

Groton Daily Independent

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“SOME OF US
THINK
HOLDING ON
MAKES US
STRONG; BUT
SOMETIMES IT
IS LETTING GO.”

-HERMANN HESSE

Groton Area keeps Roncalli winless

It was a packed gym at Aberdeen Roncalli Thursday night as the Groton Area Tigers remain undefeated and keep a goose egg in the win column for Aberdeen Roncalli in boys' basketball action. The Tigers won, 61-53.

The two main players on the floor, Brodyn DeHoet of Groton Area and Gary Imbery of Roncalli each had 32 points.

We'll put together the story for tomorrow's GDI.

And if anyone has any pictures you would like to share with us, send to news@grotonsd.net. It was VERY crowded up in the press box (your's truly had to stand on a chair to see) and I was not able to operate the camera, hold my stat sheet (no where to sit at the table) and take pictures all at the same time.

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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South Dakota

GAME, FISH AND PARKS



GFP COMMISSION PROPOSES CHANGE TO DUCK HUNTING START DATES

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission proposed to change the start date of the Low Plains Middle and Low Plains North duck hunting zones at their December meeting.

The proposed change would modify the start date of these two zones from the last Saturday of September to the Saturday closest to September 24.

The change would provide hunters an earlier start to the season in some years to take advantage of local breeding ducks.

The commission also proposed to decrease the daily limit of scaup from 3 to 1. This proposed change came from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The proposal would have the following season dates and daily limits:

Season Dates and Open Areas:

High Plains Zone: Oct. 10, 2020 – Jan. 14, 2021

Low Plains North & Low Plains Middle Zone: Sept. 26 – Dec. 8, 2020

Low Plains South Zone: Oct. 24, 2020 – Jan. 5, 2021

Daily Limits:

Ducks: 6

The duck limit may be comprised of no more than 5 mallards (which may include no more than 2 hens), 3 wood ducks, 2 redheads, 2 canvasbacks, 1 pintail and 1 scaup.

2 Bonus blue-winged teal (first 16 days of the season only)

Low Plains North & Low Plains Middle Zones: Sept. 26 – Oct. 11, 2020

Low Plains South Zone: Oct. 24 – Nov. 8, 2020

High Plains Zone: Oct. 10 – 25, 2020

Coots: 15

Mergansers: 5 (may include no more than 2 hooded mergansers)

Possession Limits: Three times the daily bag limits

To comment in person, the public hearing will be held March 5 at 2 p.m. CST at the Red Rossa Convention Center in Pierre. Individuals can comment online at gfp.sd.gov/forms/positions or mail comments to 523 E. Capitol Ave., Pierre, SD 57501. To be included in the public record and to be considered by the commission, comments must include a full name and city of residence and meet the submission deadline of 72 hours before the public hearing (not including the day of the public hearing).

GFP COMMISSION PROPOSES TO REMOVE WATER SAFETY ZONE ON LAKE NORDEN AND MINA LAKE

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission proposed to remove a water safety zone on Lake Norden in Hamlin County and Mina Lake in Edmunds County.

The proposal would remove the no wake zone near the dam at the Mina Lake Recreation Area. There is no active swimming beach located at this location and there has been no public desire for a buoyed safety zone in this area.

The proposal would also remove the no wake zone near the spillway area at the Lake Norden Recreation

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Area. Recreational use of this swimming area is limited, and several lake homeowners are in support of this proposal.

To comment in person, the public hearing will be held March 5 at 2 p.m. CST at the Ramkota Convention Center in Pierre. Individuals can comment online at gfp.sd.gov/forms/positions or mail comments to 523 E. Capitol Ave., Pierre, SD 57501. To be included in the public record and to be considered by the commission, comments must include a full name and city of residence and meet the submission deadline of 72 hours before the public hearing (not including the day of the public hearing).

GFP COMMISSION PROPOSES ELK SEASONS

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission proposed minor changes to the number of elk licenses available in the 2020 and 2021 hunting seasons. The intent of the changes is to allow an opportunity for adjustments to be made at finalization based on the results of the upcoming Black Hills aerial survey to maximize hunter opportunity and meet population objectives identified in the elk management plan.

The proposal would allow for a total of 430 “any elk” and 715 “antlerless elk” licenses for the Black Hills firearm season and 147 “any elk” and 85 “antlerless elk” for the Black Hills archery season for the 2020 and 2021 seasons.

The commission proposed reducing the number of Custer State Park “any elk” licenses from 8 to 7, and reduce the number of Custer State Park Early Archery “any elk” licenses from 3 to 2. There will be no Custer State Park “antlerless” elk licenses available for 2020 or 2021.

Along with the Custer State Park season recommendations, the commission proposed to remove the mandatory chronic wasting disease (CWD) sample submission of deer or elk harvested in the park. Hunters would still be able to voluntarily submit their animals for testing.

The commission also proposed 78 “any elk” and 75 “antlerless elk” licenses for the Prairie Elk hunting season. In addition, the commission proposed a new prairie elk hunting unit (PRE-WRA) that would include those portions of the state west of the Missouri River not associated with another prairie elk unit excluding Corson, Dewey, Oglala Lakota, Todd and Ziebach counties with season dates of Sept. 1 – Dec. 31.

Other proposed modifications to the Prairie Elk hunting season include:

Modify those portions of Unit 9 in Butte and Lawrence counties to include that area within a line beginning at the intersection of U.S. Highways 85 and 212, then east on Highway 212 to Whitewood Valley Road, then south on Whitewood Valley Road to Interstate 90, then west on Interstate 90 to U.S. Highway 85, then north on U.S. Highway 85 to point of origin. That portion of Unit 9 in Meade County would remain unchanged.

Modify Unit 15A to include those portions of Butte and Lawrence counties within a line beginning at the junction of the South Dakota-Wyoming border, east on Sourdough Road to U.S. Highway 85, then south on U.S. Highway 85 to Interstate 90, then west on Interstate 90 to the South Dakota-Wyoming border, then north to the point of origin.

Modify Unit 27A to include all of Fall River County not included in BHE-H3.

Eliminate Unit 30A (portions of Gregory County) and include this geographic area into the West River prairie unit.

To comment in person, the public hearing will be held March 5 at 2 p.m. CST at the Ramkota Convention Center in Pierre. Individuals can comment online at gfp.sd.gov/forms/positions or mail comments to 523 E. Capitol Ave., Pierre, SD 57501. To be included in the public record and to be considered by the commission, comments must include a full name and city of residence and meet the submission deadline of 72 hours before the public hearing (not including the day of the public hearing).

BIGHORN SHEEP SEASON PROPOSED WITH INCREASED OPPORTUNITIES

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission proposed up to a total of eight bighorn sheep licenses available in four hunting units for the 2020 season.

The proposal would also establish a new hunting unit in Custer and Pennington counties, modify an existing hunting unit for Custer and Fall River counties and re-establish a hunting unit in Custer State Park.

To comment in person, the public hearing will be held March 5 at 2 p.m. CST at the Ramkota Convention Center in Pierre. Individuals can comment online at gfp.sd.gov/forms/positions or mail comments to 523 E. Capitol Ave., Pierre, SD 57501. To be included in the public record and to be considered by the commission, comments must include a full name and city of residence and meet the submission deadline of 72 hours before the public hearing (not including the day of the public hearing).

GFP COMMISSION CONSIDERS CHANGES TO TUNDRA SWAN, YOUTH WATERFOWL SEASONS

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission discussed changes to two waterfowl hunting seasons at their January meeting.

The commission proposal would reduce the number of available resident tundra swan hunting licenses from 1,425 to 1,100 and nonresident licenses from 250 to 200. This reduction in licenses comes from the recommendation of the Central Flyway Council and was adopted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The commission also proposed to move the 2020 Youth Waterfowl Season. The change would align with the federal framework that allows the season to begin the Saturday closest to 14 days prior to September 24. The upcoming youth waterfowl season would be Sept. 12-13, 2020.

To comment in person, the public hearing will be held March 5 at 2 p.m. CST at the Ramkota Convention Center in Pierre. Individuals can comment online at gfp.sd.gov/forms/positions or mail comments to 523 E. Capitol Ave., Pierre, SD 57501. To be included in the public record and to be considered by the commission, comments must include a full name and city of residence and meet the submission deadline of 72 hours before the public hearing (not including the day of the public hearing).

GFP COMMISSION TO CONSIDER FLATHEAD CATFISH LENGTH LIMIT RESTRICTION

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission has proposed to establish a length limit on flathead catfish. A final determination whether to move forward with the proposed change will occur at their March meeting.

The new rule would allow for one flathead catfish over 28 inches per day on inland waters. The original proposal was made at the November commission meeting and included all waters in the state, including border waters, and originated from the public petition process. At their December meeting, the commission reduced the scope of the change to inland waters only, instead of statewide.

John Lott, Fisheries Chief, informed the commission that a meeting will be taking place in February to discuss catfish management with Iowa and Nebraska. The goal of the meeting will be to develop common regulations for catfish on border waters.

To comment in person, the public hearing will be held March 5 at 2 p.m. CST at the Ramkota Convention Center in Pierre. Individuals can comment online at gfp.sd.gov/forms/positions or mail comments to 523 E. Capitol Ave., Pierre, SD 57501. To be included in the public record and to be considered by the commission, comments must include a full name and city of residence and meet the submission deadline of 72 hours before the public hearing (not including the day of the public hearing).

COMMISSION CONSIDERS THE USE OF RIFLES FOR WEST RIVER, PRIVATE LAND SPRING TURKEY SEASON

PIERRE, S.D. – At their December meeting, the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Commission accepted a proposal that would allow the use of rifles to hunt turkeys on private land during the West River spring turkey season.

The commission wishes to hear additional public comment on this proposal and plans to take action at their next meeting, which will be held March 5-6 in Pierre.

The proposal came at the request of one of the commissioners.

To comment in person, the public hearing will be held March 5 at 2 p.m. CST at the Ramkota Convention Center in Pierre. Individuals can comment online at gfp.sd.gov/forms/positions or mail comments to 523 E. Capitol Ave., Pierre, SD 57501. To be included in the public record and to be considered by the commission, comments must include a full name and city of residence and meet the submission deadline of 72 hours before the public hearing (not including the day of the public hearing).

GFP Commission to Hear Public Comment on Proposed Nest Predator Bounty Program for 2020

PIERRE, S.D. – At their January meeting, the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission was provided a comprehensive summary on a survey conducted around the 2019 Nest Predator Bounty Program. The independent survey was conducted by Responsive Management and revealed that 83% of the general public supported the operation of the Nest Predator Bounty Program. The full report is available on the GFP website.

With this information, and recognizing the Department of Game, Fish and Parks wishes to conduct the Nest Predator Bounty Program in 2020, the commission adopted a resolution to propose the following for public consideration:

An expenditure for five dollars per tail, not to exceed \$250,000 for the bounty of nest predators.

Participants under the age of 18 and landowners harvesting nest predators from their own land will not be required to have a license. All other participants must have a hunting, fishing, or furbearer license.

The Nest Predator Bounty Program shall be operated from April 1 to July 1, 2020, to coincide with the primary nesting season of pheasants, ducks, and other ground nesting birds.

The method of take is expanded to include shooting of nest predators in addition to trapping.

After considering comments, the commission will determine if there will be a 2020 Bounty Program and, if so, lay out the final parameters at the March 5, 2020 commission meeting as well as a method to identify and monitor goals of the program. Some of these goals include but are not limited to:

Remove up to 50,000 nest predators from the landscape;

Increase furbearer license sales by 5 percent;

Double participation in ETHICS SD;

Have 20 percent of bounty participants be under the age of 18.

To comment in person, the public hearing will be held March 5 at 2 p.m. CST at the Ramkota Convention Center in Pierre. Individuals can comment online at gfp.sd.gov/forms/positions or mail comments to 523 E. Capitol Ave., Pierre, SD 57501. To be included in the public record and to be considered by the commission, comments must include a full name and city of residence and meet the submission deadline of 72 hours before the public hearing (not including the day of the public hearing).

COMMISSION EXPANDS ENDEMIC AREA RELATED TO CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Commission added several deer and elk hunting units to the chronic wasting disease (CWD) endemic area. Results from surveillance efforts have detected CWD in seven new counties this past fall.

The commission added the following hunting units to the CWD endemic area and as a result, intrastate transportation and carcass disposal requirements will become effective for the 2020 deer and elk hunting seasons:

Added deer hunting units WRD-11B, WRD-15B, WRD-35A, WRD-35L within WRD-35A, WRD-31A, WRD-39B, WRD-49A, WRD-49B, WRD-60A, RFD-LC1 and RFD-LC2.

Added elk hunting units BHE-H1, PRE-09A, PRE-11A, PRE-11B, PRE-11C, PRE-11D, PRE-35A and PRE-WRA.

Additional information on CWD including new regulations for the 2020 deer and elk hunting seasons can be found at gfp.sd.gov/chronic-wasting-disease.

To comment in person, the public hearing will be held March 5 at 2 p.m. CST at the Ramkota Convention Center in Pierre. Individuals can comment online at gfp.sd.gov/forms/positions or mail comments to 523 E. Capitol Ave., Pierre, SD 57501. To be included in the public record and to be considered by the commission, comments must include a full name and city of residence and meet the submission deadline of 72 hours before the public hearing (not including the day of the public hearing).

Commission Accepts Petition to establish 500 Nonresident Special Buck Licenses East River

PIERRE, S.D. - At their January meeting, the Game, Fish and Parks Commission accepted a petition submitted by a member of the public to establish 500 nonresident, special buck licenses East River.

Currently, there are 500 special buck licenses allocated to residents that must be used on private land and are good for "any deer."

The additional 500 licenses would be good for "any whitetail," valid only on private land, and come at a price of \$554 for nonresidents. The petition further outlined that this allocation would be annual, that applicants must have permission from a landowner or lessee of private land before applying, and that the applicant must provide the name and phone number of the person with whom they have permission to hunt.

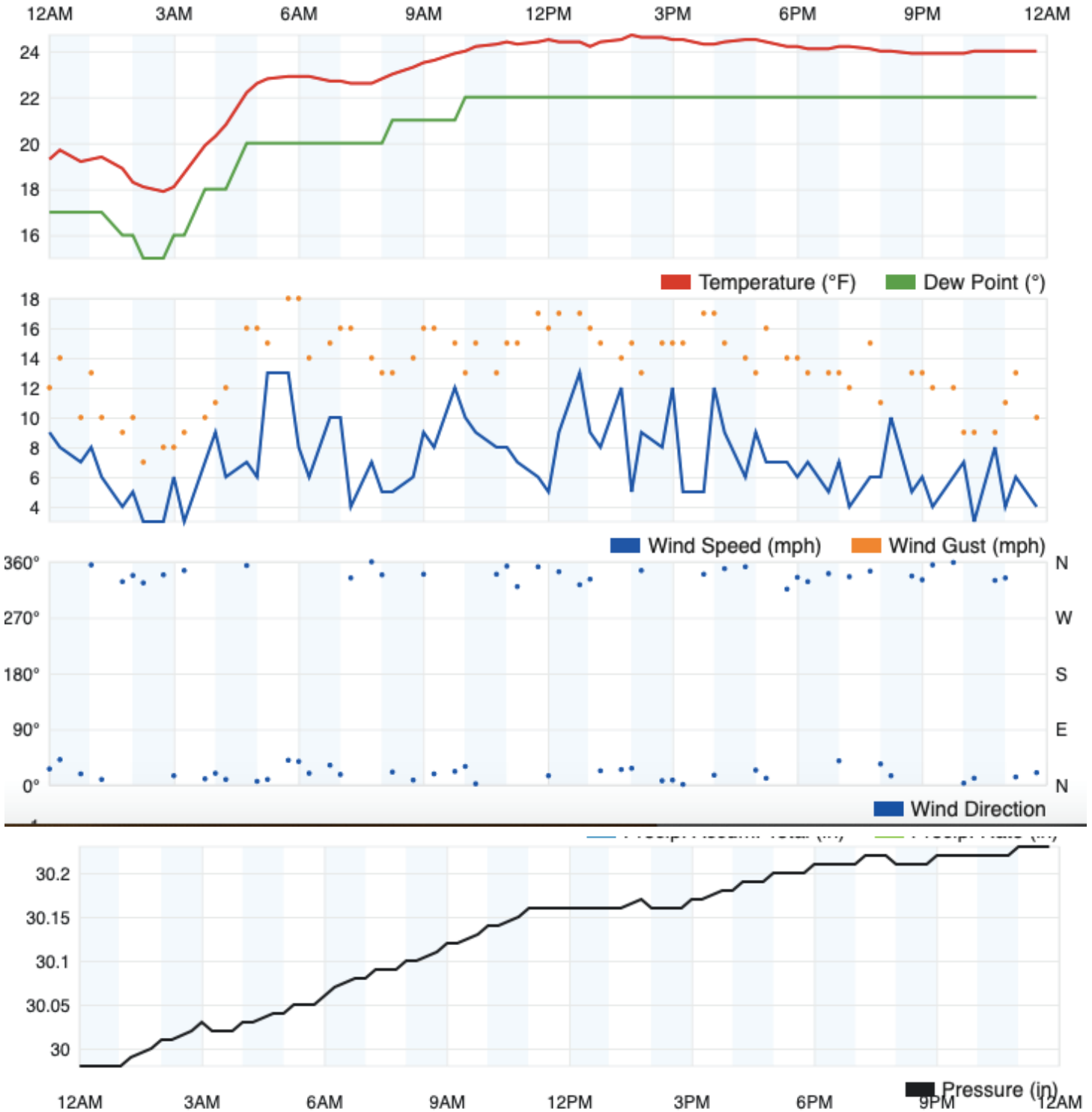
The petition was adopted as written by the commission as a proposal. Public comment is encouraged, and the commission will take final action on this proposal at the March 5-6 commission meeting in Pierre, South Dakota.

To comment in person, the public hearing will be held March 5 at 2 p.m. CST at the Ramkota Convention Center in Pierre. Individuals can comment online at gfp.sd.gov/forms/positions or mail comments to 523 E. Capitol Ave., Pierre, SD 57501. To be included in the public record and to be considered by the commission, comments must include a full name and city of residence and meet the submission deadline of 72 hours before the public hearing (not including the day of the public hearing).

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Upcoming Events

Friday, January 24, 2020

Speech Fiesta Debate at Watertown High School

Saturday, January 25, 2020

Speech Fiesta Debate at Watertown High School

Robotics at GHS Gymnasium

10:00am: Boys Junior High Jamboree at GHS (rescheduled from 1-18-20)

10:00am: Wrestling Tournament at Arlington

Sunday, January 26, 2020

Carnival of Silver Skates at 2 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

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 27, 2020

Boys Basketball at Northwestern (combined junior high game at 4 p.m., Junior Varsity game at 6:30 p.m. followed by the varsity game)

6:00pm: Junior High Wrestling Tournmanet at Redfield

Tuesday, January 28, 2020

6:30pm: Girls' Basketball at Clark/Willow Lake (at Clark School)

Thursday, January 30, 2020

4:00pm: Northeast Conference Wrestling at Britton-Hecla School

Friday, January 31, 2020

Lewis and Clark Debate at Yankton High School

Boys Basketball hosts Clark/Willow Lake. (Combined Junior High Game at 5:15 p.m., followed by Junior Varsity game at 6:30 p.m. and then the varsity game.)

82nd Annual Carnival of Silver Skates

Sunday, January 26th—2:00 and 6:30
Groton Ice Rink—West Side of Groton

Dreams...both the kind you have when you're asleep
AND when you're awake... This show will entertain
through music, costumes and skating talent.
Join us for a *great show* performed by our *local
youth* that will inspire you to *DREAM!*

Admission: 13 & older—\$3.00
6-12—\$2.00

Parking: Provided around the
rink and on the ice
or cozy up on the bleachers
(ice parking begins at 10 am,
then again at 4:30 pm)






**Check us out on Facebook
at "Silver Skates"

WE HOPE TO
SEE YOU THERE!



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| Today | Tonight | Saturday | Saturday Night | Sunday |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Patchy Fog then Cloudy | Cloudy | Patchy Fog then Mostly Cloudy | Mostly Cloudy | Mostly Cloudy |
| High: 24 °F | Low: 10 °F | High: 23 °F | Low: 19 °F | High: 33 °F |

Through Late this Morning

Areas of FOG

visibilities down to around ½ a mile or less at times

| | | |
|-----------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Slow Down | Headlights Stay On | Avoid Distractions |
|-----------|--------------------|--------------------|

Looking Ahead...

| | | |
|--|---|---|
|  morning fog 25 to 35° Saturday |  brief sunny breaks 30 to 40° Sunday |  warmest temps west 28 to 38° Monday |
|--|---|---|

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

www.weather.gov/abr

Graphic Created:
1/24/2020 5:30 AM

Areas of fog will persist through the morning hours today across central and northeast South Dakota and west central Minnesota. Locally dense fog with visibilities down to a half mile or less will be possible. Drivers will want to exercise caution as they may encounter sudden drops in visibility and scattered slippery spots on area roads. Conditions should improve during the afternoon, but skies will remain overcast. Temperatures won't budge much today with highs remaining in the 20s to around 30 degrees. Some more milder air is anticipated for the upcoming weekend, but skies will remain rather gray for the next few days.

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Today in Weather History

January 24, 1972: Snowfall of a dusting to as much as 8 inches accompanied by 30 to 40 mph winds resulted in widespread blowing and drifting snow across much of South Dakota. Many roads were blocked by drifting snow. Visibilities were near zero at times. Many activities were canceled or postponed.

January 24, 1985: Blizzard conditions associated with an Arctic front moved into western Minnesota and northeast South Dakota during the afternoon and continued into the evening. The blizzard brought travel to a standstill. Winds increased to 40 to 60 mph. Many roads were closed due to drifts of snow. Temperatures fell rapidly behind the front with wind chills of 30 to 50 below zero overnight. There were some accidents and stranded motorists. Many vehicles went into the ditch with many people stranded. The National Guard was called upon to search for stranded motorists. Portions of northeast South Dakota experienced near blizzard conditions as wind speeds gusted to near 60 mph with dangerous travel conditions.

1940: A record-breaking 19.9 inches of snow fell in Richmond, Virginia on this day. The storm, which began on the 23rd, produced a total of 21.6 inches of snow for the Richmond area. The headline in the Richmond Times-Dispatch was "Blizzard Sweeps State, Bringing Deep Snow; Public Schools Closed."

1967: A tornado outbreak across the Central U.S. was the furthest north ever recorded in the winter up to that time. Severe weather occurred across a good portion of southeast and east-central Iowa. Two-inch hail fell at Armstrong, and over two dozen tornadoes were reported. Five miles north of Fort Madison, one fatality occurred from a tornado along with six injuries. A tornado causing F4 damage killed 3 people and injured 216 in St. Louis County, Missouri. Storms also affected parts of northern and central Illinois. One strong tornado in Mason County killed one person and injured three others. Another tornado moved across the Champaign-Urbana metropolitan area, injuring five people. Other strong tornadoes were reported across Carroll County in Mt. Carroll, where 12 people were injured, and near Gladstone in Henderson County. Funnel clouds were reported across the southwest section of Chicago, IL. High winds gusting to 48 mph caused a wall of a building under construction to collapse killing one and injuring four others. Iowa had never recorded a tornado in January before this outbreak. 32 total tornadoes occurred, 14 of them in Iowa. Nine twisters occurred in Missouri, 8 in Illinois and 1 in Wisconsin.

1916 - The temperature at Browning MT plunged 100 degrees in just 24 hours, from 44 degrees above zero to 56 degrees below zero. It was a record 24 hour temperature drop for the U.S. (Weather Channel) (National Severe Storms Forecast Center)

1935 - Snowstorms hit the northeastern U.S. and the Pacific Northwest producing record 24 hour snowfall totals of 23 inches at Portland ME and 52 inches at Winthrop MA. (David Ludlum)

1956 - Thirty-eight inches of rain deluged the Kilauea Sugar Plantation of Hawaii in 24 hours, including twelve inches in just one hour. (David Ludlum)

1963 - A great arctic outbreak reached the southern U.S. The cold wave broke many records for duration of cold weather along the Gulf Coast. A reading of 15 degrees below zero at Nashville TN was an all-time record low for that location. (David Ludlum)

1982 - Chinook winds plagued the foothills of southeastern Wyoming and northern and central Colorado for the second straight Sunday. The winds gusted to 140 mph at Wondervu CO, located northeast of Denver. Chinook winds a week earlier produced wind gusts to 137 mph. (Storm Data)

1987 - Temperatures in Minnesota plunged far below the zero mark. International Falls MN reported a morning low of 35 degrees below zero, and Warroad MN was the cold spot in the nation with a low of 45 below zero. A storm developing in northeastern Texas produced severe thunderstorms with large hail in Texas, Louisiana and Arkansas. Camden AR reported golf ball size hail. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A blizzard rapidly developed in the north central U.S. In just one hour weather conditions in eastern North Dakota switched from sunny skies, light winds and temperature readings in the 20s, to rapidly falling temperatures and near zero visibility in snow and blowing snow. High winds in Wyoming, gusting to 72 mph at Gillette, produced snow drifts sixteen feet high. Northwestern Iowa experienced its second blizzard in just 24 hours. High winds in Iowa produced wind chill readings as cold as 65 degrees below zero. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

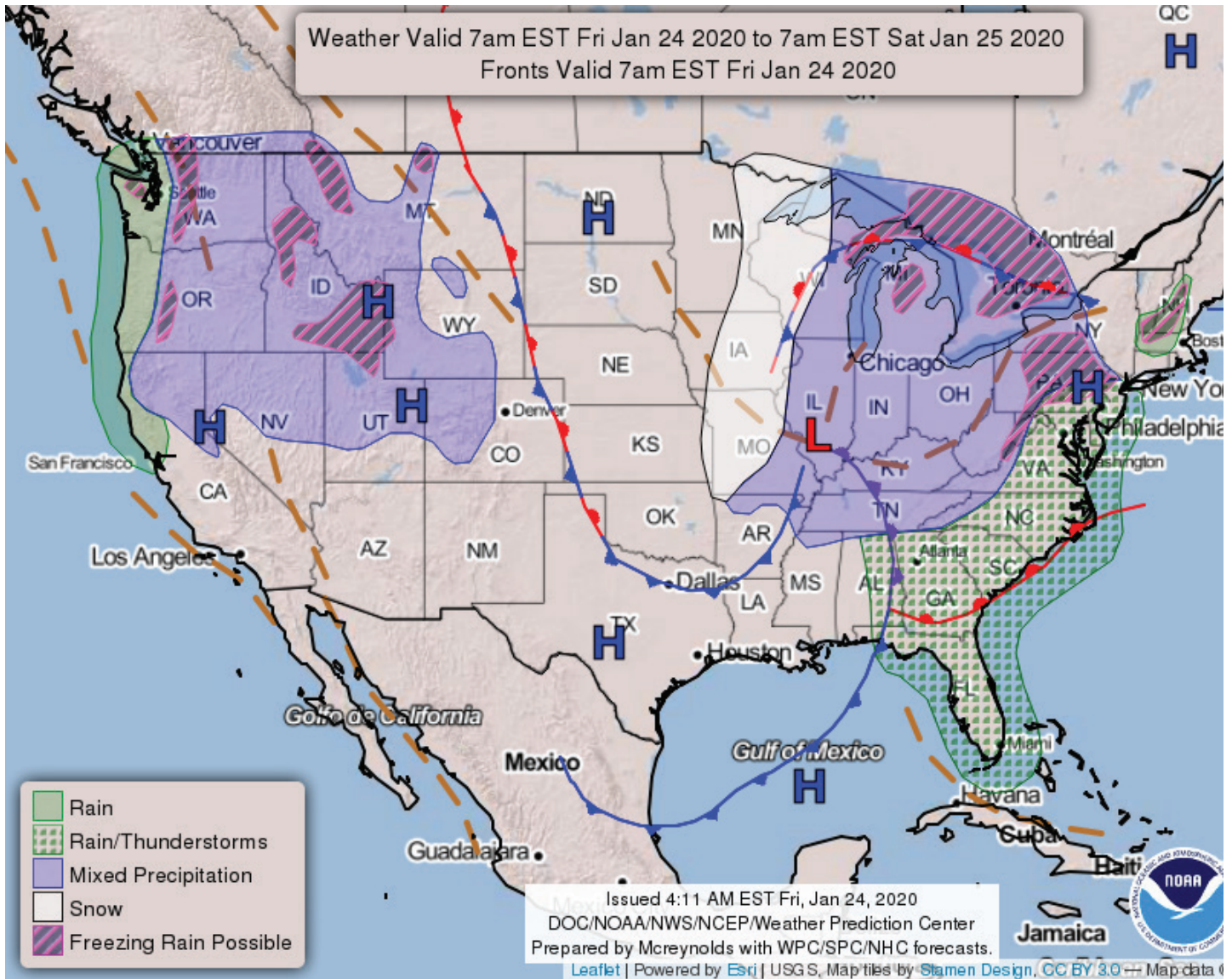
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 25 °F at 2:03 PM
Low Temp: 18 °F at 2:27 AM
Wind: 19 mph at 12:34 PM
Snow

Record High: 60° in 1981
Record Low: -35° in 1915
Average High: 23°F
Average Low: 1°F
Average Precip in Jan.: 0.36
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.35
Average Precip to date: 0.36
Precip Year to Date: 0.35
Sunset Tonight: 5:29 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:02 a.m.



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THE STORMS OF LIFE

Joseph Turner was standing in front of one of his paintings of a raging sea. A friend beside him asked, "How did you paint such a realistic picture of a storm at sea. It is so real."

He answered, "I was on a ship in the midst of that storm. Not only did I see it, but I was also there and felt it."

Like that painter, Jesus felt the storms of life.

Whenever we lose a loved one, we must remember that He stood beside a grave and wept.

If ever we are a victim of poverty or lack a place of our own, let's not forget that Jesus had no place to lay His head.

Whenever we feel alone, abandoned or neglected, we need to recall the times when His followers forsook Him and His disciples deserted Him.

Every event that God brings into our lives is one that Jesus has encountered, endured and experienced and successfully survived. Whatever God brings into our lives is temporary and will pass into the pages of history. Because He has overcome the extremes of life, we can take great comfort in the fact that He is willing to share His victories with us if we look to Him for His salvation.

Prayer: Father, You have been where we are or someday may be. So, we know with certainty that You've been there before us and will be with us and that we can survive. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Hebrews 2:18 Since he himself has gone through suffering and testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested.

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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
- 06/19/2020 SDSU Golf at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/04/2020 Firecracker Golf Tourney (4th of July)
Groton Hosting State B American Legion Baseball Tournament
- 07/12/2020 Summer Fest/Car Show
- 07/31-08/04/2020 State American Legion Baseball Tournament in Groton
- 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

THIS WEEK: 97 Celebrations of School Choice Week Organized by Schools, Organizations, and Individuals Underway in South Dakota

PIERRE, S.D., Jan. 24, 2020 /PRNewswire/ -- South Dakota will celebrate education options during School Choice Week 2020 with dozens of local events celebrating K-12 education.

Schools, organizations, and individuals are planning 97 events and activities, making up some of the 51,300 events planned nationwide to draw attention to K-12 education options. National School Choice Week (Jan. 26-Feb. 1) will be the largest celebration of educational choice in U.S. history, with a record-shattering 13.7 million Americans expected to participate.

Around the country, Americans will be celebrating at school open houses, pep rallies, screenings of the movie "Miss Virginia," sports competitions, school fairs, and more. For a preview of local events planned in South Dakota, explore the events and updates listed at schoolchoiceweek.com/states/south-dakota.

Governor Kristi Noem issued an official proclamation recognizing Jan. 26 - Feb. 1 as South Dakota School Choice Week. In addition, the county of Oglala Lakota issued a proclamation recognizing School Choice Week in its community.

In South Dakota, there are a variety of educational options available including: traditional public schools, private schools, and homeschooling. South Dakota families with income below certain thresholds may qualify for a state-run scholarship program.

National School Choice Week is an independent public awareness effort celebrated since 2011. The week is nonpartisan, nonpolitical, and not related to any legislative advocacy campaign.

"National School Choice Week is the perfect time for South Dakota families to evaluate their educational options and talk about what learning environments their children need in the coming year," said Andrew Campanella, president of National School Choice Week.

To download a guide to school choice in South Dakota, see celebration photos and proclamation updates, or learn more about featured events, visit schoolchoiceweek.com/states/south-dakota.

National School Choice Week is an independent public awareness effort designed to shine a spotlight on effective education options for children. National School Choice Week celebrates all types of school choice options, including traditional public schools, public charter schools, public magnet schools, private schools, online academies, and homeschooling. Learn more at www.schoolchoiceweek.com or explore the conversation about school choice on social media using hashtag #schoolchoice.

View original content to download multimedia: <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/this-week-97-celebrations-of-school-choice-week-organized-by-schools-organizations-and-individuals-underway-in-south-dakota-300992684.html>

SOURCE National School Choice Week

Thursday's Scores By The Associated Press

BOYS BASKETBALL

Brandon Valley 75, Brookings 34

Britton-Hecla 56, Deuel 35

Burke 63, Lyman 48

Canton 61, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 43

Chamberlain 80, Miller 36

Dell Rapids 66, Madison 48

Douglas 62, Pierre 55

Elk Point-Jefferson 70, Akron-Westfield, Iowa 32

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Florence/Henry 47, Waubay/Summit 45
Freeman Academy/Marion 58, Baltic 31
Gregory 59, Kimball/White Lake 38
Groton Area 61, Aberdeen Roncalli 53
Hanson 66, Canistota 57
Hill City 50, Lead-Deadwood 47
Howard 85, Bridgewater-Emery 74
Ipswich 54, Faulkton 47
Irene-Wakonda 47, Alcester-Hudson 19
Lennox 54, West Central 41
Luverne, Minn. 56, Garretson 48
Marty Indian 63, Scotland 32
Menno 61, Freeman 57
Oelrichs 57, New Underwood 48
Parkston 46, Bon Homme 34
Pine Ridge 64, Winner 60
Rapid City Christian 81, Bennett County 26
Sioux Falls Lincoln 69, Huron 37
St. Francis Indian 93, Jones County 79
Tripp-Delmont/Armour 56, Mitchell Christian 41
Vermillion 59, Sioux Falls Christian 58
281 Conference Tournament=
Seventh Place=
Sunshine Bible Academy 61, James Valley Christian 55
Fifth Place=
Wessington Springs 46, Hitchcock-Tulare 36
Third Place=
Iroquois 64, Highmore-Harrold 61
Championship=
Wolsey-Wessington 57, Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 51, OT
DVC Tournament=
Consolation Semifinal=
Elkton-Lake Benton 60, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 36
Semifinal=
Arlington 62, Lake Preston 34
Dell Rapids St. Mary 70, Colman-Egan 55

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Akron-Westfield, Iowa 40, Elk Point-Jefferson 39
Avon 51, Andes Central/Dakota Christian 28
Baltic 57, Freeman Academy/Marion 29
Belle Fourche 55, Douglas 35
Brandon Valley 64, Brookings 31
Castlewood 48, DeSmet 42
Clark/Willow Lake 73, Webster 55
Corsica/Stickney 60, Ethan 51
Deuel 45, Britton-Hecla 34
Faulkton 48, Ipswich 31
Howard 57, Bridgewater-Emery 49
Irene-Wakonda 60, Alcester-Hudson 27
Langford 44, Waverly-South Shore 38

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Lennox 54, West Central 42
Luverne, Minn. 67, Garretson 43
Miller 49, Chamberlain 32
Mobridge-Pollock 71, McLaughlin 65
New Underwood 44, Oelrichs 37
Newell 54, Custer 53
North Central Co-Op 58, Great Plains Lutheran 51
Parkston 46, Bon Homme 34
Rapid City Christian 71, Bennett County 34
Scotland 70, Marty Indian 45
Sioux Falls Lincoln 53, Huron 36
Sully Buttes 60, Stanley County 32
Tripp-Delmont/Armour 53, Mitchell Christian 35
Wall 57, Philip 50
Winner 75, Pine Ridge 38
281 Conference Tournament=
Seventh Place=
Iroquois 67, Sunshine Bible Academy 26
Fifth Place=
James Valley Christian 46, Wessington Springs 26
Third Place=
Wolsey-Wessington 46, Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 43
Championship=
Hitchcock-Tulare 46, Highmore-Harrold 39
Little Moreau Conference Tournament=
First Round=
Dupree 90, Harding County 49
Faith 76, Tiospaye Topa 20
Lemmon 64, McIntosh 24
Timber Lake 66, Bison 29

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

Kelley scores 18, balanced South Dakota dumps UPFW 83-60

VERMILLION, S.D. (AP) — Cody Kelley scored 18 points to lead five players in double figures for South Dakota as the Coyotes routed Purdue Fort Wayne 83-60 on Thursday night.

Triston Simpson added 16 points, Tyler Hagedorn 15, Stanley Umude 12 and Tyler Peterson 10 for South Dakota (13-8, 4-3 Summit League), which won its fourth in a row at home.

Deonte Billups had 19 points for the Mastodons (9-12, 2-4). Jarred Godfrey added 11 points and Brian Patrick had seven rebounds.

South Dakota's win reverses a 70-59 victory for the Mastadons over the Coyotes on Jan. 1.

South Dakota takes on Oral Roberts at home on Saturday. Purdue Fort Wayne plays at Omaha on Saturday.

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

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Judge dismisses final charge against man in pipeline protest

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — A judge in North Dakota has dismissed the remaining charge against a South Dakota man who prosecutors alleged was part of the 2016 riot at the Dakota Access pipeline construction site.

The prosecutor and defense attorney requested that the misdemeanor charge of engaging in a riot be dropped against Lawrence Malcolm Jr., of Sisseton, South Dakota. South Central District Judge Bruce Romanick signed the order Tuesday, The Bismarck Tribune reported.

Defense attorney Bruce Nestor filed a motion to dismiss, saying prosecutors waited too long to file the charge. The statute of limitations for the offense is two years. The criminal complaint was filed almost three years after the alleged offense, Nestor said.

Assistant Morton County State's Attorney Chase Lingle filed a motion Tuesday to dismiss, saying "the Court has made statements that concern the State about its ability to prove" the charge at trial.

Lingle did not respond to requests seeking comment on the case.

Earlier this month the judge dismissed a felony criminal mischief conspiracy charge against Malcolm for lack of probable cause. Malcolm was charged based on DNA from a cigarette butt left at the scene. His DNA was on file from a previous arrest.

Nestor countered that it was impossible to determine where the cigarette butt originated or how long it might have been there.

An affidavit says more than 100 demonstrators halted construction and vandalized equipment during the protest on the Standing Rock Indian Reservation.

New suicide prevention program targets kids, tribes, farmers

By **STEPHEN GROVES** Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota officials are trying to get suicide prevention programs into communities across the state following an increase in suicides in recent years.

Gov. Kristi Noem's administration detailed plans on Thursday to make suicide prevention part of its agriculture, tribal relations, and school programs over the next five years with a focus on rural areas. The state has recorded a 40% rise in suicides over the last decade.

The state has the sixth-highest rate of suicide in the nation, according to the South Dakota Department of Health. State Epidemiologist Josh Clayton said some of the highest rates are in Native American communities.

Noem directed the Department of Health to develop the first suicide prevention plan since 2013.

"Many communities want to do something, they just don't know where to start," said Laurie Gill, secretary of the Department of Social Services.

Gill said the state will offer free mental health first aid training to teach people how to respond when someone shows signs of mental illness or substance abuse. The state also plans to have suicide prevention programs in schools that teach students how to deal with difficult issues such as bullying, bad grades or family hardships.

Noem proposed an extra \$210,000 for the program next year.

The state will establish a website with suicide prevention resources designed specifically for teens, veterans and Native Americans. It will also have current data on suicides to help social workers develop prevention strategies.

Gill said people in small towns sometimes face stigma about seeking help, but the plan is to make mental health a part of regular conversations. A hotline for farmers and ranchers in mental distress received hundreds of calls last year.

Legislators this year are also trying to make mental health help accessible through video calls with counselors.

ACLU vows challenge to proposed transgender treatment ban

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The American Civil Liberties Union on Thursday vowed a legal challenge if South Dakota passes a law banning gender-change treatment for children under 16.

The bill headed to the House floor next week would make it illegal for physicians to perform surgeries, administer hormone therapy or give puberty-blocking medication to children under 16 who want to change their gender.

The ACLU said it's unconstitutional to single out a group of people with a law and categorically ban healthcare that is medically necessary.

The ACLU successfully challenged a South Dakota law passed last year that sought to make it illegal for people to participate in so-called "riot boosting" in advance of expected disruptive demonstrations against the construction of the Keystone XL pipeline. The law made it illegal to direct or encourage rioting. The state settled with the civil rights organization in that lawsuit and agreed not to enforce parts of the law.

North Dakota signals no new conditions on pipeline expansion

JAMES MacPHERSON Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — North Dakota regulators signaled Thursday that the state would not impose conditions beyond those required by the federal government on a proposal to double the capacity of the Dakota Access Pipeline.

Zachary Pelham, an attorney for the three-member, all-Republican North Dakota Public Service Commission told the panel that requiring additional measures could be considered "outside our lane" and "potentially problematic," drawing a legal challenge from Texas-based Energy Transfer, the pipeline's owner.

The company wants to double the capacity of the pipeline to as much as 1.1 million barrels daily to meet growing demand for oil from North Dakota. It's seeking permission for additional pump stations in the Dakotas, Iowa and Illinois.

Commissioners in a South Dakota county last year approved a conditional use permit for a pumping station. Permits in the other states are pending.

Iowa regulators last week said the company must provide expert analysis to back up its claim that doubling the line's capacity won't increase the likelihood of a spill. On Tuesday, opponents of the expansion said the Illinois Commerce Commission voted to require the company to provide justification that the additional capacity is needed, including identifying shippers and contracts. The commission did not return telephone calls Thursday to confirm the action.

The pipeline has been moving North Dakota oil through South Dakota and Iowa to a shipping point in Illinois since June 2017.

The \$3.8 billion pipeline was subject to prolonged protests and hundreds of arrests during its construction in North Dakota in late 2016 and early 2017 because it crosses beneath the Missouri River, just north of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation. The tribe draws its water from the river and fears pollution. Energy Transfer insists the pipeline and its expansion are safe.

Tribal members are asking North Dakota regulators to deny the expansion, saying it would "increase both the likelihood and severity of spill incidents." The tribe wants North Dakota regulators to seek a similar analysis to that sought by regulators in Iowa and Illinois.

"The North Dakota PSC has the statutory duty to determine whether the expansion has a minimum adverse impact on the state and citizens of North Dakota," Tim Purdon, an attorney for the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, said. "I don't know how you can evaluate this without it."

PSC Commissioner Julie Fedorchak said in an interview the tribe's concerns were addressed at a more than 15-hour meeting in November and also are addressed by the federal Pipeline Hazardous Materials Safety Administration.

The company has said that its \$40 million pump station built on a 23-acre (9-hectare) site near Linton

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would produce only "minimal adverse effects on the environment and the citizens of North Dakota." It says the expansion would lessen the need for additional pipelines or rail shipments from North Dakota, the nation's second-biggest oil producer behind Texas.

Poll: Many in US support Trump decision to kill Iran general

By BEN FOX and EMILY SWANSON Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A new poll shows Americans are more likely than not to support President Donald Trump's decision to order a drone strike that killed an Iranian general, even amid widespread skepticism about his foreign policy overall.

The poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research was taken about two weeks after the Jan. 3 strike that killed Gen. Qassem Soleimani in Iraq. It found that 41% of Americans approved of the action while 30% disapproved of it. The rest didn't express an opinion either way.

Soleimani was killed shortly after arriving at the Baghdad airport. Iran responded five days later by firing a barrage of missiles at bases in Iraq where U.S. troops are stationed, causing injuries but no deaths. The exchange sparked fears of a new Middle East war, but both sides then stood down.

That lack of escalation could explain some of the support for the strike, said Trita Parsi, executive vice president of the Quincy Institute.

"There was a fear that this could lead to an all-out war between the U.S. and Iran and, because it didn't, the assessment of whether it was good or bad shifts a bit," said Parsi, whose "trans-partisan" think tank advocates for diplomacy and military restraint in the Middle East.

The poll results are mixed for Trump, with support for killing the general not translating into a corresponding increase in approval of his handling of foreign affairs.

The poll showed 59% disapproved of the Republican president's handling of foreign policy, similar to the percentage who said that in October 2019 and well above the 43% who disapproved of his job handling the economy.

Trump's approval rating for foreign policy is similar to views on how he's handling his job as president overall.

To a certain extent, public opinion on the killing of Soleimani, who U.S. officials say led campaigns that have killed hundreds of American troops and was planning further attacks, tracked with attitudes toward the president overall. Republican support for the decision is overwhelming, with 80% approving and just 5% disapproving of the decision. Among Democrats, 15% approve and 53% disapprove.

"It does show there are repercussions for inciting violence against the U.S.," said Andrew Heater, a Trump supporter who lives near South Bend, Indiana. "I don't really like violence, and I don't really believe in it, but I feel it's been a one-way street and we continually get pushed around."

On the other side was South Florida resident Lauren Schulman, who blamed Trump for creating conflict with Iran with his 2018 unilateral withdrawal from the international agreement that removed sanctions on the country in exchange for curbs on its nuclear program. She suspects the strike against the general was intended to distract from Trump's impeachment and other issues at home.

"I just think that Trump just does this stuff to distract every time something comes up with him, which is pretty much every day," Schulman said. "I just don't think there was anything to it."

The poll showed Americans largely pessimistic about U.S. foreign policy. Close to 50% of Americans expect relationships with traditionally hostile nations to worsen in the coming year, and roughly 40% also expect a decline both in the country's relationships with allies and in U.S. standing around the world.

About 67% of Democrats think that U.S. relationships with traditionally hostile nations will worsen. On this, about 25% of Republicans agree, although Republicans are still more likely to expect these relationships to improve or stay the same.

The poll shows that 56% of Americans, both Republicans and Democrats, are extremely or very concerned about Iran's nuclear program. That's an increase from a year ago, when 48% said they were highly concerned.

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Parsi agrees with those who think the situation will worsen. The U.S. is putting increasing economic pressure on Iran — adding new sanctions on Thursday — and the Iranians are increasing their stockpiles of enriched uranium and continuing support for proxy forces in Iraq, Syria and elsewhere. A new crisis could emerge at any time.

“I think we are right now in a bit of an illusory lull in which people are under the perception that tensions have reduced when in reality it is just a temporary pause,” Parsi said. “The actual driving forces of this conflict have not changed and not let up.”

The AP-NORC poll of 1,353 adults was conducted Jan. 16-21 using a sample drawn from NORC’s probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 3.6 percentage points. Respondents were first selected randomly using address-based sampling methods and later were interviewed online or by phone.

Online:

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

Thousands turn up for ‘million’ Iraq rally against US troops

By QASSEM ABDUL-ZAHRA and SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — Thousands rallied in Baghdad on Friday to demand that American troops leave the country, though their numbers fell short of the “million-man” march called for by an influential Shiite cleric. The rally came amid heightened anti-U.S. sentiment after a U.S. drone strike earlier this month killed a top Iranian general in the Iraqi capital.

Since mid-morning, large crowds gathered on the Muslim day of prayers as loudspeakers blasted “No, no America!” at a central square in Baghdad. A child held up a poster reading, “Death to America. Death to Israel.” But by the afternoon the rally had failed to reach the critical numbers called for by radical cleric Muqtada al-Sadr.

Apparently seeking to show control, al-Sadr’s supporters did not engage in altercations with security forces or target the separate, anti-government protests in neighboring Tahrir Square, a possibility feared by activists in the lead-up to Friday’s march. Officials and experts said the rally was the cleric’s attempt to capitalize on brewing anti-American feeling and show he had the upper-hand on the Iraqi street as negotiations among political elites over who should be the next prime minister stumble on.

In his weekly Friday sermon, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, Iraq’s most revered Shiite cleric, called on political parties stop stalling and move the talks forward.

“The formation of the new government is constitutionally long overdue, it is necessary for the various parties concerned to cooperate,” al-Sistani said in a sermon delivered via a representative, “it is an important step toward resolving the current crisis.”

Roads and bridges leading to the heavily fortified Green Zone, the seat of Iraq’s government and home to several foreign embassies, including the U.S. Embassy, were blocked off by concrete barriers. Iraqi security forces stood guard, blocking access to the gates to the zone.

There was a heavy security presence as the protesters, mostly Shiites hailing from the capital but also Iraq’s southern provinces, walked on foot to an assembly point in Baghdad’s Jadriya neighborhood, waving Iraqi flags and wearing symbolic white shrouds.

Al-Sadr, whose party won the most seats in the May 2018 parliamentary elections, had called for a “million-man” demonstration to demand the withdrawal of American troops following the U.S. drone strike near Baghdad’s airport that killed top Iranian general Qassem Soleimani and senior Iraqi militia commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis. The killing sparked the ire of Iraqi officials from across the political spectrum.

According to U.S. military officials, rather than draw down, Americans have poured 20,000 additional troops in the Middle East to counter what Washington describes as an escalating threat from Iran. There are around 5,200 U.S. troops in Iraq, where they help train and assist Iraqi forces in the fight against the

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Islamic State group.

Iran has long sought the withdrawal of American forces from neighboring Iraq, but the U.S. strike that killed Soleimani in Baghdad has added new impetus to the effort.

In a statement Friday, al-Sadr — whose followers fought U.S. troops after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion to oust dictator Saddam Hussein — issued a list of conditions for American military presence in Iraq. The list includes cancelling existing security agreements, closing U.S. military bases, ending the work of American security companies and closing off access to Iraqi airspace.

If the conditions were met, the statement said, “the resistance will temporarily stop until the last soldier leaves Iraq,” al-Sadr said, referring to American troops.

Al-Sadr, once a huge thorn in the side of the American occupation after the 2003 invasion, derives political capital from his ability to call on supporters to clog streets and paralyze all movement in Baghdad.

Friday’s rally came at a critical time as rival political blocs are jockeying over the selection of a premier to replace outgoing Adel Abdul-Mahdi. It was supported by mainstream Shiite parties, including that of al-Sadr’s political rival Hadi al-Ameri, who heads the Fatah bloc in parliament, as well as the Popular Mobilization Units, an umbrella group comprised of an array of militias, including Iran-backed groups.

Al-Sadr “proved once again he can amass the crowds to take them to the street, cleverly prevented any targeting of protesters in Tahrir Square,” tweeted Farhad Alaadin, head of the Iraqi Advisory Council and a former presidential adviser.

In response to a public outcry over the U.S. airstrike that killed Soleimani and al-Muhandis, Iraq’s parliament passed a non-binding resolution this month, calling on the government to expel foreign troops from the country. Kurdish and most Sunni lawmakers boycotted the vote.

“The American forces should leave,” said an 18-year-old protester, Amer Saad. “I am ready to fight against the Americans if Muqtada al-Sadr asks us.”

Police and militiamen of the Popular Mobilization Units also closed off roads leading to the protest site, in both Karada and Jadriya neighborhoods of Baghdad. In Tahrir Square, anti-government protesters carefully eyed al-Sadr’s anti-U.S. rally but no confrontation took place. As the anti-U.S. demonstration dwindled away by the early afternoon, the anti-government protesters remained in their sit-in.

“I am not against the Sadrist movement’s demonstrations today, but if Muqtada asks for the exit of the Americans and non-intervention, he should raise the same slogan against Iranian interference, to be honest,” said one of the anti-government protesters, Yahya Mohammed.

In neighboring Iran, Ali Shamkhani, the secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council, said the Baghdad march on Friday was a “countdown” to expelling U.S. forces. “It indicated that Iraqi people are the flagship on the path of expelling the U.S. from the region,” he said.

Cleric Mohammad Hassan Abutorabifard who led Friday prayers in the Iranian capital, Tehran, told worshippers that Iraqis at the rally “stood by Iranians” following Soleimani’s killing.

“The legitimacy of the West-appointed puppet rulers in the region has totally collapsed,” he said.

Associated Press writer Nasser Karimi in Tehran, Iran, contributed to this report.

China building a hospital to treat virus, expands lockdowns

By YANAN WANG Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China announced Friday that it is swiftly building a 1,000-bed hospital dedicated to patients infected with a new virus that has killed 26 people, sickened hundreds and prompted unprecedented lockdowns of cities during the country’s most important holiday.

On the eve of the Lunar New Year, transportation was shut down in at least 13 cities home to more than 36 million people. The cities are Wuhan, where the illness has been concentrated, and 12 of its neighbors in central China’s Hubei province.

“To address the insufficiency of existing medical resources,” Wuhan is constructing a hospital modeled after the Xiaotangshan SARS hospital in Beijing, Wuhan authorities said in a Friday notice. The facility will

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be a prefabricated structure on a 25,000- square-meter (270,000-square-foot) lot, slated for completion Feb. 3.

The SARS hospital was built from scratch in 2003 in just six days to treat an outbreak of a similar respiratory virus that had spread from China to more than a dozen countries and killed about 800 people. The hospital featured individual isolation units that looked like rows of tiny cabins.

Normally bustling streets, malls and other public spaces were eerily quiet in Wuhan on the second day of its lockdown. Masks were mandatory in public, and images from the city showed empty store shelves as people stocked up for what could be an extended isolation. Train stations, the airport and subways were closed; police checked incoming vehicles but did not entirely close off roads.

Hospitals in Wuhan were grappling with a flood of patients and a lack of supplies. Videos circulating online showed throngs of frantic people in masks lined up for checks. Some users on the Weibo social media site said their family members had sought diagnoses but were turned away at hospitals that were at capacity.

At least eight hospitals in Wuhan issued public calls for donations of masks, goggles, gowns and other protective medical gear, according to notices online. Administrators at Wuhan University People's Hospital set up a group chat on the popular WeChat messaging app to coordinate donations.

The "Fever Control Command Center" of the city of Huanggang also put out a call for donations publicized by the state-run People's Daily, asking for medical supplies, medicine and disinfection equipment. The notice added that at the moment they wouldn't accept supplies from foreign countries.

Authorities were taking precautions around the country. In the capital, Beijing, major public events were canceled, including traditional temple fairs that are a staple of Lunar New Year celebrations. Beijing's Forbidden City, Shanghai Disneyland and a slew of other tourist attractions have been closed indefinitely.

The number of confirmed cases of the new coronavirus has risen to 830, the National Health Commission said. Twenty-six people have died, including the first two deaths outside Hubei and the youngest recorded victim.

The health commission in Hebei, a northern province bordering Beijing, said an 80-year-old man died there after returning from a two-month stay in Wuhan to see relatives. Heilongjiang province in the north-east confirmed a death there but did not give details.

While the majority of deaths have been older patients, a 36-year-old man in Hubei was admitted to the hospital earlier this month after suffering from fever for three days. He died following a sudden cardiac arrest on Jan. 23.

Initial symptoms of the virus can mirror those of the cold and flu, including cough, fever, chest tightening and shortness of breath, but can worsen to pneumonia. The coronavirus family includes the common cold as well as viruses that cause more serious illnesses, such as SARS and Middle Eastern respiratory syndrome, or MERS, which is thought to have originated from camels. The Wuhan outbreak is suspected to have begun from wild animals sold at a food market in the city. The market is closed for investigation.

The vast majority of cases have been in and around Wuhan, but people who visited or had personal connections to infected people were among the scattered cases counted beyond the mainland. South Korea and Japan both confirmed their second cases Friday and Singapore confirmed its third. Cases have been detected in Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, the United States, Thailand and Vietnam.

Many countries are screening travelers from China and isolating anyone with symptoms.

The World Health Organization decided against declaring the outbreak a global emergency for now. The declaration can increase resources to fight a threat but its potential to cause economic damage makes the decision politically fraught.

Chinese officials have not said how long the shutdowns of the cities will last. While sweeping measures are typical of China's Communist Party-led government, large-scale quarantines are rare around the world, even in deadly epidemics, because of concerns about infringing on people's liberties.

Recalling the government's initial cover-up of SARS, many Chinese are suspicious of the case numbers reported by officials. Authorities in turn have been keen to pledge transparency. China's cabinet, the State Council, announced Friday that it will be collecting information on government departments that have failed

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in their response to the new outbreak, including "delays, concealment and under-reporting of the epidemic."

Across China, a slew of cancellations and closures dampened the usual liveliness of Lunar New Year.

One Beijing subway station near a transport hub conducted temperature checks at its security checkpoint Friday. Some security personnel were clad in full-body hazardous material suits.

Schools prolonged their winter break and were ordered by the Ministry of Education to not hold any mass gatherings or exams. Transport departments will also be waiving fees and providing refunds for ticket cancellations.

Associated Press researcher Henry Hou and video journalist Dake Kang contributed to this report.

Face of impeachment: Schiff sets tone with appeals to Senate

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In the otherwise scripted impeachment trial, it was a rare spontaneous moment: Sen. Lindsey Graham, one of President Donald Trump's chief defenders, stopped Rep. Adam Schiff, the lead prosecutor, to shake his hand and compliment him on his arguments for Trump's removal.

Though Graham has ridiculed the case against the Republican president and heaped scorn on Democrats like Schiff, he said he believes the California Democrat is "well spoken" and "did a good job of creating a tapestry, taking bits and pieces of evidence and emails and giving a rhetorical flourish ... sometimes effectively, sometimes a little over the top."

Schiff is the face of the House's impeachment case against Trump, which has made him the principal target of Trump's ire. Though he has six managers by his side, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi appointed Schiff, her confidante, as the lead impeachment manager. He is setting the tone of the prosecution's case, working methodically to convince even his most ardent detractors that Trump deserves to be removed from office.

"In a way I do feel like I'm introducing myself to a number of the senators," Schiff said in an interview with The Associated Press before arguments resumed on Thursday. He said many of them are familiar only with conservative criticism of him, and they are "finding I'm not the demon that I'm portrayed as on Fox."

Schiff said he wishes that the Graham exchange wasn't caught on camera, "because it was nice to have a private moment. And I don't want to discourage that kind of thing. But I very much appreciated his comments."

Late Thursday, the chamber went quiet and all eyes were on the former federal prosecutor as he concluded the second day of arguments with a speech in which he told the senators that "right matters" and that President Donald Trump can't be trusted. His voice cracked as he spoke.

"The framers couldn't protect us from ourselves if right and truth don't matter," Schiff told the senators. "And you know that what he did was not right."

Schiff, who represents parts of Hollywood, has been a frequent target of conservatives since the then GOP-led House Intelligence Committee started investigating Trump's ties to Russia in the 2016 election. He was frequently on television questioning Trump's actions.

The criticism intensified, though, when Democrats took the House majority in early 2019 and he became chairman of the intelligence panel. And it reached a full-on roar as he took charge of the impeachment investigation of Trump's dealings with Ukraine last fall.

Trump has trained his ire on the congressman on Twitter and elsewhere, alternatively calling him "shifty," "sleazy," and "liddle." He has also turned his name into a vulgarity, occasionally calling him "Schitt" on Twitter, and dubbed him "pencil neck" at a campaign rally. Trump tweeted about Schiff only a handful of times in 2017 and 2018, but hundreds of times since Democrats gained the House majority.

Despite Trump's fire, Graham is not the only Republican to give Schiff respect — albeit grudgingly — since the trial has begun.

Missouri Sen. Roy Blunt said the Democrats had "admirable presentations," even though he found them repetitive and said he didn't learn much new.

Iowa Sen. Joni Ernst says she's "not a fan" because she believes Schiff "has it out" for Trump. Still, she

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says, he has been presenting a “calm, level case” against the president.

“What I appreciate, though, is the fact that he has handled this in a very calm manner compared to some of the other House managers,” Ernst says.

Schiff has tried to set a non-combative tone on the Senate floor, with conciliatory words to the Senate. He said at the start of his arguments on Wednesday that he was “deeply grateful” for their attention and understands that it’s hard to sit and listen four hours on end.

His appeals came hours after Chief Justice John Roberts, who is presiding, admonished both the House managers and Trump’s defense team for using language “that is not conducive to civil discourse.”

“I think it is appropriate at this point for me to admonish both the House managers and the president’s counsel, in equal terms, to remember that they are addressing the world’s greatest deliberative body,” Roberts said.

Roberts’ comments came around 1 a.m. Wednesday after another impeachment manager, House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler, charged that the White House lawyers were lying. Nadler also told senators that denying certain witnesses in the trial, as many GOP senators had just voted to do, was a “treacherous vote” against the United States. Trump’s defense team responded that Nadler should apologize to the president and the American people.

The next morning, before the trial resumed, the impeachment managers gathered for a news conference. When asked about Roberts’ comments, Schiff was the only one who spoke. “You’re going to have tempers flare” when trials go into the wee hours, Schiff said, and that happens in every courtroom in America.

“But we are going to try to keep focused on the facts,” Schiff said. “The president’s team would like nothing more than to provoke a bitter conflict.”

Schiff told The AP on Thursday that when talking on the Senate floor, he is trying not to make the case personal and he wants to “show respect for the senators and for the chief justice, present the evidence, make the appeals to have a fair trial, and that’s the best I can do.”

While complimenting Schiff, Graham also predicted that the White House team will unravel many of his points.

“I thought they did a good job of taking bits and pieces of the evidence and creating a quilt out of it,” Graham said. “So what I will tell my colleagues, the other side gets to talk, and see if they can pull a thread here and pull thread there and see if it holds up.”

Schiff’s House GOP colleagues were less complimentary.

“I don’t agree with Lindsey Graham’s analysis that they’re doing a good job,” said North Carolina Rep. Mark Meadows, one of several Republican House members who are consulting with the White House lawyers. “I’ve had to look in the cabinet for a bottle of No-Doz. When you look at Adam Schiff’s performance, I think what we all have come to understand is, that’s exactly what it is, it’s a performance.”

Senate Democrats, on the other hand, have been thrilled. Michigan Sen. Debbie Stabenow said Thursday evening that “I think you could have heard a pin drop” when Schiff gave his closing speech.

Connecticut Sen. Chris Murphy tweeted: “Man, Schiff’s closing was powerful.”

“Senators’ egos don’t tend to allow gushing over other politicians’ performance, but as we walked out the trial tonight, Senator after Senator (albeit the Dem ones) were awestruck,” Murphy wrote. “Schiff is right - Trump doesn’t care about us, just himself.”

Associated Press writers Alan Fram and Lisa Mascaro contributed to this report.

Youth served: Gauff wins, Serena loses at Australian Open

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Perhaps Serena Williams, now 38, will win a 24th Grand Slam title someday. And maybe Coco Gauff, still just 15, never will earn her first major championship.

Sure felt, though, as if a generational shift was being signaled Friday at the Australian Open, with a pair of monumentally significant third-round results hours apart in the same stadium: a surprising first-week

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loss by Williams, then a historic victory by Gauff.

First, Williams faltered down the stretch for her earliest exit at Melbourne Park in 14 years, a 6-4, 6-7 (2), 7-5 loss to 27th-seeded Wang Qiang of China. It pushed Williams' gap between Slam trophies to three years.

"I'm way too old to play like this at this stage of my career," Williams said. "Definitely going to be training tomorrow, that's first and foremost — to make sure I don't do this again."

Gauff also was planning a practice session for Saturday, but hers was to prepare for a fourth-round match.

That's because the 67th-ranked Gauff took the latest step in her quick progression, becoming the youngest player in the professional era to eliminate the defending women's champion at the Australian Open, beating former No. 1 Naomi Osaka 6-3, 6-4.

Only once the last point had been played did the preternaturally poised Gauff turn into a rather typical teen, joking about wanting to take "a selfie for Instagram" with Rod Laver, the 11-time major champion after whom the tournament's main stadium is named.

"Honestly, like, what is my life? Like, oh, my gosh!" Gauff told the crowd. "Two years ago, I lost first round in juniors and now I'm here. This is crazy."

It certainly is remarkable.

With a booming serve, a top-flight backhand and a winner's mentality, Gauff reversed the result from the first time she was across the net from Osaka, a former No. 1 who already owns two major titles at the age of 22.

When they played each other at the U.S. Open last September, Osaka won in two quick sets and then consoled Gauff, encouraging her to speak to the spectators who were pulling for her.

One reminder of just how young Gauff is: Most of the entrants in this year's junior Australian Open are older than she is.

Another: She is taking online classes and said she's been given permission to turn in homework late, "considering the circumstances."

Yet another: She doesn't have an official driver's license quite yet, stuck practicing behind the wheel with a learner's permit.

But put a tennis racket in her hands and move out of the way: Gauff is now 8-2 in her nascent Grand Slam career, with three of those wins coming against women who have multiple major titles.

Williams vs. Wang also was a rematch from Flushing Meadows last season — and the reverse result also happened for them. At the U.S. Open, Williams won 6-0, 6-1 in 44 minutes.

Wang credited that with prompting her to spend more time in the gym so she could add more oomph to her shots.

"I always believed I could do this one day," Wang said with a laugh. "I didn't know which day."

Like Wang, Gauff was much better Friday than in New York. Gauff's improvement revealed itself in her serving — she put 15 of her initial 16 first serves in play — and her steadiness.

Gauff declared herself more calm for this matchup.

"That," she decided, "made the difference."

So did letting Osaka make the mistakes, 30 unforced errors in all, compared to 17 for Gauff.

With that, Gauff became the youngest player to beat a top-five opponent in a women's tour-level match since Jennifer Capriati did it at 15 in 1991.

"You don't want to lose to a 15-year-old, you know?" Osaka said.

So, Naomi, could you have done something differently?

"Put the ball in the court," came the reply.

Williams had similar issues, and even though she went from a massive deficit to even as can be, she could not do what was required in the late going.

Down to what sure felt like her last chance, Williams came through with a cross-court forehand winner to close a 24-stroke point, then raised her arms, held that celebratory pose and looked over toward her guest box.

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Finally, on her sixth try, after 1½ hours of action, she had managed to convert a break point against Wang. Soon enough, they were headed to a third set and it appeared that the comeback was on.

It turned out that Williams only was delaying a surprising defeat.

So tough at the toughest moments for so many years, Williams was the one who came undone, often displaying what she later called “the signature ‘Serena frustration’ look.”

Since grabbing major championship No. 23 at the 2017 Australian Open, while she was pregnant, Williams hasn’t added to her total.

She appeared in four major finals over the past two seasons, losing each one.

Williams owns seven trophies from the Australian Open and hadn’t lost as early as the third round at either of the hard-court Grand Slam tournaments — in Melbourne or at the U.S. Open — since all the way back in 2006.

This was the first Grand Slam tournament in 11 years with each of the top 10 seeded women reaching the third round. Who would have suspected Williams would be the first to lose, followed soon thereafter by No. 3 Osaka?

Williams was only seeded No. 8, on account of how infrequently she has competed since being away from the tour while having a baby in September 2017.

She started 2020 well enough, winning a hard-court tuneup title in Auckland, New Zealand, this month for her first trophy of any sort in three years — and first as a mom.

But Williams wasn’t able to carry that success to the Grand Slam level, where it matters the most to her.

She began her news conference by crediting Wang but eventually shifted to criticizing herself for not playing well enough to win.

“I didn’t return like Serena. Honestly, if we were just honest with ourselves, I lost that match,” Williams said. “I can’t play like that. I literally can’t do that again. It’s unprofessional. It’s not cool.”

More AP Tennis: <https://apnews.com/apf-Tennis> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Now on Trump’s team, Dershowitz says, ‘I haven’t changed’

By ERIC TUCKER and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Alan Dershowitz was in line at Mar-a-Lago’s lavish Christmas Eve buffet last month when President Donald Trump stopped to chat.

The retired Harvard law professor had already been asked by Trump’s legal team to assist with the defense at his impeachment trial and, with the case opening in a matter of weeks, the Republican president wanted to know: Was he on board?

“He said, ‘Everybody wants to do this thing, but I want you,’” Dershowitz recalled in an interview with The Associated Press.

Dershowitz, whose clients have included O.J. Simpson, Claus von Bulow and Mike Tyson, ultimately said yes, joining a legal team that, starting Saturday, will present the defense at only the third impeachment trial of a American president in history.

Trump’s attorneys say Dershowitz and Ken Starr, the former independent counsel during President Bill Clinton’s impeachment, will have “discrete functions that they will be addressing” at trial.

Dershowitz’s task is to make the argument — widely rejected among scholars — that an impeachable offense requires criminal-like conduct. Dershowitz joked Thursday that if he sounded sniffly, it was because he’d been buried in musty history and law books to prepare.

While it’s just another high-profile case in a career full of them, Dershowitz’s defense of Trump has befuddled associates, friends and former students, who struggle to make sense of his forceful advocacy for the president and who fervently disagree with the legal positions he’s taken and even the facts he’s advanced in Trump’s defense.

“Rubbish” is how one law professor who studied under Dershowitz, Frank Bowman at the University of Missouri, described his views on impeachable offenses. A longtime Harvard Law School colleague, Lau-

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rence Tribe, wrote in a Washington Post opinion piece that the argument "has died a thousand deaths" but nonetheless "staggers on like a vengeful zombie." Some, meanwhile, have seized on video of a 1998 interview when Dershowitz expressed virtually the opposite view of what he's saying now about an impeachable offense requiring a crime.

For his part, Dershowitz maintains there's nothing inconsistent or unusual about the positions he's taking. Though he's been a vocal defender of Trump the last three years, he insists it's not about this particular president. Rather, he's trying to prevent impeachment from being weaponized into a "partisan process," where any president can be removed over non-criminal abuses of power.

"I've always taken positions that are principled and often unpopular and often in defense of people I don't particularly support," Dershowitz said, citing his defense of Neo-Nazis who wanted the right to march through Skokie, Illinois.

"I haven't changed at all. I've had the same consistent policy of defending people I don't like, people I do like, without regard to party, without regard to partisanship."

Nancy Gertner, a retired federal judge in Boston who has known Dershowitz for years, says it's true that he hasn't changed — he still gravitates toward the media spotlight, high-profile cases and "positions he thinks will prove how principled he is."

But she says it's impossible to reconcile his statements on behalf of Trump, and his extraordinarily expansive view of presidential authorities, with the civil libertarian bent he's expressed over the decades and his stated opposition to unchecked government power. Some of what she's heard him say is "horrifying."

"I've known him for a very long time," she said. "I've never seen anything like this."

Even before he made the case against impeachment in a book, Dershowitz has defended as lawful some of Trump's most scrutinized actions. In op-eds and TV appearances, he has accused special counsel Robert Mueller of partisan bias, ridiculed the idea Trump could have obstructed justice by firing his FBI chief and said presidents enjoy more power than kings.

"A civil libertarian should be concerned about deploying the levers of power for the wrong purposes," said Gertner, who is now a senior Harvard law lecturer. "These are not civil liberties positions. These are positions to garner attention to put him in the position that he now is in, which is to represent the president."

Harvey Silverglate, a friend of Dershowitz's for more than 50 years, said his positions on Trump clearly make him unpopular "among the legal intelligentsia nationwide." But he said Dershowitz specializes in cases where the defense is difficult or unique, and the client unpopular.

Though Trump may not be an underdog in the conventional sense, Silverglate wrote in an email, "his impeachment does present just the kind of case, challenge and client for which Dershowitz is perfect — a high-profile assault on an individual who has powerful enemies and who is being 'prosecuted.'"

Dershowitz says he's convinced that the same people criticizing him would be applauding him if he was prosecuting the House impeachment case. The attacks, he said, have been "ferocious." He calls it a "shoe on the other foot test."

"People say I'm not a constitutional lawyer because they don't like the side I'm on," Dershowitz said. "They say I'm too old, I'm a has-been."

Trump has watched Dershowitz defend him on Fox News for years, sometimes tweeting links to the lawyer's statements that he finds especially helpful. Through the Mueller investigation and into impeachment he has been enamored with the possibility of assembling a legal dream team.

But White House aides cautioned Trump against bringing Dershowitz onto his team, concerned that Dershowitz was a self-promoter whose showboating style wouldn't put Trump's interests first.

They also feared Dershowitz's ties to Jeffrey Epstein and the surrounding legal drama would be a distraction for the defense. Trump overruled them.

According to one person familiar with the decision, Trump wanted the appearance of a bipartisan defense team. And he has always valued attorneys who can make the case to the public on Fox News, his preferred platform.

By the time of their Christmas Eve conversation, Dershowitz had already been approached about a role on the team. But his wife, who was with him that evening at Mar-a-Lago, was more apprehensive, con-

cerned he'd lose his independence.

Trump sought to offer reassurance on that point, saying that while he appreciated that concern, it was nonetheless important to consider "how important this was for the future of the country and for precedent and all that," Dershowitz recalled.

Within days, his participation was settled.

"People have already said that my arguments will be bonkers or errant nonsense," Dershowitz said. "My only point is: Listen. I'm going to lay out a very serious constitutional argument. Maybe you'll agree with it or maybe you won't, but let's have a debate on the merits."

Why didn't accusers abandon Weinstein? Expert to weigh in

By **TOM HAYS** and **MICHAEL R. SISAK** Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — It's the defense's go-to question at Harvey Weinstein's rape trial: If the once-revered Hollywood mogul is a revolting sexual predator, as prosecutors and scores of women allege, why did some of his accusers keep interacting with him for years after their alleged assaults?

Prosecutors hope to give jurors some answers and neutralize that line of questioning before too long with the help of Dr. Barbara Ziv, a forensic psychiatrist who testified about the same issues at the 2018 retrial that ended in Bill Cosby's conviction on charges he drugged and molested a woman years earlier.

In her opening statement earlier this week, prosecutor Meghan Hast told jurors the expert witness set to testify Friday will dispel "myths" about how victims behave during and after rapes and sexual assaults.

In evaluating hundreds of victims, Ziv has found most victims "are assaulted by someone they know, don't physically resist or try to fight off their attacker, don't immediately report the assault and reach back out to their attacker," Hast said.

But Weinstein lawyer Damon Cheronis cautioned jurors in his opening that Ziv hasn't actually examined any of Weinstein's accusers. Cheronis zeroed in on a message from one telling Weinstein that she loved him and wanted him to meet her mother.

"Ladies and gentlemen, that's not how you talk to your predator," Cheronis said.

Ziv is expected to be the prosecution's third witness at the New York City trial of the once-powerful mogul whose downfall catalyzed the #MeToo movement.

Weinstein, 67, is charged with forcibly performing oral sex on former production assistant Mimi Haley in his New York apartment in 2006 and raping an aspiring actress in a New York hotel room in 2013.

The producer behind such Oscar-winning movies as "Pulp Fiction" and "Shakespeare in Love" has insisted any sexual encounters were consensual.

Thursday's court session was consumed by actress Annabella Sciorra's testimony that Weinstein overpowered and raped her when he showed up at the door of her Manhattan apartment in 1993 or 1994.

Keeping with strategy, Weinstein's lawyers seized on her actions after the alleged assault. On cross-examination, for example, defense attorney Donna Rotunno questioned Sciorra's decision to make the 1997 Weinstein-produced film "Copland," considering their history.

Sciorra, now 59, claimed she wasn't aware of Weinstein's involvement until she agreed to appear in the film, in part because neither his name nor that of his movie studio appeared on the script she used to audition.

Rotunno, known as a #MeToo skeptic, also challenged Sciorra's testimony that she was dismayed to find out she was booked in a hotel room right next to Weinstein's on a trip to the Cannes Film Festival to promote "Copland."

Sciorra told the jury of seven men and five women that she got another jolt when she opened her hotel room door early one morning to find Weinstein standing there in his underwear holding a bottle of oil in one hand and a video in the other.

"You already know Harvey Weinstein is in the room next door to you, correct?" said an incredulous Rotunno. "You already know that the last time you heard a knock at the door and answered it without seeing who was on the other end didn't go well, correct?"

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Sciorra's allegations are outside the statute of limitations for criminal charges on their own, but her testimony could be a factor as prosecutors look to show that Weinstein has engaged in a pattern of predatory behavior.

Prosecutors plan to call three other accusers as witnesses for the same purpose during the monthlong trial.

With Sciorra's testimony fresh in their memories, jurors could soon hear from actress Rosie Perez, one of two friends she said she told about the alleged rape long before she went public with the allegations in an October 2017 article in *The New Yorker*.

Prosecutor Joan Illuzzi-Orbon previewed Perez's testimony in court after the jury went home for the day, aiming to persuade Judge James Burke to allow her to take the witness stand as what's known as a "prompt outcry" witness.

Such witnesses are allowed to corroborate an accuser's claim that they reported a sex crime to someone else soon after it happened. Weinstein's lawyers are objecting, saying her testimony won't meet that standard. Burke has yet to rule.

According to Illuzzi, Perez would tell jurors that she spoke to Sciorra one night after the alleged rape and that Sciorra told her, in effect: "I think something bad happened to me. I believe I was raped."

Illuzzi said Perez will testify she heard more about the assault from other people while Sciorra was out of the country for a film obligation and that they then had another conversation. Sciorra testified Thursday that, at the time, she was having run-ins with Weinstein banging on her hotel room door. Illuzzi said Perez will testify that Sciorra told her, in effect: "I don't want him to get me again."

Through these conversations, Perez surmised that Weinstein was the person Sciorra was talking about, Illuzzi said, and in effect said: "Oh my God, Harvey Weinstein was the person who raped you, isn't that right?"

"Sciorra was very upset," Illuzzi said, summarizing the conversation. "She says: 'My God, I don't even remember telling you, but yes, he was the one and he did this to me.'"

Follow Tom Hays at twitter.com/aptomhays and Michael Sisak at twitter.com/mikesisak

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press undefined

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

1. 'RIGHT MATTERS' Led by Rep. Adam Schiff, Democratic House prosecutors make an expansive case at Trump's impeachment trial that he abused power like no other president in history.

2. HOW CHINA IS DEALING WITH HEALTH CRISIS It is swiftly building a 1,000-bed hospital dedicated to patients infected with a new virus that has killed dozens and sickened hundreds.

3. AMERICANS ARE ALREADY FREE TO VOTE Many of the 14 Super Tuesday states that hold primaries on March 3 offer early voting, providing a two-step challenge for Democratic presidential campaigns.

4. FRANCE ATTACKS LEAD TO UNLIKELY FRIENDSHIP Two fathers who share a mournful link to the 2015 Paris terror attacks have written a book together about family, fear and extremism.

5. 'WE DIDN'T HOPE THAT WE WOULD SURVIVE' A Russian man who was arrested by the Nazis as a teenager and sent to the Auschwitz death camp is still amazed 75 years later that he survived the ordeal.

6. TRUMP TO MAKE HISTORY AT NATIONAL MALL He will become the first sitting president to address the March for Life when he takes the stage at the annual anti-abortion gathering.

7. A LEGAL, SIGNIFICANT STEP Just days before the British Parliament makes Brexit official, two top EU officials sign the divorce agreement in a ceremony away from the media.

8. DOT-ORG UP FOR SALE Opponents of the billion-dollar sale are concerned the cost of registering a website will skyrocket, and they worry about the potential loss of freedoms of speech and expression.

9. TAYLOR SWIFT KICKS OFF SUNDANCE In "Miss Americana", the pop star discloses a past eating disorder, chronicles her inner battle over speaking out about politics and says her sexual assault court case

was a turning point in her life.

10. 'I'M BETTER THAN THAT' Serena Williams is stunned in the third round of the Australian Open by Wang Qiang of China, but compatriot Coco Gauff upsets defending champ Naomi Osaka to advance.

Thunberg brushes off mockery from US finance chief

DAVOS, Switzerland (AP) — Climate activist Greta Thunberg on Friday brushed off criticism and mockery from U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, saying that his comments have “of course no effect” on her and fellow campaigners.

The 17-year-old Swedish star acknowledged such young activists “are being criticized all the time.”

“We cannot care about those kinds of things,” insisting that her priority was drawing attention and action to concerns about global warming.

“The situation is not being treated like the crisis it is.”

Thunberg, who was selected as Time’s Person of the Year for 2019, has returned to the World Economic Forum’s annual summit in Davos, Switzerland, this week to press her call for businesses, world leaders and others to take action in the face of scientific evidence showing that temperatures on Earth are rising.

She spoke to reporters along with four other young climate activists, before they set off through the streets of Davos for the latest weekly “Fridays for Future” campaign that she launched.

At the news conference, Thunberg sought to share the spotlight, deferring to her fellow activists: Vanessa Nakate of Uganda, Loukina Tille of Switzerland, Luisa Neubauer of Germany, and Isabelle Axelsson of Sweden.

A day earlier, Mnuchin dismissed Thunberg’s suggestion that governments and companies need to cut back dramatically on their use of fossil fuels with a condescending barb.

“Is she the chief economist? Who is she? I’m confused,” he said. Then following a brief pause, he said it was “a joke.”

“After she goes and studies economics in college, she can come back and explain that to us,” he concluded.

Muslim women occupy streets in India against citizenship law

By SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — In the Indian capital’s Shaheen Bagh neighborhood, beside open sewers and dangerously dangling electricity wires, a group of Muslim women in colorful headscarves sit in resistance to a new citizenship law that has unleashed protests across the country.

For more than a month the women have taken turns maintaining an around the clock sit-in on a highway that passes through their neighborhood. They sing songs of protest and chant anti-government slogans, some cradling babies, others laying down rugs to make space for more people to sit.

The movement has slowly spread nationwide, with many women across the country staging their own sit-ins.

Through numerous police barricades, women trickle in from the winding arterial alleys of Shaheen Bagh with children in hand, as poets and singers take the makeshift stage, drawing rapturous applause.

The neighborhood rings with chants of “Inquilab Zindabad,” which means “long live the revolution!”

As night draws closer, women as old as 90 huddle together under warm blankets, falling asleep on cheap mattresses.

The women, like demonstrators elsewhere in the country, have been demanding the revocation of the citizenship law approved last month. The law provides a fast-track to naturalization for persecuted religious minorities from some neighboring Islamic countries, but excludes Muslims.

Nationwide protests have brought tens of thousands of people from different faiths and backgrounds together, in part because the law is seen by critics as part of a larger threat to the secular fabric of Indian society.

“Someone had to tell the government that their black laws won’t be accepted. So, as mothers, we de-

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cided to protest," said Najma Khatoon, 62.

Khatoon and other protesters in Shaheen Bagh view the citizenship law as part of a bigger plan by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu-nationalist government to implement a nationwide register of citizens, which they fear could lead to the deportation and detention of Muslims.

Modi and other leaders of his Bharatiya Janata Party have repeatedly said Indian citizens won't be affected by the new law, and that if a nationwide register is ever conducted, there will be no religion column.

The gathering at Shaheen Bagh started with a handful of women appalled by the violence at a nearby Muslim university during protests against the law on Dec. 15.

A common refrain among the women at Shaheen Bagh is that they are there to ensure that the secular India plotted out by independence-era leaders remains for younger generations.

A makeshift library houses people who read about the constitution. The space is decorated with art and installations — from a mock detention camp to a mini replica of India Gate, Delhi's famous World War I monument, inscribed not with the names of soldiers but of those killed in the nationwide protests.

What would halt the protests — short of a revocation of the law by the Supreme Court, where it has been challenged in nearly 60 petitions — is unclear. But there is no indication the women will up and leave anytime soon.

Leaders from Modi's party have blamed the protests on provocateurs deliberately misleading poor, uneducated people.

The women braving unusually cold winter nights seem undeterred.

"Modi's actions have stirred our blood," said Asma Khatoon, an octogenarian. "We don't feel cold anymore." ___ Associated Press journalists Rishi Lekhi and Rishabh R. Jain contributed to this report.

Book reveals 2 fathers linked by grief to 2015 Paris attacks

By LORI HINNANT Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Lola Salines happily accepted the last-minute concert ticket from a friend the night of Nov. 13, 2015. At 28, the Parisian had already created her own brand at a prestigious French publishing house, frequently took her lunch break to swim laps at the local pool with her father and was dating the coach of her amateur roller derby team. Her father wistfully described it as "a time of excitement and happiness."

She and Samy Amimour were the same age, born in the same city. And after he and two other Islamic State gunmen stormed the Bataclan concert hall that night, opening fire on a crowd of music lovers and killing 90, it became terribly clear how little he and Lola had in common. Both died that night, Lola of gunshot wounds and Samy and the two other extremists in a hail of bullets and explosions after police stormed the building.

As Georges Salines and Azdyne Amimour see it, they both grieve for children lost that night. The book they wrote together, "Il nous reste les mots" ("We Still Have Words"), was released this month in French. A series of conversations between the men, initiated by Amimour in February 2017, was transformed into a 207-page dialogue about fatherhood, faith and community.

"I wanted to talk with him about what happened, then to try and explain and to understand, to see how he views things," Amimour told The Associated Press, seated alongside Salines at the same publishing house where Lola once worked as an editor.

"To tell him my vision, to explain and to share this pain, this sadness with him. And then, to explain to him that I am not part of it, I'm not a terrorist. My family is not a family of terrorists. And to explain to him the path my son took to end in radicalization," Amimour said.

Salines accepted Amimour's invitation without hesitation.

"Azdyne Amimour's son was one of the terrorists who took part in the assault on the Bataclan, who was possibly my daughter's murderer. It didn't have the same emotional impact, but I was nonetheless prepared for the meeting because I had already met the mothers of jihadis. And I realized that they were also experiencing a terrible suffering, comparable to mine," Salines said. "I was curious to hear him because I wanted to, needed to understand what could lead a young Frenchman, Muslim or not, to go down this

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path to radicalization, to jihad and finally to terrorism, something that is very difficult to understand. And yet, it seems essential to understand it in order to act."

It took 18 hours for Georges Salines to learn his daughter's fate after the Nov. 13, 2015, attacks that left 130 people dead. He identified her remains in the same morgue that held Samy's body.

It took four days for police to arrive at the Amimour home in suburban Drancy. Samy had left to join the Islamic State group in 2013 and had practically cut off contact with his parents. Amimour had all but given up hope of seeing his son again. He had barely recognized Samy when he made the dangerous — and failed — trip to Syria to talk sense into him. But he didn't think of Samy in the chaotic days after the Nov. 13 attacks. The young man was flagged as a dangerous extremist and, in theory at least, authorities had his information on file should he try to return to France.

While the Salines family was surrounded by Lola's friends, the Amimours were largely alone in their grief.

Soon after the police left, there was a knock on their door. "It was a young man from the neighborhood, who came to tell me my son was a martyr and a hero," Amimour tells Salines. "In some way, he wanted to share our pain and our confusion, but he was completely wrong about my thinking." Around the same time, Samy's wife called from Syria to tell them about their newborn granddaughter.

It was the last they heard from her.

"I have a granddaughter somewhere. I don't know where. In Syria or Iraq. I've had no more contact with the mother. I don't know if the mother is still alive," he said.

But he, like Salines, believes people like her should be allowed to return to France, especially the children. French public opinion is largely against repatriating Islamic State recruits, but the government has slowly been bringing some home to stand trial.

"They are innocent. They clearly need to be taken care of. Some have lived through extremely traumatic events, others have been indoctrinated, absolutely horrible things have been done to these children, including putting guns in their hands and having them fire on prisoners," Salines said. "There is perhaps a risk, but the risk isn't any worse if we bring them back to France and deal with them, than if we leave them in the Mideast and try not to look."

The hope is that their book, subtitled "A lesson of tolerance and resilience," can help turn the tide.

"I realized right away that it was a project that had never been done and that this kind of dialogue will bring reactions. It will bring reactions from readers, and beyond, from society," Salines said.

"It will raise questions, about individual responsibility, collective responsibility, who are our enemies and potential allies," Salines added. "For me, that's absolutely essential."

Social controls, SARS experience help China close off cities

BEIJING (AP) — Cutting off access to entire cities with millions of residents to stop a new virus outbreak is a step few countries other than China would consider, but it is made possible by the ruling Communist Party's extensive social controls and experience fighting the 2002-03 outbreak of SARS.

CITIES AFFECTED: The first city closed off was Wuhan, with 11 million people, or 1 1/2 times the population of New York City, which is the industrial hub of central China. Access was cut off later to neighboring cities in the central province of Hubei that include Huanggang, with 7 million people; Ezhou; Chibi; Qianjiang; Zhijiang; Jingmen; Xiantao; Xiaogan and Huangshi. Their combined population is about 33 million.

WHAT IS SHUT DOWN: Authorities have blocked train, plane, rail, long-distance bus and ferry service. Wuhan usually is one of China's busiest airports, with some 600 scheduled flights per day. Municipal bus and subway service is halted, and cars and trucks were being inspected at roadblocks on the outskirts of cities and many were turned back. Cinemas, amusement parks, temples and other public sites were ordered to close.

HOW IT'S ENFORCED: Most residents appear to be cooperating following official appeals to stay home and avoid spreading the virus. If that fails, the Communist Party has one of the world's most extensive systems of surveillance and social controls. Cities are blanketed with video cameras and the ruling party has, with the help of Western tech companies, developed computerized systems to track the public, monitor

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and censor internet use and suppress protests and dissent. Facilities already in place to control movement at train stations and airports and on expressways can be pressed into use to block travel.

IS THIS THE RIGHT APPROACH?: Quarantining whole cities might seem drastic but is the "right direction" for handling a virus with no known treatment, said Joseph Kwan, a specialist in disease control at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. Shutting down buses and subways to keep people at home will reduce the risk people might spread the virus before knowing are infected, said Kwan. "It certainly sounds amazing that they can do that, but in China they don't always do things like the rest of the world," said Kwan. "Not very many countries can do what they do, but from a public health point of view, this is the right direction."

LESSONS FROM SARS: The ruling party was criticized for its slow, grudging response to the 2002 emergence of the mystery disease later known as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome. The party's refusal to disclose details fueled panic, leading people to crowd onto trains to flee Beijing and other cities, potentially spreading the virus. The party eventually mobilized a massive response, including a custom-built hospital, but that took months to get rolling. Chinese leaders tried to mollify the public by reassigning the Beijing party secretary and began daily announcements about new cases. The government created China's first nationwide disease reporting and control network, modeled on the U.S. Centers for Disease Control.

THE PUBLIC EFFECT: Food prices in Wuhan spiked as shoppers cleared grocery store shelves of vegetables, rice and other supplies. Doctors at one hospital posted appeals online for medical supplies, saying they were running low. Trucks with vegetables, rice and other supplies were allowed into Wuhan after residents stripped grocery store shelves and prices spiked. The city government announced a crackdown on hoarding, price-gouging and sales of fake or shoddy goods. The Hubei provincial governor, Wang Xiaodong, said Wuhan has 5 million kilograms (11 million pounds) of rice, 4,000 tons of cooking oil and more than 10,000 tons of pork and beef in reserve, according to news outlet sina.com. Wang said supplies were being shipped in from as far away as Yunnan province in China's southwest and Hainan island in the South China Sea, sina.com reported.

ACTION TAKEN IN OTHER CITIES: Nationwide, authorities canceled temple fairs and other public events for the Lunar New Year, which began Friday. Subway and bus employees in the capital, Beijing, were issued masks, gloves and hand sanitizer and were told to watch each other for signs of fever. The city government said subway cars and buses would be disinfected daily. Beijing's main airport, the world's second-busiest, set up a separate area for flights from Wuhan with its own facilities for passengers and baggage, a city government statement said. It said disinfection measures at the airport would increase.

Trump vs. Bloomberg: Fortunes collide in pricey knife fight

By **JONATHAN LEMIRE** Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — They are circling each other like wary boxers, with taunts on Twitter, snarky asides and belittling descriptions. They rose to prominence in Manhattan on parallel tracks, amassed wealth real and perceived and displayed a penchant for putting their names on things.

That's where the similarities end. President Donald Trump and Michael Bloomberg could hardly be more different as people, but now they both want the same job: Trump's.

Bloomberg is making the case that he is many things that Trump is not: a builder of a financial data and media company that employs 20,000 people, a billionaire whose worth Forbes estimates at \$60 billion, a problem-solver with a steady temperament who was elected three times as mayor of the nation's largest city, one of the world's leading philanthropists.

"Bloomberg is someone Trump would have liked to have been: to have invented something everyone uses, to have real wealth, to be seen as a creative person. Trump had to create an image for himself," said George Arzt, onetime press secretary to former New York Mayor Ed Koch. Arzt knows both men professionally and personally.

He said Bloomberg is someone who likes to solve problems, who likes to be hands-on, even including

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the design of new Department of Sanitation trucks, while Trump is "basically a showman." Arzt added that Trump always sought the limelight while Bloomberg shied away from it until he ran for mayor.

Trump, who said he once considered Bloomberg a friend, had a brutal assessment of his now-rival during a CNBC interview this week: "He's spending a fortune. He's making a lot of broadcasters wealthy. And he's getting nowhere."

Howard Wolfson, Bloomberg's senior adviser, jabs right back: "Mike hired Donald Trump to run a golf course in the Bronx but would not hire him for any other job. And the president knows that."

Bloomberg is running for the Democratic nomination for president on a path no serious candidate in the party has ever taken, forgoing early primary states and debates while spending hundreds of millions of dollars on ads in larger Super Tuesday states, almost all of which take a hard shot at Trump. He doesn't accept any campaign donations.

Trump has responded by calling Bloomberg "Mini Mike" on Twitter, trying to ridicule his 5-foot-8-inch stature. Bloomberg has hit Trump in another way that might hurt more. In Texas, when asked whether the country wanted a race between two New York billionaires, he replied, "Who's the other one?"

Bloomberg has said that even if he fails to win the Democratic nomination, he is prepared to spend hundreds of millions of dollars, perhaps more, to deny Trump reelection.

On Thursday, he started running a new nationwide ad that condemns Trump's treatment of decorated military leaders, and his campaign manager, Kevin Sheekey, went on Fox News to highlight it.

Their fight will be a test of the power of television and digital ads versus the impact of Twitter and the megaphone of the presidency. A key question is whether Bloomberg's attacks on Trump will do damage to an incumbent who does not have a serious primary challenger.

The president and his campaign team have been warily watching Bloomberg's spending spree since the former mayor's late entry into the presidential race.

Trump's campaign manager, Brad Parscale, recently told staffers he would not worry about Bloomberg until he cracked double digits (Bloomberg had 9% support in a Monmouth poll this week) while mocking the amount of money the former mayor was spending, according to two Republicans close to the White House who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations.

But others in the president's orbit have not been so sanguine about Bloomberg — including Trump himself.

Trump, who has been fixated on the Democratic race even in the face of an impeachment trial, was initially irked by Bloomberg's entry and has noted to confidants in recent weeks that the mayor has steadily picked up support.

Trump has also complained that Bloomberg has benefited from a disproportionate amount of positive news stories.

And he has avoided the counsel from aides, including senior adviser and son-in-law Jared Kushner, to ignore Bloomberg and thus avoid elevating him in a Democratic field that remains unsettled.

But Trump has been unable to do so, delivering several Twitter broadsides while obsessing in private over Bloomberg's wealth.

Bloomberg has spent money at a rate of about \$100 million a month and has trained his focus not on those with whom he is competing for his adopted party's nomination, but on the president as if in a general election.

Trump's campaign advisers have acknowledged that the impact of Bloomberg's spending is impossible to model and are paying close attention to the president's approval numbers in the swing states Bloomberg is blanketing with ads. And while the Trump campaign's own formidable bank account could be overwhelmed by Bloomberg's, the president's team has tried to fight fire with fire, buying their own \$10 million Super Bowl ad just after Bloomberg did likewise.

Bloomberg's fortune dwarfs Trump's wealth and has played into a number of insecurities Trump has long held about the former mayor, according to two presidential confidants who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations.

Not only is Bloomberg vastly richer than Trump, but he has also had an easy entry into the most elite Manhattan social circles, the same ones that looked down on Trump as a tabloid creation and reality TV star.

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The two men, for a time, enjoyed friendly relations, though they never were close. By the time Bloomberg became mayor in 2002, Trump had largely transitioned from real estate development to licensing and television, so the pair did not butt heads at City Hall in the way Trump did with some of Bloomberg's predecessors.

The two occasionally would rub shoulders at golf tournaments and charity events, and both attended one of Rudy Giuliani's weddings, with Trump as a guest and Bloomberg officiating. They also crossed paths at Yankees games and when Bloomberg hosted the International Olympic Committee at his Upper East Side townhouse.

They would even sometimes praise each other. At a 2007 charity golf club event, Trump said it was "my really terrific privilege to introduce a man that I think is one of the great mayors and will go down as one of the great mayors, if not the greatest, in New York City."

Meanwhile, Bloomberg appeared on an episode of "The Apprentice" in 2004. At the same ribbon-cutting ceremony three years later, he said, "If there is anybody who has changed this city, it is Donald Trump."

But no longer.

Bloomberg campaign advisers talk about a two-track operation that's focused on winning the nomination and defeating Trump in November. And Bloomberg has already pledged to pay for operations in key states through the general election even if he's not the Democratic nominee.

In addition to the ad Bloomberg released Thursday, he is running ads in 27 states calling for the Senate to convict and remove Trump in the impeachment trial. A digital ad blasts Trump for failing to repair the nation's infrastructure.

Before this cycle, both men had talked about running for president. But their differences were also clear. In 2011, when Trump was flirting with a 2012 presidential run, then-Mayor Bloomberg called Trump a friend but said Republicans were "making a terrible mistake" in questioning whether President Barack Obama was born in the U.S. — a conspiracy theory that Trump championed. As for Trump running, Bloomberg said, "Anybody can run for president if you're 35 and an American citizen."

The last time the two men spoke, according to Wolfson, was when Bloomberg called Trump after the 2016 election to congratulate him and urge him to surround himself with great people.

Says Wolfson, "You can see how well he took that advice."

Associated Press writers Zeke Miller in Washington and Kathleen Ronayne in Sacramento, California, contributed to this report.

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

Trial highlights: Conspiracy theories and fidget spinners

By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrats argued that President Donald Trump sought a phony investigation of a political rival and pursued a discredited conspiracy theory about Ukraine, while restless senators played with a new toy Thursday during Trump's impeachment trial.

Highlights of Thursday's session, which wrapped around 10:30 p.m. ET, and what's ahead as senators conduct just the third impeachment trial of a president:

'POLITICAL' INVESTIGATION

Pressing their case for a second day, Democrats said there was no evidence that former Vice President Joe Biden did anything improper in dealings with Ukraine. Rebutting a central Trump claim, Democrats said the president sought a political investigation of Biden by Ukraine to sway the 2020 election in his favor.

"There was no basis for the investigation the president was pursuing and pushing. None. He was doing it only for his own political benefit," said Rep. Sylvia Garcia of Texas, a Democratic prosecutor.

Similarly, Democrats said Trump and his allies, including his personal attorney Rudy Giuliani, pushed a bogus, Kremlin-pushed conspiracy theory that Ukraine, not Russia, meddled in the 2016 U.S. election.

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"Trump put himself first," ahead of U.S. policy and the national interest, said Rep. Adam Schiff, the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee and lead Democratic prosecutor.

PUTIN GETS RELIGION?

Democratic senators laughed as Schiff joked that Trump had "made a religious man out of Vladimir Putin," a reference to a comment by Putin last November: "Thank God," he told an economic forum in Moscow, "no one is accusing us of interfering in the U.S. elections anymore; now they're accusing Ukraine."

The discredited theory that blames Ukraine for interfering in the 2016 elections is no laughing matter, Schiff said, calling it central to the impeachment charges. Trump is accused of seeking the Ukraine investigation — and a probe of Joe Biden and his son, Hunter — for his own political benefit while holding back congressionally approved military aid as leverage.

FIDGET SPINNERS TO THE RESCUE

As senators sat through endless hours of arguments, they found another outlet to focus their attention: fidget spinners.

Sen. Richard Burr, R-N.C., handed out the toys to his colleagues before Thursday's trial proceedings began. A fidget spinner is a small toy designed to be spun between the fingers, relieving stress or boredom.

Burr was seen playing with a blue spinner while listening to arguments by Rep. Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., an impeachment manager. Other senators, including Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., and Pat Toomey, R-Pa., were also seen with spinners on their desks.

SPEAKING UP OUTSIDE THE SENATE

While senators are pledged to silence during the trial proceedings — and deprived of their phones and other electronics — they are speaking out during breaks in the action.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., a top Trump defender, challenged the Democratic argument about the Bidens' dealings in Ukraine. The White House and some congressional Republicans have raised questions about Hunter Biden's lucrative job on the board of a Ukrainian natural gas company, and Joe Biden's successful efforts to force the firing of a corrupt Ukrainian prosecutor. There's been no evidence of wrongdoing by either Biden.

"I know a lot about the Trump family and their dealings in Russia," Graham said. "I don't know anything about the Biden connection. You're going to hear more about that."

Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer, meanwhile, rebutted Republican senators who lamented they heard nothing new from House prosecutors. Republicans voted nine times this week to block Democratic amendments for new witnesses and documents.

"If they want new stuff, there is plenty of it," Schumer said at a news conference before Thursday's session. "As the (Democratic) managers made clear, a lot of the documents are sitting there, all compiled, all ready to go, with simply a vote of four Republicans to subpoena them."

WHAT'S AHEAD

Democrats are expected to wrap up their arguments Friday, with Trump's legal team set to make its case for up to three days beginning Saturday. Jay Sekulow, a lawyer for Trump, deflected rumors that the defense may wrap up in a single day.

"We're going to use a sufficient amount of time to defend our case and point out the inconsistencies of their case. We're not going to run out the clock," he said. "I am confident that whether it is (completed) Saturday or Monday or Tuesday that the case will be made defending the president. I have no doubt."

Russian Auschwitz survivor: Only coincidence that I lived

By **OLGA TREGUBOVA** Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — The 75 years since Yevgeny Kovalev was a teenage prisoner in Auschwitz have been marked by tormented memories and a wonder that he's still alive.

"Remembering all that is always like torture for me, can you imagine that? I'm even wondering myself how I could survive those times," the 92-year-old retired Russian factory worker told The Associated Press ahead of the 75th anniversary Monday of the liberation of Auschwitz by the Red Army.

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"We lived for minutes. We didn't hope that we would survive," he said.

Kovalev's journey into the depths of the Nazi death-camp system began when he was arrested in 1943 at age 15 for helping partisans fight German forces occupying the Smolensk area in western Russia. He aided in sabotage attacks that blew up Nazi Germany's trains and equipment.

"They put me on a bench, tied up my feet and body and scourged me with whipping sticks. My shirt was wet through with blood," he said.

He was sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau, the vast expanse of crude barracks and crematoria built by the Nazis in occupied Poland that was created to supplement the original Auschwitz camp, where the first victims to be fatally gassed and incinerated by the Nazis were Soviet war prisoners.

Auschwitz was the most notorious in a system of death and concentration camps that Nazi Germany operated on territory it occupied across Europe. In all, 1.1 million people were killed there, most of them Jews from across the continent.

At Birkenau, trains pulling boxcars crammed with prisoners pulled into the camp and the occupants were unloaded onto the platform.

"Those people were civilians. None of them knew they would be burned," he recalled. "They went to decontamination, went into the wash house, were locked inside and Zyklon the gas came. In five to seven minutes, everyone was dead."

Many of the arrivals were told they were being taken to showers for decontamination.

So many prisoners were killed that the crematoria on the edge of the camp couldn't incinerate all the bodies. Auschwitz's Sonderkommando prisoner work units threw many bodies into open pits and burned them there.

The crematoria worked around the clock. "Smoke came day and night and the smell was terrible," he said.

Prisoners who were ill or feeble were culled from the new arrivals and executed quickly. Younger, healthier prisoners were kept alive in order to perform work, but even teenagers feared they could be chosen for elimination.

The infamous doctor Joseph Mengele came to the camp and conducted selections of "who should go to the crematorium and who should stay. I went through this procedure three times. It was horrible. We knew perfectly well that we could be burned," Kovalev said.

At some point, teenagers such as Kovalev were sent to a subcamp that had previously been used for Roma prisoners.

"We opened one of the barracks and it was full of clothes, including children's clothes, shoes, so many of them. That was terrible. They exterminated people, burned them and left the clothes," he said.

He said another barracks had packs of human hair that the Nazis planned to use somewhere.

In late 1944, he and many other young Auschwitz prisoners were sent to northern Czechoslovakia as forced labor in a radio factory. Auschwitz was liberated on Jan. 27, 1945, but Kovalev still had to work as a forced laborer at the factory until April of that year.

After the war's end, he joined the Soviet military, then got work in a plant manufacturing automobile parts, from which he retired in 1990.

He remains stunned by the twists of fate he endured as a youngster.

"It was just a coincidence" that he survived, Kovalev said. "We never hoped that we would survive, absolutely, no one had any hope. "

Early voting means 2020 primary is already here for millions

By KATHLEEN RONAYNE Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — The Iowa caucuses are more than a week away, but millions of Americans are already free to vote.

Early voting in the crush of Super Tuesday states that hold primaries on March 3 amounts to a parallel campaign for the Democratic nomination. While much of the focus is on who will come out on top in the traditional first four voting states, early voting will allow a much broader swath of voters to play a key role

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in picking the nominee.

In Minnesota, in-person early voting began Jan. 17. Vermont's deadline to mail out its absentee ballots was the same day. Many of the 14 Super Tuesday states will offer some form of early voting between now and mid-February.

These states will test the organizational strength of the White House hopefuls. The campaigns must balance the demands of the first four states — Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina and Nevada — while also making sure to target potential supporters in the Super Tuesday states that follow. Some campaigns must manage that two-step while their candidate is stuck in Washington participating in President Donald Trump's impeachment trial.

Several campaigns said they've been working to perfect this balance for months.

"Super Tuesday has never really been March 3 for us," said Pete Kavanaugh, an adviser for former Vice President Joe Biden's campaign. "In our minds and from a resource allocation perspective, Super Tuesday begins in early February."

Michael Bloomberg, the billionaire businessman, is ignoring the early states entirely and using his nearly bottomless resources to campaign hard in the Super Tuesday states.

"We need supporters for Mike Bloomberg to vote early, independent of whatever is going on," said Will Dubbs, deputy states director for Bloomberg's campaign. "It is just very, very important for us to make sure we bank those votes, and we can concentrate our efforts elsewhere."

Bernie Sanders, meanwhile, sees early voting as a way to boost turnout among core constituencies like young, minority and working-class voters. Early voting opens new opportunities for people with strict work schedules or other barriers to voting to find time to cast ballots beyond the typical Election Day, spokeswoman Sarah Ford said.

"Early voting is another vehicle to make sure those people have the opportunity to vote for Bernie," she said.

The campaign of Pete Buttigieg, the former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, is educating volunteers in Minnesota, Colorado, California and Texas about the early voting process. And Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar rallied in her home state recently to mark the start of early voting and generate enthusiasm among voters who have sent her to the U.S. Senate three times, while freshman Rep. Ilhan Omar campaigned on behalf of Sanders.

Davis Senseman slept in an RV outside a Minnesota polling place with friends so that they could be some of the first people to vote in the presidential election.

"With Elizabeth Warren I finally had a candidate that I'm really excited about," said Senseman, a 42-year-old attorney. "I want to do this first because I'm for something, not voting against something."

The biggest early voting state, California, will mail ballots to more than 12 million voters starting Feb. 3, the same day as the Iowa caucuses, though not all of those voters will get a Democratic primary ballot. Colorado, North Carolina and Texas, which offer combinations of mail-in and in-person early voting, are also likely to have a high percentage of early voters, said Michael McDonald, a voting expert who directs the United States Elections Project at the University of Florida.

It's difficult to predict how many people will take advantage of early voting, McDonald said. While early voting offers an opportunity for campaigns to ensure their most intense supporters cast ballots early, many primary voters will wait until they begin seeing the results in earlier voting states in case their preferred candidates drop out. At least one state, Minnesota, gives voters an option to retrieve their ballot and change their votes up to a week before Election Day.

California has by far the largest population of would-be early voters. Paul Mitchell, who runs the nonpartisan Political Data Inc. that analyzes and sells voter data, predicts about a quarter of the state's eventual Democratic electorate will have cast ballots by the time Nevada holds its caucuses on Feb. 22. He projects that will increase to 40% by the time South Carolina votes on Feb. 29.

"If you have people who are with you now, you need to bank those votes," he said. "If you're running a campaign and can turn out 1 million voters on Election Day, if you can get 200,000 of them to vote early, that reduces your workload."

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In Colorado, where everyone is mailed a ballot, state officials expect 60% of voters to send their ballots back early. In North Carolina, about a quarter of people could vote early, McDonald predicted.

While early voting is an important component of campaign strategy, some experts and campaign veterans doubt its overall effect on a race's outcome. Robby Mook, who managed Democrat Hillary Clinton's 2016 campaign, said the voters who are likely to vote early are a campaign's most hardcore supporters who would have supported that candidate no matter what.

"You're often cannibalizing from what you were going to get on Election Day anyway," he said. "The question every campaign, if it's honest, is asking itself is: 'How many new votes have I turned out?'"

But other observers say early voting can affect candidates' momentum. Take California, which takes weeks to finish counting its ballots. The first reported votes on election night will be a reflection of the votes that came in earliest. If a candidate does particularly well with those voters, he or she could get an initial boost of energy, even if the results change as later votes roll in in the following weeks.

"If campaigns can use the mechanics of the election to drive their votes to get cast in those earlier tranches, you can have a greater impact on the national narrative," Mitchell said.

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

Democrats struggle to build broad support on eve of voting

By **STEVE PEOPLES AP National Political Writer**

OSAGE, Iowa (AP) — As Joe Biden wrapped a bus tour of Iowa this week, the elderly crowd gathered at VFW Hall 7920 was a stark reminder of the former vice president's struggle to attract young people.

Bernie Sanders, meanwhile, needs to strengthen his standing with older voters. Elizabeth Warren has room to grow among those without college degrees. Pete Buttigieg's support with African Americans is negligible, and the buzz that surrounds Amy Klobuchar belies the fact that she's barely registering with virtually any key demographic.

Just over a week before the Iowa caucuses jump-start the Democratic contest, polling and interviews with campaign officials suggest each of the leading candidates has glaring holes in his or her political bases. The gaps raise serious questions about their ability to build a broad coalition like the one Barack Obama twice used to win the presidency — questions that strike at the heart of electability as Iowa Democrats seek, above all, a nominee who can rally the nation to defeat President Donald Trump in November.

"They need to generate enthusiasm," 69-year-old retired attorney Tom Delgado said of the Democratic field while waiting for Biden to arrive at the VFW hall in Osage, Iowa. "I don't think any one person in the race right now can do it."

Delgado's concerns echo those of Obama veterans like David Binder, a pollster who was involved with both presidential victories and now worries that no one in his party's 2020 class is a lock to reassemble the vaunted "Obama coalition" of three core groups: young people, minorities and working-class whites.

"Every Democrat needs to work as hard as they can to coalesce those groups," Binder said. "I think some have shown in the polling that they can have a base with one or two of them, but not the whole coalition."

He added: "If any one of those elements falls off, then it's going to be very difficult for a Democrat to win."

The challenges for each of the candidates — and the party as a whole — have triggered a sense of alarm from campaign operatives and Democratic officials, several with ties to Obama, who worry that mathematical realities shaping the electorate could make it difficult for any of the candidates to defeat Trump without significant improvement over the coming months.

The Republican president cobbled together a winning coalition of his own in 2016 by drawing heavily on white, non-college-educated voters, and his campaign sees opportunities to expand his support with Latinos, among other key demographics. At the same time, Trump is trying to stoke Democratic divisions, betting that rifts between core Democratic constituencies will help him win a second term.

Democrats hope that shifts in the electorate, particularly among educated voters and women, could broaden the path to the presidency for the Democratic nominee. But there is a broad acknowledgement

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that few groups of Democratic voters are passionate about their choices in 2020.

"I'm deeply concerned about our chances this fall," said Bill Burton, an Obama aide who pointed to Obama's strength with a diverse set of voters, particularly working-class whites in more than 200 counties across the nation that backed Trump in 2016. "It's going to take a candidate who can stitch together the broadest possible coalition to beat Donald Trump."

The candidates are aware of their deficiencies, but there are no easy answers.

Buttigieg, whose struggles with African-American voters have haunted his campaign for months, said in an interview that, "No one is hurting more under the divisiveness and mismanagement more under the Trump administration than communities of color."

"I think now is our chance, with one consistent message, to build perhaps the broadest range of Democratic voters that we've had in some time," Buttigieg added. "I think it'll take patient, coalition-building."

Biden senior strategist Anita Dunn acknowledged a weakness with younger voters when pressed, but she suggested that Biden's competitors have much more to worry about with other demographics.

"Other campaigns may want to think about how they can engage better with older voters, who actually vote at a greater propensity than younger voters do," Dunn said. "But clearly, if you look at where this race is right now and the kind of support each candidate has, Biden, by far, has the best base to expand."

Sanders' chief strategist, Jeff Weaver, highlighted Sanders' strong standing with young minority voters in particular, a group that was not largely engaged in 2016. To showcase that strength, the campaign is hosting multiple events in Iowa this weekend with New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a 30-year-old liberal superstar who will stand in for Sanders as he participates in Trump's impeachment trial.

Sanders has also aggressively courted labor unions, whose working-class voters form an important part of his political base, Weaver said.

"The key to victory is putting together a coalition that includes people of all races, excites and energizes young people, and brings working people back into the Democratic Party," Weaver said. "Bernie can bring together the various pieces."

Campaigns and independent operatives believe a winning coalition in 2020 will bear some differences from Obama's coalition more than a decade ago. Democratic strategists are looking particularly at women and college-educated voters across America's suburbs, who have shifted away from Trump's GOP in a series of elections since he took office.

"We're looking at a new electorate now," said Katie Drapcho, director of research and polling for the pro-Democrat super PAC Priorities USA.

Specifically, she said the Democratic Party and its nominee will have opportunities to win drawing largely from three key groups: non-college-educated women, suburban voters who backed Republican Mitt Romney in 2012 but sided with Democrat Hillary Clinton in 2016, and working-class voters who twice backed Obama yet swung to Trump in 2016.

Still, Democrats cannot afford significant slippage among the core pieces of the Obama coalition. And leaders from those factions are concerned.

Civil rights activist Al Sharpton said he's deeply "disturbed" that the two highest-profile African American candidates running for president, Kamala Harris and Cory Booker, have already been forced out of the race. He said "it's too early to tell" whether any of the remaining Democrats can energize the black vote to a level close to Obama, the nation's first black president.

"I do not see one singularly able to do it yet," Sharpton said.

Like other Democratic leaders, he's hoping that Trump himself will ultimately persuade black voters to turn out en masse even if the ultimate Democratic nominee does not excite them.

"The biggest organizer and energizer of black voters is Donald Trump," Sharpton declared.

It's much the same with another pillar of the Obama coalition, young voters, who have been more engaged in the Trump era but have shown little excitement for most of the current Democratic candidates. Sanders, the self-described democratic socialist who has called for a political revolution, is the big exception.

Calvin Wilborn, the former president of the College Democrats of America, said it's unfair to compare

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any 2020 Democrat to Obama.

"Obama spoiled us. Not only did he move legislation and most of his ideology aligned with us, but he was charismatic," Wilborn said. "When you set the bar so high, it's hard for others. We're waiting for the same level of inspiration."

AP writers Hannah Fingerhut in Washington and Meg Kinnard in Orangeburg, South Carolina contributed to this report.

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

Trump, a late convert to cause, to join anti-abortion rally

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It was just four years ago that a political committee supporting one of Donald Trump's Republican rivals unveiled an ad slamming his views on abortion, complete with footage from a 1999 interview in which he declared, "I am pro-choice in every respect."

Now, as he heads into the 2020 election, Trump will become the first sitting president to address the March for Life, taking the stage Friday at the annual anti-abortion gathering that is one of the movement's highest profile and most symbolic events.

It's Trump's latest nod to the white evangelical voters who have proven to be among his most loyal backers. And it makes clear that, as he tries to stitch together a winning coalition for reelection, Trump is counting on the support of his base of conservative activists to help bring him across the finish line.

"I think it's a brilliant move," said Ralph Reed, chair of the Faith and Freedom Coalition and one of Trump's most prominent evangelical supporters. Reed said the president's appearance would "energize and remind pro-life voters what a great friend this president and administration has been."

It also shows how much times have changed.

Past presidents who opposed abortion, including Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush, steered clear of personally attending the march to avoid being too closely associated with demonstrators eager to outlaw the procedure. They sent remarks for others to deliver, spoke via telephone hookup or invited organizers to visit the White House.

Over the last 10 years, however, the Republican Party has undergone a "revolution," displaying a new willingness to "embrace the issue as not only being morally right but politically smart," said Mallory Quigley, a spokeswoman for the Susan B. Anthony List and Women Speak Out PAC. The group is planning to spend \$52 million this cycle to help elect candidates opposed to abortion rights. Its president, Marjorie Dannenfelser, will serve as national co-chair of a new campaign coalition, "Pro-life Voices for Trump."

Indeed, among both Republicans and Democrats, there is a greater appetite for hard-line positions for and against abortion rights.

"There used to be a middle in this country and candidates would not want to alienate the middle," said Ari Fleischer, who served as White House press secretary under President George W. Bush. "And it just seems that that is over and that both parties play to their bases to get maximum turnout from their base."

In addition, Fleischer said, Trump is far less tethered to tradition than past presidents and "happy to go where his predecessors haven't."

During his first three years in office, Trump has embraced socially conservative policies, particularly on the issue of abortion. He's appointing judges who oppose abortion, cutting taxpayer funding for abortion services and painting Democrats who support abortion rights as extreme in their views.

"President Trump has done more for the pro-life community than any other president, so it is fitting that he would be the first president in history to attend the March for Life on the National Mall," said White House spokesman Judd Deere.

This is not the first time Trump gave serious consideration to an appearance. Last year, he wanted to go and came close to attending, according to a person familiar with the discussions who spoke on condition

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of anonymity to discuss internal planning. But the trip never came together because of concerns about security so Trump joined the event via video satellite from the White House Rose Garden instead.

Trump's thinking on the matter was simple: If he supported the cause, "why wouldn't he show up to their big event?" said Matt Schlapp, chair of the American Conservative Union and a close ally of the White House. He said the appearance would be deeply significant for those in participants.

"I've had people be moved to tears over the fact that he's going," said Schlapp. "It's a big deal."

While Schlapp said he didn't think Trump's decision to attend was driven by election-year politics, he said it was nonetheless a "smart move politically" as well as "the right move morally."

"It will cement even tighter the relationship that he has with conservative activists across the country," Schlapp said.

During his video address last year, Trump sent a clear message to the thousands of people braving the cold on the National Mall. "As president, I will always defend the first right in our Declaration of Independence, the right to life," he said.

The rhetoric underscored Trump's dramatic evolution on the issue from his days as a freewheeling New York deal-maker, when he described himself as "very pro-choice" in a 1999 interview on NBC's "Meet the Press."

During his 2016 campaign for the Republican nomination, Trump said his views had changed and that he was now opposed to abortion, but for three exceptions: In the case of rape, incest and when the life of the mother is at risk.

Yet Trump's unfamiliarity with the language of abortion activism was clear, including when he offered a bungled response during a televised town hall and was forced to clarify his position on abortion three times in a single day.

Asked, hypothetically, what would happen if abortion were outlawed, Trump said there would have to "be some form of punishment" for women who have them, prompting a backlash that managed to unite abortion rights activists and opponents, including organizers of the March for Life.

Asked to clarify his position, Trump's campaign initially issued a statement saying he believed the issue should rest with state governments. He later issued a second statement that said doctors, not women, should be punished for illegal abortions.

Since that time, however, Trump has — to the shock of many — become a darling of the anti-abortion movement.

"These voters who are pro-life love Donald Trump and they will crawl across broken glass to get him re-elected," said Reed, who expressed amazement at the transformation. "Whatever you think of this president, there is no question that both at a policy level and politically, he has masterfully capitalized on his pro-life position in a way I think no one could have envisioned four years ago,"

Critics, for their part, accuse Trump of using the march to try to distract from his impeachment trial in the Senate.

Ilyse Hogue, president of NARAL Pro-Choice America, called it "an act of desperation, plain and simple," and accused Trump of taking "refuge in his ability to whip up a radical anti-choice base, spewing falsehoods when he feels threatened." Alexis McGill Johnson, acting president of the Planned Parenthood Action Fund, accused the president of carrying out "a full-out assault on our health and our rights."

"While Trump stands with the small number of Americans who want politicians to interfere with their personal health decisions, we'll be standing with the nearly 80 percent of Americans who support abortion access," she said.

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N Korea names sharp-tongued army figure as foreign minister

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea has named a sharp-tongued former army officer with little

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foreign policy experience as its top diplomat, in a possible indication it will take a harder line with Washington in stalled nuclear negotiations.

Ri Son Gwon's new title as foreign minister was disclosed Friday in a Korean Central News Agency dispatch that said he attended a reception for foreign diplomats in Pyongyang the previous day. South Korean and other outside media outlets have recently reported North Korea informed foreign diplomats in Pyongyang of Ri's job last week.

In his speech at the banquet, "Comrade Ri Son Gwon said that the Korean people have turned out in the general offensive to break through head-on the barriers to the advance of socialist construction by dint of self-reliance ... and made public the foreign policy stand of the (North Korean) government," KCNA said.

Ri, an outspoken retired army colonel who previously headed a government body responsible for relations with South Korea, has taken part in numerous inter-Korean military talks over the past 15 years. But Ri, who is also an alternate member of the ruling Workers' Party Central Committee, lacks experience in negotiations with the United States and other countries.

In South Korea, he is most known for what were seen as rude remarks to South Korean businessmen visiting Pyongyang in September 2018. While they were eating naengmyeon, Korean traditional cold noodles, Ri asked them: "Are naengmyeon going down your throats?" in apparent dissatisfaction with a lack of progress in efforts to promote inter-Korean economic projects, according to South Korean officials and lawmakers. Many conservatives in South Korea strongly criticized him.

Ri replaced Ri Yong Ho, a career diplomat with broad experiences who had taken part in nuclear negotiations with the United States since early 2018. It wasn't immediately known what happened to Ri Yong Ho, whose name was last mentioned in KCNA last August.

Analyst Cheong Seong-Chang at South Korea's private Sejong Institute said Ri Son Gwon's appointment signaled North Korea would further harden its stance toward the U.S. and bolster a push to cement its position as a nuclear state.

"From now on, it's difficult to expect meaningful progress in North Korea-U.S. diplomacy," Cheong said.

Nuclear talks between the U.S. and North Korea have progressed little since the breakdown of the second summit between President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Vietnam in February 2019. Kim recently said North Korea would strengthen its nuclear arsenal and unveil a new "strategic weapon" after the U.S. failed to meet a year-end deadline set by him to make concessions.

A senior State Department official told reporters Wednesday that Washington was aware of Ri Son Gwon's reported appointment and hopes North Korea will understand the importance of resuming diplomacy.

"There's nothing to be gained by not talking. It's only to their benefit, so we encourage them to talk," the official said on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to speak publicly to the matter. "It is slow, patient, steady diplomacy. We're going to stick with that plan."

Associated Press writer Matthew Lee in Washington contributed to this report.

'Sopranos' actress says Weinstein raped her in the mid-1990s

By MICHAEL R. SISKAK, TOM HAYS and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — "Sopranos" actress Annabella Sciorra confronted Harvey Weinstein from the witness stand Thursday, testifying that the former Hollywood studio boss overpowered and raped her and made other crude overtures that included sending her X-rated chocolates and showing up uninvited in his underwear with a bottle of baby oil in one hand and a video in the other.

In a quivering voice, Sciorra told the jury that the burly Weinstein barged into her apartment in the mid-1990s, threw her on a bed and forced himself on her as she tried to fight him off by kicking and punching him.

She said that roughly a month later, she ran into him and confronted him about what happened, and he replied: "That's what all the nice Catholic girls say."

Then, she told the jury, Weinstein leaned toward her and added menacingly: "This remains between

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you and I.”

“His eyes went black and I thought he was going to hit me right there,” Sciorra testified.

The 59-year-old actress became the first of Weinstein’s accusers to testify at his trial, where the movie mogul whose downfall gave rise to the #MeToo movement is charged with forcibly performing oral sex on former production assistant Mimi Haley in his New York apartment in 2006 and raping an aspiring actress in a hotel room in 2013.

Weinstein’s lawyers sought to sow doubts about Sciorra’s story, raising questions about her actions after the alleged rape and asking whether she had once described the encounter as “awkward sex,” which she denied.

Weinstein is not charged with attacking Sciorra, whose accusations date too far back to be prosecuted. Instead, she testified as one of four additional accusers prosecutors intend to put on the stand to show that the powerful Hollywood producer had a habit of preying on women.

Generally, prosecutors cannot bring up alleged crimes beyond the charges at a trial, but such evidence can be allowed if it shows a certain pattern of behavior. Five additional accusers were allowed to testify against Bill Cosby at the Pennsylvania trial that led to his 2018 conviction for sexually assaulting a woman.

Weinstein, 67, could get life in prison if convicted.

The executive behind such Oscar-winning movies as “Pulp Fiction” and “Shakespeare in Love” has insisted any sexual encounters were consensual.

Recounting an accusation she said she kept largely secret for decades, Sciorra testified that after raping her, Weinstein went on to try to perform oral sex on her, saying, “This is for you,” as her body “shut down.”

“It was just so disgusting,” she said. She said she started to shake: “I didn’t even know what was happening. It was like a seizure or something.”

At other points in the 1990s, she said, Weinstein sent her packages with Valium and a box of chocolate penises and turned up early one morning at her Cannes Film Festival hotel room in his underwear with the body oil and the videotape. She said he left after she frantically pushed buttons on the room phone to summon help.

The jury of seven men and five women listened keenly and took notes on her testimony. Weinstein was mostly expressionless, sometimes appearing to purse his lips as he chewed mints.

During cross-examination, Weinstein lawyer Donna Rotunno noted that Sciorra never went to police or a doctor about the alleged rape.

“At the time, I didn’t understand that that was rape,” Sciorra said. She testified earlier that she once thought rape was a crime of strangers.

“I thought he was an OK guy. I felt confused. I felt like I wished I never opened the door,” she said.

Rotunno also suggested that Sciorra’s judgment and recollection were clouded by drinking — the actress replied that she remembered having only a glass of wine with dinner — and played a 1997 clip of Sciorra playfully telling late-night host David Letterman that she sometimes had fun with the media by making up stories such as her father raising iguanas for circuses.

Sciorra said she would never lie about something as serious as sexual assault.

The defense also highlighted an August 2017 text message in which Sciorra told a friend she was broke and was “hoping Harvey has a job for me.”

The actress said she was just “fishing” to try to find out through the friend whether Weinstein knew that a reporter had gotten wind of her accusations. They were first published in The New Yorker two months later.

The Associated Press does not typically identify people who say they have been victims of sexual assault, unless they come forward publicly.

Sciorra drew acclaim for her part in Spike Lee’s 1991 movie “Jungle Fever” and her role as a pregnant woman molested by her doctor in 1992’s “The Hand That Rocks the Cradle.” She later appeared in a few episodes of “The Sopranos.”

She said she met Weinstein at an industry event in Los Angeles in 1990 or 1991. By 1993, she had starred

in one of his company's movies, the romantic comedy "The Night We Never Met."

She said the rape happened in late 1993 or early 1994, after Weinstein dropped her off from a movie-business dinner and then appeared, uninvited, at her door minutes later.

Sciorra later acted in another Weinstein-produced picture, 1997's "Cop Land," though she said she didn't realize when auditioning that his studio was involved.

She told no one at first about the alleged rape, not even her brothers, she said.

"I wanted to pretend it never happened," she said. "I wanted to get back to my life."

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Ex-pharmaceutical exec gets 5 1/2 years for pushing opioid

By COLLIN BINKLEY Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — The founder of an Arizona pharmaceutical company was ordered to spend 5 1/2 years in prison Thursday for orchestrating a bribery and kickback scheme prosecutors said helped fuel the opioid crisis.

John Kapoor, 76, the former chairman of Insys Therapeutics, was sentenced in Boston's federal court after a jury found him guilty of racketeering conspiracy last May. The 10-week trial revealed sensational details about the company's marketing tactics, including testimony that a sales executive once gave a lap dance to a doctor the company was wooing.

Kapoor was also ordered to pay a \$250,000 fine, the maximum under sentencing guidelines.

He and others were accused of paying millions of dollars in bribes to doctors across the United States to prescribe the company's highly addictive oral fentanyl spray, known as Subsys. The bribes were paid in the form of fees for sham speaking engagements that were billed as educational opportunities for other doctors.

The company was also accused of misleading insurers to get payment approved for the drug, which is meant to treat cancer patients in severe pain and can cost as much as \$19,000 a month.

Along with Kapoor, four others from Insys also were convicted last year and two pleaded guilty. All of them have been dealt prison sentences, ranging from a year and a day to nearly three years.

Prosecutors were requesting 15 years in prison for Kapoor, calling him the "lynch pin" of the operation.

"This was in every way a top-down conspiracy that John Kapoor ran," Assistant U.S. Attorney Nathaniel Yeager said at the hearing. "He was already a billionaire when this started, and this made him even richer."

Kapoor's lawyers countered that the scheme was organized by other executives and that Kapoor was never aware of any wrongdoing that could harm patients. They called him an "immigrant success story," noting that the India-born Kapoor developed Subsys after seeing his wife suffer and die from breast cancer.

During the hearing Thursday, several patients addressed the court and described their suffering after being prescribed high doses of Subsys by doctors who were paid by Insys.

Some said the drug caused their teeth to fall out and left them with memory loss. Some said they became addicted to the drug for years. One woman, Deborah Fuller, said her family has been in "constant agonizing grief" since her daughter, Sarah Fuller, died of an overdose at age 32.

Kapoor silently watched them speak and, when he was allowed to address the court, opened with an apology.

"I'm heartbroken by the words of the patients who spoke here today and those who spoke at the trial," he said. "I sincerely apologize to them and their families."

Still, Kapoor asked the judge to consider his other work developing treatments for AIDS patients and those with heart problems. He requested leniency because of his age, noting that, at 76, his time is "limited."

U.S. District Judge Allison D. Burroughs said she took Kapoor's age into account but also recognized the harm caused by his company. Ultimately, she said, it was never clear exactly what role each executive played in the scheme, so she treated Kapoor and two of his executives as "co-equals at the top of this triangle."

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The two others she referenced were dealt lighter sentences because they pleaded guilty and cooperated with authorities. Former Insys CEO Michael Babich was sentenced to 2 1/2 years in prison on Wednesday, while Alec Burlakoff, the former vice president of sales, was sentenced Thursday to more than 2 years.

After the hearing, U.S. Attorney Andrew Lelling told reporters he objected to the sentences in the case, which were far lower than what prosecutors sought.

"My view is that the public interest demanded higher sentences for these defendants," Lelling said. "These guys basically took a publicly traded pharma company and turned it into an engine for corrupting doctors and jeopardizing the health of men and women nationwide."

Prosecutors also asked the judge to detain Kapoor until he reports to prison on March 5, saying he posed a flight risk because of his wealth and his overseas connections. Burroughs denied the request, saying he has "behaved like a gentleman" through the case.

During last year's trial, jurors heard from former employees who said Insys made a habit of hiring attractive women as representatives to boost sales of the drug. One former employee testified that a regional sales manager once gave a lap dance at a Chicago nightclub to a doctor whom Insys was pushing to write more prescriptions.

Jurors were also shown a rap video in which Insys employees danced and rapped around a person dressed as a giant bottle of the fentanyl spray. Prosecutors said the video was shown at a national sales meeting in 2015 and was intended to motivate reps to push Subsysto doctors.

The case was considered the first that sought to hold an opioid maker criminally liable for the drug crisis, which has claimed nearly 400,000 lives over the last two decades. At least two others have since faced criminal charges, but prominent companies including Purdue Pharma, the maker of OxyContin, have only faced suits that carry no threat of prison time.

Insys last year reached a \$225 million settlement with the U.S. Department of Justice to end its criminal and civil probes, and the company has since filed for bankruptcy protection. It's not clear whether the company will fully pay what's owed.

China confirms 1st death outside epicenter of viral outbreak

By **KEN MORITSUGU** and **YANAN WANG** Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China moved to lock down at least three cities with a combined population of more than 18 million in an unprecedented effort to contain the deadly new virus that has sickened hundreds of people and spread to other parts of the world during the busy Lunar New Year holiday.

The open-ended lockdowns are unmatched in size, embracing more people than New York City, Los Angeles and Chicago put together.

The train station and airport in Wuhan, the epicenter of the outbreak, were shut down, and ferry, subway and bus service was halted. Normally bustling streets, shopping malls, restaurants and other public spaces in the city of 11 million were eerily quiet. Police checked all incoming vehicles but did not close off the roads.

Similar measures were being imposed Friday in the nearby cities of Huanggang and Ezhou. In Huanggang, theaters, internet cafes and other entertainment centers were also ordered closed.

In the capital, Beijing, major events were canceled indefinitely, including traditional temple fairs that are a staple of holiday celebrations, to stop the spread of the virus. The Forbidden City, the palace complex in Beijing that is now a museum, announced it will close indefinitely on Saturday.

China's National Health Commission said Friday morning the confirmed cases of the new coronavirus had risen to 830 with 25 deaths. The first death was also confirmed outside the central province of Hubei, where the capital, Wuhan, has been the epicenter of the outbreak. The health commission in Hebei, a northern province bordering Beijing, said an 80-year-old man died after returning from a two-month stay in Wuhan to see relatives.

The vast majority of cases have been in and around Wuhan or people with connections to the city. Other cases have been confirmed in the United States, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea and Thailand. Singapore and Vietnam reported their first cases Thursday, and cases have also been confirmed in the Chinese territories

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of Hong Kong and Macao.

Many countries are screening travelers from China for symptoms of the virus, which can cause fever, coughing, breathing difficulties and pneumonia.

The World Health Organization has decided against declaring the outbreak a global emergency, a step that can bring more money and resources to fight a threat but that can also cause trade and travel restrictions and other economic damage, making the decision a politically fraught one.

The decision "should not be taken as a sign that WHO does not think the situation is serious or that we're not taking it seriously. Nothing could be further from the truth," WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said. "WHO is following this outbreak every minute of every day."

Chinese officials have not said how long the shutdowns of the cities will last. While sweeping measures are typical of China's Communist Party-led government, large-scale quarantines are rare around the world, even in deadly epidemics, because of concerns about infringing on people's liberties. And the effectiveness of such measures is unclear.

"To my knowledge, trying to contain a city of 11 million people is new to science," said Gauden Galea, the WHO's representative in China. "It has not been tried before as a public health measure. We cannot at this stage say it will or it will not work."

Jonathan Ball, a professor of virology at molecular virology at the University of Nottingham in Britain, said the lockdowns appear to be justified scientifically.

"Until there's a better understanding of what the situation is, I think it's not an unreasonable thing to do," he said. "Anything that limits people's travels during an outbreak would obviously work."

But Ball cautioned that any such quarantine should be strictly time-limited. He added: "You have to make sure you communicate effectively about why this is being done. Otherwise you will lose the goodwill of the people."

During the devastating West Africa Ebola outbreak in 2014, Sierra Leone imposed a national three-day quarantine as health workers went door to door, searching for hidden cases. Burial teams collecting corpses and people taking the sick to Ebola centers were the only ones allowed to move freely. Frustrated residents complained of food shortages.

In China, the illnesses from the newly identified coronavirus first appeared last month in Wuhan, an industrial and transportation hub. Local authorities demanded all residents wear masks in public places and urged civil servants wear them at work.

After the city was closed off Thursday, images showed long lines and empty shelves at supermarkets, as people stocked up. Trucks carrying supplies into the city are not being restricted, although many Chinese recall shortages in the years before the country's recent economic boom.

Analysts predicted cases will continue to multiply, although the jump in numbers is also attributable in part to increased monitoring.

"Even if (cases) are in the thousands, this would not surprise us," the WHO's Galea said, adding, however, that the number of infected is not an indicator of the outbreak's severity so long as the death rate remains low.

The coronavirus family includes the common cold as well as viruses that cause more serious illnesses, such as the SARS outbreak that spread from China to more than a dozen countries in 2002-03 and killed about 800 people, and Middle Eastern respiratory syndrome, or MERS, which is thought to have originated from camels.

China is keen to avoid repeating mistakes with its handling of SARS. For months, even after the illness had spread around the world, China parked patients in hotels and drove them around in ambulances to conceal the true number of cases and avoid WHO experts. This time, China has been credited with sharing information rapidly, and President Xi Jinping has emphasized that as a priority.

Health authorities are taking extraordinary measures to prevent the spread of the virus, placing those believed infected in plastic tubes and wheeled boxes, with air passed through filters.

The first cases in the Wuhan outbreak were connected to people who worked at or visited a seafood market, now closed for an investigation. Experts suspect that the virus was first transmitted from wild

animals but that it may also be mutating. Mutations can make it deadlier or more contagious.

Associated Press journalists Shanshan Wang in Shanghai, Maria Cheng in London and Krista Larson in Dakar, Senegal, contributed to this report.

Questions linger over investigation into Jeff Bezos' hacking

By AYA BATRAWY Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Cybersecurity experts said Thursday there were still many unanswered questions from an investigation commissioned by Jeff Bezos that concluded the billionaire's cellphone was hacked, apparently after receiving a video file with malicious spyware from the WhatsApp account of Saudi Arabia's crown prince.

The experts said the evidence in the privately commissioned report does not show with certainty that Bezos' phone was actually hacked, much less how it was compromised or what kind of malware was used.

The report on the investigation, which was managed by FTI Consulting and overseen by Anthony Ferrante, a former head of the FBI's Cyber Division, was made public Wednesday.

In it, investigators said a digital forensic review concluded with "medium to high confidence" that Bezos' phone was compromised via malware sent from a WhatsApp account used by Saudi Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Two U.N. experts issued their own take on the report's findings, calling on the U.S. to investigate further. They said it appeared the Amazon founder may have been targeted because of his ownership of The Washington Post, which was publishing reports critical of the crown prince by columnist Jamal Khashoggi.

Khashoggi was killed by Saudi agents inside the kingdom's consulate in Turkey in October 2018, five months after Bezos' phone was apparently hacked.

The report's conclusions drew heavily from the unusually high volume of data that left Bezos' iPhone X within 24 hours of receiving the video file from Prince Mohammed's WhatsApp account on May 1, 2018, a month after the two exchanged phone numbers. The size of the file, the investigators suggested, indicated a malware payload may have been included.

The investigators said Bezos' phone began transmitting large volumes of data — an increase of some 29,000% — after receiving the video file.

The report further pointed to messages later sent from the prince's WhatsApp account to Bezos that showed "apparent awareness" of private information. One included a meme with a photo of a woman the report said resembled the woman Bezos was having an extramarital relationship with before going public with his divorce.

Another, sent two days after Bezos was briefed in phone calls last February about a Saudi online campaign against him, advised the technology mogul that what he was hearing was not true. "There is nothing against you or Amazon from me or Saudi Arabia," the message said.

The report additionally pointed to Saudi Arabia's documented use of spyware against critics and other adversaries as further potential proof.

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud called the allegations "purely conjecture" and said if there was real evidence, the kingdom looked forward to seeing it.

Cybersecurity experts said that while it was likely a hack occurred, the investigation did not prove that definitively.

"In some ways, the investigation is very incomplete. ... The conclusions they've drawn I don't think are supported by the evidence. They veered off into conjecture," said Robert Pritchard, the director of U.K.-based consultancy Cyber Security Expert.

Similarly, the former chief security officer at Facebook, who now directs a cyber policy center at Stanford, wrote that the report is filled with circumstantial evidence, but no smoking gun.

"The funny thing is that it looks like FTI potentially has the murder weapon sitting right there, they just haven't figured out how to test it," Alex Stamos wrote on Twitter.

One sticking point centered on WhatsApp's end-to-end encryption, which the report said made it "virtually impossible to decrypt contents of the downloader to determine if it contained malicious code" — meaning the investigators could not conclude whether the video file sent from Prince Mohammed's WhatsApp account was infected and used to hack Bezos' phone.

Bill Marczak, a senior research fellow at Citizen Lab, disputed that assertion, saying it is possible to decrypt the contents of a WhatsApp file. In a post written for The Medium that presents ways to further the investigation, Marczak shared a link to decryption instructions and code.

The FTI investigators did not reach out to WhatsApp to seek assistance, a Facebook spokesperson said. FTI's Ferrante did not respond to emails and text messages seeking comment. The company said in a statement that all FTI's work for clients is confidential and that the company does not "comment on, confirm or deny client engagements."

Matt Suiche, a French entrepreneur based in Dubai who founded cybersecurity firm Comae Technologies, said the video file was presumably on the iPhone because the report showed a screenshot of it. If the file had been deleted, he said the report should have stated this or explained why it was not possible to retrieve it.

"They're not doing that. It shows poor quality of the investigation," Suiche said.

Still, security professionals and the report itself said the fact that investigators failed to identify any embedded malicious code does not mean there wasn't a hack because sophisticated spyware can erase itself, leaving no trace.

Steve Morgan, founder and editor-in-chief at Cybersecurity Ventures, a cybersecurity research firm in New York, said the report makes reasonable assumptions and speculations, but does not claim 100% certainty or proof.

"Given their detailed analysis and all of the evidence they reviewed, their conclusions are reasonable," Morgan said. "The tools they used, including forensic software and hardware from Cellebrite, are widely acknowledged to be amongst the best available," he said.

Theresa Payton, founder and CEO of Fortalice Solutions, said the report is credible in her opinion, but leaves some questions unanswered, including whether the crown prince's WhatsApp account may have been hacked by a third party, meaning he was not the true attacker.

"Unless Mohammed bin Salman has a thorough forensic review of dates, times, phone logs, geocoded locations, and logins, it'll be hard to know for sure who was behind that WhatsApp message," she said.

Associated Press Technology Writer Frank Bajak in Boston contributed to this report.

Follow Aya Batrawy on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/ayaelb>

Canada's TSB says Iran has invited it to examine black boxes

By **ROB GILLIES** undefined

TORONTO (AP) — Canada's Transportation Safety Board said Thursday it has been invited by Iran to participate in the download and analysis of the flight recorders from the downing of a Ukraine International Airlines jet "whenever and wherever" that takes place.

Iran has acknowledged that its armed forces fired two Russian anti-aircraft missiles at the jetliner that crashed after taking off from Tehran's main airport earlier this month, killing all 176 people on board. Fifty-seven Canadians died and 138 of the passengers were headed to Canada.

The Transportation Safety Board said in a statement it understands that the plane's flight-data recorders — commonly known as black boxes — are still in Iran and said Iran is assessing options for their download and analysis, including doing it in Iran.

Iranian officials have offered contradictory remarks on whether they'll send the plane's flight data and cockpit voice recorders abroad to be analyzed. A preliminary report by the Civil Aviation Organization said Iranian officials had asked French and American authorities to send them "up-to-date equipment" to pull

the data in Iran.

Canada's Transportation Safety Board said it will deploy a second team of investigators to examine the recorders whenever and wherever that activity takes place.

Two other Canadian safety board investigators are heading back to Canada after six days in Tehran and two in Kyiv. The investigators are still seeking a bigger role in the probe, but the TSB says the Iranian authorities have been co-operative and helpful.

Iran may be hesitant to turn over the recorders for fear that more details from the crash — including the harrowing 20 seconds between when the first and second surface-to-air missiles hit the plane — will come to light.

The government of Canada has said the boxes should be sent quickly for analysis by experts in either France or Ukraine.

The Guard's air defenses shot the plane down shortly after it took off from Tehran on Jan. 8. Hours earlier, the Guard had launched ballistic missiles at U.S. troops in Iraq in response to the U.S. airstrike that killed Iran's top general in Baghdad. Officials say lower-level officers mistook the plane for a U.S. cruise missile.

Iranian officials initially said the crash was caused by a technical problem and invited countries that lost citizens to help investigate. Three days later, Iran admitted responsibility after Western leaders said there was strong evidence the plane was hit by a surface-to-air missile.

The victims also included 11 Ukrainians, 17 people from Sweden, four Afghans and four British citizens. Most of those killed were Iranians. The other five nations have demanded Iran accept full responsibility and pay compensation to the victims' families.

The plane was a Boeing 737-800 that was designed and built in the U.S. The plane's engine was designed by CFM International, a joint company between French group Safran and U.S. group GE Aviation. Investigators from both countries have been invited to take part in the probe.

Cleveland bishop named Philadelphia's next archbishop

By **COREY PERRINE** and **NICOLE WINFIELD** Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — The Roman Catholic bishop of Cleveland will become the new leader of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, the Vatican announced Thursday, making him the first Hispanic archbishop to lead the region's 1.3 million-member flock.

Nelson Perez, who spent most of his early pastoral career in the Philadelphia area, was introduced Thursday in a news conference at the archdiocese's Philadelphia headquarters. He will succeed Archbishop Charles Chaput, a conservative culture warrior who is stepping down after turning 75 last year, the traditional retirement age for Catholic bishops.

Chaput welcomed Perez to his new post, which he will assume Feb. 18. He called his successor "a man who already knows and loves the church in Philadelphia."

Perez shared his enthusiasm for the city, saying, "It's awesome to be back in Philadelphia with people who are faith-filled, who love the Lord, love the church." Perez also praised Chaput's tenure in the diocese, saying he faced challenges in Philadelphia with "great courage and steadfastness."

Perez, 58, attended the diocesan seminary in Philadelphia in the 1980s and served in a number of Philadelphia parishes before being named as an auxiliary bishop in Rockville Centre, New York, and then bishop of Cleveland in 2017.

Perez also addressed church sex abuse victims Thursday, telling them, "I, and we, continue to pray for your healing and support and hold you deep within our hearts — those who have been hurt. It should have never happened, and we are sorry."

Perez has had to deal with that issue while in Cleveland. The diocese last year made public a list of 22 previously unidentified priests and other clergy it said had been credibly accused of sexually abusing minors. Perez said in a letter announcing the release of the names that a committee assembled by the diocese determined that the accusations against the clerics were "more likely than not to be true."

Perez had pledged in 2018 to follow the lead of other dioceses and release the names of priests credibly

accused of sexual abuse, past and present. The Cleveland diocese in 2002 began publishing the names of priests who were accused from that year forward.

Chaput, for his part, faced a difficult task trying to restore credibility in the Philadelphia hierarchy following revelations of clergy sexual abuse and cover-up by his predecessors that were revealed in 2005 and 2011 grand jury investigations.

Appointed in 2011, Chaput was very much in favor under conservative Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI, named to participate in important Vatican missions even while being denied the cardinal's red hat that his predecessors enjoyed.

Chaput, a member of the Capuchin order, has denied he is a critic of Pope Francis, and he hosted the Argentine pope when he visited Philadelphia in 2015.

But the two clashed. After Francis opened the door to letting divorced and civilly remarried Catholics receive Communion in 2016, Chaput closed the door in Philadelphia by saying they must abstain from sex if they want the sacrament.

Chaput was also one several U.S. bishops who praised the integrity of a leading Francis critic, Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano. The former Vatican ambassador to the U.S. in 2018 called for Francis to resign for allegedly rehabilitating ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, alleging he was part of a two-decade conspiracy of cover-up.

In his letter, Vigano implied Francis opposed Chaput's conservatism, quoting the pope as telling him in 2013 that U.S. bishops must not be ideologically driven, "they must not be right-wing like the archbishop of Philadelphia."

Francis has said he doesn't remember details of the 2013 meeting.

While Francis quickly accepted Chaput's resignation, this week he formally told another 75-year-old prelate to stay on indefinitely. Cardinal Christoph Schoenborn, the archbishop of Vienna, is a strong Francis supporter and helped draft the final document at the controversial Amazon Synod, where bishops called for married priests in the Amazon.

Perez said he learned he would be changing jobs again when he got a call Saturday while visiting his mother in Florida.

"I was shocked, just absolutely shocked," Perez said. "Once a Philadelphia priest, always a Philadelphia priest. I come back really with a sense of great gratitude and joy to serve alongside great bishops."

Winfield reported from Rome. Associated Press writers Bruce Shipkowski in Trenton, New Jersey, and Lisa Cornwell in Cincinnati contributed to this report.

This story has been corrected to show that Philadelphia Archbishop Charles Chaput is a member of the Capuchin order, not the Cappuchin order.

US imposes visa rules for pregnant women on 'birth tourism'

By MATTHEW LEE and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration is imposing new visa rules aimed at restricting "birth tourism," in which women travel to the United States to give birth so their children can have U.S. citizenship. The regulations, which take effect Friday, address one of President Donald Trump's main political priorities.

The regulations seek to chip away at the number of foreigners who take advantage of the constitutional provision granting "birthright citizenship" to anyone born in the United States, a particular peeve of Trump's. Under the new rules, pregnant applicants will be denied a tourist visa unless they can prove they must come to the U.S. to give birth for medical reasons and they have money to pay for it or have another compelling reason — not just because they want their child to have an American passport.

Officials said that consular officers will not be asking all female visa applicants of child-bearing age whether they are pregnant or intend to get pregnant. Rather, they said consular officers would ask the question only if they had reason to believe the applicant is pregnant and likely or planning to give birth in the U.S.

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Visual cues such as appearing to be pregnant or listing "medical treatment" as a reason for wanting to travel to the United States might trigger such questioning, the officials said. Even if a woman is found to be pregnant and likely to deliver her child in the United States, she could still be granted a visa if she was able to demonstrate a valid reason for the travel such as visiting an ailing relative or attending a business meeting or conference, they said.

Officials said the rule will not apply to foreign travelers coming from any of the 39 mainly European and Asian countries enrolled in the Visa Waiver Program, which allows citizens of those countries to come to the U.S. without a visa for temporary stays. The rule will only apply to applicants for so-called "B" class visas that permit short-term stays for business or pleasure.

"Closing this glaring immigration loophole will combat these endemic abuses and ultimately protect the United States from the national security risks created by this practice," White House press secretary Stephanie Grisham said in a statement. "It will also defend American taxpayers from having their hard-earned dollars siphoned away to finance the direct and downstream costs associated with birth tourism. The integrity of American citizenship must be protected."

The practice of traveling to the U.S. to give birth is fundamentally legal, although there are scattered cases of authorities arresting operators of birth tourism agencies for visa fraud or tax evasion. And women are often honest about their intentions when applying for visas and even show signed contracts with doctors and hospitals.

The State Department "does not believe that visiting the United States for the primary purpose of obtaining U.S. citizenship for a child, by giving birth in the United States — an activity commonly referred to as 'birth tourism' — is a legitimate activity for pleasure or of a recreational nature," according to the new rules, which were published Thursday in the Federal Register.

Birth tourism is a business where companies for a steep fee offer foreign women the chance to come to the U.S. on a tourist visa, have a baby, get medical care, get citizenship, have a place to stay with their newborn, and then leave. It's distinct from what Trump and his allies deride as "anchor babies," referring to poor women who enter the U.S. illegally at the U.S.-Mexico border to give birth to a child and then stay in the U.S. illegally. But the end result is the same: a coveted U.S. passport.

The Trump administration also has turned away pregnant women coming over the U.S.-Mexico border as part of a broader immigration crackdown. Those women were initially part of a "vulnerable" group that included others like small children who were allowed in, while tens of thousands of other asylum seekers have been returned to Mexico to wait out their cases.

The Trump administration has been restricting all forms of immigration, but the president has been particularly troubled by birthright citizenship. Trump has railed against the practice and threatened to end it, but scholars and members of his administration have said it's not so easy to do.

Birth tourism is a lucrative business in both the U.S. and abroad. Companies take out advertisements and charge up to \$80,000 to facilitate the practice. Many of the women travel from Russia and China to give birth in the U.S.

The U.S. has been cracking down on the practice since before Trump took office.

"An entire 'birth tourism' industry has evolved to assist pregnant women from other countries to come to the United States to obtain U.S. citizenship for their children by giving birth in the United States, and thereby entitle their children to the benefits of U.S. citizenship," according to the State Department rules.

Elena Balmiller, the founder of the Florida firm AIST USA, which caters to Russian mothers-to-be, said she did not expect the new rules would stop her business. She said her business gets about 60 queries a month and had 45 clients last year, because Trump has been unable to end birthright citizenship.

"So far it has resulted in nothing but intentions, guesses, publications and projections," she said. "Not a single person has changed their mind to fly to the USA because Trump plans to stop (birthright) citizenship."

There are no figures on how many foreign women travel to the U.S. specifically to give birth. The Center for Immigration Studies, a group that advocates for stricter immigration laws, estimated that in 2012 about 36,000 foreign-born women gave birth in the U.S. and then left the country.

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"This rule will help eliminate the criminal activity associated with the birth tourism industry," according to the rules. "The recent federal indictments describe birth tourism schemes in which foreign nationals applied for visitor visas to come to the United States and lied to consular officers about the duration of their trips, where they would stay, and their purpose of travel."

Associated Press writer Ellen Knickmeyer contributed to this report.

US general says troop surge in Middle East may not end soon

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

ABOARD THE USS BATAAN (AP) — Over the past eight months, the United States has poured more than 20,000 additional troops into the Middle East to counter the escalating threat from Iran that peaked with the recent missile attack on American forces in Iraq.

Despite President Donald Trump's pledge to bring troops home, the top U.S. commander in the Middle East on Thursday said the most recent forces to enter the region could be there for "quite a while."

"You're here because I requested that you come," Marine Gen. Frank McKenzie told sailors and Marines aboard the USS Bataan amphibious assault ship, his voice booming over the ship's loudspeaker. "I'm not sure how long you're going to stay in the theater. We'll work that out as we go ahead. Could be quite a while, could be less than that, just don't know right now."

The Bataan and two other U.S. warships moved into the Middle East on Jan. 11. By Thursday, they were in the north Red Sea, roughly 50 miles south of the Sinai Peninsula. They are the latest additions to America's troop presence in the region. Since May, their numbers have grown from about 60,000 to more than 80,000.

Those increased deployments came despite two significant hurdles: Trump's persistent pledge to end the wars and bring troops home, and U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper's insistence that U.S. forces be shifted to the Asia-Pacific as a bulwark against threats from China.

In making its case for troops in the Middle East, the U.S. military points to Iran's Jan. 8 launch of as many as two dozen ballistic missiles at two Iraqi bases where U.S. troops were stationed. The attack was in retaliation for a U.S. drone strike that killed Qassem Soleimani, Iran's top general.

"Iran continues to pose a very real threat," McKenzie told reporters traveling with him to the Bataan. "I do believe that they are deterred right now, at least from state-on-state actions by our response. And so I think that while that threat remains, I think we're in a period where they're certainly not seeking to escalate anything."

He added, however, that Iranian proxy forces, who may strike with or without direction from Iranian leaders, still present a threat. He noted that Iranian attacks against Saudi Arabia last fall came as a surprise.

"Iran is very hard to read," McKenzie said. "So I would say the fact that things are quiet for a while does not mean that necessarily things are getting better."

To help deter additional Iranian attacks, McKenzie asked to have the USS Bataan Amphibious Ready Group, which includes two other ships and a Marine Expeditionary Unit, divert from their original mission in Europe and go through the Suez Canal into the Red Sea. There are about 2,500 Marines and 1,500 sailors on the three ships.

That decision is the latest move since May to bolster the American presence in the region, including the deployment of the 1st Brigade, 82nd Airborne division, to Kuwait and Iraq after the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad was attacked. The U.S. also moved an aircraft carrier into the region last year. It has left and was replaced the USS Harry S. Truman. The Pentagon has sent additional fighter jets, bomber aircraft, and Patriot missile batteries to Middle East to provide additional security for U.S. troops and allies and as a show of force to deter attacks by Iran.

Those moves have increased the U.S. troop strength in the region to more than 83,000, based on numbers from several U.S. officials and other government agencies that track military movements.

Asked about the increase, McKenzie said he understands the demand for troops in other parts of the

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world, and he has had discussions with Esper about the level of risk in the Middle East.

Esper, who has approved the moves, is looking closely at worldwide deployments in a broader effort to meet the needs of the national defense strategy that identified China and Russia as the key future threats. Even as McKenzie was traveling to the Bataan, Esper was in Florida telling reporters that Russia and China are "mission number one."

"There's only a finite number of dollars, a finite number of troops, so I've got to figure out, where is the best place to put them? I've articulated in the past that I want to either return forces to the States to improve their readiness, or redeploy others" to the IndoPacific, Esper said.

Trump has argued that the U.S. must get out of the "endless wars" in the Middle East. But he has also singled out Iran as a malign influence in the region, and after the Iranian missile strikes, was quick to threaten revenge.

After hundreds of Iranian-supported militiamen breached the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad in early January, Trump tweeted, "They will pay a very BIG PRICE! This is not a Warning, it is a Threat. Happy New Year!" Trump also approved the airstrike on Soleimani, which triggered the Iranian reprisal. Some U.S. troops were flown out of Iraq for evaluation of concussion-like symptom after the missile strikes.

Senior U.S. officials have noted the relative calm after the Iranian strikes, saying both the U.S. and Iran want to deescalate tensions.

But McKenzie said that while the U.S. wants to be "coolheaded," he worries that cooler heads may not prevail in Iran.

So when he went to the microphone on the Bataan, where Marine Harrier jets intermittently roared down the ship's deck into the air, he issued a warning.

"You need to be ready because I may need to employ you on very short notice and on some very difficult missions," he said.

What we know, and don't, about the alleged Bezos phone hack

By FRANK BAJAK AP Technology Writer

BOSTON (AP) — U.N. human rights experts are asking Washington to investigate a suspected Saudi hack that may have siphoned data from the personal smartphone of Jeff Bezos, Amazon founder and owner of The Washington Post. But the forensic evidence they cite comes from an incomplete study of Bezos's phone, raising multiple questions.

Here's a quick guide to what's known, and what remains unknown, about their findings.

WHAT HAPPENED TO BEZOS' PHONE?

According to a report overseen by a former longtime FBI agent and top cybersecurity official in the Obama administration, evidence on the phone suggests it was infected by spyware in May 2018 via a WhatsApp message from the account of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. That message included a video file that the firm's investigators say likely contained malware.

Bezos' personal security adviser had been advised in February 2019 to have the phone examined by an intelligence official who has not been named. Bezos went public with the suspected hack shortly thereafter, saying the National Enquirer tabloid had threatened to publish his private messages and photos.

ARE THE FORENSIC FINDINGS CONCLUSIVE?

Not at all. Outside security researchers highlighted several issues with the forensics report, which was overseen by Anthony Ferrante, who is senior managing director of FTI Consulting's cybersecurity operations and had worked on the National Security Council under President Barack Obama.

For instance, the FTI report, dated November and obtained Wednesday by the Vice News site Motherboard, said researchers didn't find any malware on the phone, nor any evidence that Bezos' phone had surreptitiously communicated with known spyware command servers.

Further, an examination of the crucial root file system — where top-flight hackers often hide their malware — was still pending when the report was written. iPhone security expert Will Strafach, CEO of Guardian Firewall, said that if the FTI investigators didn't look at the root file system, they didn't do a thorough

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forensic exam.

"I think the U.N. intentions are good but the details really matter here and the public reporting falls short of any real firm smoking gun," said Strafach.

Other security experts questioned the FTI team's forensic chops, wondering on Twitter and in blog posts why it was unable to decrypt the software that would have delivered the malware payload along with the video file.

Alex Stamos of Stanford University tweeted: "The funny thing is that it looks like FTI potentially has the murder weapon sitting right there, they just haven't figured out how to test it."

FTI's Ferrante did not respond to emails and text messages seeking comment. The company said in a statement that all FTI's work for clients is confidential and that FTI does not "comment on, confirm or deny client engagements." Facebook said the outfit did not reach out to WhatsApp to request assistance with its probe.

COULD HACKERS HAVE ERASED ALL EVIDENCE OF INTRUSION?

Absolutely, said Strafach. Elite hackers plant malware that erases itself after surreptitiously sending sensitive data to command servers.

"It scoops up everything they want and removes itself so there's no trace, no evidence," he said. "Anyone who knows what they are doing are going to cover up their tracks."

Sophisticated mobile spyware — such as a package called Pegasus, made by the Israeli hacker-for-hire company NSO Group — is designed to bypass detection and mask its activity. Saudi Arabia is reported to have used Pegasus against dissidents and human rights activists within weeks of the suspected Bezos hack.

On Wednesday, NSO Group "unequivocally" denied that its technology was used in the Bezos hack.

WHY IS THE UNITED NATIONS INVOLVED?

One of the two U.N. officials seeking answers in the case, Agnes Callamard, focuses on extrajudicial killings and has already investigated the Saudi government's role in the October 2018 murder in Turkey of Saudi critic and Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi.

The other, David Kaye, is the U.N. point person on free expression. He focuses on the growing and lawless use of malicious spyware to monitor and intimidate human-rights defenders and journalists.

Both are independent experts in the U.N.'s human rights arm, not employees of the international organization.

Kaye said via text message that he received the FTI report in November. He also said he did not know whether FTI investigators have examined the Bezos' phone root file system.

ARE OTHER PUBLIC FIGURES AT RISK?

It's difficult to say at the moment. Prince Mohammed has attended gatherings with numerous U.S. entertainers, technology executives and sports-team owners. A senior administration official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss internal matters, said Jared Kushner, a White House aide and son-in-law to President Donald Trump, has communicated with the crown prince via WhatsApp.

WHY ISN'T THE U.S. GOVERNMENT MORE INVOLVED?

A top U.S. Justice Department official, Adam S. Hickey, would not say whether federal investigators were looking into the allegations. Trump has been reluctant to condemn the Saudi prince over the Khashoggi killing and often expresses satisfaction with his government's purchases of U.S. weapons.

Associated Press writer Jonathan Lemire contributed from New York.

This story has been corrected to refer to Anthony Ferrante as senior managing director of FTI's cybersecurity operations, rather than its head.

9 parents separated from families return to children in US

By NOMAAN MERCHANT and ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — As his long-lost son walked toward him in an airport terminal, a sobbing David

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Xol stretched out his arms, fell to one knee and embraced the boy for about three minutes, crying into his shoulder.

He had not held the child since May 2018, when border agents pulled then-7-year-old Byron away inside a detention facility. They were separated under President Donald Trump's zero-tolerance policy — the father deported to Guatemala, the son placed in a series of government facilities before ending up with a host family in Texas.

Xol was one of nine parents who won the exceedingly rare chance to return to the U.S. after being deported under family separation. They arrived Wednesday at Los Angeles International Airport to be reunited with children they hadn't seen in a year and a half or longer under the order of a federal judge who found the U.S. government had unlawfully prevented them from seeking asylum.

After embracing, David stood and patted Byron, now 9, on the head. "He was small," the father said. "He grew a lot."

The reunion was a powerful reminder of the lasting effects of Trump's separation policy, even as attention and outrage has faded amid impeachment proceedings and tensions with Iran. But it also underscored the fact that hundreds, potentially thousands, of other parents and children are still apart nearly two years after the zero-tolerance policy on unauthorized border crossings took effect.

"They all kind of hit the lottery," said Linda Dakin-Grimm, an attorney who represents one of the parents returning to the U.S. "There are so many people out there who have been traumatized by the family separation policy whose pain is not going to be redressed."

More than 4,000 children are known to have been separated from their parents before and during the official start of zero tolerance in spring 2018. Under the policy, border agents charged parents en masse with illegally crossing the U.S.-Mexico border, then placed their children in government facilities. The policy drew condemnation from around the world as stories emerged almost daily about screaming children, some as young as babies, forcibly taken away from parents.

In June 2018, U.S. District Judge Dana Sabraw ordered the government to stop separating families and reunite parents and children.

The U.S. has acknowledged that agents separated families long before they enforced zero tolerance across the entire southern border, its agencies did not properly record separations, and some detention centers were overcrowded and undersupplied, with families denied food, water or medical care.

At least 470 parents were deported without their children, in many cases because they were told to sign paperwork they couldn't read or understand. Some of the kids were held in U.S. government facilities and ultimately placed with sponsors, usually family members. Others were deported to their home countries.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security referred a request for comment to the Justice Department, which did not respond.

The American Civil Liberties Union, which brought the original family separation lawsuit before Sabraw, asked the judge to order the return of a small group of parents whose children remained in the U.S. In September, Sabraw required the U.S. to allow 11 parents to come back and denied relief to seven others.

Byron anxiously waited for his father to clear immigration authorities and emerge in the terminal so they could be back together for the first time since that fateful day on the border.

The mother who has taken Byron in and escorted him to the airport for the reunion tried to calm his nerves: "They're almost here, you're doing great," Holly Sewell said. "Count to 1,000."

"999," Byron responded.

Esvin Fernando Arredondo was also on the plane. The father from Guatemala was separated from one of his daughters, Andrea Arredondo — then 12 years old and now 13, after they turned themselves in on May 16, 2018, at a Texas crossing and sought asylum legally, according to his lawyer. Sabraw found that Arredondo had been deported after his order to the U.S. government not to remove any more parents separated from his children.

Andrea was separated from all family for about a month, living in a shelter as the government struggled to connect children with their parents because they lacked adequate tracking systems. She was finally

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reunited with her mother, who had turned herself in at the Texas crossing with the other two daughters four days earlier than her husband, on May 12, 2018.

She and her two daughters passed the initial screening interview for asylum, unlike her husband, even though they were fleeing for the same reason. Their son Marco, 17, was shot and killed by suspected gang members in Guatemala City.

Arredondo eventually emerged with the other parents. He hugged his three daughters. One of the girls, wearing a pink sweatshirt with Mickey Mouse and other Disney characters, held onto his chest as he spoke to reporters through his tears.

"To live the way I lived was very difficult," he said.

His wife, Cleivi Jerez, 41, arrived at LAX less than an hour before the flight landed with their three daughters in tow. She planned to stay up late catching up with her husband before he has to report to an ICE office Friday in San Diego. Alison Arredondo, 7, said she missed going to the park with her father and she wanted to go to one with him in LA.

According to Holly Sewell, Byron grew three pant sizes and two shoe sizes just in the last six months. She said he has become "much more secure" and sometimes describes what his life was like in detention, especially if he sees stories about immigrant children on the news. His English has developed to the point that they no longer use a translation app to communicate.

Holly Sewell said she was thrilled Byron could see his dad again but sharply criticized the U.S. government's treatment of asylum-seekers.

While the U.S. has stopped the large-scale separations, it has implemented policies to prevent many asylum-seekers from entering the country. Under its "Remain in Mexico" policy, more than 50,000 people have been told to wait there for weeks or months for U.S. court dates. The Trump administration also is ramping up deportations of Central Americans to other countries in the region to seek asylum there.

"People want to make this a heartwarming story, but it's not. It's devastating," Sewell said. "There is just no good reason why we had to do this to this child and this family. And he symbolizes thousands of others who have been put in this exact same position."

Merchant reported from Houston.

Impeachment trial not ready for broadcast prime time

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The first night of arguments in favor of President Donald Trump's impeachment before the U.S. Senate was judged not ready for prime time by many of the nation's television executives.

ABC, CBS and NBC all stuck with regularly scheduled programs like "Chicago Med," "Criminal Minds" and "Modern Family" Wednesday evening instead of showing the House managers' evening session at the impeachment trial. That lasted about two hours, 15 minutes.

CNN and MSNBC carried the trial in full. Fox News Channel, after showing Rep. Adam Schiff speak for about a half hour, interrupted for a story about a child support case involving former Vice President Joe Biden's son Hunter, and never returned.

Even two PBS stations in the New York area showed science programming and "Antiques Roadshow" instead of the trial Wednesday evening. PBS said it gave its local stations the option to show the trial or not.

The calls Wednesday night are significant because if the top networks decided not to pre-empt programming on the first full night the case against Trump was laid out, chances are they won't reverse course later unless the unexpected happens.

Daytime was an intriguing contrast, since the top three broadcasters and cable news outlets all carried Schiff's initial stand at the podium, which lasted more than two hours.

It was rare for anyone in today's media world to command full television attention to that extent. The Senate's rules for the trial, which required using a single camera on the speaker and didn't allow reaction shots of senators, only served to accentuate Schiff's message.

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Meanwhile, Trump was setting a record for sending out the most tweets in a single day since he's been president.

For the television networks, however, prime time is a different animal altogether, with more viewers and advertising revenue available.

After pulling away from House managers Wednesday evening, Fox News personalities spent much of their time ridiculing the proceedings. Fox mostly kept a postage stamp-size picture of the speaker soundlessly mouthing words in a corner of the screen, with an invitation for viewers to go online if they wanted to hear the arguments.

Fox's Tucker Carlson ran clips of TV commentators on other network personalities who praised Schiff's afternoon speech, calling the comments "pornographic." He said Trump wasn't the only victim of the impeachment trial — suggesting viewers were, too. He brought on a former Republican congressman to talk about alleged crimes in the Obama administration and Texas Republican Rep. John Ratcliffe to assess the trial.

"Today was really boring and the president's defense team is very happy," Ratcliffe said.

Carlson also interviewed Republican Sen. Josh Hawley of Missouri, with the host saying Hawley had "stepped out of the trial" to talk on television and criticize House managers. The interview was taped during the trial's dinner break, a Hawley aide said.

Similarly, Fox's Sean Hannity labeled the impeachment trial the "Schumer Schiff Sham Show" and attacked Schiff for his afternoon speech.

"He is a lunatic," Hannity said. "If you watched him talk he was totally unhinged. He looked like a lunatic who has lost his mind."

Wrapping up his evening argument a half-hour later, Schiff also used the word "sham," but in a much different context, as a description for Trump's attempts to get the Ukraine to investigate the activities of Hunter Biden.

It wasn't heard on Fox, however. At the time Hannity was interviewing lawyer Alan Dershowitz, a member of Trump's impeachment defense team.

UN agency: China virus 'too early' for emergency declaration

By MARIA CHENG AP Medical Writer

LONDON (AP) — A viral illness in China that has sickened hundreds of people and prompted Chinese authorities to effectively shut down at least three cities is not yet a global health emergency, the World Health Organization said Thursday.

The U.N. health agency issued its evaluation after Chinese authorities moved to lock down three cities indefinitely earlier in the day and canceled major public celebrations and gatherings in Beijing during the Lunar New Year holiday period to try to contain the evolving outbreak.

During a news conference in Geneva, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said that while the epidemic was clearly a crisis in China, "it has not yet become a global health emergency. It may yet become one."

The steps taken by China to shut down cities with more than 18 million people are unprecedented in public health, as countries typically shy away from such extreme measures.

Tedros said that while WHO's role is to provide science-based recommendations, "at the end of the day, a sovereign country has the autonomy to do what it thinks is right." However, he added that WHO hoped the actions taken by China would be "short in duration."

The decision not to declare a global emergency "should not be taken as a sign that WHO does not think the situation is serious or that we're not taking it seriously. Nothing could be further from the truth," Tedros said. "WHO is following this outbreak every minute of every day."

The United Nations health agency made the decision after independent experts spent two days assessing information about the spread of the newly identified coronavirus.

"It's too early to consider this as a public health emergency of international concern," Didier Houssin, the

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chair of the emergency advisory committee, said, noting that the panel "was very divided, almost 50-50."

WHO defines a global emergency as an "extraordinary event" that constitutes a risk to other countries and requires a coordinated international response. Previous global emergencies have been declared for crises including the emergence of Zika virus in the Americas, the swine flu pandemic, and polio.

A declaration of a global emergency typically brings greater money and resources, but may also prompt nervous foreign governments to restrict travel and trade to affected countries. Deciding whether an outbreak amounts to an international crisis therefore can also be politically fraught.

In 2014, WHO initially resisted declaring the devastating Ebola epidemic in West Africa to be a global emergency because it feared the announcement would anger Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The U.N. agency ultimately declared the Ebola outbreak as a global emergency after more than 1,000 people had died and the virus had spread across multiple national borders.

Houssin suggested during the news conference in Geneva that China's view of the outbreak was a factor in Thursday's decision.

"The perception of this declaration by the international community, in the most affected country, by the people struggling with the virus, certainly has to be considered," he said.

Hundreds of people infected with the new virus have fallen ill in China, and 17 have died. The first cases appeared last month in Wuhan, an industrial and transportation hub in central China.

Other cases have been reported in the United States, Japan, South Korea and Thailand. Singapore, Vietnam and Hong Kong reported their first cases Thursday.

While airports in many major cities around the world have instituted health screenings for arriving passengers from China, Tedros said that "for the moment, WHO does not recommend any broader restrictions on travel or trade."

Dr. Peter Piot, director of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, said that regardless of the decision not to declare an emergency, many more resources were needed to stop the virus.

"There are still many missing pieces in the jigsaw puzzle to fully understanding this new virus, which is spreading rapidly across China and most probably around the world," Piot said in a statement. "There cannot be any complacency as to the need for global action."

\ 'NewsHour' host and debate moderator Jim Lehrer dies at 85

By MARK KENNEDY and DAVID BAUDER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Jim Lehrer, longtime host of the nightly PBS "NewsHour" whose serious, sober demeanor made him the choice to moderate 11 presidential debates between 1988 and 2012, has died, PBS said Thursday. He was 85.

Lehrer died "peacefully in his sleep," according to PBS. He had suffered a heart attack in 1983 and more recently, had undergone heart valve surgery in April 2008.

For Lehrer, and for his friend and longtime partner Robert MacNeil, broadcast journalism was a service, with public understanding of events and issues its primary goal.

"We both believed the American people were not as stupid as some of the folks publishing and programming for them believed," Lehrer wrote in his 1992 memoir, "A Bus of My Own."

"We were convinced they cared about the significant matters of human events. ... And we were certain they could and would hang in there more than 35 seconds for information about those subjects if given a chance."

Tributes poured in from colleagues and watchers alike, including from Fox News' Bret Baier, who called Lehrer "an inspiration to a whole generation of political journalists— including this one." Dan Rather said "few approached their work with more equanimity and integrity than Jim Lehrer." And Jake Tapper of CNN called Lehrer "a wonderful man and a superb journalist." House Speaker Nancy Pelosi called him a "champion for truth and transparency."

Many Americans knew him best for his role as debate moderator. For seven straight presidential elections, he was the sole journalist sitting across from the candidates for the first debate of the general election

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campaign. In 1996 and 2000, he moderated all of the debates — five of them — and a vice presidential contest to boot.

He told The Associated Press in 2011 that his goal was to probe the candidates' thinking and avoid "gotcha" questions. He felt his best debate performance was in 2004, with George W. Bush and John Kerry, not because of anything he did, but because the candidates were able to state their positions clearly.

"I didn't get in the way," said Lehrer, whose book "Tension City: Inside the Presidential Debates" told stories of his experiences. "Nobody was talking about what I did as a moderator. I didn't become part of the story."

He was lured out of retirement for his last debate in 2012 and it may have been a mistake; he received criticism that year for having too light a touch on the proceedings.

The half-hour "Robert MacNeil Report" began on PBS in 1975 with Lehrer as Washington correspondent. The two had already made names for themselves at the then-fledgling network through their work with the National Public Affairs Center for Television and its coverage of the Watergate hearings in 1973.

The nightly news broadcast, later retitled the "MacNeil-Lehrer Report," became the nation's first one-hour TV news broadcast in 1983 and was then known as the "MacNeil-Lehrer NewsHour." After MacNeil bowed out in 1995, it became "The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer."

"I'm heartbroken at the loss of someone who was central to my professional life, a mentor to me and someone whose friendship I've cherished for decades," said Judy Woodruff, anchor and managing editor of the PBS NewsHour, in a statement.

Politics, international relations, economics, science, even developments in the arts were all given lengthy, detailed coverage in their show.

"When we expanded to the hour, it changed from being a supplement to an alternative," Lehrer said in 1990. "Now we take the position that if you're looking for a place to go every 24 hours and find out what's happened and get some in-depth treatment, we're the place."

Lehrer moderated his first presidential debate in 1988 and was a frequent consensus choice for the task in subsequent presidential contests. He likened the job to "walking down the blade of a knife."

"Anybody who would say it's just another TV show is a liar or a fool," he once said. "I know how important it is, but it's not about me. It's what the candidates say that matters."

He also anchored PBS coverage of inaugurations and conventions, dismissing criticism from other TV news organizations that the latter had become too scripted to yield much in the way of real news.

"I think when the major political parties of this country gather together their people and resources in one place to nominate their candidates, that's important," he told The Associated Press in 2000. "To me, it's a non-argument. I don't see why someone would argue that it wasn't important."

Naturally, Lehrer came in for some knocks for being so low-key in the big televised events. After a matchup between George W. Bush and Al Gore in 2000, David Letterman cracked, "Last night was probably the first and only that time Jim Lehrer (was) the most exciting person in the room."

But the real-life Lehrer — who had a tradition of buying a new tie for good luck before each debate — was more colorful than he might have seemed on PBS.

On the side, he was also a novelist and sometime playwright. His debut novel "Viva Max!" was made into a movie starring Peter Ustinov. He did a whole series of novels about the adventures of an Oklahoma politician known as The One-Eyed Mack.

"Hemingway said this, too: If you paid attention as a reporter, then when the time came to write fiction you'd have something to write about," Lehrer told The Associated Press in 1991.

"And it turned out I did. And I've got all these stories stored up after 30 years in the news business. And they're just flowing out of me."

As Lehrer turned 75 in spring 2009, PBS announced that the show would be retitled as "PBS NewsHour" later in the year, with Lehrer pairing up on anchor duties with other show regulars.

He said he approved of the changes, telling The New York Times that having a pair of anchors would "shake things up a bit," even as all sectors of the news business struggled to meet changing reader and viewer demands.

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Lehrer was born in Wichita, Kansas, in 1934, the son of parents who ran a bus line. In addition to titling his memoir "A Bus of My Own," he collected bus memorabilia — from station signs to a real 1946 Flexible Clipper bus.

After graduation from college in 1956, he served three years in the Marines, later calling the experience so valuable that he thought all young people should take part in national service.

"I had no close calls, no rendezvous with danger, no skirted destinies with death," he wrote. "What I had was a chance to discover and test myself, physically and emotionally and spiritually, in important, lasting ways."

He went to work from 1959 to 1970 at The Dallas Morning News and the now-defunct Dallas Times-Herald. Lehrer jumped to television for a Dallas nightly newscast.

Lehrer wrote that it was ironic that the Watergate hearings helped establish the importance of public TV, since President Richard Nixon hated public broadcasting. He also recalled that the lengthy hearings gave him the chance to practice his new craft, and MacNeil, already a veteran, gave him valuable pointers on how to speak on camera clearly and conversationally.

He is survived by his wife, Kate; three daughters: Jamie, Lucy, and Amanda; and six grandchildren.

Former Associated Press writer Polly Anderson contributed to this report.

Today in History By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, Jan. 24, the 24th day of 2020. There are 342 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 24, 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill concluded a wartime conference in Casablanca, Morocco.

On this date:

In 1848, James W. Marshall discovered a gold nugget at Sutter's Mill in northern California, a discovery that led to the gold rush of '49.

In 1935, beer was first sold in cans in Richmond, Virginia, by the Gottfried Krueger Brewing Co.

In 1939, at least 28,000 people were killed by an earthquake that devastated the city of Chillan (chee-YAHN') in Chile.

In 1945, Associated Press war correspondent Joseph Morton was among a group of captives executed by the Germans at the Mauthausen-Gusen concentration camp in Austria.

In 1965, British statesman Winston Churchill died in London at age 90.

In 1984, Apple Computer began selling its first Macintosh model, which boasted a built-in 9-inch monochrome display, a clock rate of 8 megahertz and 128k of RAM.

In 1985, the space shuttle Discovery was launched from Cape Canaveral on the first secret, all-military shuttle mission.

In 1987, gunmen in Lebanon kidnapped educators Alann Steen, Jesse Turner, Robert Polhill and Mitheshwar Singh. (All were eventually released.)

In 1989, confessed serial killer Theodore Bundy was executed in Florida's electric chair.

In 1993, retired Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall died in Bethesda, Maryland, at age 84.

In 2003, former Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Ridge was sworn as the first secretary of the new Department of Homeland Security.

In 2018, former sports doctor Larry Nassar, who had admitted molesting some of the nation's top gymnasts for years under the guise of medical treatment, was sentenced to 40 to 175 years in prison. Singer Elton John announced that he would be retiring from the road after an upcoming three-year global tour.

Ten years ago: In an audio message, Osama bin Laden endorsed the failed attempt to blow up a U.S. airliner on Christmas Day and threatened new attacks against the United States. Afghanistan postponed

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parliamentary elections. The Indianapolis Colts beat the New York Jets 30-17 in the AFC championship game. The New Orleans Saints of the NFC made it to their first Super Bowl after battering the Minnesota Vikings 31-28 in overtime. Bowler Kelly Kulick became the first woman to win a PBA Tour title, beating Chris Barnes in the final of the 45th Tournament of Champions in Las Vegas. Actor Pernell Roberts, 81, died in Malibu, California.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama condemned the murder of Japanese hostage Haruna Yukawa by the Islamic State group and called for the immediate release of another Japanese hostage, journalist Kenji Goto (Goto was beheaded by his captors days later). Parts of the Northeast got their first real taste of winter as a storm dumped rain, sleet and snow as it moved up the coast. "Birdman" received the Producers Guild of America's highest film award.

One year ago: Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro called home all Venezuelan diplomats from the United States and closed its embassy, a day after ordering all U.S. diplomats out of the country; the Trump administration had said the order wasn't legal because the U.S. now recognized opposition leader Juan Guaido, and not Maduro, as Venezuela's legitimate leader. The Senate voted down competing Democratic and Republican plans for ending a 34-day partial government shutdown, but the setbacks prompted bipartisan talks aimed at temporarily halting the longest-ever closure of federal agencies.

Today's Birthdays: Cajun musician Doug Kershaw is 84. Singer-songwriter Ray Stevens is 81. Singer-songwriter Neil Diamond is 79. Singer Aaron Neville is 79. Actor Michael Ontkean is 74. Actor Daniel Auteuil is 70. Country singer-songwriter Becky Hobbs is 70. Comedian Yakov Smirnoff is 69. South Korean President Moon Jae-in is 67. Actor William Allen Young is 66. Bandleader-musician Jools Holland is 62. Actress Nastassja Kinski is 59. Rhythm-and-blues singer Theo Peoples is 59. Country musician Keech Rainwater (Lonestar) is 57. Comedian Phil LaMarr is 53. Olympic gold medal gymnast Mary Lou Retton is 52. Rhythm-and-blues singer Sleepy Brown (Society of Soul) is 50. Actor Matthew Lillard is 50. Actress Merrilee McCommas is 49. Blues/rock singer Beth Hart is 48. Actor Ed Helms is 46. Actor Mark Hildreth is 42. Actress Christina Moses is 42. Actress Tatyana Ali is 41. Rock musician Mitchell Marlow (Filter) is 41. Actress Carrie Coon is 39. Actor Daveed Diggs is 38. Actor Justin Baldoni is 36. Actress Mischa Barton is 34.

Thought for Today: "I think of a hero as someone who understands the degree of responsibility that comes with his freedom." — Bob Dylan.

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