

Groton Daily Independent

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"THERE IS NOTHING LIKE A DREAM TO
CREATE THE FUTURE."

-VICTOR HUGO



It's Basketball Action on GDILIVE.COM



Hamlin
Chargers

VS



Groton Area Tigers

Friday, Jan. 10, 2020 at the Groton Area Arena
Girls Varsity at 6:30 p.m. followed by Boys Varsity

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

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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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

Upcoming Events

Friday, January 10, 2020

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

Saturday, January 11, 2020

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

CANCELLED: Boys at Varsity Classic at the Sanford Pentagon

10 a.m.: Wrestling at Miller Tournament

Sunday, January 12, 2020

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

2:00-4:00 PM Grades JK-8 (Students must be accompanied by an adult) 4:00-6:00 PM Grades 6-12

Monday, January 13, 2020

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

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

7 p.m.: School Board Meeting

Tuesday, January 14, 2020

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

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

Groton Prairie Mixed

Team Standings: Cheetahs 26, Shih Tzus 23 ½, Foxes 22, Jackelopes 17, Chipmunks 16, Coyotes 15 ½

Men's High Games: Brad Waage 226, Ron Beldon 218, Roger Spanier 199

Women's High Games: Nicole Kassube 177, 163, Sue Stanley 174, Vicki Walter 162

Men's High Series: Brad Waage 556, Roger Spanier 532, Roger Colestock 499

Women's High Series: Nicole Kassube 485, Sue Stanley 474, Dar Larson 426

Conde National League

Jan. 6 Team Standings: Cubs 10, Giants 8, Tigers 7, Braves 5, Pirates 4, Mets 2

Men's High Games: Butch Farmen 232, 189, 188; Ryan Bethke 229, 192, 184; Lance Frohling 182

Men's High Series: Ryan Bethke 610, Butch Farmen 609, Lance Frohling 538

Women's High Games: Mary Larson 178, Vickie Kramp 178, Deb Fredrickson 173, Michelle Johnson 172

Women's High Series: Mary Larson 474, Vickie Kramp 463, Deb Fredrickson 458

Groton Coffee Cup League

Jan. 7 Team Standings: Biker Chix 10, Ten Pins 5, Kens 5, James Valley 4

High Games: Sandi Bistedeau 162, Nancy Radke 157, Myrna Stange 156

High Series: Sandi Bistedeau 443, Vickie Kramp 429, Nancy Radke 401

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GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6

School Board Meeting

January 13, 2020 – 7:00 PM – GHS Conference Room

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approval of minutes of December 9, 2019 school board meetings as drafted.
2. Approval of December District bills for payment.

OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Open Forum for Public Participation in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
2. Approval of December 2019 Financial Report, Agency Accounts, and Investments.
3. Approval of December 2019 Transportation Report.
4. Approval of December 2019 School Lunch Report.
5. Adopt job description for certified sign language interpreter.
6. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Set date and time for annual school board election – April 14th, 2020 (7:00AM – 7:00PM), and authorize Business Manager Weber to designate officials, with voting precincts in Andover, Bristol, Columbia, and Groton. [3-year terms expiring: Dr. Smith, Mr. Rix]
2. First read of recommended policy changes: ACAB Prohibition Against Aiding or Abetting Sexual Abuse (New); BDC Executive Sessions (Amend); BDDDB Agenda Format (Amend); BDDC Agenda Preparation and Dissemination (Amend); BDDEA Parliamentarian (Delete); BDDG Minutes (Amend); BDDH Public Participation at Board Meetings (Amend); BFC Policy Adoption (Amend); DB Annual Budget (Amend); BDC Budget Deadlines and Schedules (Delete); DBD Budget Planning (Delete); DBH Budget Adoption Procedures (Delete); DBKA Promissory Notes (Delete); DBK Budget Transfer Authority (Delete); DGD Credit Card Use Policy (Amend); DIC Financial Reports and Statements (Amend); DJB Petty Cash Accounts (Amend); DJC Bidding Requirements (Amend); DJD Local Purchasing (Amend); DJF Purchasing (Amend); DJ Purchasing (Amend); EH Service Animals at School (New); GBCBA Freedom of Expression (Amend); GBC Staff Ethics (Amend); GBEC Use of Alcohol and Drugs by Employees (Amend); GCBDF Nursing Mothers (New); GCB Qualifications of Teachers (Amend); GCD Professional Staff Hiring (Amend); JB Equal Educational Opportunities (Amend); JECA Admission of Resident Students (Amend); JFCD Cyberbullying (Delete); JFCE Student Bullying (Amend); KO Patriotic and National Organizations (New)
3. Review of 2020-2021 school year calendar draft and staff comments.
4. Executive session pursuant SDCL 1-25-2(1) for personnel issues.

ADJOURN

Arts advocacy means sharing YOUR stories

By Jim Speirs, Executive Director, Arts South Dakota

One of the key roles of Arts South Dakota is to encourage South Dakotans to speak out in support of the arts. We call it arts advocacy—but it is really just telling positive stories about the many ways the arts make a difference in your life.

It's really not hard to think of the ways creativity and cultural awareness positively impact our communities. In some places, our artistic and cultural heritage becomes the touchstone for community celebrations, from wacipis to Czech Days to the century-old Black Hills Roundup. Spend a few minutes reflecting on what makes your community unique and I'll bet the arts are at the center.

In many SD communities, professional artists are working alongside local residents to create lasting murals that celebrate their town. These hometown art works are something everyone is proud of—and through the inclusion of students, they strengthen local school creative programs. Another vital story to share is the work of arts organizations that bring local residents together to plan the future of their communities—and to build volunteerism on the local level. The stories are there—we just need to share them.

An obvious place for sharing is social media. Are you telling your community's creative stories on Facebook, or pushing out pictures of local arts events on Instagram? Link your social media posts to #StateOfCreate to share your arts inspirations. Does your local newspaper cover the arts and culture at least monthly? And, perhaps most important this time of year, as the future of our state is shaped in Pierre, are you reminding your legislator how important the arts are to South Dakota—and to YOU? Join us in Pierre on February 12 for Arts Advocacy Day at the Legislature!

We need to be telling these stories and building relationships with media, with neighbors and with legislators constantly. That's how the arts will thrive in South Dakota—with local voices telling our stories. For more information about how you can add your voice to others sharing creative stories, check out our website at www.ArtsSouthDakota.org.



Four locals on LATI President's List

Four GHS graduates on the Lake Area Technical Institute President's List in Watertown.

The President's List is limited to full-time students who have achieved a semester grade point average of 3.5 to 4.0.

Those with a 4-0 are Paityn Bonn, Conde; and Miranda Hanson, Bristol. Also on the President's List are Brenna Johnson and Hannah Lewandowski, both of Groton.

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Grapplers drop pair of matches

Groton Area's wrestling team went to Redfield Thursday night where they participated in a pair of dual actions. The Groton Area team lost to Webster Area, 39-7, and to Redfield, 76-3.

In the Webster dual, Dragr Monson at 120 pounds and Korbin Kucker at 126 pounds both won their matches. Monson had a 6-3 decision win over Cael Larson. Kucker pinned Gavin Witt in 1:42. Picking up wins via forfeit were Cole Bisbee, Lane Krueger and Caleb Furney.

Grady O'Neill at 285 had the only win in the Redfield dual with an 8-1 decision over Gavin Nichols.

Webster Area 39, Groton Area 27

- 106 Ethan Opitz (Webster Area) over Christian Ehresmann (Groton Area) (Dec 8-5)
- 113 Isaac Wiley (Webster Area) over Jacob Craig (Groton Area) (Fall 0:32)
- 120 Dragr Monson (Groton Area) over Cael Larson (Webster Area) (Dec 6-3)
- 126 Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) over Gavin Witt (Webster Area) (Fall 1:42)
- 132 Matt Mork (Webster Area) over Brevin Fliehs (Groton Area) (Fall 1:13)
- 138 Hayden Niles (Webster Area) (For.)
- 145 Andrew Johnson (Webster Area) (For.)
- 152 Cole Bisbee (Groton Area) (For.)
- 160 Double Forfeit
- 170 Sterling Rausch (Webster Area) over Thomas Cranford (Groton Area) (Fall 1:53)
- 182 Lane Krueger (Groton Area) (For.)
- 195 Caleb Furney (Groton Area) (For.)
- 220 Joey Hubsch (Webster Area) over Grady O'Neill (Groton Area) (Fall 1:58)
- 285 Double Forfeit

Redfield 76, Groton Area 3

- 106 Mason Whitley (Redfield Area) over Christian Ershman (Groton Area) (MD 10-1)
- 113 Brady Risetter (Redfield Area) over Jacob Craig (Groton Area) (Fall 2:40)
- 120 Jacob Fehlman (Redfield Area) over Dragr Monson (Groton Area) (Fall 3:22)
- 126 Keaton Rohlfs (Redfield Area) over Korbin Kucker (Groton Area) (Fall 0:53)
- 132 Chase McGillivary (Redfield Area) (For.)
- 138 Bradyn Robbins (Redfield Area) (For.)
- 145 Mason Fey (Redfield Area) (For.)
- 152 Cullen McNeil (Redfield Area) over Cole Bisbee (Groton Area) (Fall 0:59)
- 160 Dylan Whitley (Redfield Area) (For.)
- 170 Corbin Schwartz (Redfield Area) over Thomas Cranford (Groton Area) (Fall 1:46)
- 182 Sean Domke (Redfield Area) over Lane Krueger (Groton Area) (Fall 1:24)
- 195 Connor Appel (Redfield Area) (For.)
- 220 Grady Fey (Redfield Area) (For.)
- 285 Grady O'Neill (Groton Area) over Gavin Nichols (Redfield Area) (Dec 8-1)



Frostbite: What You Need to Know



Degrees of Frostbite and their Symptoms

1st

Ice crystals begin to form on your skin

2nd

Skin begins to feel warm, even though it has not defrosted

3rd

Skin has waxy appearance and turns red, pale, or white

4th

Pain lasts for more than a few hours, and skin may turn dark blue, gray, or even black.



How to Apply First Aid for Frostbite



If you are outside:



Hold onto another person or animal for warmth



Drink warm fluids to warm your body



Put on extra layers of clothes and blankets



Remove rings, watches, and any tight jewelry



Once you are indoors:



Do not walk if you have frostbite on your feet.



Do not break blisters or pick at frostbitten skin



Take a warm (NOT hot) bath to slowly thaw your body



Go immediately to the hospital for severe frostbite

For more tips and additional information:
[weather.gov/winter](https://www.weather.gov/winter)

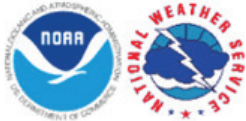
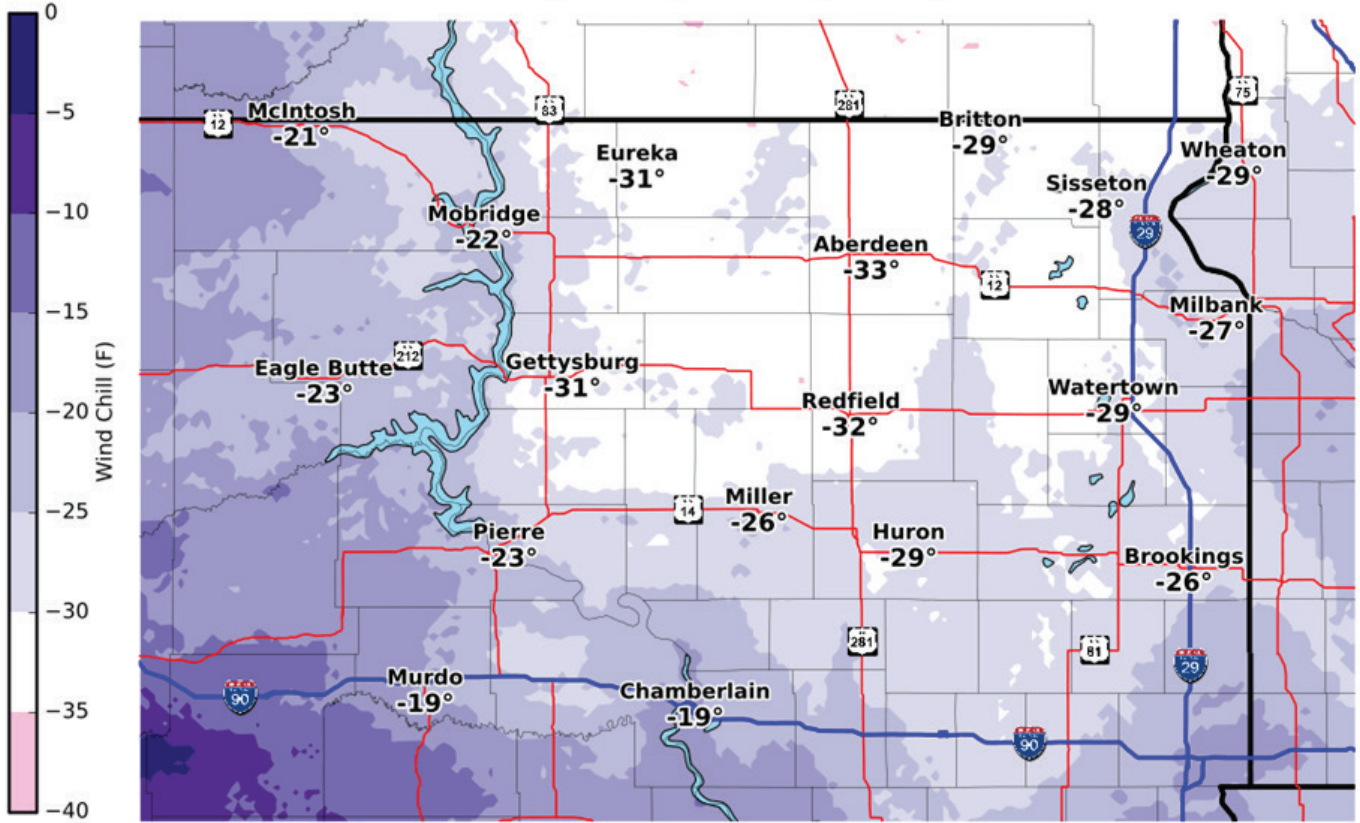


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Coldest Wind Chill

Valid: Tonight through Saturday Morning



National Weather Service
Aberdeen SD
01/10/2020 03:07 AM CST

Follow Us:   
weather.gov/Aberdeen

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Today



Slight Chance
Snow then
Mostly Sunny

High: 8 °F ↓

Tonight



Mostly Clear

Low: -18 °F

Saturday



Cold

High: 4 °F

Saturday
Night



Mostly Cloudy

Low: -1 °F

Sunday



Mostly Cloudy

High: 13 °F



Morning Snow, mainly over Southeastern 1/2 of SD
then mainly dry through the weekend
Coldest temperatures and lowest wind chills E of the Missouri River

Today



Wind Chills falling to -20 to 0°
in the afternoon

3 to 14°



Tonight



BITTERLY COLD!
Wind Chills falling to -33 to -15°

-20 to 0°



National Weather Service – Aberdeen, SD
weather.gov/Aberdeen  National Weather Service Aberdeen  @NWSAberdeen

Morning Snow, mainly over the se 1/2 of SD will give way to a clearing sky this afternoon. Arctic air will slide in tonight, with temperatures falling into the -20 to 0 degree range (coldest east of the Missouri River). Bitterly Cold Wind Chills expected tonight into Saturday morning, ranging from -33 to -15 degrees.

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Today in Weather History

January 10, 1911: The temperature at Rapid City, South Dakota plunged 47 degrees in just fifteen minutes.

January 10, 1975: An intense area of low pressure moved from eastern Iowa through eastern Minnesota. The storm center set many low pressure records as it moved across eastern Minnesota. New snow of 3 to 6 inches across much of Minnesota began to blow and drift on the morning of the 10th and then developed into a full blown blizzard with heavy snowfall developing. The blizzard continued over all of the state through the 11th with winds of 30 to 50 mph with gusts of 60 to 80 mph. Drifts up to 20 foot high developed in west central Minnesota paralyzing activity. Snowfall amounts from 1 to 2 feet occurred. Numerous roads were closed due to drifting and low visibility. Numerous sustained power outages occurred, particularly in rural sections. Thousands of people were stranded with 168 people trapped in a train in Willmar. Wind chills ranged from 50 below to 80 below behind the storm. Extensive losses to life and property occurred. There were 35 deaths during the storm and many injuries. Tens of thousands of livestock and poultry losses also occurred with 140 farm buildings damaged or destroyed. Losses to livestock and property were over 20 million. It took 11 days to clear some areas. Shelter was provided for nearly 17,000 people.

In South Dakota, snow began to fall on the 10th in the afternoon and then the winds increased and reached blizzard conditions by evening. These severe blizzard conditions continued on through the 11th and through the morning of the 12th. Wind chills fell to 50 below to 70 below zero. Many cars stalled on roads due to poor visibility, icy roads, and blowing and drifting snow. Eight people lost their lives. Thousands of livestock and poultry were lost. During the blizzard, a 2000 foot radio and TV antenna just east of Sioux Falls collapsed.

January 10, 2000: High winds gusting to over 60 mph caused some spotty damage across central and north central South Dakota. Near Mobridge, the high winds blew a semi-tractor-trailer off the road and tipped it over while it was heading westbound on Highway 12. The semi tractor-trailer sustained quite a bit of damage as a result. The high winds also damaged the windmill at the museum in Mobridge breaking off the tail and bending several of the blades. Some high wind reports include; 56 mph at McLaughlin, 58 mph at Onida and Mobridge, and 63 mph at Pierre.

1949: Snow was reported at San Diego, California for the first time since 1882. Snow was noted on some of the beaches in parts of the Los Angeles metropolitan area.

1982: Bitterly cold weather was found across Illinois. Of the 109 weather reporting stations in the state, 48 of those reported lows of 20 degrees below zero or colder. Some of the coldest temperatures included 27 below zero at Rockford, 26 below zero at Chicago, and 25 below zero at Kankakee and Peoria.

1800 - Savannah, GA, received a foot and a half of snow, and ten inches blanketed Charleston SC. It was the heaviest snowfall of record for the immediate Coastal Plain of the southeastern U.S. (David Ludlum)

1911 - The temperature at Rapid City, SD, plunged 47 degrees in just fifteen minutes. (The Weather Channel)

1949 - Snow was reported at San Diego, CA, for the first and only time since 1882. Snow was noted even on some of the beaches in parts of the Los Angeles metropolitan area. Burbank reported 4.7 inches, and Long Beach and Laguna Beach received one inch of snow. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1975 - The "Storm of the Century" hit Minnesota. A severe blizzard moved northward across the state producing up to two feet of snow. High winds drove wind chill readings to 80 degrees below zero, and at Duluth MN the barometric pressure dipped to 28.55 inches. The storm, which claimed 35 lives, occurred on the 102nd anniversary of the infamous "Pioneer Blizzard" in Minnesota. (David Ludlum)

1982 - The temperature at O'Hare Airport in Chicago, IL, plunged to an all-time record of 26 degrees below zero, and high winds drove the wind chill reading to 77 degrees below zero. The temperature in Downtown Chicago reached 23 degrees below zero. A week later a second arctic surge sent the temperature plunging back down to 25 degrees below zero. (Weather Channel) (National Weather Summary)

1987 - Bitter cold air invaded the Rocky Mountain Region, with subzero readings reported as far south as Gallop NM. Pocatello ID reported a record low reading of 14 degrees below zero. (National Weather Summary)

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 24 °F at 3:35 PM

Low Temp: 9 °F at 11:26 PM

Wind: 19 mph at 3:35 PM

Day Precip:

Record High: 56° in 2012

Record Low: -30° in 1978

Average High: 22°F

Average Low: 1°F

Average Precip in Jan.: 0.16

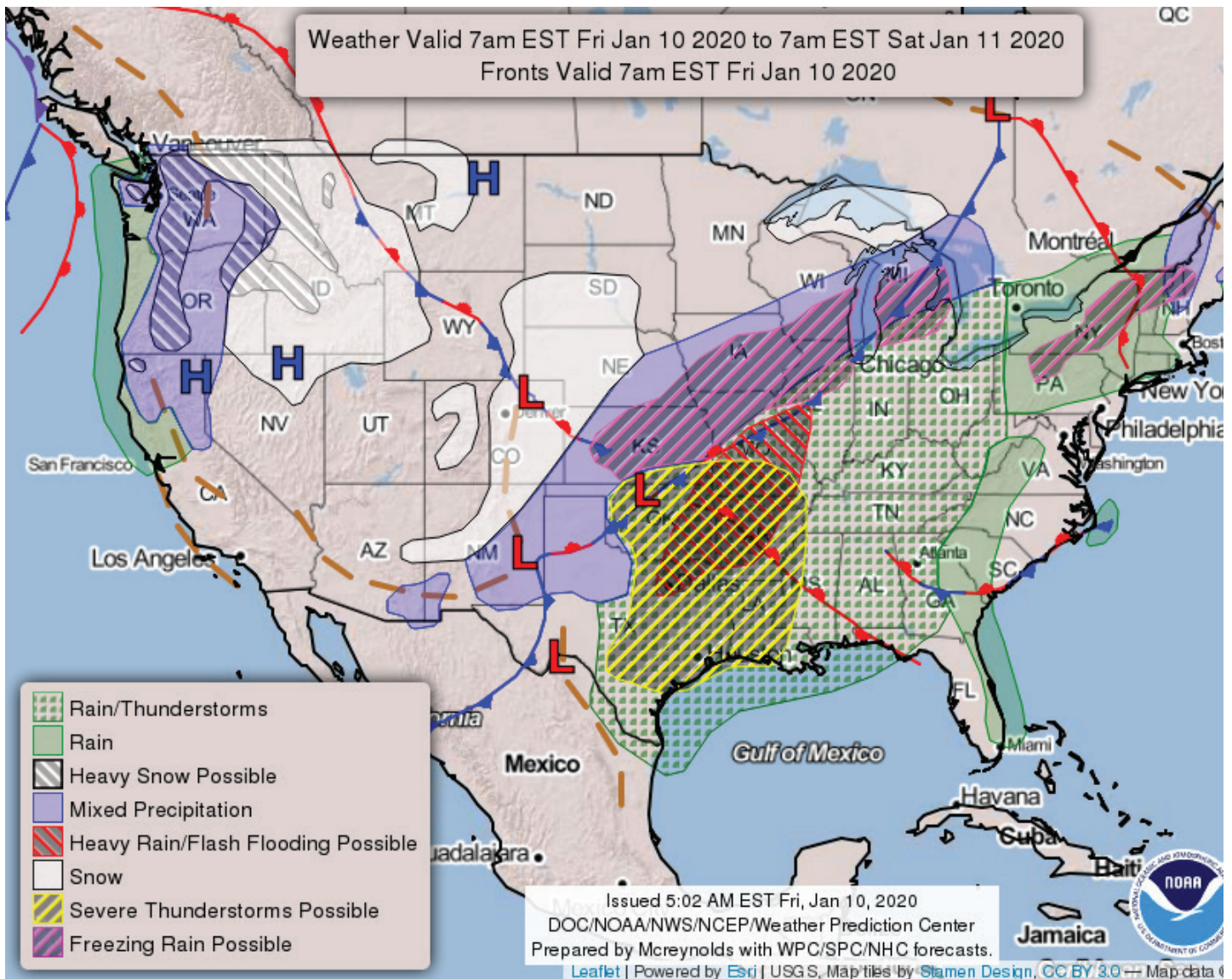
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.16

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 5:10 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:12 a.m.



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GOOD FOR EVIL

A truck driver went into a café and ordered a hamburger, French fries, a piece of pie, and a cup of coffee. Shortly after he placed his order, a group of bikers came in and surrounded him. When he was served, they ate his food and drank his coffee. Quietly, the trucker stood up, walked to the cash register, paid his bill, said nothing, walked past them, and out the door.

"He's really not much of a man," said one of the bikers.

"And he's really not much of a driver either," said the cashier. "He just ran over three bikes in the parking lot."

In Romans 12 Paul describes the central values for Christian living. In particular, he said that if we have truly experienced God's grace, we will want to share it with others. Forgiveness is a good example of sharing and showing God's grace to others.

Often we say that we forgive others for the wrongs they have done to us. But, forgiveness is much more than quietly offering kind words under our breath that only God hears. Forgiveness is active, not passive. If we have trouble forgiving someone and the hate remains lodged in our heads and hearts and not expressed with our hands by showing forgiveness, we need to do something that reflects forgiveness – like offering them a small gift. That would certainly demonstrate forgiveness.

And, when we do so, we can begin to think of – in some very small way – the tremendous gift of forgiveness that God gave to us in and through His Son: our salvation!

Prayer: Help us, Father, to be forgiving and loving of those who harm us. We see examples of this in Your Son, even when on His cross. May we follow His example. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Romans 12:17-21 Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.

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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)

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News from the Associated Press

Thursday's Scores By The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Burke 64, Andes Central/Dakota Christian 30
Custer 73, Hill City 37
Deubrook 60, Iroquois 56
Deuel 60, Webster 57, OT
Edgemont 43, Crawford, Neb. 34
Ethan 56, Avon 26
Freeman Academy/Marion 81, Centerville 53
Harding County 69, McIntosh 39
Hot Springs 39, Bennett County 31
Howard 62, Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 44
Langford 49, Waubay/Summit 42
Lennox 53, Rock Valley, Iowa 42
Leola/Frederick 66, Oakes, N.D. 46
McLaughlin 73, Stanley County 70
Menno 43, Mitchell Christian 32
Mobridge-Pollock 58, Miller 34
Oelrichs 72, Hay Springs, Neb. 48
Pine Ridge 48, Red Cloud 45
Platte-Geddes 70, Corsica/Stickney 50
Rapid City Christian 81, Wall 29
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 62, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 54
St. Thomas More 57, Douglas 31
Sully Buttes 57, Highmore-Harrold 42
Sundance, Wyo. 71, Newell 34
Timber Lake 48, Faith 38
Tiospa Zina Tribal 63, Britton-Hecla 29
Tiospaye Topa 61, Wakpala 48
Tri-Valley 67, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 51
Upton, Wyo. 73, Lead-Deadwood 67
Viborg-Hurley 66, Hanson 58
Warner 40, Ipswich 27
Wessington Springs 55, Sunshine Bible Academy 49
Big East Conference Tournament
First Round=
Flandreau 61, Garretson 49
McCook Central/Montrose 73, Baltic 48
Parker 43, Beresford 35
Sioux Valley 65, Chester 20
CNOS Tournament
MOC-Floyd Valley, Iowa 68, Dakota Valley 62

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Roncalli 64, Redfield 46
Arlington 67, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 24

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Bennett County 46, Hot Springs 30
Burke 51, Andes Central/Dakota Christian 44
Castlewood 59, Clark/Willow Lake 23
Centerville 49, Freeman Academy/Marion 17
Colman-Egan 52, Elkton-Lake Benton 19
Crawford, Neb. 54, Edgemont 28
Crow Creek 67, Chamberlain 29
Dupree 63, Potter County 56
Estelline/Hendricks 60, Lake Preston 23
Ethan 39, Avon 25
Florence/Henry 58, Wilmot 22
Hanson 49, Viborg-Hurley 47
Harding County 43, McIntosh 13
Harrisburg 55, Mitchell 41
Heart River, N.D. 50, Lemmon 24
Herreid/Selby Area 38, Faulkton 36
Hill City 59, Custer 28
Hitchcock-Tulare 51, Northwestern 41
Howard 48, Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 45
Ipswich 46, Warner 33
James Valley Christian 43, Wolsey-Wessington 35
Kimball/White Lake 51, Colome 29
Lead-Deadwood 46, Upton, Wyo. 33
Lennox 57, Rock Valley, Iowa 37
Little Wound 65, Kadoka Area 62
McLaughlin 51, Stanley County 50
Menno 55, Mitchell Christian 39
Miller 63, Mobridge-Pollock 38
New Underwood 59, Philip 31
Oelrichs 63, Hay Springs, Neb. 57
Rapid City Christian 53, Wall 32
Sioux Falls Christian 51, Canistota 46
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 74, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 30
Tiospa Zina Tribal 54, Britton-Hecla 37
Tripp-Delmont/Armour 54, Bon Homme 31
Waverly-South Shore 51, Tri-State 45
Waverly-South Shore 51, Tri-State, N.D. 45
Wessington Springs 46, Sunshine Bible Academy 15
West Central 61, Tea Area 51
White River 82, Marty Indian 22
Winner 68, Todd County 38

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

Police: Abducted Sioux Falls woman was strangled

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — An abducted Sioux Falls woman whose body was found this week was strangled and her death was ruled a homicide, police said Thursday.

Sioux Falls police spokesman Sam Clemens said the cause of 20-year-old Pasqalina Badi's death was ruled asphyxia by manual strangulation.

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Police say Badi was abducted from a Walmart parking lot on Sunday morning. Her body was found Monday on a gravel road south of Sioux Falls.

A 19-year-old man remains a suspect in the case but has not been charged, Clemens said. The man appeared in court Wednesday for an attempted New Year's Day kidnapping and aggravated assault. His bail is set at \$250,000 cash.

Police are still trying to determine if Badi and the suspect knew each other, and are still trying to determine a motive, Clemens said.

Noem drops plans to veto hemp, but calls for 'guardrails'

By **STEPHEN GROVES** Associated Press

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Kristi Noem is relenting on blocking South Dakota's development of a hemp industry, provided the proposed law meets "guardrails" she has laid out to lawmakers.

Noem announced on Thursday that she still doesn't think hemp is "a good idea" but would not veto a hemp bill passed by the Legislature if it meets her requirements. She wants the crop to be tightly regulated and for legislators to come up with a way to pay for the hemp program. Noem first detailed her shift in an interview with KELO.

House Majority Leader Lee Qualm, R-Platte, said lawmakers already have a draft of the bill and planned to introduce it early in the legislative session that starts next week. He said the bill already meets most of the requirements laid out by Noem.

The bill would allow people to grow hemp if they have a minimum plot size of 5 acres and keep the THC level of the plant below 0.3%. THC is the compound that produces a high in marijuana. It would also allow hemp to be processed into CBD oil and other products. Producers would need to obtain a license from the state and a permit to transport it.

Qualm said the current version of the bill contains an emergency clause that would make it go into effect in March so that farmers could begin planting hemp seeds in the spring. But Qualm was not sure if that provision will survive. South Dakota would still need to get its hemp plans approved by the Department of Agriculture, which might not give farmers enough time to take advantage of this year's hemp season.

Noem's office estimated it would cost about \$1.9 million to start the program and another \$1.6 million to run it. She also wants law enforcement to have the ability to inspect and search hemp fields and facilities.

The governor used her veto power last session to block a hemp bill from becoming law and had previously said she would do so again this year. She argued that legalizing hemp would lead to the legalization of marijuana.

On Thursday, the governor said, "things have changed."

In the last year, the Department of Agriculture released guidelines for industrial hemp, but Noem's veto kept South Dakota as just one of three states that did not allow it. Several Indian tribes in the state have also submitted hemp plans to the USDA for approval, and the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe has gained approval to grow hemp. The governor also acknowledged that the state had to allow hemp to be transported across state lines.

Authorities identify body found along river in Pierre

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Authorities have identified the woman whose body was found along the Missouri River in Pierre this week.

Police say the body of 40-year-old Lola Bear Stops was found just off the Lewis and Clark Trail near the Down's Marine Peninsula by a person walking a dog on Monday.

Identification was made through a fingerprint analysis sent to the South Dakota state forensic lab, according to Capt. Bryan Walz.

The cause and manner of death may not be known until final autopsy tests are returned in six to eight weeks, Walz told KCCR.

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Now that police have learned her identity, detectives can contact family and friends to try to find out what happened to her, he added.

Man given 10 years in prison for sexually assaulting toddler

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Minnesota man has been sentenced to 10 years in prison in South Dakota for sexually assaulting a toddler.

Stephen Charles Schmidt, 78, earlier pleaded guilty to one count of sexual contact with a child under 16. In an agreement with prosecutors, two other charges were dismissed.

Schmidt was indicted by a Minnehaha County grand jury last March and sentenced in Sioux Falls Wednesday.

Prosecutors said the 3-year-old girl told a family member she had been touched by Schmidt. She later changed her story and the case was dropped in 2018.

Charges were refiled after Schmidt called law enforcement to confess in February 2019, the Argus Leader reported.

He said he justified the touching by thinking they were “both getting enjoyment,” according to a court affidavit.

Iran denies downing plane, says West should share evidence

By **NASSER KARIMI** and **JOSEPH KRAUSS** Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran on Friday denied Western allegations that one of its own missiles downed a Ukrainian jetliner that crashed outside Tehran, and called on the U.S. and Canada to share any information they have on the crash, which killed all 176 people on board.

Western leaders said the plane appeared to have been unintentionally hit by a surface-to-air missile just hours after Iran launched around a dozen ballistic missiles at two U.S. bases in Iraq to avenge the killing of its top general in an American airstrike last week.

“What is obvious for us, and what we can say with certainty, is that no missile hit the plane,” Ali Abedzadeh, head of Iran’s national aviation department, told a press conference.

“If they are really sure, they should come and show their findings to the world” in accordance with international standards, he added.

Hassan Rezaeifar, the head of the Iranian investigation team, said recovering data from the black box flight recorders could take more than a month and that the entire investigation could stretch into next year. He also said Iran may request help from international experts if it is not able to extract the flight recordings.

The ballistic missile attack on the bases in Iraq caused no casualties, raising hopes that the standoff over the killing of Gen. Qassem Soleimani would end relatively peacefully, though Iran has sent mixed signals over whether its retaliation is complete.

If the U.S. or Canada were to present incontrovertible evidence that the plane was shot down by Iran, even if unintentionally, it could have a dramatic impact on public opinion in Iran.

The Iranian public had rallied around the leadership after the killing of Soleimani last Friday, with hundreds of thousands joining the general’s funeral processions in several cities, in an unprecedented display of grief and unity.

But sentiments in Iran are still raw over the government’s crackdown on large-scale protests late last year sparked by an economic crisis exacerbated by U.S. sanctions. Several hundred protesters were reported to have been killed in the clampdown.

Those fissures could quickly break open again if Iranian authorities are seen to be responsible for the deaths of 176 people, mainly Iranians or dual Iranian-Canadian citizens.

U.S., Canadian and British officials said Thursday it is “highly likely” that Iran shot down the Boeing 737 that crashed near Tehran late Tuesday. U.S. officials said the jetliner might have been mistakenly identified as a threat.

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Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, whose country lost at least 63 citizens in the downing, said "we have intelligence from multiple sources including our allies and our own intelligence."

"The evidence indicates that the plane was shot down by an Iranian surface-to-air missile," he said.

The U.S. officials did not say what intelligence they had that pointed to an Iranian missile, believed to be fired by Russian Tor system, known to NATO as the SA-15. But they acknowledged the existence of satellites and other sensors in the region, as well as the likelihood of communication interceptions and other similar intelligence.

Western countries may hesitate to share information on such a strike because it comes from highly classified sources.

Videos verified by The Associated Press appear to show the final seconds of the the ill-fated airliner, which had just taken off from Iran early Wednesday.

In one video, a fast-moving light can be seen through the trees as someone films from the ground. The light appears to be the burning plane, which plummets to the earth as a huge fireball illuminates the landscape.

Someone off-camera says in Farsi: "The plane has caught fire. ... In the name of God, the compassionate, the merciful. God, please help us. Call the fire department!"

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said "the missile theory is not ruled out, but it has not been confirmed yet."

In a Facebook post, he reiterated his call "on all international partners" — the U.S., Britain and Canada in particular — to share data and evidence relevant to the crash. He also announced plans to discuss the investigation with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo later on Friday.

Ukraine's Foreign Minister Vadym Prystaiko tweeted that he and the president met with U.S. embassy officials Friday and obtained "important data" about the crash. The minister didn't specify what kind of data it was, but said it would be "processed by our specialists."

In an interview with Fox News' Laura Ingraham aired late Thursday, Pompeo said the crash may have been caused by a "mechanical failure" but that commercial airliners need to know if it is safe to fly into and out of Tehran.

"If the international community needs to shut down that airport, so be it," he said. "We need to get to the bottom of this very, very quickly."

Iran's state-run IRNA news agency quoted Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi as saying Iran "has invited both Ukraine and the Boeing company to participate in the investigations." He later said a 10-member Canadian delegation was heading to Iran to assist victims' families.

Iran had initially said it would not allow Boeing to take part in the probe, going against prevailing international norms on crash investigations. It later invited the U.S. accident-investigating agency to take part in the investigation.

The National Transportation Safety Board said late Thursday that it would "evaluate its level of participation," but its role could be limited by U.S. sanctions on Iran. U.S. officials have also expressed concern about sending employees to Iran because of the heightened tensions.

Under rules set by a United Nations aviation organization, the NTSB is entitled to participate because the crash involved a Boeing 737-800 jet that was designed and built in the U.S.

The French air accident investigation agency, known by the French acronym BEA, is also taking part in the probe. The plane's engine was designed by CFM International, a joint company between French group Safran and US group GE Aviation.

A preliminary Iranian investigative report released Thursday said that the airliner pilots never made a radio call for help and that the burning plane was trying to turn back for the airport when it went down.

The Iranian report suggested that a sudden emergency struck the Boeing 737, operated by Ukrainian International Airlines, just minutes after taking off from Imam Khomeini International Airport early Wednesday.

Those findings are not inconsistent with the effect of a surface-to-air missile. Such missiles are designed to explode near aircraft, shredding them with shrapnel. There is no need to score a direct hit, and a stricken

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plane may look like it is turning back when in fact it is disintegrating.

Abedzadeh, the senior aviation official, had earlier said that by law there is "full coordination" between the country's air defenses and the civil aviation system.

He said authorities have recovered two black box flight recorders, saying they are "damaged" but readable, which may shed further light on what caused the crash.

Ukraine said Iranian authorities allowed Ukrainian investigators to examine fragments of the plane late Thursday.

"It is too early on in the investigation to reveal specific details," the statement from the Ukraine president's office said. It added that DNA is being collected from relatives of Ukrainians who died in the crash in order to identify the bodies.

Krauss reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Associated Press writers Daria Litvinova in Moscow, Yuras Karmanau in Minsk, Belarus, Nadia Ahmed in London and Matthew Lee in Washington contributed.

AP Explains: Not all cyber threats equally worrisome

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — West Virginia reported unusual cyber activity targeting its election systems. The Texas governor said the state was encountering attempted "attacks" at the rate of "about 10,000 per minute" from Iran. Information technology staff in Las Vegas responded to an intrusion, though the city says no data was stolen.

All told, state election officials in at least two dozen states saw suspicious cyber activity last week, although it's unclear who was behind the efforts and no major problems were reported.

Long before a targeted U.S. strike killed a top Iranian general, there were already concerns about foreign efforts to hack American institutions and its elections. The conflict with Iran has only exacerbated those fears.

Yet as the recent spate of reports makes clear, not all suspicious cyber activities are equally troublesome, the work of a foreign government or a precursor to the type of Russian interference seen in the 2016 election on behalf of President Donald Trump.

A look at what kinds of cyber activities are worrisome — and what are not:

WHAT SORT OF ACTIVITY IS THIS?

Generally speaking, what the states are reporting are efforts to probe their networks for vulnerabilities, or weaknesses that can be exploited for potential intrusion.

"Think of it in the real world as a bank robber walking by a bank — first thing they're going to do is case the joint, and the same thing happens in the digital space," said former FBI agent Anthony Ferrante, who served as director for cyber incident response at the White House's National Security Council.

The culprits are doing the cyber equivalent of wiggling a doorknob, said Ferrante, the global leader of the cybersecurity practice at FTI Consulting.

Scanning for network vulnerabilities is remarkably common. In fact, federal officials believe election officials in all 50 states were probably targeted during the 2016 election, though the number of known breaches — including in Illinois and a couple of counties in Florida — was significantly more modest. A Senate intelligence committee report found no evidence that votes or voting registration systems were altered.

IS THE ACTIVITY WORRISOME?

It can be, to the extent that it demonstrates that a hacker has set his sights on exploring — and possibly returning to — a particular network, and especially if a target is part of the country's critical infrastructure.

Much depends as well on the volume and frequency, since repeated, unwanted contact with a website can overwhelm an internet-connected server, effectively shutting it down in what is known as a distributed denial of service, or DDoS attack.

In general, though, when it comes to poking around a network, "I would certainly put it in a less severe category of threat activity than, say, an intrusion," said Luke McNamara, a principal analyst at FireEye, a

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cybersecurity firm.

It's "certainly not evidence that an intrusion has taken place or that they've been compromised," he added.

THE THREAT OF SPEARPHISHING

Experts say many major hacks originate not with network scans but with spearphishing emails — messages that appear legitimate but that actually launch malicious software that, once opened, can give an intruder access to the network or trick a target into unwittingly surrendering a network password.

It was a ploy used by Chinese hackers charged by the Justice Department in 2014 with hacking into the networks of major American corporations and stealing their trade secrets, and with Russian hackers who stole emails belonging to the Hillary Clinton campaign during the 2016 presidential election.

"That might be evidence of a more targeted effort. It may be that one of those is going to get through, and all you need is one," said Suzanne Spaulding, former under secretary for the National Protection and Programs Directorate at the Department of Homeland Security.

She said the first big question that organizations and governments have to confront is, "Do you have evidence that your system was breached? That's what you're really worried about."

The tactic is also significantly more subtle than pinging a network, and thus a preferred technique for sophisticated hackers loath to raise alarms.

"If your attempt is to try to compromise an organization, you probably want to be a little more surreptitious about it," McNamara said.

THE THREAT TO PUBLIC CONFIDENCE

Practically speaking, there's a big difference between scanning a network for vulnerabilities and actually breaking into it and extracting sensitive information.

But experts say even scans may nonetheless benefit Russia, or any other country looking to undermine faith in elections, particularly if unschooled officials sound unwarranted alarms. The American public may not appreciate the distinction between activities that may be fairly routine and full-blown cyberattacks.

"I believe that one of Russia's objects is to undermine public confidence in the legitimacy of the outcome just as a way of weakening us," said Spaulding, now a senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Associated Press writers Christina A. Cassidy in Atlanta and Frank Bajak in Boston contributed to this report.

Follow Eric Tucker on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/etuckerAP>

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Follow Eric Tucker on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/etuckerAP>

Crash may be grim echo of US downing of Iran flight in 1988

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The Western allegation that Iran shot down a Ukrainian jetliner and killed 176 people offers a grim echo for the Islamic Republic, which found itself the victim of an accidental shootdown by American forces over 30 years ago.

The July 3, 1988 downing of Iran Air flight 655 by the U.S. Navy remains one of the moments the Iranian government points to in its decades-long distrust of America. They rank it alongside the 1953 CIA-backed coup that toppled its elected prime minister and secured Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's absolute power until he abdicated the throne before the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

As recently as last week, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani referenced the attack in criticizing President Donald Trump's comments that U.S. forces had picked out 52 targets to be attacked in Iran if needed, one for each of the American hostages held after the 1979 U.S. Embassy takeover.

"Those who refer to the number 52 should also remember the number 290. #IR655," Rouhani wrote on Twitter. "Never threaten the Iranian nation."

The attack on the Iran Air flight followed what the U.S. Navy refers to as Operation Praying Mantis, a daylong naval battle in the Persian Gulf between American forces and Iran during the country's long 1980s war with Iraq. That battle came after the USS Samuel B. Robertson struck a mine that the Americans later accused Iran of laying in the shipping channels it was trying to keep open for Kuwaiti oil tankers amid the so-called "Tanker War."

After the battle, U.S. forces continued to patrol shipping channels while Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard often harassed or swarmed incoming ships with smaller vessels. That's a tactic used even today in the narrows of the Strait of Hormuz, through which 20% of the world's oil passes.

Just after dawn on July 3, 1988, the USS Vincennes sent a helicopter to hover over Iranian speedboats the Navy described as harassing commercial ships. The Iranians allegedly fired on the helicopter and the Vincennes gave chase, the Navy said. Unacknowledged for years afterward by the Navy though, the Vincennes had crossed into Iranian territorial waters in pursuit. It began firing at the Iranian ships there.

As the fighting raged, Iran Air flight 655 took off from Bandar Abbas, Iran, heading for Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. The Airbus A300 began its ascent as normal, part of a twice-weekly route flown by the airline for over 20 years. The captain communicated with air traffic controllers in English. His last message was: "Thank you, good day."

The Vincennes meanwhile had mistaken the commercial aircraft for an Iranian F-14, despite having state-of-the-art combat equipment at the time. The U.S. says the Navy made 11 radio warning calls on different frequencies before the Vincennes fired two missiles at the airplane, bringing it down and killing all aboard. The aircraft's "black box" flight recorders were never recovered.

The deaths shocked Iran, even amid the carnage of the war with Iraq, which would kill 1 million people. Sixty-six of the dead were infants and children. Authorities lined up wooden caskets of some of the dead in front of parliament in Tehran. Iran ultimately would sue the U.S., reaching a \$131.8 million settlement.

The U.S. later would give USS Vincennes Capt. William C. Rogers the country's Legion of Merit award, further angering Iran.

In the years since, Iran state television airs live footage on the anniversary of mourners wailing from boats at the spot the plane went down, tossing flowers into the warm waters of the Persian Gulf.

In recent years, hard-liners have begun linking the tragedy to Trump's maximalist campaign targeting

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Tehran, which included unilaterally withdrawing the U.S. from Iran's nuclear deal with world powers and reimposing crushing sanctions. Trump's decision to include Iran among nations in his still-standing visa bans also angers Iranians with relatives in America or those hoping to study there.

But there's also widespread anger against Iran's government bubbling underneath the surface. Economic protests have rocked the country, with the last round in November over government-set gasoline prices rising seeing over 300 people reportedly killed. The Iranian rial, around 32,000 to \$1 at the time of the 2015 nuclear deal, is now 135,000 to \$1.

Portraying the U.S. as a menace has helped bolster support of Iran's government in the past. The U.S. drone strike that killed Revolutionary Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani last week in Baghdad helped with that, seeing over a million people turn up in Tehran alone for his multi-city funeral procession.

But even that processional ended with a stampede in Soleimani's hometown that killed at least 56 people and injured over 200 more. That night, Iran launched its ballistic missile attack on Iraqi bases housing U.S. troops and buried the general. At dawn, news broke about the crash of the Ukrainian flight.

Follow Jon Gambrell on Twitter at www.twitter.com/jongambrellAP.

Australians leave homes as heat, winds escalate fire danger

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

EDEN, Australia (AP) — Thousands of people fled their homes and helicopters dropped supplies to towns at risk of nearby wildfires as hot, windy conditions Friday threatened already fire-ravaged southeastern Australian communities.

The danger is centered on New South Wales and Victoria, Australia's most populous states, where temperatures and winds spiked after a few days of relatively benign conditions.

Firefighters were working into the night to keep the fires from reaching communities as fierce winds whipped the blazes in multiple directions.

The New South Wales Rural Fire Service had warned that coastal towns south of Sydney including Eden, Batemans Bay and Nowra could again be under threat weeks after losing homes to the fires. By Friday evening, the wildfires burning in that region were holding within containment lines, but winds could cause them to flare anew, Rural Fire Service Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons told reporters.

New South Wales Premier Gladys Berejiklian said the extent of any damage from the fires wouldn't be known until Saturday morning.

"We know it's going to be a long and difficult night," Berejiklian said.

In neighboring Victoria, evacuation orders were issued in alpine areas, and Premier Daniel Andrews pleaded with residents to heed alerts and avoid complacency even though no fresh destruction was being reported.

"Despite this unprecedented fire activity, we have nobody who is unaccounted for, we have no further people who have died, and we have no further communities who have been cut off," Andrews told reporters. "Now, all of those things can change and that is perhaps the most powerful reminder that we have to remain vigilant."

The unprecedented fire crisis in southeast Australia has claimed at least 26 lives, destroyed more than 2,000 homes and scorched an area twice the size of the U.S. state of Maryland since September.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said Friday that the military was on standby to help firefighters and emergency agencies.

The military has already been involved in the unfolding crisis by clearing roads closed by fallen trees, burying dead cattle and sheep and providing fodder to surviving livestock.

Fire crews throughout the region were bracing for a long, rocky night. In the southeastern New South Wales town of Candelo, Nathan Barnden, a divisional commander with the Rural Fire Service, was preparing to head to the nearby township of Burragate with his team to protect the community from a fire that was marching north.

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The fire had breached containment lines in one area, and officials were worried that predicted winds of 60 to 100 kilometers per hour (40 to 60 miles per hour) could push it into populated areas.

"We'll be there to help defend them through the night," Barnden said. "We've been warned that we could be up there 'til the morning. ... There is a risk that we'll be cut off and we'll have to stay there throughout the time."

In the small village of Towamba in southern New South Wales, most residents had evacuated by Friday, after firefighters warned them they should get out, said John Nightingale, a volunteer firefighter with the Rural Fire Service.

Last week, some houses in the village were destroyed by a fire that turned the afternoon sky first a deep magenta and then pitch black, Nightingale said.

"Late at night, you could hear the rumbling of the fire," he said. "It was very terrifying."

Officials feared the wind shift late Friday could blow the flames in a new direction.

Nightingale said he and the other firefighters would work to snuff out any spot fires that flare up to try and keep them from spreading. But if conditions became too dangerous, they would need to take shelter at a community hall, a solid structure with about 25,000 liters (6,600 gallons) of water attached to it. Alongside the hall is a cleared, grassy area away from trees and shrubs where people can retreat as a last resort.

"The grass on the oval is very short so there's nothing to carry a strong fire," he said. "So that's a survival option, basically. A patch of grass. And if that happened, we'd have trucks and sprinklers going and hoses going, wetting people down. But I would hate it to come to that. Anything but that."

Temperatures in parts of the fire-threatened area reached around 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) on Friday, and conditions remained tinder dry.

The wildfire disaster has focused many Australians on how the nation adapts to climate change. Morrison has come under criticism for downplaying the need for his government to address climate change, which experts say helps supercharge the blazes. On Friday, thousands of protesters gathered in cities across Australia to call for action on climate change and demand that Morrison be ousted.

Morrison said Thursday that a government inquiry into the fires would examine the role of climate change.

Asked on Friday whether he expected fire emergencies of the same magnitude to become more common in the future with climate change, Morrison did not give a direct answer.

"There'll be the reviews that take place as you'd expect and I've indicated in response to questions that we'll be working closely with state and territory authorities on how they're undertaken," Morrison told reporters. "The links and implications here have been acknowledged."

Morrison brushed off criticism over what many Australians perceive as a slow, detached response to the wildfire crisis.

"What we've got here is the single largest federal response to a bushfire disaster nationally that the country has ever seen," Morrison said. "The government's responding to an unprecedented crisis with an unprecedented level of support."

The conservation group WWF-Australia estimates that 1.25 billion wild animals had died during the fires in addition to livestock losses, which the government expects will exceed 100,000 animals.

WWF fears the disasters could lead to local extinctions and threaten the survival of some species, such as the glossy black-cockatoo and a knee-high kangaroo known as the long-footed potoroo.

WWF conservation scientist Stuart Blanch described the estimate as conservative, and it did not include bats, frogs and insects.

The majority of estimated losses were reptiles, followed by birds, then mammals such as koalas, kangaroos, wallabies, echidnas and wombats.

WWF estimates there were between 100,000 and 200,000 koalas across Australia before the fire season. Estimated koala losses in the current emergency include 25,000 on Kangaroo Island off southern Australia and 8,000 in northwest New South Wales.

"It's a significant loss, but I don't think we'll know for several months," Blanch said of the koala deaths.

Associated Press writers Rod McGuirk in Canberra, Australia, and Kristen Gelineau in Sydney contributed to this report.

Iraqi PM tells US to decide mechanism for troop withdrawal

By SAMYA KULLAB and QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi has told the U.S. secretary of state to send a delegation to Iraq tasked with formulating the mechanism for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq, according to a statement released Friday.

The statement, from the office of the Iraqi caretaker prime minister, said the request came in a telephone call between Abdul-Mahdi and U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Thursday night. It says Pompeo called the Iraqi premier.

Abdul-Mahdi's comments to Pompeo suggests he was standing by his previous statements that U.S. troops should leave Iraq despite recent signals toward de-escalation between Tehran and Washington following the tit-for-tat attacks that brought Iraq to the brink of a proxy war.

Tensions eased on Wednesday when President Donald Trump signaled that Washington was stepping away from escalation.

The Iraqi prime minister said his country rejects all violations against its sovereignty, including the barrage of ballistic missiles that Iranian forces fired targeting against U.S. troops in Iraq and also America's violation of Iraq's airspace in the airstrike that killed a top Iranian general last week.

The Iraqi leader asked Pompeo to "send delegates to Iraq to prepare a mechanism to carry out the parliament's resolution regarding the withdrawal of foreign troops from Iraq," the statement said.

"The prime minister said American forces had entered Iraq and drones are flying in its airspace without permission from Iraqi authorities and this was a violation of the bilateral agreements," the statement added.

Top American military officials including Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper have said there were no plans for the U.S. to withdraw from Iraq.

Iraqi lawmakers passed a non-binding resolution to oust U.S. troops following a strike that killed top Iranian general Qassem Soleimani and senior Iraqi militia commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis last Friday.

The latest escalation was set off when a rocket attack blamed on the Iranian-backed militia group Kataeb Hezbollah, or Hezbollah Brigades, caused the death of an American contractor at a base in Kirkuk province. The U.S. replied with a barrage of strikes on the militia's bases, killing at least 25 people.

Kullab reported from Beirut.

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press

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

1. 'NO MISSILE HIT THE PLANE' Iran denies Western allegations a Ukrainian jetliner that crashed outside Tehran was brought down by an Iranian missile and calls on the U.S. and Canada to share any information they have on the crash.

2. WHEN PELOSI WILL MOVE ON IMPEACHMENT The House speaker says she will "soon" transmit the articles of impeachment against Trump, signaling a potential thaw in the standoff with Senate Republicans as she warned against rushing to an acquittal without a fair trial.

3. WHO COULD PLAY KEY ROLE IN CALIFORNIA PRIMARY Five million independent voters in the state's March 3 Democratic presidential primary, but complicated election rules make it hard to tap them.

4. WHY IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL MAY BE HARD TO SALVAGE The European Union says it will "spare no effort" to keep the landmark 2015 accord alive, but with tensions between the U.S. and Iran escalating into open hostilities it seems increasingly unlikely that will be possible.

5. BOEING EMPLOYEES SOUNDED ALARM ON 737 MAX Newly released Boeing documents show com-

pany employees knew about problems with flight simulators for the now-grounded jetliner and talked about misleading regulators.

6. 'FRAUGHT WITH DANGERS' Prince Harry and his wife Meghan say they plan to become "financially independent" working members of the royal family, but experts say the part-time arrangement could be impractical.

7. EPSTEIN JAILHOUSE VIDEO DISAPPEARS Video footage of the area around the disgraced financier's jail cell on a day he survived an apparent suicide attempt "no longer exists," federal prosecutors tell a judge.

8. ROSY EMPLOYMENT REPORT EXPECTED The U.S. job market appears to be entering 2020 on a solid footing as economists expect gains of 160,000 workers in December.

9. GROWTH IN NUMBER OF TV SERIES 'BANANAS' The head of FX Networks says an estimated tally of all scripted programs available to viewers exceeded 500 for the first time.

10. WHERE BETTORS WILL PUT THEIR MONEY Sports fans are expected to wager on the XFL, the upstart football league that begins play the week after the Super Bowl.

Harry, Meghan seek financial independence: Will that work?

By GREGORY KATZ Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — As part of a surprise announcement distancing themselves from the British royal family, Prince Harry and his wife Meghan declared they will "work to become financially independent" — a move that has not been clearly spelled out and could be fraught with obstacles.

The couple indicated in their statement Wednesday that they want to be free to work on their own terms while continuing to support the work of Queen Elizabeth II, Harry's grandmother. And that could be a problem, some royal watchers say.

"I don't think it is going to work, to be honest," said David McClure, a television producer and writer who examined the wealth of the royal family in his book "Royal Legacy."

"How can you be half in, half out? Half the week perform public duties and the other half earn your own income with TV, lectures, books? It is fraught with dangers," he said.

And the plan appeared not to have been coordinated with the palace, which quickly issued its own statement saying discussions "were at an early stage" and there were "complicated issues that will take time to work out."

On Thursday, the 93-year-old queen moved to take control of the situation, ordering officials representing the monarch, her son Prince Charles, grandson Prince William and Harry and Meghan to meet to find "workable solutions" within "days, not weeks," Britain's national news agency, Press Association, reported.

Meanwhile, questions swirled about what the term "financial independence" might mean for the royal couple.

Harry, 35, and Meghan, 38, have said they plan to cut ties to the taxpayer support given each year to the queen for official use, which currently covers 5% of the costs of running their office. But they may still continue to rely heavily on private funding provided by Harry's father, Prince Charles, who controls a vast, lucrative estate known as the Duchy of Cornwall.

Taxpayer support is provided by the Treasury to the queen each year through a fund called the Sovereign Grant. In the last fiscal year, the queen paid 329 million pounds (\$429 million) into the Treasury from the Crown Estate and received 82 million pounds (\$107 million) for official use — some of which went to fund Harry and Meghan's office costs.

But the majority of funding for the couple's office comes from Charles, who uses the revenue from the Duchy of Cornwall to pay for many of his activities along with those of his wife Camilla and his sons Harry and William.

The Duchy of Cornwall was established in 1337, and under its medieval charter, Charles is not allowed to sell any of its real estate or other assets — but he is entitled to the annual income it generates, which in the last year was roughly 21.6 million pounds (\$28.2 million).

Harry and Meghan may be able to credibly assert they are not relying on taxpayer money, which could

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be their definition of financial independence.

They faced a barrage of stinging criticism recently for using more than 2 million pounds (\$2.6 million) of taxpayer funds for the renovation of their home near Windsor Castle. They say they plan to continue using Frogmore Cottage as their U.K. base — if the queen agrees.

Harry and Meghan also have considerable assets of their own. Harry inherited an estimated 7 million pounds (\$9.1 million) from his late mother, Princess Diana, that has grown with interest, as well as money from his great-grandmother. Meghan is a millionaire in her own right after a successful acting career on the popular TV show "Suits."

Before her 2018 marriage to Harry, Meghan was positioning herself as a lifestyle influencer like business-women Gwyneth Paltrow and Reese Witherspoon. Meghan's blog was called The Tig, with a now-closed website and Instagram account.

"I can see her relaunching The Tig in a different form. People want to know what she's wearing, what she's eating, how she's living. She certainly has an understanding of the power of her appearance," said Lauren Sherman, chief correspondent in New York for the London-based Business of Fashion news site.

As the Duchess of Sussex, the clothes Meghan wears — as well as the ones she dresses her 8-month-old son Archie in — often sell out quickly and spike online searches.

Last year, Meghan collaborated with her friend, designer Misha Nonoo, to create a line of office wear for women to benefit the U.K.-based women's charity Smart Works, which provides office-appropriate clothing and work-skills training to disadvantaged women.

But, Sherman also noted the potential pitfalls of any future involving fashion.

"They're going to have to be very, very careful," Sherman said. "A lot of brands now are mission-based. She would need to partner with a brand that has a mission or has a charitable element and preaches transparency on a lot of different levels or is very entrepreneurial and female driven. There aren't many brands that would sort of pass the muster."

Chris Addison, an Emmy Award-winning writer and director from Britain whose credits include "Veep," is curious about Meghan and Harry's future plans.

"I'd love to know what they're going to do ... because they've clearly been thinking about it for a long time," he said Thursday at a TV critics meeting in Pasadena.

Asked if he could envision working with the couple to produce content — similar to Barack and Michelle Obama's Netflix deal — Addison replied, "Never say never to anything."

The royal couple will still be using British taxpayer money in some cases. Taxpayer funds are routinely used to pay for official overseas travel that the royals carry out, often at the request of the Foreign Office, which uses the family as goodwill ambassadors in many parts of the world, particularly Commonwealth countries.

Harry and Meghan, who were vilified in the press for accepting rides on private jets while calling for positive action on climate change, say on their website that they will continue to use taxpayer money for official trips when carrying out royal duties in support of the queen and the government.

They say they will pay for all trips taken on their own time.

There is also a gray area concerning the costs of their personal security. The royals are protected by a special unit of the Metropolitan Police, also known as Scotland Yard, that is funded by taxpayers for a variety of roles, including leading Britain's counter-terrorism efforts and keeping the streets safe.

The British government does not provide a public breakdown of the cost of protecting the royal family for fear that would be useful to anyone considering an attack. There have been no indications that Harry or Meghan wish to give up this protection.

Associated Press writers Leanne Italie in New York and Beth Harris in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

Follow full AP coverage at <https://www.apnews.com/PrinceHarry>

On streets of Tehran, relief for now at no wider conflict

By MEHDI FATTAHI and AYA BATRAWY Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iranian newspapers proclaimed the country's attack on U.S. forces in Iraq to be "a dark night for Americans," and Washington's "first admission of failure in history." On the bustling streets of Tehran, however, there was relief Thursday that neither side appeared primed for war.

"War is not something like the 'Call of Duty' game," said Dara Shojaei, a 23-year-old architecture student. "It's not a game you can play to win. There's no winner."

But with the relief came some mixed feelings about how far Iran should go to avenge the killing of Revolutionary Guard Gen. Qassem Soleiman, the country's most powerful commander who was slain by a U.S. drone strike in Baghdad last week. His death brought an outpouring of grief across the country, and Iran responded early Wednesday by firing a barrage of ballistic missiles at two Iraqi military bases housing American troops.

The dramatic blast of more than a dozen missiles caused no casualties at the two bases, although U.S., Canadian and British officials said Thursday that evidence showed that an Iranian anti-aircraft missile probably downed a Ukrainian jetliner near Tehran just a few hours after Iran launched its attack on the Iraqi bases. They said the strike, which killed all 176 people on board, could have been a mistake.

Investigators from Iran's Civil Aviation Organization offered no immediate explanation for the disaster. A preliminary Iranian investigative report released Thursday said that the airliner pilots never made a radio call for help and that the aircraft was trying to turn back for the airport when the burning plane went down.

Even though American and Iraqi officials said no casualties were sustained in the Iranian missile strikes on the two bases in Iraq, Iranian state TV claimed that some 80 U.S. soldiers were killed — a claim reiterated Thursday by a top Iranian military general, Gen. Amir Ali Hajizadeh. He offered no evidence.

At the White House, President Donald Trump said Iran "appears to be standing down," while Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei described the missile attack as "a slap" against America.

Across state media, the Iranian government is positioning its retaliatory strike as a victory.

The hard-line Khamenei newspaper proclaimed Iran's missiles damaged U.S. dignity, while another hard-line daily, Javan, said it was America's first admission of failure in its history.

The reformist daily Aftab Yazd led with the headline: "Iran's slap makes Trump withdraw and declare peace." Another reformist daily paper, Arman Mellis, called it "A dark night for Americans."

Despite Tehran's claims that the strikes killed Americans, Iranians have access to other sources of information. Although social media sites like Twitter are blocked, Iranians are able to access it and others through virtual private networks, or VPNs.

Ali Azimi, a 41-year-old engineer, said Iran's retaliation was "excessive."

"We shouldn't have taken revenge because they could have hit and destroyed us," he said.

In somewhat mixed messages Thursday, President Hassan Rouhani warned of a "very dangerous response" if the U.S. makes "another mistake," but a senior commander vowed even "harsher revenge."

Mohammad Taghizadeh, a 30-year-old resident of Tehran, described the Iranian actions as a "good start."

"As the supreme leader said, it was a slap. It was not satisfying and bigger things should happen," he said.

He also echoed a familiar refrain of deep suspicion toward Washington.

"Trump is trying to boost the self-confidence of Americans, and I think he is lying," Taghizadeh said about U.S. claims of no casualties. He added that because Trump is running for re-election, he "can't say that we have had our soldiers killed."

Hajizadeh, who leads the country's aerospace program, said in remarks carried Thursday by the semi-official Tasnim news agency that the goal of "Operation Martyr Soleimani," as the retaliatory campaign was dubbed, was not to kill anyone, but to "strike the enemy's military machine."

Gen. Ali Fadavi, acting commander of the Revolutionary Guard, was quoted by Tasnim as describing the attack as a clear sign of Iran's unique strength.

"We stand against the enemy and we respond," he said. "No (other) country has the capacity to express its will against the United States."

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Across the country, ordinary Iranians are bracing for even more hard times after Trump vowed to keep up the maximum pressure campaign on Tehran.

Tensions have been running high in the Persian Gulf since Trump pulled the U.S out of Iran's nuclear deal with world powers in 2018 and re-imposed punishing sanctions. The sanctions have made it difficult for Iran to sell its oil internationally, which has affected the government's ability to pay for subsidies and pushed prices up.

"Over the past three days, there was not a single day that we woke up and didn't see negative news," said Shabnam Mohtashami, 43, of Tehran. "The thought of what could happen again and what calamities we might suffer is very scary."

But she said that "domestic (economic) problems put even more pressure on us than if a war will happen or not."

Iran's government faced widespread protests in November over rising prices, with many apparently also outraged by Iran's foreign spending on interventions in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and other countries while its own economy falters.

More than 300 people were killed in the anti-government protests, according to rights organization Amnesty International. During the violence and in the days that followed, Iranian authorities blocked access to the internet.

Soleimani's killing, however, helped rally the public around the leadership again.

Millions of Iranians were stunned by Soleimani's killing, and they poured into the streets as his casket was paraded through several cities. The general was seen by many in Iran as a national hero whose command of the Revolutionary Guard's Quds Force, which oversees Shiite proxy militias, projected Iranian power in the face of U.S. pressure.

Ali Fathollah-Nejad, an Iran expert at the Brookings Doha Center, said the Iranian government has used Soleimani's death to create "a nationalistic moment" and keep the flames of conflict with Washington simmering without risking a full-blown war that might endanger the regime's survival.

He said the killing angered people beyond the government's traditional base because of Soleimani's state crafted image in recent years as a patriotic hero defending the homeland from Sunni extremists, like the Islamic State group.

"In the short term this leads to regime stabilization, with the deep-seated socio-economic and political grievances that fueled the protests pushed under the surface at a moment when a lot of Iranians fear a full-blown war," Fathollah-Nejad said.

Batrawy reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Associated Press writer Amir Vahdat in Tehran contributed.

As Iran and US take step back from the brink, Canada grieves

By ROB GILLIES and TIM SULLIVAN Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — The worst had passed, it seemed, and the United States and Iran no longer appeared poised at the edge of war.

"All is well!" President Donald Trump tweeted Tuesday night, days after a U.S. drone strike killed Iran's most powerful general, and Iran, after a barrage of missiles, had signaled it was stepping back from further escalation.

But 27 seconds before Trump's tweet, commercial flight trackers had lost contact with a Ukrainian International Airlines jet that had just taken off from Tehran's main airport. On board were 176 people, including 138 passengers on their way to Canada and at least 63 Canadian citizens and 11 Ukrainians. The plane, which never made a mayday call, slammed moments later into the ground.

Everyone on board died. They were students, newlyweds, doctors and parents. The youngest was a 1-year-old girl, Kurdia Molani, who was flying back home with her parents to the Toronto suburb of Ajax.

By late Thursday, Western leaders said that Iran had most likely shot down the jetliner with a surface-

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to-air missile — probably by accident. The loss of so many lives transformed the U.S.-Iran confrontation, which had seemed to conclude with limited bloodshed.

Instead, what had begun with a drone attack on Gen. Qassem Soleimani's motorcade at the Baghdad airport had suddenly rippled outward until dozens of Iranian-Canadians, dozens of Iranian students studying in Canada, were dead.

"The community is overwhelmed with mourning and sadness," said Payman Parseyan, a prominent Iranian-Canadian in western Canada, counting through the names of the friends he had lost. There was Pedram Mousavi and his wife Mojgan Daneshmand, both of them engineering professors, and their two daughters, Daria and Dorina Mousavi. There was Dr. Shekoufeh Choupannejad, an obstetrician-gynecologist, and her two daughters, Saba and Sara Saadat. It seemed impossible.

Some in Canada quickly blamed Trump for the disaster.

"This is insane. Sickening. Imagine having a family member on that plane," said Rob Kent, a 42-year-old Toronto resident. "One man, and only one, is responsible for those deaths. And he will never face consequences for them."

But Parseyan wasn't so sure.

"It takes two to tango," he said. "It's not hard to see the downing as a result of the escalation between the two countries. However, Iran is responsible for its own military defense equipment. While it has the right to defend itself, as it should to protect its own people, it should also have the responsibility with that right to make sure their defensive systems aren't targeting civilian aircraft."

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who has at times had a rocky relationship with Trump, was careful not to say the U.S. strike was responsible for what happened.

"I think it is too soon to be drawing conclusions or assigning blame or responsibility in whatever proportions," he told reporters.

But, he said, an accidental missile strike would compound the grief of so many people.

"My thoughts instantly went to how much harder this must make it for those families who are experiencing just a terrible amount of grief right now," he said.

Many simply struggled to make sense of the disaster.

"If something like this happened as an accident, it's much easier to take in than when you hear that maybe it got shot," said Nina Saeidpour, a Calgary real estate agent whose friend Kasra Saati was among the victims. "We're just trying to figure out what happened."

Ukrainian flights out of Tehran are often full of Iranian-Canadians and Iranian students studying in Canada, particularly after the long holiday break. Going back and forth via Kyiv is one of the most affordable routes between the two countries, and avoids stopovers in the United States, which is difficult for most Iranians.

At least 17 Canadian universities have confirmed that they lost students, professors or researchers.

Until the crash, the killing of Soleimani had seemed to end fairly quietly — at least for the U.S. A stampede at the general's funeral, jammed with mourners, had left 56 people dead and Iranian missile strikes against Iraqi bases housing American troops had injured no one. Iran appeared to have carefully calibrated the missile attacks to avoid causing further U.S. retaliation, giving early warning to its Iraqi allies to avoid casualties.

Iran has "concluded proportionate measures," Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif tweeted after the missile barrage.

Canada is one of America's oldest and closest allies, but Robert Bothwell, a professor of Canadian history and international relations at the University of Toronto, noted that Trump has said nothing about the dead Canadians.

"The unconcern certainly comes across," he said. "Not a word of sympathy."

By Thursday night, Trump had yet to mention Canada's tragedy.

Instead, in a campaign rally in Toledo, he told crowds that Soleimani's killing was "American justice," while deriding Democrats for questioning his decision to carry out the attack without first consulting Congress.

He also noted that America was ready to retaliate if Iran's missile attacks had caused any casualties.

"You have no idea," he told the cheering crowds. "A lot of people got very lucky."

Trump boasts Iranian general's death was 'American justice'

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

TOLEDO, Ohio (AP) — President Donald Trump used his first campaign election rally of 2020 to argue that he served up "American justice" by ordering a drone strike to take out Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani, while jeering Democratic leaders for questioning his decision to carry out the attack without first consulting Congress.

Trump's remarks on Thursday careened from mockery of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Rep. Adam Schiff, who heads the House Intelligence Committee, to a suggestion that he should have won the Nobel Prize, a preview of the sharp-edged reelection campaign that he will wage.

The president made his comments shortly after the Democratic-controlled House approved a resolution asserting that Trump must seek approval from Congress before engaging in further military action against Iran.

Trump mocked Pelosi's mental acuity and called Schiff a "pencil neck." He also tagged Sen. Bernie Sanders as "Crazy Bernie" for raising objections to how he carried out the strike on Soleimani.

"We got a call. We heard where he was. He knew the way he was getting there," Trump told cheering supporters in Toledo. "We didn't have time to call up Nancy, who isn't operating with a full deck."

"They want us to tell them so they can leak it to their friends in the corrupt media," Trump added.

Last week's killing of Soleimani brought long, simmering tensions between the U.S. and Iran to a boil. Iran, in retaliation, fired a barrage of missiles this week at two military bases in neighboring Iraq that house hundreds of U.S. troops. But with no casualties to U.S. or Iraqi troops, Trump said he had no plans to take further military action against Iran and would instead enact more sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

The Iran crisis, which momentarily overshadowed Trump's looming impeachment trial, has also opened a new front in the 2020 presidential campaign for Trump, who in 2016 campaigned on a promise to end American involvement in "endless wars."

Vice President Mike Pence, who joined Trump for the rally, said the president deserved credit for taking out a "dangerous terrorist" while managing to keep the engagement from escalating into an all-out war.

"And when American lives were threatened by the most dangerous terrorist in the world, President Donald Trump took action and Qassem Soleimani is gone," Pence said. "And in the wake of that attack, Iran responded, but thanks to the professionalism of the military, we suffered no American casualties and Iran appears to be standing down. That's what leadership looks like."

Trump also sought to compare his response to the recent attack on the U.S. embassy in Baghdad to the 2012 attack on U.S. government facility in Benghazi. A U.S. ambassador to Libya, a foreign service officer and two CIA contractors were killed in the Benghazi attack, which led to a two-year Republican-led investigation into then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who was not found to have committed wrongdoing.

No Americans were killed in the Baghdad assault. The protesters managed only to breach the edge of the sprawling embassy complex.

"This was the anti-Benghazi," he said. "We got there very quickly. This is the exact opposite."

Trump also turned to a topic that frequently rankles him: the fact that he has never won a Nobel Prize. Referencing the 2019 Nobel Prize winner, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, Trump said that he himself deserved the honor instead.

"I made a deal. I saved a country, and I just heard that the head of that country is now getting the Nobel Peace Prize for saving the country," Trump said. "I said, 'What?' Did I have something to do with it? Yeah. But, you know, that's the way it is. As long as we know, it's all that matters."

Abiy was awarded the prize in October for his sweeping reforms and surprising embrace of a bitter rival.

Trump enters the election year flush with more than \$100 million in campaign cash, a low unemployment rate, and an unsettled Democratic presidential field. Yet, polling shows he remains vulnerable.

In December, an AP-NORC poll showed Trump's approval rating at 40%. There have not been more recent polls to gauge support for the president in the wake of the targeted killing of Soleimani, though

opinions of Trump have changed little over the course of his presidency.

Trump has never fallen into historic lows for a president's approval ratings, but Gallup polling shows his December rating registers lower than that of most recent presidents at the same point in their first terms. Notably, approval of Trump and former President Barack Obama in the December before their reelection bid is roughly the same.

But Obama's approval rating never fell below 40% in Gallup polling, and he recovered slightly in the months leading up to his reelection to finish his first term with an average rating just below 50%. Trump's approval rating has never been higher than 46% in Gallup polling.

For Trump to win reelection, securing Ohio's 18 electoral votes will be critical. He won Ohio by 8 points in 2016, after Obama held the state in 2008 and 2012. The visit to Toledo marked Trump's 15th appearance in Ohio as president.

Associated Press writers Jill Colvin, Hannah Fingerhut, Brian Slodysko and Joshua Boak in Washington and Mike Householder in Toledo, Ohio, contributed to this report.

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

Boeing papers show employees slid 737 Max problems past FAA

By DAVID KOENIG AP Airlines Writer

Boeing employees knew about problems with flight simulators for the now-grounded 737 Max and apparently tried to hide them from federal regulators, according to documents released Thursday.

In internal messages, Boeing employees talked about misleading regulators about problems with the simulators. In one exchange, an employee told a colleague they wouldn't let their family ride on a 737 Max.

Boeing said the statements "raise questions about Boeing's interactions with the FAA" in getting the simulators qualified. But said the company is confident that the machines work properly.

"These communications do not reflect the company we are and need to be, and they are completely unacceptable," Boeing said in a statement.

Employees also groused about Boeing's senior management, the company's selection of low-cost suppliers, wasting money, and the Max.

"This airplane is designed by clowns who in turn are supervised by monkeys," one employee wrote.

Names of the employees who wrote the emails and text messages were redacted.

The Max has been grounded worldwide since March, after two crashes killed 346 people. The crash that month of an Ethiopian Airlines flight had been preceded in October 2018 by the crash of a brand-new Max operated by Indonesia's Lion Air.

Boeing is still working to update software and other systems on the Max to convince regulators to let it fly again. The work has taken much longer than Boeing expected.

The latest batch of internal Boeing documents were provided to the Federal Aviation Administration and Congress last month and released on Thursday. The company said it was considering disciplinary action against some employees.

An FAA spokesman said the agency found no new safety risks that have not already been identified as part of the FAA's review of changes that Boeing is making to the plane. The spokesman, Lynn Lunsford, said the simulator mentioned in the documents has been checked three times in the last six months.

"Any potential safety deficiencies identified in the documents have been addressed," he said in a statement.

A lawmaker leading one of the congressional investigations into Boeing called them "incredibly damning."

"They paint a deeply disturbing picture of the lengths Boeing was apparently willing to go to in order to evade scrutiny from regulators, flight crews, and the flying public, even as its own employees were sounding alarms internally," said Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore., chairman of the House Transportation Committee.

DeFazio said the documents detail "some of the earliest and most fundamental errors in the decisions

that went into the fatally flawed aircraft." DeFazio and other critics have accused the company of putting profit over safety.

The grounding of the Max will cost the company billions in compensation to families of passengers killed in the crashes and airlines that canceled thousands of flights. Last month, the company ousted its CEO and decided to temporarily halt production of the plane in mid-January, a decision that is rippling out through its supplier network.

Flaring tensions could kill Iran nuclear deal; to what end?

By DAVID RISING Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — The landmark 2015 deal between Tehran and world powers aimed at preventing Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons has been teetering on the edge of collapse since the United States pulled out unilaterally in 2018. The European Union says it will "spare no effort" to keep the deal alive, but with tensions between the U.S. and Iran escalating into open hostilities it seems increasingly unlikely that will be possible.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE NUCLEAR DEAL FAILS?

The short answer is that every step Iran takes past the limitations of the deal reduces the so-called "break-out time" to produce a nuclear warhead — which is still something Iran insists it does not want to do. Before the deal, conservative estimates were that Iran was within five to six months of being able to produce a bomb, while some feared it was within two to three months. With the deal safeguards in place the break-out time was estimated to be more than a year. Diplomats involved note that means Iran could produce a single device in that time. It would take longer to build an arsenal and delivery system, though Tehran already has developed its own short and medium-range ballistic missiles with enough range to hit targets as far away as parts of Europe.

WHAT DOES THE DEAL DO?

Iran insists its nuclear program is for civilian purposes only, and the deal allows the country to run reactors to generate power. The deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, restricts the number and types of centrifuges Iran could use, puts limits on how much heavy water and enriched uranium it can stockpile, and restricts the purity level to which it can enrich uranium. Iran has had to grant inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency access to its facilities to verify its compliance. In return, Iran has received economic sanctions relief from the U.S., E.U. and the U.N. Security Council.

WHY IS IT FAILING?

President Donald Trump unilaterally pulled the U.S. out of the deal in May 2018, saying it was insufficient and should be re-negotiated because it didn't address Iran's ballistic missile program or its involvement in regional conflicts. Since then, Washington has pursued a policy of "maximum pressure" on Iran, reinstating American sanctions with the stated goal of forcing Tehran back to the negotiating table. Those sanctions have taken a toll on Iran's economy, and sent its currency into a downward spiral. The other countries involved in the deal — Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China — along with the European Union are sticking to the deal, saying it has been working and remains the best way to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. However, they have thus far been unsuccessful in providing new economic incentives to offset the U.S. sanctions. Dissatisfied with those efforts, Iran has been openly and gradually violating the terms of the agreement.

WHERE DO THINGS STAND?

Iran has breached the main limitations of the nuclear deal, exceeding the stockpiles of heavy water and uranium allowed, the number and types of centrifuges it can operate to enrich uranium, and the purity of uranium. The accord limits Iran to enriching uranium to 3.67%, which can fuel a commercial nuclear power plant. Weapons-grade uranium needs to be enriched to around 90%. However, once a country enriches uranium to around 20%, scientists say the time needed to reach 90% is halved. Iran previously enriched to 20%. Last summer, Iran boosted its enrichment purity to 4.5%. Following the U.S. killing of

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Revolutionary Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani, Iran announced what it said was its fifth and final step in violating the deal, saying it no longer will abide by any limitation to its enrichment activities.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

The U.S. has been urging the other parties to the JCPOA to abandon the deal, a position reiterated by Trump on Wednesday when he said "they must now break away from the remnants of the Iran deal" and work together on a better one.

In Brussels, however, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen stressed that her envoy would "spare no effort" to safeguard the deal. All powers still in the deal have been urging Iran to return to compliance. Britain, Germany, France and the E.U. have gone one step farther, threatening to invoke the pact's dispute resolution mechanism — something China and Russia have been against — which would start the clock on a 30-day period in which to resolve the problem, which can be extended. If the problem persists, the matter could be brought before the U.N. Security Council and could result in the "snapback" of sanctions that had been lifted under the deal. Diplomats involved have been stressing hope that the dispute can be resolved without that.

Even in announcing the "fifth step" of violations, Iran stressed that it remained in the JCPOA and that it could reverse everything it has done. It was also vague about whether the fifth step would mean any change to its current activities, saying that would be up to the country's atomic energy agency. But Iran suggested that if the dispute resolution mechanism and snapback were instituted, it would mean the end of the deal.

Independents could decide California's Democratic primary

By KATHLEEN RONAYNE Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — In the battle for the Democratic presidential nomination, no prize is bigger than California, which offers more delegates than any other state. And as candidates plot their strategies here, there's an overlooked group of voters who could be key to victory: independents.

More than 5 million voters not registered in a party are eligible to participate in California's March 3 Democratic primary, the second most of any state that votes on Super Tuesday, after Texas. These voters flexed their power during the 2018 midterms, helping California Democrats flip seven U.S. House seats long held by Republicans.

Such a vast pool of potential supporters is a tantalizing prospect for any White House hopeful. But tapping them won't be easy because of complicated election rules and the unfamiliarity many voters have with participating in presidential primaries so early in the contest. Success will require candidates to have a sophisticated organization in California even as they spend much of their time focusing on the early voting states that will kick off the primary season next month.

"It's the critical X-factor in a California presidential primary," said Ace Smith, a political consultant who helped run California Sen. Kamala Harris's presidential campaign last year and led Hillary Clinton's 2016 California operation.

So far, Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders and billionaire Michael Bloomberg have been most aggressive in pursuing independents. Sanders, the independent senator who has thrived on anti-establishment enthusiasm, is urging his California supporters to become Democrats, despite the fact that they can vote for him as independents. At a December rally, he walked the audience through changing their voter affiliation, telling them to use the secretary of state's website.

His campaign argues that this approach ensures voters get the ballots they need, rather than having to take additional steps, as independents must. Californians can change their party registration until Feb. 18. The campaign is also adding a feature on its mobile app that will let supporters look up the party registrations of friends and family, so that they can send them instructions on how to vote for Sanders.

"They're a very important block of voters," said Rafael Nívar, who runs Sanders' California campaign. "They're the base that is going to be supportive of the politics of the senator."

Bloomberg is essentially ceding the traditional early voting states of Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada and

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South Carolina to stake his campaign — and his vast wealth — on a strong Super Tuesday showing.

“We’re building the largest field and outreach effort in California presidential primary history, including an extensive effort to ensure that non-affiliated voters can have their voice heard in choosing the next Democratic nominee,” Bloomberg’s California spokesman Drew Godinich said in an emailed statement. He declined to provide more details.

A spokeswoman for Pete Buttigieg, the former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, said the campaign is reaching out to independents across the country generally but not doing anything specific to educate Californians on how to pull Democratic ballots. A spokeswoman for Tom Steyer, the California philanthropist, said independents are supporting Steyer, but she provided no details on outreach efforts.

Representatives for former Vice President Joe Biden and Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren didn’t answer questions about their efforts to target these voters.

While they are eligible to vote in the Democratic primary, independents must take steps to do so. Those who show up at a polling place will be given an option to get a ballot for the Democratic primary. But the roughly 4 million independents who are expected to vote by mail must affirmatively ask for a ballot, either by returning a form in the mail, calling or emailing county elections officials.

As of last week, just 8% of independents who vote by mail had asked for a ballot in the presidential primary, according to data collection by Paul Mitchell, who runs the nonpartisan Political Data Inc., which collects and sells voter data to campaigns. Not all counties had reported data.

Complicating matters is the fact that for most elections, Californians are accustomed to open primaries in which all the candidates appear on the same ballot, regardless of party. Many may not know that the presidential race runs differently. The state also moved up its primary from June to March, and the earlier voting could catch some people by surprise.

Other Super Tuesday states also have a patchwork of voting rules that campaigns must understand.

Minnesota will hold its first presidential primary since 1992. Early voting there begins on Jan. 17, and some voters could face confusion. While voters don’t have to declare party affiliation for state primaries, they will have to pick a side for the presidential contest.

Colorado, meanwhile, has taken a different approach and will mail every independent voter a ballot for both the Democratic and Republican primaries, letting them choose which to vote in.

Despite the complexities, strategists say it will pay off for candidates to pay attention to independents, especially in voter-rich states like California.

Candidates must earn support from 15% of voters in a congressional district to gain the delegates that will determine who wins the nomination. And since California has more congressional districts than any other state, independents could make the difference between clinching much-needed delegates or leaving the state empty-handed.

“If they’re targeting certain congressional districts, they’re not having to beat their opponent by 100,000 votes,” Mitchell said. “Delegates are going to be won on the margins up and down the state.”

In California, 240,000 independents cast ballots in the 2016 primary between Sanders and Clinton. Four years later, there are twice as many independent voters in the state, and most are likely to vote Democratic in the general election.

“It’s really millions of potentially disenfranchised primary voters who are just there for the taking if you can identify them and turn them out,” said Dan Newman, a California political consultant who previously worked at a firm that ran Clinton’s campaign in the state.

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

Analysis: Pelosi’s delay tests public opinion on impeachment

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrats know they don’t have the votes to convict President Donald Trump when the Senate convenes as the Court of Impeachment. So they are pursuing the case in the court of

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public opinion.

It became a defining moment, one that stunned Washington, when Speaker Nancy Pelosi declined to immediately transmit the charges to the Senate after the House impeached Trump.

The abrupt move vexed the president and his party, annoying some, angering others, and caused a political firestorm as the days turned to weeks. It's now approaching a month.

While the delay is producing an avalanche of theories and strategies about the sudden impasse, it hasn't much changed the widely expected final verdict: Trump's acquittal of charges he abused power and obstructed Congress in pressuring Ukraine to investigate Joe Biden.

Yet in the lull, something else happened. New evidence and documents emerged, including emails showing more of the administration's internal deliberations over Trump's actions. Former White House national security adviser John Bolton announced he would be willing to appear, if a subpoena was sent.

Attention shifted from the airy Constitutional arguments for and against impeachment to the earthy details of how to conduct the rare Senate trial, only the third in the nation's history.

There's nowhere near the 67 votes needed for conviction in the Senate, where Republicans with Majority Leader Mitch McConnell hold a slim 53-47 majority.

But a handful of Republican senators who will decide how things go are suddenly infused with new power, and clouded with political risk. Just 51 votes will set the rules. As McConnell works to hold them in line, Democrats will try to sway four GOP senators, particularly those up for re-election this year, to join in calling for a more witnesses and documents that McConnell is reluctant to allow.

Republican Sen. Susan Collins said she would be open to hearing new testimony. Alaska GOP Sen. Lisa Murkowski expressed discomfort with the leader's close coordination with the White House. Utah Sen. Mitt Romney said he'd like Bolton to appear.

Rather than the swift Senate trial that was expected to have started by now, Trump's impeachment has become a serial disruption to the presidency that is grinding into 2020.

"Many things have been accomplished," Pelosi said Thursday.

The stated goal of Democrats is a public airing of the trial rules before Pelosi names House managers to present the case to the Senate. How much time will they be given? For how many days? Will there be more witnesses and testimony allowed?

Those are all answers McConnell will only provide when he is ready.

The ever tight-lipped Republican leader sees no reason to deviate much from the last time the Senate convened as an impeachment court for the historic undertaking, for Bill Clinton's trial in 1999. He says he'll show the details in due time.

"There will be no unfair new rulebook written solely for President Trump," McConnell said Thursday. His plan is to start the trial and have the senators decide later if they want to hear more testimony. "I've said for months that this is our preferred route."

But the longer the Pelosi-McConnell standoff drags on — itself a piece of history as the two legendary leaders refuse to budge over perhaps the most consequential role of Congress — so do the questions.

It hasn't been a risk-free strategy for Democrats. The White House mocked Democrats with a video Thursday showing all the lawmakers who said impeachment was "urgent," only to now stall the proceedings. Lawmakers in both the House and Senate have publicly aired their exasperation with the delay, one embarrassingly backtracking the comments.

Republicans say the public is on their side as McConnell invoked Founding Father Alexander Hamilton to warn against "a procrastinated resolution of impeachments." Thousands flocked to the first Trump rally of the year late Thursday in Toledo cheering him on with shouts of "USA!" They chuckled along as the president derided Pelosi.

In fact, polling throughout the impeachment proceedings has consistently shown the public closely divided over whether Trump should be impeached and removed from office.

A Monmouth University poll conducted in early December found that about 6 in 10 Americans said Democrats in Congress are more interested in bringing down Trump than pursuing the facts, while likewise about

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6 in 10 said Republicans in Congress are more interested in defending Trump than pursuing the facts.

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said McConnell is a "clever fellow" and understandably frustrated that his plan for swift acquittal has been stalled. But Pelosi has done "just the right thing."

As the minority party in the Senate, Schumer has little to lose and more to gain with the strategy. Whatever the Senate does is highly unlikely to result in Trump being removed from office. This way, Schumer can help keep impeachment in the public eye as Trump and senators seek election. Pelosi's delay of the impeachment trial is a chance for Senate Democrats to win even by losing.

"If the speaker had sent the articles of impeachment over to the Senate immediately after they passed, Senate Republicans could have moved to dismiss," he said Thursday. "There wouldn't have been a fair or even a cursory trial."

After all Pelosi has done to bring House — and the nation — to this point, she is not about to let impeachment go so easily. She has put the House majority and her own speakership, her place in history, on the line.

Pressed Thursday as she dashed into a morning meeting at the Capitol about her plans, Pelosi told reporters she knew "exactly when" she would be transmitting the articles to the Senate.

"I'm not holding them indefinitely," Pelosi told reporters later at the Capitol. "I'll send them over when I'm ready."

EDITOR'S NOTE — AP Congressional Correspondent Lisa Mascaro has covered Congress since 2010.

Video in apparent Epstein suicide attempt is lost, US says

By JIM MUSTIAN and MICHAEL BALSAMO undefined

NEW YORK (AP) — Video footage of the area around Jeffrey Epstein's jail cell on a day he survived an apparent suicide attempt "no longer exists," federal prosecutors told a judge Thursday.

Officials at the Metropolitan Correctional Center in New York believed they had preserved footage of guards finding Epstein after he appeared to have attempted suicide, but actually saved a video from a different part of the jail, prosecutors said.

The FBI also has determined that the footage does not exist on the jail's backup video system "as a result of technical errors," Assistant U.S. Attorneys Maurene Comey and Jason Swergold wrote in a court filing.

The revelation came despite assurances prosecutors made that jail officials were preserving the footage at the request of a defense attorney for Nicholas Tartaglione, a former police officer who shared a cell with Epstein in July when the wealthy financier was discovered with bruises on his neck and then placed on suicide watch.

Epstein later hanged himself in jail Aug. 10 while awaiting trial on sex-trafficking charges, officials said.

Tartaglione's defense attorney, Bruce Barket, told The Associated Press he intends to ask U.S. District Judge Kenneth Karas to hold a hearing with "live testimony" to determine what happened to the missing video.

"The various and inconsistent accounts of what happened to that video are deeply troubling," Barket said in an email.

Tartaglione is charged in what prosecutors have described as the "gangland-style" killings of four men who disappeared during a cocaine-related dispute.

Barket said the jailhouse video would have supported his position that Tartaglione "acted appropriately" on the day in question, alluding to questions about whether Epstein had been attacked.

A spokeswoman for the Bureau of Prisons declined to comment, citing an ongoing investigation.

One of Epstein's attorneys, Marc Fernich, said the missing video "only adds to the unanswered questions and deepens the air of mystery surrounding (Epstein's) death, feeding the perception that the public will never really know what happened — and that the powers that be aren't really interested in finding out."

"Nothing about Jeffrey Epstein's prosecution and death in federal custody surprises or could surprise me at this point," Fernich added.

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The U.S. Attorney's Office in Manhattan said in Thursday's court filing that jailhouse officials had preserved video for the "correct date and time" but captured the wrong part of the jail. They said the jail's computer system listed a "different, incorrect cell" for Tartaglione.

"The Government further understands from the Federal Bureau of Investigation that it has reviewed that backup system as part of an unrelated investigation and determined that the requested video no longer exists on the backup system and has not since at least August 2019 as a result of technical errors," the prosecutors wrote.

The footage in question involves a July 23 episode in which correctional officers say they found Epstein on the floor of his cell with a strip of bedsheet around his neck. Michael Thomas, one of the officers charged with falsifying records the night Epstein died, was one of the officers who responded to that scene.

Epstein was moved out of that cell and placed on suicide watch. He was transferred back to the jail's special housing unit July 30, meaning he was less closely monitored but still supposed to be checked every 30 minutes. He was also required to have a cellmate, but he was left with none after his cellmate was transferred out of the jail Aug. 9, the day before his death, authorities have said.

Prosecutors charged the two officers responsible for guarding Epstein the night he died with falsifying prison records to conceal they were sleeping and browsing the internet during the hours they were supposed to be keeping a close watch on prisoners.

The falsification of records has been a problem throughout the federal prison system. The federal Bureau of Prisons, which for years has been plagued by extensive staffing shortages, chronic violence and serious misconduct, has come under increased scrutiny since Epstein's death in August.

Staffing shortages within the bureau are so severe that guards are regularly forced to work mandatory overtime, sometimes day after day, and violence leads to regular lockdowns at prison compounds across the nation. A congressional report also found that "bad behavior is ignored or covered up on a regular basis" within the bureau.

After Epstein's death in August, Attorney General William Barr said the financier's ability to take his own life inside one of most secure jails in America raised "serious questions that must be answered." Barr removed the agency's acting director in the wake of Epstein's death and named Kathleen Hawk Sawyer, the prison agency's director from 1992 until 2003, to replace him.

Barr told the AP in November that the investigation revealed a "series" of mistakes made that gave Epstein the chance to take his own life and that his suicide was the result of "a perfect storm of screw-ups."

Barr told the AP he had personally reviewed security footage from the night Epstein took his own life, which confirmed that no one entered the area where Epstein was housed on the night he died.

Balsamo reported from Washington.

Iranians shot down airliner, Western leaders declare

By LOLITA C. BALDOR and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It is "highly likely" that Iran shot down the civilian Ukrainian jetliner that crashed near Tehran late Tuesday, killing all 176 people on board, U.S., Canadian and British officials declared Thursday. They said the fiery missile strike could well have been a mistake amid rocket launches and high tension throughout the region.

The crash came just a few hours after Iran launched a ballistic attack against Iraqi military bases housing U.S. troops in its violent confrontation with Washington over the U.S. drone strike that killed an Iranian Revolutionary Guard general. The airliner could have been mistaken for a threat, said four U.S. officials, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive intelligence.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, whose country lost at least 63 citizens in the downing, said in Ottawa: "We have intelligence from multiple sources including our allies and our own intelligence. The evidence indicates that the plane was shot down by an Iranian surface-to-air missile."

Likewise, U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison offered similar

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statements. Morrison also said it appeared to be a mistake. "All of the intelligence as presented to us today does not suggest an intentional act," he said.

The assessment that 176 people were killed as collateral damage in the Iranian-U.S. conflict cast a new pall over what had at first appeared to be a relatively calm aftermath following the U.S. military operation that killed Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani.

It was not immediately clear how the U.S. and its allies would react. Despite efforts by Washington and Tehran to step back from the brink of possible war, the region remained on edge after the killing of the Iranian general and Iran's retaliatory missile strikes. U.S. troops were on high-alert.

At the White House, President Donald Trump suggested he believed Iran was responsible for the shoot-down and dismissed Iran's initial claim that it was a mechanical issue with the plane.

"Somebody could have made a mistake on the other side." Trump said, noting the plane was flying in a "pretty rough neighborhood."

Late Thursday, the U.S. House approved a measure that aims to bar any further military action against Iran without congressional approval. However, the resolution approved by the Democratic-majority House is nonbinding and, at any rate, no similar measure could pass the Republican-controlled Senate.

As for the airliner shutdown, the U.S. officials wouldn't say what intelligence they had that pointed to an Iranian missile, believed to be fired by Russian Tor system, known to NATO as the SA-15. But they acknowledged the existence of satellites and other sensors in the region, as well as the likelihood of communication interceptions and other similar intelligence.

The New York Times posted a video Thursday it said it had verified showing the moment the apparent missile struck the plane over Iran. The video shows a fast-moving object rising before a fiery explosion. An object, apparently on fire, then continues in a different direction.

A preliminary Iranian investigative report released Thursday said that the airliner pilots never made a radio call for help and that the aircraft was trying to turn back for the airport when the burning plane went down.

The Iranian report suggested that a sudden emergency struck the Boeing 737 operated by Ukrainian International Airlines late Tuesday, when it crashed, just minutes after taking off from Imam Khomeini International Airport in Tehran.

Investigators from Iran's Civil Aviation Organization offered no immediate explanation for the disaster, however. Iranian officials initially blamed a technical malfunction for the crash, something backed by Ukrainian officials before they said they wouldn't speculate amid an ongoing investigation.

Before the U.S. assessment, Iran's state-run IRNA news agency quoted Hasan Rezaeifa, the head of the of civil aviation accident investigation commission, claiming that "the topics of rocket, missile or anti-aircraft system is ruled out."

The Ukrainian International Airlines took off at 6:12 a.m. Wednesday, Tehran time, after nearly an hour's delay at Tehran's Imam Khomeini Airport, the main airport for travelers in Iran. It gained altitude heading west, reaching nearly 8,000 feet, according to both the report and flight-tracking data.

Then something went wrong, though "no radio messages were received from the pilot regarding unusual situations," the report said. In emergencies, pilots reach out to air-traffic controllers to warn them and to clear the runway for their arrival, though their first priority is to keep the aircraft flying.

Eyewitnesses, including the crew of another flight passing above, described seeing the plane engulfed in flames before crashing at 6:18 a.m., the report said. The crash caused a massive explosion when the plane hit the ground, likely because the aircraft had been fully loaded with fuel for the flight to Kyiv, Ukraine.

The report also confirmed that both of the "black boxes" that contain data and cockpit communications from the plane had been recovered, though they sustained damage and some parts of their memory was lost.

Hours before the plane crash the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration had issued an emergency flight restriction barring U.S. carriers and pilots from flying over areas of Iraqi, Iranian and some Persian Gulf airspace warning of the "potential for miscalculation or misidentification" for civilian aircraft due to height-

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ened political and military tensions.

Oleksiy Danilov, secretary of Ukraine's Security Council, told Ukrainian media that officials had several working theories regarding the crash, including a missile strike.

"A strike by a missile, possibly a Tor missile system, is among the main (theories), as information has surfaced on the internet about elements of a missile being found near the site of the crash," Danilov said.

Ukrainian investigators who arrived in Iran on Thursday awaited permission from Iranian authorities to examine the crash site and look for missile fragments, Danilov said.

The Tor is a Russian-made missile system. Russia delivered 29 Tor-M1s to Iran in 2007, and Iran has displayed the missiles in military parades.

Iran did not immediately respond to the Ukrainian comments. However, Gen. Abolfazl Shekarchi, the spokesman of the Iranian armed forces, denied a missile hit the airplane in a comments reported Wednesday by the semiofficial Fars news agency. He dismissed the allegation as "psychological warfare" by foreign-based Iranian opposition groups.

Ukraine has a grim history with missile attacks, including in July 2014 when one such strike downed a Malaysia Airlines flight over eastern Ukraine, killing all 298 people aboard.

The plane was carrying 167 passengers and nine crew members from several countries, including 82 Iranians, at least 63 Canadians and 11 Ukrainians, according to officials. Many of the passengers were believed to be international students attending universities in Canada; they were making their way back to Toronto by way of Kyiv after visiting with family during the winter break.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said, "Undoubtedly, the priority for Ukraine is to identify the causes of the plane crash. We will surely find out the truth."

The crash ranked among the worst losses of life for Canadians in an aviation disaster. The flag over Parliament in Ottawa was lowered to half-staff, and Prime Minister Trudeau vowed to get to the bottom of the disaster.

The U.S. accident investigator, the National Transportation Safety Board, is talking to the State Department and the Treasury Department about traveling to Iran to inspect the U.S.-built aircraft and working with Iranian authorities despite U.S. economic sanctions against that country. In a statement Thursday the NTSB said it "continues to monitor the situation surrounding the crash and evaluate its level of participation in the investigation."

U.S. officials have expressed concerned about sending employees to Iran because of the heightened tensions.

Associated Press writers Rob Gillies in Toronto, Robert Burns and Matthew Lee in Washington and Jill Lawless in London contributed.

Pelosi to 'soon' send impeachment articles for Senate trial

By LISA MASCARO and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Thursday she will "soon" transmit the articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump, signaling a potential thaw in the standoff with Senate Republicans as she warned against rushing to an acquittal without a fair trial.

Pelosi, D-Calif., faces mounting pressure from Republicans and some Democrats to quit delaying the president's trial in the Senate, three weeks after the House Democrats impeached Trump on charges of abuse and obstruction. Republicans say Democrats are embarrassed by their vote. But Pelosi countered that Democrats are "proud" of upholding the Constitution and said she doubted that Senate Republicans will do the same.

Many on Capitol Hill expect the Senate impeachment trial to begin next week.

"I'll send them over when I'm ready. That will probably be soon," Pelosi told reporters at the Capitol, noting she is not postponing it "indefinitely."

The standoff between the House speaker and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., has been

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a test of wills between the two power centers in Congress over what would be the third impeachment trial in the nation's history.

McConnell said that if Pelosi and House Democrats are "too embarrassed" to send the articles of impeachment, the Senate will simply move on next week to other business.

"They do not get to trap our entire country into an unending groundhog day of impeachment without resolution," McConnell said.

McConnell told GOP senators at a lunchtime meeting to expect the trial next week, according to two people familiar with his remarks. The people requested anonymity to discuss the private meeting.

At the same time, McConnell signed on to a resolution from Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., to allow for the dismissal of articles of impeachment if the House doesn't transmit them in 25 days. That change to Senate rules appears unlikely to happen before Pelosi transmits the articles.

In the weeks since Trump was impeached, Democrats have focused on new evidence about Trump's effort to pressure Ukraine to investigate his political rivals and they pushed the Senate to consider new testimony, including from former White House national security adviser John Bolton. Republicans are just as focused on a speedy trial with acquittal.

Republicans have the leverage, with a slim 53-47 Senate majority, as McConnell rebuffs the Democratic demands for testimony and documents. But Democrats are using the delay to sow public doubt about the fairness of the process as they try to peel off wavering GOP senators for the upcoming votes. It takes just 51 senators to set the rules.

"When we say fair trial, we mean facts, we mean witnesses, we mean documents," said Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., promising votes ahead. "Every single one of us, in this Senate, will have to have to take a stand. How do my Republican friends want the American people, their constituents, and history to remember them?"

Trump weighed in from the White House suggesting that he, too, would like more witnesses at trial. They include former Vice President Joe Biden, who is seeking the Democratic presidential nomination now, and his son Hunter, as well as the government whistleblower whose complaint about the president's pressure on Ukraine sparked the impeachment investigation.

On a July telephone call with Ukraine's new president, Trump asked his counterpart to open an investigation into the Bidens while holding up military aid for Ukraine. A Ukrainian gas company had hired Hunter Biden when his father was vice president and the Obama administration's point man on Ukraine. There is no evidence of wrongdoing by either Biden.

Trump suggested that his administration would continue to block Bolton or others from the administration from appearing before senators. Many of those officials have defied congressional subpoenas for their testimony.

"When we start allowing national security advisers to just go up and say whatever they want to say, we can't do that," Trump said during an event with building contractors. "So we have to protect presidential privilege for me, but for future presidents. That's very important."

Bolton, one of four witnesses that Democrats have requested, said this week that he would testify if subpoenaed.

McConnell has said from the start he is looking to model Trump's trial on the last time the Senate convened as the court of impeachment, for President Bill Clinton in 1999. McConnell has said there will be "no haggling" with House Democrats over Senate procedures.

"There will be no unfair, new rule rule-book written solely for President Trump," McConnell said Thursday.

McConnell, who met with Trump late Wednesday at the White House, suggested last month it would be "fine with me" if the House never sent the articles. More recently, he has drawn on the Constitution's intent for the Senate to have the ultimate say on matters of impeachment. He scoffed that Pelosi has "managed to do the impossible" by uniting Democrats and Republicans who want the trial to begin.

Some Democrats have been showing increased anxiety over the delay as Americans remain divided over Trump's impeachment.

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One top lawmaker, Rep. Adam Smith, D-Wash., the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, told CNN on Thursday "it's time" to send over the charges. But shortly afterward, he tweeted that he misspoke: "If the Speaker believes that holding on to the articles for a longer time will help force a fair trial in the Senate, then I wholeheartedly support that decision."

It was a stunning turnaround, perhaps the most public, as Democratic leaders try to keep House and Senate lawmakers in line with their strategy.

The delay on impeachment has also upended the political calendar, with the weeklong trial now expected to bump into presidential nominating contests, which begin in early February. Several Democratic senators are running for the party's nomination .

One 2020 hopeful, Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J., told The Associated Press's Ground Game podcast that a looming impeachment trial and other pressing issues in Washington could deal a "big, big blow" to his presidential campaign by keeping him away from Iowa in the final weeks before the Feb. 3 caucuses.

As Pelosi dashed into a morning meeting at the Capitol, she was asked if she had any concerns about losing support from Democrats for her strategy. She told reporters: "No."

"I know exactly when" to send the impeachment articles over, Pelosi said. "I won't be telling you right now."

Pelosi is seeking what she says she wanted from the start — "to see the arena" and "terms of the engagement" that McConnell will use for the trial — before sending her House managers to present the articles of impeachment in the Senate. She has yet to choose the managers, a source of political intrigue as many lawmakers want the high-profile job.

The House impeached Trump in December on the charge that he abused the power of his office by pressuring Ukraine's new leader to investigate Democrats, including the Bidens, using as leverage \$400 million in military assistance for the U.S. ally as it counters Russia at its border. Trump insists he did nothing wrong, but his defiance of the House Democrats' investigation led to an additional charge of obstruction of Congress.

Associated Press writers Laurie Kellman, Alan Fram, Andrew Taylor, Darlene Superville and Padmananda Rama contributed to this report.

House approves measure to restrain Trump's actions on Iran

By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Reigniting a debate over who has the power to declare war, the Democratic-controlled House on Thursday approved a resolution asserting that President Donald Trump must seek approval from Congress before engaging in further military action against Iran.

The war powers resolution is not binding on the president and would not require his signature. But House Speaker Nancy Pelosi nonetheless insisted it "has real teeth" because "it is a statement of the Congress of the United States."

The measure will "protect American lives and values" by limiting Trump's military actions, Pelosi said. "The administration must de-escalate and must prevent further violence."

The White House called the resolution "ridiculous" and "completely misguided."

And Trump, at a campaign rally in Toledo, Ohio, claimed he had no obligation to give lawmakers advance warning, saying Democrats like Pelosi "want us to tell them so they can leak it to their friends in the corrupt media."

The House passed the measure, 224-194, with just three Republicans voting in support. Eight Democrats opposed the measure.

A similar proposal by Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., faces an uphill fight in the GOP-run Senate. Kaine's efforts received a boost Thursday as Republican Sen. Todd Young of Indiana, an ex-Marine, said he might support the war powers measure. Two other Republican senators said Wednesday they would back Kaine's plan.

"We are members of a separate and distinct branch of government. It is our duty not to take anyone's

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word for things as we are dealing with matters of life and death," Young said, adding that he wished Trump administration officials had provided more intelligence information during a briefing Wednesday on a U.S. drone strike that killed a top Iranian general.

Pelosi, in announcing the House vote, called the killing of Gen. Qassem Soleimani "provocative and disproportionate."

Louisiana Rep. Steve Scalise, the No. 2 House Republican, denounced the Democratic measure as little more than "a press release designed to attack President Trump," while House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy of California called it a "meaningless vote" on a measure that will never be sent to the president or "limit his constitutional authority to defend the American people."

White House spokesman Hogan Gidley said, "This House resolution tries to undermine the ability of the U.S. Armed Forces to prevent terrorist activity by Iran and its proxies, and attempts to hinder the President's authority to protect America and our interests in the region from the continued threats."

The House vote came a day after the Trump administration briefed lawmakers on its actions in Iran. Democrats and several Republicans called the briefings inadequate, adding that officials did not provide enough details about why the attack was justified.

Vice President Mike Pence said Thursday that Soleimani "was traveling the region making plans to bring an attack against American personnel and American forces." He said it was not possible to share full details of the intelligence with lawmakers.

"When it comes to intelligence we have to protect sources and methods, there's only certain amount we can share with every member of Congress," Pence said on ABC's "Good Morning America." "But those of us who have seen all the evidence know that there was a compelling case of imminent threat against American personnel."

Trump said Thursday that he "had calls from numerous senators and numerous congressmen and women saying it was the greatest presentation they've ever had."

Referring to criticism by GOP Sens. Mike Lee and Rand Paul, Trump said: "They want information that honestly I think is very hard to get. ... It really had to do with sources and information that we had that really should remain at a very high level."

Lee, a conservative from Utah, said the briefing by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and other officials was "probably the worst briefing I've seen, at least on a military issue," in the nine years he's served in the Senate.

Paul, of Kentucky, said administration officials justified killing Soleimani based on the 2002 authorization of force in Iraq. "That is absurd. That's an insult," he said.

Pelosi scheduled the House vote after Iran retaliated for the Soleimani killing by launching missiles at two military bases in Iraq that house American troops. No casualties were reported.

"Congress hereby directs the President to terminate the use of United States Armed Forces to engage in hostilities in or against Iran or any part of its government or military" unless Congress declares war on that country or enacts legislation authorizing use of force to prevent an attack on the U.S. and its forces, the five-page resolution states.

The resolution's sponsor, freshman Rep. Elissa Slotkin, D-Mich., said it is intended to "make clear that if the president wants to take us to war, he must get authorization from Congress."

If loved ones are going to be sent to fight in a protracted war, "the president owes the American people a public conversation about why, and for what ends," said Slotkin, a former CIA analyst and Pentagon official who served in Iraq.

Members of Congress have a constitutional responsibility to uphold in authorizing use of military force, Slotkin said, adding, "We are owed concrete, specific details on strategy."

Trump did not consult with congressional leaders ahead of the attack that killed the Iranian general and afterward sent Congress a notification explaining the rationale, but kept it classified.

Congress has allowed its war powers role to erode since the passage of Authorization for Use of Military Force in 2001 to fight terrorism after the 9/11 attacks, and passage of another AUMF for the invasion of

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Iraq in 2002.

Fallout from those votes deeply divided Congress and the nation, with many lawmakers, particularly Democrats, now saying they were mistakes. Yet Congress has been paralyzed on the question of whether to repeal or change those authorities.

The strikes by Iran had pushed Tehran and Washington perilously close to all-out conflict and put the world's attention on Trump as he weighed whether to respond with more military force.

Republicans have largely supported Trump's actions, saying the president was well within his power to take out Iran's architect of proxy operations against Americans in the Middle East. The U.S. considered Soleimani a terrorist.

Democrats were unconvinced that the threat posed by Soleimani was imminent or that other alternatives to the killing were pursued in good faith. By not disclosing many details of the threat, Trump was asking the American public to trust the very intelligence reports he has often disparaged, Democrats said.

Young told reporters Thursday that lawmakers "need to ensure that Congress is involved in future decision-making so we end up exactly where the president wants to end up, which is the avoidance of a major ground war in the Middle East."

He called Kaine's resolution a "mechanism to force us to debate this."

Three Republicans supported the measure: Reps. Matt Gaetz and Francis Rooney of Florida and Thomas Massie of Kentucky.

The eight Democrats who opposed it were Reps. Anthony Brindisi and Max Rose of New York, Joe Cunningham of South Carolina, Josh Gottheimer of New Jersey, Kendra Horn of Oklahoma, Ben McAdams of Utah and Stephanie Murphy of Florida.

Gaetz, one of Trump's strongest supporters, said "killing Soleimani was the right decision, but engaging in another forever war in the Middle East would be the wrong decision."

Rose, an Army veteran who served in Afghanistan, said the resolution "simply restates existing law and sends the message that war is imminent. I refuse to play politics with questions of war and peace and therefore will not support this resolution."

Associated Press writers Alan Fram, Kevin Freking and Deb Riechmann contributed to this story.

CES Gadget Show: Pizza from robots, underwater scooters

By RACHEL LERMAN and JOSEPH PISANI Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Robots were front and center at the CES gadget show in Las Vegas. One even made pizza.

The annual CES technology conference in Las Vegas runs through Friday and offers a forum for companies to unveil their products and services for the coming year.

Here are some highlights:

PIZZA ROBOT

Tucked away behind a concession stand, one robot was busy making overpriced pizzas for the hungry crowds.

"It's not bad," said McCord Fitzsimmons, who paid \$7.50 for a pepperoni slice while the robot worked behind the register. "It's kind of neat watching the thing do its thing."

The robot, which resembles an assembly line, can churn out 300 12-inch pies in an hour. (The high price, though, has nothing to do with the robot's costs, but the captive audience at CES' sprawling venues.)

Humans are still needed to make lunch. A worker with an iPad tells the robot what type of pizza to make and then slides a frozen crust on the conveyor belt. As the crust goes down the line, sauce, cheese, sausage and other toppings fall from above and onto the crust. A worker then needs to put the pie in the oven, take it out when it's done and slice it up.

Picnic, the startup behind the robot, said it's also assembling pizzas at T-Mobile Park in Seattle, where the company is based.

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Pizza shop owners can customize the machine and add whatever crusts or ingredients they want. Besides pizzas, Picnic said the robot could be reconfigured to make wraps or salads for restaurants.

CRUISIN' UNDER THE SEA

Need a faster way to travel underwater? Subblue has your back.

The company makes handheld scooters for underwater use. Just press two buttons for the battery-powered motors to start, and you're on your way.

Subblue's scooters are mostly made for professional use — for divers or other underwater explorers. But the company is working on a less expensive model for casual water adventurers, one it expects will cost \$500 to \$600.

On the CES floor, Subblue had a huge glass tank pool where onlookers gawked at a professional diver showing off the scooters.

The scooter comes with a strap so you don't lose it. There's also a mount for your phone, hopefully encased in a waterproof covering.

Land scooters have gained popularity in urban areas in recent years, garnering both praise for their small size and ease of use and pushback for crowding sidewalks and streets.

At least underwater, there's a smaller chance of traffic accidents — for now.

USE THE FORCE ...

How focused are you, really?

At BrainCo's booth, people wearing headbands equipped with EEG sensors move toy cars around a racetrack using only their minds.

The company, which was incubated at Harvard Innovation Lab, uses the headband to convert electro signals into a numeric scale of 0 to 100 to tell how hard someone is focusing. The cars moved faster as people hit higher numbers.

BrainCo makes the headbands for athletes, including the USA Weightlifting team, to test their focus levels and get them in the right headspace for training. The company says that using mind games before workouts — and meditation afterward — can make athletes more effective, without altering their training.

Traditionally, EEG measurements are used medically — but BrainCo says it collects more than 1,000 data points from the headband, which it uses to measure the person's mental state.

BrainCo also sells the headbands to schools so teachers can get a real-time look at how students are responding to lessons. But it's not currently on sale for individual consumers.

___ AP's CES coverage:

<https://apnews.com/ConsumerElectronicsShow>

US courts rule for border walls both public and private

By **NOMAAN MERCHANT** and **KEVIN FREKING** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Crews could start building a private border wall in South Texas within the coming days following a federal judge's ruling Thursday that lifted a restraining order against the project.

U.S. District Judge Randy Crane's order was the second federal ruling in two days in favor of border barriers. On Wednesday, the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals lifted a lower court's stay that had prevented President Donald Trump's administration from diverting \$3.6 billion from military construction projects to fund 175 miles (280 kilometers) of border wall.

While the White House on Thursday celebrated the appeals court's ruling, saying it rightfully lifted an "illegitimate nationwide injunction," Crane's ruling actually went against the U.S. government's position.

Fisher Industries, a North Dakota-based construction firm, wants to install 3 miles (4.8 kilometers) of steel posts about 35 feet (10 meters) from the U.S. bank of the Rio Grande, the river that forms the U.S.-Mexico border in Texas. The company's president, Tommy Fisher, wants to spend \$40 million on the private border wall — originally promoted by a pro-Trump online fundraising group — to prove that his company can build barriers more effectively.

The U.S. government sued to stop Fisher on the grounds that building so close to the Rio Grande risked

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changing the flow of the river and potentially pushing floodwaters into Mexico, in violation of treaty obligations. The U.S. attorney's office argued the project could shift the river and the international boundary, which violated the president's authority "to conduct the foreign relations of the United States."

Existing segments of fencing and the small sections that the government is currently building typically run along the Rio Grande levee or through property a significant distance away from the river. The U.S. is currently working to seize private land to build more sections of wall in Texas.

Crane issued a restraining order in December, but lifted that order Thursday. He also declined to grant a restraining order at the request of the National Butterfly Center, a nonprofit located next to the South Texas construction site. The butterfly center and environmentalists warn building a border barrier so close to the river could worsen erosion and potentially damage other land.

Fisher Industries has submitted documents to the government that argue installing fence posts and clearing and grading the land will reduce flooding, though environmentalists disagree with that claim.

Speaking after the hearing Thursday, Fisher said his work crews were ready to start working Sunday and could install all of the steel posts in a week.

"We look forward to showing the whole entire world that you can have border protection where you need it," Fisher said.

The butterfly center had been in the path of a potential border wall for years until Congress effectively exempted it and several other environmentally sensitive areas and cultural sites.

Marianna Trevino Wright, the center's executive director, said Thursday's ruling "makes you wonder when it's going to end and how many more of these proxies are there."

At the 5th Circuit, the 2-1 ruling announced Wednesday allows the government to move forward with 11 projects in California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas. The longest and most expensive by far would span 52 miles (83 kilometers) in Laredo, Texas, at an estimated cost of \$1.27 billion.

The court noted that the Supreme Court in July had stayed a similar injunction, clearing the way for the Trump administration to tap billions of dollars in Pentagon funds to build sections of border wall.

"The Government is entitled to the same relief here," the three-judge panel wrote.

President Donald Trump tweeted about the ruling and wrote that the "Entire Wall is under construction or getting ready to start!"

White House press secretary Stephanie Grisham said on Thursday that the court had lifted an "illegitimate nationwide injunction" and in doing so had allowed work on the border wall to continue with military construction money.

"We will finish the wall," she said in a statement.

Opponents of the Trump administration's actions had welcomed the earlier district court ruling that had put the work on hold, calling the Republican president's actions an "outrageous power grab." They noted that Trump had promised repeatedly during the 2016 presidential campaign that Mexico would pay for the wall.

Merchant reported from Houston.

Searchers find third body buried by Idaho avalanche

By **NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS** Associated Press

Buried under about 10 feet (3 meters) of snow after an avalanche this week at an Idaho ski resort, Bill Fuzak made peace with his predicament and prepared for death.

"I had already relegated myself to the inevitable as I knew the air would not last long," Fuzak, 62, wrote on a public Facebook page for skiers. "I'm really surprised how calm I felt but knew there was nothing I could do but wait and pray."

His prayers were answered. Fuzak became one of four survivors extricated from Tuesday's avalanche at the Silver Mountain Resort near Kellogg, Idaho. Two other skiers were killed, and the body of a third skier was recovered on Thursday. The resort remained closed Thursday.

Fuzak, a skier who lives in the nearby Spokane, Washington, area, said he was entombed in the snow

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for about 50 minutes, much longer than most avalanche survivors.

Unable to move anything but his right hand, he cleared snow from his face and mouth. At some point, he passed out.

"The first thing I remember when coming back to consciousness was a group of rescuers cheering that a survivor had been located: me," Fuzak wrote in what he called a "personal summary" on Facebook about the ordeal.

Fuzak wrote that he was among a group of skiers and snowboarders he knew, heading down Wardner Peak on a difficult run called 16-to-1 about 11 a.m.

"The snow started to fracture above us as well as below us and the slide started to propagate and accelerate," he wrote.

Fuzak then fell and said he started "swimming to try and stay on top of the slide."

The slide eventually stopped. Completely buried, Fuzak managed to punch a hole through the snow that let air flow in.

"Within seconds, another, more powerful slide hit and buried my breathing hole under what felt like feet of snow," Fuzak wrote. "At this point I tried to calm my breathing and conserve air."

He passed out and then woke up to cheers from the rescuers and a ski patrol member holding his hand.

"My hands and feet were extremely cold but I was uninjured, breathing and moving well," Fuzak wrote. "I was more than ready to get out of my encasement; afraid that a 3rd slide would bury me again."

The avalanche came after the ski resort in the Idaho Panhandle received heavy snow and resort crews used explosives the morning of the slide to try to reduce avalanche threats on Wardner Peak, where all of the runs are rated as difficult.

Fuzak and three other skiers who were not identified were rescued, but two skiers died. They were identified by the Shoshone County Sheriff's Office on Thursday as Carl Humphreys, 58, of Liberty Lake, Washington, and Scott Parsons, 46, of Spokane Valley, Washington.

The resort did not realize that another skier was missing until a day after the avalanche, when it received a call Wednesday morning from a concerned family member unable to get in touch with that person.

That prompted searchers to resume their hunt on Wednesday and Thursday.

Shoshone County Sheriff Mike Gunderson told KHQ-TV that a third body buried under the avalanche was found Thursday by searchers in a helicopter and identified as the person reported missing on Wednesday. He said there were no other reports of missing persons on the mountain.

During the winter of 2018-19, 25 people died in avalanches in the United States, The Spokesman-Review newspaper reported. People who are buried in snow for more than 30 minutes have a lower chance of survival than those rescued more quickly, the newspaper said.

The Idaho Panhandle Avalanche Center will investigate the cause of the avalanche, the resort said.

On streets of Tehran, relief for now at no wider conflict

By MEHDI FATTAHI and AYA BATRAWY Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iranian newspapers proclaimed the country's attack on U.S. forces in Iraq to be "a dark night for Americans," and Washington's "first admission of failure in history." On the bustling streets of Tehran, however, there was relief Thursday that neither side appeared primed for war.

"War is not something like the 'Call of Duty' game," said Dara Shojaei, a 23-year-old architecture student. "It's not a game you can play to win. There's no winner."

But with the relief came some mixed feelings about how far Iran should go to avenge the killing of Revolutionary Guard Gen. Qassem Soleiman, the country's most powerful commander who was slain by a U.S. drone strike in Baghdad last week. His death brought an outpouring of grief across the country, and Iran responded early Wednesday by firing a barrage of ballistic missiles at two Iraqi military bases housing American troops.

The dramatic blast of more than a dozen missiles caused no casualties at the two bases, although U.S., Canadian and British officials said Thursday that evidence showed that an Iranian anti-aircraft missile prob-

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ably downed a Ukrainian jetliner near Tehran just a few hours after Iran launched its attack on the Iraqi bases. They said the strike, which killed all 176 people on board, could have been a mistake.

Investigators from Iran's Civil Aviation Organization offered no immediate explanation for the disaster. A preliminary Iranian investigative report released Thursday said that the airliner pilots never made a radio call for help and that the aircraft was trying to turn back for the airport when the burning plane went down.

Even though U.S. and Iraqi officials said there had been no casualties, Iranian state TV claimed that some 80 U.S. soldiers had been killed in the air strike at the bases — a death toll repeated Thursday by a top Iranian military general.

At the White House, President Donald Trump said Iran "appears to be standing down," while Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei described the missile attack as "a slap" against America.

Across state media, the Iranian government is positioning its retaliatory strike as a victory.

The hard-line Khamenei newspaper proclaimed Iran's missiles damaged U.S. dignity, while another hard-line daily, Javan, said it was America's first admission of failure in its history.

The reformist daily Aftab Yazd led with the headline: "Iran's slap makes Trump withdraw and declare peace." Another reformist daily paper, Arman Melli, called it "A dark night for Americans."

Despite Tehran's claims that the strikes killed Americans, Iranians have access to other sources of information. Although social media sites like Twitter are blocked, Iranians are able to access it and others through virtual private networks, or VPNs.

Ali Azimi, a 41-year-old engineer, said Iran's retaliation was "excessive."

"We shouldn't have taken revenge because they could have hit and destroyed us," he said.

In somewhat mixed messages Thursday, President Hassan Rouhani warned of a "very dangerous response" if the U.S. makes "another mistake," but a senior commander vowed even "harsher revenge."

Mohammad Taghizadeh, a 30-year-old resident of Tehran, described the Iranian actions as a "good start."

"As the supreme leader said, it was a slap. It was not satisfying and bigger things should happen," he said.

He also echoed a familiar refrain of deep suspicion toward Washington.

"Trump is trying to boost the self-confidence of Americans, and I think he is lying," Taghizadeh said about U.S. claims of no casualties. He added that because Trump is running for re-election, he "can't say that we have had our soldiers killed."

Gen. Amir Ali Hajizadeh, who leads the country's aerospace program said in remarks carried Thursday by the semi-official Tasnim news agency that the goal of "Operation Martyr Soleimani," as the retaliatory campaign was dubbed, was not to kill anyone, but to "strike the enemy's military machine." Still, he repeated that the U.S. suffered mass casualties.

Gen. Ali Fadavi, acting commander of the Revolutionary Guard, was quoted by Tasnim as describing the attack as a clear sign of Iran's unique strength.

"We stand against the enemy and we respond," he said. "No (other) country has the capacity to express its will against the United States."

Across the country, ordinary Iranians are bracing for even more hard times after Trump vowed to keep up the maximum pressure campaign on Tehran.

Tensions have been running high in the Persian Gulf since Trump pulled the U.S. out of Iran's nuclear deal with world powers in 2018 and re-imposed punishing sanctions. The sanctions have made it difficult for Iran to sell its oil internationally, which has affected the government's ability to pay for subsidies and pushed prices up.

"Over the past three days, there was not a single day that we woke up and didn't see negative news," said Shabnam Mohtashami, 43, of Tehran. "The thought of what could happen again and what calamities we might suffer is very scary."

But she said that "domestic (economic) problems put even more pressure on us than if a war will happen or not."

Iran's government faced widespread protests in November over rising prices, with many apparently also outraged by Iran's foreign spending on interventions in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and other countries while its

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own economy falters.

More than 300 people were killed in the anti-government protests, according to rights organization Amnesty International. During the violence and in the days that followed, Iranian authorities blocked access to the internet.

Soleimani's killing, however, helped rally the public around the leadership again.

Millions of Iranians were stunned by Soleimani's killing, and they poured into the streets as his casket was paraded through several cities. The general was seen by many in Iran as a national hero whose command of the Revolutionary Guard's Quds Force, which oversees Shiite proxy militias, projected Iranian power in the face of U.S. pressure.

Ali Fathollah-Nejad, an Iran expert at the Brookings Doha Center, said the Iranian government has used Soleimani's death to create "a nationalistic moment" and keep the flames of conflict with Washington simmering without risking a full-blown war that might endanger the regime's survival.

He said the killing angered people beyond the government's traditional base because of Soleimani's state crafted image in recent years as a patriotic hero defending the homeland from Sunni extremists, like the Islamic State group.

"In the short term this leads to regime stabilization, with the deep-seated socio-economic and political grievances that fueled the protests pushed under the surface at a moment when a lot of Iranians fear a full-blown war," Fathollah-Nejad said.

— Batrawy reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Associated Press writer Amir Vahdat in Tehran contributed.

Did Fox's Tucker Carlson play role in calming Iran pressure?

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Here's a point to ponder: To what extent is Fox News Channel's Tucker Carlson responsible for President Donald Trump stepping away from a potential war with Iran?

From his prime-time perch on the top-rated cable network, Carlson has advocated restraint in dealing with Iran, and resisted cheerleading the Trump-ordered drone killing of Iranian Gen. Qasem Soleimani.

Shortly after the story of Iran's counter-attack broke on Tuesday, Carlson hosted a show that mixed coverage of the story as details became known, emphasizing early reports of a lack of American casualties, and interviews with experts on the Middle East. Some of those guests pointed out the dangers of spiraling escalation.

"I continue to believe the president doesn't want a full-blown war," Carlson said. "Some around him might, but I think most sober people don't want that."

Trump, who announced his decision not to retaliate against Iran's missile strikes in a nationally televised address 14 hours later, told some close to him that he watched Carlson's show, according to BuzzFeed News. He told confidants in recent days that Carlson's strong advocacy not to escalate the situation in Iran played a role in his decision-making, two White House officials and Republicans close to the West Wing told The Associated Press on Thursday.

Trump keeps a close eye on how his base responds to policy decisions, feeling their beliefs are often reflected and influenced by Fox News hosts. His Twitter feed reflects how he keeps close tabs on Fox, and he tweeted a link to a Carlson piece on Monday night.

The president often consults with Fox News hosts off-air, including Carlson. Carlson was seen among the president's entourage this past summer when he visited the demilitarized zone between North Korea and South Korea. He conducted an interview with Trump that was later shown on Fox.

Following Trump's announcement on Wednesday, Carlson said that "we're back from the brink." He played a clip of the president's speech where he said that a pause in hostilities between Iran and the United States was a very good thing for the world.

"That's a big claim but in this case it is not an overstatement," Carlson said.

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His show moved on to a new cause, in this case encouraging the U.S. to leave neighboring Iraq. He was calm on Tuesday's show, at a time there was breathless coverage elsewhere of the missile attack. A succession of guests threw cold water on the idea of further retaliation. Gil Barndollar of Defense Priorities suggested Americans were kidding themselves if they expected to incite a regime-change movement in Iran. With Kelley Vlahos, executive editor of The American Conservative magazine, they speculated on the role of Democrats and Trump staffers who didn't have the president's best interests in mind in advocating war with Iran. Trump was reminded that he was elected on a pledge to get Americans out of foreign entanglements.

A frequent Carlson guest, retired Army Col. Douglas MacGregor, said a war without public support could not succeed. He said further destabilization in the Middle East would have disastrous effects.

"If you destroy Iran, you will get ISIS times one hundred," he said.

Fox News anchor Bret Baier came on Carlson's show to suggest that the moment was Trump's biggest test as a leader.

Carlson's show contrasted with a more bellicose approach by the Fox personality who followed him on the air, Sean Hannity. Hannity, a more loyal Trump supporter, backed the attack that killed Soleimani. While Hannity didn't advocate all-out war with Iran, he suggested that nation was about to be hit with the full force of the American military. "You don't get to do what they did tonight," Hannity said on Tuesday's show.

A.J. Bauer, a New York University professor who is an expert on conservative media, said he could not judge what kind of impact Carlson's program had on Trump's decision. He noted that it was consistent with other times where Trump had resisted more extensive foreign entanglements.

Instead, Bauer found the different opinions expressed by Hannity and Carlson to exemplify how Fox must step carefully with an audience that reflects conflicting strains within the conservative movement, between a hawkish military approach and an "America first" attitude that resists overseas adventurism.

Associated Press White House correspondent Jonathan Lemire contributed to this report.

Iraq is caught in the middle as Iran and U.S. trade blows

By SAMYA KULLAB and QASSEM ABDUL-ZAHRA Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — For months, Iraqis have watched with deepening anxiety as tensions between Iran-backed militias and U.S. forces soared, fearing their long-beleaguered country would turn into a battleground for direct and open conflict between America and Iran.

Those fears were realized in the past week when a U.S. airstrike killed Iran's top military commander, Gen. Qassem Soleimani, after he landed at Baghdad airport, and Iran responded by firing over a dozen missiles at Iraqi military bases housing American troops.

From the country's top leadership down to the street, many Iraqis are irate at what they see as blatant violations of their sovereignty, yet are helpless as Iran and the U.S. trade blows on Iraqi soil. At every tumultuous turn, Iraq's independence has seemingly been ignored by its two closest allies, who happen to be bitter enemies.

Tensions eased on Wednesday when U.S. President Donald Trump signaled that Washington was stepping away from escalation.

But it remains to be seen what effect the clashes will have on Iraq's willingness to allow American troops to remain on Iraqi soil.

In the immediate aftermath of Soleimani's killing, Iraq's Parliament angrily voted to expel the estimated 5,200 U.S. forces stationed in the country to fight the Islamic State group — a nonbinding measure that needs the approval of the Iraqi government.

The easing of tensions in the wake of the Iranian missile attack, which caused no casualties, appears to have tempered the political resolve to immediately push American troops out.

"It slowed the momentum to remove forces that definitely reached its peak" during the parliamentary vote, said Randa Slim, director of the Track II Dialogues initiative at the Middle East Institute. "It's created

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a more relaxed atmosphere to negotiate conditions of the removal of U.S. forces that won't come across to the White House as disrespectful of the U.S."

Weeks of tit-for-tat violence illustrated how Iraq's leadership was powerless to prevent the two sides from battling on its soil, first through proxies, then face to face.

The violence was set off when a rocket attack blamed on the Iranian-backed militia group Kataeb Hezbollah, or Hezbollah Brigades, caused the death of an American contractor at a base in Kirkuk province. The U.S. replied with a barrage of strikes on the militia's bases, killing at least 25 people.

Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi got a call from U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper a half-hour before the strike to tell him of U.S. intentions. He urged Esper to call off the plan, "but there was insistence," according to a statement from the premier's office.

The militia fighters' deaths prompted enraged supporters to attack the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad for two days, breaking into the compound and setting fires.

The U.S. then killed Soleimani in a drone strike that also cost the lives of a senior Iraqi militia leader and others.

Shortly before Iran stuck back with its missile barrage against two Iraqi military bases in Ain al-Asad and Irbil that house American troops, the Iranians informed Abdul-Mahdi of its plans, according to his office.

The morning after, anti-government Iraqi demonstrators in Baghdad set fires and closed roads near Tahrir Square.

"We don't want a foreign war on Iraqi soil. Our leaders should act," said Saif, a 33-year-old protester speaking on condition his full name not be used for fear of reprisals.

Following the Iranian strike, Iraq's president and speaker of Parliament issued condemnations and called for foreign leaders to spare the country from becoming embroiled in another war. Foreign Minister Mohammed Ali al-Hakim likewise denounced the "blatant violations" without naming either Iran or the U.S. He said all sides must respect Iraq's sovereignty and called on all foreign forces to leave.

Still, politicians' demands that U.S. troops get out appear to be on a lower flame for the moment.

In the halls of Parliament, some lawmakers discussed refocusing the agenda on nominating a new prime minister to replace the outgoing Abdul-Mahdi. Abdul-Mahdi resigned in December under mounting pressure from mass protests and is serving in a caretaker capacity.

Lawmakers, experts and officials said they still expect U.S. troops to eventually leave as a result of the killing of Soleimani, but the question now is when and under what circumstances.

"Tehran expects the prime minister to fulfill that demand," Slim said. "It's not about U.S.-Iran anymore. It's about the symbolism of removing U.S. forces after the killing of Soleimani by Americans and what that symbolism means for Tehran."

—
Kullab reported from Beirut, Abdul-Zahra from Baghdad.

Fence-scaling Venezuela opposition leader rekindles his mojo

By **CHRISTINE ARMARIO** and **FABIOLA SANCHEZ** Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — In a crisp black suit with a bright blue tie, Juan Guaidó pushed and shoved his way through rows of helmet-clad national guardsmen, cursing and scolding them like schoolchildren for blocking him from entering Venezuela's congress.

"You don't get to decide who gets in!" he yelled, inching his face up close to the young man impeding his access to the legislature's ornate halls.

In recent days, the opposition leader who drew thousands of Venezuelans to the streets last year only to see his momentum steadily fizzle as President Nicolás Maduro remains firmly in power appears to have gotten his mojo back.

Images of the man recognized by the U.S. and over 50 other nations as Venezuela's rightful president scaling the National Assembly's spiked iron fence, tussling with national guardsmen and taking a spirited oath, shouted into a darkened congress operating without electricity, seem to have riled up his base once

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more.

"Today he's the star once again," said Luis Vicente León, president of Datanalisis, a Caracas-based polling company. But, the analyst added: "It won't be enough. He needs to convert his potential energy into kinetic energy."

Much is resting on the 36-year-old lawmaker's shoulders: Whether he can capitalize on the new momentum could determine if the opposition's flagging movement reinvents itself or drifts into the sidelines of history.

A significant test will come later this week when Venezuelans decide whether or not to heed his call for a new round of protests. Many are skeptical that Guaidó can still mobilize large numbers. An estimated 4.5 million people have fled the country, many of them the young adults most likely to protest. Countless others are too preoccupied trying to meet basic needs like finding food and medicine to turn out for a demonstration that might not change anything.

Guaidó will also have to rally disparate opposition factions that united to re-elect him as head of the National Assembly over whether or not to participate in this year's legislative elections. Thus far, the opposition hasn't articulated a joint strategy. Many are weary of participating in a vote with Maduro still in power, pointing out that the current National Electoral Council is still stacked heavily in the president's favor.

Others note that if they don't run, Maduro's government could gain control of what many see as Venezuela's last democratic institution.

At the center of it all is Guaidó, who in his new fighting stance appears to be drawing a page from the epic, age-old David and Goliath narrative of the virtuous underdog rushing to the rescue.

"Regaining momentum is important," said Maryhen Jiménez, a Venezuelan-born lecturer in politics at Oxford University. "But then there is the other side of the story, which is the passion of Venezuelans for a hero."

Guaidó leaped into the international limelight nearly one year ago when he climbed up on a stage before thousands of Venezuelans filling densely packed city blocks to declare himself the beleaguered nation's interim president on grounds that it was his constitutional right to step in because Maduro's reelection was not legitimate.

The previously unknown backbencher was immediately recognized by U.S. President Donald Trump and dozens of other nations stretching from Ecuador to Estonia.

He led a forceful street campaign, but a series of missteps proved costly.

In February, he snuck into Colombia, defying a Supreme Court order prohibiting him from leaving the country, to oversee the entry of international humanitarian aid into Venezuela. But state security forces refused to let the goods in, staying loyal to Maduro, who had prohibited them from allowing supplies in across the border.

Then came a blundered attempt at sparking a military revolt in late April. Though a few dozen soldiers joined Guaidó and his mentor, Leopoldo López, in urging the nation's armed forces to turn against Maduro, most stayed in their barracks.

Compelled to negotiate, Guaidó and the Maduro government sat down for talks in Barbados mediated by Norway that started out promising but went nowhere. A series of corruption scandals involving purported misuse of funds for deserted soldiers and opposition lawmakers secretly doing the bidding of government allies left the opposition decidedly bruised.

By December, Guaidó's approval rating had plummeted to 38 percent, down from a high of 61 percent 10 months before, León said.

Not only had Venezuelans grown distrustful of Guaidó, they'd also steadily lost faith that Maduro's unpopular government could be removed. Whereas in February over 70 percent stated in polls that they believed there'd be a change within three months, by December only 21 percent were optimistic, León said.

Sunday was expected to be more of the same: A showing of hands in favor of renewing Guaidó's term in office as head of the National Assembly, with some abstention or votes against by factions who are upset with his leadership.

Instead, it turned into a galvanizing moment.

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Thick rows of green-uniformed national guardsmen blocked Guaidó and other opposition lawmakers from entering. At one point, he tried scaling the National Assembly's fence, only to be pulled down by the tail of his suit.

Inside, Luis Parra, a one-time Guaidó ally who had been expelled by an opposition party for allegedly taking bribes to favor government associates, declared that he was the new National Assembly president, claiming to have garnered 81 votes of 150 lawmakers present, though a detailed tally has not been provided.

Separately, Guaidó held a session at a Venezuelan newspaper in which the opposition says he obtained 100 votes, including from some of his skeptics.

When Parra tried to hold a session Tuesday, Guaidó and a caravan of lawmaker supporters stormed past national guardsmen and forcibly entered the legislative building, sending the Maduro-backed leaders inside scrambling.

"Today, lawmakers delivered a victory for the Venezuelan people," Guaidó said triumphantly.

But how long might it last?

In some ways, little or nothing has changed: Maduro still has control of the military and the backing of powerful institutions like the Supreme Court, while Guaidó leads a largely powerless institution with no ability to enforce its proposals.

"Once the dust is settled, he'll continue to face the same challenges," said Diego Moya Ocampos, a political risk analyst.

In one potentially telling sign, there have been no spontaneous protests in Sunday's aftermath, suggesting that the public's anger over Maduro's attempted power grab could be limited, or at least still too focused on other pressing matters.

Still, Moya Ocampos said he expects to see more forceful Guaidó in the days ahead, exercising stronger rhetoric. Guaidó's decision to leave the party of his mentor, Voluntad Popular, could also free him up to take bolder moves.

"I think we are going to see a more independent Guaidó, more autonomous in his actions and regaining momentum," Moya Ocampos said.

Guaidó's most powerful ally - the United States - also seemed to signal Thursday that it was willing to take a slightly different approach. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that a "swift negotiated transition" would be ideal and outlined conditions for guaranteeing a fair legislative election. There was no mention of Maduro, who the U.S. has insisted needs to step down as part of any transition.

Guaidó supporters like Eduardo Bravo, an actor and activist, said they are elated to see the opposition leader taking riskier actions to salvage his moment.

"He knew he had to do something decisive that would generate emotion, because this is an emotional country," Bravo, 49, said Wednesday. "It was like watching democracy say: 'I'm here and I'm entering because this is my space.'"

An active protester, Bravo said he considered Guaidó's actions a "180 degree" shift.

"He's filled with hope people who felt very deceived," Bravo said. "We'll see it in the streets in the weeks ahead when people turn out again."

— Armario reported from Bogota, Colombia.

With 'Megxit,' Harry and Meghan aim to control media image

By JILL LAWLESS and DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

The relationship between Britain's royals and the media is awkward, mistrustful — and seemingly inescapable. But now Meghan and Harry want out.

After years of growing tension with the press, the prince and his wife have announced plans to quit their senior royal duties, move part-time to North America, seek financial independence and withdraw from regular media scrutiny.

The couple — who have complained of intrusive media coverage and accused some British media com-

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mentators of racism — slammed the country's long-standing arrangements for royal media coverage, saying they prefer to communicate directly with the public through social media.

The British press was stung by the snub, reacting Thursday with articles, columns and editorials that ranged from disappointment to fury.

The Daily Mirror said in an editorial that the couple's failure to tell Harry's grandmother Queen Elizabeth II about their plans "shows shocking disregard for a woman whose entire life has been ruled by a sense of public duty and honor." The Times of London accused Harry of "petulance and hot-headedness," while the Daily Mail said the couple wanted "the status of being 'senior' royals but the privacy and freedom of being private citizens."

The Sun and the New York Post both described the departure as "Megxit," a play on Brexit, Britain's impending departure from the European Union.

The 93-year-old monarch moved Thursday to take control of the situation. Britain's national news agency, Press Association, reported that the queen had ordered officials representing the monarch, Charles, Prince William, and Harry and Meghan to meet and find "workable solutions" within "days not weeks."

Harry and Meghan's shock announcement drew comparisons to the abdication of the queen's uncle King Edward VIII, who gave up the throne in 1936 so he could marry divorced American Wallis Simpson. Once again, waspish commentators noted, an American woman has caused a ruction in the British royal family.

But the relationship between royals and the media has changed dramatically in the intervening decades. Before the abdication, the romance between Edward and Simpson was headline news in the United States but went largely unreported by a deferential British press.

The trauma of World War II and the social revolution of the 1960's demolished that tradition of deference to royalty. For decades, the U.K. media has proclaimed its reverence for the queen while treating the travails of her family as fair game, from the divorces of three of her four children to second son Prince Andrew's troubling friendship with the late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

After Prince Charles married Lady Diana Spencer in 1981, the media charted every twist in the marriage: the births of sons William and Harry, Diana's glamour and charity work, the slow public crumbling of the relationship.

Charles and Diana both used the media as a weapon as their marriage foundered, giving TV interviews to present themselves in a sympathetic light. But Diana — a global megastar, followed by paparazzi wherever she went — was never fully in control of the media attention. She was killed in a car crash in Paris in 1997 while being pursued by photographers.

Diana's death provoked a crisis for the monarchy — which was portrayed as remote and cold at a time of national grief — and for the media, accused of hounding a vulnerable woman.

In the wake of Diana's death, the palace and the press reached an uneasy truce. The British media left young William and Harry alone in exchange for carefully staged interviews and photo opportunities as they grew up. That practice has continued with the three young children of William and his wife Kate.

Harry, however, still blames the media for his mother's death, and since meeting his wife — the former actress Meghan Markle — he has become less willing to play the game.

In 2017, the prince accused the media of directing "a wave of abuse and harassment" at the biracial Markle, including "racial undertones" in articles. Last year the couple launched a lawsuit against the Mail on Sunday newspaper over its publication of a letter written by Meghan. Harry said he feared "history repeating itself. ... I lost my mother and now I watch my wife falling victim to the same powerful forces."

Yet using the media has been a key part of Harry and Meghan's strategy, just as it was for Diana. When they wanted to make their unhappiness public, the couple gave an interview to a sympathetic journalist from broadcaster ITV.

In that interview, Meghan said that "very naively," she had been unprepared for the intense media scrutiny she would receive once she married into the British royal family.

"I never thought that this would be easy, but I thought it would be fair," she said.

Harry and Meghan now want to use the media on their own terms, dropping out of the "royal rota," a

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pool system that organizes media coverage of the royal family's public events. On a newly launched website, they said the system hampered their ability to "personally share moments in their lives directly with members of the public" via social media.

They said in the future they would "engage with grassroots media organizations and young, up-and-coming journalists." They also slammed the "misconception" that the British media's royal correspondents were "credible sources" of information.

Freddy Mayhew, editor of the Press Gazette, a newspaper industry trade publication, said the royal couple was aiming for a "much more controlled, much more private" approach to the media, drawing on Meghan's experience as a U.S. television star.

"I think they are perhaps seizing an opportunity with the decline of print media to break away," he said. "That's something they couldn't have done before, when papers were at their full strength. But now that a lot of it is moving online, there's the ability for people like Harry and Meghan to take control of what they put out there."

Harry, 35, is Elizabeth's grandson and sixth in line to the British throne, behind his father, brother and his brother's three children. With his ginger hair and beard, he is one of the royal family's most recognizable and popular members and has spent his entire life in the public eye.

Before marrying the prince in a wedding watched around the world in 2018, the 38-year-old Meghan was a star of the TV legal drama "Suits." The couple's son Archie was born in May 2019.

Less than two years after that fairy tale wedding, the couple was enmeshed in an uproar that began Wednesday with a statement from Buckingham Palace, described as "a personal message from the Duke and Duchess of Sussex." It said Harry and Meghan intend to become financially independent and to "balance" their time between the U.K. and North America.

In a subsequent statement just 90 minutes later, though, a difference of opinion was laid bare. The palace said many issues still had to be worked out before the couple's plan could be realized and discussions with the couple "were at an early stage."

That communique suggested that Harry and Meghan's statement had caught the royal household by surprise.

"We understand their desire to take a different approach, but these are complicated issues that will take time to work through," it read.

The announcement left a slew of questions: Where exactly do Meghan and Harry plan to live, and how will they earn private income without tarnishing the royal image? At the moment, they are largely funded by Harry's father, Prince Charles, through income from his vast Duchy of Cornwall estate.

The move dominated the news in Britain, and divided opinion. Some blamed Meghan for the troubles. A social media storm compared her to Yoko Ono, the widow of Beatles singer John Lennon, who was blamed for the breakup of the famous band.

Madame Tussauds, the famed London waxwork attraction, moved the couple out of the royal section, where they had previously stood next to the monarch and Prince Philip.

Others offered sympathy for the queen, who remains a revered figure.

"We don't mind them having an ordinary life. What we don't like is the queen not being informed about nothing," said royal super-fan John Loughrey, adding that the British public did not want to see the royal couple "isolated" abroad.

"It is a crisis," he said. "We have got a crisis here. Seriously."

Associated Press reporter Gregory Katz contributed to this report.

Follow full AP coverage at <https://www.apnews.com/PrinceHarry>

Facebook again refuses to ban political ads, even false ones
By BARBARA ORTUTAY and MAE ANDERSON AP Technology Writers

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SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Despite escalating pressure ahead of the 2020 presidential election, Facebook reaffirmed its freewheeling policy on political ads Thursday, saying it won't ban them, won't fact-check them and won't limit how they can be targeted to specific groups of people.

Instead, Facebook said it will offer users slightly more control over how many political ads they see and make its online library of political ads easier to browse.

These steps appear unlikely to assuage critics — including politicians, activists, tech competitors and some of the company's own rank-and-file employees — who say that Facebook has too much power and that social media is warping democracy and undermining elections.

And Facebook's stance stands in contrast to what its rivals are doing. Google has decided to limit targeting of political ads, while Twitter is banning them outright.

"Today's announcement is more window dressing around their decision to allow paid misinformation," said Bill Russo, a campaign spokesman for Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden.

Social media companies have been trying to tackle misinformation since it was learned that Russians bankrolled thousands of fake political ads during the 2016 elections to sow discord among Americans.

The fears go beyond foreign interference. In recent months, Facebook, Twitter and Google refused to remove a misleading video ad from President Donald Trump's campaign that targeted Biden.

Facebook has repeatedly insisted it won't fact-check political ads. CEO Mark Zuckerberg has argued that "political speech is important" and that Facebook doesn't want to interfere with it. Critics say that stance gives politicians a license to lie.

TV stations and networks aren't required to fact-check ads either, but social media gives candidates a certain advantage: the ability to "microtarget" their ads.

For instance, they can use information gleaned from voter rolls, such as political affiliation, and try to reach just those people. Or they can narrow the target audience to those who have shown interest in guns, abortion or immigration, based on what the user has read or talked about on Facebook. Candidates might even show one ad to young Democratic women interested in both gun control and climate change, and a different ad to everyone else.

Google, the digital ads leader, decided in November to limit political-ad targeting to just three broad categories — sex, age and location, such as ZIP code.

Under Google's policy, candidates would be free to show immigration ads next to immigration-related stories only; they wouldn't be able to show ads to just Democrats or Republicans, or target people specifically interested in immigration when they're reading about baseball or Beyonce.

Google said that approach aligns its policies with those of other media such as print, TV and radio.

Jason Kint, CEO of Digital Content Next, a trade group that represents digital publishers, said Google's ban on microtargeting is much better than Facebook's permissive stance. Making sure ads reach a wider, more diverse group of people can enable the public and the press to see, debate and correct claims in them, he said.

"Sunlight is the best disinfectant," he said.

Facebook said in a blog post Thursday that it considered limiting microtargeting for political ads. But it said it learned about the importance of such practices for reaching "key audiences" after talking with political campaigns from both major parties in the U.S., political groups and nonprofits.

The company said it was guided by the principle that "people should be able to hear from those who wish to lead them, warts and all, and that what they say should be scrutinized and debated in public."

Facebook does plan to let users choose to see fewer political and social-issue ads, although it won't let people exclude them entirely. It's also going to let people choose whether or not to see ads, political or otherwise, from advertisers that target them using their contact details, such as email address or phone number.

The company is also tweaking its ad library so people can search for exact phrases and limit results using filters such as dates and regions reached. Facebook's ad library currently lets anyone find out how much was spent on an ad, how many times it was seen, and the age, gender and location of the people

who saw it.

Facebook also called for government regulation of political ads, saying private companies should not be the ones to make rules about them. Experts say one of the big problems with political advertising online is the lack of a federal standard about what is and isn't allowed.

"Facebook and Twitter should not be making these decisions themselves," said Daniel Kreiss, a journalism professor at the University of North Carolina. "In the absence of any standards, you get the mess we're seeing now."

Sam Jeffers, co-founder of Who Targets Me, an advocacy group researching political advertising, also said individual companies shouldn't be deciding whether to allow political ads and what limits to set.

"It shouldn't be up to Facebook to decide what a lie is or isn't," he said. "It should be up to journalism and other forms of accountability."

For all of AP's tech coverage, visit <https://apnews.com/apf-technology>

Mae Anderson reported from New York. Kelvin Chan in London contributed to this report.

Anti-establishment views unite, divide Hong Kong protesters

By **DAKE KANG** Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Trump signs, Pepe the Frog graffiti and British and American flags have become a common sight at Hong Kong's anti-government protests — and an unsettling one to longtime democracy activists on the left.

Beijing has seized on the images to portray the movement as a coddled, westernized middle class incited by foreign organizations and governments to rebel against the world's largest communist country, China.

"Why does the American flag appear at every violent scene in Hong Kong?" state broadcaster CCTV asked.

Many of Hong Kong's hardcore protesters are working-class construction workers and hairstylists battling an establishment government dominated by business interests and real estate tycoons. Some wave U.S. and other flags to appeal to the rest of the world for support.

But a small group of followers of far-right activist Horace Chin regularly join the long-running protests, drawing the glare of television cameras with big banners reading "President Trump, Please Liberate Hong Kong".

For liberals, Chin is a pariah hijacking the demonstrations.

"It's really disappointing to see people try to drive a wedge between Hong Kong people and the Chinese people in this way," said Wilfred Chan, a founding member of Lausan, a leftist collective that seeks to build international solidarity with the Hong Kong protests. "This is a mistake."

There is little, though, that they can do about it. Protesters have vowed to avoid the internal divisions of the pro-democracy "umbrella movement" in 2014. Demonstrators refrain from criticizing each other's tactics or politics to stay focused on what unites them: opposition to the communist government in Beijing and the ruling establishment in Hong Kong.

The protests are "not your traditional left or right movement," said Avery Ng, chairman of the League of Social Democrats, a left-wing political party. "This is a broad-spectrum movement against a totalitarian government."

But basic disagreements bubble beneath the surface: What do the protests stand for? Who are they for, and who are they against? How do you save a city caught in a growing confrontation between the U.S. and China?

When four far-right Ukrainian activists flew into Hong Kong and posed for pictures with protesters, some Chinese state media played up what they said was the protest movement's true colors.

"Ukrainian neo-Nazis exposed colluding with Hong Kong rioters," trumpeted a headline in the Global Times, a nationalistic state-owned newspaper.

Hong Kong's left-leaning activists feel caught in the middle. The right-wing imagery is misleading, they

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said, fearing it feeds into Beijing's narrative and harms the movement.

The protests started in June to oppose a bill that would have allowed the city to extradite suspected criminals to China and rapidly snowballed into a full-blown defense of the city's semi-autonomy under Beijing's rule.

Chan, the Lausan member, treks the world to seek support from grassroots organizers. He sees a common struggle between demonstrators in Chile, Kashmir, Bolivia and Puerto Rico, saying their struggles stem from the same root: governments that lie to their own people.

"We have to think beyond trying to appease elites far away," he said, "When it comes to the question of Hong Kong's autonomy, I think that neither China nor the United States desires Hong Kong to truly be free."

Many of the most overt displays of support for President Donald Trump are led by Chin, the far-right activist and a former professor.

"Dear President Trump, communism is AIDS," he said in a December tweet. "Where's your cocktail therapy & shock therapies for communist China?"

In 2011, Chin published an influential book, "On the Hong Kong City-State." His supporters admire him for being one of the first to outline a concrete strategy to preserve the city's identity and traditional Chinese heritage from China's all-controlling Communist Party.

His language, though, veers into the bombastic, angering many with anti-China rhetoric that some call racist.

The expressions of people like Chin and attacks by bands of hardcore protesters targeting mainland Chinese-connected businesses and shoppers allow Beijing to tar the whole movement as being bigoted, critics say.

Cedric, a 30-year-old former construction worker turned front-liner, is somewhat indifferent towards Trump, whom he calls "just a businessman." Nor does he think the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act, passed by Congress as a rebuke to Beijing and Hong Kong's leadership, has had much impact so far.

Cedric, who like most protesters didn't give his last name out of fear of arrest, rejects political labels, calling himself "just a Hong Kong citizen." Like many in the movement, he embraces Pepe the Frog as a protest symbol, unaware of its association with far-right extremists in the U.S.

Some of his friends have been arrested and he now lives in hiding, nursing a shoulder injured in clashes with riot police. As the protests march on, Cedric hopes that more people across the globe will support the Hong Kong cause, including Chinese on the mainland.

"We won't reject support from people of any country or race, because we know those people value freedom and democracy," he said.

Ng, the head of the far-left party, sees the Chinese government as the common enemy of both Hong Kong and ordinary Chinese.

His left-wing yet anti-Beijing views were shaped by his years as a consultant helping multinational corporations buy stakes in Chinese companies. On visits to factories in distant corners of the country, he found that the lion's share of profits went to officials and business people, not the workers.

The trips jarred Ng, who struggled to square the Communist Party's socialist slogans with the exploitation and lack of basic worker rights he saw on the ground.

"The Chinese Communist Party is the most anti-communist party in the world," he said. "What they are operating is authoritarian state capitalism."

Ng sees the appeals of Hong Kong protesters to the U.S. as a distress signal, more a desperate cry for help than a sign of any ideological inclination.

"Hong Kong people are traditionally very utilitarian," Ng says. "They will try whatever path that they may think to help the cause."

Associated Press news assistant Phoebe Lai contributed to this report.

8 Nigerian soldiers killed by extremists in northeast

By HARUNA UMAR Associated Press

MAIDUGURI, Nigeria (AP) — At least eight Nigerian soldiers were killed in Monguno, a town in the country's northeast, after extremists staged a deadly attack, according to a witness.

Members of the Islamic State, West African Province ambushed a convoy of travelers being escorted by soldiers near a military checkpoint at the entrance to Monguno, according to an employee of a non-governmental organization who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not permitted to speak to the press.

The group claimed the suicide bombing and subsequent clash, according to SITE Intelligence Group.

The attack started late Tuesday the evening, and soldiers and travelers had to flee into the bush surrounding Monguno amid heavy gunfire.

A group of soldiers repelled the insurgents who attempted to invade the town.

About 300 shelters built by the International Committee of the Red Cross were burned down after a rocket-propelled grenade landed in the camp. It was not clear who shot the RPG.

The attack comes after Chadian troops who are part of the Multinational Joint Task Force withdrew from Borno some days ago. There are worries that more attacks will be carried out against key targets in the state.

On Saturday, six soldiers were killed in an attack by Boko Haram near Jakana, a town 45 kilometers (28 miles) away from Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state, according to Maj. Gen. Olusegun Adeniyi. He called for the evacuation of Jakana and another village, Mainok.

Nigeria's President Muhammad Buhari had on Tuesday told citizens not to panic over the withdrawal of the Chadian troops.

The military has not yet officially commented on the soldiers' deaths in the attack on Monguno.

Half-empty stadiums won't stop number of bowls from going up

By ERIC OLSON AP College Football Writer

Six bowls this season had their smallest crowds on record, with section after section of unoccupied seats a yawning indication of just how little buzz there can be for the long, long list of postseason games on the schedule.

Half-empty stadiums? Teams with tiny fan bases and mediocre records? Too many bowls?

They aren't going away: There will actually be three more next year, bringing the total number of bowl games to 42. That means approximately 65% of the 130 Bowl Subdivision teams will go to a postseason game next season.

But ... why?

Attendance isn't necessarily the measure of success. The bowl system generates hundreds of millions of dollars that conferences distribute to their schools. The games are inventory for television programming, and even if the ratings are modest, almost any bowl will draw more eyeballs than something else, particularly on a weekday afternoon.

That's why ESPN owns 14 bowls, and the network will add two more to its portfolio in the 2020 season even though viewership has trended mostly downward since the playoff era started in 2014.

"It's an indication of college football's strength that you could have games that really don't matter between teams people don't typically watch that can get over a million viewers," Sports Media Watch editor Jon Lewis said. "There are diminishing returns, but there's a long way to go before you would see a reduction. In fact, I doubt you'll see a reduction any time soon. You might see other networks try to get into having their own bowl games."

Lewis added, "We might be up to 50 bowl games in a decade."

Regular-season college football attendance has been in decline for years and hit a 22-year low in 2018. While there have been some empty seats at the New Year's Six bowl games — those associated with the College Football Playoff — the bigger postseason blow has been seen elsewhere.

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Of 33 second- and third-tier Bowl Subdivision games analyzed by The Associated Press, 23 were played at venues where the announced attendance was less than 75% of capacity. Of those 23, eight were under 50%. The AP did not include the New Year's Six games in its analysis because of their rotation in the CFP semifinal lineup.

The Football Bowl Association reported attendance for all 39 bowls at 1.661 million, an increase of 27,000 (1.6%).

FBA executive director Wright Waters acknowledged the attendance woes for many of the bowls not among the New Year's Six. Part of the issue, he said, is there are schools with fan bases that 20 years ago were excited about going to most any bowl that now are disappointed if their team isn't in the CFP mix.

Waters said the FBA plans to form a task force to generate ideas on how to grow attendance, with ticket pricing, matchups and the proximity of fan bases to bowl sites among the factors.

"That's your atmosphere," Waters said of crowd energy. "Would you rather have one person paying \$1,000 or have 1,000 people paying a dollar to get in the stadium? I'd rather have 1,000 people paying a dollar just because of the atmosphere."

Average announced attendance for the 33 bowls in the AP analysis was 34,595 this season. That's 1% higher than 34,215 last season, thanks to the Gator Bowl's announced crowd of 38,206 for Texas A&M-North Carolina State in 2018 growing to 61,789 for Tennessee-Indiana this season.

The games that had their lowest attendances on record this season were the New Mexico, Cure, Camellia, Pinstripe, First Responder and Famous Idaho Potato bowls.

Announced attendance figures provided by bowl organizers or stadium officials were used by AP. Those numbers — typically derived by counting the number of tickets distributed, game participants, band members and media members — invariably are higher than the actual attendance, sometimes by a wide margin.

The Las Vegas Bowl had an announced attendance of 34,197, but the scanned ticket count provided to AP by the stadium owner, UNLV, was 16,568. The Birmingham Bowl, played in heavy rain with a lengthy lightning delay, announced 27,193 even though actual attendance was 9,679. The New Mexico Bowl announced a crowd of 18,823; a San Diego Union-Tribune reporter at the game estimated actual attendance at 6,000.

Of the 33 bowls in the AP study, 26 existed in the 2013 season, the year before the CFP started. Eleven of those 26 had attendance declines of more than 10% in the 2014 season. In the last six years, five of the bowls have not matched the attendance they recorded in 2013, and eight others have hit their 2013 figures only once.

Bowls owned by ESPN referred questions about attendance to the network, which provided a statement: "Attendance is one of the many metrics in which we evaluate our bowl games. Our focus continues to be providing an overall rewarding postseason experience for student-athletes, coaches and fans, as well as each of the local communities."

New Year's Six games that didn't host CFP semifinals, and were not included in the AP's analysis, took a hit. TV viewership for all four was down. At the stadium, the Cotton Bowl between Penn State and Memphis drew 54,828, the smallest crowd since 1948. The Sugar Bowl between Georgia and Baylor had 55,211, its third sub-60,000 crowd since 2013. The Orange Bowl and Rose Bowl, however, drew near-capacity crowds.

Ohio coach Frank Solich, who was a longtime Nebraska assistant and the Cornhuskers' head coach from 1998-2003, said he has never had a bad bowl experience because it gives his team another game and a life experience that can't be duplicated.

Solich's Bobcats beat Nevada in the Famous Idaho Potato Bowl last week in Boise, Idaho, in front of an announced 13,611, a record low for a bowl that has had three iterations since starting in 1997.

"I've been in this business 52 years and I've been to all kinds of bowls," Solich said, "and I enjoyed coaching in the Bahamas Bowl and Potato Bowl every bit as much as coaching in the Rose Bowl. It's about being on national television. It's about the players who might not otherwise get to see the mountains.

It's about being a competitor; the kids for both teams played their butts off in that game," he said. "It's not about how many people are in the seats."

More AP college football: <https://apnews.com/Collegefootball> and https://twitter.com/AP_Top25

Global shares rise as worries recede on Iran, US tensions

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Global shares mostly rose Friday as worried receded that the United States and Iran might be stepping closer to the edge of war.

France's CAC 40 slipped 0.2% to 6,031.15, while Germany's DAX added nearly 0.1% in early trading to 13,505.63. Britain's FTSE 100 was little changed, down less than 0.1% at 7,593.34. U.S. shares were set to drift higher with Dow futures up 0.1% at 28,969. S&P 500 futures were up 0.2% at 3,280.70.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 edged up 0.5% to finish at 23,850.57. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 rose 0.8% to 6,929.00. South Korea's Kospi gained 0.9% to 2,206.39. Hong Kong's Hang Seng is up 0.3% at 28,638.20, while the Shanghai Composite inched down nearly 0.1% to 3,092.29.

On Wall Street, money flowed into riskier investments, such as technology stocks, and trickled out of traditional hiding spots for investors when they're nervous, such as gold. A measure of fear in the stock market had its largest drop in a week.

Stocks have been rallying after investors took comments from President Donald Trump and Iranian officials to mean no military escalation is imminent in their tense conflict. Markets had tumbled on the threat of war after the United States killed a top Iranian general in a drone strike.

Diminishing worries about a U.S.-Iran war put more of the market's focus on the economy, corporate profits and other inputs that directly affect stock prices.

"The market is in pretty solid shape," said Matt Hanna, portfolio manager at Summit Global Investments. "We could see some volatility in the beginning of 2020" following a well-worn path of choppy first halves for stocks during presidential election years, "but we don't see any sort of recession on the horizon."

Across markets, worries about a recession have faded since last year as central banks cut interest rates and pumped stimulus into the global economy. The United States and China also moved toward an interim deal in their trade war. China confirmed on Thursday that its chief envoy in tariff talks with Washington will visit next week to sign their "Phase 1" trade deal.

"Risk appetite continues to improve as investors judged the U.S.-Iran tensions to not be as concerning as thought while focusing on the upcoming leads including U.S.-China trade and a potential payrolls surprise into the end of week," said Jingyi Pan, market strategist at IG in Singapore.

The spotlight will move next to Friday's labor report, and economists expect it to show employers added 160,000 jobs last month. They also forecast the unemployment rate to hold at its low level of 3.5%. The numbers are key because a strong job market has been propping up the economy and allowing U.S. households to continue to spend, even as manufacturing weakens due to tariffs and trade wars.

ENERGY:

Benchmark U.S. crude fell 8 cents to \$59.48 a barrel. It slipped 5 cents to \$59.56 a barrel on Thursday. Brent crude, the international standard, rose 2 cents to \$65.39 a barrel.

CURRENCIES:

The dollar rose to 109.59 Japanese yen from 109.36 yen on Thursday. The euro fell to \$1.1097 from \$1.1114.

Boeing papers show employees slid 737 Max problems past FAA

By DAVID KOENIG AP Airlines Writer

Boeing employees knew about problems with flight simulators for the now-grounded 737 Max and apparently tried to hide them from federal regulators, according to documents released Thursday.

In internal messages, Boeing employees talked about misleading regulators about problems with the simulators. In one exchange, an employee told a colleague they wouldn't let their family ride on a 737 Max.

Boeing said the statements "raise questions about Boeing's interactions with the FAA" in getting the simulators qualified. But said the company is confident that the machines work properly.

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"These communications do not reflect the company we are and need to be, and they are completely unacceptable," Boeing said in a statement.

Employees also groused about Boeing's senior management, the company's selection of low-cost suppliers, wasting money, and the Max.

"This airplane is designed by clowns who in turn are supervised by monkeys," one employee wrote.

Names of the employees who wrote the emails and text messages were redacted.

The Max has been grounded worldwide since March, after two crashes killed 346 people. The crash that month of an Ethiopian Airlines flight had been preceded in October 2018 by the crash of a brand-new Max operated by Indonesia's Lion Air.

Boeing is still working to update software and other systems on the Max to convince regulators to let it fly again. The work has taken much longer than Boeing expected.

The latest batch of internal Boeing documents were provided to the Federal Aviation Administration and Congress last month and released on Thursday. The company said it was considering disciplinary action against some employees.

An FAA spokesman said the agency found no new safety risks that have not already been identified as part of the FAA's review of changes that Boeing is making to the plane. The spokesman, Lynn Lunsford, said the simulator mentioned in the documents has been checked three times in the last six months.

"Any potential safety deficiencies identified in the documents have been addressed," he said in a statement.

A lawmaker leading one of the congressional investigations into Boeing called them "incredibly damning."

"They paint a deeply disturbing picture of the lengths Boeing was apparently willing to go to in order to evade scrutiny from regulators, flight crews, and the flying public, even as its own employees were sounding alarms internally," said Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore., chairman of the House Transportation Committee.

DeFazio said the documents detail "some of the earliest and most fundamental errors in the decisions that went into the fatally flawed aircraft." DeFazio and other critics have accused the company of putting profit over safety.

The grounding of the Max will cost the company billions in compensation to families of passengers killed in the crashes and airlines that canceled thousands of flights. Last month, the company ousted its CEO and decided to temporarily halt production of the plane in mid-January, a decision that is rippling out through its supplier network.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Friday, Jan. 10, the 10th day of 2020. There are 356 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 10, 1984, the United States and the Vatican established full diplomatic relations for the first time in more than a century.

On this date:

In 1776, Thomas Paine anonymously published his influential pamphlet, "Common Sense," which argued for American independence from British rule.

In 1860, the Pemberton Mill in Lawrence, Mass., collapsed and caught fire, killing up to 145 people, mostly female workers from Scotland and Ireland.

In 1861, Florida became the third state to secede from the Union.

In 1863, the London Underground had its beginnings as the Metropolitan, the world's first underground passenger railway, opened to the public with service between Paddington and Farringdon Street.

In 1870, John D. Rockefeller incorporated Standard Oil.

In 1917, legendary Western frontiersman and showman William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody died at his sister's home in Denver at age 70.

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In 1920, the League of Nations was established as the Treaty of Versailles (vehr-SY') went into effect.

In 1967, President Lyndon B. Johnson, in his State of the Union address, asked Congress to impose a surcharge on both corporate and individual income taxes to help pay for his "Great Society" programs as well as the war in Vietnam. That same day, Massachusetts Republican Edward W. Brooke, the first black person elected to the U.S. Senate by popular vote, took his seat.

In 1994, President Bill Clinton, attending a NATO summit meeting in Brussels, Belgium, announced completion of an agreement to remove all long-range nuclear missiles from the former Soviet republic of Ukraine.

In 2002, Marines began flying hundreds of al-Qaida prisoners in Afghanistan to a U.S. base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

In 2004, actor-writer Spalding Gray, 62, vanished from his New York apartment (his body was found two months later in the East River).

In 2016, David Bowie, the chameleon-like star who transformed the sound — and the look — of rock with his audacious creativity and his sexually ambiguous makeup and costumes, died in New York.

Ten years ago: Data showed China edging past Germany in 2009 to become the top exporting nation. NBC announced it had decided to cancel "The Jay Leno Show," returning Leno from prime time to 11:35 p.m. Eastern time while pushing "The Tonight Show" with Conan O'Brien back to 12:05 a.m. (O'Brien ended up leaving NBC, and Leno resumed hosting "Tonight.")

Five years ago: Hundreds of thousands of people marched in French cities from Toulouse (tuh-LOOS') in the south to Rennes (rehn) in the west to honor the victims of recent terror attacks. SpaceX sent a supply ship soaring flawlessly toward the International Space Station, but the booster rocket ended up in pieces in the Atlantic following a failed attempt to land on a barge.

One year ago: A 13-year-old Wisconsin girl, Jayme Closs, who had disappeared in October after her parents were killed, was found alive in a rural town about an hour from her home and a suspect was taken into custody. (Jake Patterson pleaded guilty to two counts of intentional homicide and one count of kidnapping after admitting that he killed Jayme's parents and imprisoned her under a bed in his remote cabin for 88 days before she made a daring escape; he was sentenced to life in prison.) In the 20th day of a partial government shutdown caused by a stalemate over funding for a border wall, President Donald Trump toured a section of the U.S.-Mexico border and said that "a lot of the crime in our country is caused by what's coming through here." Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro celebrated the start of a second term, as countries elsewhere in the Americas cut back diplomatic ties with Venezuela and labeled him a dictator.

Today's Birthdays: Opera singer Sherrill Milnes is 85. Rock singer-musician Ronnie Hawkins is 85. Movie director Walter Hill is 80. Actor William Sanderson is 76. Singer Rod Stewart is 75. Rock singer-musician Donald Fagen (Steely Dan) is 72. Boxing Hall of Famer and entrepreneur George Foreman is 71. Roots rock singer Alejandro Escovedo is 69. Rock musician Scott Thurston (Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers) is 68. Singer Pat Benatar is 67. Hall of Fame race car driver and team owner Bobby Rahal is 67. Rock musician Michael Schenker is 65. Singer Shawn Colvin is 64. Rock singer-musician Curt Kirkwood (Meat Puppets) is 61. Actor Evan Handler is 59. Rock singer Brad Roberts (Crash Test Dummies) is 56. Actress Trini Alvarado is 53. Rock singer Brent Smith (Shinedown) is 42. Rapper Chris Smith (Kris Kross) is 41. Actress Sarah Shahi is 40. Presidential adviser and son-in-law Jared Kushner is 39. American roots singer Valerie June is 38.

Thought for Today: "In much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." — Ecclesiastes 1:18.

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