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**Kelly
Abeln**

**Casey
Johnson**

**Paityn
Bonn**



— HAPPY NEW YEAR —

Thank you for your Business in 2019 and we are looking forward to your continuing business in 2020!

Karma Salon & Boutique
39%-HAIR ~ Downtown Groton

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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CARD OF THANKS

We would like to thank everyone for their prayers, visits, love, and support. We appreciate all of you. Praise the lord for his strength -Glory to him ! We wish you a blessed 2020.

Love
Penny and Bill

EMPLOYMENT

The Groton Area School District is accepting applications for the position of Certified Sign Language Interpreter. Applicants should complete and submit the certified staff application form along with a current cover letter, resume, and three letters of recommendation. All materials should be submitted to Joe Schwan, Superintendent PO Box 410 Groton, SD 57445. EOE

Human Sexuality Uncovered

I believe that honesty is almost always the best policy. However, there are some topics people don't want to talk about. The whys, how's, dangers and wonders about sexuality is a topic that is still covered up today, but these issues were much more suppressed years ago. Growing up in the '50s and '60s in a small prairie town, I was immersed in conservative values. Cover up was the operating agreement for our farming community at that time.

To discuss, in mixed company, methods to satisfy a partner sexually or to openly talk about lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ) issues would have been disturbing at that time. This is not to say that kids didn't wonder, in private, about their sexuality, or that they did not experiment with sexual activity, but the cover up and almost denial of human sexuality was as much of the culture as was going to Sunday school.

One can say that our civilization is more open now and I believe this honesty is helpful in many ways. For example, in recent years, LGBTQ individuals have been making their way out of the closet. Thanks to more openness, misinformed myths have been debunked by studies showing that sexual orientation has nothing to do with harming children, being a poor parent, or abusing another. Unfortunately, unethical behavior and abuse can be found in every corner of our society regardless of sexual orientation...straight, gay and everywhere in between. Openness enhances understanding, while suppression and cover up can demonize good people and even serve to protect those who abuse others.

Sexual function is necessary for our species to survive but it can be much more than that. Treating each other with kindness brings mutual respect. Treating each other with honesty brings trust. Treating each other with reverence for the other person's right to choose brings the liberty to truly love in return. That said, sexual relationships can be complicated. Sometimes hurtful activity can be unintended and may result when one party is not observant or considerate of the other person's feelings. Conversely, it is also a form of cover up when one party fails to communicate his or her hurt feelings, thus allowing the harm to persist. Certainly, learning to change in order to accommodate our partners, along with large doses of forgiveness and open communication, can help make relationships work.

Bottom line: The closeness and joy of sexuality in our society and between individuals is greatly enhanced when we treat each other ethically, savor the respect, liberty and trust that follows and throw off the cover up so we can all learn and grow.

Richard P. Holm, MD is founder of The Prairie Doc® and author of "Life's Final Season, A Guide for Aging and Dying with Grace" available on Amazon. For free and easy access to the entire Prairie Doc® library, visit www.prairiedoc.org and follow Prairie Doc® on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show streaming on Facebook and broadcast on SDPB most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.



By Richard P. Holm, MD ~ Prairie Doc® Perspectives

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It's Boys' Basketball Action on GDILIVE.COM



**Webster Area
Bearcats VS**



Groton Area Tigers

8:00 p.m., Monday, Jan. 6, 2020
at the Groton Area Arena

Broadcast Sponsors of both Varsity Games

Allied Climate Professionals
Blocker Construction
Groton Dairy Queen
Jark Real Estate
John Sieh Agency
Milbrandt Enterprises
Tyson DeHoet Trucking

It's Girls' Basketball Action on GDILIVE.COM



**Roncalli
Cavaliers VS**



Groton Area Tigers

Tuesday, Jan. 7, 2020
at the Groton Area Arena

JV game at 6:30 p.m. followed by varsity game.

Parent Sponsor of JV game: Melanie Johnson

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Weekly Vikings Roundup By Jordan Wright

That's why they play the game.

Coming into wildcard weekend, the Minnesota Vikings were huge underdogs in their matchup against the New Orleans Saints. Almost every analyst picked the Saints, and for good reason – the Saints were the hottest team in the NFL in December, and the Vikings were stumbling into the playoffs having lost their final two games of the regular season. Luckily for us, the Vikings embraced their role and used that as motivation, leading to a 26-20 victory and an opportunity to continue their quest for a championship.

Kirk Cousins was under an enormous amount of pressure entering this game. His inability to win big games is well documented, and this game against the Saints felt like the type of game that would either cement his status or rewrite the narrative. His stats weren't amazing in this game (19/31, 242 yards and a touchdown), but Cousins stepped up and delivered when it counted the most, including a 43-yard bomb to Adam Thielen in overtime and the winning touchdown toss on a fade route to Kyle Rudolph from four yards out. The Vikings' defense kept them in this game, but it was Cousins who won the day.

Dalvin Cook was back for this one, after missing the last two games because of an injury. He was the focal point of the offense, getting 28 carries for 94 yards and two touchdowns. Cook was also involved in the passing game, getting targeted five times and catching three of those passes for 36 yards (second most receiving yards on the team). Adam Thielen is another Vikings player who seems to be fully recovered from an injury, as he led the team with seven catches for 129 yards and had the catch of the game in overtime.

Mike Zimmer's defense has been up and down in recent weeks, and injuries to two prominent cornerbacks (Mike Hughes, Mackensie Alexander) wasn't going to help anything. Players and coaches knew they had to be at their best if they wanted to slow down a great offense led by Drew Brees, and the defense didn't disappoint. Zimmer did a great job of adjusting his scheme, constantly putting Everson Griffen and Danielle Hunter inside and taking advantage of the weak link along the New Orleans offensive line. As a unit, the Vikings' defense finished with three sacks, seven QB hits, three tackles for a loss, and four deflected passes.

The player of the game on offense was Kirk Cousins. This was the biggest game of Cousins' career, and he really came through when the team needed it the most. His throw to Thielen in overtime might have been the best throw of his career, and his fade to Rudolph to win the game was perfectly placed.

The player of the game on defense was... a tie between Everson Griffen and Danielle Hunter. Both players finished with 1.5 sacks and three QB hits. They were disruptive all game, and didn't give Drew Brees a chance to get comfortable. Hunter also had a forced fumble in this game, which was one of the plays of the game.

Looking ahead, the Vikings will travel to San Francisco to take on the 49ers. The game will be this Saturday, January 11. Kickoff will be at 3:35pm (CT), and the game will air on NBC. The 49ers finished with a record of 13-3 and the number one seed in the NFC. They have the number four offense in the NFL, thanks in large part to tight end George Kittle. The 49ers are great on the ground as well, averaging 144 rushing yards per game. On defense, San Francisco is second in the league, only averaging 281 yards per game. The Vikings are in for a tough game, but if they play solid defense and can run the ball to control the clock, they can come away with a win. Skol!

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Dragr Monson was chosen as the Most Valuable Wrestler at the Webster Area Wrestling Tournament held Saturday. (Photo from Wendy Monson's Facebook Page)

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Today



Becoming
Sunny

High: 32 °F

Tonight



Partly Cloudy

Low: 12 °F

Tuesday



Mostly Sunny

High: 19 °F ↓↓

Tuesday
Night



Increasing
Clouds

Low: -1 °F

Wednesday



Cloudy and
Breezy

High: 20 °F

Breezy and Mild

Higs in the 30s. Westerly winds 15 to 30 mph.

 NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

Updated: 1/6/2020 4:50 AM Central

Westerly winds will become breezy today, but they will help bump highs into the 30s. High pressure builds in on Tuesday bringing calm winds and cooler temperatures.

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Today in Weather History

January 6, 1962: Snow, high winds, and sub-zero temperatures along with near blizzard conditions caused hazardous driving conditions across the area from the 6th into the 9th. Snowfall of generally 2 to 6 inches with winds of 30 to 40 mph caused widespread low visibilities along with drifts up to 4 foot high across central and northeast South Dakota.

January 6, 2010: A strong Alberta Clipper system tracked southeast through the northern plains on Tuesday night, January 5th through Thursday, January 7th. Sufficient Pacific moisture interacted with bitter cold Arctic air surging south from Canada resulting in widespread heavy snowfall over much of northeast South Dakota. Snowfall amounts ranged from 6 to 11 inches. The snow began across northeastern South Dakota in the late evening of the 5th into the early morning hours of the 6th. Many schools closed on the 6th and the 7th. Some snowfall amounts included 6 inches in Andover and Doland; 7 inches in Britton, Sisseton, and near Milbank; 8 inches in Aberdeen, Bryant, and near Summit; 9 inches at Wilmot and Castlewood; 10 inches in Clear Lake and 11 inches at Watertown. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

January 6, 2014: The coldest air in recent history moved into the region during the early morning hours of the 5th and continued into the afternoon hours of the 6th. The combination of sub-zero temperatures with north winds produced dangerously cold wind chills from 40 below to around 55 degrees below zero. Winds gusted to over 40 mph at times. Several area activities were canceled, as well as many schools on Monday the 6th. Some of the coldest wind chills include; 56 below in Summit; 55 below near Hillhead; 54 below in Brandt and Webster; 53 below in Clear Lake; 52 below in Herreid; 51 below in Leola; 50 below in Watertown, Sisseton, Bowdle, and McIntosh.

1886: The "Great Blizzard of 1886" struck the Midwest with high winds, subzero temperatures, and heavy snowfall. These conditions caused as many as 100 deaths and 80% of the cattle in the state of Kansas.

1996: A more recent Great Blizzard was a severe nor'easter that paralyzed the East Coast on January 6 to the 8th. In Washington D.C., this storm is also known as the "Great Furlough Storm" because it occurred during the 1996 federal government shutdown. Snowfall amounts from this event includes: 47 inches in Big Meadows, Virginia; 30.7" in Philadelphia; 27.8" in Newark; 24.6" at the Dulles International Airport; 24.2" in Trenton; 24" in Providence; 22.5" in Baltimore; 18.2" in Boston; 17.1" in D.C.; and 9.6" in Pittsburgh.

1880 - Seattle, WA, was in the midst of their worst snowstorm of record. Hundreds of barns were destroyed, and transportation was brought to a standstill, as the storm left the city buried under four feet of snow. (David Ludlum)

1884 - The temperature dipped to one degree below zero at Atlanta, GA. It marked the final day of a severe arctic outbreak in the South and Midwest. (David Ludlum)

1987 - A storm moving across the western U.S. spread heavy snow into the Central Rockies. Casper WY received 14 inches of snow in 24 hours, a January record for that location. Big Piney WY reported 17 inches of snow. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - It was a bad day for chickens. Heavy snow in Arkansas, with totals ranging up to 16 inches at Heber Springs, claimed the lives of 3.5 million chickens, and snow and ice up to three inches thick claimed the lives of another 1.75 million chickens in north central Texas. Up to 18 inches of snow blanketed Oklahoma, with Oklahoma City reporting a record 12 inches of snow in 24 hours. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - A "bonafide blizzard" ripped through south central and southeastern Idaho. Strong winds, gusting to 60 mph at the Fort Hall Indian Reservation, whipped the snow into drifts five feet high, and produced wind chill readings as cold as 35 degrees below zero. The blizzard prompted an Idaho Falls air controller to remark that "the snow is blowing so hard you can't see the fog".(National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Rain and gale force winds prevailed along the Northern Pacific Coast. Winds at Astoria OR gusted to 65 mph. Unseasonably warm weather prevailed over Florida. Five cities reported record high temperatures for the date, including Miami with a reading of 86 degrees. The hot spot in the nation was West Palm Beach with a high of 87 degrees. (National Weather Summary)

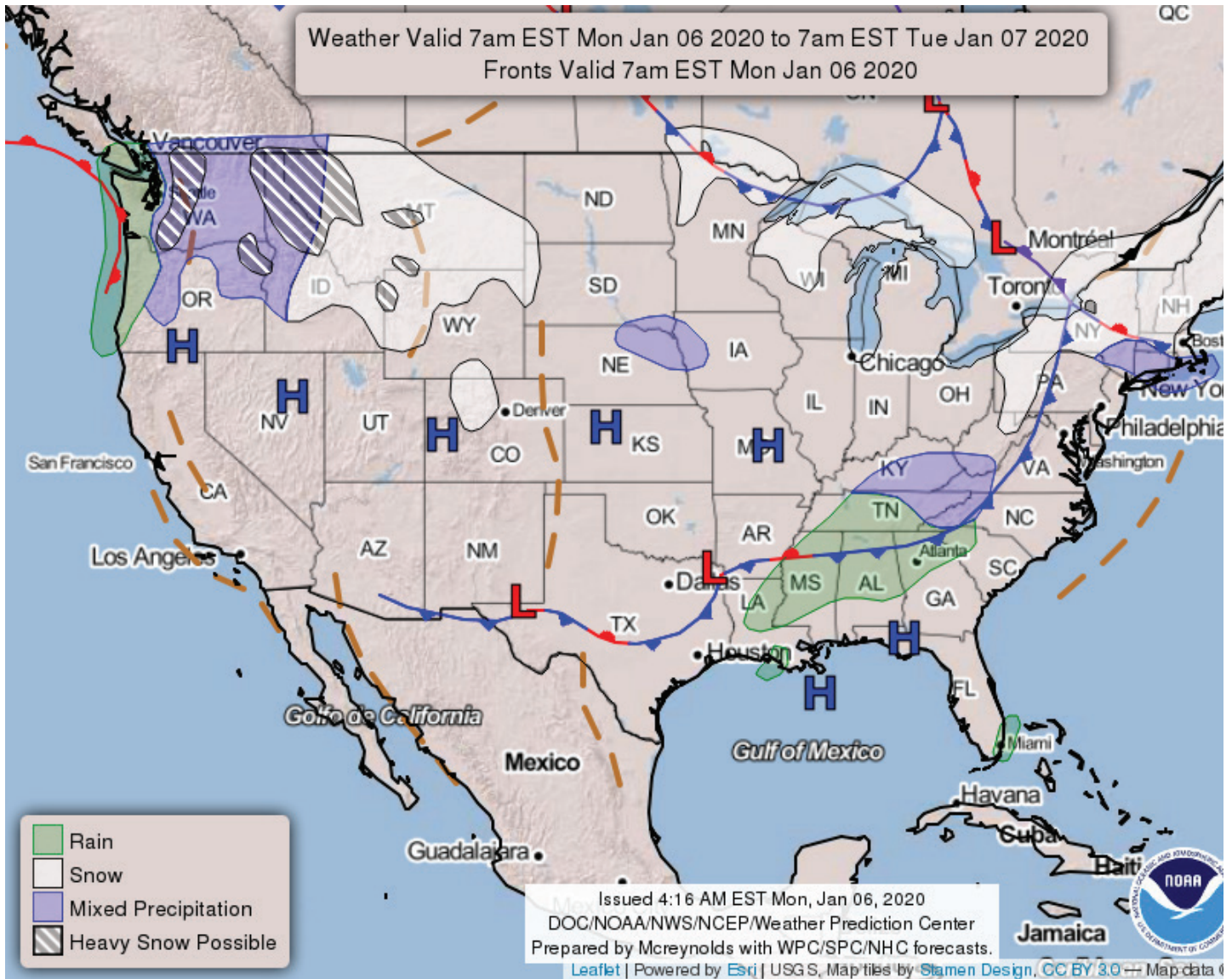
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 40 °F at 3:44 AM
Low Temp: 15 °F at 10:28 PM
Wind: 35 mph at 3:39 AM
Day Precip:

Record High: 49° in 2012
Record Low: -30° in 1909
Average High: 22°F
Average Low: 2°F
Average Precip in Jan.: 0.09
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.09
Precip Year to Date: 0.00
Sunset Tonight: 5:06 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:13 a.m.



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“ Packing Away Christmas”

All too soon (for many), the time has come to take down the Christmas decorations and pack them away till next year. It's a bit sad for those who wish they could stay up longer! For others, Christmas wasn't that great, and they are relieved to have it done with, and look forward to getting back to routine.

But as we fill boxes with lights and ornaments, let us not also pack away our desire to help those who desperately need the hope and comfort that comes through God's Word. For prisoners, the feeling of being “packed away” hits them personally, as the visits and cards of friends and relatives dry up after the holidays.

According to the many letters we receive each day, our monthly “Seeds of Hope” devotional, as well as the “Sowing And Reaping” newsletter, are eagerly awaited by prisoners that are on the mailing list. They tell us how fellow inmates enjoy the material when they share it, and then they write us and ask for a subscription.

We see a tremendous need to get more of the Gospel as presented in our “Seeds of Hope” devotional into the hands of more people, and particularly that of prisoners, who have so little to feed their spirit. It only costs \$15 a year for each prisoner to have their own year's subscription, but because prisoners have such a limited income, if any, we are asking you, our partners, to help supply the need. Won't you pray about underwriting one or more subscriptions to prisoners that want and need “Seeds of Hope?”

Please email us at lcguido@pineland.net, or call 912-685-2222 to let us know you want to supply one or more prisoners with life-giving messages for an entire year. It is truly the gift that “keeps on giving,” all year for them, and in eternity as the Lord keeps a record of our sacrifices to reward us someday.

You can also help by sharing this post on your page, to let others know of the need and give them an opportunity to share in the blessings!

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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)

News from the Associated Press

Hagedorn helps South Dakota slip past Denver 80-78

VERMILLION, S.D. (AP) — Tyler Hagedorn totaled 26 points, six rebounds, five assists and two blocks and South Dakota outlasted Denver 80-78 on Sunday.

Hagedorn made 7 of 13 shots, 3 of 6 from 3-point range, and 9 of 10 free throws for the Coyotes (10-7, 1-2 Summit League). Tyler Peterson hit all five of his shots and scored 17, while Cody Kelley hit four 3-pointers on his way to 15 points.

South Dakota shot 52% in first half and led 38-31. The Pioneers (4-13, 0-3) battled back to get within two points twice late in the second half, but never took the lead.

Sophomore Jase Townsend had 26 points on 9-of-11 shooting and nine rebounds for Denver. Ade Murphy contributed 19 points, seven boards and five assists, while Robert Jones scored 15.

For more AP college basketball coverage: <https://apnews.com/Collegebasketball> and http://twitter.com/AP_Top25

Suspect in Aberdeen shooting faces 1st-degree murder charge

Authorities have arrested a man in another man's fatal shooting near Aberdeen last week.

The suspect is expected in court Monday to face a charge of first-degree murder. The suspect was arrested Friday night, the Aberdeen News reported.

Authorities have not released the name of the suspect or the victim.

The shooting happened after an altercation early Thursday in rural Aberdeen. Authorities have said they were treating the death as a homicide.

Man dies after being thrown from pickup, struck by SUV

FLANDREAU, S.D. (AP) — A 60-year-old man is dead after he was thrown from a pickup and struck by an SUV on Interstate 29 near Flandreau.

The man was driving a pickup pulling a trailer with a utility terrain vehicle on it when he hit a patch of ice on the interstate and lost control on Saturday. The pickup rolled, and the man, who was not wearing a seat belt, was thrown onto the southbound lanes. He was struck by an SUV and died at the scene. His name has not been released.

An 11-year-old girl who was a passenger in the pickup suffered minor injuries. The 54-year-old man who was driving the SUV was not hurt. Both were wearing seat belts.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol is investigating.

Tow truck driver struck, killed in South Dakota

WATERTOWN, S.D. (AP) — A tow truck driver in South Dakota was killed when he was struck by a car as he was trying to remove a vehicle from the ditch, police said.

Watertown police said the crash happened around 8:30 a.m. Saturday, Dale Jones, 47, of Watertown was killed when police say a Chevrolet Impala driven by a 76-year-old Watertown man went out of control and struck him.

KXLG reports the crash is under investigation by Watertown police with help from the South Dakota Highway Patrol.

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Philippines braces to evacuate its workers in Iraq, Iran

By JIM GOMEZ Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte ordered the military to prepare to deploy its aircraft and ships “at any moment’s notice” to evacuate thousands of Filipino workers in Iraq and Iran should violence break out, reflecting Asia’s growing fears for its citizens in the increasingly volatile Middle East.

Other Asian nations with large populations of expatriate labor may face similar decisions amid the rapidly escalating tensions between the United States and Iran following last week’s U.S. airstrike that killed Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad.

South Korean government ministries have discussed strengthening protections for the nearly 1,900 South Koreans in Iraq and Iran. Indian foreign ministry spokesman Raveesh Kumar said India wasn’t planning to evacuate any citizens from the volatile region “yet.”

Duterte held an emergency meeting with his defense secretary and top military and police officials Sunday to discuss the evacuation plans.

“President Duterte ordered the Armed Forces of the Philippines to be prepared to deploy military assets to repatriate overseas Filipinos in the Middle East, particularly from Iran and Iraq, at any moment’s notice,” said Sen. Christopher Lawrence Go, a close ally of the Duterte, who was at the meeting.

Duterte expressed fears Monday that the Philippines may have to carry out massive evacuations if violence hits Middle Eastern countries like Saudi Arabia that host large numbers of Filipino workers.

“I’m nervous. Iran seems to be hell-bent on a retaliation, which I think will come. It’s a matter of time ... the cry for blood is there,” Duterte said in a speech. He urged Congress to hold a special session on the impact of a possible crisis in the Middle East and set aside contingency funds.

Iran has vowed to retaliate and President Donald Trump warned that U.S. forces would hit back at 52 Iranian targets if Americans come under attack. Iraq’s Parliament has also called for the expulsion of all American troops from Iraqi soil, which could revive the Islamic State group in Iraq, making the Middle East a far more dangerous and unstable place.

Compounding contingency plans is the uncertainty where hostilities could possibly break out.

Military chief of staff Lt. Gen. Felimon Santos Jr. said Philippine forces have identified possible evacuation routes not only in Iraq and Iran but other hotspots, like Israel.

“There are probabilities like that and we are improving our plans just to cover everything just in case something happens,” Santos told reporters in Manila.

Other countries face similar dilemmas. Asians make up 40 percent of the world’s migrants, and Middle Eastern countries are a common destination. African migrants are also employed around the Middle East, though the possibility of their home countries arranging evacuations is uncertain.

Gulf Arab states are home to more than 7 million Indian expatriates who help drive the region’s economy and keep its cities teeming with doctors, engineers, teachers, drivers, construction workers and other laborers. In United Arab Emirates, Indians outnumber Emiratis three to one.

South Korea’s Foreign Ministry said Monday that government agencies had discussed preparations for an escalating crisis in the Middle East but had no immediate plans for evacuations. The ministry said about 1,600 South Koreans are in Iraq, mostly working in construction, while another 280 who live in Iran are businesspeople, students or spouses of Iranians.

On past occasions, China has evacuated its citizens from other countries during times of conflict, political tension or natural disaster. In 2015, the navy transported nearly 500 Chinese out of war-torn Yemen. It evacuated 3,000 from Vietnam in 2014, after the deployment of a Chinese oil rig in disputed waters elicited a wave of anti-China riots.

There are more than 7,000 Filipino workers and their dependents in Iraq and Iran, including many who work in U.S. and other foreign facilities and commercial establishments in Baghdad, the Department of National Defense said.

The workers in Iran and Iraq are a small fraction of the hundreds of thousands of Filipinos who are

employed in countries lining the Persian Gulf.

The Philippines is a leading source of labor worldwide, with about a tenth of its more than 100 million people working mostly as household help, construction workers, seamen and professionals.

Associated Press writers Yanan Wang in Beijing, Emily Schmall in New Delhi and Kim Tong-hyung in Seoul, South Korea, contributed to this report.

Trump warns of sanctions if Iraq tries to expel US troops

By **ROBERT BURNS** and **JONATHAN LEMIRE** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump insists that Iranian cultural sites are fair game for the U.S. military, dismissing concerns within his own administration that doing so could constitute a war crime under international law. He also warned Iraq that he would levy punishing sanctions if it expelled American troops in retaliation for a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad that killed a top Iranian official.

Two top Senate Democrats are calling on the Republican president to immediately declassify the administration's reasoning for the strike on the Iranian official, Gen. Qassem Soleimani, saying there is "no legitimate justification" for keeping the information from the public.

In a letter Monday to Trump, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York and the Senate Foreign Relation Committee's Sen. Robert Menendez of New Jersey said the White House's classified notification sent to Congress late Saturday under the War Powers Act was insufficient and inappropriate.

"It is critical that national security matters of such import be shared with the American people in a timely manner, they wrote. "An entirely classified notification is simply not appropriate in a democratic society."

They asked that the notification be declassified "in full."

Congress has registered unease with Trump's decision to strike in Iraq without advance notice to lawmakers and then to send the notification, which is required under the War Powers Act, as entirely classified.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said the over the weekend the "highly unusual" classified notification "raises more questions than it answers. This document prompts serious and urgent questions about the timing, manner and justification of the Administration's decision to engage in hostilities against Iran."

Trump's comments Sunday came amid escalating tensions in the Middle East following the killing of Soleimani, the head of Iran's elite Quds force. Iran has vowed to retaliate, and Iraq's parliament responded by voting Sunday to oust U.S. troops based in the country.

Trump first raised the prospect of targeting Iranian cultural sites Saturday in a tweet. Speaking with reporters Sunday as he flew back to Washington from his holiday stay in Florida, he doubled down, despite international prohibitions.

"They're allowed to kill our people. They're allowed to torture and maim our people. They're allowed to use roadside bombs and blow up our people. And we're not allowed to touch their cultural sites? It doesn't work that way," Trump said.

The targeted killing of Soleimani sparked outrage in the Middle East, including in Iraq, where more than 5,000 American troops are still on the ground 17 years after the U.S. invasion. Iraq's parliament voted Sunday in favor of a nonbinding resolution calling for the expulsion of the American forces.

Trump said the U.S. wouldn't leave without being paid for its military investments in Iraq over the years — then said if the troops do have to withdraw, he would hit Baghdad with economic penalties.

"We will charge them sanctions like they've never seen before ever. It'll make Iranian sanctions look somewhat tame," he said. "If there's any hostility, that they do anything we think is inappropriate, we are going to put sanctions on Iraq, very big sanctions on Iraq."

He added: "We're not leaving until they pay us back for it."

The administration has scrambled to contend with the backlash to the killing of Soleimani. Though he was responsible for the deaths of hundreds of Americans, the targeted American strike marked a stark escalation in tensions between Washington and Tehran.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the U.S. military may well strike more Iranian leaders if the Islamic

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Republic retaliates. He tip-toed around questions about Trump's threat to attack Iranian cultural sites, a military action that likely would be illegal under the laws of armed conflict and the U.N. charter.

Pompeo said only that any U.S. military strikes inside Iran would be legal.

"We'll behave inside the system," Pompeo said. "We always have and we always will."

Trump's warnings rattled some administration officials. One U.S. national security official said the president had caught many in the administration off guard and prompted internal calls for others in the government, including Pompeo, to clarify the matter. The official, who was not authorized to speak publicly to the issue, said clarification was necessary to affirm that the U.S. military would not intentionally commit war crimes.

Oona Hathaway, an international law professor at Yale and a former national security law official in the Defense Department's legal office, said Trump's threat amounted to "a pretty clear promise of commission of a war crime."

The president's threats to Iran did little to quell Tehran's furor over the death of Soleimani. Iranian state television reported that the country would no longer abide by any limits of the 2015 nuclear deal it signed with the United States and other world powers. Trump withdrew the U.S. from the deal in 2018 and stepped up economic sanctions on Tehran, actions that accelerated a cycle of hostilities leading to the last week's killing.

The administration also pushed back Sunday on questions about the legality of the strike on Soleimani. Pompeo said the administration would have been "culpably negligent" in its duty to protect the United States if it had not killed him. He did not provide evidence for his previous claims that Soleimani was plotting imminent attacks on Americans. Instead of arguing that an attack had been imminent, he said it was inevitable.

"We watched him continue to actively build out for what was going to be a significant attack – that's what we believed – and we made the right decision," he said, adding later: "We continue to prepare for whatever it is the Iranian regime may put in front of us within the next 10 minutes, within the next 10 days, and within the next 10 weeks."

Congressional Democrats were skeptical.

"I really worry that the actions the president took will get us into what he calls another endless war in the Middle East. He promised we wouldn't have that," Schumer said.

Schumer said Trump lacks the authority to engage militarily with Iran and Congress needs a new war powers resolution "to be a check on this president." To which Pompeo said: "We have all the authority we need to do what we've done to date."

Sen. Mark Warner, D-Va., said the administration violated the Constitution by not consulting with Congress in advance.

Congressional staffs got their first briefings from the administration on Friday, and members were expected to be briefed this week.

But Trump made clear Sunday that he saw little reason to give Congress advanced warning if he orders the military to carry out further actions against Iran.

"These Media Posts will serve as notification to the United States Congress that should Iran strike any U.S. person or target, the United States will quickly & fully strike back, & perhaps in a disproportionate manner," he wrote on Twitter. "Such legal notice is not required, but is given nevertheless!"

Democrats in Congress have complained that Trump's order to kill Soleimani took place without first consulting with or informing top lawmakers, noting that Congress still holds sole power to declare war. Trump did meet the 48-hour deadline required by the War Powers Act to notify Congress of the deadly drone strike, though the document provided Saturday was entirely classified and no public version was released.

Moving swiftly to rebuke Trump for not consulting with Congress, Pelosi said late Sunday the House would introduce and vote this week on a war powers resolution to limit the president's military actions regarding Iran. In a letter to House Democrats, Pelosi called the airstrike "provocative and disproportionate" and said it had "endangered our servicemembers, diplomats and others by risking a serious escalation of tensions with Iran." A similar resolution was introduced in the Senate.

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Some of the Democrats running to challenge Trump in November questioned whether he had a long-term plan for the Mideast.

Former Vice President Joe Biden said Trump was ill-prepared for the repercussions of the strike on Soleimani and had alienated allies by not alerting them of the plans. Pete Buttigieg, the former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, said, "When you're dealing with the Middle East, you need to think about the next and the next and the next move. This is not checkers."

Pompeo appeared on ABC's "This Week," CNN's "State of the Union," NBC's "Meet the Press," CBS' "Face the Nation," "Fox News Sunday" and Fox News Channel's "Sunday Morning Futures." Schumer was on ABC, Warner was on NBC and Buttigieg was on CNN.

Oil price keeps rising, industry frets over Iran-US conflict

MATT O'BRIEN Associated Press

PROVIDENCE, Rhode Island (AP) — The global benchmark for crude oil rose above \$70 a barrel on Monday for the first time in over three months, with jitters rising over the escalating military tensions between Iran and the United States.

The Brent contract for oil touched a high of \$70.74 a barrel, the highest since mid-September, when it briefly spiked over an attack on Saudi crude processing facilities. Stock markets were down as well amid fears of how Iran would fulfill a vow of "harsh retaliation."

"The market is concerned about the potential for retaliation, and specifically on energy and oil infrastructure in the region," said Antoine Halff, a Columbia University researcher and former chief oil analyst for the International Energy Agency. "If Iran chose to incapacitate a major facility in the region, it has the technical capacity to do so."

The U.S. killed Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani in Iraq on Friday. Early Sunday, as Iran threatened to retaliate, President Donald Trump tweeted the U.S. was prepared to strike 52 sites in the Islamic Republic if any Americans are harmed.

Fears that Iran could strike back at oil and gas facilities important to the U.S. and its Persian Gulf allies stem from earlier attacks widely attributed to Iran.

The U.S. has blamed Iran for a wave of provocative attacks in the region, including the sabotage of oil tankers and an attack on Saudi Arabia's oil infrastructure in September that temporarily halved its production. Iran has denied involvement in those attacks.

"Targeting oil infrastructure could raise prices and bring worldwide economic pain and put Iran on the front burner," which might be exactly the kind of message its leaders are looking to send, said Jim Krane, an energy and geopolitics researcher at Rice University.

Compared to other methods of attack, targeting energy sites also "doesn't kill a lot of people," Krane said. "It's capital-intensive, it's not people-intensive. It's a safer option in terms of the virulence of reprisal."

It would still wreak havoc on the global economy, he said, because of the way that oil markets affect other energy-intensive industries such as airlines, shipping and petro-chemicals.

Global stock markets have been sliding since Friday. European indexes were down over 1% on Monday after Asia closed lower. Wall Street was expected to slide again on the open, with futures down 0.6%.

Brent crude was up \$1.02 at \$69.62 a barrel, having rise almost 6% since before the Iranian general's killing.

At the same time, some experts say the effect of a Middle Eastern geopolitical crisis on oil prices may not be as great as it once was. The U.S. energy industry, for instance, can ramp up shale oil production in places such as Texas.

"We're in this new territory where the world oil markets are more dynamic and can tolerate this disruption more than they used to," said Michael Webber, a mechanical engineering professor at the University of Texas at Austin.

Tensions between the U.S. and Iran have steadily intensified since Trump's decision to withdraw from a 2015 nuclear deal and restore crippling sanctions.

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But after the attack on Saudi Arabia's crucial Abqaiq oil processing facility in September, Halff said the "market was able to dismiss it pretty quickly, partly because there was a perception that shale oil was pretty abundant."

After that incident, the price of oil surged over 14% in a day, but lost those gains over the next two weeks. Halff said the killing of Iran's top general is different.

"This is not something that can be repaired," he said. "You can repair a facility. You can't bring somebody back to life. There's no turning back."

Weeping, Iran supreme leader prays over general slain by US

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

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Weeping amid wails from a sea of mourners, Iran's supreme leader on Monday prayed over the remains of a top Iranian general killed in a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad, an attack that's drastically raised tensions between Tehran and Washington.

The targeted killing of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani drew a crowd, said by police to be in the millions, on Monday in Tehran, where Soleimani's replacement vowed to take revenge. Additionally, Tehran has abandoned the remaining limits of its 2015 nuclear deal with world powers in response to the slaying while in Iraq, the parliament has called for the expulsion of all American troops from Iraqi soil.

The developments could bring Iran closer to building an atomic bomb, set off a proxy or military attack launched by Tehran against America and enable the Islamic State group to stage a comeback in Iraq, making the Middle East a far more dangerous and unstable place.

Adding to the tensions, President Donald Trump threatened to demand billions of dollars in compensation from Iraq or impose "sanctions like they've never seen before" if it goes through with expelling U.S. troops.

Soleimani's daughter, Zeinab, directly threatened an attack on the U.S. military in the Mideast while speaking to a crowd that stretched as far as the eye could see down major thoroughfares in Iran's capital.

"The families of the American soldiers in western Asia ... will spend their days waiting for the death of their children," she said to cheers. Iranian state television and others online shared a video that showed Trump's American flag tweet following Soleimani's killing turn into a coffin, the "likes" of the tweet replaced by over 143,000 "killed" with the hashtag #severerevenge.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei himself prayed over the caskets of Soleimani and others slain in the attack. Khamenei, who had a close relationship with Soleimani, wept at one point during the traditional Muslim prayers for the dead. The crowd wailed.

Soleimani's successor, Esmail Ghaani stood near Khamenei's side, as did Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and other top leaders in the Islamic Republic. While Iran recently faced nationwide protests over government-set gasoline prices that reportedly killed over 300 people, Soleimani's mass processions has seen politicians and leaders across the Islamic Republic's political spectrum take part, temporarily silencing that anger.

Demonstrators burned Israeli and U.S. flags, carried a flag-draped U.S. coffin or effigies of Trump. Some described Trump himself as a legitimate target for Iran's revenge.

Mohammad Milad Rashidi, a 26-year-old university graduate, predicted more tension ahead.

"Trump demolished the chance for any sort of possible agreement between Tehran and Washington," Rashidi said. "There will be more conflict in the future for sure."

Ghaani made his own threat in an interview with Iranian state television aired Monday. "God the Almighty has promised to get his revenge, and God is the main avenger. Certainly actions will be taken," he said.

Markets reacted Monday to the tensions, sending international benchmark Brent crude above \$70 a barrel. The Middle East remains a crucial source of oil and Iran in the past has threatened the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which 20% of all the world's oil traded passes.

Ghaani, a longtime Soleimani deputy, has now taken over as the head of the Revolutionary Guard's Quds Force, an expeditionary arm of the paramilitary organization answerable only to Khamenei. Ghaani has

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been sanctioned by the U.S. since 2012 for his work funding its operations around the world, including its work with proxies in Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen.

Those proxies likely will be involved in any operation targeting U.S. interests in the Mideast or elsewhere in the world.

Already, the U.S. Embassy in Saudi Arabia warned Americans "of the heightened risk of missile and drone attacks." In Lebanon, the leader of the Iranian-backed militant group Hezbollah said Soleimani's killing made U.S. military bases, warships and service members across the region fair game for attacks. A former Iranian Revolutionary Guard leader suggested the Israeli city of Haifa and others could be targeted should the U.S. attack Iran.

"We promise to continue down martyr Soleimani's path as firmly as before with help of God, and in return for his martyrdom we aim to get rid of America from the region," Ghaani said.

The head of the Guard's aerospace program, Gen. Amir Ali Hajizadeh, suggested Iran's response wouldn't stop with a single attack.

"Firing a couple of missiles, hitting a base or even killing Trump is not valuable enough to compensate for martyr Soleimani's blood," Hajizadeh said on state TV. "The only thing that can compensate for his blood is the complete removal of America from the region and taking away their evil from the oppressed people of the region."

On the nuclear deal, Iranian state television cited Sunday a statement by Rouhani's administration saying the country would not observe the nuclear deal's restrictions on fuel enrichment, on the size of its enriched uranium stockpile and on its research and development activities.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Emmanuel Macron and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson specifically urged Iran to "withdraw all measures" not in line with the 2015 agreement that was intended to stop Tehran from pursuing its atomic weapons program.

Iran insisted that it remains open to negotiations with European partners over its nuclear program. And it did not back off from earlier promises that it wouldn't seek a nuclear weapon.

However, the announcement represents the clearest nuclear proliferation threat yet made by Iran since Trump unilaterally withdrew from the accord in 2018 and reimposed sanctions last year. It further raises regional tensions, as Iran's longtime foe Israel has promised never to allow Iran to produce an atomic bomb.

Iran did not elaborate on what levels it would immediately reach in its program. Tehran has already broken some of the deal's limits as part of a step-by-step pressure campaign to get sanctions relief. It already has increased its production, begun enriching uranium to 5% and restarted enrichment at an underground facility.

While it does not possess uranium enriched to weapons-grade levels of 90%, any push forward narrows the estimated one-year "breakout time" needed for it to have enough material to build a nuclear weapon if it chose to do so.

The International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations watchdog observing Iran's program, did not respond to a request for comment. However, Iran said that its cooperation with the IAEA "will continue as before."

Soleimani's killing has escalated the crisis between Tehran and Washington after months of back-and-forth attacks and threats that have put the wider Middle East on edge. Iran has promised "harsh revenge" while Trump has vowed on Twitter that the U.S. will strike back at 52 targets "VERY FAST AND VERY HARD."

He doubled down on that threat Sunday, dismissing warnings that targeting cultural sites could be a war crime under international law.

"They're allowed to kill our people. They're allowed to torture and maim our people. They're allowed to use roadside bombs and blow up our people. And we're not allowed to touch their cultural sites? It doesn't work that way," Trump told reporters.

The processions for Soleimani mark the first time Iran honored a single man with a multi-city ceremony. Not even Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who founded the Islamic Republic, received such a processional with his death in 1989.

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Soleimani will be buried in his hometown of Kerman.

Gambrell reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press undefined

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

1. **GRIEF FOR SLAIN GENERAL** Iran's supreme leader prayed over the caskets of Iranian Revolutionary Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani and others killed in a U.S. airstrike. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who had a close relationship with Soleimani, wept during the traditional Muslim prayers for the dead.

2. **TRUMP RATCHETS UP THE THREATS** President Trump insists that Iranian cultural sites are fair game for the U.S. military, dismissing concerns that doing so could constitute a war crime under international law. He also has warned Iraq that he would levy punishing sanctions if it expelled American troops.

3. **DISASTER RAGES DOWN UNDER** At least 24 people have been killed and 2,000 homes destroyed by the wildfires in Australia, which have so far scorched an area twice the size of the U.S. state of Maryland.

4. **ELECTION YEAR IS HERE** The battle for the White House will unfold amid a great political realignment that is disrupting decades-long political alliances and further dividing America by education, gender and race.

5. **BEST OF THE SILVER SCREEN** Sam Mendes' technically dazzling World War I tale "1917" won best picture, drama, and Quentin Tarantino's radiant Los Angeles fable "Once Upon a Time ... in Hollywood" won best film, comedy or musical at the 77th Golden Globes.

6. **BEST OF THE SMALL SCREEN** Real-life stories ruled the Golden Globe TV honors, as Olivia Colman's portrayal of Queen Elizabeth II, Michelle Williams' turn as Broadway star Gwen Verdon and the nuclear disaster drama "Chernobyl" won top honors.

7. **#METOO CASE ON THE DOCKET** Harvey Weinstein is expected to be in a New York court Monday as his lawyers and a judge handle the final preparation for his trial on charges of rape and sexual assault.

8. **FINDING YOUR NEXT GIZMO** At the CES tech show in Las Vegas, expect to see artificial intelligence-infused home appliances, security cameras and cars, new gadgets that show what faster 5G cellular service can offer and, as always, the newest in robots and souped-up TVs.

9. **JITTERY INVESTORS PULL BACK** World shares were down Monday as financial markets were rattled by escalating tensions in the Middle East following the killing by a U.S. air strike of an Iranian general.

10. **WHAT MAY BE NEXT FOR TOP QUARTERBACK** After the Patriots' disappointing playoff loss, here's a peek into which uniform Tom Brady could wind up in for 2020, if he comes back for a 21st season at age 43.

Australia to pay 'whatever it takes' to fight wildfires

By NICK PERRY and KRISTEN GELINEAU Associated Press

SYDNEY (AP) — Australia's government said Monday it was willing to pay "whatever it takes" to help communities recover from deadly wildfires that have ravaged the country.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said the government was committing an extra 2 billion Australian dollars (\$1.4 billion) toward the recovery effort in addition to the tens of millions of dollars that have already been promised.

"The fires are still burning. And they'll be burning for months to come," Morrison said. "And so that's why I outlined today that this is an initial, an additional, investment of \$2 billion. If more is needed and the cost is higher, then more will be provided."

Morrison's announcement of the funds, which will go toward rebuilding towns and infrastructure destroyed by the fires, came as the death toll from the disaster rose with the discovery of a body in a remote part of New South Wales. The body is believed to be that of a 71-year-old man who was last seen on New Year's Eve moving equipment on his property on the state's south coast, police said in a statement. Police found the body on Monday between the property and a car, both of which had been destroyed by fire.

Another person in southern New South Wales was reported missing, New South Wales Premier Gladys

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Berejiklian said.

Nationwide, at least 25 people have been killed and 2,000 homes destroyed by the blazes, which have so far scorched an area twice the size of the U.S. state of Maryland.

Rain and cooler temperatures on Monday were bringing some relief to communities battling the fires. But the rain was also making it challenging for fire crews to complete strategic burns as they tried to prepare for higher temperatures that have been forecast for later in the week.

"With the more benign weather conditions, it presents some wonderful relief for everybody, the firefighters, the emergency services personnel, but also the communities affected by these fires," Shane Fitzsimmons, commissioner of the New South Wales Rural Fire Service, told reporters. "But it also presents some real challenges when it comes to implementing tactical and strategic back-burns and other techniques to try and bring these fires under control."

More than 135 fires were still burning across New South Wales, including almost 70 that were not contained. Officials have warned that the rain won't put out the largest and most dangerous blazes before conditions deteriorate again.

Victoria state Emergency Services Minister Lisa Neville said at least 200 millimeters (8 inches) of rain would need to fall over a short period of time in order to snuff out the fires — around 20 times what has fallen across the region in the past day. And officials warned that Australia's wildfire season — which generally lasts through March — was nowhere near its end.

"No one can be complacent. We've got big fire danger coming our way toward the end of this week," Victoria state Premier Daniel Andrews told reporters in Melbourne. "We are by no means out of this. And the next few days, and indeed the next few months, are going to be challenging."

New South Wales Premier Gladys Berejiklian also urged Australians not to let their guards down.

Australia's capital, Canberra, had the worst air quality of any major city in the world for much of Monday. The Department of Home Affairs, which is responsible for coordinating the country's response to disasters, told all noncritical staff to stay home because of thick smoke choking the city.

The prime minister said the military was attempting to get food, fuel and water to burned-out communities, and engineers were working to reopen roads and resupply evacuation centers. On Kangaroo Island, a refuge off the coast of South Australia state for some of the country's most endangered creatures, teams had arrived to help euthanize livestock and wild animals injured in the blazes. Hundreds of millions of animals are believed to have died already in the fires across the country.

Heavy smoke, meanwhile, was hampering the navy's efforts to airlift people out of Mallacoota, a coastal town in Victoria cut off for days by fires that forced as many as 4,000 residents and tourists to shelter on beaches over the weekend. Around 300 people were still waiting to be evacuated on Monday.

The prime minister's announcement of relief funds comes as he finds himself under siege for what many Australians have viewed as his lax response to the crisis. On Saturday, he announced he would dispatch 3,000 army, navy and air force reservists to help battle the fires and committed 20 million Australian dollars (\$14 million) to lease firefighting aircraft from overseas.

But the moves did little to tamp down the criticism that Morrison had been slow to act, even as he has downplayed the need for his government to address climate change, which experts say helps supercharge the blazes.

Wildfires are common during the southern hemisphere summer, and Australians generally take a pragmatic view of them. But this year's fires arrived unusually early, fed by drought and the country's hottest and driest year on record.

Scientists say there's no doubt man-made global warming has played a major role in feeding the fires, along with factors like very dry brush and trees and strong winds.

The environmental group Greenpeace said the relief funds announced by Morrison were "a drop in the ocean," given the widespread devastation from the fires.

"Every single cent of that money should be contributed by the coal, gas and oil companies whose carbon pollution has caused the climate crisis that has created these extreme fire conditions, right across the

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country," Greenpeace Australia Pacific Head of Campaigns Jamie Hanson said in a statement. "Slugging everyday taxpayers with the bill for this just adds insult to injury. These big polluters have become rich by trashing our climate and it's time that they started coughing up for the repair bill."

'1917,' 'Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood' win Golden Globes

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

The 77th Golden Globes were meant to be a coronation for Netflix. Instead, a pair of big-screen epics took top honors Sunday, as Sam Mendes' technically dazzling World War I tale "1917" won best picture, drama, and Quentin Tarantino's radiant Los Angeles fable "Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood" won best film, comedy or musical.

The wins for "1917" were a surprise, besting such favorites as Noah Baumbach's "Marriage Story," the leading nominee with six nods, and Martin Scorsese's "The Irishman." Both are acclaimed Netflix releases but collectively took home just one award, for Laura Dern's supporting performance as a divorce attorney in "Marriage Story." "The Irishman" was shut out.

"1917" also won best director for Mendes. The film was made in sinuous long takes, giving the impression that the movie unfolds in one lengthy shot.

"I hope this means that people will turn up and see this on the big screen, the way it was intended," said Mendes, whose film expands nationwide Friday.

Though set around the 1969 Manson murders "Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood" was classified a comedy and had an easier path to victory than the more competitive drama category. Brad Pitt won for best supporting actor, his first acting Globe since winning in 1996 for "12 Monkeys," padding his front-runner status for the Oscars. Tarantino also won best screenplay.

"I wanted to bring my mom, but I couldn't because any woman I stand next to they say I am dating so it'd just be awkward," Pitt said.

Ricky Gervais, hosting the NBC-telecast ceremony for the fifth time, began the evening with an expletive-laden plea against hypocrisy, telling winners to stick to thanking their agent and their god. But throughout the night, winners seized their moment to speak about current events including the wildfires in Australia, rising tensions with Iran, women's rights and the importance of LGBT trailblazers.

Patricia Arquette, a winner for her performance in Hulu's "The Act," referenced the United States' targeted killing of Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani, saying history wouldn't remember the day for the Globes but will see "a country on the brink of war." She urged all to vote in November's presidential election.

Gervais opened the show by stating that Netflix had taken over Hollywood. given its commanding 34 nominations coming into the Globes. "This show should just be me coming out going: 'Well done, Netflix. You win everything tonight,'" he said.

As it turned out, he was wrong. Netflix won only two awards: Dern's win plus one for Olivia Colman's performance in "The Crown." It was a definite hiccup for the streaming service, which is aiming for its first best-picture win at the Academy Awards next month.

Instead, the awards were widely spread out among traditional Hollywood studios, indie labels like A24, cable heavyweights like HBO and relative newcomers like Hulu.

Renee Zelleweger ("Judy") took home best actress in a drama, her fourth Globe. But, as always at the Globes, there were surprises. Taron Egerton, a regular presence on the awards circuit this year, won best actor in a comedy or musical for his Elton John in "Rocketman" — an honor many had pegged for Eddie Murphy ("Dolemite Is My Name").

Awkwafina, the star of the hit indie family drama "The Farewell," became the first woman of Asian descent to win best actress in a comedy or musical. "If anything, if I fall upon hard times, I can sell this," said Awkwafina, holding the award.

Egyptian-American actor Ramy Youssef won best actor in a comedy series for his Hulu show "Ramy." (Taking Gervais' advice, he said "Allahu akbar.") But the winners were otherwise largely white, something the Globes have been criticized for.

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Michelle Williams, who won best actress in a limited series for "Fosse/Verdon," stood up for women's reproductive rights in her acceptance speech.

"When it's time to vote, please do so in your self interest," Williams said. "It's what men have been doing for years, which is why the world looks so much like them."

Best actor has been this year's most competitive category, with nominees including Adam Driver ("Marriage Story") and Antonio Banderas ("Pain and Glory"). But Joaquin Phoenix won for his loose-limbed performance in the divisive but hugely popular "Joker." Phoenix gave a rambling speech that began with crediting the HFPA with the vegan meal served at the ceremony.

Dern's best supporting actress award for her performance as a divorce attorney in "Marriage Story," was her fifth Globe. Her win denied Jennifer Lopez, the "Hustlers" star, her first major acting award.

Best actor in a limited series went to Russell Crowe for the Showtime series "The Loudest Voice." He wasn't in attendance because of raging wildfires in his native Australia.

"Make no mistake, the tragedy unfolding in Australia is climate-changed based," Crowe said in a statement read by presenters Jennifer Aniston and Reese Witherspoon.

Phoebe Waller-Bridge followed up her Emmy haul by winning best comedy series and best actress in a comedy series. She thanked former President Barack Obama for putting "Fleabag" on his best-of-2019 list. With a grin, she added: "As some of you may know, he's always been on mine."

HBO had a big night. "Chernobyl" won best limited series and for Stellan Skarsgård's performance. The second season of "Succession" bested Netflix's "The Crown" and Apple TV Plus' first Globe nominee, "The Morning Show." Brian Cox, the Rupert Murdoch-like patriarch of "Succession," also won best actor in a drama series.

Best foreign language film went to Bong Joon Ho's "Parasite," the Cannes Palme d'Or winning sensation from South Korea. Despite being an organization of foreign journalists, the HFPA doesn't include foreign films in its top categories, thus ruling out "Parasite," a likely best picture nominee at next month's Oscars.

"Once you overcome the inch-tall-barrier of subtitles, you will be introduced to so many more amazing films," Bong said, speaking through a translator.

Tom Hanks, also a nominee for his supporting turn as Fred Rogers in "A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood," received the Cecil B. DeMille lifetime achievement award. The Carol Burnett Award, a similar honorary award given for television accomplishment, went to Ellen DeGeneres. She was movingly introduced by Kate McKinnon who said DeGeneres' example guided her in her own coming out.

"The only thing that made it less scary was seeing Ellen on TV," said McKinnon.

Hanks' speech had its own emotional moment when he caught sight of his wife and four children at a table near the stage and choked up.

"A man is blessed with the family's sitting down front like that," Hanks said.

Elton John and Bernie Taupin won the evening's most heavyweight battle, besting Beyonce and Taylor Swift. Their "I'm Gonna Love Me Again" won best song. "It's the first time I've ever won an award with him," Elton said of his song-writing partner. "Ever."

The roughly 90 voting members of the HFPA have traditionally had little in common with the nearly 9,000 industry professionals that make up the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. The HFPA is known for calculatingly packing its show with as much star power as possible, occasionally rewarding even the likes of "The Tourist" and "Burlesque."

Sunday's show may have added to that history with an unexpected award for "Missing Link" for best animated feature film over films like "Toy Story 4" and "Frozen 2." No one was more surprised than its director, Chris Butler. "I'm flabbergasted," he said.

But the Globes could be unusually influential this year. The condensed time frame of this year's award season (the Oscars are Feb. 9) brings the Globes and the Academy Awards closer. Balloting for Oscar nominations began Thursday. Voters were sure to be watching.

One thing they couldn't see much of: female filmmakers. Only men were nominated for best director and none of the 10 films up for best picture was directed by a woman. Time's Up, the activist group that

debuted at the black-clad 2018 Globes, called the omission "unacceptable."

Weinstein expected in court as trial set to get underway

NEW YORK (AP) — Harvey Weinstein is expected to be in a New York court Monday as his lawyers and a judge handle the final preparation for his trial on charges of rape and sexual assault.

After more than two years since the allegations first came to widespread public attention and catalyzed the #MeToo movement, jury selection is scheduled to start this week.

The disgraced movie mogul faces allegations that he raped one woman in a Manhattan hotel room in 2013 and performed a forcible sex act on a different woman in 2006.

The 67-year-old has pleaded not guilty and says any sexual activity was consensual. If he's convicted of the most serious charges against him, two counts of predatory sexual assault, Weinstein faces a mandatory life sentence.

For that to happen, prosecutors must demonstrate Weinstein had a habit of violating women. To that end, they plan to call actress Annabella Sciorra, who says Weinstein forced himself inside her Manhattan apartment in 1993 or 1994 and raped her after she starred in a film for his movie studio.

They also want jurors to hear from some of the more than 75 women who have come forward publicly to accuse Weinstein of sexual misconduct ranging from harassment to assault. The first allegations were brought to light by The New York Times and The New Yorker in October 2017.

Weinstein's lawyer, Donna Rotunno, has argued the case is weak and said she plans to aggressively cross-examine the accusers.

Picking a jury for Weinstein's trial could take a while, in part because immense media attention on the case could mean some potential jurors already have their minds made up. Weinstein's lawyers tried to get the trial moved out of Manhattan, but a court rejected that.

Election year to feature bitter fights, deepening divides

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Political Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Four years after President Donald Trump drove the rules of politics over a cliff to win the Republican presidential nomination and ultimately the White House, Democrats will go through their own version of the same test.

In less than a month, Democratic voters will begin the formal process of sifting through a historically large field of candidates. The options include progressives who have inspired energy — and strong opposition — by rejecting traditional party politics and pushing for fundamental changes to America's political, social and economic systems. Voters could pick the oldest nominee in the party's history — or the youngest.

Ironies abound at the outset of the Democratic primary.

The oldest candidate at 78, Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, has a loyal following among young voters but has yet to prove he can build a broader coalition. Older voters, meanwhile, have shown interest in Pete Buttigieg, the 37-year-old former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, whose moderate vision has been greeted with skepticism by many fellow millennials.

And a party that prides itself on valuing diversity is contending with a top tier that is all white and mostly male.

The battle for the White House will unfold amid a great political realignment that is disrupting decades-long political alliances and further dividing America by education, gender and race. That means the election will likely serve as a referendum not only on the candidates, but also the country and its definition of the American presidency.

Some of Trump's most influential allies say he is ready and willing to make 2020 the nastiest presidential contest in living memory.

Steve Bannon, a former White House adviser who has long fanned the flames of Trump's scorched-earth politics, indicated that Trump would lean more aggressively into populism and nationalism over the com-

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ing year. And he offered a warning to Democrats who have engaged in a largely polite nomination fight so far: The "pillow fight" is almost over.

"This will be one for the ages. You're going to get full Trump at max speed," Bannon told The Associated Press.

Trump and his massive political machine are an ever-present force in the Democratic contest. The most important question each candidate must answer is why they are best positioned to defeat a president many in the party consider an existential threat to democracy.

Trump has already hurled personal and policy attacks at his Democratic opponents, even inviting assistance from foreign governments to defeat them. And with his surprise move last week to strike Gen. Qassem Soleimani, Trump showed how he can use the powers of the presidency to scramble American politics in an instant.

In a race that was already certain to be brutish, Trump's decision to order the attack prompted some Democratic candidates to suggest he may have done so to divert attention from his impeachment trial.

The urgent question of which Democrat will ultimately challenge Trump will take months to resolve. The winnowing process formally begins with Iowa's Feb. 3 caucus and ends at the party's mid-July national convention after every state and U.S. territory holds its own primary contest.

The candidates represent the ideological diversity of an evolving Democratic Party that is teetering on the edge of its own civil war, united if only by overwhelming disdain for Trump.

Former Vice President Joe Biden and Buttigieg represent the party's moderate wing, favoring a more cautious shift leftward on core issues like health care, education and immigration. On the other side, Elizabeth Warren, a 70-year-old progressive Massachusetts senator, and Sanders, a self-described democratic socialist, are fighting for transformational changes including a shift to a single-payer health care system.

At the same time, one of the richest men in the world, former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, is trying to use his fortune to rewrite the rules of primary politics. The \$50 billion man, who registered as a Democrat little more than a year ago, will ignore the first four states on the primary calendar and focus instead on more than a dozen Super Tuesday states in early March.

Political operatives are skeptical, and many progressives are disgusted, yet the strategy promises to complicate and prolong the bitter primary season.

Each Democratic faction is convinced that the other will trigger the very thing they fear most: Trump's reelection.

"If we nominate a candidate that I would describe as far left, extreme left, I think that unfortunately, a lot of union members will just not get there," said Biden supporter Harold Schaitberger, the general president of the International Association of Firefighters, who specifically warned Democrats against nominating Sanders or Warren.

The case for a moderate Democrat lies with the belief that white, working-class men in a handful of states will largely decide Trump's fate in November.

Non-college-educated white men shifted sharply away from the Democratic Party in 2016, fueling razor-thin victories for Trump in three states that previously made up the Democrats' "blue wall": Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. If Trump can hold same states again in 2020, he will return to the White House for another four years.

Schaitberger fears that some Democrats don't appreciate the dire nature of the situation that continues in the Midwest, where many of his union members remain concerned by the leftward shift of the Democratic Party.

"It doesn't matter if we get 10 million more votes in California or 4 million more votes in New York or Massachusetts, you gotta be able to come up in the battlegrounds with an electoral victory," Schaitberger said, pointing to Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Florida as the states that matter most.

Alexandra Rojas, executive director of the liberal group Justice Democrats, feels just as strongly that her party must nominate a "bold progressive" like Sanders or Warren to take back the presidency. She and thousands of like-minded activists are fighting Biden and Buttigieg's candidacies, outraged by their

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reliance on wealthy donors and their refusal to embrace transformative domestic policies like Medicare for All, which would replace the U.S. private insurance system with free government-backed health coverage for all Americans.

"We're fighting like we have nothing to lose," Rojas declared.

She predicted that Democrats would ultimately come together after an explosive primary fight. Given several factors working in the Republican president's favor, the Democrats' feuding factions have no choice but to unite if they hope to take back the White House.

Rarely in modern political history has an incumbent president failed to win reelection in the midst of economic growth. And while there is debate about the strength of the U.S. economy, there is no debating the numbers: unemployment rates and the stock market are better today than when Trump took office.

Meanwhile, Trump amassed the largest political fortune in U.S. history heading into an election year, which he's already using to construct a massive political machine. Backed by more than \$100 million in his campaign account to begin the year, his team insists it can expand the traditional political battleground this fall to compete in Democratic-leaning states like Minnesota, New Mexico and even Oregon.

While he is optimistic, evangelical leader and Trump confidant Jerry Falwell Jr., the president of Liberty University, said it's too early to predict a Trump electoral landslide. But he's calling on all Republicans to embrace the Trump playbook.

"He's teaching Republicans a lesson that I hope they learn — that nobody's going to support them if they continue to be so diplomatic and so, what's the word I'm looking for? I mean they act like royalty, like it's beneath them to get down in the mud and fight," Falwell said in an interview. "The people have been looking for somebody who will get down in the mud and fight, and wade in up to their waste. Trump's the first one who's the done that."

Indeed, Trump has eagerly attacked anyone and everyone who has criticized his personal style or governing decisions, even members of his own administration at times. He has already used ethnic slurs to go after Warren, raised questions about Sanders' age, falsely called his rivals socialists, and openly encouraged foreign governments — namely Ukraine and China — to dig up dirt on Biden.

As his political base cheers, such tactics threaten to inflict lasting damage on Trump's standing with some voters — especially women.

Democrats scored sweeping victories in the 2018 and 2019 as college-educated women, particularly in America's suburbs, turned their backs on Trump's GOP. At the same time, there is evidence that younger voters and minorities are both energized and repelled by Trump entering the new year.

Bannon insisted the GOP has become the "working-class party" under Trump, although he has some concern about Trump's standing with working-class women. His more serious concern, however, lies with the narrow, but vocal slice of establishment-minded Republicans who are fighting his reelection.

He referenced the recent birth of an anti-Trump group dubbed the Lincoln Project, led by veteran Republican strategists who are planning a nationwide campaign to convince disaffected Republicans and independent voters to vote Democrat. The group's leadership features conservative attorney George Conway, who is the husband of Trump's chief White House counselor Kellyanne Conway.

"We need the Republican establishment on board," Bannon said, noting that Trump essentially won the presidency because of less than 80,000 combined votes across Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin — "an inside straight," he called it.

"If these guys can peel off 3% or 4%, that's going to be serious," he said of Trump's Republican rivals.

Yet for all the talk of shifting voting blocs, intra-party fights and what will almost certainly be the most expensive campaign in the history of the world, Bannon believes that Trump's fate will ultimately be decided by one man.

"Only Trump can beat Trump," he said.

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AP FACT CHECK: Pence misleadingly links Iran general to 9/11

By HOPE YEN, JON GAMBRELL and CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump closed out the old year by reprising a selection of his most familiar falsehoods and putting a few of his predecessor's accomplishments in his own win column. His vice president, seeking to justify the U.S. military's targeted killing of a top Iranian general, helped begin the new year with a baseless claim tying that general to the 9/11 attacks.

A look at some of the Trump administration's rhetoric on the tumultuous events in Iraq, impeachment, the economy and more:

IRAN

VICE PRESIDENT MIKE PENCE, listing some of the "worst atrocities" of Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani: Trump "took decisive action and stood up against the leading state sponsor of terror to take out an evil man who was responsible for killing thousands of Americans. ... (Soleimani) assisted in the clandestine travel to Afghanistan of 10 of the 12 terrorists who carried out the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States." -- tweets Friday.

THE FACTS: Pence misleadingly ties Soleimani to the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on New York City's World Trade Center. There is no evidence that Iran directly supported the 9/11 hijackers, many of them Saudi members of the al-Qaida terrorist group, nor are there any known reports that Soleimani was involved in assisting with their travel to Afghanistan.

First of all, there were 19 hijackers on 9/11, not 12. Pence spokeswoman Katie Waldman later clarified in a tweet that Pence was referring to those hijackers who traveled to Afghanistan through Iran before the attacks.

It's true that Iran allowed al-Qaida operatives to pass through its borders from Saudi Arabia to Afghanistan without receiving stamps in their passports or with visas obtained at its consulate in Karachi, Pakistan, according to a 19-page, unsigned report found among Osama bin Laden's personnel effects in the Abbottabad, Pakistan, raid. Fifteen of the hijackers were from Saudi Arabia, two from the United Arab Emirates, one from Egypt, and one from Lebanon.

That is consistent with the 9/11 Commission's report, which found that some of the Sept. 11 hijackers -- possibly eight -- passed through Iran.

However, nowhere does the commission's report mention Soleimani, let alone indicate he was behind the lax travel practices that allowed al-Qaida operatives through. The commission, in particular, "found no evidence that Iran or Hezbollah was aware of the planning for what later became the 9/11 attack" or that even the future hijackers themselves knew about their operation when traveling through Iran.

That makes it a stretch to imply Soleimani knew about plans for the 9/11 attacks and then worked to facilitate them.

After the attacks, al-Qaida members including Osama bin Laden's son Hamza fled into Iran, but they were ultimately rounded up by the Iranian government and imprisoned.

ECONOMY

TRUMP: "We had the best economic year, I think, in our country's history." — remarks to reporters Tuesday.

WHITE HOUSE: "President Trump's pro-growth policies have led to an economic boom that is lifting up Americans of all backgrounds." — news release Tuesday promoting his first three years in office.

THE FACTS: These are exaggerated boasts. The economy is not the best ever. It has also failed to grow to the extent Trump promised.

While the United States has enjoyed more than a decade of expansion that has created positive momentum during the Trump era, growth has not eclipsed the 3% repeatedly promised by the president and members of his administration. The national economy is healthy, but it has not been as robust as what Trump said he would produce.

In the late 1990s, growth topped 4% for four straight years, a level it has not reached on an annual

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basis under Trump. Growth reached 7.2% in 1984. The economy grew 2.9% in 2018 — the same pace it reached in 2015 under President Barack Obama — and hasn't hit historically high growth rates.

Trump criticized Obama during the 2016 campaign for failing to deliver growth above 3%, only to fall short himself, despite White House estimates that the 2017 tax cuts would achieve lasting growth at roughly that level.

"I think we could go to 4, 5, and maybe even 6%, ultimately," Trump said at the end of 2017. "We are back. We are really going to start to rock."

Annual growth instead averaged about 2.4% for the first nine months of last year. That's down from 2.9% in 2018. Many of the figures cited by the White House reflect the continuation of a recovery that began before Trump became president, instead of Trump administration policies.

VETERANS

TRUMP: "One of my greatest honors was to have gotten CHOICE approved for our great Veterans. Others have tried for decades, and failed!" — tweet Tuesday.

THE FACTS: This was one of Trump's most frequent fabrications of 2019.

It was Obama who won passage of the Veterans Choice program, which gives veterans the option to see private doctors outside the Department of Veterans Affairs' medical system at government expense. Congress approved the program in 2014, and Obama signed it into law. Trump expanded it.

WHITE HOUSE: "President Trump signed the Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act to ensure VA employees are held responsible for poor performance." — news release Tuesday promoting his first three years in office.

THE FACTS: That's not a complete portrait of his record. The new law has failed in its core mission of protecting whistleblowers who reported potential harm to veterans, according to a government watchdog.

A report released in October by the VA inspector general found that the accountability office established under the 2017 law did not consistently conduct sound and unbiased investigations and may not have protected identities of whistleblowers reporting wrongdoing.

It said the office had "significant deficiencies," such as poor leadership, shoddy training of investigators and a failure to push out underperforming senior leaders.

Just one senior manager out of the 8,000 employees fired by VA had been removed by an office created to help keep senior-level managers accountable, according to the findings by the inspector general, Michael Missal.

The VA acknowledged many of the findings and said it was working to make changes.

IMPEACHMENT

TRUMP: "... An investigation that was illegally started ... The Witch Hunt is sputtering badly, but still going on (Ukraine Hoax!). If this ... had happened to a Presidential candidate, or President, who was a Democrat, everybody involved would long ago be in jail for treason (and more), and it would be considered the CRIME OF THE CENTURY." — tweets Thursday.

THE FACTS: Trump, as is typical, is loose in accusing his political rivals of treason and in placing his predicament in the league of mass murders, terrorism and other grotesque events meriting consideration as crimes of a century. Aside from that hyperventilation, though, what to make of his claim that he was investigated illegally?

The Justice Department inspector general's report that Trump and his allies cite in his defense found "serious performance failures" up the chain of command in the conduct of the bureau's investigation into ties between Russia and the Trump campaign. It harshly criticized the FBI for how it went about eavesdropping on a former campaign aide and cited a host of other problems. The bureau says it is taking dozens of steps to fix some of its most fundamental operations as a result.

Yet the report found the FBI was justified in opening its investigation and it did not find evidence that

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the bureau had acted with political bias, a conclusion at odds with Trump's insistence that he's the victim of a witch hunt.

Similarly, there is no illegal takeover afoot in the impeachment matter. Democrats are following a process laid out in the Constitution, which gives the House the sole power to impeach a president, which it did. The Senate conducts the impeachment trial.

TRUMP, on the House's vote last month to impeach him: "What the Democrats did in the House was a disgrace. What they did — how unfair it was. We didn't get lawyers. We didn't have witnesses." — remarks Tuesday to reporters.

THE FACTS: This is a distortion. In the House proceedings, Democrats on the House Judiciary Committee that drafted the articles of impeachment invited Trump and his lawyers to take part and ask for witnesses. The witnesses who did come forward were questioned by Republicans on the committee as well as by Democrats.

Earlier hearings by the House Intelligence Committee did not invite Trump or his team. Those hearings were like the investigative phase of criminal cases, conducted without the participation of the person under investigation. But lawmakers from both parties questioned the witnesses; several were invited at the request of Republicans on the committee. Trump complained about being shut out of that but when the subsequent Judiciary Committee hearings were opened to his team and him, he declined.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., has been holding up sending the articles of impeachment to the Republican-controlled Senate, which would hold a trial where Trump almost certainly will be acquitted. She says she wants more clarity about what a trial will look like.

HEALTH CARE

TRUMP, retweeting a "Team Trump" claim that his health care policy is working in part because "pre-existing conditions covered." — tweet Tuesday.

THE FACTS: Not really. People with preexisting medical problems have health insurance protections because of Obama's health care law, which Trump is trying to dismantle.

One of Trump's major alternatives to Obama's law — short-term health insurance — doesn't have to cover preexisting conditions. Meanwhile, his administration has been pressing in court for full repeal of the Obama-era law, including provisions that protect people with preexisting conditions from health insurance discrimination. Republicans say they'd put new protections in place, but they haven't spelled them out.

With "Obamacare" still in place, preexisting conditions continue to be covered by regular individual health insurance plans.

Insurers must take all applicants, regardless of medical history, and charge the same standard premiums to healthy people and those who had medical problems before or when they signed up.

Before the Affordable Care Act, any insurer could deny coverage — or charge more — to anyone with a preexisting condition who was seeking to buy an individual policy.

Gambrell reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Associated Press writers Josh Boak, Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar and Eric Tucker in Washington contributed to this report.

EDITOR'S NOTE — A look at the veracity of claims by political figures.

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Trump returns to Washington to face a pair of challenges

By JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — His 17-day holiday stay at his Florida resort over, President Donald Trump has

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returned to the White House facing twin challenges: the fallout from the strike he ordered to kill an Iranian general and his looming impeachment trial in the Senate.

The dueling images — one of potential chaos in the Middle East, the other a politicized ritual occurring for only the third time in the nation's history — will shape a defining month of Trump's presidency, one that comes just before the first votes of the 2020 campaign are cast.

Even before Air Force One touched down outside the divided nation's capital Sunday night, Trump faced growing questions from Democrats fearful that the killing of Revolutionary Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani endangered Americans in the region and may have been an effort to distract from the president's political crisis back home.

"Next week, the president of the United States could be facing an impeachment trial in the Senate. We know he's deeply upset about that. And I think people are reasonably asking, 'Why this moment?'" Elizabeth Warren, a Democrat running for president, said on CNN's "State of the Union."

"Why does he pick now to take this highly inflammatory, highly dangerous action that moves us closer to war?" the Massachusetts senator said.

In the hours before Trump's return, tensions simmered half a world away as hundreds of thousands flooded streets Sunday in Iran to walk alongside a casket carrying the remains of Soleimani while Iraq's parliament voted in favor of a resolution calling for an end of the foreign military presence in their nation, an effort aimed at expelling the 5,000 U.S. troops stationed there over the war against the Islamic State group.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who appeared on the full gamut of Washington Sunday morning news shows, defended the strike, which killed Soleimani at the Baghdad airport, as part of a deterrence "strategy to convince the Iranian regime to behave like a normal nation."

"The American people should know that we will not waver. We will be bold in protecting American interests and we will do so in a way that is consistent with the rule of law," Pompeo told CNN.

The conflict is rooted in Trump pulling out of Iran's atomic accord and imposing sanctions that have crippled Iran's economy. But it was not at the forefront of Trump's agenda when his vacation began.

Trump departed for Mar-a-Lago, nestled against the Atlantic Ocean in tony Palm Beach on Dec. 20, just two days after the House of Representatives voted largely on party lines to approve two articles of impeachment against him over his pressure of Ukraine to investigate a potential political foe, former vice president Joe Biden.

During his stay, the president visited his nearby golf course nearly every day and kept his public appearances to a minimum. But behind the scenes, he held a series of meetings and phone calls to prepare for what lies ahead.

Trump spoke to some of his closest Republican allies in the Senate, including Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, about the upcoming trial. Though the details of the trial remain unclear, including when it will begin, the outcome seems all but certain, as the Republican-led Senate will almost surely not remove Trump from office.

But House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., has delayed transmitting the articles of impeachment to the upper chamber, a necessary step before the trial can begin, because she has demanded assurances from Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., that the proceedings be fair.

McConnell, who has been dismissive of the request, has begun negotiations with Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York over the contours of the trial, including whether witnesses would be called. The president had pushed to call witnesses to make it a showy trial — including Biden's son and the whistleblower who first reported the pressure to Ukraine — believing he can convince the American public of his innocence. But Graham and others have implored him to let the Senate handle the matter as expeditiously as possible.

Trump has fumed that impeachment will be a permanent stain on his legacy but he has listened to advisers who believe it could be a political opportunity, pointing to polling that shows it playing poorly with independents in a trio of vital Rust Belt battleground states. The president has also mused about holding a series of rallies after the likely Senate acquittal.

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But even as Trump held meetings at Mar-a-Lago about the trial and his upcoming re-election campaign, which will move into a new phase when the Iowa caucus is held in less than a month, the Iran matter moved to the forefront.

Tensions between the nations erupted after an attack killed an American contractor at a joint U.S.-Iraqi base. And after days of deliberations with his inner circle of national security advisers, Trump opted for the most dramatic response, the drone strike that killed Soleimani.

Despite Tehran's call for vengeance, Trump did not back away from his trademark bellicose bluster.

"The United States just spent Two Trillion Dollars on Military Equipment," Trump tweeted early Sunday. "We are the biggest and by far the BEST in the World! If Iran attacks an American Base, or any American, we will be sending some of that brand new beautiful equipment their way...and without hesitation!"

But linking the two crises shadowing the White House, Democrats said the heightening tensions with Iran would not dissuade them from Trump's impeachment.

"I think our system is strong enough that we can do both," Sen. Chris Van Hollen, D-Md., told Fox News Sunday. "I very much worry about what the president is doing right now to escalate tensions and the likelihood of war in Iran, but our country will have to deal with both these issues at the same time."

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Iran general replacing Soleimani vows revenge for US killing

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

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — An Iranian general who replaced the leader killed by a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad vowed Sunday to take revenge as Tehran abandoned the remaining limits of its 2015 nuclear deal with world powers in response to the slaying.

Esmail Ghaani's threat comes as the blowback over the U.S. killing of top Iranian general Qassem Soleimani mounted Sunday with Iraq's parliament calling for the expulsion of all American troops from Iraqi soil.

The three developments could bring Iran closer to building an atomic bomb, see an proxy or military attack launched by Tehran against America and enable the Islamic State group to stage a comeback in Iraq, making the Middle East a far more dangerous and unstable place.

Adding to the tensions, President Donald Trump threatened to demand billions of dollars in compensation from Iraq or impose "sanctions like they've never seen before" if it goes through with expelling U.S. troops.

Ghaani made his remarks in an interview with Iranian state television aired Monday.

"God the almighty has promised to get his revenge, and God is the main avenger. Certainly actions will be taken," Ghaani said.

Ghaani now serves as the head of the Revolutionary Guard's Quds Force, an expeditionary arm of the paramilitary organization answerable only to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. As Soleimani's longtime deputy, Ghaani has been sanctioned by the U.S. since 2012 for his work funding its operations around the world, including its work with proxies in Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen.

Those proxies likely will be involved in any operation targeting U.S. interests in the Mideast or elsewhere in the world.

Already, the U.S. Embassy in Saudi Arabia warned Americans "of the heightened risk of missile and drone attacks." In Lebanon, the leader of the Iranian-backed militant group Hezbollah said Soleimani's killing made U.S. military bases, warships and service members across the region fair game for attacks. A former Iranian Revolutionary Guard leader suggested the Israeli city of Haifa and others could be targeted should the U.S. attack Iran.

"We promise to continue down martyr Soleimani's path as firmly as before with help of God, and in return for his martyrdom we aim to get rid of America from the region," Ghaani said.

On the nuclear deal, Iranian state television cited a statement by President Hassan Rouhani's administration saying the country would not observe the nuclear deal's restrictions on fuel enrichment, on the size of its enriched uranium stockpile and on its research and development activities.

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"The Islamic Republic of Iran no longer faces any limitations in operations," a state TV broadcaster said. German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Emmanuel Macron and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson specifically urged Iran to "withdraw all measures" not in line with the 2015 agreement that was intended to stop Tehran from pursuing its atomic weapons program.

Iran insisted that it remains open to negotiations with European partners over its nuclear program. And it did not back off from earlier promises that it wouldn't seek a nuclear weapon.

However, the announcement represents the clearest nuclear proliferation threat yet made by Iran since Trump unilaterally withdrew from the accord in 2018 and reimposed sanctions. It further raises regional tensions, as Iran's longtime foe Israel has promised never to allow Iran to produce an atomic bomb.

Iran did not elaborate on what levels it would immediately reach in its program. Tehran has already broken some of the deal's limits as part of a step-by-step pressure campaign to get sanctions relief. It already has increased its production, begun enriching uranium to 5% and restarted enrichment at an underground facility.

While it does not possess uranium enriched to weapons-grade levels of 90%, any push forward narrows the estimated one-year "breakout time" needed for it to have enough material to build a nuclear weapon if it chose to do so.

The International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations watchdog observing Iran's program, did not respond to a request for comment. However, Iran said that its cooperation with the IAEA "will continue as before."

Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi earlier told journalists that Soleimani's killing would prompt Iranian officials to take a bigger step away from the nuclear deal.

"In the world of politics, all developments are interconnected," Mousavi said.

Soleimani's killing has escalated the crisis between Tehran and Washington after months of back-and-forth attacks and threats that have put the wider Middle East on edge. Iran has promised "harsh revenge" for the U.S. attack, while Trump has vowed on Twitter that the U.S. will strike back at 52 targets "VERY FAST AND VERY HARD."

He doubled down on that threat Sunday, dismissing warnings that targeting cultural sites could be a war crime under international law.

"They're allowed to kill our people. They're allowed to torture and maim our people. They're allowed to use roadside bombs and blow up our people. And we're not allowed to touch their cultural sites? It doesn't work that way," Trump told reporters.

On Sunday, hundreds of thousands of mourners accompanied the coffin carrying Soleimani's remains in the Iranian cities of Ahvaz and Mashhad. A similar procession was expected in Qom and Tehran on Monday. Tens of thousands already filled the streets of the Iranian capital early Monday morning.

Mourners wearing black beat their chests and carried posters with Soleimani's portrait. Demonstrators also unfurled red Shiite flags, which traditionally symbolize both the spilled blood of someone unjustly killed and a call for vengeance.

The processions mark the first time Iran honored a single man with a multi-city ceremony. Not even Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who founded the Islamic Republic, received such a procession with his death in 1989. Soleimani on Monday will lie in state at Tehran's famed Musalla mosque as the revolutionary leader did before him.

He will be buried in his hometown of Kerman.

Gambrell reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Trump doubles down on striking cultural sites in Iran

By **ROBERT BURNS** and **JONATHAN LEMIRE** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump insisted Sunday that Iranian cultural sites were fair game for the U.S. military, dismissing concerns within his own administration that doing so could constitute a war crime under international law. He also warned Iraq that he would levy punishing sanctions if it expelled American troops in retaliation for a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad that killed a top Iranian official.

Trump's comments came amid escalating tensions in the Middle East following the killing of Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the head of Iran's elite Quds force. Iran has vowed to retaliate and Iraq's parliament responded by voting Sunday to oust U.S. troops based in the country.

Trump first raised the prospect of targeting Iranian cultural sites Saturday in a tweet. Speaking with reporters Sunday as he returned to Washington from his holiday stay in Florida, he doubled down, despite international prohibitions.

"They're allowed to kill our people. They're allowed to torture and maim our people. They're allowed to use roadside bombs and blow up our people. And we're not allowed to touch their cultural sites? It doesn't work that way," Trump said.

The targeted killing of Soleimani sparked outrage in the Middle East, including in Iraq, where more than 5,000 American troops are still on the ground 17 years after the U.S. invasion. Iraq's parliament voted Sunday in favor of a nonbinding resolution calling for the expulsion of the American forces.

Trump said the U.S. wouldn't leave without being paid for its military investments in Iraq over the years — then said if the troops do have to withdraw, he would hit Baghdad with economic penalties.

"We will charge them sanctions like they've never seen before ever. It'll make Iranian sanctions look somewhat tame," he said. "If there's any hostility, that they do anything we think is inappropriate, we are going to put sanctions on Iraq, very big sanctions on Iraq."

He added: "We're not leaving until they pay us back for it."

The administration has scrambled to contend with the backlash to the killing of Soleimani. Though he was responsible for the deaths of hundreds of Americans, the targeted American strike marked a stark escalation in tensions between Washington and Tehran.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the U.S. military may well strike more Iranian leaders if the Islamic Republic retaliates. He tip-toed around questions about Trump's threat to attack Iranian cultural sites, a military action that likely would be illegal under the laws of armed conflict and the U.N. charter.

Pompeo said only that any U.S. military strikes inside Iran would be legal.

"We'll behave inside the system," Pompeo said. "We always have and we always will."

Trump's warnings rattled some administration officials. One U.S. national security official said the president had caught many in the administration off guard and prompted internal calls for others in the government, including Pompeo, to clarify the matter. The official, who was not authorized to speak publicly to the issue, said clarification was necessary to affirm that the U.S. military would not intentionally commit war crimes.

Oona Hathaway, an international law professor at Yale and a former national security law official in the Defense Department's legal office, said Trump's threat amounted to "a pretty clear promise of commission of a war crime."

The president's threats to Iran did little to quell Tehran's furor over the death of Soleimani. Iranian state television reported that the country would no longer abide by any limits of the 2015 nuclear deal it signed with the United States and other world powers. Trump withdrew the U.S. from the deal in 2018 and stepped up economic sanctions on Tehran — actions that accelerated a cycle of hostilities leading to the last week's killing.

The administration also pushed back Sunday on questions about the legality of the strike on Soleimani. Pompeo said the administration would have been "culpably negligent" in its duty to protect the United States if it had not killed him. He did not provide evidence for his previous claims that Soleimani was plotting imminent attacks on Americans. Instead of arguing that an attack had been imminent, he said it was inevitable.

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"We watched him continue to actively build out for what was going to be a significant attack – that's what we believed – and we made the right decision," he said, adding later: "We continue to prepare for whatever it is the Iranian regime may put in front of us within the next 10 minutes, within the next 10 days, and within the next 10 weeks."

Congressional Democrats were skeptical.

"I really worry that the actions the president took will get us into what he calls another endless war in the Middle East. He promised we wouldn't have that," said Chuck Schumer of New York, the Senate's top Democrat.

Schumer said Trump lacks the authority to engage militarily with Iran and Congress needs a new war powers resolution "to be a check on this president." To which Pompeo said: "We have all the authority we need to do what we've done to date."

Sen. Mark Warner, D-Va., said the administration violated the Constitution by not consulting with Congress in advance.

"It's also important because one, you potentially get members of Congress to buy in ahead of time, and two, they may ask that hard question that's not asked in an insular group," Warner said.

Congressional staffs got their first briefings from the administration on Friday, and members were expected to be briefed this week.

But Trump made clear Sunday that he saw little reason to give Congress advanced warning if he orders the military to carry out further actions against Iran.

"These Media Posts will serve as notification to the United States Congress that should Iran strike any U.S. person or target, the United States will quickly & fully strike back, & perhaps in a disproportionate manner," he wrote on Twitter. "Such legal notice is not required, but is given nevertheless!"

Democrats in Congress have complained that Trump's order to kill Soleimani took place without first consulting with or informing top lawmakers, noting that Congress still holds sole power to declare war. Trump did meet the 48-hour deadline required by the War Powers Act to notify Congress of the deadly drone strike, though the document provided Saturday was entirely classified and no public version was released.

Moving swiftly to rebuke Trump for not consulting with Congress, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said late Sunday the House would introduce and vote this week on a war powers resolution to limit the president's military actions regarding Iran. In a letter to House Democrats, Pelosi called the airstrike "provocative and disproportionate" and that it had "endangered our servicemembers, diplomats and others by risking a serious escalation of tensions with Iran." A similar resolution was introduced in the Senate.

Some of the Democrats running to challenge Trump in November questioned whether he had a long-term plan for the Mideast.

Former Vice President Joe Biden said Trump was ill-prepared for the repercussions of the strike on Soleimani and had alienated allies by not alerting them of the plans. "I think we need a president who could provide steady leadership on Day One," he said. "The next president is going to inherit a divided nation and a world in disarray."

Pete Buttigieg, the former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, said: "When you're dealing with the Middle East, you need to think about the next and the next and the next move. This is not checkers. And I'm not sure any of us really believe that this president and the people around him" are "really going through all of the consequences of what could happen next."

Pompeo appeared on ABC's "This Week," CNN's "State of the Union," NBC's "Meet the Press," CBS' "Face the Nation," "Fox News Sunday" and Fox News Channel's "Sunday Morning Futures." Schumer was on ABC, Warner and Warren were on NBC, Petraeus was on CBS, Buttigieg was on CNN and Graham was on Fox News Channel.

Blowback: Iran abandons nuclear limits after US killing

By NASSER KARIMI, JON GAMBRELL and ZEINA KARAM Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — The blowback over the U.S. killing of a top Iranian general mounted Sunday as Iran announced it will no longer abide by the limits contained in the 2015 nuclear deal and Iraq's Parliament called for the expulsion of all American troops from Iraqi soil.

The twin developments could bring Iran closer to building an atomic bomb and enable the Islamic State group to stage a comeback in Iraq, making the Middle East a far more dangerous and unstable place.

Adding to the tensions, U.S. President Donald Trump threatened to demand billions of dollars in compensation from Iraq or impose "sanctions like they've never seen before" if it goes through with expelling U.S. troops.

Iranian state television cited a statement by President Hassan Rouhani's administration saying the country would not observe the nuclear deal's restrictions on fuel enrichment, on the size of its enriched uranium stockpile and on its research and development activities.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran no longer faces any limitations in operations," a state TV broadcaster said.

In Iraq, meanwhile, lawmakers voted in favor of a resolution calling for an end to the foreign military presence in the country, including the estimated 5,200 U.S. troops stationed to help fight Islamic State extremists. The bill is subject to approval by the Iraqi government but has the backing of the outgoing prime minister.

In yet another sign of rising tensions and threats of retaliation over the deadly airstrike, the U.S.-led military coalition in Iraq said it is putting the battle against IS on hold to focus on protecting its own troops and bases.

The string of developments capped a day of mass mourning over Iranian Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, killed in a U.S. drone strike in Baghdad on Friday. Hundreds of thousands of people flooded the streets in the cities of Ahvaz and Mashhad to walk alongside the casket of Soleimani, who was the architect of Iran's proxy wars across the Mideast and was blamed for the deaths of hundreds of Americans in roadside bombings and other attacks.

Trump responded to the Parliament's troop withdrawal vote with a monetary threat, saying the U.S. expected to be paid for its military investments in Iraq before leaving and threatening economic sanctions if the U.S. is not treated properly.

"We have a very extraordinarily expensive air base that's there. It cost billions of dollars to build. Long before my time. We're not leaving unless they pay us back for it," he told reporters aboard Air Force One.

"If they do ask us to leave, if we don't do it in a very friendly basis, we will charge them sanctions like they've never seen before ever. It'll make Iranian sanctions look somewhat tame," he said

He added: "We're not leaving until they pay us back for it."

State Department spokesperson Morgan Ortagus earlier said the U.S. is awaiting clarification on its legal meaning but was "disappointed" by the move and strongly urged Iraq to reconsider.

"We believe it is in the shared interests of the United States and Iraq to continue fighting ISIS together," Ortagus said.

The leaders of Germany, France and Britain issued a joint statement on Sunday calling on Iran to abide by the terms of the nuclear deal and refrain from conducting or supporting further "violent acts."

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Emmanuel Macron and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson specifically urged Iran to "withdraw all measures" not in line with the 2015 agreement that was intended to stop Tehran from pursuing its atomic weapons program.

Iran insisted that it remains open to negotiations with European partners over its nuclear program. And it did not back off from earlier promises that it wouldn't seek a nuclear weapon.

However, the announcement represents the clearest nuclear proliferation threat yet made by Iran since Trump unilaterally withdrew from the accord in 2018 and reimposed sanctions. It further raises regional tensions, as Iran's longtime foe Israel has promised never to allow Iran to produce an atomic bomb.

Iran did not elaborate on what levels it would immediately reach in its program. Tehran has already bro-

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ken some of the deal's limits as part of a step-by-step pressure campaign to get sanctions relief. It has increased its production, begun enriching uranium to 5% and restarted enrichment at an underground facility.

While it does not possess uranium enriched to weapons-grade levels of 90%, any push forward narrows the estimated one-year "breakout time" needed for it to have enough material to build a nuclear weapon if it chose to do so.

The International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations watchdog observing Iran's program, did not immediately respond to a request for comment. However, Iran said that its cooperation with the IAEA "will continue as before."

Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi earlier told journalists that Soleimani's killing would prompt Iranian officials to take a bigger step away from the nuclear deal.

"In the world of politics, all developments are interconnected," Mousavi said.

In Iraq, where the airstrike has been denounced as a violation of the country's sovereignty, Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi said that the government has two choices: End the presence of foreign troops or restrict their mission to training Iraqi forces. He called for the first option.

The majority of about 180 legislators present in Parliament voted in favor of the troop-removal resolution. It was backed by most Shiite members of Parliament, who hold a majority of seats. Many Sunni and Kurdish legislators did not show up for the session, apparently because they oppose abolishing the deal.

A U.S. pullout could not only undermine the fight against the Islamic State but could also enable Iran to increase its influence in Iraq, which like Iran is a majority-Shiite country.

Soleimani's killing has escalated the crisis between Tehran and Washington after months of back-and-forth attacks and threats that have put the wider Middle East on edge. Iran has promised "harsh revenge" for the U.S. attack, while Trump has vowed on Twitter that the U.S. will strike back at 52 targets "VERY FAST AND VERY HARD."

He doubled down on that threat Sunday, dismissing warnings that targeting cultural sites could be a war crime under international law.

"They're allowed to kill our people. They're allowed to torture and maim our people. They're allowed to use roadside bombs and blow up our people. And we're not allowed to touch their cultural sites? It doesn't work that way," Trump told reporters.

The U.S. Embassy in Saudi Arabia warned Americans "of the heightened risk of missile and drone attacks." In Lebanon, the leader of the Iranian-backed militant group Hezbollah said Soleimani's killing made U.S. military bases, warships and service members across the region fair game for attacks. A former Iranian Revolutionary Guard leader suggested the Israeli city of Haifa and centers like Tel Aviv could be targeted should the U.S. attack Iran.

Iranian state TV estimated that millions of mourners came out in Ahvaz and Mashhad to pay their respects to Soleimani.

The casket moved slowly through streets choked with mourners wearing black, beating their chests and carrying posters with Soleimani's portrait. Demonstrators also carried red Shiite flags, which traditionally symbolize both the spilled blood of someone unjustly killed and a call for vengeance.

The processions marked the first time Iran honored a single man with a multi-city ceremony. Not even Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who founded the Islamic Republic, received such a processional with his death in 1989. Soleimani on Monday will lie in state at Tehran's famed Musalla mosque as the revolutionary leader did before him.

Soleimani's remains will go to Tehran and Qom on Monday for public mourning processions. He will be buried in his hometown of Kerman.

Gambrell reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates and Karam reported from Beirut. Associated Press writers Aya Batrawy in Dubai, Qassim Abdul-Zahra in Baghdad, Sarah El Deeb in Beirut, Kelvin Chan in London and Robert Burns and Jonathan Lemire in Washington contributed to this report.

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Guaidó blocked from congress as Venezuelan conflict deepens

By **FABIOLA SANCHEZ** and **JOSHUA GOODMAN** Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaidó was violently blocked Sunday from presiding over a special session of congress where rivals proclaimed a substitute leader — moves opposition officials condemned as a hijacking of the country's last democratic institution.

Hours later, however, a majority of congress members held an emergency meeting at an opposition newspaper office and voted to reelect Guaidó as their leader.

Guaidó — whose legal challenge to the socialist government has been based on his role as head of congress — headed a small group of lawmakers trying to access the neoclassical palace where the opposition-controlled National Assembly was set to elect its leader.

But they were pushed back by national guardsmen wielding heavy riot shields. As scuffles broke out, the U.S.-backed leader tried to mount an iron fence surrounding the legislature, only to be repelled again. His blue suit was ripped apart during the chaotic standoff.

Inside, the situation was similarly rowdy, as a rival slate headed by lawmaker Luis Parra were sworn in as legislative leaders. Opposition leaders immediately denounced the session as a "show" carried out by a group of "traitors" paid off by President Nicolás Maduro.

They complained Parra's election was invalid on numerous grounds — arguing the session was never officially opened, no quorum count was taken and no formal vote was called — merely a rushed show of hands as socialist deputies stormed the dais.

When they gathered later for an impromptu session at the El Nacional newspaper, the last major daily critical of the socialist government, 100 of the legislature's 167 members voted to reelect Guaidó for the final year of the Assembly's 2015-2020 term. Several of the lawmakers who have been forced into exile were represented by alternates at the impromptu session.

"The dictatorship has once again committed another mistake," said Guaidó shortly after being sworn in.

Still, senior Maduro officials celebrated the gambit as a comeuppance for the 36-year-old lawmaker, who has been struggling to maintain unity in the unwieldy opposition coalition.

"This is what I've been dreaming would happen," Maduro said at an event inaugurating a baseball stadium near Caracas. "The entire country repudiates Juan Guaidó as a puppet of American imperialism."

Parra, meanwhile, called a session for Tuesday, setting up a fight over the rival claims to the legislature's leadership in the days ahead.

A year ago, Guaidó asserted at a street demonstration that his position as legislative leader made him Venezuela's interim president in place of the "usurper" Maduro, whose 2018 reelection has been rejected as invalid by the legislature, as well as by the U.S., European Union and several Latin American governments. Key opposition figures were barred from running in that election.

There was no indication of weakening support among the more than 50 governments that recognize Guaidó as Venezuela's rightful leader. The European Union said it would continue to recognize Guaidó, Brazil's government called the initial session an "affront to democracy."

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo also repeated U.S. recognition of Guaidó and congratulated him on the legislative reelection.

"For months corrupt regime officials have engaged in an unlawful, violent, and despicable campaign of arrests, intimidation, and bribery to destroy the last democratic institution in Venezuela, the National Assembly," he said in a statement.

Pompeo described the earlier session at which Parra was sworn in as "a farcical 'vote'" at which no quorum was present.

Meanwhile Argentina's newly installed leftist government, which has been at pains to distance itself from the conservative-led backlash against Maduro in Latin America, also criticized the move.

"To impede by force the functioning of the legislative assembly is to condemn oneself to international isolation," Argentina's Foreign Minister Felipe Solá said on Twitter. "The course to follow is exactly the opposite. The assembly should choose its president with complete legitimacy."

Guaidó faced a major test in uniting and articulating a new vision in his campaign to remove Maduro. But his

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reelection for a second straight year as head of congress had been widely expected.

The weeks leading up to Sunday's vote were marked by tension, with the opposition denouncing a covert government campaign to intimidate and bribe lawmakers into voting against Guaidó.

Parra is one of a small handful of lawmakers who recently broke with Guaidó and have since been expelled from their parties for alleged involvement in a corruption scandal involving allies of Maduro.

Socialist lawmakers argued that Guaidó's absence forced them to initiate their session without him. But opposition lawmakers had faced challenges from security forces who set up several barricades downtown.

At one checkpoint, security forces demanded that each lawmaker present credentials, arguing they were under orders to deny entry to several lawmakers banned from carrying out their duties by the loyalist supreme court.

"Is your family in Venezuela?" Guaidó asked the young police officers, who stood firmly in nervous silence.

"Today you're complicit with the dictatorship, you're complicit with those who are responsible for the hunger inside Venezuela," he added.

Support for Guaidó inside the opposition has taken a hit since several minority parties in November splintered off to create a separate bloc to negotiate directly with Maduro — something that Guaidó has refused, arguing that talks are simply a time-buying exercise aimed at keeping Maduro in power.

The small group of opposition lawmakers who broke with Guaidó argue that in stubbornly sticking to a naive plan of removing Maduro by force, he has put his political ambitions above the needs of Venezuelans who have largely tuned out from the political fight while enduring an economy in shambles and under stiff U.S. sanctions.

"In 2019 you represented the hopes of the nation, but today you're its biggest deception," said José Brito, one of the lawmakers who turned against Guaidó.

Venezuela sits atop vast oil and mineral resources, but it has been imploding economically and socially in recent years. Critics blame the plunge on years of failed socialist rule and corruption, while Maduro's allies say U.S. sanctions are taking a toll on the economy. The South American nation's 30 million people suffer soaring inflation and shortages of gasoline, running water and electricity, among basic services.

An estimated 4.5 million Venezuelans have abandoned their nation in an exodus rivaling war-torn Syria.

Maduro, who took over after the 2013 death of former President Hugo Chávez, says Guaidó is a puppet of the United States. Maduro also says he's determined to win control of the National Assembly in elections later this year.

Maduro maintains military backing and control over most branches of the government, despite the deepening crisis.

"Guaidó will have to not only re-energize his base and convince them to stay engaged, but keep his coalition in line as well," said Geoff Ramsey, a researcher at the Washington Office on Latin America. "And the clock is ticking."

Goodman reported from Miami.

5 dead, 60 hospitalized in Pennsylvania Turnpike crash

By MARK SCOLFARO and CLAIRE GALOFARO The Associated Press

Five people were killed and about 60 were injured on the Pennsylvania Turnpike early Sunday morning, when a loaded bus went out of control on a hill and rolled over, setting off a chain reaction that involved three tractor-trailers and a passenger car.

The injured victims, ranging from 7 to 67 years old, are all expected to survive, though two patients remain in critical condition, authorities and hospital officials said Sunday afternoon. The crash, which happened at 3:40 a.m. on a mountainous and rural stretch of the interstate about 30 miles (50 kilometers) east of Pittsburgh, shut down the highway in both directions for several hours before it reopened Sunday evening.

Two UPS drivers, Daniel Kepner, 53, and Dennis Kehler, 48, were killed in the crash, company spokeswoman Kristen Petrella said. Both were driving together in a tractor-trailer out of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania,

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Petrella said.

State police have not identified the other three victims who were killed.

The bus was traveling from Rockaway, New Jersey, to Cincinnati, Ohio, Pennsylvania State Police spokesman Stephen Limani told reporters.

He said the bus, operated by a New Jersey-based company called Z & D Tours, was traveling downhill on a curve, careened up an embankment and rolled over. Two tractor-trailers then struck the bus. A third tractor-trailer then crashed into those trucks. A passenger car was also involved in the pileup.

Photos from the scene show a mangled collision of multiple vehicles including a smashed FedEx truck that left packages sprawled along the highway.

"It was kind of a chain-reaction crash," Limani said.

FedEx did not provide any other details besides that they are cooperating with authorities. A message seeking comment was left Sunday with the bus company.

"I haven't personally witnessed a crash of this magnitude in 20 years," Pennsylvania Turnpike spokesman Carl DeFebo told WTAE, calling it the worst accident in his decades-long tenure with the turnpike. "It's horrible."

Excelsior Health Frick Hospital in Mount Pleasant said it treated 31 victims, transferring a child and three adults to other facilities.

Hospitals brought in teams of social workers and psychologists to deal with the mental trauma, said Mark Rubino, president of Forbes Hospital, which treated 11 victims.

"The people coming in were not only physically injured but they were traumatized from a mental standpoint as well," he said. Most were covered in diesel fuel when they arrived. The hospital treated fractured bones, brain bleeds, contusions, abrasions and spinal injuries.

The victims included students and people returning from visiting family in New York City. Many traveling on the bus were from outside the United States, Limani said, some of whom do not speak English and who lost their luggage and passports in the wreckage.

The Tribune-Review reported Leticia Moreta arrived at a hospital about 11:30 a.m. to pick up her children — Jorge Moreta, 24, and Melanie Moreta, 16 — who were on the bus.

She said her children, returning from visiting their father in New York, were in stable condition.

"I was devastated," she said.

Exactly what caused the crash remains unknown, and Limani said it could take weeks or months to determine. The National Transportation Safety Board dispatched a team to investigate.

Officials said it was too early to determine if weather was a factor in the crash.

Angela Maynard, a tractor-trailer driver from Kentucky, said the roads were wet from snow but not especially icy. Maynard was traveling eastbound on the turnpike when she came upon the crash site and called 911.

"It was horrible," she told The Tribune-Review. She saw lots of smoke but no fire. She and her co-driver found one person trapped in their truck and another lying on the ground.

"I tried to keep him occupied, keep talking, until medical help arrived," Maynard said. "He was in bad shape. He was floating in and out of consciousness."

The crash left families terrified and scrambling.

"I was crying," said Omeil Ellis, whose two brothers were on the bus. "I was like crazy crying. I'm still hurt."

Ellis, from Irvington, New Jersey, told The Tribune-Review that his brothers were traveling to Ohio for work. He was planning to meet them a few days later. But both of his brothers, one of them 39 years old and one 17, were sent to hospitals.

"I'm just weak right now," he said.

Associated Press reporter Sophia Rosenbaum contributed to this report from New York.

Wilson leads Seahawks past Eagles 17-9

By **ROB MAADDI AP Pro Football Writer**

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Jadeveon Clowney knocked out Carson Wentz. Then, Russell Wilson and the Seattle Seahawks knocked off the Philadelphia Eagles.

Wilson threw a 53-yard touchdown pass to DK Metcalf, Marshawn Lynch had a rushing score and the Seahawks beat the Eagles 17-9 in the wild-card round of the NFC playoffs on Sunday night.

"To come back here, back East, it's a long ways, we were able to do it, pull through," Wilson said. "We've been road warriors and it's exciting. We've got a great defense, too."

Making his first career playoff start, Wentz lasted two series before exiting with a head injury following a helmet-to-helmet hit from Clowney.

Nick Foles wasn't around to rescue Philadelphia this time.

"I didn't intend to hurt him. I hope he's OK," Clowney said.

Referee Shawn Smith told a pool reporter: "He was a runner and he did not give himself up. We saw incidental helmet contact, and in our judgment, we didn't rule it a foul."

Forty-year-old Josh McCown stepped in, becoming the oldest quarterback to make his playoff debut. But he couldn't lead the Eagles (9-8) into the end zone.

"I didn't get the job done," said McCown, who was quite emotional on the field afterward.

The Seahawks (12-5) lost three of their final four games, including a 26-21 defeat at home against San Francisco in Week 17 that cost them the NFC West title.

But they traveled to Philadelphia for the second time in six weeks and became the third team to win on the road this weekend, improving to 8-1 away from home this season.

Wilson threw for 325 yards and led the team with 45 yards rushing. Metcalf had seven catches for 160 yards.

The Seahawks had a season-high seven sacks from six players.

"We made up our mind to not let them score," All-Pro linebacker Bobby Wagner said. "It was a mental thing more than execution."

Wilson drove Seattle 82 yards late in the second quarter and Lynch powered in from the 5 for a 10-0 lead.

Wilson connected with Metcalf for 26 yards and David Moore for 38 on third-down, catch-and-run passes to keep that drive going.

McCown finally got the offense going on the opening drive of the third quarter. He connected with Zach Ertz for 32 yards and Boston Scott ran 15 yards to the 5. But a false start, fumbled snap and sack followed. Jake Elliott's 26-yard field goal cut the deficit to 10-6.

The Seahawks answered quickly. Metcalf stretched to catch Wilson's deep pass, got up and tumbled into the end zone for a 17-6 lead.

"I caught the ball, I didn't feel anybody touch me," Metcalf said. "I got back up and I wanted a touchdown. I wanted a touchdown, real bad."

Down 17-9, Eagles coach Doug Pederson passed up a 42-yard field goal attempt with 6:24 left and went for fourth-and-4 from the Seahawks 24. Miles Sanders couldn't catch McCown's pass.

Philadelphia had another chance after Shelton Gibson, just signed earlier in the week, drew a 39-yard pass interference penalty to the Seahawks 13.

On fourth-and-7 from the 10 with two minutes left, Clowney sacked McCown.

Wentz was forced to watch from the sideline following knee surgery when Foles led the Eagles to the franchise's first Super Bowl title two years ago. He was out with a back injury last year when Foles led Philadelphia to a wild-card win in Chicago.

The Eagles were decimated by injuries throughout the season and had to rely on five offensive players off the practice squad during a four-game winning streak that sealed the NFC East title.

Wentz started all 16 games for the second time in his four seasons and played his best down the stretch with backups surrounding him. But he finished the season injured the same as the previous two.

"I'm disappointed for him," Pederson said. "I wanted this for him. I think a lot of his teammates did, too."

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The team and the organization did. He's battled through a lot."

Seattle had plenty of injuries, too. The Seahawks lost running backs Chris Carson, Rashaad Penny and C.J. Prosise, forcing them to sign Lynch.

But Seattle has Wilson — and he has the Seahawks heading to Green Bay to face Aaron Rodgers and the Packers in the divisional round.

"We're anticipating some snow," Wilson said with a smile. "They obviously have Aaron, they have a lot of great players, they have a great defensive line."

RECORD BREAKER

Metcalf set a franchise record for yards receiving in a playoff game.

"It's exciting to see a young dude come in and dominate the league like that," Seattle's Quinton Jefferson said. "A lot of people said he can't run routes. He silenced a lot of people. Glad to have him on my team."

DEJA VU

The Seahawks also beat the Eagles 17-9 on Nov. 24.

INJURIES

Seahawks: Defensive tackle Ziggy Ansah left with a neck injury.

Eagles: Wentz stayed in the game after the shot from Clowney, threw two passes and left for the locker room late in the first quarter. ... Defensive end Brandon Graham left with a knee injury.

NEXT UP

Seahawks: will go to Green Bay to face the Packers (13-3) next Sunday.

Eagles: start the offseason.

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

Dallas Cowboys finally move on from Jason Garrett as coach

By SCHUYLER DIXON AP Pro Football Writer

FRISCO, Texas (AP) — The Dallas Cowboys made official Sunday night what they had already signaled: Jason Garrett is out as coach.

Garrett was informed he wouldn't be back for a 10th full season on the same day the Cowboys finished an interview with former Green Bay coach Mike McCarthy, who won a Super Bowl with the Packers on Dallas' home field nine years ago.

Owner/general manager Jerry Jones decided not to renew Garrett's expiring contract because Super Bowl-winning quarterback Troy Aikman's former backup couldn't get the Cowboys back to football's biggest stage, an absence that's approaching a quarter-century.

At 9½ seasons, the 53-year-old Garrett had the club's second-longest tenure behind Pro Football Hall of Famer Tom Landry, who coached the Cowboys for the franchise's first 29 years before Jones fired him when he bought the team in 1989.

Dallas finished 8-8 for the fourth time under Garrett. The Cowboys fueled high preseason expectations with a 3-0 start before dropping eight of 12 and losing control of their playoff fate. Dallas missed the playoffs six times in Garrett's nine full seasons.

The inevitable conclusion was a difficult one for Jones, who hired Garrett as offensive coordinator in 2007 even before choosing Wade Phillips as coach. Garrett got the interim job when Phillips was fired halfway through the 2010 season.

Garrett's record is 87-70, playoffs included.

"We are extremely grateful to Jason Garrett for his more than 20 years of service to the Dallas Cowboys as a player, assistant coach and head coach," Jones said in a statement released by the team that ended a week of speculation on the future of Garrett, who continued showing up at team headquarters after the season ended.

"His level of commitment, character and dedication to this organization has been outstanding at every stage of his career."

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With Garrett's status unresolved publicly, the Cowboys interviewed McCarthy and former Cincinnati coach Marvin Lewis over the weekend.

McCarthy reached the playoffs nine times in 13 seasons with the Packers, reaching the NFC championship game four times. Green Bay won at least 10 games eight times in his first 11 seasons before going 7-9 in 2017. McCarthy was fired with the Packers at 4-7-1 last season.

The biggest knock on Lewis was his 0-7 playoff record with the Bengals. He had a 131-122-3 record in the regular season and was fired after a third straight losing season in 2018.

Dallas hasn't been past the divisional round of the playoffs in 24 straight seasons since the club's fifth Super Bowl title to finish the 1995 season. Garrett got them within a victory of the NFC championship game three times in five years, losing to Green Bay twice and then the Los Angeles Rams last season.

When training camp opened, Jones didn't want to talk about what it would take for Garrett to get another contract. It had been five years since Garrett was coaching for his job and the Cowboys went 12-4 and won a wild-card game before a loss at the Packers that included the infamous catch that wasn't by Dez Bryant.

Jones had high hopes with quarterback Dak Prescott going into his fourth season along with star running back Ezekiel Elliott, who got a \$90 million extension the morning of the first practice of the regular season after holding out the entire preseason.

With Dallas at 3-0, video emerged of Jones mingling with fans in the French Quarter the night before a game in New Orleans. Dallas lost 12-10 to start the first of two three-game losing streaks.

The Cowboys have never made the playoffs when losing at least three straight games twice in a season, although they had a chance to qualify with a win at Philadelphia in Week 16. Dallas lost 17-9, then was eliminated in Week 17 despite a blowout victory over Washington when the Eagles won the NFC East by beating the New York Giants.

Garrett spent seven seasons as a player with the Cowboys, starting nine games in place of Aikman. His most memorable start was a 42-31 victory over Green Bay on Thanksgiving in 1994 when he threw for 311 yards and two touchdowns. Dallas lost to San Francisco in the NFC championship game that season.

After playing sparingly for the Giants from 2000-03 and not at all with Tampa Bay and Miami in 2004, Garrett retired and joined Nick Saban's staff as quarterbacks coach. He went to the Cowboys after Saban decided to return to college coaching at Alabama.

"Jason Garrett's legacy with the Dallas Cowboys will always be that of someone who strived for greatness every day that he walked through the door," Jones said. "He is, and always will remain, a cherished member of the Dallas Cowboys family."

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

CES gadget show: How watching TV will change in the 2020s

By MAE ANDERSON AP Technology Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — What will watching TV be like in the 2020s? Amid new gadgets and glitz, the CES tech show in Las Vegas aims to offer some answers, many of which boil down to more streaming and more efforts to glue you to your phone.

The show's keynote addresses, once dominated by computer and chip makers, will this year feature executives from TV networks NBC and CBS and upstart video services like mobile-focused Quibi and free streamer Tubi. Topic one will be the streaming wars — not to mention mounting costs for consumers who want access to everything — as giants NBC Universal and WarnerMedia prepare to join the clash with Netflix later this year.

Some companies also promise a big new push into "bite-sized" video designed to draw mobile viewers from YouTube, despite the fact that a similar effort several years ago foundered.

CES, formerly known as the Consumer Electronics Show, starts Sunday in Las Vegas with two days of media previews. The show floor opens Tuesday through Friday. More than 170,000 people are expected,

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with 4,500 companies exhibiting, according to its organizers. The show takes place across a sprawling set of hotels and convention centers equivalent to more than 50 football fields.

Beyond streaming, expect to see artificial intelligence-infused home appliances, security cameras and cars, new gadgets that show what faster 5G cellular service can offer and, as always, the newest in robots and souped-up TVs. Speakers this week include Ivanka Trump, the president's daughter and senior adviser, and Hyunsuk Kim, Samsung's head of consumer electronics.

As technology increasingly infuses our lives, more traditional companies are showing up for the Las Vegas event. There's a new travel section, for example, with Delta Air Lines its largest exhibitor.

CES has hosted previous attempts to set out a road map for TV. At the 2015 show, satellite TV company Dish announced a cheaper, cable-like package of TV channels delivered over the internet and intended for cord-cutters. Offerings from Sony, DirecTV, Google, Hulu and others soon joined Dish's Sling TV.

But five years later, these online alternatives have been struggling, raising prices and in the case of Sony's PlayStation Vue, shutting down altogether.

So it's on to Plan B: Owners of television channels and producers of their shows are selling Netflix-like subscription services directly to consumers. Disney Plus launched in November, while WarnerMedia's HBO Max and NBCUniversal's Peacock are coming in a few months. If people would rather pay for subscriptions such as Netflix instead of traditional television channels through cable packages, Disney and other media companies figure they might as well try to get some of that money directly.

But they face competition from tech companies also seeking to replicate and encroach on Netflix's success. Apple launched its own streaming service in November, while Quibi promises phone-friendly viewing, with former Disney studios chief Jeffrey Katzenberg behind the effort.

"Bets have been made and billions of dollars have been spent on content," said Peter Csathy, founder and chairman of digital media consulting firm CreaTV Media. "Those numbers will only go up as all these Goliaths and then the new guys coming on board are all looking for ways to break out."

Katzenberg and Quibi CEO Meg Whitman, the former CEO of Hewlett Packard Enterprise, will use a Wednesday keynote to provide details on Quibi, which is investing \$1 billion on new shows with backing from all the major movie studios.

Short for "quick bites," the mobile-first service is designed to be watched for a just a few minutes at a time. Video programs are broken into 10 minute "chapters" — about the same length as broadcast TV segments between commercial breaks — intended for on-the-go viewers with limited attention spans.

"We want to take a phone, a device that was not actually designed to watch video on, and make it into a great watching device," Whitman said in an interview.

But previous short-video efforts have flopped. In 2018, Verizon pulled the plug on its Go90 service in 2018, roughly three years after it launched; it featured short-form original programs along with live sports and older TV shows. Several concurrent efforts have also shut down. Meanwhile, Netflix, Amazon and Hulu have all been experimenting with short-form offerings, many of them in comedy.

Quibi will also preview some of its 20 new shows, including "Chrissy's Court," a Judge Judy-style show from Chrissy Teigen. It is also debuting with movies and other content like news and weather. Quibi launches April 6 for \$5 a month with ads and \$8 without.

NBC executives won't offer more details on its upcoming Peacock service until Jan. 16. Instead, they will trot out "America's Got Talent" host Terry Crews, "This is Us" star Mandy Moore and other NBC luminaries at CES to talk more generally about the future of TV and entertainment.

"Audiences don't differentiate by screen anymore," said Linda Yaccarino, chairman of advertising and partnerships at NBCUniversal. "They want and expect an on-demand, always-on world."

As television companies experiment with making more shows available in more ways, they'll also accumulate data on viewing habits far beyond what they got with over-the-air and cable channels. That will help them target advertising to viewers' interests and make recommendations for other shows to keep viewers glued.

Companies will also test different pricing models in 2020, as they try to figure out how and how much

consumers will be willing to pay. Is there a limit to how many services consumers will pay for? Will they adapt to separate prices with and without ads? Or will they flock to free services like Tubi, even if they lack original movies and TV shows?

Kevin Westcott, who heads Deloitte's U.S. telecommunication, media and entertainment consulting business, notes that consumers are getting more choices and shows than ever, just as new technologies such as high-quality TV displays and faster 5G cellular networks come along.

The downside? "Too much choice and too much technological change" at once, he said, which could make viewers wary of new options, he said.

Cousins, Vikings upend Saints 26-20 in OT in NFC playoffs

By **BRETT MARTEL AP Sports Writer**

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — After tight end Kyle Rudolph emerged from a purple swarm of celebrating Vikings near the corner of the end zone, he took an opportunity to mock those who doubted quarterback Kirk Cousins' ability to come through in the clutch.

"I'm just glad Kirk can't win big games, apparently," Rudolph said. "We proved that one wrong today."

Cousins hit Rudolph with a 4-yard fade on third-and-goal in overtime, and the Minnesota Vikings pulled out a 26-20 victory over the favored Saints in the wild-card round of the NFC playoffs on Sunday.

Cousins lost his only previous playoff start in 2015 with Washington, came up short of a playoff berth on the final regular-season game a year ago and struggled in a handful of other high-profile regular-season night games.

Yet Cousins eschewed an opportunity to gloat after his pass to Rudolph — and a 43-yarder to Adam Thielen at the Saints 2-yard line three plays earlier — helped the Vikings (11-6) advance to play top seed San Francisco in the divisional round of the playoffs on Saturday. It was Minnesota's first road playoff win since Jan. 9, 2005, when the Vikings beat the rival Packers at Lambeau Field in the wild-card round.

"I'm just happy we won," Cousins said. "It was a great, great game, two good football teams."

Saints fans begged to differ after seeing New Orleans' season end in overtime in the Superdome for a second straight year.

The latest disappointing end for the Saints (13-4) came nearly a year after New Orleans lost in the NFC championship game to the Los Angeles Rams in a game marred by missed Rams penalties late in regulation. This time, replays on video boards showed a possible push-off by Rudolph against defensive back P.J. Williams moments before he jumped to snag the winning catch.

NFL president of officiating Al Riveron said the league reviewed numerous replay angles, and while they saw contact by both players, "none of that contact rises to the level of a foul."

Saints coach Sean Payton said the Vikings "deserved to win."

Dalvin Cook gained 130 yards from scrimmage and scored two touchdowns after missing the last two regular-season games with a shoulder injury. Cousins finished with 242 yards and one TD passing.

"Being a fourth-round pick and kind of working your way up in the league — now you win a playoff game. Guess what? You look around and you realize there's more mountains to climb," Cousins said. "You just keep chasing the next mountain and there will always be people who are going to criticize you — and that's OK."

New Orleans trailed by 10 at the start of the fourth quarter but forced overtime with Drew Brees' 20-yard touchdown pass to Taysom Hill and Wil Lutz's 49-yard field goal with 2 seconds left.

"They made more plays than we did," Payton said. "They ran the ball better than we did."

Hill was the Saints' leading rusher with 50 yards and Alvin Kamara was held to 21 yards rushing on seven carries.

"Both defenses played well," Payton added. "Shoot, here you are in overtime and they made a few plays right there at the end that obviously were significant."

PURPLE PRESSURE

Minnesota's defense forced Brees into two turnovers — one game after the Saints had finished the

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regular season with an NFL record-low eight. Brees also was sacked three times and finished 26 of 33 for 208 yards, one TD and an interception.

Brees' first turnover came on a deep throw downfield for Ted Ginn Jr. late in the first half. Safety Anthony Harris corralled the ball as he fell to the turf and then returned it 30 yards across midfield. That led to Cook's first touchdown on a 5-yard run that gave the Vikings a 13-10 lead.

The Saints were threatening with less than five minutes remaining in the fourth quarter when Danielle Hunter sacked Brees, who lost the ball. It was recovered by defensive tackle Jalyn Holmes on the Minnesota 36.

Brees said the fumble began with a "miscommunication" with a receiver, whom he didn't name.

"The ball should have been out of my hands and all of a sudden that wasn't the route that was run, so now I'm just trying to throw the ball into the dirt to avoid a sack," Brees said. "Right as my hand's going back (Hunter) just kind of gets a piece of my arm and that ball comes out. So I'm really disappointed in that. That never should have happened."

Saints safety Vonn Bell, back from a knee injury that sidelined him three games, helped set up the opening scoring chance of the game when he recovered Thielen's fumble. But Everson Griffen's sack of Brees on third-and-goal limited Minnesota's damage to a field goal.

HILL'S HIGHLIGHTS

Hill, the Saints' do-it-all reserve QB, was instrumental in the first touchdown drive of the game. He rushed for a first down before completing a 50-yard pass to rookie Deonte Harris and then, while lined up as a tight end, delivered a block that helped Kamara score on a 4-yard run around the right end to make it 10-3.

MISSED CHANCES

Harris' 54-yard kickoff return and Brees' 20-yard pass to Michael Thomas in the final seconds of the first half gave New Orleans a chance to tie it, but Lutz's 43-yard field-goal attempt went wide right.

In the third quarter, Hill's apparent first-down run on a fake punt was nullified by tight end Josh Hill's false start.

Brees also lamented a false start penalty that triggered a 10-second runoff shortly before Lutz's game-tying kick at the end of regulation. If not for the penalty, the Saints would have had a second-and-10 from the Minnesota 26 with 21 seconds left. Instead, the ball went back 5 yards and there were 11 seconds remaining.

"That was costly," Brees said, noting that without the penalty, the Saints might have taken a couple of more shots at the end zone for a late go-ahead score.

INJURIES

Vikings: Tight end Tyler Conklin was carted from the sideline to the locker room in the first half. ... Right tackle Brian O'Neill walked off with an apparent leg injury in the third quarter but returned.

Saints: Linebacker Kiko Alonso limped off the field with what the Saints said was a knee injury in the second quarter and did not return. ... Left guard Andrus Peat limped to the sideline with an apparent right leg injury in the fourth quarter but returned.

NEXT UP

Vikings: Prepare for next weekend's trip to San Francisco to face a 49ers team that, like the Saints, went 13-3 in the regular season.

Saints: Head into the offseason with contract work ahead on key personnel, including Brees, who turns 41 on Jan. 15, and Kamara, who could opt to hold out for an extension as he enters the final season of his rookie deal.

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

Iraq vote, Hezbollah threat leveled at US troops in Mideast

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA and BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — The U.S. military presence in the Middle East was thrown into jeopardy Sunday, as Iraq's parliament voted to expel U.S. troops from their country while the leader of Lebanon's Hezbollah group said the U.S. military across the region "will pay the price" for killing a top Iranian general.

Hassan Nasrallah said that U.S. bases, warships and soldiers in the Middle East were all fair targets after the U.S. drone strike that killed Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the architect of many of Iran's regional military campaigns in recent years.

The two developments were new signs of the backlash from Friday's killing of Soleimani and a number of top Iraqi officials at the Baghdad airport, and further heightened tensions in a region already on high alert and bracing for an Iranian retaliation.

Later Sunday, at least three explosions shook the Iraqi capital and sirens sounded across the Tigris River. The blasts appeared to be mortars or rockets that landed inside the heavily fortified Green Zone where the U.S. and other embassies are based, as well as the seat of Iraq's government. There was no immediate word on casualties. It was the second such attack in two days.

"The suicide attackers who forced the Americans to leave from our region in the past are still here and their numbers have increased," said Nasrallah. It was not clear which suicide bombings Nasrallah was referring to. But a 1983 attack on a U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, killed 241 U.S. servicemen and led President Ronald Reagan to withdraw all American forces from the country.

"When American troops return in coffins, when they come vertically and return horizontally to the United States of America, then Trump and his administration will know that they lost the region and will lose the elections," Nasrallah said. He added that U.S. civilians in the region should not be targeted, because attacking them would play into President Donald Trump's hands.

Nasrallah spoke from an undisclosed location, and his speech was played on large screens for thousands of Shiite followers in southern Beirut, interrupted by chants of "Death to America!" The comments were Nasrallah's first since Soleimani's killing.

The stark warning by Nasrallah came as Iraq's parliament voted in favor of a nonbinding resolution calling for the expulsion of U.S. troops from their country in a move that could pave the way for a resurgence of the Islamic State group.

The resolution asks the Iraqi government to end the agreement under which Washington sent forces more than four years ago to help fight the IS extremists. The bill is subject to approval by the Iraqi government but has the backing of the outgoing prime minister.

Amid threats of vengeance from Iran, the U.S.-led military coalition in Iraq said Sunday it is putting the battle against IS militants on hold to focus on protecting its own troops and bases.

In a strong speech before lawmakers in Iraq's parliament, Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi said that after the killing of Soleimani, the government has two choices: End the presence of foreign troops in Iraq or restrict their mission to training Iraqi forces. He called for "urgent measures" to remove foreign forces — including the estimated 5,200 U.S. troops.

Asked shortly before the parliamentary vote whether the U.S. would comply with an Iraqi government request for American troops to leave, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo would not answer directly, saying the U.S. was watching the situation.

But he added: "It is the United States that is prepared to help the Iraqi people get what it is they deserve and continue our mission there to take down terrorism from ISIS and others in the region," using an alternative acronym for the Islamic State.

Abdul-Mahdi resigned last year in response to the anti-government protests that have engulfed Baghdad and the mostly Shiite southern provinces. Political factions have been unable to agree on a new prime minister, and Abdul-Mahdi continues in a caretaker capacity. Experts said such a government is not legally authorized to sign such a law.

American forces withdrew from Iraq in 2011 but returned in 2014 at the invitation of the government

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to help battle IS after it seized vast areas in the north and west of the country, including Iraq's second-largest city, Mosul. A U.S.-led coalition provided crucial air support as Iraqi forces, including Iran-backed militias, regrouped and drove IS out in a costly three-year campaign.

A pullout of U.S. troops could cripple the fight against the Islamic State and allow it to make a comeback. Militants affiliated with IS routinely carry out attacks in northern and western Iraq, hiding out in rugged desert and mountainous areas. Iraqi forces rely on the U.S. for logistics and weapons.

An American withdrawal could also enable Iran to deepen its influence in Iraq, a majority Shiite country like Iran.

U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham, a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said on Fox News that the parliamentary vote is "a bit concerning."

"The Iranian government is trying to basically take over Iraq's political system. Iran is bribing Iraqi politicians. To the Iraqi people, do not allow your politicians to turn Iraq into a proxy of Iran," the South Carolina Republican said.

The majority of about 180 legislators present in Parliament voted in favor of the troop-removal resolution. It was backed by most Shiite members of Parliament, who hold a majority of seats. Many Sunni and Kurdish legislators did not show up for the session, apparently because they oppose abolishing the deal.

Killing Iran's most powerful general — a step Abdul-Mahdi called a "political assassination" — marked a turning point in U.S. Mideast policy by elevating a conflict that had previously been more of a shadow war, and by putting in doubt the Pentagon's ability to keep troops in Iraq.

Mroue reported from Beirut.

Extremists attack Kenya military base, 3 Americans killed

By **ABDI GULED, TOM ODULA and CARA ANNA Associated Press**

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Al-Shabab extremists overran a key military base used by U.S. counterterror forces in Kenya before dawn Sunday, killing three American Department of Defense personnel and destroying several U.S. aircraft and vehicles before they were repelled, U.S. and Kenyan authorities said.

The attack on the Manda Bay Airfield was the al-Qaida-linked group's first attack against U.S. forces in the East African country, and the military called the security situation "fluid" several hours after the assault.

Five attackers were killed, Kenyan military spokesman Paul Njuguna said.

Al-Shabab, based in neighboring Somalia, claimed responsibility for the assault.

One U.S. serviceman and two contractors with the U.S. Department of Defense were killed in the fighting, according to a statement issued late Sunday by the U.S. Africa Command, or Africom.

The attack on the compound "involved indirect and small arms fire. After an initial penetration of the perimeter, Kenya Defense Forces and U.S. Africa Command repelled the al-Shabab attack," said the AF-RICOM statement. "Reports indicate that six contractor-operated civilian aircraft were damaged to some degree. Manda Bay Airfield is utilized by U.S. forces whose missions include providing training to our African partners, responding to crises, and protecting U.S. interests in this strategically important area."

Al-Shabab claimed that there were 17 U.S. casualties, nine Kenyan soldiers killed and seven aircraft destroyed. The U.S. Africa Command dismissed the al-Shabab claims as exaggerated and said U.S. and Kenyan forces repelled the attack.

Kenya is a key base for fighting al-Shabab, one of the world's most resilient extremist organizations. A large plume of black smoke rose above the airfield Sunday and residents said a car bomb had exploded. Lamu county commissioner Irungu Macharia told The Associated Press that five suspects were arrested and were being interrogated.

An internal Kenyan police report seen by the AP said two fixed-wing aircraft, a U.S. Cessna and a Kenyan one, were destroyed along with two U.S. helicopters and multiple U.S. vehicles at the military airstrip. The report said explosions were heard at around 5:30 a.m. from the direction of the airstrip.

The Kenya Civil Aviation Authority said the airstrip was closed for all operations.

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The military's Camp Simba in Lamu county, established more than a decade ago, has under 100 U.S. personnel, according to Pentagon figures. U.S. forces at the adjoining Manda Bay airfield train and give counterterror support to East African partners. A U.S. flag-raising at the camp in August signaled its change "from tactical to enduring operations," the Air Force said at the time.

According to another internal Kenyan police report seen by the AP, dated Friday, a villager that day said he had spotted 11 suspected al-Shabab members entering Lamu's Boni forest, which the extremists have used as a hideout. The report said Kenyan authorities didn't find them.

Al-Shabab has launched a number of attacks inside Kenya, including against civilian buses, schools and shopping malls. The group has been the target of a growing number of U.S. airstrikes inside Somalia during President Donald Trump's administration.

The latest attack comes just over a week after an al-Shabab truck bomb in Somalia's capital killed at least 79 people and U.S. airstrikes killed seven al-Shabab fighters in response.

Last year, al-Shabab attacked a U.S. military base inside Somalia, Baledogle, that is used to launch drone strikes but reportedly failed to make their way inside. The extremist group also has carried out multiple attacks against Kenyan troops in the past in retaliation for Kenya sending troops to Somalia to fight it.

This attack marks a significant escalation of al-Shabab's campaign of attacks inside Kenya, said analyst Andrew Franklin, a former U.S. Marine and longtime Kenya resident.

"Launching a deliberate assault of this type against a well-defended permanent base occupied by (Kenya Defence Forces), contractors and U.S. military personnel required a great deal of planning, rehearsals, logistics and operational capability," he said. Previous attacks against security forces have mainly been ambushes on Kenyan army or police patrols.

The Sunday attack came days after a U.S. airstrike killed Iran's top military commander and Iran vowed retaliation, but al-Shabab is a Sunni Muslim group and there is no sign of links to Shiite Iran or proxies.

"No, this attack was no way related to that incident" in the Middle East, an al-Shabab spokesman told the AP on condition of anonymity for security reasons.

One analyst, Rashid Abdi, in Twitter posts discussing the attack, agreed, but added that Kenyan security services have long been worried that Iran was trying to cultivate ties with al-Shabab.

"Avowedly Wahhabist Al-Shabaab not natural ally of Shia Iran, hostile, even. But if Kenyan claims true, AS attack may have been well-timed to signal to Iran it is open for tactical alliances," he wrote.

But a former member of the U.N. committee monitoring sanctions on Somalia, Jay Bahadur, said in a tweet that "the attack is far more related to AS wanting a do over on their spectacular failure at Baledogle four months ago."

When asked whether the U.S. military was looking into any Iranian link to the attack, U.S. Africa Command spokesman Col. Christopher Karns said only that "al-Shabab, affiliated with al-Qaida, has their own agenda and have made clear their desire to attack U.S. interests."

The al-Shabab claim of responsibility said Sunday's attack was part of its "Jerusalem will never be Judaized" campaign, a rarely made reference that also was used after al-Shabab's deadly attack on a luxury mall complex in Kenya's capital, Nairobi, in January 2019.

Somalia's government, which is fighting al-Shabab with the help of a multinational African force, The Federal Republic of Somalia joins the rest of the world in condemning the cowardly attack that targeted joint Kenyan and U.S forces based at Manda Bay Airfield, Kenya earlier today.

Anna contributed from Johannesburg

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Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, Jan. 6, the sixth day of 2020. There are 360 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 6, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in his State of the Union address, outlined a goal of "Four Freedoms": Freedom of speech and expression; the freedom of people to worship God in their own way; freedom from want; freedom from fear.

On this date:

In 1412, tradition holds that Joan of Arc was born this day in Domremy.

In 1759, George Washington and Martha Dandridge Custis were married in New Kent County, Virginia.

In 1912, New Mexico became the 47th state.

In 1919, the 26th president of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt, died in Oyster Bay, New York, at age 60.

In 1945, George Herbert Walker Bush married Barbara Pierce at the First Presbyterian Church in Rye, New York.

In 1968, a surgical team at Stanford University School of Medicine in Palo Alto, California, led by Dr. Norman Shumway, performed the first U.S. adult heart transplant, placing the heart of a 43-year-old man in a 54-year-old patient (the recipient died 15 days later).

In 1975, the original version of "Wheel of Fortune," hosted by Chuck Woolery and Susan Stafford, premiered on NBC-TV.

In 1994, figure skater Nancy Kerrigan was clubbed on the leg by an assailant at Detroit's Cobo Arena; four men, including the ex-husband of Kerrigan's rival, Tonya Harding, went to prison for their roles in the attack. (Harding pleaded guilty to conspiracy to hinder prosecution, but denied any advance knowledge about the assault.)

In 1998, In a new bid to expand health insurance, President Clinton unveiled a proposal to offer Medicare coverage to hundreds of thousands of uninsured Americans from ages 55 to 64.

In 2001, with Vice President Al Gore presiding in his capacity as president of the Senate, Congress formally certified George W. Bush the winner of the bitterly contested 2000 presidential election.

In 2003, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein accused U.N. inspectors of engaging in "intelligence work" instead of searching for suspected nuclear, chemical and biological weapons in his country.

In 2005, former Ku Klux Klan leader Edgar Ray Killen was arrested on murder charges 41 years after three civil rights workers were slain in Mississippi. (Killen was later convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to 60 years in prison.)

Ten years ago: James von Brunn, a 89-year-old white supremacist charged in a deadly shooting at Washington's Holocaust museum, died in North Carolina, where he was being held while awaiting trial. British Prime Minister Gordon Brown fended off a challenge to his leadership from within his own ruling Labour Party just months before general elections.

Five years ago: In a blend of pageantry and politics, Republicans took complete control of Congress for the first time in eight years, then ran straight into a White House veto threat against their top-priority legislation to build the Keystone XL oil pipeline. President Barack Obama pledged to stand with Mexico against "the scourge of violence and the drug cartels" as he met at the White House with President Enrique Pena Nieto. Randy Johnson, Pedro Martinez and John Smoltz, a trio of star pitchers who dominated in an era of offense, were elected to baseball's Hall of Fame along with Craig Biggio.

One year ago: The Freddie Mercury biopic "Bohemian Rhapsody" was named the best drama picture at the Golden Globes, defeating another movie about musicians, the more heavily favored "A Star is Born." U.S. national security adviser John Bolton said there was now no timetable for U.S. troops to leave northeastern Syria, saying they wouldn't leave until Islamic State militants were defeated and Kurdish fighters were protected. Another round of talks failed to break an impasse over funding for a border wall, as a

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government shutdown remained in effect.

Today's Birthdays: Country musician Joey, the CowPolka King (Riders in the Sky) is 71. Former FBI director Louis Freeh is 70. Rock singer-musician Kim Wilson (The Fabulous Thunderbirds) is 69. Singer Jett Williams is 67. Actor-comedian Rowan Atkinson is 65. World Golf Hall of Famer Nancy Lopez is 63. Actor Scott Bryce is 62. Rhythm-and-blues singer Kathy Sledge is 61. TV chef Nigella Lawson is 60. Rhythm-and-blues singer Eric Williams (BLACKstreet) is 60. Actor Aron Eisenberg is 51. Actor Norman Reedus is 51. TV personality Julie Chen is 50. Actor Danny Pintauro (TV: "Who's the Boss?") is 44. Actress Cristela Alonzo is 41. Actress Rinko Kikuchi (RINK'-oh kih-KOO'chee) is 39. Actor Eddie Redmayne is 38. Retired NBA All-Star Gilbert Arenas is 38. Actress-comedian Kate McKinnon is 36. Actress Diona Reasonover is 36. Rock singer Alex Turner (Arctic Monkeys) is 34.

Thought for Today: "A little learning is not a dangerous thing to one who does not mistake it for a great deal." — William Allen White, American newspaper editor (1868-1944).

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