran has worsened.

Soleimani was the architect of Iran’s regional policy of mobilizing militias across Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, including in the war against the Islamic State group. He was also blamed for attacks on U.S. troops and American allies going back decades.

In Baghdad, thousands of mourners, mostly men in black military fatigues, carried Iraqi flags and the flags of Iran-backed militias that are fiercely loyal to Soleimani at Saturday’s ceremony. They were also mourning Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, a senior Iraqi militia commander who was killed in the same strike.

The mourners, many of them in tears, chanted “No, No, America,” and “Death to America, death to Israel.” Mohammed Fadl, a mourner dressed in black, said the funeral is an expression of loyalty to the slain leaders. “It is a painful strike, but it will not shake us,” he said.

Helicopters hovered over the procession, which was attended by Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi and leaders of Iran-backed militias. The procession later made its way to the Shiite holy city of Karbala, where the mourners raised red flags associated with unjust bloodshed and revenge.

The slain Iraqi militants will be buried in Najaf, while Soleimani’s remains will be taken to Iran. More funeral services will be held for Soleimani in Iran on Sunday and Monday, before his body is laid to rest in his hometown of Kerman.

The gates to Baghdad’s Green Zone, which houses government offices and foreign embassies, including the U.S. Embassy, were closed Saturday.

An Iraqi security official said a Katyusha rocket was launched Sunday evening and fell into a square inside the Green Zone, less than one kilometer from the embassy. The official said there were no injuries. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to reporters.

Iraq’s government, which is closely allied with Iran, condemned the airstrike that killed Soleimani, calling it an attack on its national sovereignty. Parliament is meeting for an emergency session Sunday, and the government has come under mounting pressure to expel the 5,200 American troops based in the country, who are there to help prevent a resurgence of the Islamic State group.

Hadi al-Amiri, who heads a large parliamentary bloc and is expected to replace al-Muhandis as deputy commander of the Popular Mobilization Forces, an umbrella group of mostly Iran-backed militias, was among those paying their final respects in Baghdad.

“Rest assured,” he said before al-Muhandis’ coffin in a video circulated on social media. “The price of your pure blood will be the exit of U.S. forces from Iraq forever.”

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The U.S. has ordered all citizens to leave Iraq and temporarily closed its embassy in Baghdad, where Iran-backed militiamen and their supporters staged two days of violent protests earlier this week in which they breached the compound. Britain and France have warned their citizens to avoid or strictly limit travel in Iraq.

No one was hurt in the embassy protests, which came in response to U.S. airstrikes that killed 25 Iran-backed militiamen in Iraq and Syria. The U.S. blamed the militia for a rocket attack that killed a U.S. contractor in northern Iraq.

Tensions between the U.S. and Iran have steadily intensified since Trump's decision to withdraw from the 2015 nuclear deal and restore crippling sanctions, which have devastated Iran's economy and contributed to recent protests there in which hundreds were reportedly killed.

The administration's "maximum pressure" campaign has led Iran to openly abandon commitments under the deal. The U.S. has also blamed Iran for a wave of increasingly provocative attacks in the region, including the sabotage of oil tankers in the Persian Gulf and an attack on Saudi Arabia's oil infrastructure in September that temporarily halved its production.

Iran denied involvement in those attacks, but admitted to shooting down a U.S. surveillance drone in June, saying it had strayed into its airspace.

Billboards and images of Soleimani, who was widely seen as a national icon and a hero of the so-called Axis of Resistance against Western hegemony, appeared on major streets in Iran Saturday with the warning from the supreme leader that "harsh revenge" awaits the U.S.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani visited Soleimani's home in Tehran to express his condolences.

"The Americans did not realize what a great mistake they made," Rouhani said. "They will see the effects of this criminal act, not only today but for years to come."

On the streets of Tehran, many mourned Soleimani.

"I don't think there will be a war, but we must get his revenge," said Hojjat Sanieefar. America "can't hit and run anymore," he added.

Another man, who only identified himself as Amir, was worried.

"If there is a war, I am 100% sure it will not be to our betterment. The situation will certainly get worse," he said.

In an apparent effort to defuse tensions, Qatar's foreign minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, made an unplanned trip to Iran where he met with Rouhani and other senior officials.

Qatar, which has often served as a regional mediator, hosts American forces at the Al-Udeid Air Base and shares a massive offshore oil and gas field with Iran.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo meanwhile said he had spoken with Iraqi President Barham Salih, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu and Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, of the United Arab Emirates. "I reaffirmed that the U.S. remains committed to de-escalation," Pompeo tweeted.

A Saudi official had earlier confirmed to The Associated Press that the U.S. did not coordinate with Saudi Arabia before carrying out the strike that killed Soleimani. The official was not authorized to discuss security matters and so spoke on condition of anonymity.

In a sign of his regional reach, supporters in Lebanon hung billboards commemorating Soleimani in Beirut's southern suburbs and in southern Lebanon along the disputed border with Israel, according to the state-run National News Agency.

Both are strongholds of the Iran-backed Hezbollah militant group, whose leader, Hassan Nasrallah, has close ties to Soleimani. A portrait of Nasrallah could be seen in Soleimani's home when mourners paid tribute there.

Palestinian factions in the Gaza Strip, including the territory's Hamas rulers, opened a mourning site for the slain general and dozens gathered to burn American and Israeli flags. Iran has long provided aid to the armed wing of Hamas and to the smaller Islamic Jihad militant group.

Ismail Radwan, a senior Hamas official, said the killing of Soleimani was "a loss for Palestine and the

resistance.”

El Deeb reported from Beirut. Associated Press writers Joseph Krauss in Jerusalem, Jon Gambrell and Aya Batrawy in Dubai, United Arab Emirates; Amir Vahdat in Tehran, Iran; Zeina Karam in Beirut and Fares Akram in Gaza City, Gaza Strip contributed.

Rose McGowan defends tweet apologizing to Iran after strike

By JOHN CARUCCI Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Rose McGowan’s tweet that apologized on behalf of the U.S. to Iran for “disrespecting their flag and people” in the wake of an airstrike that killed the country’s top general was not anti-American, the actress said in the face of harsh criticism.

“I don’t support Iran over America. I want America to be better,” McGowan said during an exclusive interview with The Associated Press on Friday.

Her tweet read: “Dear #Iran, The USA has disrespected your country, your flag, your people. 52% of us humbly apologize. We want peace with your nation. We are being held hostage by a terrorist regime. We do not know how to escape. Please do not kill us.”

The head of Iran’s elite Quds force and mastermind of its regional security strategy, Gen. Qassem Soleimani, was killed in a U.S. airstrike early Friday. The attack has caused regional tensions to soar.

She faced outrage over Friday’s Twitter post, with some suggesting she move to Iran. McGowan acknowledged that her tweet was unusual.

“I woke up, I stupidly looked at Twitter. I was going to the bathroom, and I was like, ‘what?’” She added that she doesn’t believe the governments of either Iran or the U.S.

“So, I just thought I would do something a little strange or unusual ... bloodshed should be avoided if you can,” she said. “And I kind of just thought, what if I take a really bizarre way around this. A very strange thought, I understand.”

McGowan, 46, who is known for her role in the “Scream” movie franchise, was one of the earliest of dozens of women to accuse Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein of sexual misconduct, making her a major figure in the #MeToo movement. Jury selection is scheduled to start this week in New York in a sexual assault case against Weinstein based on allegations from two other women. Weinstein has pleaded not guilty in that case and denies any maintains any sexual activity was consensual.

McGowan has filed a federal lawsuit alleging Weinstein and two of his former attorneys engaged in racketeering to silence her and derail her career as she prepared to accuse him of rape. An attorney for the mogul has called the suit meritless.

60 dead in landslides, flash floods in Indonesia’s capital

By NINIEK KARMINI Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Landslides and floods triggered by torrential downpours have left at least 60 people dead in and around Indonesia’s capital, as rescuers struggled to search for people apparently buried under tons of mud, officials said Saturday.

Monsoon rains and rising rivers submerged a dozen districts in the greater Jakarta area and caused landslides that buried at least a dozen people.

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

It’s the worst flooding in the area since 2007, when 80 people were killed over 10 days.

Rescuers recovered more bodies as flash floods and mudslides destroyed several villages in Lebak, a district in neighboring Banten province, Wibowo said. Rescuers were still searching for two villagers reportedly missing in the landslide, he said.

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The number of fatalities was expected to increase, with rescuers and villagers also searching for at least three people believed to be buried in another landslide in Cigudeg village in Bogor district, said Ridwan, the village's secretary, who goes by a single name.

Ridwan said bad weather, blackouts and mudslides were hampering rescue efforts. He said rescuers on Saturday managed to reach eight hamlets that had been isolated for days by cut-off roads and mudslides and rescued more than 1,700 villagers in weak condition.

Four days after the region of 30 million people was struck by flash floods, waters have receded in many middle-class districts, but conditions remain grim in narrow riverside alleys where the city's poor live.

Government data showed that some 92,200 people were still unable to return home and were crammed at damp emergency shelters, mostly in the hardest-hit area of Bekasi. The number was sharply reduced from 173,000 as the muddy waters which submerged much of the city up to 2 meters (6.5 feet) high were receded.

Indonesia's Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics Agency said that more downpours were forecast for the capital in the coming days, and that the potential for extreme rainfall will continue until next month across the vast archipelago nation. The government on Friday started cloud seeding in an attempt to divert rain clouds from reaching greater Jakarta to prevent possible flooding, the agency said.

Indonesia is hit by deadly floods each year, and Jakarta, the capital of Southeast Asia's largest economy, is not immune. But this year's floods have been particularly bad, with about 397,000 people seeking refuge in shelters across the greater metropolitan area as floodwaters reached up to 6 meters (19 feet) in some places.

US singer Pink pledges \$500K to fight Australia wildfires

SYDNEY (AP) — American pop singer Pink says she is donating \$500,000 to help fight the deadly wildfires that have devastated parts of Australia.

"I am totally devastated watching what is happening in Australia right now with the horrific bushfires," Pink tweeted Saturday to her 32.2 million Twitter followers. "I am pledging a donation of \$500,000 directly to the local fire services that are battling so hard on the frontlines. My heart goes out to our friends and family in Oz."

The death toll in the wildfire crisis is now up to 23 people. The fires are expected to be particularly fierce throughout the weekend.

The wildfires, which have been raging since September, have already burned about 5 million hectares (12.35 million acres) of land and destroyed more than 1,500 homes.

On foreign policy, Trump flouts risks that gave others pause

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is not the first American leader to have Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani in his sights, but he was the first to pull the trigger.

It's a pattern that has emerged throughout Trump's presidency. On a range of national security matters, he has cast aside the same warnings that gave his predecessors in both parties pause.

At times, he has simply been willing to embrace more risk. In other moments, he has questioned the validity of the warnings altogether, even from experts within his own administration. And he has publicly taken pride in doing so.

When Trump moved the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, a pledge others had made but ultimately backed away from, it was against the advice of aides who argued it would inflame tensions in the Middle East. When he became the first American leader to step foot in North Korea, he disregarded those who said he was giving Pyongyang a symbolic victory without getting anything in return.

Trump's supporters have embraced his willingness to act where others would not, saying he has brought a businessman's fresh eye to intractable problems. But his high-risk approach has sparked fear in Demo-

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crats, as well as some Republicans, who worry that the president is overly focused on short-term wins and blind to the long-term impact of his actions.

"Trump thinks foreign policy is a reality show, and if there aren't devastating consequences the next day, then they won't come," said Ben Rhodes, who served as President Barack Obama's deputy national security adviser. "They are coming — in some cases, they already have, in others, the situation is getting progressively worse."

Trump's willingness to buck conventional thinking has been a defining feature of his political life. As he enters the final year of his first term, aides and allies describe him as increasingly emboldened to act on his instincts. He's banished the coterie of advisers who viewed themselves as "guardrails" against his impulse. Others, like former Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, have left because they disagreed with Trump's decision-making.

Trump's approach to national security has been shaped in part by the response to one of his first major actions: airstrikes against Syria in retaliation for the use of chemical weapons in 2017, a few months after he took office. He relished in the fact that both Republicans and Democrats cheered the decision, one that Obama had backed away from.

Obama halted plans for a strike in 2013 in part because he feared it would drag the U.S. into a wider conflict. That didn't happen after Trump's targeted strike — though quagmire in Syria remains and the U.S. still has a small troop presence in the country.

The consequences of Trump's brash foreign policy decisions have indeed been mixed.

His decision to move the embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem did not, in fact, prompt an uptick in violence in the Middle East. But it also did nothing to help the Trump White House ease mounting tensions with the Palestinians, cratering prospects for progress on a peace deal with the Israelis.

Trump's decision to embrace direct diplomacy with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, including a meeting at the dividing line between North and South Korea, has resulted in little progress toward dismantling Pyongyang's nuclear program. Negotiations have largely broken down, and Kim said this week that his country would soon unveil a new strategic weapon.

The president also faced fierce backlash from his own party last year when he abruptly announced that he was withdrawing U.S. forces from Syria, clearing the way for Turkey to launch an offensive against Kurdish forces allied with the U.S. Trump initially dug in on his decision, but ultimately reversed course.

To the president's critics, his decision to order a targeted strike against Soleimani may be his riskiest decision yet.

Both the Obama and George W. Bush administrations passed on the prospect of taking out Soleimani, the leader of Iran's elite Quds Force who is accused of helping orchestrate attacks on American troops in Iraq. Even Trump advisers acknowledged the risk of Iranian retaliation, which could pull the U.S. and Tehran into a direct military conflict.

"One of these days, he's going to blunder himself into a real, full-blown crisis," Marie Harf, a senior adviser to former Secretary of State John Kerry, said of Trump. "The Soleimani assassination may be the reckless move by Trump that sends us into full-scale conflict."

But to Trump backers, it's just another hyperbolic response to a warranted action by the president.

Nebraska Republican Sen. Ben Sasse criticized those who he said were treating Soleimani's killing like it "was the end of the world." Sasse said that while he and Trump don't always see eye-to-eye on policy issues, the president was right to take this step.

"The fact of the matter is, Iran in general and Soleimani in particular had been ramping up attacks," Sasse said. "There had to be a red line around the loss of American life."

'Not safe to move': Fire threats intensify in Australia

By SHONAL GANGULY and STEVE McMORRAN Associated Press

SYDNEY (AP) — A father and son who were battling flames for two days are the latest victims of the worst wildfire season in Australian history, and the path of destruction widened in at least three states Saturday due to strong winds and high temperatures.

The death toll in the wildfire crisis is now up to 23 people, Prime Minister Scott Morrison said after calling up about 3,000 reservists to battle the escalating fires, which are expected to be particularly fierce throughout the weekend.

"We are facing another extremely difficult next 24 hours," Morrison said at a televised news conference. "In recent times, particularly over the course of the balance of this week, we have seen this disaster escalate to an entirely new level."

Dick Lang, a 78-year-old acclaimed bush pilot and outback safari operator, and his 43-year-old son, Clayton, were identified by Australian authorities after their bodies were found Saturday on a highway on Kangaroo Island. Their family said their losses left them "heartbroken and reeling from this double tragedy."

Lang, known as "Desert Dick," led tours for travelers throughout Australia and other countries. "He loved the bush, he loved adventure and he loved Kangaroo Island," his family said.

Clayton Lang, one of Dick's four sons, was a renowned plastic surgeon who specialized in hand surgery.

The fire danger increased as temperatures rose Saturday to record levels across Australia, surpassing 43 degrees Celsius (109 Fahrenheit) in Canberra, the capital, and reaching a record-high 48.9 C (120 F) in Penrith, in Sydney's western suburbs.

Video and images shared on social media showed blood red skies taking over Mallacoota, a coastal town in Victoria where as many as 4,000 residents and tourists were forced to shelter on beaches as the navy tried to evacuate as many people as possible.

By Saturday evening, 3,600 firefighters were battling blazes across New South Wales state. Power was lost in some areas as fires downed transmissions lines, and residents were warned that the worst may be yet to come.

"We are now in a position where we are saying to people it's not safe to move, it's not safe to leave these areas," state Premier Gladys Berejiklian told reporters. "We are in for a long night and I make no bones about that. We are still yet to hit the worst of it."

Morrison said the governor general had signed off on the calling up of reserves "to search and bring every possible capability to bear by deploying army brigades to fire-affected communities."

Defense Minister Linda Reynolds said it was the first time that reservists had been called up "in this way in living memory and, in fact, I believe for the first time in our nation's history."

The deadly wildfires, which have been raging since September, have already burned about 5 million hectares (12.35 million acres) of land and destroyed more than 1,500 homes.

The early and devastating start to Australia's summer wildfires has also been catastrophic for the country's wildlife, likely killing nearly 500 million birds, reptiles and mammals in New South Wales alone, Sydney University ecologist Chris Dickman told the Sydney Morning Herald. Frogs, bats and insects are excluded from his estimate, making the toll on animals much greater.

Experts say climate change has exacerbated the unprecedented wildfires around the world. Morrison has been criticized for his repeated refusal to say climate change is impacting the fires, instead deeming them a natural disaster.

Some residents yelled at the prime minister earlier in the week during a visit to New South Wales, where people were upset with the lack of fire equipment their towns had. After fielding criticism for taking a family vacation in Hawaii as the wildfire crisis unfolded in December, Morrison announced he was postponing visits to India and Japan that were scheduled for later this month.

The government has committed 20 million Australian dollars (\$14 million) to lease four fire-fighting aircraft for the duration of the crisis, and the helicopter-equipped HMAS Adelaide was deployed to assist evacuations from fire-ravaged areas.

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The deadly fire on Kangaroo Island broke containment lines Friday and was described as "virtually unstoppable" as it destroyed buildings and burned through more than 14,000 hectares (35,000 acres) of Flinders Chase National Park. While the warning level for the fire was reduced Saturday, the Country Fire Service said it was still a risk to lives and property.

New South Wales Rural Fire Service Deputy Commissioner Rob Rogers warned that the fires could move "frighteningly quick." Embers carried by the wind had the potential to spark new fires or enlarge existing blazes.

Rural Fire Service Commissioner Shane Fzsimmons said the 264,000-hectare (652,000-acre) Green Wattle Creek fire in a national park west of Sydney could spread into Sydney's western suburbs. He said crews have been doing "extraordinary work" by setting controlled fires and using aircraft and machinery to try to keep the flames away.

More than 130 fires were burning in New South Wales, with at least half of them out of control.

Firefighters were battling a total of 53 fires across Victoria state, and conditions were expected to worsen with a southerly wind change. About 900,000 hectares (2.2 million acres) of bushland has already been burned through.

In a rare piece of good news, the number of people listed as missing or unaccounted for in Victoria was reduced from 28 to six.

"We still have those dynamic and dangerous conditions — the low humidity, the strong winds and, what underpins that, the state is tinder dry," Victoria Emergency Services Commissioner Andrew Crisp said.

Thousands have already fled fire-threatened areas in Victoria, and local police reported heavy traffic flows on major roads.

"If you might be thinking about whether you get out on a particular road close to you, well there's every chance that a fire could hit that particular road and you can't get out," Victoria Emergency Services Commissioner Andrew Crisp said.

___ McMorran reported from Wellington, New Zealand.

Iran general steps out of Soleimani's shadow to lead proxies

By AMIR VAHDAT and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — A new Iranian general has stepped out of the shadows to lead the country's expeditionary Quds Force, becoming responsible for Tehran's proxies across the Mideast as the Islamic Republic threatens the U.S. with "harsh revenge" for killing its previous head, Qassem Soleimani.

The Quds Force is part of the 125,000-strong Revolutionary Guard, a paramilitary organization that answers only to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The Guard oversees Iran's ballistic missile program, has its naval forces shadow the U.S. Navy in the Persian Gulf and includes an all-volunteer Basij force.

Like his predecessor, a young Esmail Ghaani faced the carnage of Iran's eight-year war with Iraq in the 1980s and later joined the newly founded Quds, or Jerusalem, Force.

While much still remains unknown about Ghaani, 62, Western sanctions suggest he's long been in a position of power in the organization. And likely one of his first duties will be to oversee whatever revenge Iran intends to seek for the U.S. airstrike early Friday that killed his longtime friend Soleimani.

"We are children of war," Ghaani once said of his relationship with Soleimani, according to Iran's state-run IRNA news agency. "We are comrades on the battlefield and we have become friends in battle."

The Guard has seen its influence grow ever-stronger both militarily and politically in recent decades. Iran's conventional military was decimated by the execution of its old officer class during the 1979 Islamic Revolution and later by sanctions.

A key driver of that influence comes from the elite Quds Force, which works across the region with allied groups to offer an asymmetrical threat to counter the advanced weaponry wielded by the U.S. and its regional allies. Those partners include Iraqi militiamen, Lebanon's Hezbollah and Yemen's Houthi rebels.

In announcing Ghaani as Soleimani's replacement, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei called the new leader "one of the most prominent commanders" in service to Iran.

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The Quds Force "will be unchanged from the time of his predecessor," Khamenei said, according to IRNA. Soleimani long has been the face of the Quds Force. His fame surged after American officials began blaming him for deadly roadside bombs targeting U.S. troops in Iraq. Images of him, long a feature of hard-line Instagram accounts and mobile phone lockscreens, now plaster billboards calling for Iran to avenge his death.

But while Soleimani's exploits in Iraq and Syria launched a thousand analyses, Ghaani has remained much more in the shadows of the organization. He has only occasionally come up in the Western or even Iranian media. But his personal story broadly mirrors that of Soleimani.

Born on Aug. 8, 1957 in the northeastern Iranian city of Mashhad, Ghaani grew up during the last decade of monarchy. He joined the Guard a year after the 1979 revolution. Like Soleimani, he first deployed to put down the Kurdish uprising in Iran that followed the shah's downfall.

Iraq then invaded Iran, launching an eight-year war that would see 1 million people killed. Many of the dead were lightly armed members of the Guard, some of whom were young boys killed in human-wave assaults on Iraqi positions.

Volunteers "were seeing that all of them are being killed, but when we ordered them to go, would not hesitate," Ghaani later recounted. "The commander is looking to his soldiers as his children, and in the soldier's point of view, it seems that he received an order from God and he must to do that."

He survived the war to join the Quds Force shortly after its creation. He worked with Soleimani, as well as led counterintelligence efforts at the Guard. Western analysts believe while Soleimani focused on nations to Iran's west, Ghaani's remit was those to the east like Afghanistan and Pakistan. However, Iranian state media has not elaborated on his time in the Guard.

In 2012, the U.S. Treasury sanctioned Ghaani, describing him as having authority over "financial disbursements" to proxies affiliated with the Quds Force. The sanctions particularly tied Ghaani to an intercepted shipment of weapons seized at a port in 2010 in Nigeria's most-populous city, Lagos.

Authorities broke into 13 shipping containers labeled as carrying "packages of glass wool and pallets of stone." They instead found 107 mm Katyusha rockets, rifle rounds and other weapons. The Katyusha remains a favored weapon of Iranian proxy forces, including Iraqi militias and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah.

An Iranian and his Nigerian partner later received five-year prison sentences over the shipment, which appeared bound for Gambia, then under the rule of dictator Yahya Jammeh. Israeli officials had claimed the rockets would be shipped to militants in the Gaza Strip, while Nigerian authorities alleged that local politicians could use the arms in upcoming elections.

Also in 2012, Ghaani drew criticism from the U.S. State Department after reportedly saying that "if the Islamic Republic was not present in Syria, the massacre of people would have happened on a much larger scale." That comment came just after gunmen backing Syrian President Bashar Assad killed over 100 people in Houla in the country's Homs province.

"Over the weekend we had the deputy head of the Quds Force saying publicly that they were proud of the role that they had played in training and assisting the Syrian forces — and look what this has wrought," then-State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said at the time.

In January 2015, Ghaani indirectly said that Iran sends missiles and weapons to Palestinians to fight Israel. "The U.S. and Israel are too small to consider themselves in line with Iran's military power," Ghaani said at the time. "This power has now appeared alongside the oppressed people of Palestine and Gaza in the form of missiles and weapons."

Now, Ghaani is firmly in control of the Quds Force. While Iran's leaders say they have a plan to avenge Soleimani's death, no plan has been announced as the country prepares for funerals for the general starting Sunday.

Whatever that plan is, Ghaani likely will be involved.

"If there were no Islamic Republic, the U.S. would have burned the whole region," Ghaani once said.

___ Gambrell reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Small cracks have appeared in GOP unity on impeachment trial

By **MATTHEW DALY** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate seems certain to keep President Donald Trump in office thanks to the overwhelming GOP support expected in his impeachment trial. But how that trial will proceed — and when it will begin — remains to be seen.

Democrats are pushing for the Senate to issue subpoenas for witnesses and documents, pointing to reports that they say have raised new questions about Trump's decision to withhold military aid from Ukraine.

Once the House transmits the articles of impeachment, decisions about how to conduct the trial will require 51 votes. With Republicans controlling the Senate 53-47, Democrats cannot force subpoenas on their own.

For now, Republicans are holding the line behind Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's position that they should start the trial and hear arguments from House prosecutors and Trump's defense team before deciding what to do.

But small cracks in GOP unity have appeared, with two Republican senators criticizing McConnell's pledge of "total coordination" with the White House during the impeachment trial.

Alaska Sen. Lisa Murkowski said she was "disturbed" by the GOP leader's comments, adding that there should be distance between the White House and the Senate on how the trial is conducted. Maine Sen. Susan Collins, meanwhile, called the pledge by McConnell, R-Ky., inappropriate and said she is open to seeking testimony.

Democrats could find their own unity tested if and when the Senate reaches a final vote on the two House-approved impeachment charges — abuse of power and obstruction of Congress.

It would take 67 votes to convict Trump on either charge and remove him from office, a high bar unlikely to be reached. It's also far from certain that all 47 Democrats will find Trump guilty.

Democratic Sen. Doug Jones of Alabama said he's undecided on how he might vote and suggested he sees merits in the arguments both for and against conviction.

A look at senators to watch once the impeachment trial begins:

Murkowski

In her fourth term representing Alaska, Murkowski is considered a key Senate moderate. She has voted against GOP leadership on multiple occasions and opposed Brett Kavanaugh's nomination to the Supreme Court in 2018.

Murkowski told an Alaska TV station last month there should be distance between the White House and the GOP-controlled Senate in how the trial is conducted.

"To me it means that we have to take that step back from being hand in glove with the defense, and so I heard what leader McConnell had said, I happened to think that that has further confused the process," she said.

Murkowski says the Senate is being asked to cure deficiencies in the House impeachment effort, particularly when it comes to whether key witnesses should be brought forward to testify, including White House acting chief of staff Mick Mulvaney and former national security adviser John Bolton.

"How we will deal with witnesses remains to be seen," she said, adding that House leaders should have gone to court if witnesses refused to appear before Congress.

Collins

The four-term senator said she is open to calling witnesses as part of the impeachment trial but calls it "premature" to decide who should be called until evidence is presented.

"It is inappropriate, in my judgment, for senators on either side of the aisle to prejudge the evidence before they have heard what is presented to us," Collins told Maine Public Radio.

Senators take an oath to render impartial justice during impeachment — an oath lawmakers should take seriously, Collins said.

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Collins, who is running for reelection and is considered one of the nation's most vulnerable GOP senators, also faulted Democrats for saying Trump should be found guilty and removed from office. "There are senators on both sides of the aisle, who, to me, are not giving the appearance of and the reality of judging that's in an impartial way," she said.

Jones

Jones, a freshman seeking reelection in staunchly pro-Trump Alabama, is considered the Democrat most likely to side with Republicans in a Senate trial. In a Washington Post op-ed column, Jones said that for Americans to have confidence in the impeachment process, "the Senate must conduct a full, fair and complete trial with all relevant evidence regarding the president's conduct."

He said he fears that senators "are headed toward a trial that is not intended to find the whole truth. For the sake of the country, this must change."

Unlike what happened during the investigation of President Bill Clinton, "Trump has blocked both the production of virtually all relevant documents and the testimony of witnesses who have firsthand knowledge of the facts," Jones said. "The evidence we do have may be sufficient to make a judgment, but it is clearly incomplete," he added.

Jones and other Democrats are seeking testimony from Mulvaney and other key White House officials to help fill in the gaps.

Mitt Romney, R-Utah.

Romney, a freshman senator and on-again, off-again Trump critic, has criticized Trump for his comments urging Ukraine and China to investigate Democrat Joe Biden, but has not spoken directly about he thinks impeachment should proceed.

Romney is overwhelmingly popular in a conservative state where Trump is not beloved, a status that gives Romney leverage to buck the president or at least speak out about rules and procedures of a Senate trial.

Cory Gardner, R-Colo.

Gardner, like Collins is a vulnerable senator up for reelection in a state where Trump is not popular. Gardner has criticized the House impeachment effort as overly partisan and fretted that it will sharply divide the country.

While Trump is under water in Colorado, a GOP strategist says Gardner and other Republicans could benefit from an energized GOP base if the Senate, as expected, acquits Trump of the two articles of impeachment approved by the House. An acquittal "may have a substantial impact on other races in Colorado, up to and including Sen. Cory Gardner's re-election," Ryan Lynch told Colorado Public Radio.

Martha McSally, R-Ariz.

McSally, who was appointed to her seat after losing a Senate bid in 2018, is another vulnerable Republican seeking election this fall. She calls impeachment a serious matter and said she hopes her constituents would want her to examine the facts without partisanship. The American people "want us to take a serious look at this and not have it be just partisan bickering going on," she told The Arizona Republic.

Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn.

A three-term senator and former governor, Alexander is retiring next year. A moderate who's respected by both parties as an old-school defender of Senate prerogatives, Alexander has called Trump's conduct "inappropriate," but says he views impeachment as a "mistake."

An election, which "is just around the corner, is the right way to decide who should be president," Alexander said last fall. "Impeachment has never removed a president. It will only divide the country further."

Gym class without the gym? With technology, it's catching on

By CAROLYN THOMPSON Associated Press

Grace Brown's schedule at West Potomac High School in northern Virginia is filled with all the usual academics, and she's packed in Latin, chorus and piano as extras.

What she can't cram into the 8:10 a.m. - 2:55 p.m. school day is gym class.

So she's taking that one minus the gym, and on her own time.

The 14-year-old freshman is getting school credit for virtual physical education, a concept that, as strange as it may sound, is being helped along by availability of wearable fitness trackers.

For students whose tests and textbooks have migrated to screens, technology as gym equipment may have been only a matter of time.

Grace, who lives in Alexandria, wears a school-issued Fitbit on her wrist while getting in at least three 30-minute workouts a week outside of school hours. She has an app on her computer that screenshots her activity so she can turn it in for credit.

While online physical education classes have been around for well over a decade, often as part of virtual or online schools, the technology has made possible a new level of accountability, its users say.

"We're asking kids to wear this while they do an activity of their choice, and they can change the activity as they desire, as long as it's something that they understand is probably going to get their heart rate up," said Elizabeth Edwards, department head for online physical education at Fairfax County Public Schools, which includes Grace's high school.

Though a physical education instructor isn't shouting from the sidelines, teachers do guide assignments by setting goals such as fat burn, cardio or peak, relying on the technology to be their eyes and ears. Students also are required to sign in for a weekly 60-minute to 90-minute classroom session with the teacher.

Teenagers who play soccer, swim or dance all year may satisfy the workout requirements without doing anything extra. Grace has been adding bike rides and jogs to her days.

For her, online PE freed her up to take three elective courses, instead of two in school. For others, it's a welcome way to take a required class that students otherwise may find socially or physically challenging.

"We definitely exercise more in online PE," Grace said. "There's a lot of standing around in regular PE. Online, I do much harder workouts."

A survey of more than 3,000 fitness professionals by the American College of Sports Medicine named wearable technology the top trend in fitness for 2020.

It's not clear how many schools are embracing the trend. It comes with some cautions.

Technology and the collection of any student data always raises the specter of student privacy concerns. And some worry that students exercising on their own may miss out on important social concepts such as teamwork.

"There is a difference between physical activity and physical education," said Chris Hersl, former vice president for programs and professional development at SHAPE America, which wrote national standards for K-12 physical education.

"Physical activity is great for the body. We want everybody to move," he said, "but physical education is a class where students are taught how to move their body and the social context in which to do that."

Joliet Township schools in Illinois uses fitness trackers as part of a blended learning conditioning program that has students who sign up for it work out two to three times a week in the gym with an instructor and the other days on their own.

"It's a flexible schedule where they still have in-person physical education classes and there's still instruction happening, but they're able to use the Fitbit to monitor how students are working outside the classroom," said Karla Guseman, the district's associate superintendent for educational services.

She said it's one of numerous blending learning options that Joliet Township High School offers to give students both more control over the pace and time of their work, and more responsibility to get it done.

"We're trying to give them an opportunity to see what post-secondary might look like," Guseman said, "when you don't meet every day but you're still expected to do work for a course or preparation between class periods."

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A virtual school that is part of the Springfield, Missouri, public school district started with a single class -- physical education, said Nichole Lemmon, the creator of the program, called Launch, which uses Garmin fitness trackers.

"Eight years ago, it was the very first online class by our developers to meet a really niche student who could not fit PE courses into their schedule," Lemmon said. "Maybe they wanted to take more honors level courses, or advanced placement, or international baccalaureate classes and PE was hard to fit in, so we allowed them to do it outside of the school day."

A telling illustration of the technology-driven 24/7 school day is the peak log-in time on the school's portal system: 10:03 p.m.

"They may not be working out at 10 p.m., but that's when they're turning in their workout. The notion that education now runs 7:30-4, 8-3, is really antiquated," Lemmon said, "and our students are begging to be able to have more flexibility in the time of day they learn."

During the past summer session, there were 22,600 students enrolled, and the most popular courses were PE, she said.

Teachers help students set up their fitness devices, entering the student's height, weight and age, and coming up with a target heart rate. As an added layer of instruction and accountability, Launch students are required to send video back to the teacher, who checks their technique as they stretch or lift weights, for example.

"They work with their PE instructor to set a fitness goal and then they get their workout however they want to," Lemmon said. It really does promote lifelong fitness because it's about working out the way they want to, not they're required to do a particular activity in gym. ... We have a lot of kids -- a locker room is their worst nightmare. It's not where they want to be."

Grace's mother, Rhonda Brown, remembers how hard gym class soccer and softball games were for her because of blindness in one eye.

"You're talking to someone who was always picked last for every sporting activity. I have nightmares sometimes," she said.

She'd like to see the county go even further and grant waivers from PE to kids that play school sports.

"We're so stuck in the traditional classroom setting. These kids are burning 2,000 calories during a practice and more at every game.," she said. "I wish the schools would catch up with the times."

Amid clergy abuse, survivors of color remain in shadows

By GARY FIELDS, JULIET LINDERMAN and WONG MAYE-E Associated Press

The Samples were a black Chicago family, with six children and few resources. The priest helped them with tuition, clothes, bills. He offered the promise of opportunities — a better life.

He also abused all the children.

They told no one. They were afraid of not being believed and of losing what little they had, said one son, Terrence Sample. And nobody asked, until a lawyer investigating alleged abuses by the same priest prompted him to break his then 33-year silence.

"Somebody had to make the effort," Sample said. "Why wasn't it the church?"

Even as it has pledged to go after predators in its ranks and provide support to those harmed by clergy, the church has done little to identify and reach sexual abuse victims. For survivors of color, who often face additional social and cultural barriers to coming forward on their own, the lack of concerted outreach on behalf of the church means less public exposure — and potentially, more opportunities for abuse to go on, undetected.

Of 88 dioceses that responded to an Associated Press inquiry, seven knew the ethnicities of victims. While it was clear at least three had records of some sort, only one stated it purposely collected such data as part of the reporting process. Native Americans, African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, Pacific Islanders and Hawaiians make up nearly 46% of the faithful in the U.S., according to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, an authoritative source of Catholic-related data. But the Catholic Church has

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made almost no effort to track the victims among them.

"The church has to come into the shadows, into the trenches to find the people who were victimized, especially the people of color," Sample said. "There are other people like me and my family, who won't come forward unless someone comes to them."

Brian Clites, a leading scholar on clergy sexual abuse and professor at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, said the church has demonstrated a pattern of funneling predator priests to economically disadvantaged communities of color, where victims have much more to lose if they report their abuse.

"They are less likely to know where to get help, less likely to have money for a lawyer to pursue that help and they are more vulnerable to counterattacks" from the church, which will hire investigators against the survivors, said Clites.

Alaska leads the nation in rates of sexual violence, and Florence Kenney said the Catholic church has played a role in perpetuating the abuse of natives there.

Kenney, now 85, said she was abused at the Holy Cross Mission in Holy Cross, Alaska. Kenney is indignant, and she described the relationship between the Catholic Church and Native Alaskan families as both predatory and symbiotic: The church provided food, money and resources to the village, Kenney said, in exchange for labor and silence.

"The church needed those people, and the people needed the church," Kenney said. "A family might sacrifice one or two children, look the other way, to preserve their relationship with the church for the others."

There is no accurate count of clergy abuse survivors. A special report commissioned by the Colorado attorney general's office examining abuse within state dioceses and released in October determined "victims of child sex abuse and particularly those abused by clergy are less likely to report their abuse than other crime victims."

As for minority survivors, dioceses rarely collect demographic data.

The AP contacted 178 dioceses to ask if they collect such data. Few who responded knew the race or ethnicity of claimants. Some said demographics aren't relevant, while others cited privacy concerns.

One diocese — Alexandria, Louisiana — shared a spreadsheet of survivors, including demographics, and without names.

The diocese began keeping such data in 2015, when Lee Kneipp, the victim assistance coordinator, took the job. Kneipp said knowing the race and ethnicity of victims helps investigative efforts and enables a deeper examination of records and the potential ability to find others who have not been acknowledged.

In looking into one African American survivor's abuse claim, Kneipp was able to locate two more survivors of color from the same parish; the priest, he said, abused only boys in low-income black communities.

Levi Monagle, an Albuquerque lawyer whose firm has close to 200 clients, including Native Americans and Hispanics, said there can be cultural and logistical impediments to contacting survivors who have not come forward.

"We don't go cold-calling people, knocking on doors, even if you have a serial perpetrator and a survivor who says we know there were other altar boys who traveled with this guy," he said.

The firm puts out press releases but some of the Native American population and communities are in "extreme geographic isolation" compared with other places and often don't have access to media.

Richard King, 70, was sexually abused on the Assiniboine reservation in Fort Belknap, Montana, where he grew up. He said taboos and shame kept him silent decades. Instead he abused alcohol and drugs. That, he believes, is how tribal members dealt with the abuses they face, rather than speaking out.

His mother's tribe was devoutly Catholic, and he doubted he would be believed.

"If children tell their parents that the clerics abused you, I would probably have gotten a whipping. I would have gotten one at church and one at home," King said. "They'd say, 'Shut up, that doesn't happen.'"

He began speaking to small groups he counseled, sharing some of his story. But it was nearly 50 years before he met with an attorney, Andrew Chasan; he was ready to share what happened to him, and sit down with Montana media.

When the Society of Jesus, Oregon Province, faced scores of suits accusing its priests of abuse, it filed

for bankruptcy. King filed a claim and received a settlement, though in a statement to the AP the province said King's abuser was not a Jesuit priest.

Phillip Aaron, a Seattle-based attorney who represented the Sample family, said his client base, which includes hundreds of African American survivors of clergy abuse, stayed silent because they feared ridicule, or worse.

"It was such a stigma," Aaron said. "That is still present now. We haven't touched the top of the barrel of black victims. There are so many black victims who have not come forward who are suffering in silence because of the stigma."

Some survivors, like Sample, kept quiet because they did not want the resources their abusers provided to dry up, Aaron said.

Sample, now 58, was a middle school student at St. Procopius Catholic school, when his abuser, a priest there, took an interest in him. He was groomed, isolated and assaulted for several years, he said.

"I was thinking I have to keep this secret," Sample said. "One, we have to eat and two, we have to stay in school, and this would kill my mom if she knew."

Jacob Olivas' secrecy emanated from another source. He was raised in California, the son of two Mexican immigrants. His father, he said, was the embodiment of machismo: strong, silent, stoic. Olivas was abused by a priest at age 6, and when his father found out he instructed Jacob to stay quiet. It was never discussed, he said. He had no therapy, no opportunity to process what had happened.

"I was supposed to keep quiet, to forget about it," Olivas said.

"That's just the way the Hispanic community is. They have a reverence for the church, there's no ands, there's no buts, there's no questions: You respect the church, you respect the father," he said. "I think it was something that made my father feel more proud: This priest is taking an interest in my son."

Such reluctance to come forward, whether fueled by social or cultural barriers, shame or fear, means some victims will stay silent unless they are drawn out.

"How big is the iceberg that's under the water still, when you're talking about survivors?" Monagle asked. "Every culture carries the weight of its own taboos."

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Trump stirs Mideast tensions despite talk of 'endless wars'

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — With a single drone strike, President Donald Trump did more than just take out an avowed enemy of the United States. He may have also upended a central element of his foreign policy.

The Friday strike that killed the most prominent Iranian general may have ended any chance that he would get the United States out of the "endless wars" in the Middle East that he has railed against since taking office.

The killing of Gen. Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad has the world bracing for a possible retaliation, with many fearing it could lead to a wider conflict.

"It is probably the most profound escalation that the United States could have taken," said Ned Price, who served on the National Security Council under President Barack Obama.

Trump has been on a confrontational path with Iran since even before he took office, when he pledged to end the Iran nuclear deal signed by Obama. He insisted he doesn't want war and the killing of Soleimani wasn't meant to provoke the Islamic Republic.

"We took action last night to stop a war," Trump said. "We did not take action to start a war."

Nonetheless, the targeting of Soleimani, the head of Iran's elite Quds Force, was arguably the most provocative military action in the Middle East since President George W. Bush launched the 2003 Iraq war to topple Saddam Hussein.

The killing of Soleimani, regarded as the second most powerful official in Iran, came as Trump has sought

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to apply increased pressure on Iran through economic sanctions to abandon its nuclear weapons program, while Iran has countered with provocative attacks on U.S. military and oil facilities in region.

By taking out Soleimani, Trump signaled to Iran that his patience has worn thin over the long, simmering conflagration.

The shadowy general who was in command of Iran's proxy forces was responsible, according to the Pentagon, for the deaths of hundreds of American troops in Iraq during the height of the war there. White House officials said Trump decided to take action because Soleimani was plotting unspecified future attacks targeting Americans as tensions between the U.S. and Iran have reached a boil.

Trump said Friday he wasn't interested in further escalating the conflict, but warned the regime that his military advisers have already drawn up plans to retaliate should Iran attack.

"If Americans anywhere are threatened, we have all of those targets already fully identified and I am ready and prepared to take whatever action is necessary, and that in particular refers to Iran," Trump said.

Trump's aggressive approach with Iran is remarkable considering his oft-repeated desire to avoid expensive military entanglements. His aversion to long-term military presence has led to him butting heads with his top advisers as he has sought to end the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan and Syria.

Yet, for much of his nearly three years in office, Trump has buffeted between demonstrating restraint and sending warning flares to Iran that the U.S. is prepared for military confrontation.

In June, after Iran shot down a U.S. drone, Trump said he gave top Pentagon officials permission to carry out military strikes against Iran before changing his mind 10 minutes before the operation was to be carried out.

Trump said he had a change of heart after being told by a general that the strikes would cause up to 150 Iranian casualties.

In September, with French President Emmanuel Macron serving as a go-between, Trump reportedly made an unsuccessful attempt to persuade Iran President Hassan Rouhani to speak with him by phone from the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly.

The next month the Pentagon announced it was deploying 3,000 U.S. troops to protect Saudi Arabia. (The Pentagon on Friday announced following Soleimani's killing that it would boost its presence in the region with an additional 3,500 U.S. troops.)

The October boost in forces came after a drone attack on a Saudi oilfield. Iranian-backed Houthi rebels claimed responsibility for the attack, and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo accused Iran of being behind "unprecedented attack on the world's energy supply."

The tit-for-tat between the U.S. and Iran rose to a whole new level in recent weeks.

Last week, after months of massive street protests in Baghdad by demonstrators urging both Iran and the U.S. to cease interfering in Iraqi affairs, the Iran-backed Kataib Hezbollah group fired a barrage of rockets at a military base in Kirkuk, killing a US contractor and wounding several US and Iraqi troops.

On Sunday, Trump struck back with airstrikes on Iran-affiliated militia bases in western Iraq and Syria.

Then on Tuesday pro-Iranian militia members marched on the U.S. embassy in Baghdad, leading to diplomats holing up in the sprawling compound as protesters burning the embassy's reception.

Still, before attending a New Years Eve party at his Mar-a-Lago resort, Trump told reporters that he didn't see war coming and that he wanted peace with Iran. The president, however, warned that if the U.S. were to go to war with Iran it "wouldn't last very long."

Less than 48 hours later, Trump ordered the strike that took out Soleimani.

"President Trump may be genuine in not wanting war with Iran," Price said. "At the same, it is fair to say that he doesn't seem to understand the implication that an action like this could foretell."

James Carafano, a national security analyst at the conservative Washington think tank Heritage Foundation, argues that there's no disconnect between Trump's disdain for endless wars and his efforts to increase pressure on Iran.

"This is clearly not an escalation, this is clearly an act of self-defense," Carafano said. "The president has also never said we're walking away from the Middle East. What he says he wants is a sustainable security architecture in place which means we're going to protect our interest and we're going to expect others

to do more to protect theirs.”

Iran says it is already plotting revenge.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei warned that “harsh retaliation is waiting” for the U.S. after the airstrike and called Soleimani the “international face of resistance.”

As thousands of worshipers in the Tehran took to streets after Friday prayers to condemn the killing and chant “Death to deceitful America,” the State Department issued an alert urging American citizens to leave Iraq “immediately.”

Over the course of presidency, Trump’s hawkishness on Iran has lacked coherence and has, in no small part, been informed by his desire to do away with the fragile peace brokered by Obama, said Abbas Kadhim, a Middle East analyst at the Atlantic Council in Washington.

Trump won the White House after pledging as a candidate to undo the Obama-administration brokered agreement to limit its uranium enrichment program in exchange for an easing of sanctions. He and other critics felt the deal gave too many economic benefits without doing enough to prevent Iran from eventually developing a nuclear weapon.

Trump followed through on his campaign vow in May 2018 by officially withdrawing from the treaty and reimposing crippling sanctions on Tehran.

“He exited from the deal because it was an Obama deal, and he did believe in his heart of hearts that he could come up with a better deal,” Kadhim said. “He thought Iran would now be facing the greatest dealmaker. But I think he miscalculated the stubbornness of the Iranians.”

US long watched Soleimani, but feared risks of a strike

By ZEKE MILLER and JULIE PACE The Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In 2007, U.S. commandos watched as a convoy carrying a powerful Iranian military leader made its way to northern Iraq.

It was a prime opportunity to take out Gen. Qassem Soleimani, who had been accused of aiding Shiite forces that killed thousands of American troops in Iraq. But ultimately, military leaders passed on a strike, deferring to deep concerns about the potential fallout of such a provocative attack.

“To avoid a firefight, and the contentious politics that would follow, I decided that we should monitor the caravan, not strike immediately,” retired Gen. Stanley McChrystal wrote last year in Foreign Policy.

Fears about the repercussions and reverberations of a targeted killing of Soleimani persisted throughout the administrations of President George W. Bush, a Republican, and President Barack Obama, a Democrat, according to officials who served under both. Soleimani, they calculated, was just as dangerous dead and martyred as he was alive and plotting against Americans.

That approach came to an end this week when President Donald Trump authorized an airstrike against Soleimani. He was killed after his plane landed at the Baghdad airport.

Trump heralded the attack on Twitter, declaring that Soleimani “should have been taken out many years ago!”

But some former administration officials argued that despite Soleimani’s role in orchestrating deadly attacks on U.S. troops, Trump’s decision may ultimately put Americans in the region at heightened risk.

“Previous presidents have had the opportunity to take measures like what we saw last night but have held back because of the risks entailed and the questions that were there about where this would all lead,” said Derek Chollet, an assistant secretary of defense during the Obama administration. “Unfortunately, those questions are not any clearer today.”

Indeed, Trump’s strike against Soleimani, the head of Iran’s elite Quds Force, thrusts Washington and Tehran into uncharted territory after months of rising tensions. It’s unclear how or when Iran will respond, or whether that response will pull the U.S. deeper into a military conflict abroad.

Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Mark Milley said officials were well aware of the prospect of retaliation, but believed “the risk of inaction exceeded the risk of action.” He cited “compelling, clear, unambiguous intelligence indicating that Soleimani was planning a significant campaign of violence against the U.S. in the

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coming days, weeks, months." He would not provide any specifics on the intelligence.

In the hours after Soleimani's death, the State Department urged American citizens to "immediately" leave Iraq and defense officials said the Pentagon was sending nearly 3,000 more troops to the region.

Previous administrations weighed concerns about Iranian retaliation as they monitored Soleimani, who kept a low profile and traveled only to countries like Iraq where the Quds Force already had strong security.

Rep. Elissa Slotkin, a Democrat from Michigan and former CIA analyst who tracked Soleimani's activities, said there was a "simple question" that prevented both the Bush and Obama administrations from targeting the Iranian leader.

"Was the strike worth the likely retaliation and the potential to pull us into a protracted conflict?" Slotkin said. "The two administrations I worked for both determined that the ultimate ends didn't justify the means."

Former Obama administration officials said discussions about taking out Soleimani never reached an operational phase. Beyond the risk of escalation with Iran, officials said they were uncertain that taking the Quds leader off the battlefield would have any impact on Tehran's regional aggression or support for terror groups.

The Obama administration also worried that killing Soleimani would undercut diplomatic efforts to forge a nuclear deal with Iran, according to one official. The U.S. and five other nations signed a nuclear accord with Tehran in 2015, but Trump withdrew from the pact after taking office.

The officials insisted on anonymity in order to discuss internal national security deliberations.

The U.S. hasn't been alone in monitoring Soleimani's whereabouts over the years.

Israel, a staunch opponent of Iran, had followed the Quds commander as well, said Yoel Guzansky, an Iran expert at the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv.

Guzansky said Israel, a country with a sophisticated military backed by the U.S., could have also taken out Soleimani, but had held back because of concerns about retaliation.

AP reporters Sagar Meghani and Lolita C. Baldor contributed to this report.

Trump: Aim of killing Iranian general was to 'stop a war'

By **ROBERT BURNS, LOLITA C. BALDOR and ZEKE MILLER** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Friday he ordered the killing of a top Iranian general "to stop a war," not start one, but in the tense aftermath the Pentagon braced for retaliation by sending more troops to the Middle East. Democrats complained that Trump hadn't consulted Congress, and some worried that the strike made war more likely.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo argued the U.S. case with allies in the Middle East and beyond, asserting that Friday's drone strike killing Gen. Qassem Soleimani was a necessary act of self defense. He asserted that Soleimani was plotting a series of attacks that endangered many American troops and officials across the Middle East.

The ramifications of Trump's decision to kill Soleimani were still coming into focus Friday; they could include an end to the U.S. military partnership with Iraq in fighting the Islamic State extremist group. Some Iraqi politicians called the attack, which also killed an Iraqi general, a violation of Iraqi sovereignty and questioned whether U.S. forces should be expelled. The U.S. has about 5,200 troops in Iraq, mostly to train and advise Iraqi forces fighting IS.

In brief remarks to the nation, Trump said the Iranian general had been plotting "imminent and sinister" attacks. At the Pentagon, Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the U.S. had "compelling, clear, unambiguous intelligence" of Soleimani plotting violent acts.

"Oh, by the way, it might still happen," Milley said, referring to the planned attacks.

Trump called Soleimani a ruthless figure who "made the death of innocent people his sick passion. ... We take comfort in knowing that his reign of terror is over."

The president warned Iran against retaliating. He said the U.S. military has Iranian targets "fully identi-

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fied" for counter-retaliation. The U.S. has a wide range of offensive and defensive forces in the Gulf area within range of Iran.

Asked about possible retaliation, Milley told reporters, "Is there risk? You're damn right there's risk." He added, "There is a range of possible futures here, and the ball is in the Iranian court."

As Iran warned of "harsh" reprisals, the U.S. Homeland Security Department watched for trouble brewing on the domestic front and reported "no specific, credible threats" in the first hours after the American attack in Baghdad, said the department's acting secretary, Chad F. Wolf.

Senior State Department officials, in a briefing for reporters, said the drone strike near the Baghdad international airport was based on intelligence that suggested Soleimani was traveling in the area to put final touches on plans for attacks that would have hit U.S. diplomats, troops and American facilities in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and elsewhere in the Mideast. The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity under State Department ground rules, would not be more specific about the intelligence but said it clearly called for a decisive U.S. response.

Democrats in Congress questioned the administration's approach, while making clear they don't regret Soleimani's demise. Sen. Mark Warner, a Virginia Democrat, noted that Pompeo said the administration wants to "de-escalate" tensions with Iran.

"I think the jury's out on that," Warner said. "I hope they're successful on that. I think it could have brought in more congressional leaders and allies to help make that case ahead of time."

Rep. Adam Schiff, a California Democrat, said he has not heard a satisfactory explanation for the timing of the U.S. attack.

"And the question is why the administration chose this moment, why this administration made the decision to remove him from the battlefield and other administrations, both parties, decided that would escalate the risks, not reduce them," he said.

Fears about the repercussions of killing Soleimani persisted throughout the administrations of President George W. Bush, a Republican, and President Barack Obama, a Democrat, according to officials who served under both. Soleimani, they calculated, was just as dangerous dead and martyred as he was alive and plotting against Americans.

A decades-long U.S. nemesis, Iran holds a range of options for striking back, militarily or otherwise. Tens of thousands of American troops in the Persian Gulf area, including in Iraq and Qatar, are within easy range of Iranian missiles, and Iran has the capability to act more clandestinely with cyber attacks or military proxy strikes on U.S. targets abroad.

Last summer, following a string of intelligence indications that Iran was planning attacks on U.S. targets in the Gulf area, the Pentagon accelerated the deployment of an aircraft carrier to the region and deployed additional missile defenses. In all, about 14,000 additional U.S. troops were sent to the area over the summer and fall, but that did not deter Iran, which is feeling an extreme squeeze from U.S. sanctions that have all but shut off its oil exports.

The final sequence of actions leading to the killing of Soleimani began in October with rocket attacks in Iraq that Washington blamed on Iran-supported Shiite militias. A Dec. 27 rocket attack near Kirkuk killed an American contractor and wounded U.S. and Iraqi soldiers. The U.S. blamed an Iran-backed militia called Kataeb Hezbollah, or KH, and on Dec. 29 it bombed five KH-linked facilities. Two days later, KH militiamen and their supporters stormed the U.S. Embassy compound in Baghdad, an attack Trump cited as evidence that Soleimani deserved to be eliminated.

"The Iranian regime's aggression in the region, including the use of proxy fighters to destabilize its neighbors, must end and it must end now," Trump said.

Trump's final pre-strike consultations were held behind the palm trees at his Mar-a-Lago club in Palm Beach, Florida, where the president has spent two weeks largely out of sight before his impeachment trial in the Senate. In the days before the attack, Trump huddled with aides, including Pompeo and his national security adviser, Robert O'Brien.

After the Soleimani killing, Pompeo announced that he was placing the Iran-backed Iraqi militia Asaib Ahl al-Haq on the State Department's "foreign terrorist organization" blacklist, which blocks any assets

the group may have in U.S. jurisdictions and bars Americans from providing it with material support.

The Pentagon was largely silent Friday on details of the drone strike and its aftermath. Officials announced the deployment of nearly 3,000 additional soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to Kuwait as reinforcements. Separately, the 173rd Airborne Brigade, based in Italy, had been placed on alert for possible deployment of parts of the brigade to Lebanon to help defend the U.S. Embassy in Beirut.

The additional troop deployments reflect concerns about potential Iranian retaliatory action. But they also run counter to Trump's repeated push to extract the United States from Mideast conflicts. He has repeatedly called for withdrawing from Syria and Afghanistan, but over the past year he has greatly increased U.S. troop totals in the Middle East.

More broadly, some congressional Democrats and national security analysts questioned whether the Trump administration is prepared for Iranian retaliation and the prospect of political backlash in Iraq, where American troops are working with Iraqi forces in a sometimes tense partnership against the Islamic State extremist group. The Pentagon said it wants to sustain that work, but some Iraqi leaders said it might be time for U.S. troops to leave.

In Baghdad, Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi condemned the American drone strike, which also killed an Iraqi general who was deputy commander of the Iranian-backed militias in Iraq known as the Popular Mobilization Forces. Abdul-Mahdi called the killings an "aggression against Iraq." An emergency session of parliament was called for Sunday, and the deputy speaker, Hassan al-Kaabi, said it would make "decisions that put an end to the U.S. presence in Iraq."

Ordering out American forces would heavily damage Washington's influence and make the U.S. troop presence in neighboring Syria more tenuous. But Iraq's leadership is likely to be divided over such a step. President Barham Salih called for "the voice of reason and wisdom to dominate, keeping in mind Iraq's greater interests."

Associated Press writers Lisa Mascaro, Jonathan Lemire and Matthew Lee contributed.

Legal basis for US killing of Iran general depends on threat

By BEN FOX Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Did President Donald Trump have the legal authority to order the killing of a top Iranian general in Iraq?

The answer depends largely on facts that aren't publicly known yet. And experts are quick to point out that even if it was legally justified that doesn't make it the right decision, or one that will be politically smart in the long run. Iran and its allies are vowing revenge.

In its limited explanation so far, the Pentagon said Gen. Qassem Soleimani was "actively developing" plans to kill American diplomats and service members when he was killed in a U.S. drone strike Friday near the Baghdad airport shortly after arriving in the country.

That would appear to place the action within the legal authority of the president, as commander in chief, to use force in defense of the nation under Article II of the Constitution, said Bobby Chesney, a professor at the University of Texas School of Law who specializes in national security issues.

"If the facts are as the Defense Department said, then the president relatively clearly has Article II authority to act in self-defense of American lives," Chesney said.

That justification would apply even if Soleimani hadn't already launched an attack under the established doctrine of "anticipatory" self-defense, according to Jeff Addicot, a retired Army officer and expert in national security law at St. Mary's University School of Law in San Antonio.

"Legally there's no issue," Addicot said. "Politically, however, it's going to be debated, whether it's the correct response. In my opinion it's the appropriate response, but it's certainly legal."

Self-defense would be a legal justification under both U.S. law and the laws of international armed conflict, though the experts consulted by The Associated Press repeatedly stressed that this would depend

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on what intelligence prompted the killing, and American authorities may never release that information. "Under international law, self-defense, to be lawful, will need to be invoked in situations where there is an imminent attack against the interest of the territory, in this case of the United States," said Agnès Callamard, United Nations special rapporteur on extrajudicial executions. "At this point in time, the United States has not thus far provided any information suggesting that there was an imminent attack against the American interest."

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the general posed an "imminent" threat. "He was actively plotting in the region to take actions — a big action, as he described it — that would have put dozens if not hundreds of American lives at risk," he told CNN.

The U.S. has used such justification in the past. In April 1986, President Ronald Reagan launched strikes against Libya based on what he said was "solid evidence" of attacks planned by longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi against U.S. installations, diplomats and American tourists. The attack, which the president said was "carefully targeted to minimize casualties" among civilians, killed about 40 people but not the Libyan leader.

One problem with relying on the self-defense rationale is that the justification is undermined if the risk of retaliation would create more of a threat to Americans, said David Glazier of Loyola Law School in Los Angeles. "This is an incredibly complex question," he said. "I'd be very wary of anyone who says they know the answer."

There are separate but related legal questions about other aspects of the attack that Iran state TV said killed a total of 10 people, including a deputy commander, five Revolutionary Guard members and Soleimani's son-in-law. Among them: Was this a legitimate military target? Yes, since the general was a military and not a civilian figure, according to experts.

Soleimani, the head of Iran's elite Quds Force, oversaw foreign operations that U.S. officials say have killed hundreds of American troops.

Callamard said the deaths of civilians make this potentially an "arbitrary killing" under international human rights law. But U.S. experts said so-called collateral deaths have long been an unfortunate fact of war and whether this would amount to a war crime would depend on factors such as how many of the people killed could be considered legitimate targets in a conflict.

Democratic leaders of Congress complained they weren't notified of the strike in advance. Chesney said the administration could argue it has legal authority to protect the troops in the Middle East who were dispatched under congressional authorizations in 2001 and 2002 in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

That argument, however, starts to get shakier if the killing of Soleimani escalates into a wider conflict, said Stephen Vladeck, a professor at the University of Texas School of Law who specializes in national security law and the prosecution of war crimes.

"Even though the Executive Branch has pursued ever-broader theories of the President's unilateral power to use force in self-defense, one of the critical considerations in each case has been whether the force comes with a risk of escalation," Vladeck said by email. "Where, as here, there is no question that it does, the argument that the President needed clearer buy-in from the legislature is much, much stronger."

House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff said the world is "better off" without Soleimani. But after receiving a classified briefing on the intelligence that led to the strike he questioned the timing and expressed concern about what might happen next.

"Sulemani has been engaged in deadly and malevolent action throughout the region for a long time," Schiff said. "And the question is why the administration chose this moment, why this administration made the decision to remove him from the battlefield and other administrations, both parties, decided that would escalate the risks, not reduce them."

With contributions from Associated Press journalists Martha Collins in London; and Padmananda Rama, Mary Clare Jalonick and Laurie Kellman in Washington.

Was the drone attack on Iranian general an assassination?

By JOHN DANISZEWSKI Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — After Friday's targeted killing of Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani, newsrooms struggled with the question: Had the United States just carried out an assassination? And should news stories about the killing use that term?

The AP Stylebook, considered a news industry bible, defines assassination as "the murder of a politically important or prominent individual by surprise attack."

Although the United States and Iran have long been adversaries and engaged in a shadow war in the Middle East and elsewhere, the U.S. has never declared formal war on Iran. So the targeted killing of a high Iranian state and military official by a surprise attack was "clearly an assassination," said Mary Ellen O'Connell, an expert in international law and the laws of war at the University of Notre Dame School of Law.

Just as clearly, the Trump administration doesn't agree.

Though a statement issued by the Pentagon said the attack was specifically intended to kill Soleimani and that it was ordered "at the direction of the President," it also characterized the killing as defensive, to protect U.S. military forces abroad, and stated that Soleimani was actively developing plans "to attack American diplomats and service members in Iraq and throughout the region." Subsequent statements by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and President Donald Trump also characterized the killing as punishment of Soleimani for past blood on his hands.

O'Connell's counterargument: Whether the killing is framed as part of an armed conflict between two states or as a police action intended to deter terrorism, it cannot be characterized as an act of self-defense because there was never a full-fledged and direct attack on the United States by Iran. The United States's legal reason for being in Iraq is to deter the Islamic State group, not to fight against Iran, she noted, and the attacks against the U.S. by Iranian-backed militias in recent months have been intermittent and relatively limited.

"Assassination is prohibited both in peacetime law as well as on the battlefield," she said.

"We have really moved to a nearly lawless state," she said. If the justification for a military response is self-defense, the response should be "necessary and proportionate." But that would not justify individual targeted killings, she said.

For Iran, Soleimani's killing was a "horrific assassination," wrote Majid Takht Ravanchi, Iran's ambassador to the United Nations.

It is "an obvious example of state terrorism, and, as a criminal act, constitutes a gross violation of the fundamental principles of international law," Ravanchi wrote in a letter to the U.N. secretary-general.

The premeditated killing of a specific individual commander for what they have done on the battlefield or what they may do has been prohibited by the law of armed conflict dating from the Hague Conventions of 1907, and by a protocol of the Geneva Convention in 1949 saying "it is prohibited to kill, injure or capture an adversary by perfidy," she added.

International war law aside, there also has been a U.S. executive order in place since 1976 forbidding the U.S. from carrying out political assassinations. The order came into being after revelations that the CIA had organized or sanctioned assassination attempts against foreign leaders including Fidel Castro.

The current version of the executive order states: "No person employed by or acting on behalf of the United States Government shall engage in, or conspire to engage in, assassination."

It does not however define what constitutes an assassination, and has been generally interpreted to mean an unlawful killing of a political leader in peacetime. For instance, during the "war on terror" since 9/11, the United States is believed to have conducted a number of secret drone strikes targeting individuals, such as the attack against al-Qaida propagandist Anwar al-Awlaki, who was killed in 2011 in Yemen.

Soleimani, however, was a military leader. If he was leading forces against the United States, under the international laws of war as enunciated in the 1949 Geneva Conventions, he and his forces could be considered legitimate battle targets during any actual war or armed conflict, declared or undeclared.

The AP has mostly refrained from describing Soleimani's death as an assassination — both because it would require that the news service decide that the act was a murder, and because the term is politically

freighted.

Duke University Professor of Law Madeleine Morris, an expert on international criminal law, said the law is not terribly clear in this area.

She said that under the United Nations Charter, there is a clear right of self-defense in response to armed attacks. She noted that some might argue that the attacks the U.S. has experienced in this case do not meet at a threshold of gravity to justify this sort of targeted killing, while others would argue to the contrary that there is no explicit threshold — that if attacked a country has an absolute right to respond militarily.

“There is no obligation to kill a lot of people rather than a single person,” she said.

The question then would be whether the act of war was legal, allowed as self-defense, or would it be considered an illegal act of aggression? That would depend on the intelligence evidence offered by the United States and the imminence of any planned attack.

“The problem is that governments have good reason to make very little public in this situation, which makes it very difficult to evaluate the situation politically or legally.”

1 fatally stabbed, 3 hurt in morning attack in Austin, Texas

By PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — A man stabbed two people, one fatally, inside a restaurant during a violent string of attacks Friday at a shopping plaza in Texas’ capital city that began with an assault at a coffee shop and ended with the suspect leaping off a roof, police said.

The attacks on a busy downtown avenue of restaurants and apartments just south of the Texas Capitol terrified customers stopping for their morning coffee on the way to work. It was the city of Austin’s first homicide of 2020.

It began when the alleged attacker, who police only identified as a 27-year-old male, struck a person inside the coffee shop “for no apparent reason,” according to Austin police. He then fled a few doors down to Freebirds World Burrito, where he stabbed two people before escaping to the roof and jumping.

By Friday night, police said the wounded person was in stable but serious condition, and the suspect was in critical condition.

“This guy out of nowhere just hit him in the back of the head with something,” said Stacy Romine, 33, who was getting her drink at Bennu Coffee when she saw the attack at a table full of regulars. “People tried to restrain him and stop him from leaving the store after it happened. But he could not be apprehended by three men, including a police officer.”

Authorities said both stabbing victims worked at the restaurant. Emergency responders described the person who died as a man in his 20s.

Hours after the attack, Republican Texas Gov. Greg Abbott speculated on Twitter that the attacker was homeless with a criminal record, fanning an ongoing feud with Austin’s liberal leaders over people living on the streets. Police, however, have publicly offered few details on the suspect, and Abbott spokesman John Wittman would not comment beyond the governor’s tweet.

Last year, Austin relaxed ordinances on public camping, a move that made homelessness more visible downtown. Abbott has previously shared videos that he claims captures the dangers of the new policy, but they include videos criticized as misleading, including one of a man whose attorney later said wasn’t homeless and suffered from mental illness.

Austin Mayor Steve Adler said Friday night he didn’t know the stabbing suspect’s housing situation but called the governor’s tweet disappointing, saying it suggested that the homeless are dangerous.

“It’s harmful to a community when we demonize people like that falsely, misleading. There’s a real price,” Adler said.

In 2017, one student was killed and three others wounded in a random stabbing attack at the University of Texas campus in Austin. In that case, the assailant was later found not guilty by reason of insanity.

___ Associated Press writer Jake Bleiberg in Dallas contributed to this report.

___ Follow Paul J. Weber on Twitter: www.twitter.com/pauljweber

AP Exclusive: Sierra skeleton ID'd as 'ghost of Manzanar'

By BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A skeleton found by hikers this fall near California's second-highest peak was identified Friday as a Japanese American artist who had left the Manzanar internment camp to paint in the mountains in the waning days of World War II.

The Inyo County sheriff used DNA to identify the remains of Giichi Matsumura, who succumbed to the elements during a freak summer snow storm while on a hiking trip with other members of the camp. Matsumura had apparently stopped to paint a watercolor while the other men, a group of anglers, continued toward a lake to fish.

His body wasn't found for another month, and the tragedy was overshadowed in the immediate days after his Aug. 2, 1945 disappearance when the U.S. dropped the first atomic bomb, hastening Japan's surrender in the war. Matsumura was one of more than 1,800 detainees who died in the 10 prison camps in the West, though it's one of the more unusual deaths.

While his burial in the mountains was well known among members of the camp and his family, the story faded over time and the location of the grave site in a remote boulder-strewn area 12,000 feet above sea level was lost to time.

Lori Matsumura, the granddaughter who provided the DNA sample, was surprised when Sgt. Nate Derr of the Inyo County sheriff's office contacted her to say they believed her grandfather's remains had been discovered. After all, he had been found nearly 75 years ago and buried.

"It was a bit of a rediscovery," she told The Associated Press. "We knew where he was approximately because we knew the story of what happened. So we knew he was there."

As a girl, she was haunted by a photo her grandmother showed her of the pile of stones where her grandfather was buried beneath a small marker in the remote mountains.

"Once in a great while, she would bring it out and say, 'Oh, this is all they could bring of your grandfather.' And my aunt would be, 'No, don't show her that picture,'" Matsumura said. "It did scare me. I'm like, 'Oh, my God, that's my grandfather under there.'"

Her aunt, Kazue, told her that her grandfather was known as "the ghost of Manzanar."

"To this day, it seems like he's not passed away," Kazue, who died two years ago at 83, told the Manzanar National Historic Site. "It seems like he's gone someplace, because I didn't see his body."

It was by accident on Oct. 7 that Tyler Hofer and a friend stumbled upon the remains on their way to the top of Mount Williamson. The two were off course on a crude route through the jumble of granite boulders in a basin of lakes when Hofer looked down and saw what looked like a bone.

Earlier in the day, the men had discovered a pile of bones beneath Shepherd Pass, where a herd of migrating deer had plummeted to their death two years earlier on a steep, icy slope. At first, Hofer thought the bone was more animal remains, but upon closer inspection he realized it was a human skull.

Hofer and Brandon Follin moved the rocks and found an intact skeleton with a belt around its waist and leather shoes on the feet. The arms appeared to be crossed over the chest.

Hofer posted about his finding on a Facebook forum, describing inaccurately that the skull appeared to be fractured and the shoes were the type worn by rock climbers. He suggested it was a case of foul play.

When contacted by the AP, the sheriff's office said there were no signs of a crime. They said it was a mystery, though, because they had searched records of missing reports going back decades and said no one was known to be lost in the area that would fit that description.

What officials didn't say, though, was that by the time they had retrieved the bones by helicopter, they already had a hunch it might be Matsumura.

While his story was little known, it got renewed attention when "The Manzanar Fishing Club" documentary film came out in 2012. Director Cory Shiozaki told the story about intrepid prisoners who would escape from the camp at night and slip into the mountains to fish for trout — sometimes for weeks at a time.

A segment of the film on Matsumura's death didn't make the final cut. Still, Shiozaki often addressed the tragedy at the many screenings where he spoke and the story became more broadly known.

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In the final year of the war, the guard towers were no longer manned with armed soldiers, and people were free to leave the camp. The Matsumuras, like many others, had no home or business to return to, so they remained behind.

When a group of fishermen planned to hike to the chain of lakes in Williamson Bowl, Matsumura insisted on tagging along.

The trip leader didn't want Matsumura, 46, to join them because he was older and not in great physical shape, but he eventually relented, Shiozaki said. The group of six to 10 men headed into the Sierra Nevada on July 29, 1945.

At some point in the demanding trek, Matsumura stopped to paint a water color and said he would catch up later. A freak snowstorm blew in, and the fishermen retreated to a cave.

When the weather cleared, they searched fruitlessly for Matsumura. Three later search parties from the camp also failed to find him.

During that period, his wife, Ito, worried so much that her hair turned the color of snow, according to Kazue, who was 10 at the time.

"I felt sorry for my mom, you know," Kazue told the National Park Service. "She couldn't eat or anything ... She had black hair, and it turned white all of a sudden."

Matsumura's decomposing remains were found a month after he was lost by hikers from the nearby town of Independence.

Members from the camp then hiked back up to bury him in a mountainside grave under a sheet his wife provided, according to the park service. Atop the granite stones placed on his body, was a granite column with a paper note attached to mark the site. In Japanese characters, it gave his name, age and said, "Rest in Peace."

The burial party brought back clippings of his hair and fingernails, a Buddhist tradition when a body can't be returned, for a ceremony at the camp.

Rather than reopen an old wound in her family's past, the finding has awakened interest in learning more about their story and time in the camp and sharing it with nephews and nieces, Lori Matsumura said.

Until she recently saw a photo of the search party, Lori Matsumura never knew her father, Masaru, had played a role in looking for his dad.

Her father never talked about the experience, and she now regrets not pressing him for more information. Like many who endured the hardship and humiliation of the one of the darkest chapters of U.S. history when more than 110,000 people of Japanese descent — two-thirds American citizens — were imprisoned because of fear they would remain loyal to their ancestral homeland, Masaru Matsumura seemed bitter and rarely spoke of camp, Lori Matsumura said.

He had been close to graduating from high school when his family was sent to Manzanar. After his father's death, Masaru Matsumura had to support his mother and three siblings when they returned to Santa Monica. He had to take a job as gardener as his father had done.

Kazue Matsumura said her mother, widowed at 43, worked two or three jobs, according to the oral history she gave Manzanar.

Ito Matsumura was 102 when she died in 2005. She was buried with a lock of her husband's hair and his name on her gravestone.

Most of what Lori Matsumura knows of the camp came from her grandmother and an aunt who lived across the street from the little home where she grew up in Santa Monica.

Now that her curiosity has been sparked, Lori Matsumura has no one to ask about their experiences in camp or the impact of her grandfather's death on the family. Her father died last summer at age 94, the last of his generation.

"I wished I would have dug a little deeper and found out more stories from my dad," she said. "He didn't talk about it much. I wished I would have asked more questions."

In a 24/7 food culture, periodic fasting gains followers

By CANDICE CHOI AP Food & Health Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — On low-carb diets, meat and cheese are OK.

On low-fat diets, fruit and oatmeal are fine.

With the latest diet trend, no foods at all are allowed for long stretches of time.

A diet that forbids eating for hours on end might seem doomed in a culture where food is constantly available, but apps and Facebook groups are popping up for people practicing "intermittent fasting."

Bri Wyatt, a 32-year-old Tennessee resident, tried it this summer.

"At first I was like, there's no way," she said.

But after reading more about it, she thought it might not be that hard. She started by skipping breakfast and night-time snacks, and later moved on to a 60-day challenge of fasting every other day.

Melissa Breau Bankston, a Crossfit instructor in New Orleans, Louisiana, also tried intermittent fasting as a way to curb her snacking. "I wanted to limit the amount of time that I was eating," she said.

Studies on the potential health benefits of intermittent fasting are still limited, including for its effectiveness with weight loss. But heading into the new year, you may be wondering whether it could help you get in better shape.

WHEN, NOT WHAT

Like other diets, intermittent fasting helps you lose weight by setting boundaries around food. But instead of limiting what you eat, it restricts when you eat.

"It's really another way of fooling your body into eating less calories," said Krista Varady, who studies intermittent fasting at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Proponents say intermittent fasting helps with weight loss in other ways. For instance, they say it forces your body to start burning its own fat for fuel after depleting the energy it normally gets from food. But any effects would depend on the specific approach you take, and Varady said there isn't strong evidence yet that intermittent fasting has any unique effects compared with other diets.

Regardless, people should consult their doctor before trying it. It's not advised for children, people on certain medications and people with a history of eating disorders.

FASTING MENU

One of the more popular approaches to intermittent fasting is to limit eating to an 8-hour window and to fast during the day's other 16 hours. This is called time-restricted feeding and isn't as difficult as some other approaches, since the fasting period can include the time you're asleep.

Many people tailor the eating window to be shorter or longer. Some eat just one meal a day, while others fast entire days a couple times a week. On fasting days, people may allow themselves around 600 calories if needed. But Dr. Jason Fung, who has written books on intermittent fasting, says skipping food altogether might actually be easier, since eating small amounts could stimulate appetite.

Whatever the method, people aren't supposed to gorge when they stop fasting. Fung says it's a myth that fasting leaves you famished.

Sumaya Kazi, who posts about her intermittent fasting online and offers coaching services on the diet, says it seems more difficult than it is partly because overeating has become the norm. "Intermittent fasting is more of a mental challenge than a physical challenge," she says.

But people react differently to diets, and fasting may be a lot harder for some than for others, says Dr. Fatima Stanford, a Harvard Medical School obesity specialist.

"There's no one size fits all," she said.

FASTING ON TRIAL

Obesity experts have become interested in intermittent fasting, but studies on the diet are still emerging. For now, limited research suggests it may not be any better for weight loss than conventional calorie-cutting over the long term.

"Unfortunately, intermittent fasting gets a little hyped," said Courtney Peterson, who studies the diet at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Still, some fasting approaches may be more effective than others. And Peterson notes the difficulty of designing studies that definitively capture a diet's effects. That's in part because so many other variables could be at play.

For instance, researchers are looking at whether any benefits of intermittent fasting might be tied to when the eating period falls and fluctuations in how well our bodies process food throughout the day.

Some health experts say intermittent fasting might be too difficult for many people. They point to a study of 100 people where those placed in the alternate-day fasting group lost around the same amount of weight as those on conventional calorie-restriction diets over time. But the fasting group had a dropout rate of 38%, compared with 29% for the conventional diet group.

But intermittent fasting may be easier than other diets for people who already skip meals when they're too busy, said Varady of the University of Illinois at Chicago.

To make weight loss stick, she said people should pick diets that resemble how they already eat.

"Different diets do work for different people," she said.

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Iran vows revenge for US attack that killed powerful general

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA and ZEINA KARAM Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iran promised to seek revenge for a U.S. airstrike near Baghdad's airport that killed the mastermind of its interventions across the Middle East, and the U.S. said Friday that it was sending thousands more troops to the region as tensions soared in the wake of the targeted killing.

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

Almost 24 hours after the attack on Soleimani, Iraqi officials and Iranian-backed militias in Iraq reported another deadly airstrike.

An Iraqi government official reported a strike on two vehicles north of Baghdad but had no information on casualties. Another security official who witnessed the aftermath described charred vehicles and said five people were killed. Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

Iraqi state television and the media arm of the Iran-backed militias known as the Popular Mobilization Forces also reported the strike. The group said its medics were targeted.

An American official who spoke on the condition of anonymity denied the U.S. was behind the reported attack.

The targeted strike against Soleimani and any 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.

"We take comfort in knowing that his reign of terror is over," Trump said of Soleimani.

The United States said it was sending nearly 3,000 more troops to the Middle East, reflecting concern about potential Iranian retaliation. The U.S. also urged Americans to leave Iraq immediately following the airstrike at Baghdad's international airport that Iran's state TV said killed Soleimani and nine others.

The State Department said the embassy in Baghdad, which was attacked by Iran-backed militiamen and their supporters earlier this week, is closed and all consular services have been suspended.

Around 5,200 American troops are based in Iraq to train Iraqi forces and help in the fight against Islamic State militants. Defense officials who discussed the new troop movements spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss a decision not yet announced by the Pentagon.

A Pentagon official who was not authorized to speak publicly said the U.S. also had placed an Army bri-

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gade on alert to fly into Lebanon to protect the American Embassy. U.S. embassies also issued a security alert for Americans in Bahrain, Kuwait and Nigeria.

The announcement about sending more troops came as Trump said Soleimani's killing was not an effort to begin a conflict with Iran.

"We took action last night to stop a war. We did not take action to start a war," Trump said, adding that he does not seek regime change in Iran.

Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, vowed "harsh retaliation" after the airstrike, calling Soleimani the "international face of resistance." Khamenei declared three days of public mourning and appointed Maj. Gen. Esmail Ghaani, Soleimani's deputy, to replace him as head of the Quds Force.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani called the killing a "heinous crime" and said his country would "take revenge." Iran twice summoned the Swiss envoy, the first time delivering a letter to pass to Washington.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif called the U.S. attack a "cowardly terrorist action" and said Iran has the right to respond "in any method and any time."

Thousands of worshipers in Tehran took to the streets after Friday prayers to condemn the killing, waving posters of Soleimani and chanting "Death to deceitful America."

However, the attack could act as a deterrent for Iran and its allies to delay or restrain any potential response. Trump said possible targets had been identified and the U.S. was prepared. Oil prices surged on news of the airstrike, and markets were mixed.

The killing promised to further strain relations with Iraq's government, which is allied with both Washington and Tehran and has been deeply worried about becoming a battleground in their rivalry. Iraqi politicians close to Iran called for the country to order U.S. forces out.

The U.S. Defense Department said it killed the 62-year-old 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 orchestrated violent protests at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad.

The strike, on an access road near Baghdad's airport, was carried out early Friday by an American drone, according to a U.S. official.

Soleimani had just disembarked from a plane arriving from either Syria or Lebanon, a senior Iraqi security official said. The blast tore apart his body and that of Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, deputy commander of the Iran-backed Popular Mobilization Forces. A senior politician said Soleimani's body was identified by the ring he wore.

Others killed include five members of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guard and Soleimani's son-in-law, Iranian state TV said.

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

The attack comes at the start of a year in which Trump faces both a Senate trial following his impeachment 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.

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

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

Supporters of the strike against Soleimani said it restored U.S. deterrence power against Iran, and Trump allies were quick to praise the action.

"To the Iranian government: if you want more, you will get more," South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham tweeted.

"Hope this is the first step to regime change in Tehran," Trump's former national security adviser, John Bolton, wrote in a tweet.

Others, including Democratic presidential hopefuls, criticized Trump's order. 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 con-

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flict across the Middle East.”

Trump, who was vacationing at his private club in Palm Beach, Florida, said he ordered the airstrike because Soleimani had killed and wounded many Americans over the years and was plotting to kill many more.

“He should have been taken out many years ago,” Trump added.

The potential for a spiraling escalation alarmed U.S. allies and rivals alike.

“We are waking up in a more dangerous world,” France’s deputy minister for foreign affairs, Amelie de Montchalin, told RTL radio.

The European Union warned against a “generalized flare-up of violence.” Russia condemned the killing, and fellow Security Council member China said it was “highly concerned.”

Britain and Germany noted that Iran also bore some responsibility for escalating tensions.

Even so, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo expressed frustration at the European reaction.

“Frankly, the Europeans haven’t been as helpful as I wish that they could be. The Brits, the French, the Germans all need to understand that what we did, what the Americans did, saved lives in Europe as well,” he said on the Fox News “Hannity” program.

While Iran’s conventional military has faced 40 years of American sanctions, Iran can strike in the region through its allied forces like Lebanon’s Hezbollah, Iraqi militias and Yemen’s Houthi rebels.

Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah called on “the resistance the world over” to avenge Soleimani’s killing. Frictions over oil shipments in the Gulf also could increase, and Iran’s Revolutionary Guard has built up a ballistic missile program.

Iran’s Supreme National Security Council said in a statement Friday that it had held a special session and made “appropriate decisions” on how to respond but didn’t elaborate.

Israeli Defense Minister Naftali Bennett held a meeting with top security officials Friday, but the Israeli military said it was not taking any extraordinary action on its northern front, other than closing a ski resort in the Golan Heights near Lebanon and Syria as a precaution.

The most immediate impact could be in Iraq. Funerals for al-Muhandis and the other slain Iraqis were set for Saturday.

Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi condemned the strike as an “aggression against Iraq.” An emergency session of parliament was called for Sunday, which the deputy speaker, Hassan al-Kaabi, said would take “decisions that put an end to the U.S. presence in Iraq.”

Karam reported from Beirut. Associated Press writers Robert Burns, Lolita C. Baldor and Zeke Miller in Washington; Jon Gambrell and Aya Batrawy 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.

Methodists propose split in gay marriage, clergy impasse

By TRAVIS LOLLER and GARY FIELDS Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — United Methodist Church leaders from around the world and across ideological divides unveiled a plan Friday for a new conservative denomination that would split from the church in an attempt to resolve a decades-long dispute over gay marriage and gay clergy.

The proposal, called “A Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace Through Separation,” envisions an amicable separation in which conservative churches forming a new denomination would retain their assets. The new denomination also would receive \$25 million.

The proposal was signed in December by a 16-member panel, who worked with a mediator and began meeting in October. The panel was formed after it became clear the impasse over LGBTQ issues was irreconcilable. The next step could come at the church’s General Conference in May.

Methodist Bishop Karen Oliveto, the denomination’s first openly gay bishop, said the United Methodist Church leadership “was clearly at a point in which we couldn’t agree to disagree” over same-sex rela-

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tionships. "I'm actually really sad that we couldn't build a bridge that could have provided a witness to the world of what unity amid diversity and disagreement could look like." Oliveto was challenged by the denomination's highest court, the Judicial Council, in 2017 when it declared that the bishop's consecration "was incompatible with church law."

However, Oliveto was allowed to remain as the resident bishop of the Mountain Sky Conference, which includes United Methodist churches in Colorado, Montana, Utah, Wyoming and a section of Idaho. Asked what a post-separation world looks like for the church to move forward, Oliveto said, "We are no longer using LGBTQ people as scapegoats."

Members of the 13-million-person denomination have been at odds for years over the issue, with members in the United States leading the call for full inclusion for LGBTQ people.

The rift widened last year when delegates meeting in St. Louis voted 438-384 for a proposal called the Traditional Plan, which affirmed bans on LGBTQ-inclusive practices. A majority of U.S.-based delegates opposed that plan but were outvoted by U.S. conservatives teamed with delegates from Methodist strongholds in Africa and the Philippines.

Methodists in favor of allowing gay clergy and gay marriage vowed to continue fighting. Meanwhile the Wesleyan Covenant Association, representing traditional Methodist practice, had already been preparing for a possible separation.

Concern over the future of the church pushed members, led by Bishop John Yambasu of Sierra Leone, to convene a group to share ideas across the theological spectrum.

New York Bishop Thomas Bickerton said that turned into the final panel, made up of moderates, progressives and traditionalists from Africa, Europe, the Philippines and the United States.

Bickerton, who heads 438 Methodist churches in New York, said while he thinks it is an amicable solution, "there is a degree of heartbreak within me because I never thought we would reach this point. However, we are at this point. The differences are irreconcilable. This is inevitable."

The Rev. Keith Boyette, president of the Wesleyan Covenant Association and one of 16 people on the mediation team that developed and signed the separation proposal, said he is "very hopeful" the plan will be approved.

This is the first time that "respected leaders of groups from every constituency" have come together to form a plan, he said. "And this is the first time that bishops of the church have signed on to an agreement like this."

While other mainline Protestant denominations have embraced gay-friendly practices, the United Methodist Church has not, though acts of defiance by pro-LGBTQ clergy have multiplied. Many have performed same-sex weddings; others have come out as gay or lesbian from the pulpit.

Texas Bishop Scott J. Jones praised the panel for its contribution to the ongoing discussions about human sexuality but "it should be emphasized that a statement by 16 leaders does not necessarily mean that its provisions will be adopted."

"The Protocol itself says it was developed in service to the General Conference delegates who will decide on its adoption or amendment. Other plans may well be considered as alternatives," he said in a statement. "Significant questions remain to be answered about the Protocol's implementation. The Judicial Council will need to rule on its constitutionality. The feasibility of its financial provisions must also be evaluated."

Bickerton said it is unclear how many members will be lost if the proposal moves forward. "I am sure we will lose a certain percentage. We anticipate that," he said. "It's time for us to get back to the ministry and mission of the church."

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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 Fahrenheit (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 F (49.9 C).

"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 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

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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."

Follow Seth Borenstein on Twitter at @borenbears .

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McCaffrey a double All-Pro pick; Gilmore, Thomas unanimous By BARRY WILNER AP Pro Football Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Christian McCaffrey's versatility and superb statistics helped him to a rare double: The Carolina Panthers running back has made The Associated Press NFL All-Pro Team at two positions.

McCaffrey rushed for 1,387 yards and 15 touchdowns while catching a phenomenal 116 passes for 1,005 yards and four TDs. He became the third player in NFL history to finish with 1,000 yards rushing and 1,000 yards receiving in the same season, joining Hall of Famer Marshall Faulk and Roger Craig, who is on the senior ballot for the hall this year.

That so impressed the 50 members of a nationwide media panel who regularly cover the NFL for McCaffrey to be voted the first-team running back and the top flex player. The flex position was created in

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2016 to reward players who epitomize the way offense is now played in pro football. Not one fits that description better than McCaffrey, whose terrific season came for a 5-11 team.

"It means a lot," says McCaffrey, a third-year pro. "It is a big honor and that is something that you don't work hard for it, but when it comes you are really grateful and appreciative."

McCaffrey's achievement was complemented by the unanimous selections of New Orleans receiver Michael Thomas and New England cornerback Stephon Gilmore. It's the second straight season both made the squad, Thomas doing it with an NFL-record 149 catches, Gilmore anchoring the league's top-ranked defense.

Ravens sensation Lamar Jackson, who in his second season led Baltimore to a league-best 14-2 mark, was chosen as quarterback. Jackson and McCaffrey were among 14 first-time All-Pros.

Rams safety Eric Weddle, a former Raven, witnessed the jukes and jaunts of Jackson firsthand in a 45-6 Ravens romp.

"When you get on the field and you get to the speed of what they run, it's tough," says Weddle, a former All-Pro. "I mean, some of the plays I didn't know who had the ball because they run it so efficiently. (Jackson) is one of a kind; he's pretty special."

This special class includes several multiple All-Pros: Rams DT Aaron Donald and Seahawks LB Bobby Wagner, each for a fifth time; Cowboys right guard Zack Martin and Ravens kicker Justin Tucker for a fourth time.

Bears kick returner Cordarrelle Patterson made his third All-Pro roster, as did Eagles center Jason Kelce and Texans receiver DeAndre Hopkins.

All-Pros for the second time included Thomas, Gilmore, Cardinals edge rusher Chandler Jones, Steelers DT Cam Heyward, Patriots special teamer Matthew Slater, Colts left guard Quenton Nelson, and Ravens defensive back Marcus Peters, who shared that spot with the teammate Marlon Humphrey and the Chiefs' Tyrann Mathieu (second appearance).

Thomas, Gilmore, Nelson, Hopkins, Kelce, Martin, Donald, Wagner and Tucker repeated from 2018.

The other newcomers were Humphrey; 49ers tight end George Kittle; Ravens left tackle Ronnie Stanley; Saints right tackle Ryan Ramczyk; Steelers edge rusher T.J. Watt; Saints linebacker Demario Davis; Vikings LB Eric Kendricks; Bills cornerback Tre'Davious White; safeties Jamal Adams of the Jets and Minkah Fitzpatrick of the Steelers; Titans punter Brett Kern; and Saints punt returner Deonte Harris, the only rookie on the team.

"When you got here and people start talking about All-Pro and that's the best of the best, you're like 'Pro Bowl is cool, but I need to get the best of the best,'" says Wagner, who led the NFL in tackles this season. "As you get older you kind of understand how hard these things are to get. And so you don't take any of them for granted and are very grateful for your health, grateful for your teammates. As you get older you reflect and you appreciate things differently that you might not have had when you were young."

Ramczyk once played Division III college ball. Now look at him.

"It's just pretty crazy that I was at a little D-3 school and I'm like, 'If I'm going to play this game, I'm going to play to be the best I possibly can be,'" he says, adding the All-Pro designation is "pretty awesome. It's pretty cool."

Not surprisingly, Baltimore led the All-Pro Team with five selections, while New Orleans had four and Pittsburgh each had three. There were 16 AFC players and 13 from the NFC.

AP Sports Writers Tim Booth, Steve Reed, Brett Martel and Dave Ginsburg contributed.

More AP NFL: <https://apnews.com/NFL> and https://twitter.com/AP_NFL

McConnell and Pelosi give no signs of budging on impeachment

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congress opened the new year with the Senate deadlocked over President Donald Trump's impeachment trial, leaving the proceedings deeply in flux as Republicans refuse to bend to Democratic demands for new witnesses.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell showed no signs Friday of negotiating with the Democrats as he aims for Trump's swift acquittal. At the same time, the Republican leader acknowledged the Senate cannot begin the historic undertaking until House Speaker Nancy Pelosi delivers the articles of impeachment — which she is refusing to do until he provides details on the trial's scope. Neither seems willing to budge.

"Their turn is over," McConnell said about the Democratic-led House. "It's the Senate's turn now to render sober judgment as the framers intended."

Pelosi responded that McConnell's stance "made clear that he will feebly comply with President Trump's cover-up of his abuses of power and be an accomplice to that cover-up."

The House and Senate gavelled in for brief sessions Friday with the sudden crisis in the Middle East only adding to the uncertainty about how lawmakers will proceed with the impeachment trial, only the third in U.S. history.

Trump was impeached last month by the House on charges that he abused power and obstructed Congress in his dealings with Ukraine. Trump withheld nearly \$400 million in military aid for Ukraine, an Eastern European ally that depends on U.S. support to counter Russia, after asking President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to publicly announce an investigation into Trump rival Joe Biden. The aid was ultimately released after Congress objected.

Democrats believe their demands for witnesses are bolstered by new reports about Trump's decision to withhold the aid and unease among some GOP senators over the situation.

"The American people deserve the truth," Pelosi said in a statement. "Every Senator now faces a choice: to be loyal to the President or the Constitution."

McConnell has said the trial should start and then senators can decide the scope. Acquittal seems likely in the Senate because Republicans hold a 53-47 seat majority and it takes two thirds of the Senate to convict. But McConnell's leverage is limited during the trial. Either side needs to reach just a 51-vote threshold to call witnesses or seek documents, which could politically test some senators.

As he opened the chamber Friday, McConnell criticized House Democrats as having engineered a "slapdash" impeachment that was the "most rushed, least fair" in history, only to now forcibly postpone the proceedings while they seek more information.

The GOP leader did not defend or criticize the president's actions toward Ukraine. But he invoked the Founding Fathers' vision of the slower-moving Senate as "an institution that could stop momentary hysteria and partisan passions."

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer also drew on the founders to pressure Republican senators not to fall lockstep in line with Trump, as they typically do, but fulfill their role as jurors.

"The vital question, of whether or not we have a fair trial, ultimately rests with a majority of the senators in this chamber," Schumer said. He is pressing to hear testimony from at least four new witnesses, all of whom refused to appear in the House proceedings before the House voted to impeach Trump last month.

"We need the whole truth," Schumer said. McConnell, he said, has been unable to make "one single argument" against having witnesses and documents in the trial.

Two Republican senators, Lisa Murkowski and Susan Collins, have indicated they were open to hearing from more witnesses and registered their concerns about McConnell's claim that he was working closely with the White House on the format for the trial. Senators up for re-election in 2020 will face particular pressure over their votes.

Trump wants not only acquittal in the trial but also vindication from his GOP allies.

The witnesses that Senate Democrats want to call refused to testify in the House proceedings under orders from the White House. They are Trump's former national security adviser John Bolton, acting chief

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of staff Mick Mulvaney and two other officials who were directly involved with Trump's decision to withhold the military assistance for Ukraine. Republicans, in turn, could try to hear from Biden or his son, Hunter Biden, who worked for an energy company in Ukraine while his father was vice president.

More information keeps flowing. A federal judge on Friday allowed a Rudy Giuliani associate indicted on campaign finance charges, Lev Parnas, to turn over documents to Congress as part of the impeachment proceeding. Parnas and another man, Igor Fruman, played key roles in efforts by Giuliani, Trump's personal lawyer, to launch a Ukrainian corruption investigation against Democratic presidential candidate Biden.

McConnell showed no signs of deviating from his opening stance. He defended his earlier remarks in which he said he would not be an "impartial juror" in the trial and stuck with his plan to follow the process used during Bill Clinton's impeachment, in which the trial was convened and then votes were taken to decide if additional witnesses were needed.

The GOP leader suggested the Senate will carry on with its other business while it waits for the House to act. As if to emphasize that point, he set up a vote for Monday to advance a Trump nominee to run the Small Business Administration.

"We can't hold a trial without the articles," McConnell said. "So for now, we are content to continue the ordinary business of the Senate while House Democrats continue to flounder."

The Constitution requires that the House and Senate convene on Jan. 3, though few lawmakers were in town for the perfunctory session. But the Senate leaders' remarks were being closely watched for signs of next steps amid the crisis in the Middle East after the U.S. killed a top Iranian general with airstrikes in Iraq.

Associated Press writers Mary Clare Jalonick, Andrew Taylor, Laurie Kellman and Padmananda Rama contributed to this report.

Ex-Nissan chief made escape to Beirut aboard charter flights

By SUZAN FRASER and YURI KAGEYAMA Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — Charter flights that spirited ex-Nissan chief Carlos Ghosn from Japan to Istanbul and from there to Beirut — an escape made possible with the help of an airline employee who falsified records. Security camera footage reportedly showing he simply walked out of his Tokyo home hours before fleeing the country.

Details emerged Friday of the bizarre path to freedom that allowed the ex-Nissan boss to jump \$14 million bail, seemingly under the noses of Japanese authorities, and evade charges of financial misconduct that could carry a jail sentence of up to 15 years.

The improbable weekend escape has confounded and embarrassed Japanese authorities, even setting off wild speculation that Ghosn was carted off inside a musical instrument case from his home, which was under 24-hour surveillance.

But on Friday, Japanese public broadcaster NHK TV cited investigative sources as saying security footage showed he simply walked out of the house alone around noon on Sunday. Details also emerged about the route the fallen auto industry executive took to Lebanon, where he grew up and is considered something of a national hero.

Turkish airline company MNG Jet said that two of its planes were used illegally in Ghosn's escape, first flying him from Osaka, Japan, to Istanbul, and then on to Beirut, where he arrived Monday and has not been seen since.

It said a company employee had admitted to falsifying flight records so that Ghosn's name did not appear on them, adding that he acted "in his individual capacity" without MNG Jet's knowledge.

The company said it launched an investigation after learning from media reports that the planes were for Ghosn and not the officially declared passengers.

"The two leases were seemingly not connected to each other. The name of Mr. Ghosn did not appear in the official documentation of any of the flights," the company said in a statement. It did not say who the jets were leased to or identify the employee it said aided Ghosn's escape.

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Lebanese authorities have said Ghosn entered the country legally on a French passport, though he had been required to surrender all three of his passports to his lawyers under terms of his bail. He also has Brazilian and Lebanese citizenship.

Interpol issued a wanted notice on Thursday for Ghosn, but Japan has no extradition treaty with Lebanon and it appeared unlikely he would be handed over.

The plane carrying Ghosn landed at Istanbul's Ataturk Airport, which is closed to commercial flights and used only for cargo and private flights, the Interior Ministry said. "A transfer occurred in the cargo section," of the airport, spokesman Ismail Catakli said. "In this way, Turkey was used as a transit point."

A cargo company employee was aboard the flight to Beirut and immediately returned to Istanbul aboard the same jet, Turkey's Hurriyet newspaper said. The employee was one of seven people detained by Turkish authorities investigating how Ghosn passed through Turkey. Two were released Friday while the five others were ordered arrested, the state-run Anadolu news agency said.

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 added that Ghosn entered the country on a legal passport and appeared to cast doubt on the possibility Lebanon would hand Ghosn over to Japan.

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

"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 was set to go on trial in Japan in April. In a statement Tuesday, he said he fled to avoid "political persecution" by a "rigged Japanese justice system." He has promised to speak with reporters next week.

His lawyer in France, Francois Zimeray, told NHK 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, has close ties to senior politicians and business stakes in a number of companies in Lebanon. 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.

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.

Kageyama reported from Tokyo. Associated Press reporters John Leicester in Paris and Bassem Mroue, AJ Naddaff and Zeina Karam in Beirut contributed to this report.

Cycle of revenge: What's next after killing of Iran general?

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — The unprecedented killing of Iran's top general in a U.S. airstrike in Iraq has sent shockwaves across the Middle East, with Iran and its allies vowing revenge amid fears of an all-out war.

But while they have vast arsenals and are within striking distance of U.S. troops deployed in Syria, Iraq and the Gulf, Iran may be wary of launching a retaliatory attack that could ignite a major conflict.

The targeted attack on Friday could give them pause by signaling that the mercurial President Donald Trump is willing to wield U.S. military power in dramatic and unforeseen ways.

The slain general, Qassem Soleimani, was a towering figure who mobilized heavily-armed militias across the region against the United States and its allies, extending Iran's influence to the Mediterranean.

His death was a major blow to Iran and led nearly everyone from Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on down to vow massive retaliation.

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"There will be for sure a reaction from Iran's side and the axis of resistance, but the question is where, when and how," said Ibrahim Bayram, an analyst with Lebanon's daily An-Nahar. "I think the Iranians are precise and know how to direct the hit."

Here is a look at possible scenarios going forward:

AMERICA OUT OF IRAQ

The most immediate repercussions are likely to be felt in Iraq, where the airstrike — which also killed a top Iraqi militia commander — was seen as an assault on the country's sovereignty.

Iraq's parliament will meet for an emergency session Sunday. On Saturday, the country's powerful Iran-backed militias will hold a funeral in Baghdad that thousands are expected to attend.

The targeted killing is likely to strengthen Iran-backed forces and political factions in the face of anti-government protesters who oppose Tehran's influence. Iran's allies can now present themselves as upholding national sovereignty against foreign aggression.

Iraq's government, which has maintained an uneasy alliance with both Washington and Tehran, will come under mounting pressure to expel the 5,200 American troops who are in the country to help prevent a resurgence of the Islamic State group.

Restricting or expelling American troops on Iraqi soil is a likely immediate impact option, according to Renad Mansour, a research fellow at the London-based international affairs think tank Chatham House.

"I think it would be hard for any Iraqi government official making a claim to keep American troops after this," Mansour said. If America goes, he added, other diplomatic missions might follow.

That would place Iraq even more firmly in Iran's camp, alongside Syria and Lebanon, and fulfill a goal Soleimani had pursued since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion.

But it might not be enough.

REGIONAL PRESSURE POINTS

Over the last decade, Soleimani had mobilized tens of thousands of heavily armed fighters in Syria and Iraq, who have battled alongside President Bashar Assad in Syria's civil war and fought the Islamic State group in both countries.

The United States has relatively small deployments of troops in both countries who could be targeted in revenge attacks. The latest escalation began last week when a rocket attack blamed on an Iran-backed Iraqi militia killed a U.S. contractor.

The U.S. responded with a wave of airstrikes that killed 25 militiamen in Iraq and Syria, and the militia-men then staged two days of violent protests at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. No one was hurt in the protests, but demonstrators breached the embassy compound.

Iran could also exact revenge through allies further afield, in Lebanon, Yemen or the Gaza Strip.

The Iran-backed Hezbollah militant group dominates Lebanon and has an arsenal of tens of thousands of rockets that can hit every part of Israel. But it is unlikely to risk an all-out war that would devastate Lebanon, which is already in the grip of a severe economic crisis and its own anti-government protests.

CYBERATTACKS AND OTHER POSSIBLE RETALIATION TACTICS

Security experts said cyberattacks were likely to be part of Iran's retaliation. And while cautioning that the U.S. power grid is quite resilient, there are plenty of other opportunities for major disruption, they said.

Other potential targets include the financial sector, manufacturing, oil and gas plants and transit systems.

Iranian hackers carried out a series of disruptive attacks that knocked U.S. banks' websites offline prior to the Obama administration's 2015 nuclear deal.

"Our concern is essentially that things are going to go back to the way they were before the agreement," said John Hultquist, director of intelligence analysis at the cybersecurity firm FireEye. "There are opportunities for them to cause us real disruption."

Iran has also been doing a lot of probing of U.S. industrial systems in recent years — trying to gain ac-

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cess — but has limited its destructive attacks to targets in the Middle East such as the Saudi oil company, experts say.

STRIKING THE GULF

Rather than unleashing its proxies, Iran might respond on its own by targeting U.S. allies in the Gulf and their oil infrastructure. The U.S. blamed Iran for a sophisticated attack on Saudi Arabia's oil facilities in September that temporarily halved its oil production.

The U.S. also blamed Iran for the sabotage of oil tankers last year in the Strait of Hormuz, through which 20% of the world's oil passes. Iran denied those allegations, but acknowledged shooting down a U.S. surveillance drone in June.

Iran could also retaliate by abandoning the 2015 nuclear deal, which has gradually come unraveled since Trump withdrew from the agreement in May 2018 and restored crippling sanctions.

Iran has already openly breached some of its commitments in response to the sanctions and could announce a major new drive to enrich uranium.

SOUND AND FURY?

There's also the possibility, amid all the dire predictions, that Iran does nothing, at least for now.

Israel, for one, does not appear terribly concerned. Authorities closed a ski resort near the borders with Lebanon and Syria, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu cut short a trip to Greece, but there have been no other security measures or any talk of calling up reserves.

"I think the Iranians are shocked now," said Yoel Guzansky, an expert on Iran at the Institute for National Strategic Studies, a Tel Aviv think tank.

Iran and its allies have lost several other senior commanders over the years. While they always vow revenge, they usually add that it will happen at a time and place of their choosing — and the crisis passes.

For example, Hezbollah vowed revenge after one of its top commanders, Imad Mughniyeh, was killed in a bombing in Damascus that the group blamed on Israel. That was in 2008, and while the group has traded fire with Israel since then, it has not carried out any major attacks.

Then again, there's no real precedent for the killing of a figure like Soleimani.

Joost Hiltermann, the Middle East program director at the Crisis Group, an international think tank, says "we could see a war."

"They have put themselves in a corner. They will have to respond," he said.

Associated Press writers Josef Federman in Jerusalem, Fadi Tawil and A.J. Naddaff in Beirut, and Samya Kullab in New York contributed.

Warren, Klobuchar, Booker recent fundraising lags top rivals

By SARA BURNETT and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democratic presidential candidate Elizabeth Warren said Friday that she raised \$21.2 million from October through December, with more than \$1.5 million coming on the last day of the year. But the Massachusetts senator still trailed a trio of other top rivals in fundraising and fell short of her total from the three previous months.

Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar said she took in \$11.4 million for her White House bid to close out the year, while New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker said he raised \$6.6 million. It was the best fundraising quarter so far for both Klobuchar and Booker.

Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, the strongest progressive voice along with Warren, said he raised more than \$34.5 million in the same quarter, proving that his heart attack in October hasn't slowed his fundraising prowess. Sanders and Warren both rely heavily on small contributions from donors that primarily come online.

Former Vice President Joe Biden rebounded from a summer slump to take in \$22.7 million, also his best quarterly haul as a presidential candidate, while Pete Buttigieg, the former mayor of South Bend, Indiana,

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raised \$24.7 million. Both typically use more traditional fundraising methods, including frequent gatherings with big donors that Warren and Sanders have shunned.

Entrepreneur Andrew Yang, who has not yet scored high enough in recent polls to qualify for the next Democratic presidential debate scheduled for Jan. 14, announced receiving \$16.5 million.

In the third quarter last year, Warren raised \$24.6 million as months of strong, summer polling lifted her to front-runner status along with Biden and Sanders. But lately, Warren's support has plateaued as Buttigieg has vaulted among the front-runners. Warren and Buttigieg have feuded for weeks about fundraising tactics, but Warren's latest donations total further suggests her overall momentum is slowing.

It could have been worse. In an email to supporters last week, Warren's campaign said it had raised only about \$17 million with just a few days to go in the quarter — which may have helped trigger the final-hours-of-the-year donation infusion. In a message Friday, Warren campaign manager Roger Lau said the senator's average contribution was \$23, proving the grassroots nature of her appeal.

Lau wrote that, all told last year, nearly 1 million donors provided more than 2.7 million contributions to raise more than \$71 million for Warren.

Klobuchar said 145,126 people donated between September and December, with an average contribution of \$32. Campaign manager Justin Buoen struck a similar tone to Lau's, citing a "massive surge in grassroots support."

Buoen attributed that rise to the Minnesota senator's strong performances in fall debates, which he said helped the campaign double its staff in Iowa and New Hampshire, where voters cast the first votes for the Democratic nomination beginning Feb. 3, and invest in the next two states — Nevada and South Carolina. The campaign also is spending money in states that will vote in the March 3 Super Tuesday contests.

Booker campaign manager Addisu Demissie said it was "thrilled" to have recorded its best quarter yet, despite Booker not having qualified for the December debate. He said "artificial thresholds" set by the Democratic National Committee had prevented viable candidates like Booker, who is black, from participating, and he warned that with former Housing Secretary Julian Castro's decision to drop out of the race Thursday, Democrats have gone from having the most diverse field of candidates for president to one that doesn't reflect the diversity of the party or the country.

There were no black or Latino candidates in the December debate, and so far all the candidates who have qualified for the Jan. 14 debate are white.

"To put it bluntly, we're still behind the fundraising of a field of predominantly white candidates who have been able to haul in significantly greater sums of money or tap into their personal fortunes to fund their campaigns," Demissie said.

The large amounts of money for so many Democratic presidential hopefuls are a positive sign but also indicate that the fight for the party's nomination could continue for several months, making it difficult for candidates who don't have strong campaign funding to stay in the race to replace President Donald Trump.

Trump's campaign said it raised \$46 million during the last quarter and had more than \$102 million cash on hand. The size of the Democratic candidates' campaign bank accounts won't be clear until the Jan. 31 federal reporting deadline — and will provide a more complete picture of where each stands than just the announcements of how much money they raised in the fourth quarter.

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

This story has been corrected to show the federal reporting deadline is Jan. 31, not Jan. 15.

Iran's popular Gen. Soleimani became an icon by targeting US

By **NASSER KARIMI** and **JON GAMBRELL** Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — For Iranians whose icons since the Islamic Revolution have been stern-faced clergy, Gen. Qassem Soleimani was a popular figure of national resilience in the face of four decades of U.S. pressure.

For the U.S. and Israel, he was a shadowy figure in command of Iran's proxy forces, responsible for fighters in Syria backing President Bashar Assad and for the deaths of American troops in Iraq.

Soleimani survived the horror of Iran's long war in the 1980s with Iraq to take control of the Revolutionary Guard's elite Quds Force, responsible for the Islamic Republic's campaigns abroad.

Relatively unknown in Iran until the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, Soleimani's popularity and mystique grew after American officials called for his killing. A decade and a half later, Soleimani had become Iran's most recognizable battlefield commander, ignoring calls to enter politics but growing as powerful, if not more, than its civilian leadership.

"The warfront is mankind's lost paradise," Soleimani said in a 2009 interview. "One type of paradise that is portrayed for mankind is streams, beautiful nymphs and greeneries. But there is another kind of paradise. ... The warfront was the lost paradise of the human beings, indeed."

A U.S. airstrike killed Soleimani, 62, and others as they traveled from Baghdad's international airport early Friday morning. The Pentagon said President Donald Trump ordered the U.S. military to take "decisive defensive action to protect U.S. personnel abroad by killing" a man once referred to by Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as a "living martyr of the revolution."

Soleimani's luck finally ran out after he was rumored dead several times over the years. There was a 2006 airplane crash that killed other military officials in northwestern Iran and a 2012 bombing in Damascus that killed top aides of Assad. More recently, rumors circulated in November 2015 that Soleimani had been killed or seriously wounded leading forces loyal to Assad as they fought around Syria's Aleppo.

As tensions between the U.S. and Iran increased after Trump pulled out of Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers, Iranian officials quickly vowed to retaliate. While Soleimani was the Guard's most prominent general, many others in its ranks have experience in waging the asymmetrical, proxy attacks for which Iran has become known.

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

Soleimani's early years are a bit of a mystery. Born March 11, 1957, Iranians say Soleimani grew up near the mountainous and historic Iranian town of Rabor, famous for its forests, its apricot, walnut and peach harvests and its brave soldiers. The U.S. State Department has said he was born in the Iranian religious capital of Qom.

Little is known about his childhood, though Iranian accounts suggest Soleimani's father was a peasant who received some land under the Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the monarch who was toppled in the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

By the time he was 13, Soleimani was working construction, later as an employee of the Kerman Water Organization. After Iran's Islamic Revolution swept the shah from power, Soleimani joined the Revolutionary Guard. He deployed to Iran's northwest with forces that put down Kurdish unrest.

Soon after, Iraq invaded Iran and began the two countries long, bloody eight-year war. The fighting killed more than 1 million people and saw Iran send waves of lightly armed troops into minefields and the fire of Iraqi forces, including teenage soldiers. Soleimani's unit and others also were attacked by Iraqi chemical weapons.

Amid the carnage, Soleimani became known for his opposition to "meaningless deaths" on the battlefield. He wept with fervor when exhorting his men into combat, embracing each individually.

For several years after the Iraq-Iran war, Soleimani largely disappeared from public view, something analysts attribute to his wartime disagreements with Hashemi Rafsanjani, who served as Iran's president

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from 1989 to 1997. But after Rafsanjani, Soleimani became head of the Quds force. He also grew so close to Khamenei that the Supreme Leader officiated the wedding of the general's daughter.

As chief of the Quds Force — or Jerusalem Force — Soleimani oversaw the Guard's foreign operations and soon would come to the attention of Americans following the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein.

In secret U.S. diplomatic cables released by WikiLeaks, U.S. officials openly discussed Iraqi efforts to reach out to Soleimani to stop rocket attacks on the highly secured Green Zone in Baghdad in 2009. Another cable in 2007 outlines then-Iraqi President Jalal Talabani offering a U.S. official a message from Soleimani acknowledging having "hundreds" of agents in the country while pledging, "I swear on the grave of (the late Ayatollah Ruhollah) Khomeini I haven't authorized a bullet against the U.S."

U.S. officials at the time dismissed Soleimani's claim as they saw Iran as both an arsonist and a fireman in Iraq, controlling some Shiite militias while simultaneously stirring dissent and launching attacks. U.S. forces blamed the Quds Force for an attack in Karbala that killed five American troops, as well as for training and supplying the bomb makers whose improvised bombs made IED — improvised explosive device — a dreaded acronym among soldiers.

In a 2010 speech, U.S. Gen. David Petraeus recounted a message from Soleimani he said explained the scope of Iranian's powers.

"He said, 'Gen. Petraeus, you should know that I, Qassem Soleimani, control the policy for Iran with respect to Iraq, Lebanon, Gaza and Afghanistan,'" Petraeus said.

The U.S. and the United Nations put Soleimani on sanctions lists in 2007, though he continued to travel. In 2011, U.S. officials named him as a defendant in an outlandish Quds Force plot to allegedly hire a purported Mexican drug cartel assassin to kill a Saudi diplomat.

The attention the West gave Soleimani only boosted his profile at home. He sat by Khamenei's side at key meetings. He famously met Syria's Assad in February together with the supreme leader — but without Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, sparking a short-lived resignation by the top Iranian diplomat.

Polling data routinely showed Soleimani rated more favorably than other public figures, according to the Center for International Studies at the University of Maryland. But Soleimani refused entreaties to enter politics.

Soleimani's greatest notoriety arose from the Syrian civil war and the rapid expansion of the Islamic State group. Iran, a major backer of Assad, sent Soleimani into Syria several times to lead attacks against IS and others opposing Assad's rule. While a U.S.-led coalition focused on airstrikes, several ground victories by Iraqi forces featured photographs of Soleimani leading them without a flak jacket.

"Soleimani has taught us that death is the beginning of life, not the end of life," one Iraqi militia commander said.

Gambrell reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

'Jeopardy!' titans compete for \$1 million, 'Greatest' title

By LYNN ELBER AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Super Bowl is weeks away, but for "Jeopardy!" addicts the big game is here: All-time top money winners Brad Rutter, Ken Jennings and James Holzhauer are facing off for ultimate bragging rights.

"The first person to win three matches will be crowned the greatest of all time," said executive producer Harry Friedman. The winner gets \$1 million, with \$250,000 for each runner-up in the contest that airs on consecutive nights beginning 8 p.m. ET Tuesday.

Host Alex Trebek credits the rookie for making "Jeopardy! The Greatest of All Time" happen.

The tournament "was a natural because of the appearance of James Holzhauer," Trebek said. "Prior to that, there wasn't a contestant who measured up, in the eyes of our viewers, to Ken Jennings or Brad Rutter. And here comes James, and wins more money faster than anybody else had ever done on the

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show, and really caught America's fancy."

Friedman said there had been discussions with ABC about a rare prime-time foray for "Jeopardy!" but the format was proving elusive until professional sports gambler Holzhauer steamrolled his way to glory in 2019 with his smarts, skill and high-roller Daily Double bets.

"There was a lot of online chatter about, 'Is he the greatest player of all time?' 'No, Ken Jennings, because he had that streak,' or somebody would say, 'I think it's Brad Rutter, look at how many times he's won.' So it really sort of fell into place," the producer said.

Trebek, who is being treated for pancreatic cancer as he's continued hosting regular "Jeopardy!" games, wasn't asked directly if he was up to handling the championship series as well.

"We discussed the idea of this competition with him because we wanted to make sure that he supported it as a concept, first and foremost. And he said, 'Oh yeah, let's do.' Enthusiastically," Friedman said.

("It's part of my job," Trebek said. He was "struggling a bit" during the taping, he said, adding, "Well, it comes with the territory.")

The high-profile contest took place in December. To keep the outcome a mystery, an ABC release has it running through Jan. 16 "if necessary."

For Jennings, knowing who he would face was both stressful — "Usually, it's anybody's guess who makes the finals" — and helpful.

"I could look at tape of them, and they're both extremely scary players, one of whom (Rutter) I've played before. He usually finds a way to win. So I knew these just going to be the fastest, smartest people I've ever seen holding a 'Jeopardy!' buzzer," Jennings said.

Holzhauer also did his homework.

"I studied some more esoteric facts with the expectation that the writers would ramp up the question difficulty, but the big thing I did to prepare was extra reps of buzzer practice, knowing that Brad and Ken are the two best in the history of the show on the signaling device," he said in an email.

It feels "crazy to be compared to the two best players that ever came before me, but I know I can hang with them," Holzhauer said. "One nice factor is that the three of us can have fun trash talking without anyone 'punching down.'"

Rutter considers the players to be evenly matched in their skills.

"It's really all about buzzer timing and knowledge, and all of us are pretty good at that," he said. "Personality-wise, I think Ken is probably the jokiest of the three, like he throws little quips in, and I'm a little too focused. ... James is also ready with the quips, but he's got the analytical thing down, too."

"But we all put a bunch of strategy into it," Rutter said. Any chance he'd share his? "Tune in to find out."

Rutter enters the contest as the top winner on any TV game show with \$4.69 million in "Jeopardy!" play. Jennings holds the winning-streak record, 74 games, and has collected \$3.37 million. Holzhauer set and broke more than a dozen records for the largest single-day winnings, won the 2019 Tournament of Champions and earned \$2.7 million in winnings.

Rutter is the veteran player, making his first "Jeopardy!" appearance nearly 20 years ago, in October 2000, when champs were "retired" from regular-season play after five victories. Jennings' first game was in June 2004, a year after the rules were changed to allow players to rack up unlimited wins.

Subsequent tournament play has seen Rutter consistently triumph. But Jennings can claim a qualified exhibition victory: During a 2011 face-off with IBM's Watson, the computer won but Jennings topped Rutter to come in second.

The contestants share obvious ability — along with gender. Might a future "Greatest" contest be more inclusive?

"Absolutely," Friedman replied. The contestant pool is more diverse and has more women since online testing was added to make the initial application process widely available, he said.

Lynn Elber can be reached at lelber@ap.org and on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/elber>

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 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

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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.

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."

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today is Saturday, Jan. 4, the fourth day of 2020. There are 362 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 4, 1964, Pope Paul VI began a visit to the Holy Land, the first papal pilgrimage of its kind.

On this date:

In 1809, Louis Braille (LOO'-wee brayl), inventor of the Braille raised-dot reading system for the blind, was born in Coupvray, France.

In 1896, Utah was admitted as the 45th state.

In 1861, Alabama seized a federal arsenal at Mount Vernon near Mobile.

In 1904, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Gonzalez v. Williams*, ruled that Puerto Ricans were not aliens and could enter the United States freely; however, the court stopped short of declaring them citizens. (Puerto Ricans received U.S. citizenship in March 1917.)

In 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in his State of the Union address, called for legislation to provide assistance for the jobless, elderly, impoverished children and the handicapped.

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson delivered his State of the Union address in which he outlined the

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goals of his "Great Society."

In 1974, President Richard Nixon refused to hand over tape recordings and documents subpoenaed by the Senate Watergate Committee.

In 1987, 16 people were killed when an Amtrak train bound from Washington, D.C., to Boston collided with Conrail locomotives that had crossed into its path from a side track in Chase, Maryland.

In 1999, Europe's new currency, the euro, got off to a strong start on its first trading day, rising against the dollar on world currency markets. Former professional wrestler Jesse Ventura took the oath of office as Minnesota's governor.

In 2002, Sgt. 1st Class Nathan Ross Chapman, a U.S. Army Special Forces soldier, was killed by small-arms fire during an ambush in eastern Afghanistan; he was the first American military death from enemy fire in the war against terrorism.

In 2006, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon suffered a significant stroke; his official powers were transferred to his deputy, Ehud Olmert (EH'-hood OHL'-murt). (Sharon remained in a coma until his death in Jan. 2014.)

In 2018, the Trump administration moved to vastly expand offshore drilling from the Atlantic to the Arctic oceans with a five-year plan that would open up federal waters off of California for the first time in decades and possibly open new areas of oil and gas exploration along the East Coast. The Dow Jones Industrial Average burst through the 25,000 mark, closing at 25,075.13 just five weeks after its first close above 24,000.

Ten years ago: Dubai opened the world's tallest skyscraper, and in a surprise move renamed the 2,717-foot gleaming glass-and-metal tower Burj Khalifa in a nod to the leader of neighboring Abu Dhabi, the oil-rich sheikdom that had come to its financial rescue. The Secret Service said a third uninvited guest had made his way into the White House state dinner for India's prime minister in Nov. 2009. (For his part, Washington businessman Carlos Allen insisted that he had received an invitation, and did not crash the event.) Tsutomu Yamaguchi, the only person recognized by the Japanese government as a survivor of both the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings, died at age 93 in Nagasaki.

Five years ago: Pope Francis named 156 new cardinals, selecting them from 14 countries, including far-flung corners of the world, to reflect the diversity of the Roman Catholic church and its growth in places like Asia and Africa. North Korea criticized the United States for slapping sanctions on Pyongyang officials and organizations for a cyberattack on Sony Pictures.

One year ago: President Donald Trump declared that he could keep parts of the government shut down for "months or even years" after he and Democratic leaders again failed to resolve his demand for billions of dollars for a border wall with Mexico. The Transportation Security Administration said there had been an increase in the number of its employees calling off work during the partial government shutdown; TSA employees had been expected to work without pay during the shutdown because their jobs are considered essential. Five teenage girls died from inhaling carbon monoxide after a fire broke out next to a locked "escape room" in Poland.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Barbara Rush is 93. Football Hall of Fame coach Don Shula is 90. Opera singer Grace Bumbry is 83. Actress Dyan Cannon is 81. Author-historian Doris Kearns Goodwin is 77. Country singer Kathy Forester (The Forester Sisters) is 65. Actress Ann Magnuson is 64. Rock musician Bernard Sumner (New Order, Joy Division) is 64. Country singer Patty Loveless is 63. Actor Julian Sands is 62. Rock singer Michael Stipe is 60. Actor Patrick Cassidy is 58. Actor Dave Foley is 57. Actress Dot Jones is 56. Actor Rick Hearst is 55. Singer-musician Cait O'Riordan is 55. Actress Julia Ormond is 55. Tennis player Guy Forget (ghee fohr-ZHAY') is 55. Country singer Deana Carter is 54. Rock musician Benjamin Darvill (Crash Test Dummies) is 53. Actor Josh Stamberg is 50. Actor Jeremy Licht is 49. Actor Damon Gupton is 47. Actress-singer Jill Marie Jones is 45. Actress D'Arcy Carden is 40. Alt-country singer Justin Townes Earle is 38. Christian rock singer Spencer Chamberlain (Underoath) is 37. Actress Lenora Crichlow is 35. Comedian-actress Charlyne Yi is 34. MLB All-Star Kris Bryant is 28. Actress-singer Coco Jones is 22.

Thought for Today: "The last temptation is the greatest treason: to do the right deed for the wrong reason." — T.S. Eliot, American-born English poet (born in 1888, died this date in 1965).

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