

# Groton Daily Independent

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## UpComing Events

### Tuesday, Jan. 18

Wrestling Tournament at Hamlin  
Junior High Boys Basketball at Mobridge. 7th at 4 p.m. followed by 8th grade game.

Junior High Wrestling Invitational at the Aberdeen Civic Arena, 4 p.m.

The Junior High boys basketball game in Groton scheduled for Jan. 18th is cancelled.

City Council Meeting at 7 p.m.

### Thursday, Jan. 20

Girls Basketball at Clark/Willow Lake. JV at 6 p.m. followed by varsity.

### Friday, Jan. 21

Debate Speech Fiesta at Watertown High School  
Boys Basketball hosting Clark/Willow Lake. 7th grade at 4 p.m., 8th grade at 5 p.m., JV at 6 p.m.

**Groton Daily Independent**  
**PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445**  
**Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460**

The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

followed by varsity game.

Wrestling Dual at Deuel High School, 6 p.m.

### Saturday, Jan. 22

Debate Speech Fiesta at Watertown High School

Wrestling Tournament at Arlington, 10 a.m.

### Monday, Jan. 24

Boys Basketball at Northwestern. 7th at 3:30, 8th at 4:30, C at 5:15, then JV and Varsity to follow.;  
Wrestling at Ipswich, 6 p.m.

## Surplus Van for Sale

The Groton Area School District is accepting sealed bids for the sale of a 1994 Chevy Beauville Van with liftgate. For more information or to see the vehicle, contact Transportation Director, Damian Bahr, at 605-397-8117 or Damian.Bahr@k12.sd.us. Bids can be dropped off at the high school office (502 N 2nd Street, Groton, SD) or mailed to Groton Area School District PO Box 410, Groton, SD 57445. Envelopes should be marked "Van Bid." Bids will be opened on Friday, January 28 at 2:00 PM. (0112.0119)

## OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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## Groton Area COVID-19 Report

Groton Area School District

Active COVID-19 Cases

Updated January 17, 2022; 3:50 PM

**Increase of 8 from  
Jan. 14th**

J	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1	1	1	S	T
K	G										0	1	2	t	o
														a	a
														f	f
														f	l
0	2	0	2	0	0	2	0	2	2	2	1	2	5	1	21
Change	0	0	-1	0	0	+2	0	+1	+2	+2	0	+1	+1	0	+8

FEBRUARY 2022  
month/year

## Groton Senior Menu

SITE: GROTON / CONDE

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
	1 DRI-43 Lemon Chicken Breast Creamy Noodles Spinach Salad Baked Apple Slices Whole Wheat Bread	2 DRI-14 Tater Tot Hotdish Green Beans Grape Juice Sour Cream Apple Pie Square Whole Wheat Bread	3 DRI-3 Turkey & Dressing Mashed Potatoes/Gravy Broccoli Cranberry Sauce Pumpkin Bar Whole Wheat Bread	4 DRI-26 Salmon Loaf Creamed Peas Fruit Brownie Whole Wheat Bread
7 DRI-23 Meatballs Mashed Potatoes/Gravy Carrots Mixed Fruit Whole Wheat Bread	8 DRI-58 Chicken Tetrazzine Green Peas Honey Fruit Salad Vanilla Pudding Whole Wheat Bread	9 DRI-55 Baked Pork Chop AuGratin Potatoes Beets Iced Honey Cookie Applesauce Whole Wheat Bread	10 Taco Salad Mexican Rice Fresh Fruit Breadstick	11 DRI-13 Hot Turkey Combos Mashed Potatoes/Gravy 7 Layer Salad Fruit Crisp
14 DRI-34 Spanish Rice/Hamburger Green Beans Mandarin Oranges Chocolate Pudding Whole Wheat Bread	15 DRI-54 BBQ Chicken Baked Potato w/S.Cream Carrots Fruit Whole Wheat Bread	16 DRI-36 Beef Stroganoff Noodles Mixed Vegetables Angel Food Cake w/ Strawberries Whole Wheat Bread	17 DRI-47 Ham and Bean Soup Egg Salad Sandwich Tomato Spoon Salad Applesauce	18 DRI-27 Lemon Baked Fish Rice Pilaf California Blend Veggies Fruit Crisp Whole Wheat Bread
21  HOLIDAY  PRESIDENT'S DAY	22 Hamburger w/ Bun Oven Roasted Potatoes Mixed Vegetables Fruit Ice Cream Sundae	23 DRI-28 Scalloped Potato/Ham Peas Sunset Salad Cookie Whole Wheat Bread	24 DRI-48 Roast Beef Mashed Potatoes/Gravy Carrots Peach Cobbler Whole Wheat Bread	25 DRI-39 Tuna Noodle Casserole Broccoli Swedish Apple Pie Square Whole Wheat Bread
28 DRI-64 Lasagna Rotini Tossed Salad/Dressing Ambrosia Fruit Salad Cookie Whole Wheat Bread				

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## Weekly Vikings Roundup

-Season of Change

By Jack & Duane Kolsrud

The rumors at the end of the season proved true and the Vikings' owners end the Rick Spielman and Mike Zimmer eras after eight up and down seasons.

It looked like a promising start in 2014 after making the playoffs in three of the first six seasons but the wheels came off on the defensive side of the ball in 2020 and 2021. Mike Zimmer, known for his defensive prowess, just couldn't put it together over the past two years and the Vikings ranked near the bottom of the NFL. That along with numerous other issues that seem to be coming to light over the past week lead to his dismissal as the third-winningest coach in franchise history.

The defensive woes could be attributed to some key injuries to guys like Anthony Barr and Danielle Hunter- perennial Pro Bowl players that can control games upfront that could hide the deficiencies in the backfield. In a pass-friendly league, there is a premium on defensive backs and the Vikings were not nearly as dominant in that department as in earlier Zimmer years with Xavier Rhodes and Terrance Newman playing alongside Harrison Smith.

That put a lot of pressure on the Viking's offense to out-score their opponents this season. While in the past had you told Zimmer your team would score 25 points per game, he would have been feeling pretty good about his team's chances of making a run for the division title. As we saw all year long though, the Vikings could never maintain momentum late in games, leading the NFL in a stat your team does not want to be the best at- points given up in the final two minutes of each half. Another stat that was revealed this week was the Vikings lead the league in the most three and outs with 53. This stat is telling as it means your defense is seldom getting a break when they most need it - when the game is going the other way after the other team may have just scored.

So it was time for a change and the Wilfs are now looking for a new general manager and head coach. The early consensus is to hire an offensive-minded head coach.

The feeling is Zimmer was too much involved on the defensive side of the ball but also wanted to be a run-first offensive team. That just isn't the norm these days in the NFL. The perfect world would be a coach that manages the entire team equally and hires coordinators that are allowed to coordinate. That's easy to say but may be difficult to find in this era of analytics.

On the general manager side - Rick Spielman had his moments at finding diamonds in the rough with middle-round picks, hitting on some top-notch first-rounders but missed on several high draft picks as well.

If the team is stuck with Kirk Cousins at quarterback, then they need to hire someone that will shore up the young and up-and-coming offensive line. The missing pieces appear to be at the right guard position and a top-notch center. With the #12 pick in the draft, they may opt for Iowa center Tyler Linderbaum . The perfect scenario would be to pair him up with another Hawkeye in Brandon Scherff, a free agent All-Pro from the Washington Football Team that is hopefully interested in moving back closer to home.

The next few weeks will tell the story of the Viking future for the next 5-10 years to come. It's been a long time since a trip to the Super Bowl and the Viking loyal fan base is ready to get rewarded for their never-ending love for the purple.

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## Re: Glimpses From Greenfield 2022–Week 1

The first week of the Legislative Session was typical in many ways. However, for the Appropriations Committee, we have been hard-at-work for two weeks. With the unprecedented number of dollars being showered upon the states by the federal government, as well as the state revenues which are off the charts, we have many important deliberations to make this year. We want to be responsible about the decisions we make which will likely revolve around long-term infrastructure investments and taking a look at the potential for changes to some tax rates.

On Tuesday, the Governor delivered what I consider the best State of the State address I've ever heard. She showcased many of the recent success stories of South Dakota and the people who have called this "home" for mere months to several decades. It is no secret that people have been flooding into SD to enjoy our local tourism opportunities. In so many cases when those people are here, they realize our way of life is second-to-none, and those people are choosing to relocate to SD. They embrace the freedom so many of us have enjoyed all our lives, and they say, "I want this for my family!" Additionally, the Governor was quick to point out a few of the countless success stories of lifelong South Dakotans. Clearly, we have a very good thing going for us, and that is due to the SD Governor and government honoring people's freedoms and liberties and allowing them to make decisions that are in their best interests, while so many other states and federal government bureaucrats are trying to stifle individual initiative and ingenuity.

We also heard from Chief Justice Steven Jensen with the State of the Judiciary address and from Siseton Wahpeton Oyate Tribal Chairman Delbert Hopkins, Jr. with the State of the Tribes address. Both individuals discussed their outlook, highlighting challenges we must collectively work together to overcome.

To-date, there have been 74 House Bills and 85 Senate Bills introduced. Additionally, there have been two Joint Resolutions dropped in the hopper calling for Article V Conventions (Conventions of States) which would contemplate amendments to our US Constitution. At this point, it is premature to delve deeply into all these issues, as most of them have not even had initial committee hearings. One bill that has emerged from Senate State Affairs is SB 46, which would establish that extracurricular activities reserved for girls and women would be protected as female-only even when boys who identify as girls seek to participate. This has gotten a tremendous amount of media coverage both on the local level and the national scene. The bill passed the State Affairs Committee, 8-1, and will be heard on the Senate floor this week.

With that, I want to express my continued gratitude for the trust you have place in me to work for you! This is my 22nd year in the Legislature. After this year, I will be term-limited out of the Senate, and I am currently seeking the Republican nomination to be your next Commissioner of School and Public Lands. In the meantime, there is much work to be done on the legislative front, and I encourage you to reach out via email. My address is [brock.greenfield@sdlegislature.gov](mailto:brock.greenfield@sdlegislature.gov).

Until next time, I wish you health and happiness and God's richest blessings for you and your family.

Brock

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## Lady Tigers beat Langford Area

Groton Area had a 15-point run in the first half as the Lady Tigers defeated Langford Area, 41-15.

Groton Area jumped out to a 13-4 lead after the first quarter and upped it to 25-6 at half time and 36-10 after the third quarter.

Sydney Leicht led the Tigers with 10 points and two steals. Alyssa Thaler had nine points, three rebounds and one steal. Gracie Traphagen had eight points, 11 rebounds, one assist, two steals and one blocked shot. Kennedy Hansen had five points, one rebound, one assist and two steals. Jerica Locke had three points, five rebounds, three assists and four steals. Allyssa Locke had two points, one rebound and two assists. Brooke Gengerke had two points and two rebounds. Aspen Johnson had two points and four rebounds. Jaedyn Penning had two rebounds and one steal. Brooklyn Hansen and Faith Traphagen each had one rebound.

Groton Area made 12 of 27 in field goals for 49 percent, was two of 20 in three-pointers for 10 percent, 11 of 18 from the line for 61 percent, had 31 rebounds, seven turnovers, seven assists, 12 steals, 12 fouls and one blocked shot.

Megan Gustafson led the Lions with seven points while Katherine Jensen had six and Emily Jensen had two points. Langford Area made five of 38 field goals for 13 percent, was five of six from the free throw line, had 16 team fouls and 11 turnovers.

The game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Groton Ford, Dacotah Bank, John Sieh Agency, Bary Keith at Harr Motors and Allied Climate Professionals with Kevin Nehls.

Groton Area led at the quarter stops at 10-5, 17-9 and 26-9 en route to a 30-15 win in the junior varsity game.

Brooklyn Hansen had seven points while Jerica Locke had six, Kennedy Hansen five, Mia Crank four, Faith Traphagen and Rylee Dunker each had three points and Jaedyn Penning had two points.

Emily Jensen led the Lions with seven points while Clarissa Guy had six and Autumn Wegleitner added two points.

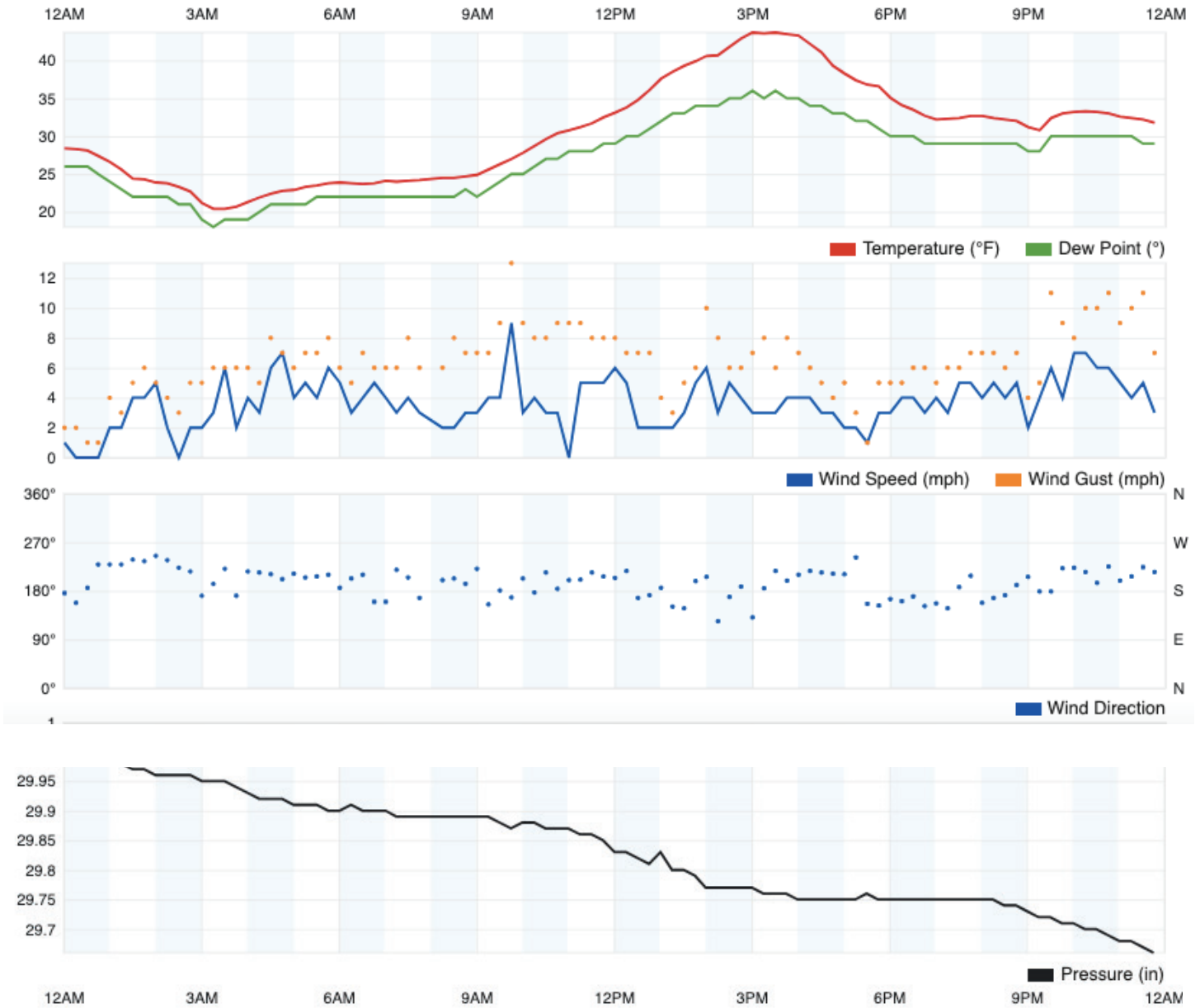
The game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Laila Roberts.

- Paul Kosel

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Broton Daily Independent

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Wind Advisory		Wind Chill Advisory			
Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday	
Increasing Clouds and Windy	Partly Cloudy and Blustery	Cold	Mostly Clear	Cold	
High: 38 °F	Low: -9 °F	High: 1 °F	Low: -16 °F	High: 7 °F	

## Starting Mild - Becoming Windy

### Wind Gusts

	Tue																			Wed			
	4am	5am	6am	7am	8am	9am	10am	11am	12pm	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	5pm	6pm	7pm	8pm	9pm	10pm	11pm	12am	1am	2am
<b>Aberdeen</b>	23	28	31	33	36	39	41	36	33	33	32	32	31	31	29	28	28	28	28	28	25	23	23
Britton	20	23	29	36	39	40	40	37	36	36	33	36	33	33	32	29	29	29	29	29	29	23	21
Eureka	31	36	40	45	47	48	45	41	40	39	37	37	33	33	33	32	32	32	32	32	31	28	25
Faulkton	25	29	32	37	40	39	41	37	33	36	36	37	36	36	33	31	29	29	29	29	29	25	25
Gettysburg	25	29	36	36	39	41	41	44	36	33	36	39	36	33	32	31	31	31	31	31	29	25	25
Highmore	25	28	31	36	39	40	40	36	36	33	33	36	33	33	32	31	31	29	29	29	29	25	25
Kennebec	20	24	31	39	40	41	41	40	37	36	36	37	33	33	32	31	31	29	29	29	29	25	25
McIntosh	39	44	45	55	53	55	53	48	45	40	37	39	39	39	39	37	37	36	36	33	33	31	31
Mobridge	28	37	40	44	44	44	40	40	37	36	33	33	32	32	31	29	29	29	29	29	29	24	23
Murdo	25	31	36	44	44	44	44	41	39	37	36	37	36	36	33	32	32	32	32	32	31	28	28
Ortonville	13	17	23	31	33	36	37	39	39	39	36	36	33	33	32	29	29	29	29	29	29	25	24
Pierre	16	25	31	39	37	41	41	37	36	33	32	33	31	29	29	25	25	25	25	25	24	21	21
Redfield	17	23	28	36	36	37	39	33	32	33	33	36	33	32	32	29	29	29	29	29	28	25	25
Sisseton	25	28	32	37	37	44	44	41	40	37	39	40	37	36	33	32	32	33	33	33	32	28	28
Timber Lake	32	39	41	48	48	48	48	44	40	39	37	39	37	37	37	33	32	32	31	31	29	25	25
Watertown	16	20	24	31	33	36	36	36	36	36	33	33	32	32	31	29	29	28	28	28	25	21	21
Webster	21	24	29	36	39	41	41	39	41	37	33	36	33	33	32	29	29	29	29	29	29	24	24
Wheaton	16	21	29	37	40	45	45	44	41	40	37	37	36	36	36	32	31	29	29	29	31	25	25

National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD

Jan. 18, 2022 | 3AM

A cold front will pass through the region around mid-day into the afternoon, with winds increasing out ahead of the front and just behind. Windy to breezy conditions are expected to continue into Wednesday before arctic high pressure moves overhead.

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## Starting Mild - Turning Colder

	Temperatures																								
	Tue												Wed												
	7am	8am	9am	10am	11am	12pm	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	5pm	6pm	7pm	8pm	9pm	10pm	11pm	12am	1am	2am	3am	4am	5am	6am	7am
<b>Aberdeen</b>	39	37	33	28	23	17	12	8	6	3	1	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5	-7	-8	-9	-9	-5	-4	-2	-1
<b>Britton</b>	33	31	27	22	17	11	7	3	2	0	-2	-3	-4	-4	-5	-7	-8	-9	-10	-10	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6
<b>Eureka</b>	34	31	25	20	15	11	8	5	6	4	2	0	-1	-2	-2	-3	-4	-6	-8	-9	-9	-8	-7	-5	-4
<b>Faulkton</b>	43	41	37	31	25	19	14	10	9	7	6	4	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5	-4	-2	0	2
<b>Gettysburg</b>	41	39	36	31	26	21	16	12	10	8	7	5	4	2	1	-1	-2	-2	-3	-3	-4	-3	-2	0	1
<b>Highmore</b>	45	44	42	37	32	26	20	16	14	12	10	8	7	6	5	4	2	1	0	0	-1	-1	1	2	4
<b>Kennebec</b>	49	49	47	43	38	33	28	23	21	19	16	14	12	11	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	3	5	6	8
<b>McIntosh</b>	27	24	21	18	15	12	9	7	7	6	4	3	3	2	0	0	-1	-2	-2	-4	-5	-5	-3	-2	0
<b>Mobridge</b>	39	37	33	28	24	20	16	13	12	10	8	6	5	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-2	-3	-1	0	2	3
<b>Murdo</b>	47	47	45	42	38	32	27	23	21	18	16	14	12	11	10	8	7	6	5	4	3	4	5	7	8
<b>Ortonville</b>	36	36	33	29	24	18	13	9	7	4	2	1	0	-1	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5	-6	-6	-5	-4	-4	-3
<b>Pierre</b>	47	47	45	41	36	31	26	22	21	18	16	14	13	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	3	3	5	6	8
<b>Redfield</b>	44	43	39	33	28	22	17	13	10	8	5	4	2	1	1	0	-1	-3	-4	-5	-5	-2	-1	1	2
<b>Sisseton</b>	35	33	29	24	19	14	9	6	4	2	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-4	-5	-5	-6	-6	-7	-5	-4	-4	-3
<b>Timber Lake</b>	37	34	31	27	23	19	16	13	12	10	8	6	5	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-2	-3	-2	0	1	3
<b>Watertown</b>	35	34	32	28	23	18	13	9	9	6	3	2	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5	-6	-7	-8	-8	-7	-7	-6
<b>Webster</b>	34	32	29	25	19	14	9	5	3	1	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5	-6	-8	-9	-10	-11	-11	-10	-9	-8	-7
<b>Wheaton</b>	33	32	29	25	19	14	9	5	5	3	1	-1	-2	-3	-3	-4	-5	-5	-6	-7	-8	-7	-6	-6	-5

National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD

Jan. 18, 2022 | 3AM

Mild conditions this morning will be short lived, as arctic high pressure blasts into the region. Temperatures will be some 30 to 40 degrees colder by this time Wednesday.



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## Dangerously Cold Wind Chills Tonight/Wednesday

	Wind Chills																								
	Tue												Wed												
	12pm	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	5pm	6pm	7pm	8pm	9pm	10pm	11pm	12am	1am	2am	3am	4am	5am	6am	7am	8am	9am	10am	11am	12pm
<b>Aberdeen</b>	28	25	19	12	7	-1	-8	-13	-15	-19	-21	-22	-23	-24	-26	-27	-28	-30	-30	-32	-32	-26	-25	-23	-22
<b>Britton</b>	20	17	11	4	-2	-9	-15	-20	-22	-24	-26	-27	-28	-28	-29	-32	-33	-34	-33	-32	-32	-31	-30	-29	-28
<b>Eureka</b>	20	16	7	1	-5	-11	-14	-18	-17	-18	-21	-24	-25	-26	-26	-27	-29	-31	-32	-33	-33	-32	-31	-28	-28
<b>Faulton</b>	33	30	25	16	9	2	-5	-11	-13	-15	-16	-18	-19	-20	-21	-22	-24	-25	-25	-26	-28	-26	-24	-21	-19
<b>Gettysburg</b>	31	28	23	16	9	4	-2	-8	-12	-14	-14	-17	-18	-20	-21	-24	-25	-25	-25	-25	-26	-25	-24	-21	-20
<b>Highmore</b>	36	34	31	25	19	11	3	-2	-5	-8	-10	-13	-14	-15	-16	-17	-20	-21	-21	-21	-22	-22	-19	-18	-15
<b>Kennebec</b>	41	41	38	33	26	20	13	7	4	2	-2	-5	-7	-8	-10	-12	-13	-14	-15	-16	-17	-17	-14	-13	-11
<b>McIntosh</b>	9	5	1	-3	-7	-10	-13	-15	-16	-17	-20	-21	-21	-22	-24	-24	-25	-26	-25	-28	-29	-29	-26	-24	-22
<b>Mobridge</b>	27	24	19	12	7	2	-3	-6	-8	-10	-13	-15	-16	-18	-20	-21	-22	-24	-23	-23	-23	-21	-19	-17	-16
<b>Murdo</b>	38	38	35	31	26	18	12	7	4	0	-3	-5	-7	-9	-10	-13	-14	-15	-15	-17	-18	-17	-15	-13	-11
<b>Ortonville</b>	25	24	20	14	7	-1	-8	-12	-15	-18	-21	-22	-22	-24	-24	-25	-26	-28	-28	-28	-28	-26	-26	-26	-25
<b>Pierre</b>	38	39	35	30	24	17	11	6	4	1	-1	-4	-4	-7	-8	-10	-11	-12	-12	-13	-15	-15	-12	-12	-9
<b>Redfield</b>	35	33	28	19	14	6	-1	-6	-11	-13	-17	-18	-20	-21	-21	-22	-24	-26	-26	-28	-27	-23	-22	-20	-19
<b>Sisseton</b>	22	20	13	6	0	-7	-13	-17	-20	-22	-24	-25	-26	-27	-29	-29	-30	-30	-30	-30	-30	-28	-26	-27	-26
<b>Timber Lake</b>	24	19	15	10	5	0	-3	-7	-9	-11	-14	-17	-17	-19	-21	-21	-23	-24	-24	-24	-25	-24	-21	-20	-17
<b>Watertown</b>	23	22	19	13	7	0	-7	-12	-12	-15	-19	-20	-22	-24	-24	-26	-27	-28	-27	-28	-30	-30	-29	-30	-28
<b>Webster</b>	21	18	14	8	1	-7	-13	-17	-20	-22	-25	-26	-26	-28	-29	-30	-33	-34	-34	-35	-35	-34	-32	-31	-30
<b>Wheaton</b>	20	18	13	8	0	-7	-13	-18	-18	-20	-23	-26	-26	-27	-26	-28	-29	-29	-29	-30	-32	-30	-30	-30	-29

National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD

Jan. 18, 2022 | 3AM

As arctic high pressure moves in, much colder temperatures and windy to breezy conditions will result in dangerously cold wind chills Tonight, Wednesday and Thursday.

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## Today in Weather History

January 18, 1979: An area of low pressure moving across the region brought widespread snow of 5 to 10 inches to much of Minnesota from the 18th through the 20th. Travel was difficult, if not impossible, in many areas where there were near blizzard conditions. Schools and businesses closed, along with many flights canceled.

January 18, 1999: One to 4 inches of snowfall combined with winds of 30 to 45 miles an hour brought blizzard conditions to part of northeast South Dakota. Highway 12 and Interstate 29 were most affected by the low visibilities. There was a seven-car pileup on Highway 12 near Andover with minor injuries. As a result, traffic was shut off in the westbound lanes for a few hours. Over 200 people were stranded overnight at a restaurant near Summit. There was also a rollover north of Summit, which resulted in minor injuries. One traveler said the visibility was frequently near zero.

January 18, 2014: A strong Alberta Clipper low-pressure system moved over the Northern Plains Friday night and Saturday morning. Anywhere from a trace to just near 3 inches of fresh snowfall accompanied this low-pressure system. Over this area, strong northwest winds of 25 to 40 mph developed by late Friday night with gusts of 45 to 55 mph. A few areas even experienced gusts to 58 mph or higher again. This system packed such a wallop that a couple of instances of thundersnow occurred, as evidenced by the cloud to ground lightning strikes showing up in southwestern Day County and northwestern Clark County early Saturday morning.

Numerous reports of visibility reduced to one-quarter mile or less across northeast South Dakota, specifically on or just to the east of the Glacial Lakes region, were received.

1857 - A great cold storm swept across the Atlantic Seaboard. Snowfall totals of 12 inches were common, whole gales caused shipwrecks and damage property on islands, and temperatures near zero prevailed from Virginia northward. Great drifts of snow blocked transportation. Richmond VA was cut off from Washington DC for a week. (David Ludlum)

1943: Idaho's coldest night on record occurred as the low temperature dropped to 60 degrees below zero at Island Park Dam.

1950: Oregon continued in the grips of one of its worst winter months ever. A significant winter storm brought a thick glaze of ice to Columbia River Gorge, stopping automobile traffic in its tracks. Hundreds of motorists were stranded and had to be rescued by train. Even that wasn't easy with the coating of ice. The storm caused widespread power outages.

1971: A warm Santa Ana condition brought a 95 degree reading to Los Angeles, the highest January temperature on record. It was 95 degrees in Palm Springs, the highest temperature on record for January as well.

1973: The first tornado death of the year has been registered north of Corey, Louisiana, during the afternoon hours. Although a girl was killed when a tenant farm was destroyed, a baby received only minor injuries when it was carried 300 to 400 yards by the tornado.

1978: In Connecticut, the Hartford Arena collapsed after experiencing the largest snowstorm of its 5-year life. Multiple issues caused the collapse.

1980: A tropical depression that developed on January 15th became Tropical Storm Hyacinthe on the 18th. From the 18th through the 27th, this storm produced a world-record rainfall amount of 223.5 inches at Cratère Commerson on La Réunion.

1987 - A storm in the south central U.S. blanketed Oklahoma City with eight inches of snow, their highest total since 1948. Snowfall totals in Oklahoma ranged up to 13 inches at Gage, with drifts five feet high. Roof collapses across the state resulted in seven million dollars damage. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A storm in the southwestern U.S. produced a 15 to 20 foot surf along the southern coast of California resulting in more than fifty million dollars damage. A small tornado in Orange County CA lifted a baseball dugout fifteen feet into the air and deposited it in the street, 150 yards away. The same storm also produced 26 inches of snow at Duck Creek UT. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

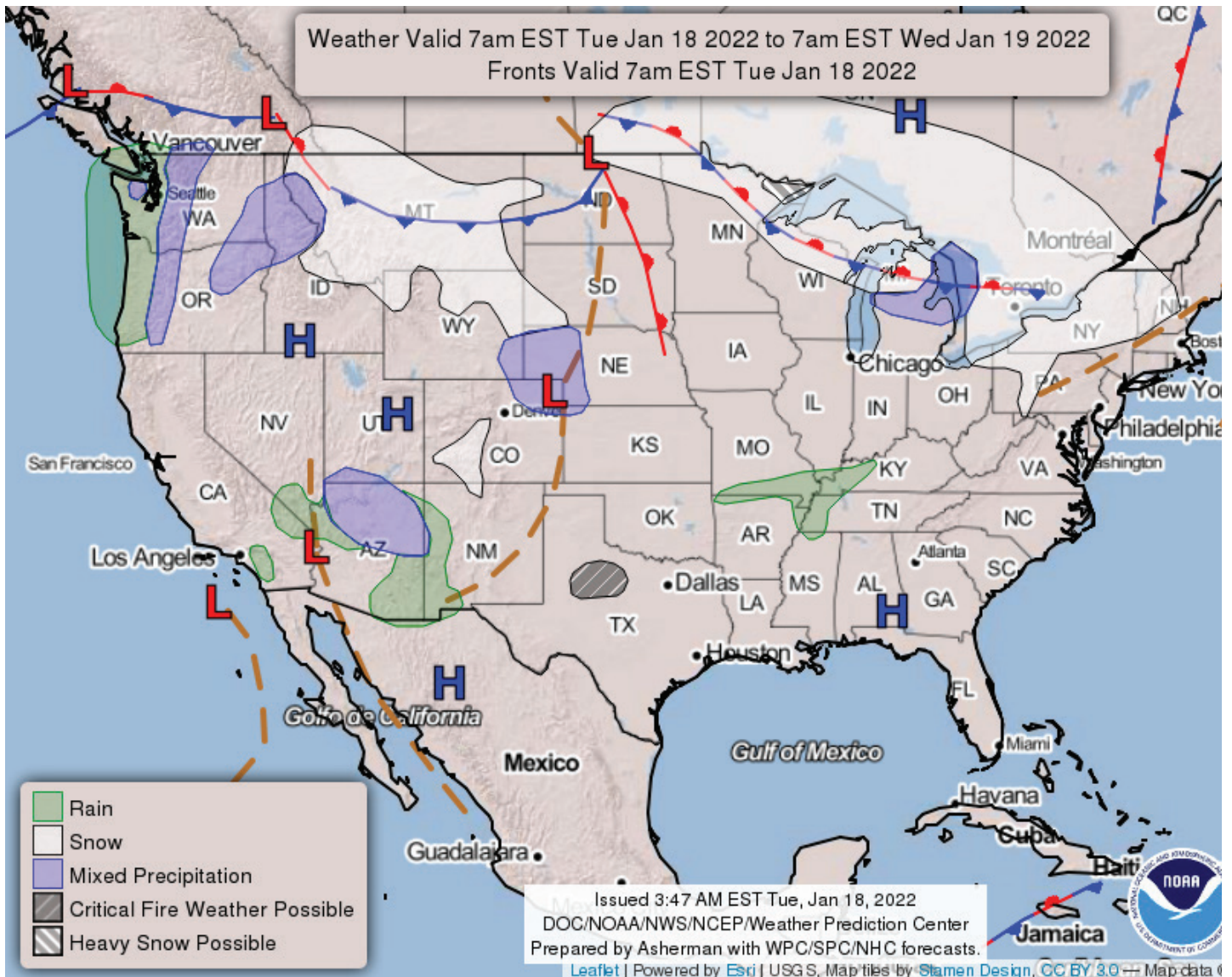
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

**High Temp: 44 °F at 3:02 PM**  
**Low Temp: 20 °F at 3:21 AM**  
**Wind: 13 mph at 9:44 AM**  
**Precip: 0.00**

**Record High: 51 in 1944**  
**Record Low: -34 in 1970**  
**Average High: 23°F**  
**Average Low: 1°F**  
**Average Precip in Jan.: 0.35**  
**Precip to date in Jan.: 0.43**  
**Average Precip to date: 0.35**  
**Precip Year to Date: 0.43**  
**Sunset Tonight: 5:21:10 PM**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:03:52 AM**



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## IN HIS PRESENCE

Legend records interesting stories of temples built by the Turks years ago. They built their temples with roofs that were always open. They did this to reflect their belief that God cannot be confined to them or with them. To them, God is present everywhere, and His presence cannot be contained by a building or any other thing.

The Psalmist wrote, "Tremble, earth, at the presence of the Lord." When God comes and is present, things will happen. This is why churches and church attendance are so fundamental. When the children of God gather together to worship the living God, the unexpected, yet possible, can and will happen, if He is present.

Listen to the Psalmist "...at the presence of the God of Jacob, who turned the rock into a pool, the hard rock into springs of water..." It was Moses who commanded water from the rock. God answered Him, and Israel's thirst was quenched because God was present. When Jesus entered His public ministry, He performed many miracles. Demons were cast out, the sick were healed, the hungry were fed, lepers were cleansed, and the blind could see once again. When Jesus performed His miracles, God was present, and His power was visible to those who gathered around Him.

Jesus promised that if "... two or three come together in my Name, there am I with them!" When we, as His disciples, gather together in His name and agree to ask for anything that is consistent with His nature, He will be present. He will not only hear us but grant our request.

God will always be present if we gather in His name.

Prayer: Father, forgive us for our self-imposed limits. In Your presence and in Your Name miracles will happen. Help us to be receptive to Your ways. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: – Tremble, earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob, who turned the rock into a pool, the hard rock into springs of water. Psalm 114:7-8

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## 2022 Community Events

- 01/30/2022 84th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)  
01/30/2022 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am – 1pm, Groton Community Center, 109 N 3rd St, Groton,  
04/09/2022 Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)  
Dueling Pianos Baseball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm  
04/23/2022 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)  
04/24/2022 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)  
05/07/2022 Lions Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)  
St John's Lutheran Church VBS 9-11am  
05/30/2022 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)  
Transit Fundraiser at the Community Center 4-7pm (Thursday Mid-June)  
SDSU Alumni & Friends Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 12pm Start  
Ladies Invitational at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Registration 10am Start  
07/04/2022 Firecracker Couples Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Registration, 10am Start  
(4th of July)  
07/10/2022 Lions Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)  
Dacotah Bank Back To School Supply Drive  
Professional Management Services Check-R-Board Days  
Legion Auxiliary #39 Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar 11am-1pm at the Groton Legion  
Baseball Tourney  
Pro Am Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course  
Ferney Open Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Start  
How can we... "Love Groton"? United Methodist Church 9:30am  
Moonlight Swim at the Swimming Pool 9-11pm for 9th grade to age 20  
Golf Fundraiser Lunch at Olive Grove Golf Course 11a-1pm  
JVT School Supply Drive  
Wine on Nine at Olive Grove Golf Course 6pm  
United Methodist Church VBS 5-8pm  
Groton Firemen Summer Splash Day 4-5pm GHS Parking Lot  
09/10/2022 Lions Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)  
6th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 3:30-5pm  
Couples Sunflower Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 12pm  
Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport  
10/14/2022 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am (2nd Friday in October)  
10/01/2022 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm  
10/31/2022 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm (working day on or closest to Halloween)  
10/31/2022 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm  
11/12/2022 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party 6:30pm (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)  
11/24/2022 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)  
Tour of Homes & Holiday Party at Olive Grove Golf Course  
Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-12pm

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## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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## News from the Associated Press

### SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Monday:

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$347 million

Powerball

09-24-35-46-65, Powerball: 22, Power Play: 2

(nine, twenty-four, thirty-five, forty-six, sixty-five; Powerball: twenty-two; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$53 million

### Woman accused of faking kidnapping facing criminal charges

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Sioux Falls woman accused of faking her own kidnapping from a local pizza restaurant told detectives she wanted a break from her husband, according to court documents.

The woman has been charged with attempted grand theft and making a false report to authorities. She faces arraignment next week in Minnehaha County.

Court documents say the woman worked as a delivery driver for Domino's Pizza and last Feb. 10 called her husband and said she was surrounded by multiple armed individuals who were demanding money. Her husband told investigators that he thought he heard pounding on a window and a car door opening before the call went dead.

Then he started to receive text messages demanding money for the safe return of his wife, officials said. As detectives were speaking with workers at Domino's, one employee began getting texts from the woman's phone demanding money for her to be released unharmed, the Argus Leader reported.

Police were able to ping the woman's phone to a Culver's in Brookings. That's where the Brookings SWAT team was activated, and found the woman's car with her and another man inside, according to court documents.

Authorities say investigators called the woman out on what they said were inaccuracies in her story and she admitted to sending the text messages to her husband and co-worker, as well as admitted she had never been kidnapped.

An arraignment is scheduled for Jan. 26.

### Texas synagogue hostage-taker had stayed in area shelters

By JAMIE STENGLE, JAKE BLEIBERG and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

COLLEYVILLE, Texas (AP) — An armed man who took four people hostage during a 10-hour standoff at a Texas synagogue had spent time in area homeless shelters in the two weeks leading up to the attack, and was dropped off at one by someone he appeared to know.

Malik Faisal Akram, a 44-year-old British national who authorities identified as the hostage-taker, was brought to the shelter in downtown Dallas on Jan. 2 by a man who hugged him and had conversations with him, said Wayne Walker, CEO and pastor of OurCalling, which provides services to homeless people.

"He was dropped off by somebody that looked like he had a relationship with him," said Walker, who said they'd turned photos and video over to the FBI.

An FBI spokeswoman said late Monday that they did not have any information they could confirm regarding Akram's stay at the OurCalling facility. The agency has said there was no early indication that anyone else was involved in the hostage-taking.

Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker told "CBS Mornings" that he'd let Akram into Congregation Beth Israel on Saturday morning because he appeared to need shelter. The synagogue is in Colleyville, a city of about

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26,000 people located 30 miles (48 kilometers) northwest of Dallas.

Cytron-Walker said the man wasn't threatening or suspicious at first, but later he heard a gun click as he was praying.

The rabbi and three other men were participating in the service that was being livestreamed when they were taken hostage. The first hostage was released shortly before 5 p.m. Cytron-Walker and two others escaped around 9 p.m., when Cytron-Walker threw a chair at the gunman.

"The exit wasn't too far away," Cytron-Walker said. "I told them to go. I threw a chair at the gunman, and I headed for the door. And all three of us were able to get out without even a shot being fired."

Akram was killed after the hostages ran out. Authorities have declined to say who shot Akram, saying it was still under investigation.

Video of the standoff's end from Dallas TV station WFAA showed people running out a door of the synagogue, and then a man holding a gun opening the same door just seconds later before he turned around and closed it. Moments later, several shots and then an explosion could be heard.

The FBI on Sunday night issued a statement calling the ordeal "a terrorism-related matter, in which the Jewish community was targeted" and said the Joint Terrorism Task Force is investigating. The agency noted that Akram spoke repeatedly during negotiations about a prisoner who is serving an 86-year sentence in the U.S. The statement followed comments Saturday from the special agent in charge of the FBI's Dallas field office that the hostage-taker was focused on an issue "not specifically related to the Jewish community."

Akram could be heard ranting on a Facebook livestream of the services and demanding the release of Aafia Siddiqui, a Pakistani neuroscientist suspected of having ties to al-Qaida who was convicted of trying to kill U.S. Army officers in Afghanistan.

"The last hour or so of the standoff, he wasn't getting what he wanted. It didn't look good. It didn't sound good. We were terrified," Cytron-Walker told "CBS Mornings."

At a service held Monday evening at a nearby Methodist church, Cytron-Walker said the amount of "well-wishes and kindness and compassion" has been overwhelming.

"Thank you for all of the compassion, from the bottom of my heart," Cytron-Walker said.

"While very few of us are doing OK right now, we'll get through this," he said.

The investigation stretched to England, where late Sunday police in Manchester announced that two teenagers were in custody in connection with the standoff. Greater Manchester Police tweeted that counter-terrorism officers had made the arrests but did not say whether the pair faced any charges.

British media, including the Guardian, reported Tuesday that Akram had been under investigation by the domestic security service, MI5, as a possible "terrorist threat" in 2020. The investigation was closed after authorities concluded Akram posed no threat, the reports said.

Britain's Home Office did not immediately comment on the reports.

President Joe Biden called the episode an act of terror. Speaking to reporters in Philadelphia on Sunday, Biden said Akram allegedly purchased a weapon on the streets.

Federal investigators believe Akram purchased the handgun used in the hostage-taking in a private sale, according to a person familiar with the matter who spoke on condition of anonymity because the investigation is ongoing. Akram arrived in the U.S. at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York about two weeks ago, a law enforcement official said.

Akram arrived in the U.S. on a tourist visa from Great Britain, according to a U.S. official who spoke on condition of anonymity because the information was not intended to be public. London's Metropolitan Police said in a statement that its counter-terrorism police were liaising with U.S. authorities about the incident.

U.K. Home Secretary Priti Patel told the House of Commons on Monday that she had spoken to her U.S. counterpart, Alejandro Mayorkas, and offered "the full support" of the police and security services in Britain in the investigation.

After staying at the OurCalling facility on Jan. 2, he stayed in another Dallas homeless shelter.

Akram stayed three nights between Jan. 6 and Jan. 13 at Union Gospel Mission Dallas, the homeless shelter's CEO, Bruce Butler, told CNN. According to their records, Akram left there for the last time on Jan. 13 — two days before he took the hostages at the synagogue.



Akram used his phone during the course of negotiations to communicate with people other than law enforcement, according to a law enforcement official who was not authorized to discuss an ongoing investigation by name and spoke on condition of anonymity.

It wasn't clear why Akram chose the synagogue, though the prison where Siddiqui is serving her sentence is in Fort Worth.

An attorney in Texas who represents Siddiqui said Monday that Siddiqui had no connections to Akram. "She said from the beginning when she was sentenced that she does not want any violence done in her name and she doesn't condone any type of violence being done," said attorney Marwa Elbially.

Akram, who was called Faisal by his family, was from Blackburn, an industrial city in northwest England. His family said he'd been "suffering from mental health issues."

"We would also like to add that any attack on any human being, be it a Jew, Christian or Muslim, etc. is wrong and should always be condemned," his brother, Gulbar Akram, wrote.

## Satellite photos show aftermath of Abu Dhabi oil site attack

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Satellite photos obtained by The Associated Press on Tuesday appear to show the aftermath of a fatal attack on an oil facility in the capital of the United Arab Emirates claimed by Yemen's Houthi rebels.

The attack brought the long-running Yemen war into Emirati territory on Monday. That conflict raged on overnight with Saudi-led airstrikes pounding Yemen's capital, Sanaa, killing and wounding civilians.

Meanwhile, fears over new disruptions to global energy supplies after the Abu Dhabi attack pushed benchmark Brent crude to its highest price in years.

The images by Planet Labs PBC analyzed by the AP show smoke rising over an Abu Dhabi National Oil Co. fuel depot in the Mussafah neighborhood of Abu Dhabi after the attack. Another image taken shortly after appears to show scorch marks and white fire-suppressing foam deployed on the grounds of the depot.

The Abu Dhabi National Oil Co., known by the acronym ADNOC, is the state-owned energy firm that provides much of the wealth of the UAE, a federation of seven sheikhdoms on the Arabian Peninsula also home to Dubai.

ADNOC did not respond to questions from the AP asking about the site and damage estimates from the attack. The company had said the attack happened around 10 a.m. Monday.

"We are working closely with the relevant authorities to determine the exact cause and a detailed investigation has commenced," ADNOC said in an earlier statement.

The attack killed two Indian nationals and one Pakistani as three tankers at the site exploded, police said. Six people were also wounded at the facility, which is near Al-Dhafra Air Base, a massive Emirati installation also home to American and French forces.

Another fire also struck Abu Dhabi International Airport, though damage in that attack could not be seen. Journalists have not been able to view the sites attacked and state-run media have not published photographs of the areas.

Police described the assault as a suspected drone attack. The Houthis have described using cruise and ballistic missiles in the attack, without offering evidence.

Meanwhile Tuesday, the Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen announced it had started a bombing campaign targeting Houthi sites in the capital of Sanaa. It said it also struck a drone operating base in Nabi Shuaib Mountain near Sanaa.

Overnight videos released by the Houthis showed damage, with the rebels saying the strike killed at least 12 people. Sanaa resident Hassan al-Ahdal said one airstrike hit the house of Brig. Gen. Abdalla Kassem al-Junaid, who heads the Air Academy. He said at least three families were living in the house. Another adjunct house with a four-member family was damaged.

The Saudi-led coalition has faced international criticism for airstrikes hitting civilian targets amid the war. For hours Monday, Emirati officials did not acknowledge the Houthi claims over the Abu Dhabi attack,

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even as other countries condemned the assault. Senior Emirati diplomat Anwar Gargash broke the silence on Twitter, saying that Emirati authorities were handling the rebel group's "vicious attack on some civilian facilities" with "transparency and responsibility."

The office of South Korean President Moon Jae-in, who had been in the Emirates on a state visit, said he spoke to Abu Dhabi's powerful Crown Prince, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, immediately after the attack.

The statement quoted Sheikh Mohammed as saying the attack had been "anticipated." The two had been scheduled to meet during Moon's visit but the event had been cancelled prior to the attack over an "unforeseen and urgent matter of state," according to Moon's office.

The Emirati Foreign Ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment over Moon's statement.

Fears over future attacks reaching the UAE, a major oil producer and OPEC member, helped push Brent crude oil prices to their highest level in seven years. On Tuesday, a barrel of Brent crude traded at over \$87.50 a barrel, a price unseen since October 2014.

Although the UAE has largely withdrawn its own forces from Yemen, it is still actively engaged in the conflict and supports Yemeni militias fighting the Houthis.

The incident comes as the Houthis face pressure and are suffering heavy losses. Yemeni government forces, allied and backed by the UAE, have pushed back the rebels in key provinces. Aided by the Emirati-backed Giants Brigades, the government forces took back the province of Shabwa earlier this month in a blow to Houthi efforts to complete their control of the entire northern half of Yemen.

While Emirati troops have been killed over the course of the conflict, now in its eight year, the war has not directly affected daily life in the wider UAE, a country with a vast foreign workforce.

## Hong Kong to kill 2,000 animals after hamsters get COVID-19

By ZEN SOO Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Hong Kong authorities said Tuesday that they will kill about 2,000 small animals, including hamsters, after several tested positive for the coronavirus at a pet store where an employee was also infected.

The city will also stop the sale of hamsters and the import of small mammals, according to officials from the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department. The pet shop employee tested positive for the delta variant on Monday, and several hamsters imported from the Netherlands at the store tested positive as well.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, animals do not appear to play a significant role in spreading the coronavirus. But Hong Kong authorities said they are not ruling out transmission between animals and humans.

"We cannot exclude the possibility that the shopkeeper was in fact actually infected from the hamsters," said Edwin Tsui, a controller at the Centre for Health Protection.

"If you own a hamster, you should keep your hamsters at home, do not take them out," department director Leung Siu-fai said at a news conference. "All pet owners should observe good personal hygiene, and after you have been in contact with animals and their food, you should wash your hands."

"Do not kiss your pets," he added.

As a precautionary measure, customers who purchased hamsters from the store after Jan. 7 will be traced and be subject to mandatory quarantine and must hand over their hamsters to authorities to be put down, officials said.

They said all pet stores in Hong Kong must stop selling hamsters and that about 2,000 small mammals, including hamsters and chinchillas, will be killed in a humane manner.

Customers who bought hamsters in Hong Kong from Dec. 22 will be subject to mandatory testing and are urged not contact others until their tests have returned negative. If their hamsters test positive, they will be subject to quarantine.

Hong Kong has been grappling with a local omicron outbreak traced to several Cathay Pacific crew

members who dined at bars and restaurants across the city before testing positive for the omicron variant.

The government announced late Monday that two former flight attendants have been arrested for leaving their homes during quarantine and later being confirmed to have coronavirus infections. It did not identify their employer, but said the two arrived from the U.S. on Dec. 24 and 25 and "conducted unnecessary activities" while under medical surveillance.

The arrests came after Cathay Pacific said it had fired two crew members for breaching coronavirus protocols. It previously apologized and called their actions "extremely disappointing." The company had to cut back on flights — both passenger and cargo — in January because of tightened virus curbs.

The two have been released on bail and will have their case heard in court on Feb. 9. If convicted of violating anti-epidemic regulations, they could face up to six months' imprisonment and a fine of up to 5,000 Hong Kong dollars (\$642).

Previously in Hong Kong, some air and sea crew members could isolate at home under quarantine exemptions. Regulations were tightened on Dec. 31 to require crew members to isolate in a designated quarantine hotel for about a week.

## **Biden year one takeaways: Grand ambitions, humbling defeats**

By The Associated Press undefined

Joe Biden's long arc in public life has always had one final ambition: to sit behind the Resolute Desk of the Oval Office.

He achieved it — albeit, at 78, as the oldest person to assume the presidency. After the turbulence and chaos of his predecessor, Donald Trump, Biden was seen by voters as one who could restore a sense of normalcy and a reassuring tone to the White House.

But Biden also found out, as all his predecessors have, that events beyond his control would shape his time in office and the public's assessment of him.

Takeaways from The Associated Press' White House team on Biden's first year as president:

### **BIG AMBITIONS**

Biden started his presidency with more than \$4 trillion worth of big ideas — his eyes larger than what the Senate could stomach.

\$1.9 trillion worth of coronavirus relief passed in March, which in many first years in office would have been considered a signature achievement.

But Biden kept asking for more: an additional \$2.3 trillion for infrastructure and jobs, and another \$1.8 trillion for families.

After some tortuous negotiations, he got a version of his infrastructure plan passed and even got more than a dozen Republicans in the Senate to vote for it.

But attention spans are short. Biden's \$1.8 trillion package, which he labeled "Build Back Better," had elements that included a wish list of Democratic priorities for the past decade — a child care tax credit, climate legislation, paid family leave and universal prekindergarten, among other provisions.

So far, it looks like the bill was not, to turn the expression on its head, too big to fail. Republicans abandoned him on this, and several Democrats were also skeptics. Then inflation surged, and the plan's chances plummeted.

— By Josh Boak

### **HE STILL THINKS LIKE A SENATOR**

Biden was a senator for nearly four decades, so it's perhaps no surprise that he brings a legislator's mindset to his presidency.

Known as an adept negotiator from his time in the Senate, Biden still immerses himself in legislative negotiations and is versed in the minutiae of his proposals. He believes in the value of personal connections and face-to-face conversations in negotiating details, frequently calling key senators or having lawmakers meet with him at the White House.

Biden emphasizes the need for bipartisanship, a value he held dear in the Senate. But it's one that, in

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today's sharply divided Washington, feels out of touch with the moment.

Biden also keeps the schedule of a senator: He's often late to events and likes to get out of town on the weekends, returning home to Delaware.

One major difference? Now he's riding Air Force One instead of Amtrak.

— By Alexandra Jaffe

## SHOOTING HIGH AND FALLING SHORT

Biden inherited a long list of unfulfilled Democratic policy priorities when he took office, but despite his best efforts, most remain so.

Taking office after Trump's efforts to subvert the will of voters, no issue seemed so urgent for Biden as the push for legislation on voting protections.

Biden's attempt to break a logjam on the legislation by pushing for the Senate to change its rules to pass bills by a simple majority was quashed before it even really began by two moderate members of his own party.

It was emblematic of how Biden's central rationale for his presidency — his nearly four decades in Washington uniquely positioned him to deliver on an immensely ambitious agenda — seems increasingly out of step with today's politics.

Biden bet unsuccessfully that personal relationships, private cajoling and public arm-twisting could overcome years of increasingly bitter partisan divisions and ideological disagreements.

The lack of progress on voting rights, immigration, climate change, gun control and abortion protections remains an unmet burden.

— By Zeke Miller

## NO OBAMA 2.0

Biden came to office trumpeting "America is back," his shorthand message to allies and adversaries that the days of Trump's inward-looking "America first" foreign policy were over.

But his approach to the world has also been notable for its determination to avoid some of the missteps of his old boss, Barack Obama.

Biden stood by his pledge to meet an August deadline to end the war in Afghanistan even as military commanders and some political allies urged him to slow down what ended up being a chaotic and bloody U.S. military withdrawal. As vice president, Biden had opposed Obama's move to surge more U.S. troops into the country. But the exit Biden presided over was widely criticized for its haste and execution, which included U.S. troop casualties.

Biden also came to office with a greater deal of skepticism than Obama — and Trump and George W. Bush for that matter — about Russian President Vladimir Putin. Obama sought to "reset" the U.S.-Russia relationship. By 2014, after a series of earlier disappointments, Obama's hope for a reset had evaporated when Russia seized the Black Sea peninsula of Crimea from Ukraine.

Biden made it clear early on that his highest hope for the Putin relationship was finding a measure of stability and predictability. With his administration pressing Putin to step back from Russia's current troop buildup on the Ukraine border, it remains to be seen if Biden's approach will net better results.

— By Aamer Madhani

## A GILDED CAGE

For a man who wanted to get to the White House in the worst way for decades, Biden doesn't seem that enamored with the place.

Over his first year in office, he's spent at least a portion of 99 days in his home state of Delaware, mostly during weekend trips and amounting to more than a fourth of his presidency. It's a short jaunt that requires a massive operation involving security contingents, press pools, helicopters and buses.

As for the White House, Biden calls his accommodations on Pennsylvania Avenue a bit of a "gilded cage in terms of being able to walk outside and do things."

"I said when I was running, I wanted to be president not to live in the White House but to be able to make the decisions about the future of the country," he said in a CNN interview.

The vice presidential residence in Northwest D.C., which sits on 80 acres (32 hectares), was very dif-

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ferent, he said.

"You can walk off a porch in the summer and jump in a pool, and, you know, go into work," he said. "You can ride a bicycle around and never leave the property."

— By Colleen Long

## ALL ABOUT BEAU

Biden's late son, Beau, sometimes seems as much a part of Biden's presidency as Biden himself.

Biden works references to his son into speeches and other public remarks, and sometimes wears a baseball cap bearing the logo of Beau's child protection foundation.

Beau was being groomed to follow his father into national politics -- and perhaps one day be president. He was a Delaware attorney general, served in the state's Army National Guard and advised his father politically.

Brain cancer took him away from his wife and two young children in 2015 at age 46. He's the second child Biden has buried; a 1972 car wreck killed the president's first wife and baby daughter.

Biden said during his 2020 presidential campaign that Beau should have been the candidate.

On the eve of his swearing-in, a tearful Biden said his "one regret" was that Beau wasn't alive "because we should be introducing him as president."

— By Darlene Superville

## BETTER AT BEING A VP THAN HAVING A VP

Obama did not choose Biden because the two were personally close. He chose him because he added some foreign policy heft and experience and could serve as a bridge to Congress.

But over time, the two became personally closer. Obama tasked Biden with being the "sheriff" to oversee how money in the 2009 stimulus bill was spent during the financial crisis. He also assigned him to help fashion a plan to end the war in Iraq.

When Biden was considering a run to succeed Obama in 2016, the president was cool to the idea and his vice president bowed out in favor of Hillary Clinton.

Still, Obama's regard for his vice president was on display at the end of their tenure, when he presented Biden with the Medal of Freedom in an emotional ceremony.

Biden's relationship with Vice President Kamala Harris hasn't been nearly as smooth.

Her role in the job is historic: She's the first woman and first Asian and Black vice president. But she's struggled to find her footing, and Biden hasn't been much of a guide, though the two insist publicly that their relationship is solid.

Biden has assigned Harris some of the administration's most difficult issues, including immigration and voting rights. And while Biden himself served as top cop on the stimulus law, he gave the task of overseeing spending from his \$1 trillion infrastructure law instead to a former mayor, Mitch Landrieu of New Orleans, rather than his vice president.

— By Colleen Long

## ALL THE PRESIDENT'S CZARS

From infrastructure to COVID-19 response, Biden has hired White House coordinators to marshal the resources of the federal government to implement his policies. In the case of combating climate change, Biden went so far as to put two in place — Gina McCarthy to lead the domestic initiative and former Secretary of State John Kerry to lead it globally.

Biden knows a thing or two about czars: He was one, when he led the implementation of the American Recovery Act for President Barack Obama. But it's telling that rather than relying on Cabinet secretaries or his own vice president, he's chosen experienced and often politically connected managers like Gene Sperling, who leads implementation of the COVID-19 relief bill, and Jeff Zients, who runs the government response to the virus.

This reflects not just the Biden White House's technocratic streak but also the centralization of power within the West Wing.

## Despite huge volcano blast, Tonga avoids widespread disaster

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — The blast from the volcano could be heard in Alaska, and the waves crossed the ocean to cause an oil spill and two drownings in Peru. The startling satellite images resembled a massive nuclear explosion.

And yet, despite sitting almost on top of the volcano that erupted so violently on Saturday, the Pacific nation of Tonga appears to have avoided the widespread disaster that many initially feared.

Perhaps the biggest problem is the ash that has coated the main island and transformed it into a gray moonscape, contaminating the rainwater that people rely on to drink. New Zealand's military is sending fresh water and other much-needed supplies, but said Tuesday the ash covering Tonga's main runway will delay the flight at least another day.

Tonga has so far reported two deaths, and concerns remain over the fate of people on two smaller islands that were hard hit. Communications have been down everywhere, making assessments more difficult.

But on the main island of Tongatapu, at least, life is slowly returning to normal. The tsunami that swept over coastal areas after the eruption was frightening for many but rose only about 80 centimeters (2.7 feet), allowing most to escape.

"We did hold grave fears, given the magnitude of what we saw in that unprecedented blast," said Katie Greenwood, the head of delegation in the Pacific for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. "Fortunately, in those major population centers we are not seeing the catastrophic effect we thought might happen, and that's very good news."

Greenwood, who is based in Fiji and has been talking with people in Tonga by satellite phone, said an estimated 50 homes were destroyed on Tongatapu but that nobody needed to use emergency shelters. She said about 90 people on the nearby island of 'Eua were using shelters.

U.N. humanitarian officials and Tonga's government has reported "significant infrastructural damage" around Tongatapu.

"There has been no contact from the Ha'apai Group of islands, and we are particularly concerned about two small low-lying islands — Mango and Fonoi — following surveillance flights confirming substantial property damage," U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

New Zealand's High Commission in Tonga also reported significant damage along the western coast of Tongatapu, including to resorts and the waterfront area.

Like other island nations in the Pacific, Tonga is regularly exposed to the extremes of nature, whether it be cyclones or earthquakes, making people more resilient to the challenges they bring.

Indeed, Greenwood said Tonga does not want an influx of aid workers following the eruption. Tonga is one of the few remaining places in the world that has managed to avoid any outbreaks of the coronavirus, and officials fear that if outsiders bring in the virus it could create a much bigger disaster than the one they're already facing.

Another worry, said Greenwood, is that the volcano could erupt again. She said there is currently no working equipment around it which could help predict such an event.

Satellite images captured the spectacular eruption of the Hunga Tonga Hunga Ha'apai volcano on Saturday, with a plume of ash, steam and gas rising like a giant mushroom above the South Pacific. The volcano is located about 64 kilometers (40 miles) north of Tonga's capital, Nuku'alofa.

Two people drowned in Peru, which also reported the oil spill after waves moved a ship that was transferring oil at a refinery.

In Tonga, British woman Angela Glover, 50, was one of those who died after being swept away by a wave, her family said.

Nick Eleini said his sister's body had been found and that her husband survived. "I understand that this terrible accident came about as they tried to rescue their dogs," Eleini told Sky News. He said it had been his sister's life dream to live in the South Pacific and "she loved her life there."

New Zealand's military said it hoped the airfield in Tonga would be opened either Wednesday or Thursday. The military said it had considered an airdrop but that was "not the preference of the Tongan authorities."

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New Zealand also sent a navy ship to Tonga on Tuesday, with another planned to leave later in the day, and pledged an initial 1 million New Zealand dollars (\$680,000) toward recovery efforts.

Australia sent a navy ship from Sydney to Brisbane to prepare for a support mission if needed.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian on Tuesday said China is preparing to send drinking water, food, personal protective equipment and other supplies to Tonga as soon as flights resume.

The U.N. World Food Program is exploring how to bring in relief supplies and more staff and has received a request to restore communication lines in Tonga, which is home to about 105,000 people, Dujarric said.

Communications with the island nation are limited because the single underwater fiber-optic cable that connects Tonga to the rest of the world was likely severed in the eruption. The company that owns the cable said the repairs could take weeks.

Samiuela Fonua, who chairs the board at Tonga Cable Ltd., said the cable appeared to have been severed soon after the eruption. He said the cable lies atop and within coral reef, which can be sharp.

Fonua said a ship would need to pull up the cable to assess the damage and then crews would need to fix it. A single break might take a week to repair, he said, while multiple breaks could take up to three weeks. He added that it was unclear when it would be safe for a ship to venture near the undersea volcano to undertake the work.

A second undersea cable that connects the islands within Tonga also appeared to have been severed, Fonua said. However, a local phone network was working, allowing Tongans to call each other. But he said the lingering ash cloud was continuing to make even satellite phone calls abroad difficult.

## Julius Erving, aka Dr. J, talks about NBA life in the 1980s

By JULIUS ERVING For The Associated Press

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Hall of Famer Julius Erving, an NBA and ABA champion, is considered one of the greatest basketball players ever and one the greatest ambassadors of the game off the court. He is an 11-time NBA All-Star and league MVP. The player fans know as "Dr. J" shares some of the experiences that helped make him who he is, and provided him with the foundation to help him lead the transformation the NBA during the 1980s.)

Those of us who played in the NBA in the 1980s definitely played a role in what the league has become today.

And I think that in communicating with the next generation of players, they gave a lot of credit to myself and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. If you start in 1980, and you look at the guys who were the All-Pro players, the MVPs or whatever, there was an acceptance, and there was the crossing-over between the different ethnicities that created a pretty good melting pot.

I look at the commercial success that happened with myself, with Larry Bird, with Converse and Spalding as an example, and the next wave with Magic Johnson and Michael Jordan. It didn't just happen. There were shoulders we were standing on.

There was Bill Russell, who's been a dear friend for many, many years. Oscar Robertson, Jerry West, and even the lesser-celebrated guys like Walt Bellamy, Lou Hudson, Pete Maravich. We were just trying to kind of give them credit and understand their struggle. They were always taking commercial flights. Before that, I mean, there were guys taking trains and buses. It is so much different now.

And so, over these decades, the eight decades of the NBA, there has been growth from within. That has created an image, a global image, and without all the parts you wouldn't have the total sum.

I was a Salvation Army kid. I knew about being part of something bigger than yourself. John Havlicek and I, we were endorsers for the Special Olympics. The public service ads and the public service involvement led to the commercial endorsements because people realized that the same guys, those same people doing public service ads could be good pitchers, good spokesmen.

If you elected to volunteer to do that and you gave up your time and your name, face and likeness, that was a gateway. Wall Street could see it just like anybody else and say, 'This guy's pitching the Salvation

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Army, he's pitching the Special Olympics, so maybe he could pitch my shoe, maybe he could pitch my toothpaste.

Being a Salvation Army kid, that was always in my mind. It helped make me who I am. That's where I played basketball. That's where I learned to travel and be a good representative of the entity that I'm traveling with. And so, we'd get in the station wagon and we'd go all over Long Island, we'd go to New Jersey, we went to Pennsylvania. And to be on the traveling team, that was very important. When you went, you had to behave and you had to represent your family and you had to represent the Corps, and you had to represent where you were from. And so that helped you in terms of communicating with people and trusting people.

I was 11 when that started. It became a fixture in my life, even today. I'm 71 years old, but I love talking about it even now. A couple months ago I did a program at the Salvation Army, a fundraising program. The guy who coached me when I was 11, he was 19. And he's still a great friend. He kind of left the Corps, became the mayor of the town, Hempstead.

He remembers when I wouldn't have two nickels to rub together, living in a housing project and he said, "Hey, you want to do something different? Let's go ask your mom if you can have permission to go down to the Salvation Army and play basketball inside instead of playing outside, especially in the middle of the winter." I've always regarded that as being pivotal to my life.

I never could have envisioned what my life has become, and I don't think the NBA could envision what it has become today.

## The AP Interview: Exiled artist Ai Weiwei on Beijing Games

By STEPHEN WADE AP Sports Writer

Ai Weiwei is one of China's most famous artists, and many regard him as one of the world's greatest living ones. Working with the Swiss architectural firm Herzog & de Meuron, he helped design the Bird's Nest Stadium, the centerpiece of Beijing's 2008 Summer Olympics.

The stadium in northern Beijing, instantly recognizable for its weave of curving steel beams, will also host the opening ceremony for Beijing's Winter Olympics on Feb. 4.

In the design phase, Ai hoped the stadium's latticework form and the presence of the Olympics would symbolize China's new openness. He was disappointed. He has repeatedly described the stadium and the 2008 Olympics as a "fake smile" that China presented to the world.

Ai expects the Winter Games to offer more of the same.

Even before his fame landed him the design job, Ai had been an unrelenting critic of the Chinese Communist Party. He was jailed in 2011 in China for unspecified crimes and is now an outspoken dissident who lives in exile in Portugal. He has also lived in exile in Germany — he still maintains a studio there — and in Britain.

His art — ranging from sculpture to architecture to photography, video and the written word — is almost always provocative, and he's scathing about censorship and the absence of civil liberties in his native country.

His memoir — "1000 Years of Joys and Sorrows" — was published last year and details the overlap of his life and career with that of his father Ai Qing, a famous poet who was sent into internal exile in 1957, the year Ai Weiwei was born.

Ai writes in his memoir: "The year I was born, Mao Zedong unleashed a political storm — the Anti-Rightist Campaign, designed to purge "rightist" intellectuals who had criticized the government. The whirlpool that swallowed up my father upended my life too, leaving a mark on me that I carry to this day."

He quotes his father: "To suppress the voices of the people is the cruelest form of violence."

Ai responded to a list of questions by email from the Associated Press. He used his dashed hopes for the Bird's Nest to illustrate how China has changed since 2008.

"As an architect my goal was the same as other architects, that is, to design it as perfectly as possible," Ai wrote to Associated Press. "The way it was used afterwards went in the opposite direction from our ideals. We had hoped that our architecture could be a symbol of freedom and openness and represent optimism



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and a positive force, which was very different from how it was used as a promotional tool in the end.”

The 2008 Olympics are usually seen as a “coming out” party for China. When the IOC awarded Beijing the Olympics in 2001, it said they could help improve human rights. Ai, instead, termed the 2008 Olympics a “low point” as migrant workers were forced out of the city, small shops were shuttered and street vendors removed, and blocks-long billboards popped up, painted with palm trees and beach scenes to hide shabby neighborhoods from view.

“The entire Olympics took place under the situation of a blockade,” Ai told AP. “For the general public there was no joy in participation. Instead, there was a close collaboration between International Olympic Committee and the Chinese regime, who put on a show together in order to obtain economic and political capital.”

Ai writes in his book that he watched the opening ceremony away from the stadium on a television screen, and jotted down the following.

“In this world where everything has a political dimension, we are now told we mustn’t politicize things: this is simply a sporting event, detached from history and ideas and values — detached from human nature, even.”

The IOC and China again say the Olympics are divorced from politics. China, of course, has political ends in mind. For the IOC, the Olympics are a sports business that generates billions in sponsor and television income.

In his email, Ai described China as emboldened by the 2008 Olympics — “more confident and uncompromising.” He said the 2008 Olympics were a “negative” that allowed China’s government to better shape its message. The Olympics did not change China in ways the IOC suggested, or foster civil liberties. Instead, China used the Olympics to alter how it was perceived on the world stage and to signal its rising power.

The 2008 Games were followed a month later by the world financial crisis, and in 2012 by the rise of General Secretary Xi Jinping. Xi was a senior politician in charge of the 2008 Olympics, but the 2022 Games are his own.

“Since 2008 the government of China has further strengthened its control and the human rights situation has further deteriorated,” Ai told AP. “China has seen the West’s hypocrisy and inaction when it comes to issues of human rights, so they have become even bolder, more unscrupulous, and more ruthless. In 2022 China will impose more stringent constraints to the Internet and political life, including human rights, the press, and We-media. The CCP does not care if the West participates in the Games or not because China is confident that the West is busy enough with their own affairs.”

Ai characterized the 2022 Winter Olympics and the pandemic as a case of fortunate timing for China’s authoritarian government. The pandemic will limit the movement of journalists during the Games, and it will also showcase the state’s Orwellian control.

“China, under the system of state capitalism and especially after COVID, firmly believes that its administrative control is the only effective method; this enhances their belief in authoritarianism. Meanwhile, China thinks that the West, with its ideas of democracy and freedom, can hardly obtain effective control. So, the 2022 Olympics will further testify to the effectiveness of authoritarianism in China and the frustration of the West’s democratic regimes.”

Ai was repeatedly critical of the IOC as an enabler; interested solely in generating income from the Chinese market. The IOC and China both see the Games as a business opportunity. Ai suggested many Chinese see the Olympics as another political exercise with some — like athletes — trying to extract value.

“In China there is only the Party’s guidance, state-controlled media, and people who have been brain-washed by the media,” Ai wrote. “There is no real civil society. Under this circumstance, Chinese people are not interested in the Olympics at all because it is simply a display of state politics. Nationally trained athletes exchange Olympic gold medals for economic gains for individuals or even for sport organizations; this way of doing things deviates from the Olympics’ original ideas.”

Ai was asked if he planned to go back to China. He said he was doubtful.

“Judging from the current situation, it is more and more unlikely for me to be able to return to China,”

he said. "My main point here is that the situation in China has worsened. The West's boycott is futile and pointless. China does not care about it at all."

## Stafford propels Rams past Cardinals 34-11 in playoff rout

By GREG BEACHAM AP Sports Writer

INGLEWOOD, Calif. (AP) — The Rams had a 20-point lead on Arizona with 4 1/2 minutes left at raucous SoFi Stadium. Matthew Stafford's 13-year quest for his first playoff victory was all but complete after Los Angeles' dominant performance on both sides of the ball.

The quarterback still took off running on third-and-long through the heart of the Cardinals' defense on a gleeful, perilous scramble that ultimately ended short of a first down.

Even while shouldering enormous postseason pressure, Stafford never forgot to have fun. He was strong enough to carry it all — and the Rams are riding him on to Tampa Bay.

Stafford passed for 202 yards and two touchdowns and ran for another score in his first playoff win, and the Rams roared out of the wild-card round with a 34-11 victory over Arizona on Monday night.

"What a team effort," Stafford said. "Our defense played outstanding tonight. Special teams basically set up a score ... and we were good enough on offense to score some points and come away with the win. Just happy to be moving on."

Odell Beckham Jr. and Cooper Kupp made touchdown catches for the NFC West champion Rams (13-5), who will visit the defending Super Bowl champion Buccaneers on Sunday for a spot in the NFC championship game.

David Long also scored on a 3-yard interception return while the Rams' defense harassed Kyler Murray into a calamitous playoff debut. Los Angeles led 28-0 before cruising in the first playoff game at SoFi, which will host Super Bowl 56 next month.

Stafford was outstanding in his first playoff game with the Rams, completing 13 of his season-low 17 passes without an interception and despite three drops. He scored his first playoff rushing TD since January 2012 on a goal-line sneak, and he coolly directed LA's offense while seizing his first playoff win in a career that began with 12 years in Detroit, where his Lions went 0-3 in the postseason.

"I thought he did a great job leading the way," McVay said. "He's still the same great player to me, and he always was before this game. I think it's good so you guys don't have to talk about that anymore. So pleased be able to do this with him. He's our leader out there, and we wouldn't be here without him."

After an inconsistent finish to the regular season, the Rams' constellation of big stars came together brilliantly around Stafford on the postseason stage.

Beckham had four catches for 54 yards, including his first career playoff touchdown catch for the Rams' first points. He also threw a 40-yard pass during his own first postseason victory.

Linebacker Von Miller added six tackles and a key early sack in his first postseason appearance since winning the MVP award in Super Bowl 50.

Murray went 19 of 34 for 137 yards and two interceptions for the Cardinals (11-7), who followed their 10-2 start with a 1-5 slide. Arizona lost on the road for only the second time in 10 games this season under coach Kliff Kingsbury.

"We didn't do anything right the first two quarters," Kingsbury said. "The Rams handled the game and the atmosphere well. ... As an offense, we were just out of sync on a couple of things early that could have changed the game. We never got in a rhythm, and they made some big plays."

James Conner rushed for a TD for the Cardinals, who have one playoff victory since the 2009 season. Murray went 7 for 17 for 28 yards and threw two interceptions in an awful first half that left the Cardinals trailing 21-0 with just 40 yards of offense before they managed to get their initial first down.

"Losing is one thing, but when you don't even make it competitive is another," Murray said.

Los Angeles went up by three touchdowns when linebacker Troy Reeder's pressure prompted Murray to fling the ball blindly out of the end zone to avoid a safety. Long made a shoe-top interception and took one stride to score the shortest pick-6 in NFL playoff history.

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The Rams capped their second offensive drive with Stafford's precise 4-yard throw to Beckham. The veteran wideout has six TD catches in his last eight games since he joined the Rams at midseason.

After Long's TD, the Cardinals finally got a first down seven minutes before halftime, but Rams lineman Marquise Copeland got his first career interception on a deflected pass.

"I feel like we was dominant out there," All-Pro Rams defensive lineman Aaron Donald said. "I feel like the quarterback wasn't comfortable at all."

QB OBJ

Kupp's TD catch after halftime was set up by Beckham's sharp 40-yard pass down the sideline to Cam Akers — the sixth completion of Beckham's eight-year career.

"He should have led me a little bit," Akers said. "Nah, I'm playing."

WEDDLE'S RETURN

Eric Weddle got significant playing time for the Rams in the 37-year-old veteran's first NFL game since the 2019 season finale. The two-time All-Pro safety ended his retirement last week to help out after Los Angeles lost starters Taylor Rapp to a concussion and Jordan Fuller to a season-ending ankle injury.

INJURIES

Cardinals safety Budda Baker left the field on a stretcher in the third quarter after a helmet-to-helmet hit with Akers. Players knelt around Baker in concern before he was taken off the field. He was taken to a hospital for further evaluation, but had movement in his extremities.

"It was just a football play," said Akers, who had 95 total yards. "It wasn't nothing personal. I've got the utmost respect for Budda and that team."

J.J. Watt had three tackles for Arizona in his first game since late October. The three-time NFL Defensive Player of the Year had shoulder surgery, but rushed back to help the Cardinals.

Long (knee) and Rams left tackle Andrew Whitworth (ankle) both missed time in the second half.

UP NEXT

Cardinals: An offseason evaluation of what went wrong late in such a promising season.

Rams: A showdown with the Buccaneers and Tom Brady, who has a bit more experience under playoff pressure than Murray.

## Texas rabbi says he, 2 hostages escaped synagogue standoff

By JAMIE STENGLE, JAKE BLEIBERG and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

COLLEYVILLE, Texas (AP) — The rabbi of a Texas synagogue where a gunman took hostages during livestreamed services said Monday that he threw a chair at his captor before escaping with two others after an hourslong standoff, crediting past security training for getting himself and his congregants out safely.

Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker told "CBS Mornings" that he let the gunman inside the suburban Fort Worth synagogue Saturday because he appeared to need shelter. He said the man was not threatening or suspicious at first. But later, he heard a gun click as he was praying.

Another man held hostage, Jeffrey R. Cohen, described the ordeal on Facebook on Monday.

"First of all, we escaped. We weren't released or freed," said Cohen, who was one of four people in the synagogue for services that many other Congregation Beth Israel members were watching online.

Cohen said the men worked to keep the gunman engaged. They talked to the gunman, and he lectured them. At one point as the situation devolved, Cohen said the gunman told them to get on their knees. Cohen recalled rearing up in his chair and slowly moving his head and mouthing "no." As the gunman moved to sit back down, Cohen said Cytron-Walker yelled to run.

"The exit wasn't too far away," Cytron-Walker said. "I told them to go. I threw a chair at the gunman, and I headed for the door. And all three of us were able to get out without even a shot being fired."

Authorities identified the hostage-taker as 44-year-old British national Malik Faisal Akram, who was killed Saturday night after the last three hostages ran out of the synagogue in Colleyville around 9 p.m. The first hostage was released shortly after 5 p.m.

The FBI on Sunday night issued a statement calling the ordeal "a terrorism-related matter, in which the

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Jewish community was targeted” and said the Joint Terrorism Task Force is investigating. The agency noted that Akram spoke repeatedly during negotiations about a prisoner who is serving an 86-year sentence in the U.S. The statement followed comments Saturday from the special agent in charge of the FBI’s Dallas field office that the hostage-taker was focused on an issue “not specifically related to the Jewish community.”

Akram could be heard ranting on a Facebook livestream of the services and demanding the release of Aafia Siddiqui, a Pakistani neuroscientist suspected of having ties to al-Qaida who was convicted of trying to kill U.S. Army officers in Afghanistan.

“The last hour or so of the standoff, he wasn’t getting what he wanted. It didn’t look good. It didn’t sound good. We were terrified,” Cytron-Walker told “CBS Mornings.”

At a service held Monday evening at a nearby Methodist church, Cytron-Walker said the amount of “well-wishes and kindness and compassion” has been overwhelming from Colleyville — a city of about 26,000 people, 15 miles (23 kilometers) northeast of Fort Worth — and surrounding communities.

“Thank you for all of the compassion, from the bottom of my heart,” Cytron-Walker said.

“While very few of us are doing OK right now, we’ll get through this,” he said.

Video of the standoff’s end from Dallas TV station WFAA showed people running out a door of the synagogue, and then a man holding a gun opening the same door just seconds later before he turned around and closed it. Moments later, several shots and then an explosion could be heard.

Authorities have declined to say who shot Akram, saying it was still under investigation.

The investigation stretched to England, where late Sunday police in Manchester announced that two teenagers were in custody in connection with the standoff. Greater Manchester Police tweeted that counter-terrorism officers had made the arrests but did not say whether the pair faced any charges.

President Joe Biden called the episode an act of terror. Speaking to reporters in Philadelphia on Sunday, Biden said Akram allegedly purchased a weapon on the streets.

Federal investigators believe Akram purchased the handgun used in the hostage-taking in a private sale, according to a person familiar with the matter who spoke on condition of anonymity because the investigation is ongoing. Akram arrived in the U.S. at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York about two weeks ago, a law enforcement official said.

Akram arrived in the U.S. on a tourist visa from Great Britain, according to a U.S. official who spoke on condition of anonymity because the information was not intended to be public. London’s Metropolitan Police said in a statement that its counter-terrorism police were liaising with U.S. authorities about the incident.

U.K. Home Secretary Priti Patel told the House of Commons on Monday that she had spoken to her U.S. counterpart, Alejandro Mayorkas, and offered “the full support” of the police and security services in Britain in the investigation.

In the two weeks before Akram took hostages at the synagogue, he had stayed at Dallas-area homeless shelters.

Wayne Walker, CEO and pastor of OurCalling, which provides services to homeless people, said that Akram stayed at their downtown Dallas facility Jan. 2, and their review of camera footage showed he was dropped off by someone he appeared to know well. Walker said they contacted the FBI and gave them access to their photos and video.

“He was dropped off by a guy who actually had some conversations with him outside and actually brought him in to our facility, had some more conversations with him inside,” Walker said. “And then before he left, they gave each other long hugs like they were long lost friends and patted each other on the back before the one took off.”

“So he was dropped off by somebody that looked like he had a relationship with him,” he told The Associated Press.

An FBI spokeswoman said late Monday night that they did not have any information they could confirm regarding Akram’s stay at the OurCalling facility. The agency has said there was no early indication that anyone else was involved in the hostage-taking.

Akram stayed three nights between Jan. 6 and Jan. 13 at Union Gospel Mission Dallas, the homeless shelter’s CEO, Bruce Butler, told CNN. According to their records, Akram left there for the last time on

Jan. 13 — two days before he took the hostages at the synagogue.

Akram used his phone during the course of negotiations to communicate with people other than law enforcement, according to a law enforcement official who was not authorized to discuss an ongoing investigation by name and spoke on condition of anonymity.

It wasn't clear why Akram chose the synagogue, though the prison where Siddiqui is serving her sentence is in Fort Worth.

An attorney in Texas who represents Siddiqui said Monday that Siddiqui had no connections to Akram. "She said from the beginning when she was sentenced that she does not want any violence done in her name and she doesn't condone any type of violence being done," said attorney Marwa Elbially.

Akram, who was called Faisal by his family, was from Blackburn, an industrial city in northwest England. His family said he'd been "suffering from mental health issues."

"We would also like to add that any attack on any human being, be it a Jew, Christian or Muslim, etc. is wrong and should always be condemned," his brother, Gulbar Akram, wrote.

## Race to cut carbon emissions splits U.S. states on nuclear

By JENNIFER McDERMOTT Associated Press

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP) — As climate change pushes states in the U.S. to dramatically cut their use of fossil fuels, many are coming to the conclusion that solar, wind and other renewable power sources might not be enough to keep the lights on.

Nuclear power is emerging as an answer to fill the gap as states transition away from coal, oil and natural gas to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and stave off the worst effects of a warming planet. The renewed interest in nuclear comes as companies, including one started by Microsoft founder Bill Gates, are developing smaller, cheaper reactors that could supplement the power grid in communities across the U.S.

Nuclear power comes with its own set of potential problems, especially radioactive waste that can remain dangerous for thousands of years. But supporters say the risks can be minimized and that the energy source will be essential to stabilize power supplies as the world tries to move away from carbon dioxide-emitting fossil fuels.

Tennessee Valley Authority President and CEO Jeff Lyash puts it simply: You can't significantly reduce carbon emissions without nuclear power.

"At this point in time, I don't see a path that gets us there without preserving the existing fleet and building new nuclear," Lyash said. "And that's after having maximized the amount of solar we can build in the system."

The TVA is a federally owned utility that provides electricity to seven states as the nation's third largest electricity generator. It's adding about 10,000 megawatts of solar capacity by 2035 — enough to power nearly 1 million homes annually — but also operates three nuclear plants and plans to test a small reactor in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. By 2050, it hopes to hit its goal of becoming net zero, which means the amount of greenhouse gases produced is no more than the amount removed from the atmosphere.

An Associated Press survey of the energy policies in all 50 states and the District of Columbia found that a strong majority— about two-thirds— say nuclear, in one fashion or another, will help take the place of fossil fuels. The momentum building behind nuclear power could lead to the first expansion of nuclear reactor construction in the U.S. in more than three decades.

Roughly one-third of the states and the District of Columbia responded to the AP's survey by saying they have no plans to incorporate nuclear power in their green energy goals, instead leaning heavily on renewables. Energy officials in those states said their goals are achievable because of advances in energy storage using batteries, investments in the grid for high-voltage interstate transmission, energy efficiency efforts to reduce demand and power provided by hydroelectric dams.

The split over nuclear power in U.S. states mirrors a similar debate unfolding in Europe, where countries including Germany are phasing out their reactors while others, such as France, are sticking with the technology or planning to build more plants.

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The Biden administration, which has tried to take aggressive steps to reduce greenhouse gases, views nuclear as necessary to help compensate for the decline of carbon-based fuels in the nation's energy grid.

U.S. Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm told the AP that the administration wants to get to zero-carbon electricity, and "that means nuclear, that means hydropower, that means geothermal, that means obviously wind on and offshore, that means solar."

"We want it all," Granholm said during a visit in December to Providence, Rhode Island, to promote an offshore wind project.

The \$1 trillion infrastructure package championed by Biden and signed into law last year will allocate about \$2.5 billion for advanced reactor demonstration projects. The Energy Department said studies by Princeton University and the Decarb America Research Initiative show that nuclear is necessary for a carbon-free future.

Granholm also touted new technologies involving hydrogen and capturing and storing carbon dioxide before it is released into the atmosphere.

Nuclear reactors have operated reliably and carbon-free for many decades, and the current climate change conversation brings the benefits of nuclear to the forefront, said Maria Korsnick, president and chief executive officer of the Nuclear Energy Institute, the industry's trade association.

"The scale of this electric grid that's across the United States, it needs something that's always there, something that can help really be the backbone, if you will, for this grid," she said. "That's why it's a partnership with wind and solar and nuclear."

Nuclear technology still comes with significant risks that other low-carbon energy sources don't, said Edwin Lyman, director of nuclear power safety at the Union of Concerned Scientists. While the new, smaller reactors might cost less than traditional reactors to build, they'll also produce more expensive electricity, he said. He's also concerned the industry might cut corners on safety and security to save money and compete in the market. The group does not oppose the use of nuclear power, but wants to make sure it's safe.

"I'm not optimistic we'd see the kind of safety and security requirements in place that would make me feel comfortable with the adoption or deployment of these so-called small modular reactors around the country," Lyman said.

The U.S. also has no long-term plan for managing or disposing the hazardous waste that can persist in the environment for hundreds of thousands of years, and there's the danger of accidents or targeted attacks for both the waste and the reactors, Lyman said. Nuclear disasters at Pennsylvania's Three Mile Island, Chernobyl and more recently, Fukushima, Japan, in 2011 provide an enduring warning about the dangers.

Nuclear power already provides about 20% of electricity in the U.S., accounting for about half the nation's carbon-free energy. Most of the 93 reactors operating in the country are east of the Mississippi River.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has approved just one of the new, small modular reactor designs — from a company called NuScale Power, in August 2020. Three other companies have told the commission they're planning to apply for their designs. All of these use water to cool the core.

The NRC is expecting about a half dozen designs to be submitted for advanced reactors, which use something other than water to cool the core, such as gas, liquid metal or molten salt. That includes a project by Gates' company, TerraPower, in Wyoming, which has long depended on coal for power and jobs.

As utilities quit coal, Wyoming is tapping into wind and installed the third-largest amount of wind power generating capacity of any state in 2020, after Texas and Iowa. But Glen Murrell, executive director of the Wyoming Energy Authority, said it's unrealistic to expect all the nation's energy to be provided exclusively through wind and solar. Renewable energy should work in tandem with other technologies such as nuclear and hydrogen, he said.

TerraPower plans to build its advanced reactor demonstration plant in Kemmerer, a town of 2,700 in western Wyoming where a coal plant is closing. The reactor uses Sodium technology, which is a sodium-cooled fast reactor paired with an energy-storage system.

In another coal-dependent state, West Virginia, some lawmakers are trying to repeal the state's mora-

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torium on the construction of new nuclear facilities.

A second reactor design by TerraPower will be built at the Idaho National Laboratory. The Molten Chloride Reactor Experiment will have a core that's as small as a refrigerator and molten salt to cool it instead of water.

Among the other states that support nuclear power, Georgia maintains that its nuclear reactor expansion will "provide Georgia with ample clean energy" for 60 to 80 years. Georgia has the only nuclear project under construction in the U.S. — the expansion of Plant Vogtle from two of the traditional large reactors to four. The total cost is now more than double the original projection of \$14 billion, and the project is years behind schedule.

New Hampshire said that without nuclear, the region's environmental goals would be impossible to meet as affordably. And the Alaska Energy Authority has been working since 2007 to plan for the use of small modular nuclear reactors, possibly at remote mine sites and military bases first.

The Maryland Energy Administration said that while the goal of all renewable energy is laudable and costs are declining, "for the foreseeable future we need a variety of fuels," including nuclear and cleaner natural gas-powered systems to ensure reliability and resiliency. Maryland has one nuclear plant, and the energy administration is talking with manufacturers of small modular reactors.

Other officials, mostly in Democratic-led states, said they're moving beyond nuclear power. Some said they never relied heavily on it to begin with and don't see a need for it in the future.

They said the cost of new reactors compared to installing wind turbines or solar panels, the safety concerns and the unresolved question of how to store hazardous nuclear waste are deal-breakers. Some environmentalists also oppose small modular reactors because of the safety concerns and hazardous waste questions. The Sierra Club has described them as "high-risk, high-cost and highly questionable."

In New York, which has some of the nation's most ambitious goals to combat climate change, the future energy grid will be dominated by wind, solar and hydropower, said New York State Energy Research and Development Authority President and CEO Doreen Harris.

Harris said she sees a future beyond nuclear, dropping from nearly 30% of the state's energy mix currently to around 5%, but the state will need advanced, long-duration battery storage and perhaps cleaner-burning fuels such as hydrogen.

Nevada is especially sensitive to nuclear energy because of the failed plan to store the nation's commercial spent nuclear fuel at Yucca Mountain. Officials there don't consider nuclear power a viable option. Instead, they see potential for battery technology for energy storage and geothermal energy.

"Nevada understands better than most other states that nuclear technology has significant lifecycle problems," David Bobzien, director of the Nevada Governor's Office of Energy, said in a statement. "A focus on short-term gains can't alleviate the long-term issues with nuclear energy."

California is slated to close its last remaining nuclear power plant, Diablo Canyon, in 2025, as it turns to cheaper renewables to power its grid by 2045.

Officials think they can meet that goal if California sustains its expansion of clean electricity generation at a "record-breaking rate for the next 25 years," building on average of 6 gigawatts of new solar, wind and battery storage sources annually, according to state planning documents. California also imports power produced in other states as part of a Western U.S. grid system.

Skeptics have questioned whether California's all-in renewable plan can work in a state of nearly 40 million people.

Research from scientists at Stanford University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology concluded that delaying Diablo Canyon's retirement to 2035 would save California \$2.6 billion in power system costs, reduce the chances of brownouts and lower carbon emissions. When the research was presented in November, former U.S. Energy Secretary Steven Chu said the nation is not positioned in the near-term to go to 100% renewable energy.

"They'll be times when the wind doesn't blow and the sun doesn't shine," he said. "And we will need some power that we can actually turn on and dispatch at will. That leaves two choices: either fossil fuel or nuclear."

But the California Public Utilities Commission says it would likely take “seismic upgrades” and changes to the cooling systems, which could cost more than \$1 billion, to continue operations at Diablo Canyon beyond 2025. Commission spokesperson Terrie Prosper said 11,500 megawatts of new clean energy resources will be online by 2026 to meet the state’s long-term needs.

Jason Bordoff, co-founding dean of the Columbia Climate School, said that while California’s plans are “technically possible,” he’s skeptical because it’s challenging to build that much renewable capacity quickly. Bordoff said there is “good reason” to think about extending the life of Diablo Canyon to keep energy costs down and reduce emissions as quickly as possible.

“We have to incorporate nuclear energy in a way that acknowledges it’s not risk-free,” he said. “But the risks of falling short of our climate goals exceed the risks of including nuclear energy as part of the zero carbon energy mix.”

## In tiny Wyoming town, Bill Gates bets big on nuclear power

By BRADY McCOMBS and MEAD GRUVER Associated Press

KEMMERER, Wyoming (AP) — In this sleepy Wyoming town that has relied on coal for over a century, a company founded by the man who revolutionized personal computing is launching an ambitious project to counter climate change: A nationwide reboot of nuclear energy technology.

Until recently, Kemmerer was little-known for anything except J.C. Penney’s first store and some 55-million-year-old fish fossils in quarries down the road.

Then in November, a company started by Bill Gates, TerraPower, announced it had chosen Kemmerer for a nontraditional, sodium-cooled nuclear reactor that will bring on workers from a local coal-fired power plant scheduled to close soon.

The demonstration project comes as many U.S. states see nuclear emerging as an answer to fill the gap as a transition away from coal, oil and natural gas to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Many residents in Kemmerer, where the population of 2,700 is little-changed since the 1990s, see the TerraPower project as a much-needed economic boost because Rocky Mountain Power’s Naughton power plant will close 2025. The plant employs about 230 and a mine that supplies coal exclusively to the plant — and is also at risk of closing if it can’t find another customer — almost 300.

“Kemmerer needs something or it’ll become a dust bowl,” said Ken Spears, a 69-year-old retired coal mine worker whose family has depended on the mine and power plant for generations.

Spears was among a group of men who gathered recently in a downtown bar, Grumpies, near a park with statue of James Cash Penney and his first store. They played pool near an antique piano and signs reading “Let’s go Brandon” and “Trump 2020 No More Bull...”

Kemmerer is a quaint town of old-time storefronts and rolling hills, off the beaten path other than for occasional tourists who pass through on a slower, more scenic route to Grand Teton and Yellowstone national parks. Residents speak proudly of the coal heritage, quiet lifestyle and easy access to open lands where they can fish, hunt and hike. A river that is iced over in the winter runs through town nearby a railroad track that is down the hill from neighborhoods of older houses where families of deer roam at sunset.

Wyoming has the biggest coal industry in the U.S. by far. Trump won the state with some of his highest margins, almost 70%, in 2016 and 2020 on promises to shore up coal mining.

Yet concerns about TerraPower’s unusual, coal-replacing nuclear plant seem few and far between in this town.

“This isn’t a Chernobyl-type thing,” said Spears, wearing a camouflaged jacket and University of Wyoming cap with the bucking-horse-and-rider logo. “Kemmerer needs something.”

The U.S. nuclear industry has been at a standstill, providing a steady 20% of the nation’s power for decade amid the costly and time-consuming process of building huge conventional nuclear plants.

Only one new commercial nuclear project, the Tennessee Valley Authority’s Watts Bar No. 2, has come online in the U.S. in the past 25 years.

By cooling the planned Kemmerer reactor with liquid sodium, a metal that boils at a temperature much



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higher than water and solidifies at well above room temperature, TerraPower says its relatively small, 345-megawatt plant, able to power about 345,000 homes, will be safe and less expensive than conventional, water-cooled nuclear plants. The company's Sodium plant will use a simpler and less expensive system of unpressurized coolant and vents not dependent on electricity to halt fission during an emergency.

The approach isn't new. Russia has had a commercial sodium-cooled reactor in use at full capacity since 2016 and such designs have been tested in the U.S.

TerraPower plans to make its plant useful for today's energy grid of growing renewable power. A salt heat "battery" will allow the plant to ramp up electricity production on demand, offsetting dips in electricity when the wind isn't blowing and sun isn't shining.

"It should provide a more useful reactor, really, for operating on a grid that has a much greater amount of wind and solar than in the past," said TerraPower President and CEO Chris Levesque.

At peak capacity, the plant could generate 500 megawatts, enough for 500,000 homes, he said.

The project will cost up to \$4 billion, half of it from the U.S. Department of Energy, but costs should come down as demand for carbon-free energy grows and more are built, said Levesque.

"If we can show that the plant can be built affordably and on time, we'll have orders for additional Sodium reactors even before the first one starts up. In the 2030s, there will be massive demand for this kind of power," Levesque said.

One downside: The plant's fuel, at least at first, would need to come from Russia. The plant will require uranium fuel enriched to 20%, four times higher than in conventional nuclear plants. The U.S. doesn't currently enrich fuel to that level for commercial power.

For that matter, Levesque pointed out, about one-fifth of conventional nuclear fuel also is imported.

So far, concerns in Wyoming about the project have been few. The Wyoming Outdoor Council, noting the declining cost of solar and wind power, points out that nuclear remains costly and sodium-cooled in other countries have had leaks leading to fires and shutdowns.

In between games of pool at Grumpies bar, Colt Quintard, a 30-year-old coal mine worker, said he isn't as convinced as others the nuclear plant will be as big a boon to the community.

He fears many of the plant's full-time workers will come from out of town due to the training needed and others will live in larger cities and commute. He's open to getting training to work at the nuclear plant, but said more likely he'll have to go back to working around the county as a diesel mechanic, keeping him from being able to see his 2-year-old daughter each night.

"I don't think this community is going to benefit from it the way a lot of people think it's going to," said Quintard. "Change is going to happen, regardless. There is nothing we can do."

Rocky Mountain Power employee Crystal Bowen has no such misgivings, saying the plant should allow her and others with Rocky Mountain Power to shift to jobs at the new plant. Bowen said her online research about the nuclear technology eased any concerns.

"It was pretty shocking, back in 2019, when we heard that the fate of the plant wasn't as long-lived as we thought," said Bowen, who works in payroll and is a lifelong resident of the community. "I did not want to have to leave. I have children here. I have parents here and the idea of having to move to another location was pretty scary."

She added: "I don't know if Kemmerer would have survived if we lost the power plant and the coal mine. It may have just turned into a ghost town."

TerraPower has pledged to train workers so anyone interested can transition to working at the nuclear plant when it opens, said Rodger Holt, manager of the Naughton coal plant.

Kemmerer beat out three other Wyoming cities for the nuclear plant: nearby Rock Springs, Gillette in a coal-rich northeastern part of the state and Glenrock in east-central Wyoming. The Naughton plant employees, with experience on equipment such as generators that are used in both coal and nuclear plants, were a major reason for putting the plant in Kemmerer, according to TerraPower.

The plant remains years off — 2028 is the current estimate — but already has triggered interest in real estate and "breathes new life into the town," Mayor Bill Thek said.

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Gates' reputation as a global supporter of developing and distributing vaccines — against COVID-19, malaria and other diseases that have killed millions worldwide — also have earned him skepticism in Wyoming, a deeply conservative state among the least vaccinated against the coronavirus.

Gates, the famous co-founder Microsoft, started Bellevue, Washington-based TerraPower in 2008 and is chairman of its board. When asked about the billionaire, most in town held their tongues.

Thek laughed when asked and said he didn't want to "pick apart Bill Gates" and said "everyone knows who Bill Gates is," while reminding that the U.S. government will pay for half of the project.

"He's put his money into this and that's it, period," Thek said.

One thing Gates and Thek agree on: TerraPower's planned Natrium plant could be key to cleaner energy not just for Kemmerer and Wyoming, but the world.

"I'm not really on that bandwagon that everything is going to be green," said Thek, who describes himself as a conservative. "But I'm absolutely for saving our environment. If we get in on the ground floor of being part of saving and making our environment better, I'm all for that."

## Before pullout, watchdog warned of Afghan air force collapse

By KATHY GANNON Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Months before President Joe Biden announced the U.S.'s complete withdrawal from Afghanistan last year, Washington's watchdog warned that the Afghan air force would collapse without critical American aid, training and maintenance. The report was declassified Tuesday.

The report by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction John Sopko, submitted to the Department of Defense in January 2021, underscores that American authorities had been alerted that Afghanistan's air force did not have the capabilities to survive after a U.S. withdrawal. In particular, the report points to U.S. failure to train Afghan support staff, leaving the air force unable to maintain its aircraft without American contractors.

U.S. air support to government forces was key in the 20-year-war against Taliban insurgents. Its removal — along with the inability of the Afghan air force to fill the void — was one factor that contributed to the Taliban's sweeping victory as the Americans withdrew.

The inspector general's office told The Associated Press on Monday that it is rare for SIGAR reports to be classified but when they are, a declassified version is issued by the Pentagon in under two months. The office said it did not know why it took the Defense Department more than a year before declassifying this particular report, or why it did so now, five months after the Taliban took power.

SIGAR has tracked and documented Washington's spending and progress in Afghanistan since the office was established in 2008. It has released successive reports that documented corruption, Afghan and U.S. leadership failings and weaknesses within the Afghan army, offering recommendations on where to improve.

Since the 2001 U.S.-led invasion that ousted the Taliban and during the long war that ensued, Washington spent more than \$145 billion on reconstruction in Afghanistan and nearly \$1 trillion on its military engagement. Billions went to building up the Afghan military forces.

Biden announced in April that the last 2,500-3,500 U.S. troops would leave along with NATO's 7,500 troops, following a deal reached with the Taliban by the Trump administration. The announcement started a rapid collapse of the Afghan defense forces.

The Taliban's sweep through the country was swift, with many areas falling without a fight as Afghan troops — many of whom had not received their salaries from the Afghan government in months — fled. Afghan warplanes continued to hit Taliban positions in some areas in June and July last year, but it was not enough to stem the tide.

The Taliban entered Kabul on Aug. 15 after U.S.-backed President Ashraf Ghani fled the capital. By the end of August, the U.S. completed its chaotic departure and the evacuation of tens of thousands of Afghans, marked by images of young men clinging to departing U.S. aircraft for an opportunity to live in the U.S. and flee the Taliban's harsh and restrictive rule.

Over the preceding months, Afghan officials had warned that the air force was not able to stand on its

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own. Ata Mohammed Noor, a powerful warlord in northern Afghanistan who was a key U.S. ally in the 2001 defeat of the Taliban, said the fleet was overused and under-maintained.

"Most of the planes are back on the ground. They cannot fly and most of them are out of ammunition," he said.

The newly declassified SIGAR report says that between 2010 and 2019, the U.S. spent \$8.5 billion "to support and develop" the Afghan air force and its elite unit, the Special Mission Wing. But the report warns that both are ill-prepared. It also warns against removing the hundreds of U.S. contractors who maintained the aircraft fleet.

According to the report, NATO and the U.S. switched in 2019 from building the air force to making sure it had a chance at long-term survival.

But Sopko gave their efforts a failing grade, saying the Afghan air force hadn't been able to get the qualified personnel needed to set itself on the road to independence.

He said a combination of U.S. and NATO military personnel, as well as U.S.-funded contractors, had focused on training pilots but had not prioritized training for 86% of Afghanistan Air force personnel, including its support staff.

Even as the U.S. Department of Defense touted the Afghan air force's progress "in combat operation capabilities, pilot and ground crew proficiency, as well as air-to-ground integration," Sopko said, they continued "to struggle with human capital limitations, leadership challenges, aircraft misuse, and a dependence on contractor logistic support."

## **Sinema, Manchin slammed as Senate begins voting bill debate**

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Facing stark criticism from civil rights leaders, senators return to Capitol Hill under intense pressure to change their rules and break a Republican filibuster that has hopelessly stalled voting legislation.

The Senate is set to launch debate Tuesday on the voting bill with attention focused intently on two pivotal Democrats — Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona and Joe Manchin of West Virginia — who were singled out with a barrage of criticism during Martin Luther King Jr. Day events for their refusal to change what civil rights leaders call the "Jim Crow filibuster."

Martin Luther King III, the son of the late civil rights leader, compared Sinema and Manchin to the white moderate his father wrote about during the civil rights battles of the 1950s and 1960s — a person who declared support for the goals of Black voting rights but not the direct actions or demonstrations that ultimately led to passage of the landmark legislation.

"History will not remember them kindly," the younger King said, referring to Sinema and Manchin by name.

This will be the fifth time the Senate will try to pass voting legislation this Congress, as elections officials warn that new state laws are making it more difficult to vote in some parts of the country.

The House has passed the package, but the legislation is stalled in the Senate, opposed by Republicans. With a 50-50 split, Democrats have a narrow Senate majority — Vice President Kamala Harris can break a tie — but they lack the 60 votes needed to overcome the GOP filibuster.

Once reluctant to change Senate rules, President Joe Biden used the King holiday to pressure senators to do just that. But the push from the White House, including Biden's blistering speech last week in Atlanta comparing opponents to segregationists, is seen as too late, coming as the president ends his first year in office with his popularity sagging.

"It's time for every elected official in America to make it clear where they stand," Biden said on Martin Luther King Jr. Day. "It's time for every American to stand up. Speak out, be heard. Where do you stand?"

The Senate is launching what could become a weeklong debate, but the outcome is expected to be no different than past failed votes on the legislation. Biden has been unable to persuade Sinema and Manchin to join other Democrats in changing the rules to lower the 60-vote threshold. In fact, Sinema upstaged the president last week, reiterating her opposition to the rules changes just before Biden arrived on Capitol

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Hill to court senators' votes.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., had shelved a promised Monday rules change vote that would have been linked to the King holiday. But he is pressing ahead Tuesday as advocates push to put senators on record, despite the expectation that no bill will pass by week's end.

Senators have been working nonstop for weeks on rules changes that could win support from Sinema and Manchin, only to see their efforts repeatedly dashed. The two senators, both moderates, have expressed openness to discussing the ideas, but have not given them their backing.

Both Manchin and Sinema have argued that preserving the Senate filibuster rules as they are, at the 60-vote threshold to advance legislation, is important for fostering bipartisanship. They also warn of what would happen if Republicans win back majority control, as is distinctly possible this election year, and could easily pass GOP-backed bills.

Sinema came under particularly fierce criticism on social media for invoking King as well as the late Rep. John Lewis, whose name is on the legislation, despite her refusal to change the rules.

Blame also fell to Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell, who is leading his party against the voting legislation. The Kentucky Republican has argued the legislation is a federal overreach into state-run elections, and he harshly criticized Biden's speech last week as "unpresidential."

Civil rights leaders have implored the Senate to act swiftly, as states are passing laws that many argue will make it more difficult for Black Americans and others to vote by consolidating polling locations, refusing to allow water distribution in long lines and requiring certain types of identification.

"We cannot think of a time more defining to the American story than the chapter you are presently writing," NAACP President and CEO Derrick Johnson wrote in an open letter to the Senate.

"What country will your children and grandchildren be left with, given the relentless assaults on American freedom and democracy?"

Manchin spokeswoman Sam Runyon said in a statement late Monday: "Senator Manchin believes strongly that every American citizen of legal age has not only the right, but also the responsibility to vote and that right must be protected by law. He continues to work on legislation to protect this right."

Sinema's office did not respond to a request for comment.

The voting bill was the Democrats' top priority this Congress, and the House swiftly approved H.R. 1 only to see it languish in the Senate.

Now called the Freedom to Vote: John R. Lewis Act, the package before the Senate includes some of the most sweeping changes to elections in a generation, including making Election Day a national holiday and requiring access to early voting and mail-in ballots that became overwhelmingly popular during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The package is coupled with the John R. Lewis Voting Advancement Act, which would require voting protections that had been stripped by the Supreme Court and would again allow Justice Department scrutiny of states with a pattern of elections violations.

## Tarnished Gold: Illegal mining stokes Indigenous divisions

By SAM COWIE Associated Press

RAPOSA SERRA DO SOL INDIGENOUS TERRITORY, Brazil (AP) — The mining encampment that stretches across a mountainside in Brazil's Amazon is dotted with plastic tarpaulin covers. Under them, dozens of men toil in rocky pits, excavating sacks of ore to be transported by truck. Gold will be extracted from the ore.

Of all places this squatter settlement shouldn't exist, it's here: in Brazil's northernmost Roraima state that doesn't permit gold prospecting, inside one of the nation's Indigenous reserves where mining activity is illegal and on the flanks of this mountain — Serra do Atola — that traditional leaders of the Macuxi people hold sacred.

Nevertheless, a recent visit by The Associated Press — at the invitation of local leaders from the Maturuca and Waromada villages — found the illegal mining site back up and running just months after authorities shut it down.

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That the miners have returned in droves underscores the insatiable lure of gold and the fact they are being encouraged to keep up their work – including by the nation's president.

Such relentless pressure is rekindling long-standing divisions in local communities here on the Raposa Serra do Sol reserve about the best path forward for their collective well-being. Some local leaders see gold mining and other extractive activities as a potential boon for the area that could bring jobs and investments in one of Brazil's poorest states. Others see the mining as defiling the land on the reserve by polluting the waters, stripping bare the land, as well as upending centuries-old cultural traditions.

An AP investigation found that illegal landing strips and unauthorized airplanes have helped miners carry out tons of gold mined on Indigenous lands. The gold ends up in the hands of brokers, some of whom are under investigation by authorities for receiving gold from illegal mining. The gold is refined in Sao Paulo before becoming part of the global supply chain where it is used in products such as smartphones and computers.

Last March, the Amazon military command, federal police and environmental agencies raided mining operations at Serra do Atola mountain and found 400 people, excavation pits, precision scales and mercury for gold processing. Tribal leaders had previously filed complaints to prosecutors of bars, drugs and prostitution at the sacred site's base.

The mining site is just one of several. The number of wildcat miners at sites across the reserve has surged to some 2,000, according to Edinho Batista Macuxi, general coordinator of Roraima's Indigenous Council, the state's primary representative body that says it represents some 30,000 people.

Macuxi said that the illegal mining operations on the reserve were financed by local non-Indigenous business owners and politicians who were the owners of the equipment needed to extract the gold from the ore. A 2020 Federal Police raid on the reserve - in which four tribespeople were arrested – seems to support those allegations. The police found the gold illegally extracted would be split three ways: a quarter would be paid to the owners of equipment used to extract the gold, 4% to the local community where the mining operations were active, and the rest to the miners who had extracted the gold.

Macuxi attributes the resilience of the illegal activity to the fiery, pro-mining rhetoric of Brazil's far-right President Jair Bolsonaro. The president has sought to legalize prospecting on reserves across the country, saying they are underutilized and should bring socioeconomic gains to the impoverished region.

"The president is most to blame," Macuxi told the AP. "There is great incentive coming directly from the state."

Bolsonaro's endorsement of mining resonates with those locals who support greater economic development with the support from outsiders, Macuxi said. Some view gold prospecting as beneficial or are involved directly themselves.

"They are a minority," said Macuxi. "They are used as puppets to justify these types of projects."

Bolsonaro has said that Indigenous people should be entitled to self-determination — not just regarding possible mining, but all activities. He publicly opposed Raposa Serra do Sol's designation as a protected reserve in 2005 and often holds it up as an example of a large swath of land ripe for productive activities.

The president visited the reserve last October and, donning a traditional tribal headdress, shared with a cheering crowd of villagers his plans to present legislation that would allow mining, monoculture crop cultivation and infrastructure projects like dams on reserves.

"This bill is not an imposition. It says if you want to plant, go plant. If you're going to mine, you're going to mine," he told the Flechal community, where illegal mining is also present.

In the background, banners of the Defense Society of the United Indigenous People of Roraima, which supports mining on the reserve, hung on the wall. The group purports to represent 22,000 people across Roraima.

Unlike many reserves in the Brazilian Amazon featuring lush rainforest, Raposa Serra do Sol is mostly tropical savannah. Bordering Venezuela and Guyana, it is larger than the state of Connecticut and home to 26,000 people from five different ethnicities.

Since the Brazilian government granted its protected status, it has been a stage for sporadic violence

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often driven by disagreements over whether non-Indigenous farmers could remain in the territory.

In November, state military police broke up checkpoints established by Macuxi people opposed to the illegal mining; six of them were injured with rubber bullets.

When AP reporters visited the reserve the same month, they still had to pass through checkpoints aimed at warding off invaders and stopping the spread of COVID-19. The rugged terrain is only passable in a four-wheel drive vehicle or motorcycle.

The AP also witnessed illegal miners working in pits on the side of the sacred mountain, equipped with barrels of fuel and portable generators used to power jackhammers to break up the rocky surface.

From the encampment, trucks transported sacks of rocks that prospectors hope contain granules of gold to properties outside the mining site.

There, they are put through crushing machines in order to extract gold. In the vicinity, lookouts alert the presence of any unknown or suspicious vehicles.

Elsewhere in the reserve, in the Mutum community along the Ireng River that forms part of Brazil's border with Guyana, two men sat aboard a mining barge. One held a pan for separating the gold from sediment using mercury. The process is ubiquitous across Brazil's Amazon and it irreversibly poisons locals' waterways and fisheries, according to federal prosecutors and decades of research in the region, including by the government's Fiocruz health institute.

The president of the smaller pro-Bolsonaro Indigenous group, Irisnaide de Souza Silva, has met with the president personally, including in the capital, Brasilia.

She told the AP that her organization is trying to kick-start a project to plant 30,000 hectares (74,000 acres) of soybeans on the reserve.

"We're very focused on this project, it's innovative," she said.

The farming initiative dovetails with a program that Brazil's Indigenous agency created under Bolsonaro, dubbed "Indigenous Independence." It enables rural producers and organizations to partner with Indigenous people within reserves to mass produce crops.

The program has been fiercely criticized by activists who say ancestral lands and traditions should be preserved, and who point out that the expertise and capital come from people outside the reserve.

They argue large-scale farms on reserves stand to deepen a trend already taking place with illegal mining: outsiders reaping outside benefits while local communities receive scraps, plus the environmental damages.

The Indigenous agency's press office confirmed to the AP in an email that it was aware of the proposed soybean project, which isn't part of its "Indigenous Independence" initiative. The agency described its program as a means to help improve villages' living conditions and provide "dignity" to local people.

Critics say that couldn't be farther from the truth.

"It's a contemporary way of doing what the colonizers did in the 16th century and 17th century," said Antenor Vaz, a former member of the agency, who is now retired and consulting on issues relating to isolated tribes. "What's really happening is the appropriation of Indigenous lands by outsiders."

Vaz said that Raposa Serra do Sol could represent the future for Brazil's Indigenous lands far and wide if Bolsonaro's development-oriented policies continue.

"Inside any community differences exist," he added. "Bolsonaro is stoking these differences when he only visits communities inside the territory that are in favor of these projects."

## North Korean missile tests signal return to brinkmanship

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Grappling with pandemic difficulties and U.S.-led sanctions over his nuclear ambitions, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un could be reviving his 2017 playbook of nuclear and missile brinkmanship to wrest concessions from Washington and his neighbors.

North Korea's short-range missile launches on Monday were its fourth round of missile tests this month and signaled a refusal to be ignored by the Biden administration, which has focused more on confronting bigger adversaries such as China and Russia.

The tests could also reflect a growing urgency in its need for outside relief after its economy decayed

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further under the severe sanctions and two years of pandemic border closures, experts say.

The two missiles launched Monday near the capital, Pyongyang, followed a resumption of railroad freight traffic with China that had been suspended over pandemic concerns, in what is likely an attempt to revive the desperate economy.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said Monday that trade between Dandong in China and Sinuiju in North Korea will be maintained while pandemic controls stay in place.

While North Korea is likely to continue showcasing its weapons in the coming weeks, it could keep things relatively quiet before the opening of the February Winter Olympics in China, its main ally and economic lifeline, launching known short-range missiles rather than more provocative systems.

But it could dramatically raise the ante once the Beijing Games end. Du Hyeogn Cha, an analyst at Seoul's Asan Institute for Policy Studies, said Kim could resume testing nuclear explosives and intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Kim suspended nuclear and ICBM tests in 2018 while engaging in talks with former U.S. President Donald Trump. But the diplomacy remains derailed since their second summit in 2019, when the Americans rejected North Korea's demand for major sanctions relief in exchange for a partial surrender of its nuclear capabilities.

North Korea in recent months has ramped up tests of short-range missiles designed to defeat missile defenses in the region.

Its leaders may think it needs to stage more provocative tests to move the needle with the Biden administration, which has offered open-ended talks but has shown no willingness to ease sanctions unless Kim takes real steps to abandon his nuclear weapons program.

It's unclear whether nuclear or ICBM tests would extract a compromise from Washington, which is more likely to respond with further sanctions and military pressure, possibly including a resumption of major military drills with South Korea, Cha said.

Nam Sung-wook, a North Korea expert at Seoul's Korea University, said a nuclear test is more likely than an ICBM test because it would send a greater level of shock. The North may use that test to claim it has acquired an ability to produce a nuclear warhead small enough to fit on its purported hypersonic missile, which it first tested in September.

Nam said North Korea would time the test to maximize its political effect, with South Korean presidential elections scheduled in March and President Joe Biden facing crucial midterm elections in November. North Korea conducted its sixth and last test of a nuclear explosive device in September 2017.

"In Pyongyang's mind, there is no other way to grab Washington's attention than a major provocation," Nam said.

North Korea strengthened efforts to expand its weapons capabilities following Kim's 2021 announcement of a new five-year plan to develop his military forces, with an ambitious wish list that included hypersonic missiles, solid-fuel ICBMs, spy satellites and submarine-launched nuclear missiles.

However, the frequency of tests since then exceeds usual technological timelines and apparently reflects Kim's desire to break out of the country's current deepening economic problems and international isolation — what appears to be the toughest period of his decade-long rule.

"Externally, North Korea is trying to make a statement that it will continue to go its own way regardless of sanctions. Internally, the leadership is trying to tell its people that the supreme leader's promises will be realized no matter what, whether they be weapons development or overcoming sanctions through a self-reliant economy," Cha said.

"But they are proceeding with the tests at a very fast pace, and this reveals a sense of alarm within Pyongyang's leadership, that they must get something done with the United States in 2022 or there could be trouble."

According to South Korean estimates, North Korea's trade with China shrank by about 80% in 2020 before plunging again by two-thirds in the first nine months of 2021. The contraction in 2020 was the biggest since 1997 as grain production dropped to the lowest level since Kim took power in 2011.

Describing its anti-coronavirus campaign as a matter of "national existence," North Korea has severely

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restricted cross-border traffic and trade for the past two years and is even believed to have ordered troops to shoot on sight any trespassers who cross its borders.

Experts say a major COVID-19 outbreak would have devastating consequences because of North Korea's poor health care system, and could even trigger instability.

Its resumption of the train route with China indicates how hard it has become for its leadership to withstand the economic strain caused by border closures, said Park Won Gon, a professor of North Korea studies at Seoul's Ewha Womans University.

For decades, North Korea has mastered the art of brinkmanship, manufacturing diplomatic crises with weapons tests and threats before offering negotiations aimed at extracting concessions. Kim sped up the process in 2017 with a highly provocative run of nuclear and ICBM tests while exchanging threats of nuclear annihilation with Trump before beginning their diplomacy in 2018.

North Korea began 2022 with what it claimed were two successful tests of a hypersonic missile, which Kim said would significantly enhance his "war deterrent." After the Biden administration imposed new sanctions over those launches, North Korea vowed stronger and more explicit action and fired two missiles from a train on Friday.

State media photos of Monday's launch suggest the North tested a weapon that looks similar in appearance with the U.S. MGM-140 Army Tactical Missile System. The missiles, which North Korea first tested in 2019, are part of the country's expanding short-range weaponry designed to be maneuverable and fly at low altitudes, which potentially improves their chances of evading missile defense systems in South Korea and Japan.

Park said North Korea's push to develop and mass-produce such missiles is a key part of its efforts to cement its status as a nuclear power. Its pressure campaign is not only aimed at winning economic benefits but also to negotiate with Washington from a position of power and convert the nuclear diplomacy into talks for mutual arms reduction, he said.

## **Australia has record COVID-19 deaths, hospitals under stress**

By ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Australia reported a record high of COVID-19 deaths Tuesday, and its second-largest state declared an emergency in hospitals to cope with surging patient admissions and a staffing shortage due to the coronavirus.

The 74 deaths occurred in its three most populous states. New South Wales reported 36, Victoria reported 22 and Queensland 16. The previous daily record was 59 coronavirus-related deaths on Sept. 4, 2020.

Federal Health Minister Greg Hunt said there were signs that New South Wales' infection rate was peaking and Victoria was near a plateau.

The New South Wales government has ruled out a return to lockdown to counter the highly contagious omicron variant. In October, Sydney ended a 108-day lockdown because the population of Australia's most populous city was largely vaccinated.

Another lockdown would have "substantial consequences for men and women right across the state in terms of being able to provide food on the table for their family," state Premier Domonic Perrottet told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

Victoria declared an emergency for hospitals in its state capital, Melbourne, and several regional hospitals from midday Wednesday because of staff shortages and a surge in patient admissions. About 5,000 staff are absent because they are either infected or close contacts.

"We've reached a point in our healthcare system where it's juggling extreme workforce shortages ... alongside a vast number of patients with COVID-19 who require hospitalization, alongside that an extraordinary workforce that are absolutely exhausted," Acting Health Minister James Merlino said.

A emergency declaration means additional capability and capacity need to be mobilized to receive an influx of patients. Some hospital staff may be recalled from leave and more services will be deferred. Physiotherapists and medical students will be asked to take on nursing duties.



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It is the first time the emergency has been activated in multiple hospitals across the state. More than 2,700 people have died with COVID-19 in Australia, which has a population of 26 million.

## North Korea: Tactical guided missiles fired in latest test

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea said Tuesday it had conducted a test-firing of “tactical guided missiles,” a day after South Korea’s military detected the North launching two ballistic missiles into the sea.

Monday’s test was North Korea’s fourth round of missile launches this month and the second since its Foreign Ministry warned of stronger and more explicit action after the Biden administration last week imposed fresh sanctions over the North’s continued weapons displays.

Some experts say North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is reviving Pyongyang’s old playbook of brinkmanship to extract concessions from Washington and neighbors as he grapples with a broken economy and pandemic-related difficulties. The economic setbacks have left Kim with little to show for his diplomatic efforts with the U.S., which derailed in 2019 after the Americans rejected North Korea’s demands for major sanctions relief in exchange for a partial surrender of its nuclear capabilities.

North Korea’s official Korean Central News Agency said the test was aimed to evaluate the missiles that were already being manufactured and deployed. KCNA said missiles “precisely” struck a sea target to confirm the system’s “accuracy, security and efficiency.”

The report didn’t specify what the missiles were. Kim Dong-yub, a professor at Seoul’s University of North Korean Studies, said state media photos suggest the North tested a short-range weapon that looks similar in appearance with the U.S. MGM-140 Army Tactical Missile System.

First tested in 2019, the missile is part of North Korea’s expanding short-range weaponry that experts say are aimed at overwhelming missile defenses in North Asia. Its missile launches on Friday were of another short-range weapon apparently modeled after the Russian Iskander mobile ballistic system.

These missiles, which are potentially nuclear-capable, are designed to be maneuverable and fly at low altitudes, theoretically giving them a better chance at evading and defeating missile defense systems.

Park Won Gon, a professor at Seoul’s Ewha Womans University, said the North’s development and mass production of these short-range weapons are a key part of the country’s efforts to cement its status as a nuclear power in hopes of wresting badly needed economic concessions from rivals.

The North has so far rejected the Biden administration’s open-ended offers to resume talks, saying that Washington must first abandon what Pyongyang perceives as “hostile” policies.

Even if negotiations resume, it could be impossible to entirely remove all the short-range weapons North Korea has already produced. Kim Jong Un is clearly trying to convert the diplomacy with Washington into an arms-reduction negotiation between nuclear states and rejecting any process that would culminate in a unilateral surrender of weapons he sees as his strongest guarantee of survival, Park said.

Last week, the U.S. Treasury Department imposed sanctions on five North Koreans over their roles in obtaining equipment and technology for the North’s missile programs in response to North Korea’s earlier tests of a purported hypersonic missile.

The State Department ordered sanctions against another North Korean, a Russian man and a Russian company for their broader support of North Korea’s weapons of mass destruction activities. The Biden administration also said it would pursue additional U.N. sanctions over the North’s continued tests.

## Colombian author García Márquez had secret Mexican daughter

By ASTRID SUÁREZ Associated Press

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — For decades renowned Colombian author Gabriel García Márquez kept the public from knowing about an intimate aspect of his life: He had a daughter with a Mexican writer, with whom he had an extramarital affair in the early 1990s.

The closely guarded secret was published by Colombian newspaper El Universal on Sunday and confirmed to the Associated Press by two relatives of the Nobel Prize-winning author, who is famous for novels like

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One Hundred Years of Solitude and Love in the Time of Cholera.

García Márquez died in Mexico City in 2014, where thousands of his readers lined up to see his casket in a concert hall. He was married for more than five decades to Mercedes Barcha and the couple had two children named Rodrigo and Gonzalo. They lived in Mexico City for much of their lives.

El Universal said that in the early 1990s García Márquez had a daughter with Susana Cato, a writer and journalist who worked with García Márquez on two movie scripts and who also interviewed him for a 1996 magazine story. Cato and García Márquez named their daughter Indira: She is now in her early 30s and uses her mother's surname.

Shani García Márquez, one of the writer's nieces, told the AP that she had known for years about her cousin Indira, but had not mentioned her to the media because her parents always asked her to be discrete about her uncle's personal life.

Gabriel Eligio Torres García, who is also a nephew of the Colombian writer, said he has been in touch with Indira Cato through social media, though he has never met her in person.

"My cousins Rodrigo and Gonzalo told me about her casually during a reunion," he said.

Other members of García Márquez's family, cited by El Universal, said they had not spoken about the writer's daughter previously out of "respect" for Mercedes Barcha who died in August 2020. Torres García said that Indira Cato's mother, Susana, had also been discrete about her daughter's lineage, to keep her away from the media spotlight.

Indira Cato is now a documentary producer in Mexico City. She won several awards for a 2014 documentary on migrants passing through Mexico.

García Márquez' family said they didn't want to share her contact information because they were not authorized to do so, and the AP could not contact Indira Cato independently.

"She leads a very artistic lifestyle, like many people in this family," said Shani García. "It makes us very happy that she has shined on her own."

## Djokovic's deportation exposes Australian border debate

By ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Weary after two years of some of the harshest COVID-19 border restrictions in the world, many Australians wanted Novak Djokovic kicked out of their country for traveling to a tennis tournament in their country without being vaccinated.

But the backdrop to the government's tough line on the defending Australian Open champion — and Prime Minister Scott Morrison's description of the expulsion as a "decision to keep our borders strong" — dates to nearly a decade ago. It also shines a light on Australia's complicated, and strongly criticized, immigration and border policies.

Back in 2013, the border issue wasn't unvaccinated foreigners like Djokovic but thousands of asylum seekers from Asia, the Middle East and Africa who flocked to Australia on rickety fishing boats from Indonesian ports.

Now, with the next election due by May, Djokovic has become the new focus of the government's claim to a tough stance on border protection that leaders hope will win votes. The opposition, meanwhile, argues that Djokovic has exposed government failures in border control and its pandemic response.

Refugee activists say the tennis star's treatment exposes the harsh treatment of dozens of others detained because of visa issues.

Widespread anger followed a Djokovic post on social media on Jan. 4 that said he had been granted "exemption permission" to fly quarantine-free to Australia to play tennis. He had been approved by an automated visa application process days earlier.

Djokovic arrived at a time when some Australians' overseas relatives still aren't able to visit because their COVID-19 vaccine types aren't recognized by Australian authorities.

Tennis fan Holly McCann, who attended the first day of the Australian Open on Monday, said Djokovic did not deserve to be an exception to strict border rules.

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"It should be the rule is the rule, regardless of your status," McCann said. "I have nothing against him personally, but I don't think he should be an exception."

When an expletive-laden off-air conversation between Seven Network television anchors Mike Amor and Rebecca Maddern savaging Djokovic's character and government bungling of his case was somehow posted online, viewer responses were overwhelmingly positive, suggesting a strong urge for Djokovic to be expelled.

A poll published by The Sun Herald and Sunday Age newspapers on Sunday showed 71% of respondents did not want Djokovic to be allowed to stay in Australia.

In 2013, when a conservative coalition won the first of three consecutive elections, Morrison, the then-new minister for Immigration and Border Protection, played a key role in revamping what had seemed to many the insurmountable and politically damaging problem of daily unauthorized boat arrivals.

Morrison took credit as government vessels turned back boats and asylum seekers were sent to immigration centers on poor island nations instead of the Australian mainland.

Djokovic's days in Australia were largely spent in the cramped Park Hotel, which is used for immigration detention, while he fought in the courts to stay in Melbourne. This was welcomed by refugee advocates for the international attention it focused on 60 other people kept in the same high-rise building because they don't have visas.

When Djokovic's visa was first canceled, Morrison tweeted, "Rules are rules, especially when it comes to our borders."

But Melbourne-based refugee advocate Ian Rintoul noted that unlike other refugees and asylum seekers who shared the Park Hotel with the wealthy celebrity, Djokovic was not handcuffed when he was escorted from the building.

"Many people learned that there are refugees being held prisoner by the Australian government for the first time because of Novak Djokovic," Rintoul said. "That's the silver lining to this fiasco."

The political decision to deport Djokovic was made by Immigration Minister Alex Hawke after a court overturned a previous decision by a border official to cancel his visa on procedural grounds when he arrived at Melbourne airport 11 days earlier.

Confusingly, Australia canceled Djokovic's visa twice for different reasons.

In the first instance, the visa was canceled because his diagnosis with COVID-19 in Serbia last month did not qualify him for an exemption from Australia's border rules. Foreign visitors have to be fully vaccinated or provide a medical certificate as evidence that they cannot be inoculated for health reasons.

Djokovic had relied on exemptions from vaccine rules provided by Tennis Australia and the Victoria state government.

The 34-year-old Serb was finally deported because Hawke regarded him as a "talisman of a community of anti-vaccination sentiment" whose presence might encourage Australians to emulate his flouting of pandemic safety measures.

Border protection has been a recurring theme in Morrison's rise to power. While popular at home, the border policies were widely criticized as inhumane and an abrogation of Australia's international obligations to refugees.

Those in hotel detention with Djokovic came to Australia from camps in Nauru and Papua New Guinea for medical treatment and then gained a court injunction preventing them from being sent back. Some have been detained in hotels for more than two years, Rintoul, the refugee advocate, said.

For almost two years following the start of the pandemic, thousands of Australians were refused permission to travel overseas to visit dying relatives, attend funerals and weddings or be introduced to newborn family members.

Considered cruel by many, the travel ban kept Australia's pandemic death toll down and was supported by a majority of Australians.

But a relaxation of travel restrictions a month ago because of high vaccination levels and the arrival of the highly contagious omicron variant have resulted in Australia recording as many coronavirus infections

in the first weeks of 2022 as it tallied in the previous two years of the pandemic.

Morrison has laid the blame for Djokovic's ill-fated Australian trip squarely on the tennis star.

But opposition spokesperson Kristina Keneally said there was no excuse for the government issuing a visa in the first place for "a known anti-vax proponent."

"This has been a monumental bungle at our borders by the Morrison government. They want to run around and pat themselves on the back about it. They deserve a kick up the backside," she said.

## On MLK Day, King III implores Senate to act on voting rights

By JEFF MARTIN and MICHAEL WARREN The Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — A day before the U.S. Senate was expected to take up significant legislation on voting rights that is looking likely to fail, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s eldest son condemned federal lawmakers over their inaction.

Speaking in Washington, D.C. on Monday, Martin Luther King III said though he was marking the federal holiday named for his father, he wasn't there to celebrate. He was there to call on Congress and President Joe Biden to pass the sweeping legislation that would help ease Republican-led voting restrictions passed in at least 19 states that make it more difficult to cast a ballot.

"Our democracy stands on the brink of serious trouble without these bills," he said.

Monday's holiday marked what would have been the 93rd birthday of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., who was just 39 when he was assassinated in 1968 while helping sanitation workers strike for better pay and workplace safety in Memphis, Tennessee.

Around the U.S., other holiday events included marches in several cities, acts of service in King's name, and the annual Martin Luther King Jr. service at the slain civil rights leader's Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, where U.S. Sen. Raphael Warnock is the senior pastor.

Pews have been packed by politicians in past years, but given the pandemic, many gave either pre-recorded or livestreamed remarks instead, including Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris.

Biden said Americans must commit to the King's unfinished work, delivering jobs and justice and protecting "the sacred right to vote, a right from which all other rights flow."

"It's time for every elected official in America to make it clear where they stand," Biden said. "It's time for every American to stand up. Speak out, be heard. Where do you stand?"

Democrats had hoped to vote on the legislation Monday, in a show of respect for the late civil rights leader as the issue gathered political steam late last year and peaked with a powerful blunt speech last week by Biden, who likened the Jan. 6, 2021, violence and election subversion of today with the civil rights struggles fought by King and others. But it comes too late for many civil rights leaders.

Senate Republicans remain unified in opposition to the Democrats' voting bills, and the 50-50 chamber needs 60 votes to pass the legislation. Two Democrats, Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Sen. Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, remain opposed to changing Senate rules that would allow for the Democrats to pass the bills without the GOP. The vote was pushed back to Tuesday, but it looks as if there is no way through for the legislation to protect the right to vote.

King told of how his father also faced a pushback on civil rights by those who believed the issue could not be solved with legislation. "They told him he had to change hearts first. And he worked hard at that. After all, he was a Baptist preacher. But he knew that when someone is denying you your fundamental rights, conversation and optimism won't get you very far."

Sinema has argued that bipartisanship is needed to address the issue, but King countered that significant milestones, including the 14th Amendment that granted citizenship to former slaves, passed Congress without bipartisan support.

Harris was meeting Monday with lawmakers ahead of the vote working to get the legislation passed. But when asked specifically about her message to Sinema and Manchin, she didn't engage directly.

"As I've said before, there are a hundred members of the United States Senate, and I'm not going to absolve — nor should any of us — absolve any member of the United States Senate from taking on a

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responsibility to follow through on the oath that they all took to support and defend the Constitution of the United States," she said.

Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina, the Senate's only Black Republican, countered with a series of King Day-themed videos he said would emphasize positive developments on civil rights. Scott sidestepped criticism about GOP actions and accused Biden of labelling Republicans as racists.

"To compare or conflate people who oppose his positions as being racists and traitors to the country is not only insulting and infuriating, it's dead wrong," Scott told The Associated Press.

To the sparse crowd at Ebenezer, Warnock, now running for reelection as Georgia's first Black senator, said that "everybody loves Dr. King, they just don't always love what he represents."

"Let the word go forth, you cannot remember Dr. King and dismember his legacy at the same time," Warnock said. "If you will speak his name you have to stand up for voting rights, you have to stand up on behalf of the poor and the oppressed and the disenfranchised."

Other leaders weighed in, too. Former President Barack Obama shared a picture of King's granddaughter Yolanda admiring a bust of King that Obama kept in the Oval Office. "The fight for voting rights takes perseverance," Obama tweeted. "As Dr. King said, 'There are no broad highways to lead us easily and inevitably to quick solutions. We must keep going.'"

King "saw a great injustice in his world and fought to right that wrong," Republican Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp said in a recorded message played at Ebenezer. "His methods ultimately led to success and showed all of us that taking the high road is the best path to achieving lasting change."

Democrat Stacey Abrams, now trying again to defeat Kemp as he seeks reelection, tweeted that King's call remains clear: "Deliver justice for the poor, protect those targeted by hate, defend the freedom to vote, and demand that our leaders fight current malice as the best bulwark against future harm."

King, who delivered his historic "I Have a Dream" speech while leading the 1963 March on Washington and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, considered racial equality inseparable from alleviating poverty and stopping war. His insistence on nonviolent protest continues to influence activists pushing for civil rights and social change.

## UK's Johnson, and his foes, await key 'partygate' report

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — As he fights for his career, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has one constant refrain: Wait for Sue Gray.

Gray is a senior but previously obscure civil servant who may hold Johnson's political future in her hands. She has the job of investigating allegations that the prime minister and his staff attended lockdown-flouting parties on government property.

Gray is due to report by the end of the month on claims government staff held late-night soirees, "bring your own booze" parties and "wine time Fridays" while Britain was under coronavirus restrictions in 2020 and 2021. The allegations have spawned public anger, incredulity and mockery, and prompted some in the governing Conservative Party to call for Johnson's resignation.

The prime minister last week made a contrite, carefully worded apology in Parliament, but stopped short of admitting rule-breaking and urged everyone to wait for Gray's verdict.

But Alex Thomas, a program director at think-tank the Institute for Government, said those expecting the report to "either clear the prime minister or damn him" would likely be disappointed.

"This is a huge political and wider public issue," he said. "The Gray report is an important part of finding out what happened. But in the end this is a judgment for Conservative Cabinet ministers and MPs about whether they want Boris Johnson to lead their party and therefore lead the country."

Gray is investigating close to a dozen alleged gatherings held between May 2020 and April 2021, most in the prime minister's Downing Street office-cum-residence. One party took place when people in Britain were banned from socializing or visiting sick relatives in hospitals. Another came on the eve of Prince Philip's socially distanced funeral, at which widowed Queen Elizabeth II was forced to sit alone in church.

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Johnson has acknowledged attending one event, a May 2020 garden party, but says he considered it a work event. But his former top aide Dominic Cummings, who is now a fierce critic of Johnson, said Monday that the prime minister had been warned the party broke the rules, and lied to Parliament by denying it.

Gray has access to "all relevant records" and power to interview officials, including Johnson, in her attempt to uncover the facts. The prime minister's office would not confirm whether Johnson has been quizzed by Gray, though Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi said Johnson had "submitted himself" to investigation.

Gray can establish "whether individual disciplinary action is warranted" against officials, and London's Metropolitan Police force says it could open an investigation if she finds evidence of law-breaking.

Crucially, though, Gray has limited room to censure Johnson. Usually, civil service inquiries make recommendations to the prime minister. Here it's the prime minister who is being investigated, making Johnson the arbiter of his own punishment.

The inquiry is an unusually high-profile assignment for a woman used to exerting power behind the scenes. Gray has served both Labour and Conservative governments over several decades, according to a brief biography on the government website, with a gap in the 1980s when she ran a pub in Northern Ireland.

As head of "propriety and ethics" at the Cabinet Office, she investigated previous allegations of wrongdoing by ministers, including claims of sexual misconduct against then deputy prime minister Damian Green in 2017, who was forced to resign as a result.

Gray is regarded within government as a straight shooter unafraid to stand up to politicians. But freedom of information campaigners have criticized her role in keeping government secrets. A previous role involved vetting officials' memoirs to ensure no secrets were spilled, and she has been accused of stonewalling freedom of information requests.

Thomas, who knows Gray, said she wouldn't be enjoying the spotlight.

"You don't generally join the civil service to become a household name," he said. "That said, she is a resilient person."

Johnson's office says the prime minister "will accept what facts she establishes," but won't say what action he might take after Gray's report. He has previously ignored a similar civil-service inquiry: In 2020, Johnson backed Home Secretary Priti Patel after an investigation concluded that she had bullied her staff.

British media reported Monday that the prime minister plans to fire senior officials and aides to save his own skin if Gray's report is critical — a plan dubbed "Operation Save Big Dog."

Johnson spokesman Max Blain dismissed the reports and said he had "never heard that term used." He also denied the government was deploying "Operation Red Meat" -- throwing out attention-grabbing policy measures to distract from the party claims.

The government has undeniably made a flurry of recent announcements likely to appeal to Conservative lawmakers who may be wobbling in their support for Johnson. They include a plan to cut taxpayer support for the BBC; a vow to deploy the military to stop migrants crossing the English Channel from France in small boats; and an intention to lift remaining coronavirus restrictions next week.

"Partygate" has helped the opposition Labour Party open up a double-digit opinion poll lead on the Conservatives. Johnson doesn't have to face voters' judgment until the next general election, scheduled for 2024. But the Conservative Party has a history of ousting leaders once they become liabilities.

Johnson's predecessor, Theresa May, was forced out in 2019 after failing to secure acceptable Brexit divorce terms with the European Union. Johnson could suffer the same fate if the party decides his popular appeal — the star quality that has seen him bounce back from past scandals — has vanished.

Under Conservative rules, a no-confidence vote in the leader can be triggered if 54 party lawmakers write letters demanding it. It's unclear how many have already been submitted, and so far only a handful of Conservative members of Parliament have openly called for Johnson to quit.

Many others are waiting to see what Gray says, and how the public responds.

"There is a real sense of anger and disappointment within the party," Conservative lawmaker Andrew Bowie told the BBC. "And I think that many MPs therefore are struggling with the decisions that they may have to take over the next few weeks."

## Funeral services held for 12 killed in Philadelphia fire

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Funeral services were held Monday for nine children and three adults who died in a Philadelphia fire five days into the new year, the deadliest blaze in the city in more than a century.

A funeral procession on the rain-soaked streets of the city Monday morning was followed by services at Temple University's Liacouras Center, to which members of the community were invited and asked to wear white.

Those in attendance at the three-hour service listened to Bible readings, official proclamations and music. Relatives spoke about their loss and their memories of their loved ones from two microphones behind tables bearing caskets amid white flowers and large pictures of the victims.

"None of us know what to do with a funeral with 12 people," said the Reverend Dr. Alyn Waller of the Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church. "We're in a space of grief and pain we wish on no one else."

One speaker, an aunt of the children, tearfully said she believed there was "a family reunion in heaven."

"I believe they're with their dad. I believe they're with my mother. I believe they're with my father, their uncles and aunts," she said. "The hurt is deep but it will subside."

The victims of the Jan. 5 fire were all on the third floor of a duplex north of the city center near the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The three-story brick duplex was owned by the Philadelphia Housing Authority, which is the city's public housing agency and the state's biggest landlord.

Three sisters — Rosalee McDonald, Virginia Thomas and Quinsha White — and nine of their children died in the blaze, according to family members. The city last week identified the other victims as Quintien Tate-McDonald, Destiny McDonald, Dekwan Robinson, J'Kwon Robinson, Taniesha Robinson, Tiffany Robinson, Shaniece Wayne, Natasha Wayne and Janiyah Roberts. Officials did not provide their ages.

Investigators last week confirmed that it started at a Christmas tree but stopped short of officially saying that it was sparked by a child playing with a lighter.

The blaze had been the deadliest fire in years at a U.S. residential building but was surpassed days later by a fire in a high-rise in New York City's Bronx borough that killed 17 people, including several children.

## Drone attack in Abu Dhabi claimed by Yemen's rebels kills 3

By AYA BATRAWY Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — A drone attack claimed by Yemen's Houthi rebels targeting a key oil facility in Abu Dhabi killed three people on Monday and sparked a fire at Abu Dhabi's international airport.

Emirati police identified the dead as two Indian nationals and one Pakistani. Six people were also wounded at an industrial area where Abu Dhabi's state-owned energy company runs a pipeline network and an oil tanker storage facility.

Senior Emirati diplomat Anwar Gargash blamed the Houthis for the attack, saying on Twitter that Emirati authorities were handling the rebel group's "vicious attack on some civilian facilities" in the United Arab Emirates' capital with "transparency and responsibility."

"The tampering of the region's security by terrorist militias is too weak to affect the stability and safety in which we live," he said.

Three transport tankers caught fire at the oil facility, while another fire was sparked at an extension of Abu Dhabi International Airport.

Police said preliminary findings indicate there were small flying objects, possibly belonging to drones, that fell in the two areas and may have caused the explosion and fire. They said there was no significant damage from the incidents, without offering further details.

Yemen's Iranian-backed Houthi rebels claimed they were behind an attack targeting "sensitive Emirati facilities." In a press conference late Monday, military spokesman Yehia Sarea said, without offering evidence, that the Houthis targeted the airports of Abu Dhabi and Dubai, as well as an oil refinery and other sites in the UAE with ballistic missiles and explosive-laden drones.

Although the UAE has largely withdrawn its own forces from Yemen, it is still actively engaged in the

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conflict and supports Yemeni militias fighting the Houthis.

The incident comes as the Houthis face pressure and are suffering heavy losses. Yemeni government forces, allied and backed by the UAE, have pushed back the rebels in key provinces. Aided by the Emirati-backed Giants Brigades, the government forces took back the province of Shabwa earlier this month in a blow to Houthi efforts to complete their control of the entire northern half of Yemen.

Condemnations of the attack on the UAE poured in from across the world.

U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said the United States would work with the UAE and international partners to hold the Houthis accountable, saying "we stand beside our Emirati partners against all threats to their territory."

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres denounced the assault as "prohibited by international law" and urged all sides "to prevent any escalation amid heightened tensions in the region," said spokesman Stephane Dujarric. The U.N. special envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg was headed to Riyadh for meetings with Saudi and Yemeni officials on "the recent military uptick" in Yemen, Dujarric added.

Saudi Arabia and a host of other Arab states decried the assault as "a cowardly terrorist attack." The kingdom, as well as the U.S., U.N. experts and others have accused Iran of supplying arms to the Houthis.

The UAE was a key member of the Saudi-led coalition that has waged war against the Houthis since 2015, trying to restore to power the internationally backed government, ousted by the rebels the previous year.

While Emirati troops have been killed over the course of the conflict, now in its eight year, the war has not directly affected daily life in the wider UAE, a country with a vast foreign workforce that is also home to Dubai, a glitzy city of skyscrapers and five-star hotels.

The airport fire in Abu Dhabi was described by police as "minor" and took place at an extension of the international airport that is still under construction. For years, the airport home to Etihad Airways has been building its new Midfield Terminal, but it was not clear if that was where the fire took place.

Etihad Airways said "precautionary measures resulted in a short disruption for a small number of flights" and that airport operations have returned to normal. Abu Dhabi Airports did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The other blast struck three petroleum transport tankers near a complex for the Abu Dhabi National Oil Co. in the Musaffah industrial area. The company describes it as a pipeline and terminal facility located some 22 kilometers (13 miles) from the center of the city of Abu Dhabi, where 36 storage tanks also supply transport trucks carrying fuel.

It is also a short distance from Al-Dhafra Air Base, a military installation that hosts U.S. and French forces. U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Andrew Clark, the Al-Dhafra Air Base commander for American forces, said in a statement to The Associated Press that "no incidents" affected the base amid the attack.

"U.S. forces are ready and available to assist and support their Emirati partners if requested," he said.

The location of the ADNOC facility where the tankers caught fire is approximately 1,800 kilometers (1,100 miles) northeast of Saada, the Houthis' stronghold in Yemen.

The incident comes as South Korea's President Moon Jae-in is visiting the UAE. The two countries reportedly reached a preliminary deal valued at some \$3.5 billion sell mid-range South Korean surface-to-air missiles to the UAE during his trip.

At an event attended by the South Korean president earlier in the day, Emirati Energy Minister Suhail al-Mazrouei declined to comment on the attack but told the AP that investigations were ongoing.

The Houthis have used bomb-laden drones to launch crude and imprecise attacks aimed at Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The group has also launched missiles at Saudi airports, oil facilities and pipelines, and used booby-trapped boats for attacks in key shipping routes.

Earlier this month, the Houthis seized an Emirati-flagged ship in the Red Sea, a crucial route for international trade and energy shipments.

Though there have been civilian deaths in Saudi Arabia from Houthi attacks, there had been no deaths previously reported in the UAE.

The overwhelming number of civilian deaths in the conflict have been in Yemen. The war has killed 130,000 people in Yemen — both civilians and fighters — and has exacerbated hunger and famine across



the impoverished country.

Torbjorn Soltvedt, an analyst at the risk intelligence company Verisk Maplecroft, noted that while the Houthis have claimed responsibility for an attack on the UAE, Iraqi-based militias have also threatened the UAE in response to alleged Emirati interference in Iraqi politics.

He said the attack highlights the missile and drone threat faced by the UAE and the region's other main oil producers. Without a solution to diffuse wider regional tensions, Gulf Arab states "will remain vulnerable to attacks," he added.

## Winter storm whipping northeast US with snow, thunderstorms

By JULIE WALKER and KAREN MATTHEWS Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A dangerous winter storm brought significant snowfall, strong thunderstorms and blustery winds to the northeastern U.S. on a holiday Monday.

The storm system dropped a foot (30 centimeters) or more of snow in parts of New York state, Ohio and Pennsylvania Sunday night through Monday morning after pummeling parts of the Southeast on Sunday.

"We've had a very strong area of low pressure that's kind of moved up the coast, with pretty heavy snowfall accumulations from Tennessee, North Carolina all the way into the northeast," said meteorologist Marc Chenard at the weather service's headquarters in College Park, Maryland.

Forecasters in Buffalo, New York, said almost 18 inches (45 centimeters) of snow fell by 1 p.m. Monday. The city advised people not to travel if they didn't need to on this Martin Luther King Jr. Day, while some surrounding towns instituted a travel ban.

"WOW! (Latest) snow measurement at 1 AM was 4.6 inches in the last hour at the Buffalo Airport!" the National Weather Service in Buffalo tweeted overnight. "And tack on another 4 inches in the last hour ending at 2 AM! Total so far since late Sun evening - 10.2 inches."

Weather service meteorologist Alexa Maines said 15 inches (38 centimeters) or more of snow were reported in Cleveland, Ohio, and 25 inches (63 centimeters) in parts of Ashtabula County in the northeast corner of the state.

Power outages affected tens of thousands of customers in the northeast, and hundreds of flights were canceled. Many COVID-19 vaccination and testing sites had to close down.

New York City got less than an inch of snow, which was washed away by rain overnight. The weather service said spotty showers and snow showers might continue through Monday night.

Forecasters said wind gusts in New York City could top out around 45 mph (72 kph), and around 60 mph (97 kph) on Long Island.

Sleet and rain were the main threats for much of Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island. Periods of snowfall transitioned to rain overnight. NWS meteorologists in Boston said wind gusts could reach 70 mph (113 kph).

The howling winds spread a fire that destroyed a motel and two other structures in coastal Salisbury, Massachusetts, early Monday.

The storm brought similar conditions Sunday to the Southeast, where thousands were still without power Monday.

Multiple states reported heavy snowfall, and two people died Sunday in North Carolina when their car drove off the road. The roof of a dormitory partially collapsed in the state at Brevard College, with officials saying it broke under the weight of snow. There were no injuries.

Severe thunderstorms in Florida spun up a tornado with 118 mph (190 kph) winds, destroying 30 mobile homes and majorly damaging 51 more. Three minor injuries were reported.

Wet roadways in the South were expected to refreeze Monday, creating icy conditions for motorists.

Plow trucks were scattered along roads and highways up the East Coast, working to clear the way for travelers. Some crashes were reported in the early morning hours, including an ambulance involved in a wreck on Interstate 279 in Pittsburgh, KDKA-TV reported. It was unclear whether anyone was injured.

## Israel study: 4th vaccine shows limited results with omicron

By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — An Israeli hospital on Monday said preliminary research indicates a fourth dose of the coronavirus vaccine provides only limited defense against the omicron variant that is raging around the world.

Sheba Hospital last month began administering a fourth vaccine to more than 270 medical workers — 154 who received a Pfizer-BioNtech vaccine and 120 others who received Moderna's. All had previously been vaccinated three times with the Pfizer-BioNtech vaccine.

The clinical trial found that both groups showed increases in antibodies "slightly higher" than following the third vaccine last year. But it said the increased antibodies did not prevent the spread of omicron.

"Despite increased antibody levels, the fourth vaccine only offers a partial defense against the virus," said Dr. Gili Regev-Yochay, director of the hospital's infection disease unit. "The vaccines, which were more effective against previous variants, offer less protection versus omicron."

The preliminary results raised questions about Israel's decision to offer a second booster shot — and fourth overall — to its over-60 population. The government says over 500,000 people have received the second booster in recent weeks.

Dr. Nahman Ash, director of Israel's Health Ministry, said the research did not mean the fourth vaccine effort was a mistake. "It returns the level of antibodies to what it was at the beginning of the third booster. That has great importance, especially among the older population," he told Channel 13 TV.

But he said the research would be taken into account as authorities debate whether to expand the additional booster campaign to the broader population.

Israel was one of the first countries last year to widely vaccinate its population and last summer became the first to offer a booster shot. The latest booster campaign for older Israelis also is believed to be the first of its kind in the world.

Israel's aggressive vaccination efforts have not been able to stop an omicron outbreak in recent weeks. The variant has caused record-setting infection levels and sent a growing number of people to the hospital, though the numbers of seriously ill remain below previous waves.

It has also forced large numbers of Israelis into quarantine, straining schools and businesses.

Omicron is already dominant in many countries and can also infect those who have been vaccinated or had previously been infected by prior versions of the virus. Early studies, however, show it is less likely to cause severe illness than the previous delta variant. Vaccination and a booster still offer strong protection from serious illness, hospitalization and death.

On Tuesday, the Israeli government said it was shortening the mandatory quarantine period from seven days to five days in order to help keep the economy running.

"This decision will enable us to continue safeguarding public health on the one hand and to keep the economy going at this time on the other, even though it is difficult, so that we can get through this wave safely," said Prime Minister Naftali Bennett.

## Out of this world: 555.55-carat black diamond lands in Dubai

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Auction house Sotheby's Dubai has unveiled a diamond that's literally from out of this world.

Sotheby's calls the 555.55-carat black diamond — believed to have come from outer space — "The Enigma." The rare gem was shown off on Monday to journalists as part of a tour in Dubai and Los Angeles before it is due to be auctioned off in February in London.

Sotheby's expects the diamond to be sold for at least 5 million British pounds (\$6.8 million). The auction house plans to accept cryptocurrency as a possible payment as well.

Sophie Stevens, a jewelry specialist at Sotheby's Dubai, told The Associated Press that the number five bears an importance significance to the diamond, which has 55 facets as well.

"The shape of the diamond is based on the Middle-Eastern palm symbol of the Khamsa, which stands

for strength and it stands for protection," she said. Khamsa in Arabic means five.

"So there's a nice theme of the number five running throughout the diamond," she added.

Stevens also said the black diamond is likely from outer space.

"With the carbonado diamonds, we believe that they were formed through extraterrestrial origins, with meteorites colliding with the Earth and either forming chemical vapor disposition or indeed coming from the meteorites themselves," she said.

Black diamonds, also known as carbonado, are extremely rare, and are found naturally only in Brazil and Central Africa. The cosmic origin theory is based on their carbon isotopes and high hydrogen content.

## China's Xi rejects 'Cold War mentality,' pushes cooperation

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — Chinese President Xi Jinping said Monday that his country will send an additional 1 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccine to other countries, calling for global cooperation to tackle the pandemic and other challenges while urging other powers to discard a "Cold-War mentality" — a veiled swipe at the United States.

Xi touted China's efforts to share vaccines, fight climate change and promote development in the opening speech of a virtual gathering hosted by the World Economic Forum. The online event is being held after the group put off its annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland, because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Efforts to battle the global outbreak that has claimed over 5.5 million lives and upended the world economy and climate change were prominent themes Monday.

In a panel session on the virus, Moderna's CEO said the vaccine maker was working on a single-shot booster for both COVID-19 and the flu, while U.S. infectious diseases expert Dr. Anthony Fauci lamented as "very disturbing" the reluctance of many Americans to follow basic measures like mask-wearing and getting vaccinated.

Xi, who hasn't left China since the coronavirus emerged in early 2020, said his country has exported more than 2 billion doses of its COVID-19 vaccines to over 120 countries and international institutions. He announced plans to provide an additional 1 billion, including a donation of 600 million doses to Africa and an extra 150 million to Southeast Asia.

By comparison, managers of the U.N.-backed COVAX program to ship vaccines to developing countries announced over the weekend that it has now delivered 1 billion vaccine doses.

Xi touched on standard themes from previous international addresses, including responding to trading partners' complaints by promising to open China's state-dominated economy wider to private and foreign competition.

His comments come as tensions between the United States and China have simmered on topics like Taiwan, intellectual property, trade, human rights and the South China Sea.

"We need to discard Cold War mentality and seek peaceful coexistence and win-win outcomes," Xi said through a translator. "Protectionism and unilateralism can protect no one. ... Even worse are the practices of hegemony and bullying, which run counter to the tide of history" — terms Beijing has used to describe U.S. policy and actions.

"A zero-sum approach that enlarges one's own gain at the expense of others will not help," he added. "The right way forward for humanity is peaceful development and win-win cooperation."

Xi said China "stands ready to work with" other governments on climate change but announced no new initiatives and offered no resources. He said it was up to developed countries to provide money and technology.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi also took up the environment in his address, pledging his country's commitment to achieving net-zero emissions by 2070.

India's growth in the next 25 years will be "green and clean, and also sustainable and reliable," he said, stressing its commitment to solar power.

While Xi and Modi touted environmental efforts, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres ratcheted up his concerns about the use of coal — both China and India are big users — in his call for "real climate

action in developing countries.”

“Emissions must fall, but they continue to rise,” Guterres said in his address, appealing for debt relief for developing countries needing help weaning off coal.

Guterres pointed to his call for “coalitions” to help foster a clean energy transition, highlighting U.S.-Chinese efforts to provide China with “adequate technologies” to accelerate that shift.

“India doesn’t like the coalition, but India has accepted several bilateral forms of support, and I’ve been in close contact with the U.S., U.K. and several other countries to make sure that there’s a strong project to support India,” he said.

Guterres said the past two years had shown that the world needs to cooperate to halt climate change, achieve global economic recovery and beat the pandemic.

During a session on COVID-19’s future, Moderna CEO Stephane Bancel said he hoped the U.S.-based company would have a combined vaccine booster ready to test in advanced research in the second quarter, saying a best-case scenario would be if the single shot covering both flu and COVID-19 would be ready for use next year.

“I don’t think it would happen in every country, but we believe it’s possible to happen in some countries next year,” Bancel said.

Moderna has been criticized for prioritizing distribution of its COVID-19 vaccines to rich countries; only a fraction of its supply has gone to poor countries via COVAX. He said the company aimed to make about 2 to 3 billion doses this year and hopes to have data from a new vaccine tweaked to address the omicron variant in March.

The annual Davos gathering usually takes place in person in the Alpine snows of eastern Switzerland, drawing hundreds of business leaders, cultural elites, academics and government leaders. Leaders of countries like Germany, Colombia and Japan were set to address the gathering that runs through Friday.

## **Omicron slamming S. American hospitals as workers fall ill**

By DÉBORA ÁLVARES and ALMUDENA CALATRAVA Associated Press

BRASILIA, Brazil (AP) — The coronavirus’ omicron variant starting to barrel across South America is pressuring hospitals whose employees are taking sick leave, leaving facilities understaffed to cope with COVID-19’s third wave.

A major hospital in Bolivia’s largest city stopped admitting new patients due to lack of personnel, and one of Brazil’s most populous states canceled scheduled surgeries for a month. Argentina’s federation of private healthcare providers told the AP it estimates about 15% of its health workers currently have the virus.

The third wave “is affecting the health team a lot, from the cleaning staff to the technicians, with a high percentage of sick people, despite having a complete vaccination schedule,” said Jorge Coronel, president of Argentina’s medical confederation. “While symptoms are mostly mild to moderate, that group needs to be isolated.”

It wasn’t supposed to be this way: South America’s vaccine uptake was eager once shots were available. About two-thirds of its roughly 435 million residents are fully immunized, the highest percentage for any global region, according to Our World in Data. And health workers in Brazil, Bolivia and Argentina have already been receiving booster shots.

But the omicron variant is defying vaccines, sending case numbers surging. Argentina saw an average 112,000 daily confirmed cases in the week through Jan. 16, up from 3,700 a month earlier. Brazil’s health ministry is still recovering from a hack that left coronavirus data incomplete; even so, it shows a jump to an average 69,000 daily cases in the same seven-day period, up 1,900% from the month before.

Omicron spreads even easier than other strains, and is already dominant in many countries — among them, Brazil and some parts of Argentina. It also more easily infects those who have already been vaccinated or infected by earlier versions of the virus. Early studies show omicron is less likely to cause serious diseases than the delta variant, and vaccination and booster shots still offer strong protection against serious illness, hospitalization and death.

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Lesser severity leaves South America's residents loath to give up their long-awaited summer that, so they were told, would mark a return to normality after full vaccination. The enduring pandemic often seems an afterthought to people who are out and about, and don't glimpse how omicron has started affecting medical staff. Beaches were packed this weekend in Argentina and Brazil.

Matías Fernández Norte, a surgeon at the Hospital de Clínicas in Buenos Aires, told the AP that the high number of professionals on leave has generated "physical and spiritual fatigue, in addition to the stress of dealing with a patient on the edge."

"You feel like you are living a parallel reality. In the street you meet a world that doesn't seem to feel the pandemic," he said. "Sometimes it feels like people have forgotten. Unfortunately, that's what we feel."

Brazil's council of state health secretariats estimates that between 10% and 20% of all professionals in the health network — including doctors, nurses, nurse technicians, ambulance drivers and others in direct contact with patients — have taken sick leave since the last week of 2021.

"We are having trouble making the schedules," said the council's director, Carlos Lula.

The press office of Rio de Janeiro state's health secretariat told the AP that about 5,500 professionals have left their jobs since December. All elective surgeries scheduled in the state health network have been suspended for four weeks. As for urgent care, relocations and overtime are being used as stopgap measures.

"Forty percent of our staff is on sick leave," Marcia Fernandes Lucas, health secretary for the municipality of Sao Joao de Meriti, in Rio's metropolitan region, told the AP in her office. "We are able to work with these 60% by redeploying them (between health centers)."

Public hospitals in Bolivia are operating at 50-70% capacity due to the high number of infections among health care workers, according to the Bolivian doctors' union. In Santa Cruz, the country's most populous city, the Children's Hospital is overwhelmed — but less by its number of patients than the amount of staff falling ill, according to Freddy Rojas, its vice director. Last week, the facility stopped admitting new patients.

"There has been a collapse, because we don't have replacements," said José Luís Guaman, interim president of the doctors' union in Santa Cruz.

Such is the risk of medical services grinding to a halt in Argentina's Buenos Aires province — the country's most populous — that health workers have been allowed to return to work even if coming into contact with someone infected, provided they are asymptomatic and vaccinated. Other provinces in Argentina are expected to adopt the same rules in the coming days, in line with the health ministry's recently-issued guidelines.

Similar measures are being enacted by authorities in France and the U.S., where omicron has been putting hospital systems to the test for weeks.

Chile has seen a constant increase in its number of cases, prompting the reactivation of public- and private-sector hospital beds, but so far the country hasn't experienced hospital overload. Peru has also seen case its numbers rise, but its facilities aren't yet suffering.

The Pan American Health Organization said Wednesday it expects omicron to become the predominant coronavirus variant in the Americas in the coming week. Ten countries in the region — especially in the Caribbean — didn't reach the goal set by the World Health Organization to have 40% of citizens fully vaccinated by end-2021.

While a smaller fraction of people develop serious illness from the the highly-transmissible variant, the crush of contagion and resulting strain on hospitals means omicron shouldn't be underestimated, said Lula, of the Brazilian health secretariat council.

"People have to understand that the argument that omicron is 'mild' is false," Lula said. \_\_\_\_

Calatrava reported from Buenos Aires. Reporters Carlos Valdez and Paola Flores contributed to this report from La Paz, Bolivia, Mario Lobão from Rio de Janeiro, Patricia Luna and Eva Vergara from Santiago, Chile, and Franklin Briceño from Lima, Peru.

**How's he doing? Americans weigh in on Biden's performance**

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By The Associated Press undefined

President Joe Biden took office at a particularly polarized time in American history, so it's not surprising that citizens are divided on his performance at the one-year mark.

A Georgia history teacher who voted for Biden would give him a "C" grade, faulting the president for not pushing earlier to end the filibuster in the Senate but supportive of his Build Back Better plan.

A retired nurse in Iowa who supported Pete Buttigieg in the Democratic primary says she's been impressed by the way Biden has upheld the dignity of the office.

A registered independent in Arizona who voted for former President Donald Trump says Biden's first year has been "pretty bad," citing the shutdown of the Keystone XL oil pipeline and the chaotic Afghanistan withdrawal.

Here's what else Americans have to say about the job Biden has done so far:

## THE TRUMP-TO-BIDEN VOTER

Craig Prichard believes Donald Trump should be in jail. But he's far from your typical anti-Trumper: He voted for him in 2016.

But not in 2020. "No, sir," says the 65-year-old self-described independent from Des Moines, Iowa.

Prichard is still angry at Trump over the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection, saying he believes the former president caused it. But it was Trump's handling of the coronavirus pandemic that led Prichard to vote for Biden in 2020.

"Trump wanted to make it look like COVID was going away," Prichard says. "That wasn't the way to take care of it."

Prichard, who for 40 years built farm machinery, worked construction and eventually retired after a stint at a meatpacking plant last year, says Biden is "handling COVID as well as he can" while juggling a number of other issues.

"Biden, you can tell he's trying to handle the pandemic, food prices, gas prices, Russia, all at the same time, and he doesn't seem to care how he looks," Prichard says. "Because it's not real good right now for him, even though there's less people dying than if Trump were there."

"Trump, turns out, only cared about how he looked," Prichard says.

## THE TEACHER WHO GIVES BIDEN A 'C' GRADE

Kai Uchimura, a high school history teacher who lives in Decatur, Georgia, voted for Biden in 2020. He'd give him a "C" grade so far.

Uchimura, 26, describes himself as leaning left on most issues, though he is not a registered Democrat. He says he supports Biden's social policy bill that remains stalled in Congress, but thinks Democrats have done a poor job of explaining its benefits.

"That Build Back Better plan, it seemed like no one knew what was in the bill except for the cost," he says.

He also faults Biden for not pushing earlier to end the filibuster in the Senate that requires 60 votes to advance most legislation. Last week, for the first time, Biden directly advocated eliminating the filibuster in order to debate and vote on election and voting rights legislation.

"I know that when he was coming into office, he had this message of trying to unite the country and extend a hand across the aisle," Uchimura says. "But I wish he would have recognized earlier that this era of bipartisanship seems to be pretty much on thin ice."

## THE BIDEN VOTER WHO DECRIES POLARIZATION

Lynn Manning-John, a school principal on a Native American reservation on the Nevada-Idaho border, is pleased with Biden's first year in office but worries his presidency has further polarized her community.

At a Walmart in Elko County, Nevada, a ranching region that heavily supported the former president, she's overheard customers complain about how Biden's agenda has permeated "Trump country."

"There is just a reluctance to support the current president," the 45-year-old independent voter says. "There's pushback towards anything that he puts forward, even if it's good and common sense." She was especially happy with Biden's nomination of Deb Haaland, a fellow Native American, as interior secretary.

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The superintendent and five out of seven school board members in Elko County resigned last year during protests from parents' groups opposed to lesson plans about equity and diversity in the parts of the county outside the Duck Valley Indian Reservation.

Manning-John sees the resignations and the parents' demands as an outgrowth of the backlash to Biden's 2020 victory.

Biden's election win is still unreal to many Americans, she says.

"And the absolute revolt that has come about since absolutely goes directly to the school boards," she says.

## THE BIDEN VOTER WARY OF LIBERALS

Patrick Sweeney voted for Biden but has been disappointed the president hasn't pushed back more against the left wing of the Democratic Party.

"I wish he would claim and stake out the middle ground, and be more that, 'This is what the Democratic Party represents,'" says Sweeney, a 62-year-old retired educator in a Phoenix suburb who is not affiliated with a political party.

"So much of the conversation seems to get focused on the extreme left wing of the Democratic Party and progressive positions," Sweeney says. "I think he needs to be more front and center in countering that."

He is pleased with the infrastructure bill Biden signed into law but wishes he'd stopped there instead of pushing a massive increase in social service spending.

"I was enthusiastic about the original infrastructure plan," he says. "I think it's long overdue, and I was really glad to see it, and I think that could've and should've been a great accomplishment. Get the bulldozers and shovels rolling and get to work." He adds: "The Build Back Better plan, I think there's too much in there that I don't see the need for it, or I don't know that the federal government is the solution for it."

## THE TRUMP VOTER WHO'S NOT IMPRESSED

Eric Ollarsaba says Biden's presidency has been "pretty bad." But the 33-year-old Trump voter isn't surprised.

"He's pretty much doing exactly what I expected him to do," says Ollarsaba, a registered independent who lives in Phoenix and works at an online car retailer. "He's a career politician."

He is disappointed Biden shut the Keystone XL oil pipeline, and he was appalled by the chaotic U.S. military exit from Afghanistan.

"We're probably going to be reliant on other countries for energy, which I could potentially see leading to another conflict, or us involving ourselves in another war," Ollarsaba says. "I think we still needed a U.S. presence in Afghanistan. Not major military operations, but we still need a presence and I think that would make that region — at least for the United States — a little less dangerous."

The U.S. should not have had to rely on the Taliban's cooperation to evacuate Americans from Afghanistan, he says. He worries ceding influence there will allow terrorist groups to gain a foothold.

## THE DEMOCRAT WHO PREFERRED MAYOR PETE

Biden wasn't Kathleen Paul's first pick. The 74-year-old retired nurse liked Pete Buttigieg in the Democratic primary.

"I thought Biden was sort of 'Jokin' Joe,'" Paul says. "He said things that were so off-the-cuff when (Barack) Obama was president. I thought, 'Can we really take this guy seriously?'"

Turns out, a bit to her surprise, she can.

"I've been really impressed with the way he upholds the dignity of the office, the way he expresses himself," says Paul, a self-described liberal Democrat from Des Moines, Iowa. "I knew he had experience and had been through tragedy. But I didn't know he could project the weight of that."

She credits Biden with following the science in his handling of the pandemic but faults him for his naïve optimism in setting last July 4 as the date by which 70% of the nation's eligible population would be vac-

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minated. That goal was reached months later but the percentage has slipped under 70% because younger children were made eligible.

She was also upset by the chaotic pullout from Afghanistan, saying the administration should have foreseen the end result: "Bombs going off, people running down runways after planes."

"They made the move, and it was not well done," she says. "If you're there for 20 years, what's another six months to pull the Band-Aid off a little more slowly?"

## THE BIDEN VOTER WHO WANTS HIM TO TOOT HIS OWN HORN

Natalie Rawlings, a registered Democrat who voted for Biden, says the president doesn't get enough credit for all the things that are going right, like the strong job market that has made it easier for workers to switch jobs.

But she thinks that's partly his own fault.

"I don't know why he's having such a hard time with the messaging," says Rawlings, a 50-year-old Atlanta resident who works for a Fortune 500 company. "Did Biden think his plans were going to sell themselves?"

She also thinks Biden has misjudged his ability to cajole his former colleagues in the Senate to back his agenda.

"Biden has bit off more than he can chew," she says. "Maybe if he did things more incrementally, but now that would appear like he's backpedaling."

It's still early, but she's skeptical he'll be a two-term president.

"I can't see a clear path for Biden into a second term," she says.

## THE TRUMP VOTER PLEASANTLY SURPRISED BY SOME BIDEN INITIATIVES

J.J. Goicoechea, a cattle rancher from Eureka, Nevada, voted for Trump and plans to vote Republican again, but he says he's been pleasantly surprised with the Biden administration's agricultural initiatives, including those tailored to small family farms and ranches like his.

Farms and ranches have received more than \$1 billion in relief dollars since Biden took office. The administration has worked to fund independent processors after beef plants closed during the pandemic and engaged farmers in regards to climate change, working to incentivize them to offset carbon emissions through tactics like planting carbon-capturing crops.

But Goicoechea, 47, worries the attempt to strengthen regulations and the Packers and Stockyards Act could have unintended consequences and raise costs in an industry where many ranchers already operate on small margins. He attributes inflation to the government spending and relief programs that the administration has helped push through Congress and says it has raised costs on everything needed to operate a cattle ranch.

"The cost of doing business has just almost doubled over where it was last year," Goicoechea says, citing the prices of hay, fuel, fertilizer and tires for pickups and tractors. "I'm a little concerned about where that's going. We keep asking for help, they give us a little monetary help, and that kind of drives inflation up higher."

## THE SOCIAL WORKER WHO IS RETHINKING HER VOTE

Gina Massiah reluctantly voted for Biden, considering him the better of two bad options. But now the 49-year-old social worker isn't so sure.

"Yes, there was a lot of division," the Brooklyn resident says of the Trump era. But with Trump, "you knew what you were getting."

"Was he a bigot? He was all of that. None of us are perfect. We all come with things, right? But I think he would have gotten a lot more done had he gotten reelected." She adds: "I absolutely favor him over Biden. And woo, that's a Black person saying that, right?"

"That might sound insane to some people that I'm saying that," she says, "but that's how I feel."

Massiah, a registered Democrat who doesn't feel bound to either party, lumps Biden in with other politicians who make big promises but "forget about you" once they get into office.



She's particularly dismayed by the lack of progress on racial issues. While she said many had held out hope because Vice President Kamala Harris is a woman of color, "we're still getting gunned down by police. We're still getting targeted when we go into the stores."

Massiah is exhausted.

"I'm just fed up. Truly fed up."

## Cold case team shines new light on betrayal of Anne Frank

By MIKE CORDER Associated Press

AMSTERDAM (AP) — A cold case team that combed through evidence for five years in a bid to unravel one of World War II's enduring mysteries has reached what it calls the "most likely scenario" of who betrayed Jewish teenage diarist Anne Frank and her family.

Their answer, outlined in a new book called "The Betrayal of Anne Frank A Cold Case Investigation," by Canadian academic and author Rosemary Sullivan, is that it could have been a prominent Jewish notary called Arnold van den Bergh, who disclosed the secret annex hiding place of the Frank family to German occupiers to save his own family from deportation and murder in Nazi concentration camps.

"We have investigated over 30 suspects in 20 different scenarios, leaving one scenario we like to refer to as the most likely scenario," said film maker Thijs Bayens, who had the idea to put together the cold case team, that was led by retired FBI agent Vincent Pankoke, to forensically examine the evidence.

Bayens was quick to add that, "we don't have 100% certainty."

"There is no smoking gun because betrayal is circumstantial," Bayens told The Associated Press on Monday.

The Franks and four other Jews hid in the annex, reached by a secret staircase hidden behind a bookcase, from July 1942 until they were discovered in August 1944 and deported to concentration camps.

Only Anne's father, Otto Frank, survived the war. Anne and her sister died in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Anne was 15.

The diary Anne wrote while in hiding was published after the war and became a symbol of hope and resilience that has been translated into dozens of languages and read by millions.

But the identity of the person who gave away the location of their hiding place has always remained a mystery, despite previous investigations.

The team's findings suggest that Otto Frank was one of the first to hear about the possible involvement of Van den Bergh, a prominent member of the Jewish community in Amsterdam.

A brief note, a typed copy of an anonymous tip delivered to Otto Frank after the war, names Van den Bergh, who died in 1950, as the person who informed German authorities in Amsterdam where to find the Frank family, the researchers say.

The note was an overlooked part of a decades-old Amsterdam police investigation that was reviewed by the team, which used artificial intelligence to analyze and draw links between archives around the world.

The Anne Frank House museum in the canal-side Amsterdam building that includes the secret annex welcomed the new research, but said it also leaves questions unanswered. The museum gave the researchers access to its archives for the cold case project.

"No, I don't think we can say that a mystery has been solved now. I think it's an interesting theory that the team came up with," said museum director Ronald Leopold. "I think they come up with a lot of interesting information, but I also think there are still many missing pieces of the puzzle. And those pieces need to be further investigated in order to see how we can value this new theory."

Bayens said the hunt for the betrayer was also a way of looking for an explanation of how the horror of the Nazi occupation forced some members of a once close-knit Amsterdam community to turn on one another.

How did facism bring people "to the desperate point of betraying each other, which is an awful, really awful situation?" he said.

"We went looking for a perpetrator and we found a victim," Bayens said.

## Djokovic lands in Serbia as questions arise over French Open

By DARKO BANDIC and DUSAN STOJANOVIC Associated Press

BELGRADE, Serbia (AP) — Novak Djokovic returned home Monday after being thwarted from defending his Australian Open title only to face a new predicament: He could be barred from the French Open this year, too, if he's still not vaccinated against COVID-19.

A plane carrying the No. 1-ranked player touched down in his native Serbia, closing at least the first chapter in a dizzying drama that has resonance in the world of elite sports, Australia's pandemic politics and the polarized debate over the coronavirus shots.

A handful of fans waving the Serbian flag greeted him at Belgrade's airport. Djokovic has an almost iconic status in Serbia, and many there felt he was poorly treated by Australia.

But his troubles may not be over yet: He could be barred from the French Open this year, under a new law intended to exclude the unvaccinated from stadiums and other public places. Much could change between now and the start of the Grand Slam tournament in late May, but that raised the specter that the recent saga in Australia would be not just a blip but an ongoing challenge for the athlete, who is increasingly being held up as a hero by the anti-vaccine movement.

A member of the French Parliament, Christophe Castaner, said that the new law will apply to anyone who wants to play in the French Open — a reversal of earlier plans to create a "bubble" around the tournament.

"To do your job, to come for pleasure or leisure, to practice a sport, it will be necessary to present a vaccine. This will be valid for people who live in France but also for foreigners who come to our country for vacation or for a major sports competition," Sports Minister Roxana Maracineanu told BFM television on Monday.

But some details of the law are still being hashed out — including how it will deal with people who have recently recovered from COVID-19, as Djokovic says he has. The question is how recent the infection has to be to qualify for an exemption to vaccination rules.

Djokovic is also the defending champion at Wimbledon, which begins in late June. But so far, England has allowed exemptions from various coronavirus regulations for visiting athletes, if they remain at their accommodation when not competing or training. The U.S. Tennis Association, which runs the U.S. Open, has said it will follow government rules on vaccination status.

It's also not clear when Djokovic could head back to Australia. Deportation can lead to a three-year ban on returning to the country, although that can be waived, depending on the circumstances.

For now, a warm welcome awaits Djokovic, who has overwhelming support in his native Serbia where his closest family lives. Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic has accused the Australian government of "harassing" the top-ranked tennis star and urged him to return home.

"God bless you Novak," read one of the banners held by the fans at the airport as he was whisked through the passport control and customs and then driven by his brother Djordje to his apartment in Belgrade.

The official Tanjug news agency reported that Djokovic's mother, Dijana, said her son will remain in Belgrade in the coming days and won't make statements for the media.

Djokovic's Australian saga began when he was granted an exemption to strict vaccination rules by two medical panels and the tournament organizer in order to play in the Australian Open based on documents he supplied showing he had recently had COVID-19. He received a visa to enter the country through an automated process. But upon arrival, border officials said the exemption was not valid and moved to deport him.

The initial news that the star had been granted the exemption sparked anger in Australia, where strict lockdowns in cities and curbs on international travel have been employed to try to control the spread of the coronavirus since the pandemic began.

More than 95% of all Top 100 men and women tennis players in their tours' respective rankings are vaccinated. At least two other men — American Tennys Sandgren and Frenchman Pierre-Hugues Herbert — skipped the Australian Open due to vaccine requirements.

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In the end, Australian authorities revoked Djokovic's visa, saying his presence could stir up anti-vaccine sentiment and that kicking him out was necessary to keep Australians safe. He was deported Sunday, a day before the tournament got underway in Melbourne.

Djokovic has won nine titles there previously. He had hoped this year to secure his 21st Grand Slam singles trophy, breaking the record he shares with rivals Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal for the most in the history of men's tennis. Federer is not playing while recovering from injury, but Nadal is competing.

As the legal battle played out in Australia, Djokovic acknowledged that he had attended an interview in Belgrade in December with journalists from L'Equipe newspaper after testing positive for the coronavirus. He later described this "an error" of judgment.

Asked if Djokovic would face any penalties for flouting his isolation while being infected when he returns to Serbia, Serbian officials said he would not because the country is not in a state of emergency.

Djokovic is a national hero in Serbia, whose president had called the court hearing in Australia "a farce with a lot of lies."

"Novak, welcome home, you know that we all support you here," said Snezana Jankovic, a Belgrade resident. "They can take away your visa, but they cannot take away your Serbian pride."

## N. Korea fires short-range missiles in 4th launch this month

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea fired two suspected ballistic missiles into the sea Monday in its fourth weapons launch this month, South Korea's military said, with the apparent goal of demonstrating its military might during paused diplomacy with the United States and pandemic border closures.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said North Korea likely fired two short-range ballistic missiles from an area in Sunan, the site of Pyongyang's international airport. The missiles were launched four minutes apart and flew about 380 kilometers (236 miles) with a maximum altitude of 42 kilometers (26 miles) before landing in waters off the country's northeastern coast, it said.

The U.S. Indo-Pacific Command said the missiles did not pose an immediate threat to U.S. personnel or territory, or to its allies, but highlighted the destabilizing impact of North Korea's "illicit" weapons program. Japanese Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi said the missiles landed outside Japan's exclusive economic zone, and Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno condemned the actions as threats to peace.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in, who is visiting the United Arab Emirates, instructed officials to make "utmost efforts to ensure stability" on the Korean Peninsula, his office said. It also said members of the presidential National Security Council stressed the need to revive nuclear diplomacy with North Korea.

The U.S. special representative for North Korea, Sung Kim, called his counterparts in Japan and South Korea to discuss the launches and urged the North to instead engage in dialogue. The three officials pledged to continue their close coordination, the U.S. Department of State said.

North Korea conducted flight tests of a purported hypersonic missile on Jan. 5 and Jan. 11 and also test-fired ballistic missiles from a train on Friday in an apparent reprisal for new sanctions imposed by the Biden administration last week for its continuing test launches.

North Korea has been ramping up tests in recent months of new, potentially nuclear-capable missiles designed to be maneuverable and fly at low altitudes, which potentially improve their chances of evading missile defenses in the region.

Some experts say North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is going back to a tried-and-true tactic of pressuring his neighbors and the U.S. with missile launches and threats before offering negotiations meant to extract concessions.

A U.S.-led diplomatic push aimed at convincing North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons program collapsed in 2019 after the Trump administration rejected the North's demand for major sanctions relief in exchange for a partial surrender of its nuclear capabilities.

Kim has since pledged to further expand a nuclear arsenal he clearly sees as his strongest guarantee of survival.

His government has so far rejected the Biden administration's call to resume dialogue without precondi-

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tions, saying that Washington must first abandon its "hostile policy," a term North Korea mainly uses to describe sanctions and combined U.S.-South Korea military exercises.

Kim Dong-yub, a professor at Seoul's University of North Korean Studies, said North Korea may have conducted another launch to pressure Washington and could continue to dial up its testing activity after vowing stronger action over what it perceives as U.S. hostility.

Last week, the U.S. Treasury Department imposed sanctions on five North Koreans over their roles in obtaining equipment and technology for the North's missile programs, in its response to North Korea's earlier tests this month.

The State Department ordered sanctions against another North Korean, a Russian man and a Russian company for their broader support of North Korea's weapons of mass destruction activities. The Biden administration also said it would pursue additional U.N. sanctions over the North's continued tests.

The announcement of the sanctions just came hours after North Korean state media said Kim Jong Un oversaw a successful test of a hypersonic missile on Tuesday, the country's second test of the purported system in a week, and claimed that the weapon would greatly increase the country's "war deterrent."

North Korea fired two short-range ballistic missiles from a train last Friday in apparent retaliation against new U.S. sanctions tied to the hypersonic tests. Friday's test came hours after North Korea's Foreign Ministry issued a statement berating the Biden administration over the new sanctions and warned of "stronger and certain reaction" if Washington maintains its confrontational stance.

## Beijing to offer Olympic tickets to 'selected' spectators

BEIJING (AP) — Only "selected" spectators will be permitted at next month's Beijing Olympics because of the coronavirus pandemic, organizers said Monday.

Beijing had already announced that no fans from outside the country would be permitted at the events, and had not offered tickets to the general public.

Monday's announcement posted on the organizing committee's website confirmed expectations that the Winter Games would have few onlookers at the venues, under even more strict conditions than imposed during last year's Summer Olympics in Tokyo.

China has largely avoided major virus outbreaks with a regimen of lockdowns, mass testing for COVID-19 and travel restrictions, although it continues to fight surges in several cities, including the port of Tianjin, about an hour from Beijing. The capital itself confirmed over the weekend that a 26-year-old woman had contracted the omicron variant of the virus and has tested more than 13,000 people in search of cases of cross transmission.

In its statement, the organizing committee said its measures were intended to "create a pleasant environment for the holding of the Games."

"Given the difficult and complicated work of controlling the epidemic, and to protect the health and safety of those involved with the Games, the original plan of offering tickets to the general public has been altered toward spectators from selected groups," the statement said.

## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Jan. 18, the 18th day of 2022. There are 347 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 18, 1943, during World War II, Jewish insurgents in the Warsaw Ghetto launched their initial armed resistance against Nazi troops, who eventually succeeded in crushing the rebellion.

On this date:

In 1778, English navigator Captain James Cook reached the present-day Hawaiian Islands, which he named the "Sandwich Islands."

In 1911, the first landing of an aircraft on a ship took place as pilot Eugene B. Ely brought his Curtiss

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biplane in for a safe landing on the deck of the armored cruiser USS Pennsylvania in San Francisco Harbor.

In 1913, entertainer Danny Kaye was born David Daniel Kaminsky in New York City.

In 1957, a trio of B-52s completed the first non-stop, round-the-world flight by jet planes, landing at March Air Force Base in California after more than 45 hours aloft.

In 1975, the situation comedy "The Jeffersons," a spin-off from "All in the Family," premiered on CBS-TV.

In 1990, a jury in Los Angeles acquitted former preschool operators Raymond Buckey and his mother, Peggy McMartin Buckey, of 52 child molestation charges.

In 1991, financially strapped Eastern Airlines shut down after more than six decades in business.

In 1993, the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday was observed in all 50 states for the first time.

In 2005, the world's largest commercial jet, the Airbus A380 "superjumbo" capable of flying up to 800 passengers, was unveiled in Toulouse, France.

In 2011, Chinese President Hu Jintao arrived at Andrews Air Force Base outside Washington for a four-day state visit; President Barack Obama welcomed him with a private dinner in the White House residence. The first director of the Peace Corps, R. Sargent Shriver, died in Bethesda, Maryland, at age 95.

In 2019, Jason Van Dyke, the white Chicago police officer who gunned down Black teenager Laquan McDonald in 2014, was sentenced to nearly seven years in prison.

In 2020, ahead of opening statements in the first Senate impeachment trial of President Donald Trump, House prosecutors wrote that Trump had "used his official powers to pressure a foreign government to interfere in a United States election for his personal political gain," while Trump's legal team denounced what it called a "brazen and unlawful attempt to overturn the results of the 2016 election."

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama rejected the Keystone XL project, a Canadian company's plan to build a 1,700-mile pipeline to carry oil across six U.S. states to Texas refineries. Wikipedia and other websites went dark to protest two congressional proposals intended to thwart the online piracy of copyrighted movies and TV programs.

Five years ago: Twenty-nine people were killed when an avalanche buried the Hotel Rigopiano in central Italy (nine people were pulled out alive by rescuers). Jeff Bagwell, Tim Lincecum and Ivan Rodriguez were elected to baseball's Hall of Fame. Opera singer Roberta Peters, 86, died in Rye, New York.

One year ago: California became the first state to record more than 3 million known coronavirus infections, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. Speakers at the annual Martin Luther King Jr. holiday celebration in Atlanta called for a renewed dedication to nonviolence following a turbulent year in which a deadly pandemic, protests over systemic racism and a divisive election capped by an attack on the U.S. Capitol strained Americans' capacity for civility. Jimmie Rodgers, singer of the 1957 hits "Honeycomb" and "Kisses Sweeter Than Wine," whose career in music and movies was disrupted by a severe head injury a decade later, died in California at age 87.

Today's Birthdays: Movie director John Boorman is 89. Former Sen. Paul Kirk, D-Mass., is 84. Singer-songwriter Bobby Goldsboro is 81. Comedian-singer-musician Brett Hudson is 69. Actor-director Kevin Costner is 67. Country singer-actor Mark Collie is 66. Actor Mark Rylance is 62. Actor Alison Arnglim (TV: "Little House on the Prairie") is 60. Former Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley is 59. Actor Jane Horrocks is 58. Comedian Dave Attell (uh-TEHL') is 57. Actor Jesse L. Martin is 53. Rapper DJ Quik is 52. Rock singer Jonathan Davis (Korn) is 51. Former NAACP President and CEO Benjamin Todd Jealous is 49. Singer Christian Burns (BBMak) is 48. Actor Derek Richardson is 46. Actor Jason Segel is 42. Actor Samantha Mumba is 39. Country singer Kristy Lee Cook (TV: "American Idol") is 38. Actor Devin Kelley is 36. Actor Ashleigh Murray (TV: "Riverdale") is 34. Actor Zeeko Zaki is 32. Tennis player Angelique Kerber is 34. Actor Mateus Ward is 23.