

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Groton Community Calendar

### Wednesday, Nov. 23

Senior Menu: Roast beef, mashed potatoes and gravy, beets, peaches, dinner roll.

Groton CM&A: Kids' Club, Youth Group and Adult Bible Study begins at 7 pm

Emmanuel Lutheran: No confirmation; League, 6:30 p.m.

UMC: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Confirmation, 4 p.m.

St. John's Thanksgiving Eve Service, 7 p.m.

NO SCHOOL - Thanksgiving break

### Thursday, Nov. 24

NO SCHOOL - Thanksgiving break  
Community Thanksgiving Dinner, 11:30 a.m., Groton Community Center

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

**OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton  
The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.



### Friday, Nov. 25

NO SCHOOL - Thanksgiving break

### Saturday, Nov. 26

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Catholic: SEAS Confession: 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass: 4:30 p.m.

### Sunday, Nov. 27

Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., Worship Service at 10:45 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 7 p.m.

UMC: UM Student Day; Conde Worship, 8:30 a.m.; coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m., SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

St. John's worship, 9 a.m.; Zion Lutheran worship, 11 a.m.

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Yesterday's GDI featured the Wolter family donating two John Deere tractors to the shop class. An additional photo submitted shows Dale Wolter with his father Russell Wolter on a John Deere, doing farm chores.

**'TIS THE  
SEASON TO  
SHOP LOCAL**

**GROTON**  
Chamber Of Commerce



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## Wolves Down Dragons, Move to 1-0 in NSIC

Aberdeen, S.D. – The (RV) Northern State University men's basketball team opened the 2022-23 NSIC season with an 84-75 victory over MSU Moorhead. The Wolves shot 58.6% from the floor in the win and held a double-digit lead for more than half the game.

### THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 84, MSUM 75

Records: NSU 3-2 (1-0 NSIC), MSUM 3-2 (0-1 NSIC)

Attendance: 3084

### HOW IT HAPPENED

• Northern tallied 50 points in the first and 34 points in the second, en route to their third win of the season

• The Wolves shot 44.4% from beyond the arc, hitting eight threes, and 80.0% from the foul line

• NSU recorded a game high 44 points in the paint and 12 second chance points, as well as 15 assists

• They out-rebounded the Dragons 36-25, recording nine total offensive boards

• Three Wolves scored in double figures led by Jackson Moni and Jordan Belka with a season highs 25 and 24

• Sam Masten tallied a season high of his own, dishing out nine assists, while Moni and Belka added season highs with eight and nine rebounds respectively

• All five starters for the Wolves shot 50.0% or better from the field, led by Belka hitting 11-of-16

• The win is the 31st for the Wolves over Dragons in program history

### NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STAND-OUTS

• Jackson Moni: 25 points, 64.2 field goal%, 8 rebounds

• Jordan Belka: 24 points, 68.8 field goal%, 9 rebounds

• Sam Masten: 16 points, 9 assists, 8 rebounds

### UP NEXT

Northern State hosts the Dacotah Bank Classic this Friday and Saturday from Wachs Arena. Tip-off is set for 7 p.m. on Friday versus Texas A&M – Kingsville and 6 p.m. on Saturday against Presentation College. Minnesota Crookston will also face each TAMK and PC prior to the Wolves games each day.



*Olive Grove's  
6th Annual*

*Christmas  
Tour of Homes  
& Holiday  
Party*

**Charlie & Jenn Dirks  
Tigh & Adrienne Fliehs  
Tom & Barb Paepke  
Wage Memorial Library & City Office**

**SATURDAY,  
DEC. 3, 2022**

**TOUR OF  
HOMES  
4-7 P.M.**

**HOLIDAY  
PARTY  
4-CLOSE**

**Silent Basket Items  
Bidding closes at 8:30 p.m.  
Live Auction begins at 8:30 p.m.**

**Coffee, Apple Cider and Goodies at the Club House  
A variety of snacks served.**

**\$15 tickets available at  
Lori's Pharmacy, Groton  
Groton Ford  
Hair & Company, Aberdeen  
Olive Grove Golf Clubhouse**

**Come on out for a fun evening!  
Support your local golf course!**

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**2022 NEC ALL-CONFERENCE  
ASPEN JOHNSON**

**2022 SEASON STATS**  
185 KILLS  
75 DIGS  
46 BLOCKS

**TIGERS**

## NEC All-Conference Volleyball Team

**Aberdeen Roncali:** Camryn Bain, Ella Hanson

**Clark/Willow Lake:** Shay Michalski

**Groton Area:** Anna Fjeldheim, Aspen Johnson.

**Hamlin:** Ally Abraham, Gracelyn Leiseth, Kami Wadsworth.

**Milbank:** Averie Engebretson, Rachel Schulte.

**Redfield:** Gracie Fast, Camryn Rohlf.

**Sisseton:** Krista Langager.

**Tiospa Zina:** Kenadee Bissonette.

**Webster Area:** Gracie Cadwell.

Deuel and Britton-Hecla had no one on the team.



**2022 NEC ALL-CONFERENCE  
ANNA FJELDHEIM**

**2022 SEASON STATS**  
171 KILLS  
285 DIGS  
34 ACES

**TIGERS**

## Governor Noem Signs Thanksgiving Proclamation

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, Governor Kristi Noem issued an executive proclamation proclaiming November 24, 2022 as “Thanksgiving Day” in South Dakota. You can find the proclamation here.

The full text of the proclamation can be found below:

Whereas, Thanksgiving is a time to celebrate family, fellowship, and everything that we are thankful for in life; and,

Whereas, the first Thanksgiving took place in 1621, when the Wampanoag Native American tribe shared a fall harvest feast with the Pilgrims at Plymouth; and,

Whereas, the Pilgrims had fled religious persecution in Europe and had just arrived in an unfamiliar land, yet they chose to celebrate by giving thanks; and,

Whereas, the Wampanoag Native Americans did not know the Pilgrims nor speak their language, but they welcomed the newcomers to their land and celebrated their new neighbors with a feast; and,

Whereas, President Abraham Lincoln made Thanksgiving a national holiday in 1863, in the midst of the Civil War, realizing that it is precisely during our most difficult times that we must be most thankful; and,

Whereas, in his proclamation of that national holiday, President Lincoln wrote, “The year that is drawing towards its close, has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever-watchful providence of Almighty God;” and,

Whereas, South Dakota has likewise been granted tremendous blessings from our Creator. Some of these – like good weather, bountiful harvests, thriving commerce, and the hard labor of our farmers, ranchers, and everyone else involved in putting food on our tables – may seem mundane or commonplace, but they are truly life-giving gifts; and,

Whereas, each of us have examples of wonderful blessings – both mundane and extraordinary – in our own lives and in the lives of our families; and,

Whereas, Psalm 107:8-9 states: “Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind, for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things;” and,

Whereas, James 1:17 states, “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows;” and,

Whereas, We would be remiss if we did not give thanks to our Creator for the “good and perfect gifts” that he has bestowed upon us; and,

Whereas, Thanksgiving is traditionally celebrated on the fourth Thursday in November:

Now, Therefore, I, Kristi Noem, Governor of the State of South Dakota, do hereby proclaim November 24, 2022, as

## **THANKSGIVING DAY**

in South Dakota.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the Great Seal of the State of South Dakota, in Pierre, the Capital City, this Twenty-Second Day of November in the Year of Our Lord, Two Thousand and Twenty-Two.

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## Wolves Women Down Saints 90-57 in Cross-Town Battle

Aberdeen, S.D. – Northern State improved to 3-0 in Wachs Arena on the season with their second consecutive 30-point victory, defeating Presentation 90-57. The Wolves saw 11 players score in the game, led by Jordyn Hilgemann, Morgan Fiedler, Kailee Oliverson, and Madelyn Bragg all scoring in double figures.

### THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 90, PC 57

Records: NSU 4-1 (1-0 NSIC), PC 0-7 (0-0 NSAA)

Attendance: 1,559

### HOW IT HAPPENED

Northern State used 3-pointers by Rianna Fillipi, Alayna Benike, and Rachel Garvey to jump out to a 13-3 lead in the early minutes of the game

The Wolves used a 10-0 run midway through the second quarter to increase their lead to 21 points

A 3-pointer by Zoe Hardwick, her first of her career, with 52 seconds left in the game gave NSU their largest lead of the game at 33 points,

Northern State shot 51.5 percent from the field, 52.9 percent from 3-point range, and 78.6 percent from the free throw line

The Wolves made nine shots from beyond the arc, led by Hilgemann who shot a perfect 3-3 from deep Northern out-rebounded the Saints 37-29 and secured 12 offensive rebounds

NSU converted 19 PC turnovers into 26 points off turnovers

The Northern State bench scored 59 points in the game, with Hilgemann, Fiedler, and Bragg all scoring in double figures; in total six players from the NSU bench scored in the game

### NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Jordyn Hilgemann: 12 points, 3-3 3-point field goals, 4 rebounds

Morgan Fiedler: 12 points, 4 assists

Kailee Oliverson: 10 points, 2 rebounds

Madelyn Bragg: 10 points, 3 rebounds, 2 blocks

### UP NEXT

Northern State will travel to Florida this weekend for the Bahama House Shootout in Daytona Beach. The Wolves will face-off against Flagler at 12 p.m. CST on Friday, and then take on the hosts of Embry-Riddle at 2 p.m. CST on Saturday afternoon.

## State Threatened and Endangered Species Status Reviews Completed

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) has completed the state list of threatened and endangered species and is currently accepting nominations for the next biennial review.

South Dakota's endangered species law states that the GFP Commission will review the state list of threatened and endangered species every two years. Suggested changes to add or remove species are considered during these biennial reviews.

The Commission completed their most recent review at the September Commission meeting where the status of the Peregrine Falcon was changed from state endangered to state threatened because surveys showed the species met the downlisting goals first identified during the 2018 review.

The 2022 Status Reviews are available at <https://gfp.sd.gov/threatened-endangered/>.

Moving forward with the beginning of the next review, GFP is also providing a format for suggested future changes. This includes new listings, where a species is added as state threatened or endangered, or delistings, the process of removing a species from the state list. The nomination form can be found on the GFP website.

Completed nomination forms must be submitted to [StatusReviews@state.sd.us](mailto:StatusReviews@state.sd.us) by December 31, 2022. These nominations will be considered and included in the evaluation process for the next biennial review to be completed in 2024.

## DPS Urges Public to Keep Safety A Priority During Thanksgiving Holiday

PIERRE, S.D. – Whether hosting Thanksgiving at home or traveling somewhere else to celebrate the holiday, the South Dakota Department of Public Safety and its agencies remind the public that safety must be a priority.

For those staying at home, state Fire Marshal Paul Merriman says nationally, Thanksgiving is when the most home cooking fires happen every year. Merriman says it is important, at all times of the year, to have working smoke alarms on each level of the home

"Many Thanksgiving gatherings occur in the kitchen, so people need to stay alert to cooking food on stoves or in ovens," he said. "It is also important to be careful with the use of candles, fireplaces and other heating sources located throughout the home."

The Thanksgiving holiday also is a busy one on the highways. The Highway Patrol will conduct a state-wide "Operation Safe" Wednesday to encourage people to be safe drivers and troopers also will be on the road throughout the weekend.

"With so many things going on for this holiday, it is easy to get distracted and forget to focus on driving," said Highway Patrol Superintendent Col. Rick Miller. "We remind drivers to slow down, avoid distractions, don't drink and drive and wear a seatbelt."

The 102-hour holiday reporting period for motor vehicle traffic crashes begins at 6 p.m., Wednesday, Nov. 23, and ends at midnight, Sunday, Nov. 27. The state Office of Highway Safety says last year in South Dakota during the same reporting period, there were 195 vehicle crashes resulting in 27 injuries and two fatalities.

While the weather should be good for travel, drivers are encouraged to check road conditions by calling 5-1-1 or click onto [sd511.org](http://sd511.org).

The Fire Marshal, Highway Patrol and Highway Safety are agencies of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **White River School District gets \$1.5M surprise donation from billionaire philanthropist**

**90% of students in the rural western SD school district are Native American**

**BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - NOVEMBER 22, 2022 4:38 PM**

A rural western South Dakota school district is one of several across the country to receive a surprise donation from billionaire philanthropist Mackenzie Scott.

White River School District got \$1.5 million from Scott about a month ago. Scott, who has a 4% stake in Amazon, has donated just under \$2 billion over the last seven months to hundreds of organizations, including a number of public school districts.

The district is renowned in South Dakota for its basketball legacy, but its student population is small. It serves just 415 students from Pre-K through high school, nearly all of whom are housed under one roof in the town of just over 500.

About 90% of students are Native American, and the school district stretches about 900 square miles. A handful of students and faculty commute 30 minutes each day, either driving from ranches or from the nearby town of Norris.

Superintendent Louie Krogman ignored the initial email about the donation in mid-September, assuming it was a phishing scam.

"They sent a follow up email after I didn't respond, and then I decided to call them to make sure it was real," Krogman said. "I about fell out of my chair hearing it."

The funds have no strings attached. They can be used to pay for student scholarships, technology updates or even a new gym. The White River gym is not only used for school activities and assemblies but also for community events.

The school district is already using federal funds for building updates, including roof repairs. That money amounts to roughly \$4.5 million, allocated in three rounds of American Rescue Plan (ARP) Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds, Krogman said. South Dakota schools received \$382 million from that source.

That means the district won't need to use the newly donated money for building repairs. Instead, they can use it in whatever way they think will benefit their students the most, letting their "imagination take over," he said.

Krogman wants his students more invested in their education.

"We're just really focusing on the health and wellbeing of our students. It all goes together..." Krogman said. "We want them to form relationships that will help them not only get through school, but to see that if they continue their education, good things will happen. We want to make school a great resource educationally and for the wellbeing of our students as a whole."

The district will host conversations with school board members, faculty and staff, students and community members soon to collect ideas on how to use the cash infusion. Whatever they decide, Krogman hopes it benefits the entire community.

"I don't know why or how we were selected, but we're very grateful and happy to receive it," Krogman said. "We need to get organized, make it worthwhile and leave a lasting impact on our school."



## **GF&P: Medical marijuana patients won't lose hunting rights**

**Mismatch between federal cannabis law and state laws spark concern**

**BY: JOHN HULT - NOVEMBER 23, 2022 4:30 AM**

Sioux Falls lawyer Ryan Kolbeck typically doesn't deal with legal questions about hunting licenses.

The criminal defense attorney did field multiple calls on the topic in the days following the Nov. 8 election, however. They started coming in shortly after it became clear that South Dakota voters had voted to reject the legalization of recreational cannabis.

Each question had the same framing: Since federal law prohibits gun ownership by habitual marijuana users – or users of any substance federal classified as “illicit” – would they be able to obtain both a medical marijuana card and a hunting license in the state of South Dakota?

“You have to register with the state (to use medical marijuana), which is different from any other medication,” Kolbeck said. “People were wondering if the state of South Dakota could be trusted, basically.”

The callers had waited out the election, Kolbeck said, hoping a win for recreational marijuana would preclude them from applying for a medical marijuana card that would put their names on a state-held list.

The question was based more on speculation and suspicion of lawmakers than any official guidelines, Kolbeck said, but those suspicions aren't especially uncommon in states with medical marijuana programs. The issue of hunting licenses comes up in online forums, and gun rights issues have bubbled over into state government action elsewhere.

In Minnesota, concerns over gun permits sparked the introduction of a bill that would have reclassified cannabis to allow medical users to own firearms.

In Oregon, the state pharmacy board re-classified the drug as schedule II, in part to clear a path for firearms permits.

The question of hunting license losses, or even a loss of gun rights, is “theoretical,” according to marijuana activist Matthew Schweich. Even so, Schweich is unsurprised to hear that the question arose in South Dakota.

“It's really just a question of whether the (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms) would try to get records from states on medical cannabis and use them to say that someone was dishonest on the forms,” said Schweich, who helped back the 2020 medical marijuana initiative and the failed 2022 recreational marijuana use measure. “At this point, I'm not aware of that ever happening.”

Obtaining a hunting license is different from purchasing a firearm or getting a firearms permit, of course. Different states have different rules on concealed carry permits that are separate from federal rules. Unlike Oregonians, for example, South Dakotans can carry firearms – concealed or otherwise – without a permit.

And in South Dakota, the use of medical cannabis does not prevent anyone from getting a hunting license.

“If they just simply have a medical marijuana card, one, we wouldn't check that, but two, it wouldn't prevent them from getting a license,” said John Canta, a section chief for the Game Fish & Parks (GF&P) Department.

There are things that could disqualify a person from a hunting license, though. Someone with more than \$1,000 in unpaid child support, for example, would be ineligible, as would a felon.

But those disqualifying issues would only come up if the applicant brought them up, Canta said. There are a series of boxes the applicant must check to confirm eligibility, with a catch-all box at the end of the process.

“There's a statement they agree to to say that they are, in fact, eligible for the license,” Canta said.

No one at the GF&P runs background checks to confirm the accuracy of the statement, though. Marijuana use wouldn't cause trouble for a hunter unless a game officer caught someone shooting under the influence or otherwise violating hunting laws, Canta said.

All of which means Kolbeck's clients are in the clear if they decide to seek a medical marijuana card for chronic pain or another qualifying condition.

Ultimately, however, the mismatch between federal laws on marijuana and state laws that allow medical or recreational use — there are 38 states with one or both — is liable to remain a source for concerns about gun rights, Schweich said. If Congress took steps to reclassify the drug, those theoretical worries would evaporate.

“What we really need is federal reform,” Schweich said.

## Student loan repayment pause extended by White House amid legal battles over relief plan

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - NOVEMBER 22, 2022 4:59 PM

WASHINGTON — The Department of Education announced on Tuesday it is extending the pandemic-era pause on federal student loan repayments until June 30 while legal challenges to the administration's student debt relief program are fought over in the courts.

The agency said if the student debt relief program has not been put in place by June 30, and if litigation is still tied up in the courts, student loan payments will begin 60 days after that.

"Payments will resume 60 days after the Department is permitted to implement the program or the litigation is resolved, which will give the Supreme Court an opportunity to resolve the case during its current Term," the department said in a statement. "If the program has not been implemented and the litigation has not been resolved by June 30, 2023 — payments will resume 60 days after that."

Earlier the administration had said the pandemic-era pause would expire on New Year's Eve. Two lawsuits blocking the Biden plan, including one brought by six GOP-led states, have been appealed by the Justice Department, but it's unclear how long the legal process could take.

"We're extending the payment pause because it would be deeply unfair to ask borrowers to pay a debt that they wouldn't have to pay, were it not for the baseless lawsuits brought by Republican officials and special interests," U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona said in a statement.

President Joe Biden, in a Tuesday tweet, said the extension will give "the Supreme Court time to hear the case in its current term."

"I'm confident that our student debt relief plan is legal," he said on Twitter.

Before the announcement, more than 200 advocacy groups had urged Biden to extend the pause.

In a Monday letter, the groups argued that if student loan repayments restart, it would be a financial setback for borrowers, especially at a time of record high inflation.

"We, the undersigned 225 organizations, urge you to immediately extend the payment pause until your Administration is able to fully implement debt relief for all eligible borrowers and to continue to use every legal authority at your disposal to make this relief real," according to the letter.

"We cannot allow these blatantly political lawsuits to throw millions of borrowers into financial catastrophe," the letter said. "Throwing millions of borrowers back into repayment as the state of debt relief remains uncertain is a recipe for disaster and will result in widespread confusion and set borrowers up for failure."

Most of the organizations that signed onto the letter include labor groups like the AFL-CIO, legal organizations like the ACLU and NAACP, and debt cancellation advocacy groups such as the Debt Collective and Student Debt Crisis Center.

### Multiple extensions

The Trump administration implemented the pause on student loan repayments due to the coronavirus pandemic and the Biden administration has extended it multiple times.

A federal appeals court issued a nationwide injunction that barred the Biden administration from carrying out its student debt relief plan following the challenge by the six GOP-led states — Nebraska, Missouri, Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas and South Carolina.

The Biden administration has asked the U.S. Supreme Court to vacate the nationwide injunction.

U.S. President Joe Biden speaks at the Democratic National Committee (DNC) summer meeting at the Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center Sept. 8, 2022. (Photo by Alex Wong/Getty Images)

U.S. President Joe Biden speaks at the Democratic National Committee (DNC) summer meeting at the Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center Sept. 8, 2022. (Photo by Alex Wong/Getty Images)

"The Eighth Circuit's erroneous injunction leaves millions of economically vulnerable borrowers in limbo, uncertain about the size of their debt and unable to make financial decisions with an accurate understanding of their future repayment obligations," Solicitor General Elizabeth Prelogar wrote in the filing to the

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U.S. Supreme Court.

In late August, Biden announced he would cancel up to \$20,000 in federal student loan debt for Pell Grant borrowers and up to \$10,000 for all other borrowers with an income of less than \$125,000 for an individual and \$250,000 for a household.

The program would only apply to current borrowers, not future ones, and income levels for the 2020 and 2021 tax years would be considered. Student loan borrowers who have private student loans would not be eligible.

The attorneys general from the states that launched the legal challenge argued that the loan relief program threatens those states' future tax revenues and that the plan overrode congressional authority.

More than 43 million Americans have student loan debt, and the Federal Reserve estimates that the total U.S. student loan debt is more than \$1.76 trillion.

The three-panel judge from the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals in St. Louis put the injunction in place "until further order of this court or the Supreme Court of the United States."

Those judges are Bobby E. Shepherd and Ralph R. Erickson, both President George W. Bush appointees, and L. Steven Gras, a President Donald Trump appointee.

Following the decision, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said the White House believes it has the legal authority to carry out the program.

"The Administration will continue to fight these baseless lawsuits by Republican officials and special interests and will never stop fighting to support working and middle class Americans," she said in a statement.

## 26 million applicants

More than 26 million student loan borrowers have applied for the program, and 16 million have been accepted, according to the Department of Education.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office found that the program would add \$400 billion to the national deficit over the span of 30 years. The agency found that the pause on federal student loan repayments has cost \$20 billion from September to December 2022.

Adam Looney, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institute — a left-leaning think tank — said while the cost seems high, for borrowers who qualify it comes out to a monthly average savings of about \$59.

Looney previously was a senior economist for public finance and tax policy with former President Barack Obama's Council of Economic Advisers, and was an economist at the Federal Reserve Board.

"It's like a tax cut," Looney said of student loan borrowers who would qualify for debt relief.

## Second lawsuit

The Biden administration stopped accepting applications for student debt relief following a second decision from a federal judge in Texas who separately ruled the program was unlawful.

In Fort Worth, U.S. District Judge Mark Pittman, an appointee of former President Donald Trump, ruled that the program was an "unconstitutional exercise of Congress's legislative power." He ruled in favor of two borrowers, backed by a conservative advocacy group, who brought the challenge.

The Department of Justice has already filed an appeal to that ruling.

Pittman wrote in his opinion that "[w]hether the Program constitutes good public policy is not the role of this Court to determine."

Sabrina Calazans, the outreach director at the Student Debt Crisis Center, said prior to Tuesday's announcement that the Biden administration should resume its pause on student loan repayment. The center also signed onto the letter to the White House from the more than 200 organizations.

"We're advocating for an extension to the payment pause until student debt cancellation is applied to borrowers' accounts," she said. "We believe that borrowers should be able to get their debt canceled and not have to make any payments until that happens because they've been promised this relief."

Calazans, who has student loan debt herself — federal and private loans — and is a first-generation college student, said the pause on repayments has been a lifeline for her and her family. The pause did not

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include private loans, which she has, so she's had to continue those payments throughout the pandemic.

"Folks were struggling before the pandemic started," she said of student loan debt. "This was already a crisis that people were dealing with beforehand, so this has been around for a long time, not just recently."

Calazans said those student loan borrowers who applied to the Department of Education for debt relief are starting to get emails that their applications for student debt cancellation were approved, but the lawsuits are blocking it.

"Folks are excited about the prospect of having their debt canceled — whether it's all of it or a portion of it — and now that hope that they had is now suddenly stopped for now because of the blocking of this plan," she said. "Borrowers are in this limbo."

## **Emails sent out**

The Department of Education has sent out emails to student loan borrowers who applied, and were approved for the debt relief program with the subject line: "Your Student Loan Debt Relief Application Has Been Approved."

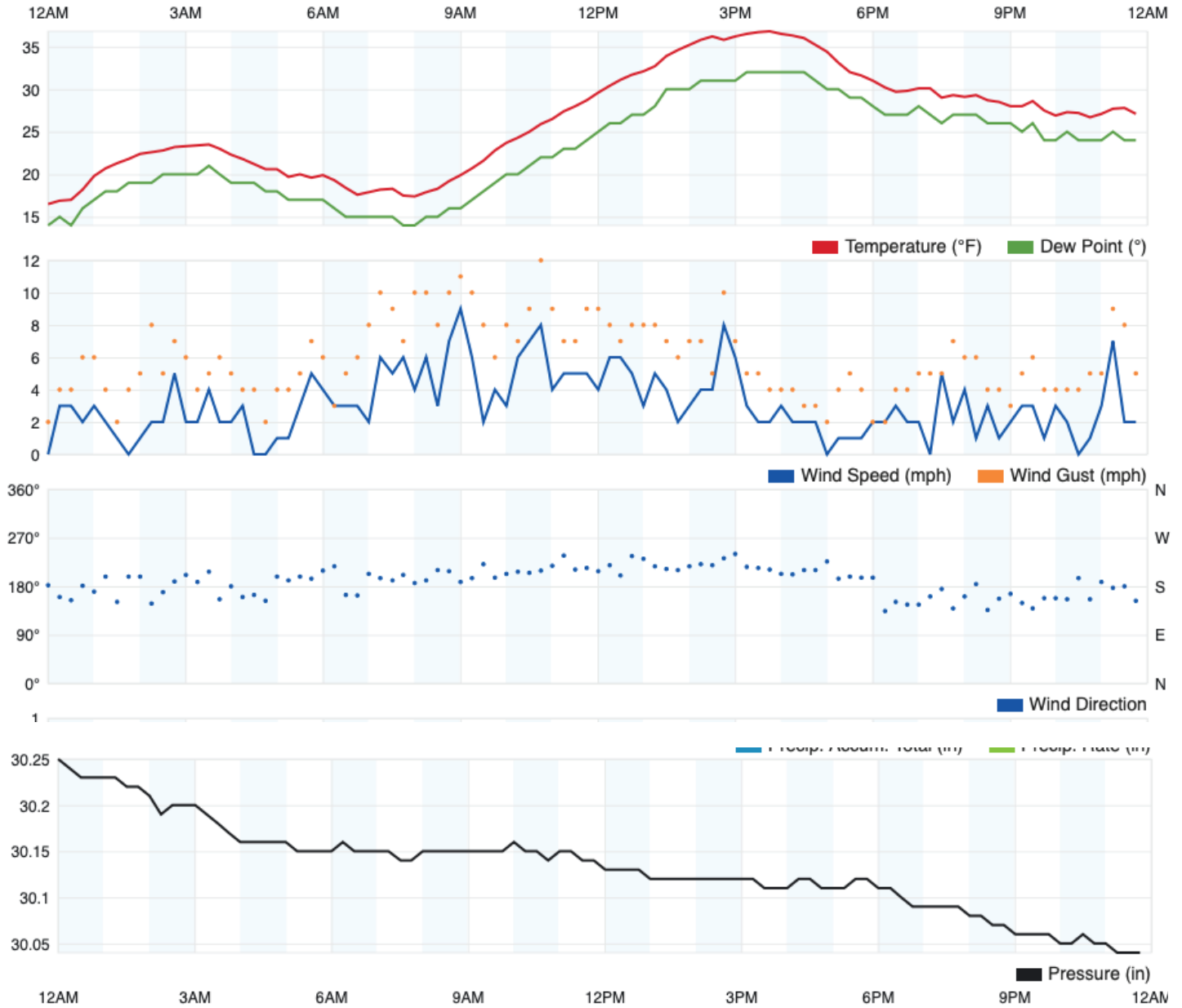
However, the body of the email reads: "Unfortunately, a number of lawsuits have been filed challenging the program, which have blocked our ability to discharge your debt at present."

"We believe strongly that the lawsuits are meritless, and the Department of Justice has appealed on our behalf," according to the email. "We will keep your application information and will continue our review of your eligibility if and when we prevail in court. We will update you when there are new developments."

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Sunny

High: 40 °F

Tonight



Increasing  
Clouds

Low: 16 °F

Thanksgiving  
Day



Gradual  
Clearing

High: 37 °F

Thursday  
Night



Mostly Clear

Low: 16 °F

Friday



Sunny

High: 41 °F

Friday  
Night



Mostly Clear

Low: 23 °F

Saturday



Partly Sunny

High: 40 °F

## Thanksgiving Forecast

Today



35 to 59°

\*Increasing clouds late.  
Slight chance of  
sprinkles/flurries  
In central SD  
early Thurs AM



Thursday



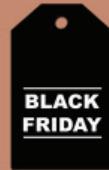
33 to 43°



Friday



37 to 53°



 NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE  
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

It is almost turkey day! Mostly sunny for today with clouds on the increase from west to east late to-night. There is a slight chance 15% of sprinkles/flurries early Thanksgiving morning across central SD with clouds clearing west to east by the afternoon and evening. Sunny and warmer for Friday.

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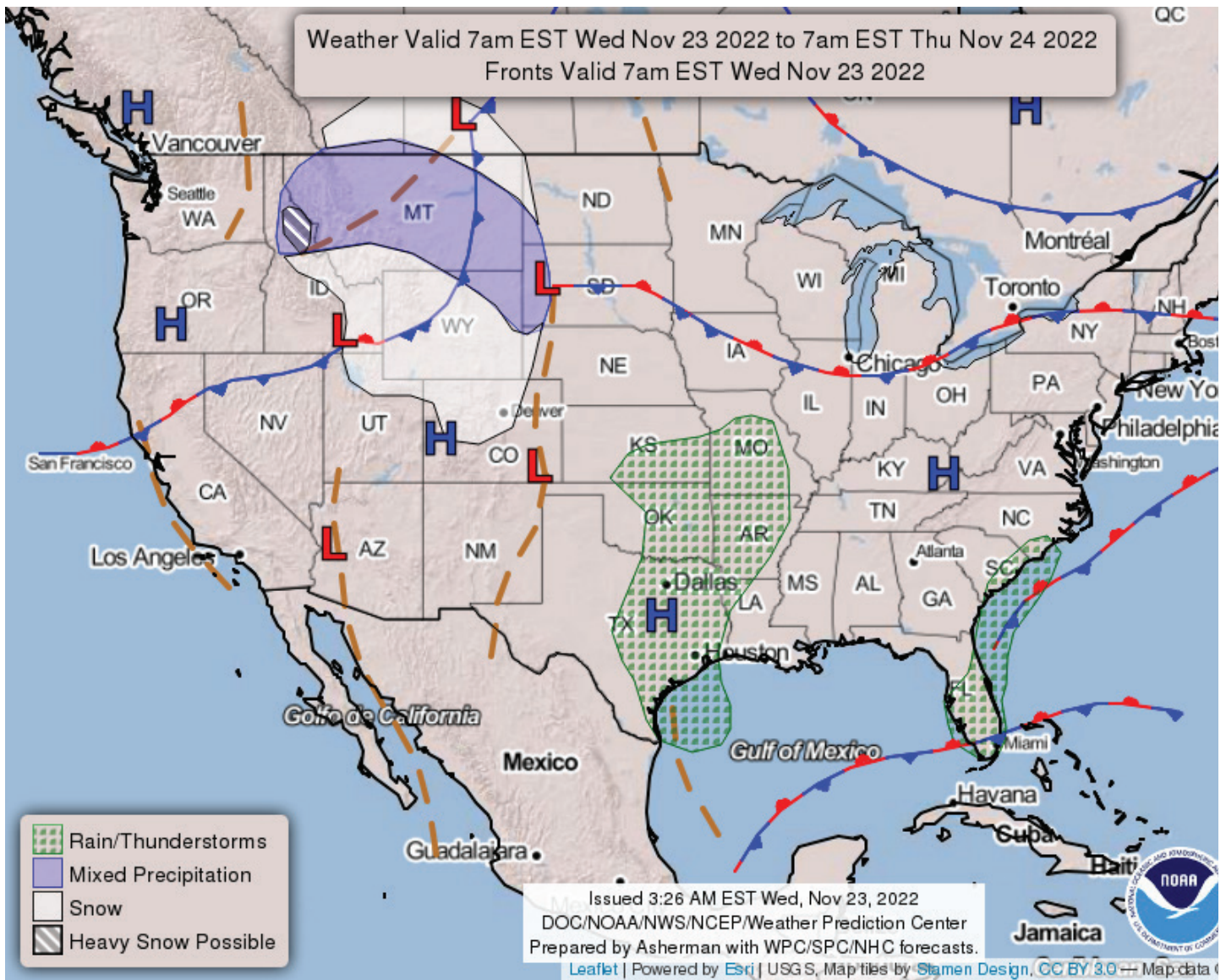
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 37 °F at 3:30 PM**  
**Low Temp: 16 °F at 12:00 AM**  
**Wind: 12 mph at 10:40 AM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 9 hours, 16 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 59 in 2017  
Record Low: --17 in 1985  
Average High: 39°F  
Average Low: 16°F  
Average Precip in Nov.: 0.60  
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.00  
Average Precip to date: 21.07  
Precip Year to Date: 16.50  
Sunset Tonight: 4:57:02 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:41:57 AM



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## Today in Weather History

November 23, 1996: Heavy snow of 6 to 8 inches fell across most of northern South Dakota, adding to already significant snow depth. Roads became snow-packed, which hampered travel, resulting in the postponement of many activities. Some snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Aberdeen, Isabel, Roscoe, and Mellette; 7 inches at Eagle Butte, Timber Lake, Selby, Faulkton, Leola, Frederick, Webster, and Sisseton; and 8 inches at Britton, Ipswich, Eureka, and McLaughlin.

1909 - Rattlesnake Creek was deluged with 7.17 inches of rain in 24 hours to establish a record for the state of Idaho. (The Weather Channel)

1912: The Rouse Simmons was a three-masted schooner famous for sinking during a violent storm on Lake Michigan on this day. The ship was bound for Chicago with a cargo of Christmas trees when it foundered off the coast of Two Rivers, Wisconsin, killing all on board.

1943 - Northern New Hampshire was in the grips of a record snowstorm which left a total of 55 inches at Berlin, and 56 inches at Randolph. The 56 inch total at Randolph established a 24 hour snowfall record for the state. In Maine, Middle Dam received a record 35 inches of snow in 24 hours. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Rain and gale force winds prevailed along the Northern Pacific coast. Quillayute, WA, received 1.57 inches of rain in 24 hours, including nine tenths of an inch in six hours. Heavy snow fell over northern Oregon and the Cascade Mountains of Washington State. Temperatures began to moderate in the eastern U.S. following a bitterly cold weekend. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Low pressure crossing the Great Basin brought wintry weather to parts of the western U.S. Up to a foot of snow blanketed Yellowstone Park, and winds gusted to 70 mph at Casper WY, and reached 95 mph near Reno NV. Up to seven inches of rain was reported in the Grass Valley and Nevada City area of California. Paradise CA was soaked with 5.37 inches of rain in 24 hours. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Low pressure tracking across the Carolinas brought heavy rain to parts of the Southern Atlantic Coast Region for Thanksgiving Day, and blanketed the Middle Atlantic Coast States and southern New England with heavy snow. The storm produced up to nine inches of snow over Long Island NY, and up to 14 inches over Cape Cod MA, at Yarmouth. Totals of 4.7 inches at New York City and 6.0 inches at Newark NJ were records for Thanksgiving Day, the 8.0 inch total at Providence RI was a record for any given day in November, and the 6.5 inch total at Strasburg CT was a record for the month of November as a whole. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2004 - An outbreak of severe thunderstorms produced reports of 54 tornadoes across portions of Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas and Alabama. In Texas's Hardin county, one person was killed with three injured when a tornado struck during the afternoon (Associated Press).



Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### WHERE IS HE WHEN WE NEED HIM?

The night was so dark that even the stars were hidden behind the clouds. The winds were so fierce and the rains so heavy that it was nearly impossible to see. A chaplain noticed a young sailor trying to hide behind the ship's guns where there was a dim light. Trying to comfort him, the chaplain opened his New Testament to John 3:16 and asked him to read that verse. He wanted to talk to him about God. "For God so loved the world," he began reading quietly, "that He gave His only forgotten Son."

Many of us frequently forget the Lord, His Word and His works until we need His help. This happened to the people of Israel. The Psalmist reminds us of this in two simple words that all of us, unfortunately, can relate to: "They forgot."

Often when we face a crisis, it is easy to focus on the crisis rather than the Christ who can guide and guard us through it safely if we would only allow Him. We think of everything that we can do rather than what He can do. So, we delay calling on Him. More than we can realize He is waiting to hear our voice. He wants to comfort and care for us, strengthen and sustain us. But we choose to tackle the task by ourselves - believing that we can live life without Him. Then, when we realize that we are helpless, we turn to Him and, as always, He responds. Perhaps He allows us to "try it" on our own and fail so that He can remind us of our weakness and His enduring strength.

His promise? "Call on me, and I will answer you..." And again, "I will never leave you nor forsake you!"

Prayer: How foolish we are, Father, to ever forget that You are always present waiting and wanting to help us. Help us to remember You in the good times and in the bad times. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: But they soon forgot what He had done. Psalm 106:13a



We all need the encouragement, comfort, and peace that comes through God's grace. Our daily devotionals, known as Seeds of Hope, have been a means through which thousands of people have experienced this grace. Each devotional comes from God's Word and we pray this good "seed" finds good soil in your heart. Our aim is that the Seeds of Hope will be a great source of daily encouragement to you and that God will use them to draw you near to Him

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## 2022-23 Community Events

- 07/21/2022: Pro Am Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course  
07/22/2022: Ferney Open Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Start  
07/24/2022: Moonlight Swim at the Swimming Pool 9-11pm for 9th grade to age 20  
07/27/2022: Golf Fundraiser Lunch at Olive Grove Golf Course 11a-1pm  
08/05/2022: Wine on Nine at Olive Grove Golf Course 6pm  
08/12/2022: GHS Basketball Golf Tournament  
No Date Set: 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)  
09/11/2022: 6th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 3-5pm  
09/11/2022: Couples Sunflower Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10 a.m.  
09/02-04: Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport  
10/01/2022: Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm  
10/07/2022: Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am  
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  
11/13/2022: Snow Queen Contest  
11/19/2022: 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)  
12/03/2022 Tour of Homes & Holiday Party at Olive Grove Golf Course  
12/10/2022: Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-12pm  
01/29/2023 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am-1pm, Community Center  
01/29/2023 85th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)  
04/01/2023 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)  
04/22/2023 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)  
04/23/2023 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)  
05/06/2023 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)  
05/29/2023 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)  
07/04/2023 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Registration, 10am Start (4th of July)  
07/09/2023 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)  
09/09/2023 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)  
10/31/2023 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm (working day on or closest to Halloween)  
10/31/2023 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm  
11/23/2023 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)

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## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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## News from the Associated Press

### **Oklahoma police: Suspect nabbed in killings of 4 at pot farm**

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

The suspect in the weekend killings of four people at a marijuana farm in Oklahoma was arrested in the afternoon by officers in South Florida, police announced late Tuesday.

Wu Chen was taken into custody without incident just before 4 p.m. Central time by Miami Beach police and taken to the Miami-Dade County Detention Center, the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation said in an evening post on Facebook.

The arrest came "after a car tag reader flagged vehicle he was driving," it added. The suspect will be charged with murder and shooting with intent to kill and faces extradition to Oklahoma.

OSBI also posted a photo provided by U.S. Marshals of the man sitting shoeless on a curb, apparently with his hands cuffed behind his back.

Authorities said the victims — three men and one woman, all Chinese citizens — were shot dead and "executed" on the 10-acre (4-hectare) property west of Hennessey, about 55 miles (90 kilometers) northwest of Oklahoma City. A fifth victim who is also a Chinese citizen was wounded and taken to an Oklahoma City hospital.

The victims had not yet been identified publicly, and next-of-kin notification was still pending "because of a significant language barrier," police said.

Authorities had said previous they had a suspect in mind but were withholding the name for the time being to avoid endangering others.

"The suspect was inside that building for a significant amount of time before the executions began," OSBI said in a news release earlier Tuesday. "Based on the investigation thus far, this does not appear to be a random incident."

OSBI Capt. Stan Florence said the previous day that authorities believed the suspect knew the victims, who were found dead Sunday night.

"They all know each other," Florence said. "Don't know if they're related, or if they're coworkers, but certainly these individuals were, we believe, all familiar with each other."

The Kingfisher County Sheriff's Office initially responded to a reported hostage situation at the farm and requested help from state authorities, Florence said.

"There's a lot to unravel with this case," he added. "It'll take a little time for us to process it."

The case is being investigated as a quadruple homicide. The Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs Control is also investigating.

That agency has targeted criminal growing and trafficking of marijuana for the black market in recent years. But agency spokesman Mark Woodward said Tuesday it was too soon to say that was a focus of this investigation.

"It being a marijuana farm, obviously Oklahoma state law requires that they have a license from the Oklahoma Medical Marijuana Authority and from us," Woodward said. "One of the things we're looking at is, is it obtained legally or was it obtained by fraud? So that'll be part of our investigation."

Porsha Riley, spokeswoman for the Oklahoma Medical Marijuana Authority, said there is an active license for a medical marijuana grow business at the location.

None of the 14 marijuana growing operations in the Hennessey area responded to email inquiries from The Associated Press, and officials would not identify which one operated at the site of the shootings.

Oklahoma voters legalized medical marijuana in 2018, and the industry quickly boomed thanks to an open-ended law that put in place fewer restrictions than in other states.

In March, voters will decide whether to legalize recreational use of the drug.

Maryland and Missouri approved recreational marijuana in this month's midterm elections, bringing the total number states that allow recreational use to 21. Arkansas, North Dakota and South Dakota voters

rejected legalization proposals in the midterms.

## South Dakota secures 68-58 victory against LIU

By The Associated Press undefined

CYPRESS LAKE, Fla. (AP) — Mason Archambault's 19 points helped South Dakota defeat Long Island University 68-58 on Tuesday.

Archambault also contributed four steals for the Coyotes (3-2). Tasos Kamateros scored 13 points and added six rebounds. Paul Bruns recorded 11 points and was 4 of 10 shooting (1 for 5 from distance).

Marko Maletic led the way for the Sharks (1-3) with 19 points. LIU also got 12 points and two steals from R.J. Greene. In addition, Cheikh Ndiaye finished with six points and two steals.

## Bison's relocation to Native lands revives a spiritual bond

By BOBBY ROSS Jr. Associated Press

BULL HOLLOW, Okla. (AP) — Ryan Mackey quietly sang a sacred Cherokee verse as he pulled a handful of tobacco out of a zip-close bag. Reaching over a barbed wire fence, he scattered the leaves onto the pasture where a growing herd of bison — popularly known as American buffalo — grazed in northeastern Oklahoma.

The offering represented a reverent act of thanksgiving, the 45-year-old explained, and a desire to forge a divine connection with the animals, his ancestors and the Creator.

"When tobacco is used in the right way, it's almost like a contract is made between you and the spirit — the spirit of our Creator, the spirit of these bison," Mackey said as a strong wind rumbled across the grassy field. "Everything, they say, has a spiritual aspect. Just like this wind, we can feel it in our hands, but we can't see it."

Decades after the last bison vanished from their tribal lands, the Cherokee Nation is part of a nationwide resurgence of Indigenous people seeking to reconnect with the humpbacked, shaggy-haired animals that occupy a crucial place in centuries-old tradition and belief.

Since 1992 the federally chartered InterTribal Buffalo Council has helped relocate surplus bison from locations such as Badlands National Park in South Dakota, Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming and Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona to 82 member tribes in 20 states.

"Collectively those tribes manage over 20,000 buffalo on tribal lands," said Troy Heinert, a Rosebud Sioux Tribe member who serves as executive director of the InterTribal Buffalo Council, based in Rapid City, South Dakota. "Our goal and mission is to restore buffalo back to Indian country for that cultural and spiritual connection that Indigenous people have with the buffalo."

Centuries ago, an estimated 30 million to 60 million bison roamed the vast Great Plains of North America, from Canada to Texas. But by 1900, European settlers had driven the species to near extinction, hunting them en masse for their prized skins and often leaving the carcasses to rot on the prairie.

"It's important to recognize the history that Native people had with buffalo and how buffalo were nearly decimated. ... Now with the resurgence of the buffalo, often led by Native nations, we're seeing that spiritual and cultural awakening as well that comes with it," said Heinert, who is a South Dakota state senator.

Historically, Indigenous people hunted and used every part of the bison: for food, clothing, shelter, tools and ceremonial purposes. They did not regard the bison as a mere commodity, however, but rather as beings closely linked to people.

"Many tribes viewed them as a relative," Heinert said. "You'll find that in the ceremonies and language and songs."

Rosalyn LaPier, an Indigenous writer and scholar who grew up on the Blackfeet Nation's reservation in Montana, said there are different mythological origin stories for bison among the various peoples of the Great Plains.

"Depending on what Indigenous group you're talking to, the bison originated in the supernatural realm and ended up on Earth for humans to use," said LaPier, an environmental historian and ethnobotanist at

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the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. "And there's usually some sort of story of how humans were taught to hunt bison and kill bison and harvest them."

Her Blackfeet tribe, for example, believes there are three realms: the sky world, the below world — that is, Earth — and the underwater world. Tribal lore, LaPier says, holds that the Blackfeet were vegetarians until an orphaned bison slipped out of the underwater world in human form and was taken in by two caring humans. As a result, the underwater bison's divine leader allowed more to come to Earth to be hunted and eaten.

In Oklahoma, the Cherokee Nation, one of the largest Native American tribes with 437,000 registered members, had a few bison on its land in the 1970s. But they disappeared.

It wasn't until 40 years later that the tribe's contemporary herd was begun, when a large cattle trailer — driven by Heinert — arrived in fall 2014 with 38 bison from Badlands National Park. It was greeted by emotional songs and prayers from tribe's people.

"I can still remember the dew that was on the grass and the songs of the birds that were in the trees. ... I could feel the hope and the pride in the Cherokee people that day," Heinert said.

Since then, births and additional bison transplants from various locations have boosted the population to about 215. The herd roams a 500-acre (2-square kilometer) pasture in Bull Hollow, an unincorporated area of Delaware County about 70 miles (113 kilometers) northeast of Tulsa, near the small town of Kenwood.

For now, the Cherokee are not harvesting the animals, whose bulls can weigh up to 2,000 pounds (900 kilograms) and stand 6 feet tall (nearly 2 meters), as leaders focus on growing the herd. But bison, a lean protein, could serve in the future as a food source for Cherokee schools and nutrition centers, said Bryan Warner, the tribe's deputy principal chief.

"Our hope is really not just for food sovereignty's sake but to really reconnect our citizens back in a spiritual way," said Warner, a member of a United Methodist church.

That reconnection in turn leads to discussions about other fauna, he added, from rabbits and turtles to quail and doves.

"All these different animals — it puts you more in tune with nature," he said as bison sauntered through a nearby pond. "And then essentially it puts you more in tune with yourself, because we all come from the same dirt that these animals are formed from — from our Creator."

Originally from the southeastern United States, the Cherokee were forced to relocate to present-day Oklahoma in 1838 after gold was discovered in their ancestral lands. The 1,000-mile (1,600-kilometer) removal, known as the Trail of Tears, claimed nearly 4,000 lives through sickness and harsh travel conditions.

While bison are more associated with Great Plains tribes than those with roots on the East Coast, the newly arrived Cherokee had connections with a slightly smaller subspecies, according to Mackey. The animals on the tribe's lands today are not direct descendants, he explained, but close cousins with which the tribe is able to have a spiritual bond.

"We don't speak the same language as the bison," Mackey said. "But when you sit with them and spend time with them, relationships can be built on ... other means than just language alone: sharing experiences, sharing that same space and just having a feeling of respect. Your body language changes when you have respect for someone or something."

Mackey grew up with Pentecostal roots on his father's side and Baptist on his mother's. He still occasionally attends church, but finds more meaning in Cherokee ceremonial practices.

"Even if (tribal members) are raised in church or in synagogue or wherever they choose to worship, their elders are Cherokee elders," he said. "And this idea of relationship and respect and guardianship — with the land, with the Earth, with all those things that reside on it — it's passed down. It still pervades our identity as Cherokee people."

That's why he believes the bison's return to Cherokee lands is so important.

"The bison aren't just meat," he said. "They represent abundance and health and strength."

**Twin blasts shake Jerusalem, killing teen and wounding 18**

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By ALON BERNSTEIN and TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Two blasts went off near bus stops in Jerusalem at the height of morning rush hour on Wednesday, killing a Canadian teenager and injuring at least 18, in what police said were suspected attacks by Palestinians.

The first explosion occurred near a typically crowded bus stop on the edge of the city. The second went off about half an hour later in Ramot, a settlement in the city's north. Police said one person died from their wounds and at least three were seriously wounded in the blasts.

The victim was identified as 15-year-old Aryeh Shechopek, who was heading to a Jewish seminary when the blast went off, according to a notice announcing his death. Shechopek was a Canadian citizen, according to Canada's Ambassador to Israel Lisa Stadelbauer.

Tensions between Israelis and Palestinians have been surging for months, amid nightly Israeli raids in the occupied West Bank prompted by a spate of deadly attacks against Israelis that killed 19 people in the spring. There has been an uptick in recent weeks in Palestinian attacks.

The violence occurred hours after Palestinian militants stormed a West Bank hospital and carried out an Israeli citizen seeking treatment there after a car accident, according to the young man's father. That incident could further ratchet up tensions.

The developments took place as former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is holding coalition talks after national elections and is likely to return to power as head of what's expected to be Israel's most right-wing government ever.

Itamar Ben-Gvir, an extremist lawmaker who has called for the death penalty for Palestinian attackers and who is set to become the minister in charge of police under Netanyahu, said the attack meant Israel needed to take a tougher stance on Palestinian violence.

"We must exact a price from terror," he said at the scene of the first explosion. "We must return to be in control of Israel, to restore deterrence against terror."

Police, who were searching for the suspected attackers, said their initial findings showed that shrapnel-laden explosive devices were placed at the two sites. The twin blasts occurred amid the buzz of rush hour traffic and police briefly closed part of a main highway leading out of the city, where the first explosion went off. Video from shortly after the initial blast showed debris strewn along the sidewalk as the wail of ambulances blared. A bus in Ramot was pocked with what looked like shrapnel marks.

"It was a crazy explosion. There is damage everywhere here," Yosef Haim Gabay, a medic who was at the scene when the first blast occurred, told Israeli Army Radio. "I saw people with wounds bleeding all over the place."

While Palestinians have carried out stabbings, car rammings and shootings in recent years, bombing attacks have become very rare since the end of a Palestinian uprising nearly two decades ago.

The U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem condemned the violence, as did EU Ambassador to Israel Dimitar Tzantchev.

The Islamic militant Hamas, which rules the Gaza Strip and once carried out suicide bombings against Israelis, praised the perpetrators of the attacks, calling it a heroic operation, but stopped short of claiming responsibility.

"The occupation is reaping the price of its crimes and aggression against our people," Hamas spokesman Abd al-Latif al-Qanua said.

Israel said that in response to the blasts, it was closing two West Bank crossings to Palestinians near the West Bank city of Jenin, a militant stronghold.

In Jenin late Tuesday, militants entered a hospital and removed the Israeli teen wounded in a car accident. The young man, 17, was from Israel's Druze minority. His father, who was in the hospital room with him, said the militants disconnected him from hospital equipment and took him while still alive. The Israeli military said the young man was already dead when he was taken.

"It was something horrendous. It was something that was inhumane," Husam Ferro, the teen's father, told Israeli news site YNet. "He was still alive and they took him in front of my eyes and I couldn't do anything."

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A Druze community leader told YNet talks were underway on the body's return to the family. Palestinian militants have in the past carried out kidnappings to seek concessions from Israel.

Palestinian officials either declined to comment or did not respond to requests for comment.

More than 130 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli-Palestinian fighting in the West Bank and east Jerusalem this year, making 2022 the deadliest year since 2006. The Israeli army says most of the Palestinians killed have been militants. But stone-throwing youths protesting Israeli army incursions and others not involved in confrontations have also been killed.

At least eight Israelis have been killed in the most recent wave of Palestinian attacks.

The Israeli military said Wednesday that Palestinian gunmen opened fire on forces escorting worshippers to a flashpoint shrine in the West Bank city of Nablus overnight. The troops fired back and the Palestinian Health Ministry said a 16-year-old was killed in the incident.

Israel captured the West Bank in the 1967 Mideast war, along with east Jerusalem and Gaza. The Palestinians seek the territories for their hoped-for independent state.

## Multiple explosions heard across Ukrainian capital Kyiv

By JOHN LEICESTER and SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Multiple explosions were heard in Kyiv Wednesday after air raid sirens sounded in Ukraine's capital and elsewhere across the country.

The thunderous echoes of what sounded like repeated blasts rattled across the capital. Mayor Vitali Klitschko posted on Telegram that "one of the capital's infrastructure facilities has been hit." He urged people to "Stay in shelters! The air alert continues."

Klitschko didn't give further details, and there was no further information on whether and what targets may have been hit.

Russia has been repeatedly pounding Ukraine's war-time capital and power facilities across the country in recent weeks, causing widespread blackouts.

THIS IS A BREAKING NEWS UPDATE. AP's earlier story follows below.

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — An overnight rocket attack destroyed a hospital maternity ward in southern Ukraine, killing a 2-day-old baby, Ukrainian authorities said Wednesday. Ukraine's first lady said the attack caused "horrible pain," vowing that "we will never forget and never forgive."

The baby's mother and a doctor were pulled alive from the rubble in Vilniansk, close to the city of Zaporizhzhia.

The region's governor said the rockets were Russian. The strike adds to the gruesome toll suffered by hospitals and other medical facilities — and their patients and staff — in the Russian invasion that will enter its tenth month this week.

They have been in the firing line from the outset, including a March 9 airstrike that destroyed a maternity hospital in the now-occupied port city of Mariupol.

"At night, Russian monsters launched huge rockets at the small maternity ward of the hospital in Vilniansk. Grief overwhelms our hearts — a baby was killed who had just seen the light of day. Rescuers are working at the site," said the regional governor, Oleksandr Starukh, writing on the Telegram messaging app.

First lady Olena Zelenska wrote on Twitter that a 2-day-old boy died in the strike and expressed her condolences. "Horrible pain. We will never forget and never forgive," she said.

Photos posted by the governor showed thick smoke rising above mounds of rubble, being combed by emergency workers against the backdrop of a dark night sky.

The State Emergency Service said the two-story building was destroyed.

Vilniansk is in the Ukrainian-held north of the Zaporizhzhia region, and is about 500 kilometers (300 miles) southeast of Ukraine's capital, Kyiv. Other parts of Zaporizhzhia are Russian-held and it is one of four Ukrainian regions that Russia illegally annexed in September after internationally condemned sham referendums.

Medical workers' efforts have been complicated by unrelenting Russian attacks in recent weeks on



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Ukraine's infrastructure that officials say have caused huge damage to the power grid. State grid operator Ukrenergo said that all regions of Ukraine would see power outages on Wednesday.

The situation is even worse in the southern city of Kherson, from which Russia retreated nearly two weeks ago after months of occupation — cutting power and water lines.

Many doctors in the city are working in the dark, unable to use elevators to transport patients to surgery and operating with headlamps, cell phones and flashlights. In some hospitals, key equipment no longer works.

"Breathing machines don't work, X-ray machines don't work ... There is only one portable ultrasound machine and we carry it constantly," said Volodymyr Malishchuk, the head of surgery at a children's hospital in the city.

On Tuesday, after strikes on Kherson seriously wounded 13-year-old Artur Voblikov, a team of health staff carefully maneuvered the sedated boy up six flights of a narrow staircase to an operating room to amputate his left arm.

Malishchuk said that three children wounded by Russian strikes have come to the hospital this week, half as many as had previously been admitted in all of the nine months since the invasion began. Picking up a piece of shrapnel that was found in a 14-year-old boy's stomach, he said children are arriving with severe head injuries and ruptured internal organs.

Artur's mother, Natalia Voblikova, sat in the dark hospital with her daughter, waiting for his surgery to end. "You can't even call (Russians) animals, because animals take care of their own," said Voblikova wiping tears from her eyes. "But the children ... Why kill children?"

In the northeastern city of Kupiansk, two civilians were killed and two more were wounded by Russian shelling on Wednesday morning, a regional official said.

A nine-story residential building and a clinic were damaged, and a 55-year-old woman and a 68-year-old man died, Kharkiv governor Oleh Syniehubov said on Telegram.

Kupiansk was an early prize of Ukraine's lightning offensive in the northeastern Kharkiv region in September and, like other recaptured settlements, has seen repeated shelling by Russian forces which many Ukrainian officials describe as retaliation.

The deputy head of Ukraine's presidential office, Kyrylo Tymoshenko, said that 11 towns and villages in total were shelled in 24 hours in the Zaporizhzhia region. He said Russian forces also launched more than 30 missiles at Ukrainian-held towns near the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, Europe's largest, damaging residential buildings and power lines.

In Strasbourg, France, the European Parliament overwhelmingly backed a resolution labeling Russia a state sponsor of terrorism for its invasion of and actions in Ukraine. The nonbinding but symbolically significant resolution passed in a 494-58 vote with 48 abstentions.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy welcomed the vote. "Russia must be isolated at all levels and be held accountable in order to end its longstanding policy of terrorism in Ukraine and across the globe," he wrote on Twitter.

## UK top court rules against Scottish independence vote plan

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The U.K. Supreme Court ruled Wednesday that Scotland does not have the power to hold a new referendum on independence without the consent of the British government. The judgment is a setback for the Scottish government's campaign to break away from the United Kingdom.

Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said she would respect the ruling but continue the fight for independence, saying Scotland's "democratic right to choose our own future" was at stake.

The top court ruled that the Scottish Parliament "does not have the power to legislate for a referendum on Scottish independence."

Supreme Court President Robert Reed said the five justices were unanimous in the verdict, delivered six weeks after lawyers for the pro-independence Scottish administration and the Conservative U.K. govern-

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ment argued their cases at hearings in London.

Independence supporters plan to rally outside the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh and at other sites later Wednesday.

The semi-autonomous Scottish government wants to hold a referendum next October with the question "Should Scotland be an independent country?"

The U.K. government in London refuses to approve a vote, saying the question was settled in a 2014 referendum that saw Scottish voters reject independence by a margin of 55% to 45%.

The pro-independence government in Edinburgh wants to revisit the decision, though, arguing that Britain's departure from the European Union — which a majority of Scottish voters opposed — has radically changed the political and economic landscape.

Sturgeon argues that she has a democratic mandate from the Scottish people to hold a new secession vote because there is an independence-supporting majority in the Scottish Parliament.

During Supreme Court hearings last month, Dorothy Bain, the Scottish government's top law officer, said the majority of Scottish lawmakers had been elected on commitments to hold a fresh independence referendum. She also said a referendum would be advisory, rather than legally binding — though a "yes" vote would create strong momentum for Scotland to break away.

U.K. government lawyer James Eadie argued that power to hold a referendum rests with the U.K. Parliament in London, because "it's of critical importance to the United Kingdom as a whole," not just Scotland.

The Supreme Court justices agreed. They said it is clear that "a Bill which makes provision for a referendum on independence — on ending the sovereignty of the Parliament of the United Kingdom over Scotland — has more than a loose or consequential connection with the sovereignty of that Parliament."

Reed stressed that the court was "not asked, and cannot be asked, to express a view on the political question of whether Scotland should become an independent country."

The British government urged politicians in Scotland and London to move on and focus on pressing issues such as a struggling economy and a cost-of-living crisis.

Scottish Secretary Alister Jack said "people in Scotland want both their governments to be concentrating all attention and resources on the issues that matter most to them."

But Sturgeon said the ruling was "a hard pill for any supporter of independence — and surely indeed for any supporter of democracy — to swallow."

"A so-called partnership in which one partner is denied the right to choose a different future ... cannot be described in any way as voluntary or even a partnership at all," she said. She ruled out holding an unauthorized referendum, saying "the route we take must be lawful and democratic for independence to be achieved."

Sturgeon said she would make the next U.K. national election, due within two years, a de-facto plebiscite on ending Scotland's three-century-old union with England. She said the governing Scottish National Party would hold a special conference next year to work out details of that plan.

Polls suggest Scots are about evenly split on independence — and also that a majority of voters do not want a new referendum anytime soon.

Scotland and England have been politically united since 1707. Scotland has had its own parliament and government since 1999 and makes its own policies on public health, education and other matters. The U.K.-wide government in London controls matters such as defense and fiscal policy.

## Police: 6 people and assailant dead in Walmart shooting

By ALEX BRANDON Associated Press

CHESAPEAKE, Va. (AP) — A shooter opened fire in a Walmart in Virginia, leaving six people dead, police said, in the country's second high-profile mass killing in a handful of days. The assailant is also dead.

The store in Chesapeake was busy just before the shooting Tuesday night with people stocking up ahead of the Thanksgiving holiday, a shopper told a local TV station.

Officer Leo Kosinski couldn't say how the shooter died but said that he didn't believe police fired shots.

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It was not clear who the shooter was or what their motive might be.

"I am devastated by the senseless act of violence that took place late last night in our city," Mayor Rick W. West said in a statement posted on the city's Twitter account Wednesday. "Chesapeake is a tightknit community and we are all shaken by this news."

Joetta Jeffery told CNN she received text messages from her mother who was inside the store during the shooting. Her mother, Betsy Umphlett, was not injured.

"I'm crying, I'm shaking," Jeffery said. "I had just talked to her about buying turkeys for Thanksgiving, then this text came in."

A database run by The Associated Press, USA Today and Northeastern University that tracks every mass killing in America going back to 2006 shows this year has been especially bad. The U.S. has now had 40 mass killings so far this year, second to the 45 that occurred for all of 2019. The database defines a mass killing as at least four people killed, not including the killer.

The attack at the Walmart came three days after a person opened fire at a gay nightclub in Colorado, killing five people and wounding 17. Earlier in the year, the country was shaken by the deaths of 21 when a gunman stormed an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas.

Tuesday's shooting also brought back memories of another at a Walmart in 2019, when a gunman police say was targeting Mexicans opened fire at a store in El Paso, Texas, and killed 22 people.

The shooting had apparently stopped when police arrived at the store in Chesapeake, which is Virginia's second-largest city and lies next to the seaside communities of Norfolk and Virginia Beach.

Mike Kafka, a spokesman for Sentara Healthcare, said in a text message that five patients from the Walmart were being treated at Norfolk General Hospital. Their conditions weren't immediately available.

Walmart tweeted early Wednesday that it was "shocked at this tragic event."

U.S. Sen. Mark Warner said in a tweet that he was "sickened by reports of yet another mass shooting, this time at a Walmart in Chesapeake."

State Sen. Louise Lucas echoed Warner's sentiment, tweeting that she was "absolutely heartbroken that America's latest mass shooting took place in a Walmart in my district."

## Official: Organized crime likely behind Celtic gold heist

BERLIN (AP) — A senior official in southern Germany said Wednesday that organized crime groups were likely behind the theft of a huge horde of ancient gold coins stolen from a museum this week.

The 483 coins were discovered in 1999 during excavations of an ancient settlement near the present-day town of Manching and were on display at the local Celtic and Roman Museum.

"It's clear that you don't simply march into a museum and take this treasure with you," Bavaria's minister of science and arts, Markus Blume, told public broadcaster BR. "It's highly secured and as such there's a suspicion that we're rather dealing with a case of organized crime."

Blume said that all of the museum's security systems, along with Manching's entire telephone network, had been disabled during the heist.

German news agency dpa reported that in addition to the 483 coins, dating back to around 100 B.C., three other items were stolen from a second display cabinet.

Authorities fear the treasure, worth millions of euros (dollars), could be melted down, meaning the bowl-shaped coins would be lost to science.

Police and prosecutors planned to hold a news conference in Manching on Wednesday afternoon.

## Clinging to ancient faith, India tribes seek religion status

By SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

GUDUTA, India (AP) — The ritual began with a thunderous roll of leather drums, its clamor echoing through the entire village. Women dressed in colorful saris broke into an Indigenous folk dance, tapping and moving their feet to its galloping rhythm.

At the climax, 12 worshippers — proudly practicing a faith not officially recognized by the government

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— emerged from a mud house and marched toward a sacred grove believed to be the home of the village goddess. Led by the village chieftain Gasia Maranda, they carried religious totems — among them an earthen pitcher, a bow and arrow, winnowing fan and a sacrificial axe.

Maranda and others in Guduta, a remote tribal village in India's eastern Odisha state that rests in a seemingly endless forest landscape, are "Adivasis," or Indigenous tribespeople, who adhere to Sarna Dharma. It is a belief system that shares common threads with the world's many ancient nature-worshipping religions.

On that day inside the grove, worshippers displayed their reverence for the natural world, making circles around a Sal plant and three sacred stones, one each for the malevolent spirits they believe need pleased. They knelt as Maranda smeared the stones with vermilion paste, bowed to the sacred plant and laid down fresh leaves covered in a cow dung paste.

"Our Gods are everywhere. We see more in nature than others," said Maranda, as he led the men back to their homes.

But the government does not legally acknowledge their faith — a fact that is increasingly becoming a rallying point for change for some of the 5 million or so Indigenous tribespeople in the country who follow Sarna Dharma. They say formal recognition would help preserve their culture and history in the wake of the slow erosion of Indigenous tribespeople's rights in India.

Citizens are only allowed to align themselves with one of India's six officially recognized religions — Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Jainism and Sikhism. While they can select the "Others" category, many nature worshippers have felt compelled by the country's religious affiliation system to associate with one of the six named faiths.

Tribal groups have held protests in support of giving Sarna Dharma official religion status in the run-up to the upcoming national census, which has citizens state their religious affiliation.

The protests have gained momentum after the recent election of Droupadi Murmu, the first tribal woman to serve as India's president, raising hopes that her historic win will bring attention to the needs of the country's Indigenous population, which is about 110 million people as per the national census. They are scattered across various states and fragmented into hundreds of clans, with different legends, languages and words for their gods — many, but not all follow Sarna Dharma.

Salkhan Murmu, a former lawmaker and community activist who also adheres to Sarna Dharma, is at the center of the protests pushing for government recognition of his religion. His sit-in demonstrations in several Indian states have drawn crowds of thousands.

At a recent protest in Ranchi, the capital of eastern Jharkhand state, men and women sat cross-legged on a highway blocking traffic as Murmu spoke from a nearby stage. Dressed in a traditional cotton tunic and trousers, Murmu explained how anxieties over losing their religious identity and culture are driving the demand for formal recognition.

"This is a fight for our identity," Murmu told the crowd, who held their fists in the air and shouted: "Victory to Sarna Dharma." Thunderous applause washed over the venue.

Murmu is also taking his religion recognition campaign beyond city centers and into remote tribal villages. His message: If Sarna Dharma disappears, one of the country's last links to its early inhabitants goes with it. It is a convincing argument evidenced by the increasing number of tribal members rallying behind Murmu, who are helping fuel the slow morphing of the campaign into a social movement.

"If our religion will not get recognized by the government, I think we will wither away," said Murmu, as a group of villagers huddled around him in Odisha's Angarpada village. "The moment we get into any other religion by force, by pressure or by gratification we will lose our entire history, our way of life."

Murmu's efforts are just the latest push for official recognition.

In 2011, a government agency for Indigenous tribespeople asked the federal government to include Sarna Dharma as a separate religion code in that year's census. In 2020, the Jharkhand state, where tribespeople make up nearly 27% of the population, passed a resolution with a similar objective.

The federal government did not respond to either request.

One argument for granting Sarna Dharma official recognition is the sheer number of nature worshippers

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in India, said Karma Oraon, an anthropologist who taught at Ranchi University and has studied the lives of Indigenous tribes for decades.

The 2011 national census shows Sarna Dharma adherents in India outnumber Jains, who are officially the country's sixth largest faith group. Hindus are No. 1, making up nearly 80% of the 1.4 billion people in India.

More than half — a number close to 4.9 million — of those who selected the "Others" religion option in the 2011 national census further identified as Sarna Dharma adherents. Comparably, India's Jain population is slightly more than 4.5 million people.

"Our population is more than the recorded believers who follow Jainism. Why can't then our faith be recognized as a separate religion?" Oraon said.

Decades ago, there were more options for Indigenous tribespeople.

The census, started in 1871 under British rule, once allowed for the selection of "Animists," "Aboriginal," and "Tribes." The categories were removed in 1951 when the first census in independent India was conducted.

Some hope giving Sarna Dharma official status could stem the various existential threats to the faith.

The natural environment is integrally linked to worshippers' identity, but fast-disappearing ancient forests and encroachment by mining companies has led many to leave tribal villages, creating a generational disconnect among followers, Oraon said. Plus, many from younger generations are abandoning their centuries-old religious customs for urban life.

"We are going through an identity crisis," said Oraon.

His concerns have heightened after Hindu nationalist groups, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling party, have sought to bring nature worshippers into the Hindu fold. They are motivated by potential electoral gains but also want to bolster their agenda of transforming a secular India into a distinctly Hindu state.

These efforts stem from a long-held belief that India's Indigenous tribespeople are originally Hindus, but adherents of Sarna Dharma say their faith is different from monotheistic and polytheistic ones.

Sarna Dharma has no temples and scriptures. Its adherents don't believe in heaven or hell and don't have images of gods and goddesses. Unlike Hinduism, there is no caste system nor rebirth belief.

"Tribespeople might share some cultural ties with Hindus, but we have not assimilated into their religion," said Oraon.

The gradual embrace of Hindu and Christian values by some Indigenous tribal groups has exacerbated his concerns.

In the late 19th century, many tribespeople in Jharkhand, Odisha and other states renounced nature worship — some voluntarily and others coaxed by money, food and free education — and converted to Christianity. Hindu and Muslim groups also encouraged conversion, further chipping away at nature worshipper numbers.

In some cases, the conversions were resisted, said Bandhan Tigga, a religious leader of Sarna Dharma. When Hindu groups showed up, some tribespeople sacrificed cows, a holy animal for Hindus. They also slaughtered pigs, considered unclean in Islam, when Muslim missionaries arrived.

"In each case, the women smeared either pig or cow fat on their foreheads so that no Hindu or Muslim man could marry them," said Tigga, wearing a white and red striped cotton towel around his neck, a design that also makes up for the Sarna Dharma flag fluttering atop his house in Murma, a village in Jharkhand.

Most Christian missionaries are met with resistance these days, but conversions can still happen, said Tigga, who travels to remote parts of eastern India to persuade converts to return to their ancient faith.

For Sukhram Munda, a man in his late 80s, much is already gone.

He is the great-grandson of Birsa Munda, a 19th-century charismatic Indigenous leader who led his forest-bound community in revolt against British colonialists. Munda's legend grew after his death and bronze statues of him appeared in almost every tribal village in the state. Soon, a man who worshipped nature was worshipped by his own people.

But Munda's religion barely survived the onslaught of conversions in his ancestral Ulihatu village in Jharkhand. Half of his descendants converted to Christianity, Sukhram said. Now, the first thing visitors to

Ulihatu see is a church, a large white building that stands out against the green of the surrounding forests. "This used to be the village where we worshipped nature," said Sukhram. "Now half of the people don't even remember the religion their ancestors followed."

## Search effort intensifies after Indonesia quake killed 271

By ANDI JATMIKO Associated Press

CIANJUR, Indonesia (AP) — More rescuers and volunteers were deployed Wednesday in devastated areas on Indonesia's main island of Java to search for the dead and missing from an earthquake that killed at least 271 people.

With many missing, some remote areas still unreachable and more than 2,000 people injured in the 5.6 magnitude quake Monday, the death toll was likely to rise. Hospitals near the epicenter on the densely populated island were already overwhelmed, and patients hooked up to IV drips lay on stretchers and cots in tents set up outside, awaiting further treatment.

More than 12,000 army personnel were deployed Wednesday to increase the strength of search efforts that being carried out by more than 2,000 joint forces of police, the search and rescue agency and volunteers, said Suharyanto, the National Disaster Mitigation Agency chief.

Suharyanto, who like many Indonesians uses only one name, said aid was reaching thousands of people left homeless who fled to temporary shelters where supplies can be distributed only by foot over the rough terrain.

He said rescuers recovered three bodies Wednesday and rescued a 6-year-old boy who was found alive next to the dead body of his grandmother after spending two days trapped under the rubble of his collapsed house.

Television reports showed police, soldiers and other rescue personnel using jackhammers, circular saws and sometimes their bare hands and farm tools, digging desperately in the worst-hit area of Cijendil village where tons of mud, rocks and trees were left from a landslide.

The government appeared to be focused on finding bodies, and wherever possible, survivors. Authorities struggled to bring tractors and other heavy equipment over washed-out roads after earthquake triggered landslides crashing onto the hilly hamlets.

But still, residents said the government was slow to respond to the earthquake.

Muhammad Tohir, 48, was sitting in his living room with family in Cijendil when the catastrophe struck. Although his family managed to make it out, his sister and her two children was crushed by a landslide, a few kilometers (miles) of his house.

"When I came to my sister's house, I was devastated by what I saw," Tohir said. "Dozens of houses had been buried by landslides. ... I feel like doomsday."

He said more than 40 houses in his sister's neighborhood in Cijendil were buried under tons of mud with at least 45 people were buried alive, including Tohir's sister and her two children.

Tohir, along with other residents in the area, searched for the missing using farm tools and managed to pull out two bodies buried under as much as 6 meters (10 feet) of mud. Two days later, rescue personnel arrived to help in the search.

"The government too slow to respond to this disaster," Tohir said. "They should be bringing in heavy equipment to speed this up," he said.

But he said that he will not give up until they can pull his sister and his nieces out of the mud.

In several hard-hit areas, water, food and medical supplies were being distributed from trucks, and authorities have deployed military personnel carrying food, medicine, blankets, field tents and water tankers.

Volunteers and rescue personnel erected more temporary shelters for those left homeless in several villages of Cianjur district.

About 800 police, soldiers and volunteers dug through the debris with their bare hands, shovels and hoes as heavy rain hindered their efforts.

Arif Yulianto, a search and rescue operation coordinator said the search effort was halted Wednesday

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afternoon due to heavy rains that made the landslide areas unstable. The operation is to be resumed early Thursday.

Most were barely protected by makeshift shelters that were lashed by heavy monsoon downpours. Only a few were lucky to be protected by tarpaulin-covered tents. They said they were running low on food, blankets and other aid, as emergency supplies were rushed to the region.

Suharyanto said more than 58,000 survivors were moved to shelters and 2,043 people were injured, with nearly 600 of them still receiving treatment for serious injuries.

He said rescuers had recovered bodies from collapsed houses and from landslides that were triggered by the earthquake, and about 40 people were still missing. But not all of the 271 dead have been identified, so it's possible some the bodies pulled from the rubble are of people on the missing list.

Rescue operations were focused on about a dozen villages in Cianjur, where people are still believed trapped, Suharyanto said.

In a news conference Wednesday, Suharyanto said that more than 56,230 houses in Cianjur were damaged.

Indonesia is frequently hit by earthquakes, many much stronger than Monday's whose magnitude would typically be expected to cause light damage. But the area is densely populated, and experts said the shallowness of the quake and inadequate infrastructure contributed to the severe damage, including caved-in roofs and large piles of bricks, concrete, and corrugated metal.

The quake was centered on the rural, mountainous Cianjur district, where one woman said her home started "shaking like it was dancing."

More than 2.5 million people live in Cianjur district, including about 175,000 in the main town of the same name.

Many of the dead were public school students who had finished their classes for the day and were taking extra lessons at Islamic schools when the buildings collapsed, West Java Gov. Ridwan Kamil said.

President Joko Widodo visited Cianjur on Tuesday and pledged to rebuild infrastructure and to provide government assistance up to 50 million rupiah (\$3,180) to each resident whose house was damaged.

The country of more than 270 million people is frequently struck by earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and tsunamis because of its location on the arc of volcanoes and fault lines in the Pacific Basin known as the "Ring of Fire."

## Workers protest, beaten at virus-hit Chinese iPhone factory

By JOE McDONALD and ZEN SOO AP Business Writers

BEIJING (AP) — Employees at the world's biggest Apple iPhone factory were beaten and detained in protests over pay amid anti-virus controls, according to witnesses and videos on social media Wednesday, as tensions mount over Chinese efforts to combat a renewed rise in infections.

Videos that said they were filmed at the factory in the central city of Zhengzhou showed thousands of people in masks facing rows of police in white protective suits with plastic riot shields. Police kicked and hit a protester with clubs after he grabbed a metal pole that had been used to strike him.

Frustration with restrictions in areas throughout China that have closed shops and offices and confined millions of people to their homes has boiled over into protests. Videos on social media show residents tearing down barricades set up to enforce neighborhood closures.

The ruling Communist Party promised this month to try to reduce disruptions by shortening quarantines and making other changes. But the party is sticking to a "zero-COVID" strategy that aims to isolate every case while other governments relax controls and try to live with the virus.

Last month, thousands of employees walked out of the iPhone factory operated by Taiwan's Foxconn Technology Group over complaints about unsafe working conditions following virus cases.

A protest erupted Tuesday over complaints Foxconn changed conditions for new workers who were attracted by offers of higher pay, according to Li Sanshan, an employee.

Li said he quit a catering job in response to advertising that promised 25,000 yuan (\$3,500) for two

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months of work. Li, 28, said workers were angry after being told they had to work two additional months at lower pay to receive the 25,000 yuan.

"Foxconn released very tempting recruiting offers, and workers from all parts of the country came, only to find they were being made fools of," Li said.

Foxconn, headquartered in New Taipei City, Taiwan, said in a statement the "work allowance" has "always been fulfilled based on contractual obligation."

Foxconn denied what it said were comments online that employees with the virus lived in dormitories at the Zhengzhou factory. It said facilities were disinfected and passed government checks before employees moved in.

"Regarding any violence, the company will continue to communicate with employees and the government to prevent similar incidents from happening again," the company statement said.

Protests have flared as the number and severity of outbreaks has risen across China, prompting authorities in areas including Beijing, the capital, to close neighborhoods and impose other restrictions that residents say go beyond what the national government allows.

More than 253,000 cases have been found in the past three weeks and the daily average is increasing, the government reported Tuesday. This week, authorities reported China's first COVID-19 deaths in six months.

On Wednesday, the government reported 28,883 cases found over the past 24 hours, including 26,242 with no symptoms. Henan province, where Zhengzhou is the capital, reported 851 in total.

The government will enforce its anti-COVID policy while "resolutely overcoming the mindset of paralysis and laxity," said a spokesman for the National Health Commission, Mi Feng.

The city government of Guangzhou, the site of the biggest outbreaks, announced it opened 19 temporary hospitals with a total of almost 70,000 beds for coronavirus patients. The city announced plans last week to build hospital and quarantine facilities for 250,000 people.

Also Wednesday, Beijing opened a hospital in an exhibition center and suspended access to Beijing International Studies University was suspended after a virus case was found there. The capital earlier closed shopping malls and office buildings and suspended access to some apartment compounds.

Foxconn said earlier its Zhengzhou factory uses "closed-loop management," which means employees live at their workplace with no outside contact.

The protest lasted through Wednesday morning as thousands of workers gathered outside dormitories and confronted factory security workers, according to Li.

Other videos showed protesters spraying fire extinguishers toward police.

A man who identified himself as the Communist Party secretary in charge of community services was shown in a video posted on the Sina Weibo social media platform urging protesters to withdraw. He assured them their demands would be met.

Apple Inc. has warned deliveries of its new iPhone 14 model would be delayed due to anti-disease controls at the factory. The city government suspended access to an industrial zone that surrounds the factory, which Foxconn has said employs 200,000 people.

News reports said the ruling party had ordered "grassroots cadres" to fill in for Foxconn employees in Zhengzhou who left. The company didn't respond to requests for confirmation and details about that arrangement.

## Salt, drought decimate buffaloes in Iraq's southern marshes

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

CHIBAYISH, Iraq (AP) — Abbas Hashem fixed his worried gaze on the horizon — the day was almost gone and still, there was no sign of the last of his water buffaloes. He knows that when his animals don't come back from roaming the marshes of this part of Iraq, they must be dead.

The dry earth is cracked beneath his feet and thick layers of salt coat shriveled reeds in the Chibayish wetlands amid this year's dire shortages in fresh water flows from the Tigris River.



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Hashem already lost five buffaloes from his herd of 20 since May, weakened with hunger and poisoned by the salty water seeping into the low-lying marshes. Other buffalo herders in the area say their animals have died too, or produce milk that's unfit to sell.

"This place used to be full of life," he said. "Now it's a desert, a graveyard."

The wetlands — a lush remnant of the cradle of civilization and a sharp contrast to the desert that prevails elsewhere in the Middle East — were reborn after the 2003 fall of Saddam Hussein, when dams he had built to drain the area and root out Shiite rebels were dismantled.

But today, drought that experts believe is spurred by climate change and invading salt, coupled with lack of political agreement between Iraq and Turkey, are endangering the marshes, which surround the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in southern Iraq.

This year, acute water shortages — the worst in 40 years, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization — have driven buffalo herders deeper into poverty and debt, forcing many to leave their homes and migrate to nearby cities to look for work.

The rural communities that rely on farming and herding have long been alienated from officials in Baghdad, perpetually engaged in political crises. And when the government this year introduced harsh water rationing policies, the people in the region only became more desperate.

Oil-rich Iraq has not rebuilt the country's antiquated water supply and irrigation infrastructure and hopes for a water-sharing agreement for Tigris with upstream neighbor Turkey have dwindled, hampered by intransigence and often conflicting political allegiances in Iraq.

In the marshes, where rearing of water buffaloes has been the way of life for generations, the anger toward the government is palpable.

Hamza Noor found a patch where a trickle of fresh water flows. The 33-year-old sets out five times a day in his small boat across the marshes, filling up canisters with water and bringing it back for his animals.

Between Noor and his two brothers, the family lost 20 buffaloes since May, he said. But unlike other herders who left for the city, he is staying.

"I don't know any other job," he said.

Ahmed Mutliq, feels the same way. The 30-year-old grew up in the marshes and says he's seen dry periods years before.

"But nothing compares to this year," he said. He urged the authorities to release more water from upstream reservoirs, blaming provinces to the north and neighboring countries for "taking water from us."

Provincial officials, disempowered in Iraq's highly centralized government, have no answers.

"We feel embarrassed," said Salah Farhad, the head of Dhi Qar province's agriculture directorate. "Farmers ask us for more water, and we can't do anything."

Iraq relies on the Tigris-Euphrates river basin for drinking water, irrigation and sanitation for its entire population of 40 million. Competing claims over the basin, which stretches from Turkey and cuts across Syria and Iran before reaching Iraq, have complicated Baghdad's ability to make a water plan.

Ankara and Baghdad have not been able to agree on a fixed amount of flow rate for the Tigris. Turkey is bound by a 1987 agreement to release 500 cubic meters per second toward Syria, which then divides the water with Iraq.

But Ankara has failed to meet its obligation in recent years due to declining water levels, and rejects any future sharing agreements that forces it to release a fixed number.

Iraq's annual water plan prioritizes setting aside enough drinking water for the nation first, then supplying the agriculture sector and also discharging enough fresh water to the marshes to minimize salinity there. This year, the amounts were cut by half.

The salinity in the marshes has further spiked with water-stressed Iran diverting water from its Karkheh River, which also feeds into Iraq's marshes.

Iraq has made even less headway on sharing water resources with Iran.

"With Turkey, there is dialogue, but many delays," said Hatem Hamid, who heads the Iraqi Water Ministry's key department responsible for formulating the water plan. "With Iran, there is nothing."

Two officials at the legal department in Iraq's Foreign Ministry, which deals with complaints against other

countries, said attempts to engage with Iran over water-sharing were halted by higher-ups, including the office of then-Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi.

"They told us not to speak to Iran about it," said one of the officials. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss legal issues.

Iraq's needs are so dire that several Western countries and aid organizations are trying to provide development assistance for Iraq to upgrade its aging water infrastructure and modernize ancient farming practices.

The U.S. Geological Survey has trained Iraqi officials in reading satellite imagery to "strengthen Iraq's hand in negotiations with Turkey," one U.S. diplomat said, also speaking anonymously because of the ongoing negotiations.

As the sun set over Chibayish, Hashem's water buffalo never returned — the sixth animal he lost.

"I have nothing without my buffaloes," he said.

## Turkish strikes on Kurds stoke tensions with Syria as well

By BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Russia has pushed for years for a reconciliation between its ally, the Syrian government, and Turkey, which stood on opposing sides in Syria's civil war. Recent weeks saw the first small signs of possible progress.

But that could be threatened by this weekend's flare-up in tensions between Turkey and Syrian Kurds who control much of north and eastern Syria. Turkish airstrikes hit positions in Syria and Iraq of suspected Kurdish militants that Turkey blames for a deadly Nov. 13 bombing in Istanbul.

The strikes also hit Syrian army positions, killing and wounding a number of soldiers. Further worrying to Syria: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's repeated warnings that his military could carry out a new ground incursion into Syria, something U.S.-backed Kurdish forces have vowed to fight.

The Russian presidential envoy in Syria, Alexander Lavrentyev, urged Turkey on Tuesday to show restraint. He said he hoped it "will be possible to convince our Turkish partners to refrain from excessive use of force on Syrian territory."

The warnings underscore the danger of a new escalation of violence in a Syria that has been relatively calm for several years but is still torn to pieces among multiple powers by 11 years of conflict, from the long civil war to the rise and fall of the Islamic State group.

Turkey and the government of Syrian President Bashar Assad both oppose the Syrian Kurds: Ankara because it accuses them of links to Kurdish militants on its soil, Damascus because of the Kurdish hold over nearly a third of Syria's territory, including the oil-rich east. In a further complication, U.S. troops in northeastern Syria are working with the Kurdish-led forces there.

But sharing an opponent has so far not been enough to overcome other reasons for enmity. Damascus denounces Turkey's hold over long stretches of northern Syria along the shared border, seized in Turkey's previous military incursions against the Kurds since 2016. During the civil war, Turkey also backed rebels trying to oust Assad, and it still protects the opposition fighters' last territorial enclave in northwest Syria.

The deaths of Syrian soldiers in the weekend strikes further raise the temperature. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor that tracks the country's conflict, reported 18 Syrian soldiers were killed.

"Syria sees what happened as an aggression, and this affects any Iranian or Russian mediation that could open the closed doors between Ankara and Damascus," said Muhannad Haj Ali, a former Syrian legislator and a commander with the armed wing of Syria's ruling Baath party. "This undermines any political attempts, and therefore the Turks will have to apologize."

Prior to the strikes, there were hopeful signs in the reconciliation effort. In July, talks were held in Moscow between the head of Syria's National Security Council, Ali Mamluk, and Turkish intelligence chief Hakan Fidan, according to Ibrahim Hamidi, senior diplomatic editor for Syrian affairs at the London-based Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper.

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In October, Erdogan said low-level talks were taking place. Speaking to reporters at a European summit in Prague, he said that although a meeting with Assad was not currently on the table, when the time comes, "we could go the way of meeting the president of Syria."

A Lebanese politician allied with Syria who regularly meets Syrian officials said the Iranians, another close ally of Moscow, recently carried a message from Erdogan to Assad. In it, Erdogan called for the return of the Syrian army to areas now controlled by the Kurds, for action to prevent Kurdish fighters from using Syrian gas and oil and for Syrian refugees in Turkey to be returned to Syria.

Erdogan is under intense pressure at home to send Syrian refugees back. Anti-refugee sentiment is rising in Turkey amid an economic crisis, with presidential and parliamentary elections set for next year.

For Russia, a deal between Damascus and Ankara would help strengthen its ally Assad and would further promote Moscow's influence with Turkey, a NATO member that is increasingly warm to Russia.

In the message passed by the Iranians, Erdogan also said he was ready to send Turkish officials to Damascus, but Assad refused, saying they could meet in a third country, according to the Lebanese politician, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly about sensitive Syrian affairs.

A senior Turkish government official denied any Iranian mediation, arguing that Tehran was "antagonistic" toward Turkey in Syria. The official said it was Russia that pushed Turkey toward reconciliation but that there was "no progress at all." He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the backroom diplomacy.

Turkey's hand inside Syria is a major obstacle for Damascus.

Haj Ali called Turkey an occupying force and said it must end "terrorism," referring to its support of Syrian opposition fighters.

Mais Kreidi, a Syria-based member of the committee charged with producing a new constitution for Syria, said Syria will not accept less than full Turkish withdrawal to restore ties.

"In Syria we have red lines and they include liberating our land," Kreidi said.

Still, Abdurrahman of the Syrian Observatory said he doubts the talks will be hurt by the Syrian soldiers' deaths in Turkey's strikes, given their common interest against the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces.

"The SDF is the enemy for both sides," Abdurrahman said.

Progress in talks was enough to raise concern among the Syrian Kurds.

Kurdish fighters "are taking this issue seriously and taking measures to address it," SDF commander Mazloum Abdi told Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper. Any deal, he said, "will target the will of our people."

Speaking to The Associated Press in northern Syria late Tuesday, Abdi said that there are no basis for an agreement between Turkey and Syria.

"If this happens, it will be a great national crime because this will open the way for the occupation of parts of Syria," Abdi said. "This is not acceptable."

On Monday the SDF expressed condolences to the families of Syrian soldiers killed in the Turkish airstrikes and said Syrians should remember the "schemes of Turkish occupation and its mercenaries" — a sign of how the Kurds have also sought to promote common cause with Damascus.

## Supreme Court OKs handover of Trump tax returns to Congress

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court on Tuesday cleared the way for the imminent handover of former President Donald Trump's tax returns to a congressional committee after a three-year legal fight.

The court, with no noted dissents, rejected Trump's plea for an order that would have prevented the Treasury Department from giving six years of tax returns for Trump and some of his businesses to the Democratic-controlled House Ways and Means Committee.

Alone among recent presidents, Trump refused to release his tax returns either during his successful 2016 campaign or his four years in the White House, citing what he said was an ongoing audit by the IRS. Last week, Trump announced he would run again in 2024.

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It was the former president's second loss at the Supreme Court in as many months, and third this year. In October, the court refused to step into the legal fight surrounding the FBI search of Trump's Florida estate that turned up classified documents.

In January, the court refused to stop the National Archives from turning over documents to the House committee investigating the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol. Justice Clarence Thomas was the only vote in Trump's favor.

In the dispute over his tax returns, the Treasury Department had refused to provide the records during Trump's presidency. But the Biden administration said federal law is clear that the committee has the right to examine any taxpayer's return, including the president's.

Lower courts agreed that the committee has broad authority to obtain tax returns and rejected Trump's claims that it was overstepping and only wanted the documents so they could be made public.

Chief Justice John Roberts imposed a temporary freeze on Nov. 1 to allow the court to weigh the legal issues raised by Trump's lawyers and the counter arguments of the administration and the House of Representatives.

Just over three weeks later, the court lifted Roberts' order without comment.

Rep. Richard Neal, D-Mass., the committee chairman until the next Congress begins in January, said in a statement that his committee "will now conduct the oversight that we've sought for the last three and a half years."

In a message on his social media network, Trump said the Supreme Court's action created "terrible precedent for future Presidents." He accused the court of becoming "nothing more than a political body, with our country paying the price."

He also said: "Why would anybody be surprised that the Supreme Court has ruled against me, they always do!"

The House contended an order preventing the IRS from providing the tax returns would leave lawmakers "little or no time to complete their legislative work during this Congress, which is quickly approaching its end."

Had Trump persuaded the nation's highest court to intervene, he could have run out the clock on the committee, with Republicans ready to take control of the House in January. They almost certainly would have dropped the records request if the issue had not been resolved by then.

The House Ways and Means panel first requested Trump's tax returns in 2019 as part of an investigation into the Internal Revenue Service's audit program and tax law compliance by the former president. A federal law says the Internal Revenue Service "shall furnish" the returns of any taxpayer to a handful of top lawmakers.

The Justice Department under the Trump administration had defended a decision by then-Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin to withhold the tax returns from Congress. Mnuchin argued that he could withhold the documents because he concluded they were being sought by Democrats for partisan reasons. A lawsuit ensued.

After President Joe Biden took office, the committee renewed the request, seeking Trump's tax returns and additional information from 2015-2020. The White House took the position that the request was a valid one and that the Treasury Department had no choice but to comply. Trump then attempted to halt the handover in court.

Then-Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance Jr. obtained copies of Trump's personal and business tax records as part of a criminal investigation. That case, too, went to the Supreme Court, which rejected Trump's argument that he had broad immunity as president.

## Defense: Colorado gay club shooting suspect is nonbinary

By THOMAS PEIPERT, JESSE BEDAYN and BRITTANY PETERSON Associated Press

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (AP) — The alleged shooter facing possible hate crime charges in the fatal shooting of five people at a Colorado Springs gay nightclub is nonbinary, the suspect's defense team says

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in court filings.

In several standard motions filed on behalf of Anderson Lee Aldrich on Tuesday, public defenders refer to the suspect as "Mx. Aldrich," noting in footnotes that Aldrich, 22, is nonbinary and uses they/them pronouns. The motions deal with issues like unsealing documents and evidence gathering, not Aldrich's identity and there was no elaboration about it.

Aldrich, who was beaten into submission by patrons during Saturday night's shooting at Club Q, was scheduled to appear in court for the first time Wednesday by video from jail. The motive in the shooting was still under investigation, but authorities said Aldrich faces possible murder and hate crime charges.

Hate crime charges would require proving that the shooter was motivated by bias, such as against the victims' actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. The charges against Aldrich are preliminary, and prosecutors have not yet filed formal charges. Aldrich is represented by Joseph Archambault, a chief trial deputy with the state public defender's office. Lawyers from the office do not comment on cases to the media.

It was also revealed Tuesday that Aldrich's name was changed more than six years ago as a teenager, after filing a legal petition in Texas seeking to "protect himself" from a father with a criminal history including domestic violence against Aldrich's mother.

Aldrich was known as Nicholas Franklin Brink until 2016. Weeks before turning 16, Aldrich petitioned a Texas court for a name change, court records show. A petition for the name change was submitted on Brink's behalf by their grandparents, who were their legal guardians at the time.

"Minor wishes to protect himself and his future from any connections to birth father and his criminal history. Father has had no contact with minor for several years," said the petition filed in Bexar County, Texas.

The suspect's father is a mixed martial arts fighter and pornography performer with an extensive criminal history, including convictions for battery against the alleged shooter's mother, Laura Voepel, both before and after the suspect was born, state and federal court records show. A 2002 misdemeanor battery conviction in California resulted in a protective order that initially barred the father, Aaron F. Brink, from contacting the suspect or Voepel except through an attorney, but was later modified to allow monitored visits with the child.

The father also was sentenced to 2 1/2 years in custody for importation of marijuana and while on supervised release violated his conditions by testing positive for illegal steroids, according to public records. Brink could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

Aldrich's request for a name change came months after Aldrich was apparently targeted by online bullying. A website posting from June 2015 that attacked a teen named Nick Brink suggests they may have been bullied in high school. The post included photos similar to ones of the shooting suspect and ridiculed Brink over their weight, lack of money and what it said was an interest in Chinese cartoons.

Additionally, a YouTube account was opened in Brink's name that included an animation titled "Asian homosexual gets molested."

The name change and bullying were first reported by The Washington Post.

Court documents laying out Aldrich's arrest were sealed at the request of prosecutors. Aldrich was released from the hospital and was being held at the El Paso County jail, police said.

Local and federal authorities have declined to answer questions about why hate crime charges were being considered. District Attorney Michael Allen noted that the murder charges would carry the harshest penalty — life in prison — whereas bias crimes are eligible for probation. He also said it was important to show the community that bias motivated crimes are not tolerated.

Aldrich was arrested last year after their mother reported her child threatened her with a homemade bomb and other weapons. Ring doorbell video obtained by The Associated Press shows Aldrich arriving at their mother's front door with a big black bag the day of the 2021 bomb threat, telling her the police were nearby and adding, "This is where I stand. Today I die."

Authorities at the time said no explosives were found, but gun-control advocates have asked why police didn't use Colorado's "red flag" laws to seize the weapons Aldrich's mother says her child had.

The weekend assault took place at a nightclub known as a sanctuary for the LGBTQ community in this

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mostly conservative city of about 480,000 about 70 miles (110 kilometers) south of Denver.

A longtime Club Q patron who was shot in the back and thigh said the club's reputation made it a target. Speaking in a video statement released by UC Health Memorial Hospital, Ed Sanders said he thought about what he would do in a mass shooting after the 2016 massacre of 49 people at the Pulse gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida.

"I think this incident underlines the fact that LGBT people need to be loved," said Sanders, 63. "I want to be resilient. I'm a survivor. I'm not going to be taken out by some sick person."

The attack was halted by two club patrons including Richard Fierro, who told reporters that he took a handgun from Aldrich, hit them with it and pinned them down with help from another person until police arrived.

The victims were Raymond Green Vance, 22, a Colorado Springs native who was saving money to get his own apartment; Ashley Paugh, 35, a mother who helped find homes for foster children; Daniel Aston, 28, who had worked at the club as a bartender and entertainer; Kelly Loving, 40, whose sister described her as "caring and sweet"; and Derrick Rump, 38, another club bartender known for his wit.

## **Bolsonaro contests Brazil election loss, wants votes voided**

By DAVID BILLER and CARLA BRIDI Associated Press

BRASILIA, Brazil (AP) — More than three weeks after losing a reelection bid, President Jair Bolsonaro on Tuesday blamed a software bug and demanded the electoral authority annul votes cast on most of Brazil's nation's electronic voting machines, though independent experts say the bug doesn't affect the reliability of results.

Such an action would leave Bolsonaro with 51% of the remaining valid votes — and a reelection victory, Marcelo de Bessa, the lawyer who filed the 33-page request on behalf of the president and his Liberal Party, told reporters.

The electoral authority has already declared victory for Bolsonaro's nemesis, leftist former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, and even many of the president's allies have accepted the results. Protesters in cities across the country have steadfastly refused to do the same, particularly with Bolsonaro declining to concede.

Liberal Party leader Valdemar Costa and an auditor hired by the party told reporters in Brasilia that their evaluation found all machines dating from before 2020 — nearly 280,000 of them, or about 59% of the total used in the Oct. 30 runoff — lacked individual identification numbers in internal logs.

Neither explained how that might have affected election results, but said they were asking the electoral authority to invalidate all votes cast on those machines.

The complaint characterized the bug as "irreparable non-compliance due to malfunction" that called into question the authenticity of the results.

Immediately afterward, the head of the electoral authority issued a ruling that implicitly raised the possibility that Bolsonaro's own party could suffer from such a challenge.

Alexandre de Moraes said the court would not consider the complaint unless the party offers an amended report within 24 hours that would include results from the first electoral round on Oct. 2, in which the Liberal Party won more seats in both congressional houses than any other.

Creomar de Souza, political analyst of Dharma Political Risk and Strategy, said the wording of de Moraes' ruling indicates the electoral court is likely to reject the appeal.

The bug hadn't been known previously, yet experts said it also doesn't affect results. Each voting machine can still be easily identified through other means, like its city and voting district, according to Wilson Ruggiero, a professor of computer engineering and digital systems at the Polytechnic School of the University of Sao Paulo.

Diego Aranha, an associate professor of systems security at Aarhus University in Denmark, who has participated in official security tests of Brazil's electoral system, agreed.

"It does not undermine the reliability or credibility in any way," Ruggiero told The Associated Press by

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phone. "The key point that guarantees correctness is the digital signature associated with each voting machine."

While the machines don't have individual identification numbers in their internal logs, those numbers do appear on printed receipts that show the sum of all votes cast for each candidate, said Aranha, adding the bug was only detected due to the efforts by the electoral authority to provide greater transparency.

Bolsonaro's less than two-point loss to da Silva on Oct. 30 was the narrowest margin since Brazil's 1985 return to democracy. While the president hasn't explicitly cried foul, he has refused to concede defeat or congratulate his opponent — leaving room for supporters to draw their own conclusions.

Many have been protesting relentlessly, making claims of election fraud and demanding that the armed forces intervene.

Dozens of Bolsonaro supporters gathered outside the news conference on Tuesday, decked out in the green and yellow of Brazil's flag and chanting patriotic songs. Some verbally attacked and pushed journalists trying to enter the venue.

Bolsonaro spent more than a year claiming Brazil's electronic voting system is prone to fraud, without ever presenting evidence.

The president's son, federal lawmaker Eduardo Bolsonaro, repeated that concern at a conference in Mexico last week.

"We always distrusted these machines. ... We want a massive audit," the younger Bolsonaro said. "There is very strong evidence to order an investigation of Brazil's election."

Brazil began using an electronic voting system in 1996 and election security experts consider such systems less secure than hand-marked paper ballots, because they leave no auditable paper trail. But Brazil's system has been closely scrutinized by domestic and international experts who have never found evidence of it being exploited to commit fraud.

The Senate's president, Rodrigo Pacheco, said Tuesday afternoon that the election results are "unquestionable."

Bolsonaro has been almost completely secluded in the official residence since his Oct. 30 defeat, inviting widespread speculation as to whether he is dejected or plotting to cling to power.

In an interview with newspaper O Globo, Vice President Hamilton Mourão chalked up Bolsonaro's absence to erysipelas, a skin infection on his legs that he said prevents the president from wearing pants.

For its audit, the Liberal Party hired the Legal Vote Institute, a group that has been critical of the current system, saying it defies the law by failing to provide a digital record of every individual vote.

In a separate report presented earlier this month, the Brazilian military said there were flaws in the country's electoral systems and proposed improvements, but didn't substantiate claims of fraud from some of Bolsonaro's supporters.

Analysts have suggested that the armed forces, which have been a key component of Bolsonaro's administration, may have maintained a semblance of uncertainty over the issue to avoid displeasing the president. In a subsequent statement, the Defense Ministry stressed that while it had not found any evidence of fraud in the vote counting, it could not exclude that possibility.

## Colorado club shooting survivor: 'I want to be resilient'

By AMY FORLITI and STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

One man who has frequented Club Q for decades was just opening up a tab at the bar when he was shot in the back. Another man was about to leave the club with his group when he heard a "pop, pop, pop" and took a bullet to his arm — then watched his boyfriend and sister fall to the floor.

They are some of the 17 people wounded by gunfire Saturday when a 22-year-old man went on a shooting rampage at Club Q, a well-known club for the LGBTQ community in Colorado Springs. On Tuesday, they shared the horror of seeing their loved ones shot down in front of them, as well as the hope they felt as people helped each other in the chaos.

Ed Sanders, 63, said he had been waiting in line at the bar, had made his way up to the front and given

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the bartender his credit card when he was hit in the back — right between the shoulder blades. Surprised, he turned to look at the gunman, only to be hit again in the thigh as another volley of shots were fired.

"I fell. And everybody fell," Sanders said in video statements released Tuesday by UHealth Memorial Hospital Center. "It was very traumatic. I shielded another woman with my coat ... there was a lot of chaos."

James Slauch said he, his boyfriend and his sister were getting ready to leave the club when, "all of a sudden we just hear, 'pop, pop, pop.' As I turn, I took a bullet in my arm from the back."

Slauch, who spoke to The Associated Press from his hospital bed, said he watched others around him fall — including his boyfriend, who was shot in the leg, and his sister, who had bullet wounds in 13 places. He quickly called the police, heard several more shots, then nothing. The scariest part of the shooting, he said, was not knowing whether the gunman would fire again.

Five people were killed in the shooting, which stopped after the gunman was disarmed by patrons.

The motive for the attack is still being investigated and the man has not been formally charged. Police say he was armed with multiple firearms, including an AR-15-style semiautomatic rifle, and possible hate crimes are being considered.

"I want to be resilient. I'm a survivor," Sanders said. "I'm not going to be taken out by some sick person."

Sanders has been a patron of Club Q for 20 years and even went to the club's opening night decades ago. He wore a hospital gown and had an oxygen tube in his nose in the video recorded by the hospital.

He said that after the 2016 Pulse gay nightclub shooting in Florida, which killed 49 people, Sanders thought about what he would do if something similar happened at Club Q — but he never dreamed it would become reality.

"I'm smiling now because I am happy to be alive," Sanders said. "I dodged a major event in my life and came through it, and that's part of who I am as a survivor."

Sanders knew many of the victims, including the "door lady" and two bartenders who died. Sanders said that after the shooting, people who weren't hit were helping each other "just like a family would do."

Sanders said the shot to his back missed vital organs but broke a rib. He said he now has a concave wound in his back and will need skin grafts. Sanders was also shot in the thigh, and said "that was the most blood."

"I think this incident underlines the fact that LGBT people need to be loved," Sanders said.

For Slauch, Club Q was a place where he felt safe after coming out as gay at age 24. It was where he met his partner, Jancarlos Del Valle, eight months ago, and it was where they took his sister, Charlene, on Saturday night to cheer her up from a recent breakup, as well as the death of their mother from COVID-19 a year ago.

Slauch said that after the gunman was subdued, the club instantly became a community again. Patrons grabbed paper towels to try to stop bleeding wounds. One man told Slauch he would be OK and kissed him on the forehead.

"That was such a reassurance to me," he said. "That hope stayed there."

Del Valle and James were rushed to one hospital and Charlene, who had more extensive injuries, was taken to another. James said he did not find out what happened to his sister until the next day. A community of support has formed around the Slaughts, including a GoFundMe campaign to pay for medical bills. Messages have poured in from around the world.

"Being shot, being a victim of this whole thing -- it left me with a sense of more hope than anything else, especially with everyone coming together," he said. "This is not a time to be afraid. This is not a time to let in one awful person. This is a time to come together."

## Accountant testifies Trump claimed decade of huge tax losses

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump reported losses on his tax returns every year for a decade, including nearly \$700 million in 2009 and \$200 million in 2010, his longtime accountant testified Tuesday, confirming long-held suspicions about the former president's tax practices.



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Donald Bender, a partner at Mazars USA LLP who spent years preparing Trump's personal tax returns, said Trump's reported losses from 2009 to 2018 included net operating losses from some of the many businesses he owns through his Trump Organization.

"There are losses for all these years," said Bender, who was granted immunity to testify at the company's criminal tax fraud trial in Manhattan.

The short exchange amounted to a rare public discussion of Trump's taxes — which the Republican has fought to keep secret — even if there was no obvious connection to the case at hand.

A prosecutor, Susan Hoffinger, questioned Bender briefly about Trump's taxes on cross examination, at one point showing him copies of Trump tax paperwork that the Manhattan district attorney's office fought for three years to obtain, before moving on to other topics.

The Trump Organization, the holding company for Trump's buildings, golf courses and other assets, is charged with helping some top executives avoid income taxes on compensation they got in addition to their salaries, including rent-free apartments and luxury cars. If convicted, the company could be fined more than \$1 million.

Trump is not charged in the case and is not expected to testify or attend the trial. The company's former finance chief testified that he came up with the scheme on his own, without Trump or the Trump family knowing. Allen Weisselberg, testifying as part of a plea deal, said the company also benefited because it didn't have to pay him as much in salary.

Bender's testimony came on a day full of Trump-related legal drama, including the U.S. Supreme Court clearing the way for Congress to get six years worth of tax returns for Trump and some of his businesses.

Also Tuesday, the judge in New York Attorney General Letitia James' civil fraud lawsuit against Trump and his company set an October 2023 trial date; a federal appeals court heard arguments in the FBI's Mar-a-Lago documents investigation; and Sen. Lindsey Graham, a Trump ally, testified before a Georgia grand jury probing alleged 2020 election interference.

Bender's tax loss testimony echoed what The New York Times reported in 2020, when it obtained a trove of Trump's tax returns. Many of the records reflected massive losses and little or no taxes paid, the newspaper reported at the time.

The Times reported Trump paid no income tax in 11 of the 18 years whose records it reviewed, and that he paid just \$750 in federal income tax in 2017, the year he became president. Citing other Trump tax records, The Times previously reported that in 1995 he claimed \$915.7 million in losses, which he could have used to avoid future taxes under the law at the time.

Manhattan prosecutors subpoenaed Bender's firm in 2019, seeking access to eight years of Trump's tax returns and related documents, finally getting them after a protracted legal fight that included two trips to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Bender handled tax returns and other financial matters for Trump, the Trump Organization and hundreds of Trump entities starting in the 1980s. He also prepared taxes for members of Trump's family and other company executives, including Weisselberg and Weisselberg's son, who managed a company-run ice rink in Central Park.

Weisselberg, who pleaded guilty in August to dodging taxes on \$1.7 million in extras in exchange for a five-month jail sentence, testified that he hid company-paid extras such as Manhattan apartments and Mercedes-Benz cars from his taxable income by having the company's comptroller, Jeffrey McConney, reduce his salary by the cost of those perks.

Bender testified that Weisselberg kept him the dark on that arrangement — and that he only found out about it from prosecutors last year.

But emails shown in court Tuesday suggested that McConney tried to loop him in as early as 2013, with attached spreadsheets listing Weisselberg's pay and reductions for extras, including Trump-paid tuition for his grandchildren's private schooling.

Bender, who testified that he got numerous emails from Trump executives daily, said he didn't recall seeing those messages. If he had, he said: "We would have had a serious conversation about continuing with the client."

Mazars USA LLP has since dropped Trump as a client. In February, the firm said annual financial statements it prepared for him "should no longer be relied upon" after James' office said the statements regularly misstated the value of assets — an allegation at the heart of her lawsuit.

Trump blamed Bender and Mazars for the company's troubles, writing on his Truth Social platform last week: "The highly paid accounting firm should have routinely picked these things up - we relied on them. VERY UNFAIR!"

Bender testified that he put the onus on Weisselberg to fix any problems as scrutiny of the Trump Organization intensified after Trump's election in 2016 and advised him to stop one dubious practice: the company's longstanding, tax-saving habit of paying executive bonuses as freelance income.

The accountant said he told Weisselberg: "If there is anything bothering you, even if there's the slightest chance, we have to set the highest standards so the company should be, effectively, squeaky clean."

## Man United owners prepared to sell Premier League club

By JAMES ROBSON AP Soccer Writer

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — Manchester United's American owners confirmed Tuesday they would consider putting the iconic Premier League club up for sale.

United said the Glazer family was exploring outside funding to enhance growth — a move that could pave the way to a potential buyout.

"As part of this process, the board will consider all strategic alternatives, including new investment into the club, a sale, or other transactions involving the company," it said in a statement.

American investment bank the Raine Group has been enlisted to handle any sale or fresh investment.

Raine earlier this year handled the sale of Premier League club Chelsea to Todd Boehly and Clearlake Capital, successfully securing 2.5 billion pounds (\$3 billion) plus a commitment of 1.75 billion pounds (\$2 billion) of further investment.

While there is no guarantee the Glazers will cede complete control of United, the news will provide hope to the team's supporters who have long-campaigned to drive out the American family, which also owns the NFL's Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

The late tycoon Malcolm Glazer bought United in 2005 for 790 million pounds (then about \$1.4 billion) amid a backlash from fans.

Unrest has continued in the following years and in recent times seen increasingly angry protests. A game against Liverpool had to be postponed last year following demonstrations at Old Trafford.

"The strength of Manchester United rests on the passion and loyalty of our global community of 1.1 billion fans and followers," said co-chairmen Avram Glazer and Joel Glazer in the statement. "As we seek to continue building on the club's history of success, the board has authorized a thorough evaluation of strategic alternatives. We will evaluate all options to ensure that we best serve our fans and that Manchester United maximizes the significant growth opportunities available to the club today and in the future."

They added that throughout the process "we will remain fully focused on serving the best interests of our fans, shareholders, and various stakeholders."

United fans have been critical of the leveraged nature of the Glazers' buyout that loaded debt onto the club, as well as a perceived lack of investment and the dividends taken out by the owners.

The club has endured a sustained period of decline since the retirement of Alex Ferguson in 2013 — failing to win a league title since then — and has had to watch as fierce rivals Manchester City and Liverpool have dominated English soccer.

United said among its plans for growth was the potential redevelopment of its Old Trafford stadium — something supporters have long called for.

It is likely Raine would use the Chelsea sale as gauge for any valuation — and hope to exceed that figure for one of the most popular sports teams in the world.

Jim Ratcliffe, the billionaire owner of petrochemicals firm INEOS, this month dropped his previously held interest in buying United, despite being a longtime fan.

INEOS already owns French club Nice.

"Our position has developed since the summer and we are now focusing our efforts in Nice and raising our ambitions for the club to make them into a top tier club in France to compete with PSG," INEOS said in a statement. "This would represent much better value for our investment than buying one of the top tier Premier league clubs."

Liverpool — another storied Premier League club with American ownership — is exploring similar options. Fenway Sports Group said earlier this month that it was open to selling shares of the club it bought in 2010.

## Review: Wrenching and riveting, 'The Son' leaves you shaken

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

If you don't have children, you will likely walk out of "The Son" shaken and deeply moved. If you do have kids, you may have to be eventually pulled to your feet after collapsing into a fetal ball for several hours.

Writer-director Florian Zeller's second installment in his trilogy examining mental health is an emotional wrecking ball almost exquisite in its destructive power. If his previous film, "The Father," needed a trigger warning about dementia, "The Son" needs one for depression and suicide.

Despite the title, "The Son" is really about the father in this story, Peter, a successful workaholic Manhattan lawyer on his second wife and second child, a newborn. Past and present collide when Nicholas, the 17-year-old son from his first marriage, reaches a crescendo of mental anguish.

"It's life. It's weighing me down. I want something to change, but I don't know what," he cries. "I feel like my head's exploding."

But neither dad — Hugh Jackman, in easily his finest work onscreen — nor mom, Laura Dern in another heart-led performance, can seem to help. Zen McGrath plays the son with stunning agony, his hooded eyes flickering as if he's being hunted.

Zeller, adapting his play for the screen together again with translator and co-screenwriter Christopher Hampton, grounds everything in an unblinking realism, letting the words carry and avoiding any visual tricks, except for a shaky camera when it focuses on Nicholas.

One quiet symbol that recurs is of Peter shown often at an elevator bank, his vertical world going up and down. But at his home, the filmmakers show a constant churning washing machine — lines versus circles.

None of the parents in this high-class world — including stepmom Beth played by Vanessa Kirby — seem to know how to help this young man stuck in a domestic no man's land or even how to speak to him.

Jackman's Peter addresses his son as if he were in a sales meeting ("Soon everything will go back to normal") and even offers him a fist-bump. He and his mom have a chopped shorthand, with fractured dialogue. ("Call me," "Don't..." and "Don't cry, my little sunbeam.")

Restless and in mental pain, the son goes from one parent's home to another, skipping school and just wandering the city. "What's going to become of you?" his dad demands, confusing the byproduct for the root issue.

In one heartbreaking scene, dad, stepmom and son dance in their living room to Tom Jones' "It's Not Unusual" and the camera soon closes in on the adults blissfully smiling as they let loose, unaware that the son long ago dropped out.

The son's anger at his father for leaving his mother buries the film in guilt that eats away at the dad, who starts to drift off in meetings. He then has a wonderfully tense visit with his own father (Anthony Hopkins, though not playing his same role in "The Father.") Peter tells him he may turn down a job to care for his son, which his father sees as a dig at his own absentee parenting. "What do you want, applause?" sneers the father. "Get over it."

All the while, Nicholas is calling out for help. "I'm not well, mom," "I'm not made like other people" and "I don't think I'm ever going to measure up." He's cutting himself and has no friends. Viewers will be unable to shake a rising sense of dread, that the son needs something that his parents cannot give him. That love is not enough, as a psychiatrist says.

The film's only flashbacks are of a sunny vacation in Corsica back when the first marriage was strong and Nicholas was 6 and first learning to swim. It was dad who encouraged him to make his first tentative

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strokes alone. Knowing the waves of grief yet to come almost physically hurts.

"The Son," a Sony Pictures Classics release opens in New York and Los Angeles on Nov. 25 and will expand to theaters nationwide on Jan. 20, is rated PG-13 for mature thematic content, suicide and strong language. Running time: 124 minutes. Three and a half stars out of four.

## 'Stock up on blankets': Ukrainians brace for horrific winter

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainians could face rolling blackouts from now through March in frigid, snowy weather because Russian airstrikes have caused "colossal" damage to the power grid, officials said. To cope, authorities are urging people to stock up on supplies and evacuate hard-hit areas.

Sergey Kovalenko, the CEO of private energy provider DTEK Yasno, said the company is under instructions from Ukraine's state grid operator to resume emergency blackouts in the areas it covers, including the capital, Kyiv, and the eastern Dnipropetrovsk region.

"Although there are fewer blackouts now, I want everyone to understand: Most likely, Ukrainians will have to live with blackouts until at least the end of March," Kovalenko warned on Facebook.

"We need to be prepared for different options, even the worst ones. Stock up on warm clothes and blankets. Think about what will help you wait out a long shutdown," he told Ukrainian residents.

Russia has launched six massive aerial attacks against Ukraine's power grid and other infrastructure since Oct. 10, as the war approaches its nine-month mark. That targeted onslaught has caused widespread blackouts and deprived millions of Ukrainians of electricity, heat and water.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Tuesday in a video speech to a French municipal group that Russian missile strikes have destroyed nearly half of the country's energy facilities "to turn the cold of winter into a weapon of mass destruction." Later, in his nightly video address, he announced the establishment of "Points of Invincibility" where people can gather for electricity, mobile communications, internet access, heat, water, and first aid.

Temperatures commonly stay below freezing in Ukraine in the winter, and snow has already fallen in many areas, including Kyiv. Ukrainian authorities are evacuating civilians from recently liberated sections of the southern Kherson and Mykolaiv regions out of fear the winter will be too hard to survive.

Heeding the call, women and children — including a little red-headed boy whose shirt read in English "Made with Love" — carried their limited belongings, along with dogs and cats, onto trains departing from the newly liberated city of Kherson.

"We are leaving now because it's scary to sleep at night," departing resident Tetyana Stadnik said on a cramped night sleeper train Monday as a dog wandered around. "Shells are flying over our heads and exploding. It's too much. We will wait until the situation gets better. And then we will come back home."

Another resident said leaving was the right thing to do to help the country.

"No one wants to leave their homes. But they're even advising (to leave). They'd have to warm us up, when it's needed for other people. If we have an opportunity to leave, we can at least help Ukraine with something," Alexandra Barzenkova said as she sat on a train bunk bed.

More hardship was in store for those remaining.

The repeated Russian attacks — with the most severe on Nov. 15 involving 100 heavy rockets — have damaged practically every thermal and hydroelectric power plant, and "the scale of destruction is colossal," Volodymyr Kudrytskyi, the CEO of Ukrenergo, the state-owned power grid operator, said Tuesday. In addition, electric substations have been damaged, while nuclear power plants have largely been spared, he said.

Kyiv regional authorities said Tuesday that more than 150 settlements were enduring emergency blackouts because of snowfall and high winds.

Slowed by the weather, Ukrainian forces are pressing a counteroffensive while Moscow's troops maintain artillery shelling and missile strikes.

In a key battlefield development, Natalia Humeniuk of the Ukrainian army's Operational Command South said on Ukrainian television that Kyiv's forces are attacking Russian positions on the Kinburn Spit, a gate-

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way to the Black Sea basin, as well as parts of the southern Kherson region still under Russian control.

The Kinburn Spit is Russia's last outpost in Ukraine's southern Mykolayiv region, directly west of Kherson. Ukrainian forces recently liberated other parts of the Kherson and Mykolaiv regions. Moscow has used the Kinburn Spit as a staging ground for missile and artillery strikes on Ukrainian positions in the Mykolaiv province, and elsewhere along the Ukrainian-controlled Black Sea coast.

Recapturing the Kinburn Spit could help Ukrainian forces push into Russian-held territory in the Kherson region "under significantly less Russian artillery fire" than if they directly crossed the Dnieper River, a Washington-based think tank said. The Institute for the Study of War added that control of the area would help Kyiv alleviate Russian strikes on Ukraine's southern seaports and allow it to increase its naval activity in the Black Sea.

In the Russian Black Sea Fleet's headquarters city of Sevastopol, Russian-installed Gov. Mikhail Razvozhayev said air defense systems intercepted at least two drones, including those targeting a power station. Zelenskyy has vowed to recapture the Crimean Peninsula, which Russia annexed in 2014, but his government didn't immediately comment on the Russian report.

In other developments:

— Ukraine's counter-intelligence service, police officers and the country's National Guard on Tuesday searched one of the most famous Orthodox Christian sites in Kyiv after a priest spoke favorably about Russia during a service.

— Ukraine's presidential office said Tuesday that at least eight civilians were killed and 16 were injured over the previous 24 hours, as Moscow's forces again used drones, rockets and heavy artillery to pound eight Ukrainian regions.

—In the eastern Donetsk region, fierce battles continued around Bakhmut, where the Kremlin's forces are keen to clinch a victory after weeks of embarrassing military setbacks. Donetsk Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko also said Russia launched missiles at Kramatorsk, a Ukrainian military hub, and the city of Avdiivka. Russia's Defense Ministry spokesman hinted at clashes near the Donetsk village of Pavlivka, saying Russian troops "destroyed" three Ukrainian sabotage and reconnaissance units.

— One civilian was killed and three others wounded after Russian forces shelled the city of Kherson, Ukraine's presidential office said.

— Two civilians died Tuesday in the Russian border region of Belgorod, its governor said on Telegram. Vyacheslav Gladkov said a married couple were killed by an unexploded munition in Staroselye, on the border with Ukraine's northern Sumy region. He said a woman was killed in shelling of Shebekino, close to Ukraine's Kharkiv province.

— A social worker was killed and two other civilians were wounded Tuesday after Russian tank shells hit an aid distribution point in southern Ukraine, according to the governor of Zaporizhzhia.

— Ukrainian officials on Tuesday handed over the bodies of 33 soldiers recovered from Russia to their families.

— The U.S. announced disbursement of \$4.5 billion to help stabilize Ukraine's economy and support key Ukrainian government functions. The package will help fund wages for hospital workers, government employees and teachers, as well as social assistance for the elderly and vulnerable.

## Giroud, Mbappe help France beat Australia 4-1 at World Cup

By JEROME PUGMIRE AP Sports Writer

AL WAKRAH, Qatar (AP) — France showed it can cope without its star striker at the World Cup.

In Karim Benzema's absence, Kylian Mbappe scored one and set up the second of Olivier Giroud's two goals to help the defending champions beat Australia 4-1 Tuesday.

Giroud equaled Thierry Henry's national record of 51 goals with a header from Mbappe's cross in the 71st minute. Giroud, who failed to score at the last World Cup but did find the net at the 2014 tournament, can break Henry's record when France faces Denmark on Saturday.

"It's not just about chasing records but what he always does on the field," France coach Didier Deschamps

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said. "He's a very important player for us."

Moments before that strike, Mbappe headed in Ousmane Dembele's cross from the right to start this World Cup as he finished the last — with a goal. He knelt with one hand behind his back and his finger on his forehead in a new celebration.

Deschamps joked that Mbappe could now become even more lethal.

"He always dreams about scoring headers, so if he starts doing that he'll be even more dangerous," Deschamps said, cracking a smile. "I knew he would be ready tonight because this is his competition."

Craig Goodwin gave Australia the lead when he turned in winger Mathew Leckie's cross in the ninth minute. France midfielder Adrien Rabiot equalized with a powerful header in the 27th and set up Giroud's first goal shortly after.

"It's great for our momentum and confidence to have turned things around," Giroud said. "Even though we could have scored more we combined well."

France was playing without the injured Benzema, who was ruled out of the World Cup last week.

The Socceroos were pumped up and the green-and-gold Aussie fans were loving it. They even mocked Mbappe with chants of "Who are ya? Who are ya?" after he lost the ball dribbling down the left.

That's as good as it got for them.

Theo Hernandez curled in a cross for Rabiot to score his first World Cup goal — four years after refusing to go on France's standby list in case of injuries. He even emailed France coach Didier Deschamps to be taken off the list and was dropped from the national team for two years.

It's been some comeback for Rabiot. He's now leading a midfield missing the injured Paul Pogba and N'Golo Kante — France's engine room the 2018 World Cup.

"Having Adrien playing at this level is very important for us," Deschamps said.

Injuries are hurting Deschamps' team, however, and now the coach could be without Lucas Hernandez — Theo's older brother. He hurt his knee in the build up to Australia's goal.

"He needs to have tests but unfortunately it does look pretty serious," Deschamps said. "That's the real low point about tonight."

## Thanksgiving travel rush is back with some new habits

By DAVID KOENIG and ALEXANDRA OLSON Associated Press

The Thanksgiving travel rush was back on this year, as people caught planes in numbers not seen in years, setting aside inflation concerns to reunite with loved ones and enjoy some normalcy after two holiday seasons marked by COVID-19 restrictions.

Changing habits around work and play, however, might spread out the crowds and reduce the usual amount of holiday travel stress. Experts say many people will start holiday trips early or return home later than normal because they will spend a few days working remotely — or at least tell the boss they're working remotely.

The busiest travel days during Thanksgiving week are usually Tuesday, Wednesday and the Sunday after the holiday. This year, the Federal Aviation Administration expects Tuesday to be the busiest travel day with roughly 48,000 scheduled flights.

Chris Williams, of Raleigh, North Carolina, flew Tuesday morning with his wife and two kids to Atlanta, Georgia, to spend the holiday with extended family.

"Of course it's a stressful and expensive time to fly," said Williams, 44, who works in finance. "But after a couple years of not getting to spend Thanksgiving with our extended family, I'd say we're feeling thankful that the world's gotten to a safe enough place where we can be with loved ones again."

Although Williams said the family's budget has been tight this year, he's capitalized on the opportunity to teach his kids some personal finance basics. His youngest, 11, has been learning how to budget her allowance money since March and is excited to buy small gifts for her friends on Black Friday or Cyber Monday. "Probably slime," she said, "with glitter."

The Transportation Security Administration screened more than 2.6 million travelers on Monday, surpass-

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ing the 2.5 million screened the Monday before Thanksgiving in 2019. The same trend occurred Sunday, marking the first year that the number of people catching planes on Thanksgiving week surpassed pre-pandemic levels.

"People are traveling on different days. Not everyone is traveling on that Wednesday night," says Sharon Pinkerton, senior vice president at the trade group Airlines for America. "People are spreading their travel out throughout the week, which I also think will help ensure smoother operations."

AAA predicts that 54.6 million people will travel at least 50 miles from home in the U.S. this week, a 1.5% bump over Thanksgiving last year and only 2% less than in 2019. The auto club and insurance seller says nearly 49 million of those will travel by car, and 4.5 million will fly between Wednesday and Sunday.

U.S. airlines struggled to keep up as the number of passengers surged this year.

"We did have a challenging summer," said Pinkerton, whose group speaks for members including American, United and Delta. She said that airlines have pared their schedules and hired thousands of workers — they now have more pilots than before the pandemic. "As a result, we're confident that the week is going to go well."

U.S. airlines plan to operate 13% fewer flights this week than during Thanksgiving week in 2019. However, by using larger planes on average, the number of seats will drop only 2%, according to data from travel-researcher Cirium.

Airlines continue to blame flight disruptions on shortages of air traffic controllers, especially in Florida, a major holiday destination.

Controllers, who work for the Federal Aviation Administration, "get tested around the holidays. That seems to be when we have challenges," Frontier Airlines CEO Barry Biffle said a few days ago. "The FAA is adding another 10% to headcount, hopefully that's enough."

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg has disputed such claims, saying that the vast majority of delays and cancellations are caused by the airlines themselves.

TSA expects airports to be busier than last year and probably about on par with 2019. The busiest day in TSA's history came on the Sunday after Thanksgiving in 2019, when nearly 2.9 million people were screened at airport checkpoints.

Stephanie Escutia, traveling with four children, her husband and her mother, said it took the family four hours to get through checking and security at the Orlando airport early Tuesday. The family was returning to Kansas City in time for Thanksgiving after a birthday trip to Disney World.

"We were surprised at how full the park was," said Escutia, 32. "We thought it might be down some but it was packed."

She welcomed the sense of normalcy, and said her family would be gathering for Thanksgiving without worrying about keeping their distance this year. "Now we are back to normal and looking forward to a nice holiday," she said.

People getting behind the wheel or boarding a plane don't seem fazed by higher gasoline and airfare prices than last year or the widespread concern about inflation and the economy. That is already leading to predictions of strong travel over Christmas and New Year's.

"This pent-up demand for travel is still a real thing. It doesn't feel like it's going away," says Tom Hall, a vice president and longtime writer for Lonely Planet, the publisher of travel guides. "That's keeping planes full, that's keeping prices high."

## A rail strike looms and impact on US economy could be broad

By JOSH FUNK AP Business Writer

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — American consumers and nearly every industry will be affected if freight trains grind to a halt next month.

One of the biggest rail unions rejected its deal Monday, joining three others that have failed to approve contracts over concerns about demanding schedules and the lack of paid sick time. That raises the risk of a strike, which could start as soon as Dec. 9 under a deadline that was pushed back Tuesday.

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It wouldn't take long for the effects of a rail strike to trickle through the economy. Many businesses only have a few days' worth of raw materials and space for finished goods. Makers of food, fuel, cars and chemicals would all feel the squeeze, as would their customers.

That's not to mention the commuters who would be left stranded because many passenger railroads use tracks owned by the freight railroads.

The stakes are so high for the economy that Congress is expected to intervene and impose contract terms on railroad workers. The last time U.S. railroads went on strike was in 1992. That strike lasted two days before Congress intervened. An extended rail shutdown has not happened for a century, partly because a law passed in 1926 that governs rail negotiations made it much harder for workers to strike.

Here are some of the expected impacts of a rail strike:

## \$2 BILLION A DAY

Railroads haul about 40% of the nation's freight each year. The railroads estimated that a rail strike would cost the economy \$2 billion a day in a report issued earlier this fall. Another recent report put together by a chemical industry trade group projected that if a strike drags on for a month some 700,000 jobs would be lost as manufacturers who rely on railroads shut down, prices of nearly everything increase even more and the economy is potentially thrust into a recession.

And although some businesses would try to shift shipments over to trucks, there aren't nearly enough of them available. The Association of American Railroads trade group estimated that 467,000 additional trucks a day would be needed to handle everything railroads deliver.

## CHEMICALS RUN DRY

Chemical manufacturers and refineries will be some of the first businesses affected, because railroads will stop shipping hazardous chemicals about a week before the strike deadline to ensure that no tank cars filled with dangerous liquids wind up stranded.

Jeff Sloan with the American Chemistry Council trade group said chemical plants could be close to shutting down by the time a rail strike actually begins because of that.

That means the chlorine that water treatment plants rely on to purify water, which they might only have about a week's supply of on hand, would become hard to get. It would be hard for manufacturers to make anything out of plastic without the chemicals that are part of the formula. Consumers will also pay more for gasoline if refineries shut down, either because they can't get the ingredients they need to make fuel or because railroads aren't available to haul away byproducts like sulfur.

Chemical plants also produce carbon dioxide as a byproduct, so the supply of carbon dioxide that beverage makers use to carbonate soda and beer would also be restricted, even though the gas typically moves via pipelines.

## PASSENGER PROBLEMS

Roughly half of all commuter rail systems rely at least in part on tracks that are owned by freight railroads, and nearly all of Amtrak's long-distance trains run over the freight network.

Back in September, Amtrak canceled all of its long-distance trains days ahead of the strike deadline to ensure passengers wouldn't be left stranded in remote parts of the country while still en route to their destination.

And major commuter rail services in Chicago, Minneapolis, Maryland and Washington state all warned then that some of their operations would be suspended in the event of a rail strike.

## FOOD FEARS

It would take about a week for customers to notice shortages of things like cereal, peanut butter and beer at the grocery store, said Tom Madrecki, vice president of supply chain for the Consumer Brands Association.

About 30% of all packaged food in the U.S. is moved by rail, he said. That percentage is much higher for denser, heavier items like cans of soup.

Some products, like cereal, cooking oils and beer, have entire operations built around rail deliveries of raw ingredients like grain, barley and peanuts, along with shipments of finished products.



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Those companies typically keep only two to four days' worth of raw ingredients on hand because it's expensive to store them, Madrecki said, and grocers also keep a limited supply of products on hand.

Madrecki said big food companies don't like to discuss the threat of a rail strike because of worries about product shortages can lead to panic buying.

## HUNGRY HERDS

Any disruption in rail service could threaten the health of chickens and pigs, which depend on trains to deliver their feed, and contribute to higher meat prices.

"Our members rely on about 27 million bushels of corn and 11 million bushels of soybean meal every week to feed their chickens. Much of that is moved by rail," said Tom Super, a spokesman for the National Chicken Council, a trade group for the industry raising chickens for meat.

The National Grain and Feed Association said a rail strike now would hit pork and chicken producers in the southern U.S. hardest, because their local supply of corn and soybeans from this year's harvest is likely exhausted and they'd have to ship feed by truck, dramatically increasing costs.

"They only have so much storage. They can't go without rail service for too long before they'd have to shut down the feed mills and they run into problems," said Max Fisher, the NGFA's chief economist.

## RETAIL RISKS

Jess Dankert, the vice president for supply chain at the Retail Industry Leaders Association, said retailers' inventory is largely in place for the holidays. But the industry is developing contingency plans.

"We don't see, you know, canceling Christmas and that kind of narrative," Dankert said. "But I think we will see the generalized disruption of really anything that moves by rail."

David Garfield, a managing director with the consulting firm AlixPartners, said a rail strike could still impact holiday items shipped to stores later in December, and would definitely hamper stocking of next season's goods.

Retailers are also concerned about online orders. Shippers like FedEx and UPS use rail cars that hold roughly 2,000 packages in each car.

## AUTOMOBILE ANGST

Drivers are already paying record prices and often waiting months for new vehicles because of the production problems in the auto industry related to the shortage of computer chips in recent years.

That would only get worse if there is a rail strike, because roughly 75% of all new vehicles begin their journey from factories to dealerships on the railroad. Trains deliver some 2,000 carloads a day filled with vehicles.

And automakers may have a hard time keeping their plants running during a strike because some larger parts and raw materials are transported by rail.

## Driver faces charges in connection with Apple store crash

HINGHAM, Mass. (AP) — A man was arraigned Tuesday on charges that he was reckless when he crashed his SUV through the front window of an Apple store in Massachusetts, killing one person and injuring 19 others, authorities said.

Bradley Rein, 53, was arraigned in district court in Hingham. Rein told police he was looking for an eye-glass store at a shopping center in the town of Hingham, southeast of Boston, when his right foot became stuck on the accelerator, according to court documents. He said he used his left foot to try to brake but couldn't stop the vehicle, crashing through the front of the store, the documents say. Rein was wearing running sneakers.

The court entered not guilty pleas on his behalf to charges of motor vehicle homicide by reckless operation and reckless operation of a motor vehicle, according to the clerk's office.

Rein told police he had no medical issues that would impair his ability to drive and he had not consumed alcohol or drugs. A preliminary breath test showed a reading of 0.00%, according to the documents.

Rein was held on \$100,000 bail and his next court date was set for Dec. 22. He was represented by a public defender at the arraignment. A phone message seeking comment on his behalf was left at the

Committee for Public Counsel Service.

Rein was arrested Monday night after his 2019 Toyota 4Runner crashed into the store's plate glass window and struck people in the morning, the documents say. The victim who died was identified as Kevin Bradley, 65, of New Jersey.

Apple released a statement saying it was "devastated by the shocking events at Apple Derby Street today and the tragic loss of a professional who was onsite supporting recent construction at the store."

The storefront window showed a gaping hole as first responders worked at the scene of the crash. The store opened about an hour before the crash.

## Argentines shocked, saddened by loss to Saudis at World Cup

By DANIEL POLITI Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — Tears welled in the eyes of Oscar López as he washed the windows of the Buenos Aires building where he works as the superintendent.

A devoted fan of Argentina, the 67-year-old was visibly upset as he reflected on the bitter 2-1 loss by the national team, delivered by upstart Saudi Arabia on Monday at the World Cup in Qatar.

But the fact that Argentina was favored over the Saudis is no excuse, Lopez said.

"If they're in the World Cup, no team is easy," López said. "You always have to be careful."

Most of Argentina got up early to watch the 7 a.m. match and the long-awaited debut of Lionel Messi's team. Many walked to bakeries in Buenos Aires wearing the light-blue-and-white jerseys to grab snacks.

Sounds of cheering were heard in the streets at the kickoff. More noise followed when Messi scored early in the game, and the din of air horns penetrated the morning air.

But an eerie silence then set in, as what was supposed to be an easy match turned challenging. Saudi Arabia rallied with two second-half goals, and one of World Cup's favorites instead suffered one of its biggest upsets.

"The truth is, this is a disappointment, a big disappointment," said Alejandro Pintos, a 36-year-old locksmith who opened his shop later than usual to watch the game. "This was the match that we had no choice but to win."

Pintos said the national team was "very disorganized" — something he found particularly frustrating, given its 36-match unbeaten streak leading up to the tournament.

Local media quoted Messi as saying he was just as shocked as the fans on how things had turned out.

"It's a very strong blow," Messi said. "We didn't expect to begin this way."

Other fans took to social media to complain about three potential Argentina goals ruled out on offside calls.

Argentines were counting on the World Cup to bring a glimmer of a hope to a country that has been economically stagnant for years, suffering a nearly 100% inflation rate and where close to four in 10 live in poverty.

"I'm really quite bitter," said Josefina Licera, a 27-year-old social worker, as she waited to take a bus to work. "I was really sure we were going to win, and it was a big surprise."

Susana Leguizamón, 55, woke up early, put on her blue-and-white-striped Argentina jersey and was ready to celebrate.

"I was very, very, very surprised," she said. "The truth is, we underestimated our rival."

But Santiago Babarro, 40, said he wasn't too shocked by the loss.

"The same thing always happens to Argentina," the retail worker said. "We say, 'This is an easy match, we can win it easily,' and then, bam! They put us in our place. We always believe we're more than what we are."

Sebastián Fabre said he woke up with an uneasy feeling and was worried about what he said was overconfidence by Argentina's fans.

"There was way too much unfounded optimism. I didn't want to say anything but I think we were all way too overconfident," he said.

Leguizamón, who walked to her job at a restaurant still wearing her Argentina jersey, said she could feel the suffering of those around her.

"Everyone is very sad, very sad," she said. "We all woke up with lots of hope."

Some fans saw a silver lining in suffering adversity at the outset of the tournament. Argentina next plays Mexico on Saturday in the second Group C match.

"Really, it's better that this happened in the first match and not in the quarterfinals," Fabre said. "That's the positive side to this."

Leguizamón agreed.

"A trip is not a fall, as we say here," she said, using a common Argentine expression. "I'm a big fan of the national team and I get in a really bad mood when it loses but my hope is intact."

The saddest part, said 21-year-old retail worker Florencia Folgoso, "is having to go to work after watching a match that we lost. You already start the day with the left foot."

## Break it down: Dancers begin charting path to Paris Olympics

By AARON MORRISON AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Breaking is in Victor Montalvo's blood. He is a descendant of twin breakers — his father and uncle — who were performing in Mexico long before they taught a young Montalvo to spin on his back.

Born in Kissimmee, Florida, the 28-year-old who also goes by B-Boy Victor has mastered the foundations of the dance form. He has power. He has the flavor and swagger expected of a diehard b-boy. His movement syncs with the breakbeat flowing from the DJ's turntables.

Scribble, chirp, rip, boom, blip.

He hopes to take breaking further than his relatives ever dreamt, to battle his way to a medal ceremony, when the now-global dance art debuts at the Olympic Summer Games less than two years from now.

"I feel like I have a really high chance," Montalvo told The Associated Press.

He is among dozens of champion b-boys and b-girls — a term for a male or female entrenched in the culture of hip hop — who are charting a path to the 2024 Games in Paris. The International Olympic Committee announced two years ago that breaking would become an official Olympic sport, a development that divided the breaking community between those excited for the larger platform and those concerned about the art form's purity.

But after the Red Bull BC One World Final, held earlier this month in the birthplace of hip hop and a short distance from the very streets where Black and Puerto Rican New Yorkers pioneered the art of breaking, the field of Olympic competitors is starting to take shape. The Nov. 12 event also attracted some of the original b-boys and b-girls, as the hip hop community prepares to celebrate 50 years since the culture's founding in 1973.

"You never thought that something you were doing for fun was going to go around the world," said Douglas "Dancin' Doug" Colón, a b-boy of the first generation of breakers from Harlem who beamed with pride over the dance form's acceptance into the Olympics.

Along with Colón, first generation b-boy Trixie sat near a circular stage in the center of Manhattan's Hammerstein Ballroom. One by one, Red Bull BC One World Final competitors from Canada, China, France, Italy, Kazakhstan, South Korea and Venezuela took to the battle stage. The energy drink beverage company runs the world's largest breaking competition.

The OGs offered blessings to their descendants by giving them dap — a friendly gesture of greeting in the Black and Latino communities that communicates solidarity and well wishes to the recipient. Joe Conzo, Jr, a photographer known in the community as "Joey Snapz," who documented hip hop in the Bronx from its infancy, also sat stageside taking pictures of the Olympic hopefuls.

"Nothing's going to change the culture, the culture stays the same," Colón said. "Even though it's now an Olympic sport, people back in the hood will still be doing their thing."

Victor Alicea, a Red Bull BC One World Final judge, told the AP that judging competitions within the hip

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hop culture has always been very subjective. But that won't be the case with the Paris Olympics, where officials will use a newly developed judging system to decide which b-boy or b-girl bested their opponent in one-on-one battles.

The Trivium judging system, created for the debut of breaking at the 2018 Youth Olympic Games in Buenos Aires, is a digital scoring platform that allows judges to react in real time to breakers' physical, artistic and interpretative qualities or their "body, mind and soul." A panel of five judges scores each breaker on creativity, personality, technique, variety, performativity and musicality. The scores can adjust throughout the battle, based on how a breaker responds to their opponent.

Scores can be lowered if a breaker "bites," or copies, a set of moves from their opponent. Misbehavior, such as deliberate physical contact with an opponent, and other unsportsmanlike conduct can also lower a breaker's score.

"I look for someone that takes over the floor. It's a battle. It's not just you dance and then I dance. You've got to bring it," said Alicea, who is also known as B-boy Kid Glyde.

Montalvo, who was ranked as the world's top b-boy after a world championship competition in Paris last December, said his path to the Olympics will require intense training. It will also require more winning performances at competitions sanctioned by the World DanceSport Federation, an IOC-approved body administering the battles. Breakers who do well in those events score points that help them qualify for the Paris Games. Olympic qualifiers kick off in September and run through June 2024.

At the end of the process, 16 b-boys and 16 b-girls will be allowed to compete over two days at the iconic Place de la Concorde, an outdoor public square in Paris.

That gives Olympic hopefuls lots of opportunities to sharpen their skills for the high stakes battles.

## MEET THE CONTENDERS

### B-BOY VICTOR

What sets Montalvo apart from other b-boys, he said, is his command of judge-favored foundations of breaking: "toprock" moves, footwork, "downrock" moves done closer to the floor, "power" moves showing acrobatics and strength, along with the classic "headspins," "windmills" and "freeze" poses.

"I feel like the foundations are the most important thing," he said. "I see a lot of dancers doing big moves, but then they don't have those small details. They don't know how to get out of those big moves. It's important to create a story, and the foundations are like creating a story."

### B-BOY YU-KI

During a Red Bull BC One quarterfinal round battle against Japan's Yuki Minatozaki, Montalvo transitioned from a windmill into a downrock move in which his legs moved back and forth so quickly that they looked like turning Double Dutch ropes. Minatozaki responded with a smirk, half-hearted applause and sarcastic thumbs up — all in the spirit of good sportsmanship — before exploding into a headspin and showcasing energetic standing footwork.

"It feels great that the sport now has a lot more eyeballs on it," Minatozaki, who goes by B-boy Yu-Ki, told the AP through a translator. The 23-year-old has been breaking since the age of five. He intends to seek a spot in the Paris Games, he said.

Minatozaki lost his battle against Montalvo, who also went on to the final to defeat Lee-Lou Demierre of the Netherlands, another likely Olympic contender. That victory did not earn Montalvo points toward qualifying for the Olympics.

### B-GIRL INDIA

India Sardjoe, a 16-year-old breaker from the Netherlands, won the Red Bull BC One World Final b-girl title. She said she planned to focus next on competing in crew battles — this entails a team of breakers competing against another for a group title and bragging rights, reminiscent of breaking's roots in the Bronx. Sardjoe was fresh off of claiming the top honor at the European Breaking Championships, a WDSF event held in Manchester, England on Nov. 6.

The Red Bull title is an accomplishment, nonetheless.

"I had to battle the defending champion, so that's not nothing," Sardjoe said. "But I was super happy

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to battle against her.”

B-GIRL LOGISTX

Sardjoe defeated 19-year-old Logan Edra, also known as B-girl Logistx, who won last year’s Red Bull BC One World Final in Gdansk, Poland. Hailing from San Diego, Edra began breaking at age eight, after first training in ballet and jazz. Her father nudged her into hip hop lessons.

Like Sardjoe and Montalvo, Edra told the AP she will compete in WDSF events over the next year and half for a spot in the Olympics. On Saturday, she competed in the Breaking for Gold Challenge Series in Tokyo and took home a silver medal behind Lithuania’s Dominika Banevič, known as B-Girl Nicka, who won gold.

“I’m competing against the best of the best,” Edra said. “Because I have such a high standard for myself, I try to out-train everybody. The training is crazy — I’ve got bruises on my elbows and my knees from practicing moves over and over. It’s a lot of commitment because we don’t have as many resources as other sports do.”

B-GIRL ISIS

Isis Alexandra Granda Chalen, a b-girl who grew up in Ecuador before moving to the U.S., started young in ballet, folk and contemporary dance. But breaking spoke to her rebellious nature, particularly at a time when she questioned if those other dance forms were aligned with her dreams.

“The moment that I understood that I have more responsibility for myself, I put more work into breaking and I got the opportunities to be here,” Chalen, 27, said ahead of the Red Bull BC One World Final.

“Now, we’re going to do this transition, from artists to athletes,” she said of her Olympic dreams. “It’s a big opportunity for every country. I came from Latin America, where there aren’t as many opportunities. But the Olympics are for everybody.”

B-GIRL SUNNY

Sunny Choi, a Queens, New York-based b-girl who won the 2022 Red Bull BC One Cypher USA in September, said there’s an accessibility to the art and sport of breaking that will make it a huge draw at the Paris Olympics. She hopes to earn a spot on the U.S. team.

“We have a lot of diversity in breaking, which is really beautiful about what we do, because there aren’t many financial barriers to entry,” Choi told the AP. “If you have a clean floor and, nowadays, access to YouTube or something where you can learn, and some music, you can just do this on your own.”

She said her nascent Olympic journey has already required personal and professional sacrifices that initially had her questioning if she wanted to compete at all.

“I’m one of those all or nothing people,” Choi said. “I’ve done a lot of soul searching to remove some of the mental blocks. I feel like this journey is going to pull out a lot from me and I just need to be ready for that.”

## King Charles III welcomes S. African leader for state visit

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — King Charles III welcomed South African President Cyril Ramaphosa to London on Tuesday for the first state visit of his reign, which will include a formal banquet as well as talks with government leaders focused on investment and green energy.

Charles and Camilla, the queen consort, greeted Ramaphosa during a ceremony on Horse Guards Parade near Buckingham Palace. William and Kate, the Prince and Princess of Wales, also attended.

The visit was organized before the death of Queen Elizabeth II, a nod to her longtime devotion to the Commonwealth. The last state visit by a South African leader was in 1996, when Nelson Mandela was honored two years after he became South Africa’s first Black president.

Ramaphosa addressed a joint session of the U.K. Parliament on Tuesday, urging U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to triple the number of South Africans studying in the U.K. to build business ties. He spoke in Parliament’s Royal Gallery, becoming the first South African president to address lawmakers since Mandela in 1996.

“There are few countries that have the depth of experience and knowledge of the South African economy

than Britain," he said. "British companies need to use this advantage to greater effect to seek out opportunities in our country for investment and trade."

On the agenda are opportunities for British companies to take part in up to 5.4 billion pounds (\$6.4 billion) of infrastructure projects over the three years, Britain's Foreign Office said. Britain will also provide funding for technical and vocational education in hopes of spurring the development of green technology and electric car manufacturing in South Africa.

"South Africa is already the U.K.'s biggest trading partner on the continent, and we have ambitious plans to turbocharge infrastructure investment and economic growth together," Sunak said before Ramaphosa arrived.

On Tuesday night, Charles will preside over his first state banquet as monarch, held in honor of the South African president at Buckingham Palace. They will be joined by Camilla and other members of the royal family, including William and Kate.

On the menu is grilled brill with wild mushrooms, and truffles; a ballotine of Windsor pheasant filled with artichokes, quince compote and port sauce, vegetables and a selection of wines.

South African High Commissioner Jeremiah Nyamane Mamabolo hailed the importance of the state visit after speaking to the king when Charles visited an exhibition of South African fashion a few weeks ago in London.

"The important thing is that the king has focused for his first visit, to be with Africa, South Africa, and the Commonwealth," Mamabolo said.

## **Ronaldo to leave Manchester United 'with immediate effect'**

By JAMES ROBSON AP Soccer Writer

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — Cristiano Ronaldo will leave Manchester United "with immediate effect," the Premier League club said Tuesday, days after he gave an explosive interview criticizing manager Erik ten Hag and the club's owners.

It wasn't known where the 37-year-old Ronaldo will go next after failing to secure a move to a Champions League club in the summer.

"Following conversations with Manchester United we have mutually agreed to end our contract early," Ronaldo said. "I love Manchester United and I love the fans, that will never ever change. However, it feels like the right time for me to seek a new challenge.

"I wish the team every success for the remainder of the season and for the future."

Ronaldo, who is currently in Qatar with Portugal as he aims to win a first World Cup title for his country, has been left frustrated after being reduced to a fringe member of United's team this season.

The Portugal captain said he felt "betrayed" during the 90-minute interview with Piers Morgan, which aired Thursday and in which he was also critical of younger players.

United said last week that it had initiated appropriate steps in response to his comments, with the cancellation of his contract widely expected.

"Cristiano Ronaldo is to leave Manchester United by mutual agreement, with immediate effect," it said on Tuesday. "The club thanks him for his immense contribution across two spells at Old Trafford, scoring 145 goals in 346 appearances, and wishes him and his family well for the future."

That statement didn't convey the club's dismay after the unauthorized interview.

Ronaldo's sudden exit could also speed up United's plans to sign a new center forward.

Ten Hag had planned to address his attack at the end of the season, but may now have to look for a replacement during the January window.

## **World Cup Viewer's Guide: Davies to play in Canada's return**

By JENNA FRYER AP National Writer

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — Alphonso Davies will make his World Cup debut in a boost for Canada, which returns to soccer's biggest stage for the first time since 1986.

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The winger is easily Canada's top player but his status for the tournament was in doubt after he strained his right hamstring playing for Bayern Munich earlier this month. Davies was given the go-ahead to play Wednesday when Canada faces second-ranked Belgium.

"He's clear that he wanted to play," Canada coach John Herdman said. "I think our medical team, we wanted him to play, as well. But you've just got to go through the mathematical algorithms that are put in front of you to progress him to top speed and he hit that, so that was brilliant. He's been in full training and he's got that big smile back on his face, which is great."

The 22-year-old Davies has 12 goals in 34 international appearances, including five goals in World Cup qualifying, and will be needed as Canada faces Belgium, a 2018 semifinalist and second in the FIFA rankings.

It is Canada's second ever appearance at the World Cup, and it's first trip to the tournament since a hapless three-loss performance 36 years ago.

Belgium, meanwhile, has been a contender in recent years, finishing third at the 2018 World Cup and losing to Italy in the quarterfinals at last year's European Championship. But its aging team has injury problems and striker Romelu Lukaku will miss the match against Canada and perhaps also the second match against Morocco.

The 29-year-old Lukaku hasn't played since Oct. 29 because of a left thigh injury. He last played a full 90 minutes in early August. Kevin De Bruyne and Eden Hazard, longtime Belgium holdovers, are healthy but both 31 years old.

Canada, which earned an automatic berth into the World Cup by winning the final CONCACAF qualifying group ahead of the United States and Mexico, is bullish about its chances.

"Canada is starting to expect things from us. If you go to France, Germany, Italy, England, Brazil, Argentina, they'll ask, 'Who's Canada?'" Herdman said. "But I think internally, as a country, we've started to believe things are possible, and it's just the same mentality — one game at a time."

## GERMAN RECOVERY

Germany opens its World Cup campaign against Japan as it attempts to recover from its 2018 elimination from the group stage as the defending champions.

The embarrassment in Russia marked the earliest knockout in World Cup history for Germany, which is seeking a fifth title. But the team didn't seem so strong in a 1-0 win over Oman in its final warmup game, and Germany has lost six of its last seven matches.

The Germans will be without winger Leroy Sané because of a knee injury. He could be replaced by 19-year-old Bayern Munich teammate Jamal Musiala.

Japan is attempting to reach the quarterfinals for the first time in its seventh straight World Cup appearance. The team has faced questions about winger Takumi Minamino, who has yet to excel since moving from Liverpool to French club Monaco.

## OTHER MATCHES

Spain plays Costa Rica, while Morocco faces Croatia in a full day for Group E.

Spain is the 2010 World Cup champion, the second of three straight major titles it won between the 2008 and 2012 European Championships. But Spain was eliminated from the group stage in 2014 and knocked out on penalties in the round of 16 in 2018 by host nation Russia.

Costa Rica reached the quarterfinals in 2014, its best World Cup showing, but failed to win a single match and was eliminated from the group stage four years ago.

Croatia was runner-up in 2018 and its team returns almost the entire squad, including 37-year-old Luka Modric in his final chance to win the World Cup. Modric was named the tournament's best player in Russia, where Croatia lost to France 4-2 in the final.

Morocco failed to qualify for the World Cup on four of five attempts but did make the field in 2018. The team earned only one point in three group matches but returns to the tournament now ranked 22nd by FIFA and qualified with a perfect record by winning all six of its group games.

Morocco reached the round of 16 in 1986.

## HUGE UPSET

One of the biggest upsets in World Cup history occurred Tuesday when Argentina and Lionel Messi were

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beaten 2-1 by Saudi Arabia, the second-lowest ranked team in the tournament.

The loss for the South American champions was a depressing start to Messi's quest to win the one major title that has eluded him. Playing in his fifth World Cup, Messi said he felt "dead" after the loss.

"It's a very hard blow because we did not expect to start in this way," Messi said.

The upset ranks alongside Cameroon's 1-0 win over an Argentina team led by Diego Maradona in the opening game of the 1990 World Cup; Senegal's 1-0 victory over defending champion France in the 2002 tournament opener; and the United States beating England by the same score in 1950.

## OFF-FIELD ISSUES

The tournament continued to be plagued by problems away from the field as fans again struggled to upload their tickets for a second consecutive day on the FIFA application, and spectators donning rainbow-inspired gear complained they were hassled attempting to enter stadiums.

The ticketing issue began Monday when England played Iran and fans said a glitch in the app caused hundreds to miss the start of the match. The next day, hundreds were lined up at a "Ticket Resolution Point" at a convention center in central Doha showing the error messages on their mobile apps.

The Rainbow imagery, meanwhile, is a symbol of LGBTQ rights and its display at the World Cup is controversial because same-sex relations are criminalized in Qatar. The Welsh soccer federation has asked FIFA for clarity on reports some of its fans were stopped from wearing their rainbow-colored bucket hats into stadiums.

## World Cup stunner: Saudi Arabia beats Messi's Argentina 2-1

By STEVE DOUGLAS AP Sports Writer

LUSAIL, Qatar (AP) — Lionel Messi stood with his hands on his hips near the center circle, looking stone-faced as Saudi Arabia's jubilant players ran in all directions around him after pulling off one of the biggest World Cup upsets ever against Argentina.

The South American champions and one of the tournament favorites slumped to a 2-1 loss Tuesday against the second lowest-ranked team at the World Cup in a deflating start to Messi's quest to win the one major title that has eluded him.

Asked how he felt after a painful start to his record fifth World Cup for Argentina, Messi said: "The truth? Dead. It's a very hard blow because we did not expect to start in this way."

Saudi Arabia's comeback joins the list of other major World Cup upsets: Cameroon's 1-0 win over an Argentina team led by Diego Maradona in the opening game of the 1990 World Cup; Senegal's 1-0 victory over defending champion France in the 2002 tournament opener; or the United States beating England by the same score in 1950.

"We know the World Cup is this way," Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni said. "Sometimes you can steamroll the opponents and, in a couple of plays, you are losing."

That summed up the pattern of a match that started with Messi giving Argentina the lead, calmly converting a penalty in the 10th minute for his 92nd international goal. It had all the makings of a routine win for the defending Copa America champions, who were on a 36-match unbeaten run — one short of the record in international soccer.

Didn't turn out that way.

Goals by Saleh Alshehri and Salem Aldawsari in a five-minute span early in the second half gave the Saudis a landmark result in the first World Cup staged in the Middle East. Their previous biggest win was 1-0 over Belgium at the 1994 World Cup, secured by a storied individual goal by Saeed Al-Owairan.

"All the stars aligned for us," Saudi Arabia coach Herve Renard said. "We made history for Saudi football."

The 35-year-old Messi, playing in his fifth — and likely his final — World Cup for Argentina, scratched the side of his head and shook hands with a Saudi coaching staff member after the final whistle.

He walked toward the tunnel with a group of other Argentina players and looked despondent, an all-too-familiar scene for the seven-time world player of the year who has yet to win soccer's ultimate prize.

"We are facing two finals now," said Argentina striker Lautaro Martinez, looking ahead of remaining group matches against Mexico and Poland. "We screwed it up in the second half."



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The unlikely victory by a team made up entirely of Saudi-based players was sealed by a somersault by Aldawsari, who brought down a high ball just inside the penalty area, spun his way past Nahuel Molina with the help of a ricochet, dribbled past Leandro Paredes and drove a powerful shot to the far corner in the 53rd.

A stunned Messi watched as Saudi Arabia's green-clad fans, who had come over the Qatari border in their thousands, celebrated in disbelief in the stands. Saudi Arabia's substitutes swarmed onto the field to congratulate Aldawsari, who sank to his knees after his post-goal acrobatics.

"It's one for the history books," Renard said.

Such was Argentina's initial dominance that Saudi Arabia didn't have a shot on goal in the first half, during which the Alibiceleste had three goals ruled out for offside as they repeatedly got behind the Saudis' high defensive line.

"Some of those decisions were by inches," Scaloni said, "but that's technology for you."

The 48th-minute equalizer came from Saudi Arabia's first attempt on target, with Alshehri finding the far corner with an angled finish that went through the legs of defender Cristian Romero and beyond the dive of goalkeeper Emi Martinez.

Saudi goalkeeper Mohammed Alowais made two diving saves during 14 minutes of stoppage time to preserve a win that shakes up the group.

"This group always stood out for its evenness, its strength, and it is time to be more united than ever," Messi said. "We have to go back to our training base and try to win the next game."

## TURNAROUND

Argentina hadn't previously lost a World Cup game when leading at halftime since 1930, when the team conceded three goals in the second half to lose to Uruguay 4-2.

## LAST-16 HOPES

Saudi Arabia strengthened its chances of reaching the knockout stage of the World Cup for the first time since 1994. "There will just be 20 minutes of celebration for us," Renard said. "We still have two games — or more."

## UP NEXT

Argentina returns to the Lusail Stadium to play Mexico on Saturday. Saudi Arabia takes on Poland on the same day.

## Taylor Swift ticket trouble could drive political engagement

By BROOKE SCHULTZ Associated Press/Report for America

Some of Taylor Swift's fans want you to know three things: They're not still 16, they have careers and resources and, right now, they're angry. That's a powerful political motivator, researchers say.

Look what Ticketmaster made them do.

It started Nov. 15, when millions crowded a presale for Swift's long-awaited Eras Tour, resulting in crashes, prolonged waits and frantic purchases. By Thursday, Ticketmaster had canceled the general sale, citing insufficient remaining tickets and inciting a firestorm of outrage from fans. Swift herself said the ordeal "really pisses me off."

Ticketmaster apologized but the bad blood had already been sowed. And now fans — and politicians — have started acting on it.

U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez directed Swifties to where they could make U.S. Department of Justice complaints. Multiple state attorneys general — including in Pennsylvania and Tennessee, key states in Swift's origin story — have announced investigations.

Stephanie Aly, a New York-based professional who has worked on community organizing for progressive politics, for years has thought mobilizing fandoms for social progress could be beneficial.

"Fandoms are natural organizers," said the 33-year-old Swiftie. "If you find the right issues and you activate them and engage them then you can effect real change."

In 2020, for instance, K-pop fans organized to back the Black Lives Matter movement and sought to

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inflate registration for a Donald Trump rally. Aly and Swifties from different industries — law, public relations, cybersecurity and more — have joined forces to create Vigilante Legal, a group lobbying to create policy change around Ticketmaster and organize the Swifties, while creating email templates to petition attorneys general and providing antitrust information. Thousands have expressed interest in helping or learning more.

“The level of anger that you’ve just seen in the country around this issue is astounding,” said Jean Sinzdak, associate director for the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University. “People are really sharing their feelings about that and building a movement about that online, which I really think is quite fascinating. It’s certainly an opportunity to engage people politically. Whether it lasts is hard to say, but it certainly feels like a real opportunity.”

In one way, said Sinzdak, this is giving Swift’s large following of younger people a direct line to seeing how policy takes shape. It’s also targeting a demographic that is seldom courted by politicians during election season.

“Nobody goes out and thinks, ‘Let’s target young women,’” said Gwen Nisbett, a University of North Texas professor who researches the intersection of political engagement and pop culture. “Be it about abortion or student loans, that age group is super mobilized and young women are super mobilized.”

Fan culture and community has boosted that tendency toward mobilization. Nisbett was studying parasocial relationships — when fans have strong one-way relationships with celebrities — in 2018, when the previously apolitical Swift posted an endorsement of Democratic candidates to social media. Nisbett found that while such posts may not determine fans’ votes, they still led to the increased likelihood fans would look for more information about voting — and actually vote.

For the record: AP VoteCast, an extensive survey of the U.S. electorate, showed about a third of Tennessee voters in 2018 said they had a favorable opinion of Swift, and among them, a large majority — about 7 in 10 — backed Democrat Phil Bredesen in the Senate contest. That was in clear contrast to the roughly third of voters who had an unfavorable opinion of Swift and overwhelmingly backed Republican Marsha Blackburn.

For Swifties, the ire for Ticketmaster is not just about a ticket: “It’s the fact that you can’t participate in your community and your fandom and it’s part of your identity,” Nisbett said.

This isn’t even the first time a fandom or an artist has targeted Ticketmaster. Pearl Jam took aim at the company in 1994, although the Justice Department ultimately declined to bring a case. More recently, Bruce Springsteen fans were enraged over high ticket costs because of the platform’s dynamic pricing system.

“It’s not just about getting vengeance for Swifties. It’s not about getting an extra million Taylor Swift fans tickets, or all of us going to a secret session,” said Jordan Burger, 28, who is using his law background to help the cause. “It’s about fundamental equality. And when you have a monopolist like that, it’s just so representative of the class structure of a society where there isn’t equality anymore, there isn’t fairness.”

The sheer power and size of Swift’s fandom has spurred conversations about economic inequality, merely symbolized by Ticketmaster.

Aly noted that quite a few of the members of the group did get tickets; the issue is bigger than Ticketmaster, she said.

“We’ve gotten some feedback that, ‘This is too big, let the government handle it.’ Have you seen the U.S. government? The government only functions when the people push it to and when the people demand that it function and the people are involved,” she said. “Even when something seems too big to fail or too powerful to fail, there are always enough of us to make a difference. Your involvement may be the thing that pushes it over the edge that forces the government to act.”

Aly says many grown-up Swifties have 10-15 years’ experience of being bullied for liking the singer — but what fans have in mind might be better than revenge.

“We have thick skin and nothing to lose, really,” Aly said.

**Gathering again? Tips for a safe and healthy Thanksgiving**

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By JONEL ALECCIA AP Health Writer

For families who settled for smaller gatherings and remote blessings during the height of the pandemic, this Thanksgiving looks like the return of the big bash.

More folks are getting together this year, with the American Automobile Association predicting holiday travel will be nearly back to prepandemic levels.

If that's the case at your house, it may have been a while since you faced a frozen turkey or remembered which cousins shouldn't sit together.

To help you brush up on the holiday basics, here are some tips to keep everyone safe, healthy and sane:  
**FIRST, THE TURKEY**

The big bird is the center of most Thanksgiving meals, but it's important to handle raw poultry properly to avoid spreading bacteria that can send your guests home with an unwanted side of food poisoning. Thaw safely. A frozen turkey needs about 24 hours to thaw for every 4 to 5 pounds of weight, according to the Agriculture Department. In a pinch, it can be thawed in a cold water bath or even a microwave, but it must be cooked immediately if you use those methods. And don't wash the turkey. It's a bad idea to rinse it in the sink, a practice that can spread potentially dangerous germs like salmonella to nearby areas, said Jennifer Quinlan, a Drexel University nutrition sciences professor who has studied consumers' turkey-handling habits. Instead, pat the turkey dry with paper towels and plop it in the roasting pan.

**COOK THOROUGHLY, REFRIGERATE PROMPTLY**

The best way to make sure your turkey is fully cooked, to an internal temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit, is to use a meat thermometer, said Lisa Shelley, who researches food safety at North Carolina State University. Don't rely on golden-brown skin or the color of the turkey juices. Once the turkey is served, be sure to refrigerate it and all the other leftovers — mashed potatoes, gravy, yams — within two hours. "Really, set a timer when you put everything out," suggested Quinlan. "You'll be surprised at how fast two hours goes."

And don't skimp on the cleanup. Wash your hands before preparing food and after touching raw poultry. But make sure to consider the counters, the cutting boards and any tools that may be contaminated, too, said Shelley. Clean with soap and water, then sanitize with chlorine bleach. "It's a two-step process," she said.

**DANGER ZONES**

Certain holidays are known for specific injuries and Thanksgiving's no exception, said Dr. Christopher Kang, president of the American College of Emergency Physicians. Carve carefully. Slicing a turkey is a lot harder than it looks, as Turkey Day injuries attest. "Always, with any cutting and carving, we see a lot of hand injuries and finger injuries," said Kang, an ER doctor in Tacoma, Washington. Make sure the carving knife is sharp and never slice toward yourself, always away. Don't put your hand under the blade to catch a slice of meat.

Beware, turkey fryer fires. Deep-fried turkey may sound delectable, but it's a dangerous dish for home cooks to prepare. The fryers can tip over and spill -- and the combination of a frozen or not-quite-thawed turkey and hot oil can create an explosion. Even when that doesn't happen, Kang said he's seen plenty of painful scalding injuries caused by hot oil.

**AVOID THE "TRIPLE-DEMIC"**

Thanksgiving gatherings also kick off a spike in other ER visits as generations gather and swap germs. This year, the danger posed by COVID-19 and other viruses, including an early flu season and RSV, respiratory syncytial virus, is a continuing worry, Kang said. Babies and young children are particularly vulnerable to some infections; older people are more susceptible to others. "What age group is not at risk?" Kang said. To reduce the chances of infection and serious illness, make sure everyone eligible is up-to-date on vaccinations. Ask folks who have any symptoms of illness — even "allergies" or "just a cold" — to stay home. Consider asking guests to take a rapid COVID-19 test before they show up. Make sure your home is well-ventilated: Open windows, keep a portable air purifier running. To protect the most vulnerable guests, consider wearing masks indoors.

**BE MINDFUL OF YOUR MENTAL HEALTH**

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Hosting — or joining — a Thanksgiving holiday event after nearly three years of a tumultuous pandemic may be a challenge. It's important to have realistic expectations — and to plan ahead to avoid familiar family pitfalls, according to the American Psychological Association. Take time for yourself. Despite the pressure of the holidays, don't forgo your healthy routine. If you usually exercise, make time for a long walk, APA experts say: "Reflect on aspects of your life that give you joy." Set boundaries in advance. If you're worried about conflicts or heated discussions at your holiday table, the APA suggests making sure everyone knows Thanksgiving is a time to focus on "gratitude, appreciation and all you have, including each other."

## 'Top Gun: Maverick' to land on Paramount+ in December

By The Associated Press undefined

NEW YORK (AP) — Seven months after first arriving in theaters, "Top Gun: Maverick," the year's top film, will finally land on a streaming service.

Paramount Pictures announced Tuesday that "Top Gun: Maverick," having made more than \$1.48 billion worldwide at the box office, will debut Dec. 22 on Paramount+.

In an age where studios have increasingly pushed to shorten the span between theatrical and streaming, Paramount kept the Tom Cruise-starring "Top Gun" sequel going in theaters and, more recently on video-on-demand, for an uncommonly long and extremely lucrative run.

After being held for more than two years during the pandemic, "Top Gun: Maverick" was released in late May. It proved a juggernaut as the No. 1 film in North America for three straight weeks and even returned to the top spot over Labor Day weekend in September. It remained in the top 10 film at the domestic box office for 14 straight weeks. In late August, "Top Gun: Maverick" was released on premium on-demand for \$20 (later reduced to \$6) and again topped on-demand charts.

"Top Gun: Maverick" will be available on Paramount+ in the U.S., Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, Switzerland, Austria and in Latin America.

## Fill your stocking with Alicia Keys, Louis Armstrong, more

By The Associated Press undefined

Holiday music might not be everyone's cup of tea, but with new records from Alicia Keys, Backstreet Boys and Debbie Gibson, there's something that might appeal to everyone at the table. So pull out the record player, light some candles and get festive — and thankful for new music.

Associated Press journalists unwrapped the latest new holiday-themed albums from Chris Isaak, Davis Causey & Jay Smith, Louis Armstrong, Pentatonix and more.

Alicia Keys, "Santa Baby" (Alicia Keys Records)

Alicia Keys' Christmas album debut "Santa Baby" is as cheeky, cozy and captivating, as the classic it is named after.

For a holiday fanatic like me, there is nothing more heartwarming than Christmas songs. However, Keys is able to take a holiday favorite and improve it with her vocals and R&B twist.

So, like a square of butter over a freshly baked tower of pancakes, my heart sweetly melts into a sugary puddle.

The 15-time Grammy winner wraps those beloved old Christmas songs with originals, sure to join the pantheon of the glorious jolly songs. In the music video for the song, "December Back 2 June," a joyous Alicia Keys wears bubble ponytails and a metallic suit, singing "Christmas is all the time when I'm with you."

Ending with "Ave Maria," the artist risks it all, by taking a slow classic and adding a soul vibe with a recurring drum beat that makes an already solemn song into something fresh and beautiful.

Like that perfect black sweater in your wardrobe, this album goes with everything, whether you're feeling like snuggling under a blanket drinking hot tea or preparing yourself for a winter date. This album has it all: The sexy, the homey and the nostalgic.

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— Martina Inchingolo

Chris Isaak, "Everybody Knows It's Christmas" (Sun Records/Virgin UMG)

Fresh off a lifetime achievement award from the Americana Music Association, singer Chris Isaak is in a festive mood. It only makes sense that his next project would be a holiday album.

On "Everybody Knows It's Christmas," Isaak, who has built a career ranging comfortably between rockabilly and doo-wop, applies his distinctive talent to 13 holiday tracks in the Sun Studio style.

Isaak and his backup band, who are touring behind the album, take up familiar tunes like "Winter Wonderland" and "Jingle Bell Rock" with exuberant style, but they also dial up rockabilly cuts like "Run Rudolph Run" and an original called "Almost Christmas" that fits right in. There's not an earworm in the bunch, which can be a rarity for a holiday album.

Isaak's music can feel lightweight, but he succeeds by never taking himself too seriously. He always seems to do things just for the fun of it, and this album is no exception. And hey, isn't Christmas supposed to be fun?

— Scott Stroud

"Pickin' On Christmas," Davis Causey & Jay Smith (Strolling Bones Records)

More than two decades after it was recorded, "Pickin' On Christmas" again makes a lovely holiday gift.

In 1998, Athens, Georgia, guitarists Davis Causey and Jay Smith found themselves with little money for presents, so they recorded an album of eight instrumentals for a limited run of 100 CDs, and gave them to friends and family.

Now the set is available on the Strolling Bones label, and it's full of good cheer and interesting interplay.

With the help of overdubs, Causey and Smith trade licks and engage in creative counterpoint to generate plenty of winter warmth. The festive mash-up "Silver Bells/Silent Night" settles into a boogie rhythm pushed by drummer Jeff Reilly, and features what sounds like at least five guitars. Another innovative interpretation, "We Three Kings/God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen," combines funky syncopation with three guitars improvising simultaneously.

There's plenty of variety. The one original tune, the serene "Following a Star," includes a synth guitar part by Causey that sounds like a cello, while Randall Bramblett contributes a sprightly soprano sax part on "What Child Is This?" "Little Drummer Boy" mixes Causey's resonator guitar and Smith's classical guitar, and several cuts feature blue notes and other jazz colors.

Causey has become a model of longevity, his 60-year career highlighted by work with Kris Kristofferson, Marvin Gaye and Waylon Jennings, among many others. Smith died shortly after these tunes were recorded, which makes the album a poignant holiday celebration of musical kinship.

— Steven Wine

Joss Stone, "Merry Christmas, Love" (S-Curve Records)

Soul singer Joss Stone has released her first album of Christmas songs, to which the only natural reaction is: Why did it take so long to get these chestnuts roasting?

"Merry Christmas, Love" is a brilliant addition to the holiday cannon with Stone's seemingly effortless takes on 13 classics, breathing new life into "White Christmas" and "Let It Snow." She also wrote two nifty originals.

Though she has a Ferrari engine, her restraint is admirable, letting the song shine, like one of the prettiest versions of "In The Bleak Midwinter" you'll ever hear and an absolutely joyous take on Irving Berlin's "Snow."

Stone shows exquisite control and tone on "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" and leaves the beauty of "Away in a Manger" unadorned. One of the new ones, "If You Believe," borrows a beat from "The Little Drummer Boy" but soars, at the end unleashing that Ferrari.

The album ends with a tricky one — "Silent Night." And Stone absolutely smashes it, with sonic fireworks. This collection needs to be on repeat this holiday — and next.

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— Mark Kennedy

Debbie Gibson, "Winterlicious" (Stargirl Records)

Writing your own Christmas songs must be a daunting task but that hasn't stopped Debbie Gibson. Thank goodness.

The singer who gave us "Only in My Dreams" offers "Winterlicious," her first ever holiday album. It's an eclectic set, mixing classics with originals, including a duet with her dad, a new Hanukkah song — big points for inclusion, Ms. Gibson — and ends with an emotional and super New Year's Eve song, "Cheers."

One highlight is a rare Christmas break-up song — she and New Kids on the Block's Joey McIntyre co-wrote the terrific "Heartbreak Holiday." Other Gibson originals like "Jingle Those Bells," "Christmas Star" and "Christmas Dreams" deserve to be on your holiday rotation and her cover of "The Candy Man" is a great showcase for her Broadway-ready voice.

The duet with Joe Gibson on "White Christmas" is painful — sorry, dad — but the driving, over-the-top and maybe even naughty arrangement of "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen" goes down well. This is an album that's got something for everyone.

— Mark Kennedy

Backstreet Boys, "A Very Backstreet Christmas" (BMG)

Backstreet Boys have released their first Christmas album and you can thank the pandemic for that.

During lockdown, while everyone was busy baking and working out from home, the boy band was harmonizing jolly classics.

They bring a nostalgic boy band pop twist to beloved songs like "White Christmas," "Winter Wonderland" and "Last Christmas," while slow staples, like "Silent Night" and "O Holy Night," give the singers a chance to show off their angelic voices.

In addition, the band gifts their fans with their own original Christmas song "Happy Days." They sing "We're gonna party like it's '99," and, honestly, there probably isn't a more early 2000s pop holiday song than this.

While the album is offering a vast option of well-known classics, the band makes each song its own.

So, being a big Christmas enthusiast won't just do it, you have to commit to that cheesy and sentimental pop beat. While I doubt that whoever is not into the boy band genre will curiously stumble into this album, the hardcore fans will definitely be satisfied.

— Martina Inchingolo

Pentatonix, "Holidays Around the World" (RCA Records)

In what is becoming a steadfast holiday tradition, Pentatonix is back with new music on a new holiday album. The five-member acapella group released "Holidays Around the World," which explores collaborations with musicians from different cultures around the world.

Each track highlighted the cultures of the different featured artists on the album. Collaborations include Lang Lang, Shreya Ghoshal, Hiba Tawaji, La Santa Cecilia, Lea Salonga and more.

Pentatonix continues to put their own twists on traditional holiday classics, as they have successfully done in past holiday albums. The standouts are "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year" and "Last Christmas" (feat. HIKAKIN & SEIKIN).

Out of the original songs on the album, "Kid on Christmas" (feat. Meghan Trainor) was the clear pop hit with its upbeat chorus. While Christmas seems to be the main holiday celebrated in this album, the uplifting melodies or jolly lyrics in each track will put audiences in the holiday spirit.

— Karena Phan

Louis Armstrong, "Louis Wishes You a Cool Yule" (Verve Records)

If Mariah Carey is the queen of Christmas music, then make space for its king, Louis Armstrong.

Fifty years since the legendary artist passed away, his fans received the best Christmas present they

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could wish for. Months before his death, the musician recorded himself reciting the poem "A Visit from St Nicholas" (also popularly known as "The Night Before Christmas").

Now, the never before released recording, featuring Armstrong's growly, familiar voice, is accompanied by a musical underbed from New Orleans pianist, Sullivan Fortner.

The track is part of Louis Armstrong's first Christmas album called "Louis Wishes You a Cool Yule." Including nine holiday classics recorded by the artist, plus his memorable masterpiece "What a Wonderful World."

The musician's work has been proven to pass the test of time and it's still able to this day to keep that naive and childish glow in us from dimming. With this festive album, we get to hold on to that feeling for a little longer and get back to it at every re-listen.

So, as he reads in the new track: "Happy Christmas to all and to all a good night . . . A very good night."

— Martina Inchingolo

## Kim's sister warns US of 'a more fatal security crisis'

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The influential sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un warned the United States on Tuesday that it would face "a more fatal security crisis" as Washington pushes for U.N. condemnation of the North's recent intercontinental ballistic missile test.

Kim Yo Jong's warning came hours after U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield told an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council that the U.S. will circulate a proposed presidential statement condemning North Korea's banned missile launches and other destabilizing activities. After the meeting, Thomas-Greenfield also read a statement by 14 countries which supported action to limit North Korea's advancement of its weapons programs.

Kim Yo Jong, who is widely considered North Korea's second most powerful person after her brother, lambasted the United States for issuing what she called "a disgusting joint statement together with such rabblies as Britain, France, Australia, Japan and South Korea."

Kim compared the United States to "a barking dog seized with fear." She said North Korea would consider the U.S.-led statement "a wanton violation of our sovereignty and a grave political provocation."

"The U.S. should be mindful that no matter how desperately it may seek to disarm (North Korea), it can never deprive (North Korea) of its right to self-defense and that the more hell-bent it gets on the anti-(North Korea) acts, it will face a more fatal security crisis," she said in a statement carried by state media.

Monday's U.N. Security Council meeting was convened in response to North Korea's ICBM launch on Friday, which was part of a provocative run of missile tests this year that experts say is designed to modernize its nuclear arsenal and increase its leverage in future diplomacy. Friday's test involved its most powerful Hwasong-17 missile, and some experts say the successful steep-angle launch proved its potential to strike anywhere in the U.S. mainland if it's fired at a standard trajectory.

During the Security Council meeting, the United States and its allies strongly criticized the ICBM launch and called for action to limit North Korea's nuclear and missile programs. But Russia and China, both veto-wielding members of the Security Council, opposed any new pressure and sanctions on North Korea. In May, the two countries vetoed a U.S.-led attempt to toughen sanctions on North Korea over its earlier ballistic missile tests, which are prohibited by U.N. Security Council resolutions.

North Korea has said its testing activities are legitimate exercises of its right to self-defense in response to regular military drills between the United States and South Korea which it views as an invasion rehearsal. Washington and Seoul officials say the exercises are defensive in nature.

Kim Yo Jong said the fact that North Korea's ICBM launch was discussed at the Security Council is "evidently the application of double-standards" by the U.N. body because it "turned blind eyes" to the U.S.-South Korean military drills. She said North Korea won't tolerate any attempt to undermine its right to self-defense and will take "the toughest counteraction to the last" to protect its national security.

On Monday, North Korea's foreign minister, Choe Son Hui, called U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres "a puppet of the United States."

There are concerns that North Korea may soon conduct its first nuclear test in five years.

The status of North Korea's nuclear capability remains shrouded in secrecy. Some analysts say North Korea already has nuclear-armed missiles that can strike both the U.S. mainland and its allies South Korea and Japan, but others say the North is still years away from possessing such missiles.

## Top US diplomat criticizes FIFA armband threat at World Cup

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — America's top diplomat on Tuesday criticized a decision by FIFA to threaten players at the World Cup with yellow cards if they wear armbands supporting inclusion and diversity.

Speaking alongside his Qatari counterpart at a news conference, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said it was "always concerning ... when we see any restrictions on freedom of expression."

"It's especially so when the expression is for diversity and for inclusion," Blinken said at Doha's Diplomatic Club. "And in my judgment, at least no one on a football pitch should be forced to choose between supporting these values and playing for their team."

Just hours before the first players with the armbands in support of the "One Love" campaign were to take the field on Monday, soccer's governing body warned they would immediately be shown yellow cards — two of which lead to a player's expulsion from that game and also the next.

No player wore the "One Love" armbands Monday though seven European teams had said they planned to wear them ahead of the tournament.

England's Harry Kane wore a FIFA-approved "No Discrimination" armband that was offered as a compromise in the match with Iran. FIFA has tried to counter the Europeans' campaign with its own armbands featuring more generic slogans backed by some United Nations agencies.

Asked to respond to Blinken's comments, FIFA referred to an earlier statement about allowing the "No Discrimination" armbands at the tournament, as part of a compromise it tried to strike with soccer federations.

Blinken arrived in Qatar on Monday, where he visited a youth soccer program tied to the World Cup. He later watched the U.S. tie with Wales on Monday night.

While openly critical of FIFA, Blinken struck a more measured tone with Qatar. This energy-rich Mideast nation has been criticized ahead of the tournament over its treatment of migrant laborers and criminalizing gay and lesbian sex.

"We know that without workers, including many migrant workers, this World Cup simply would not have been possible," Blinken said. "Qatar has made meaningful strides in recent years to its labor laws to expand worker rights."

However, he made a point to add: "Real work remains on these issues, and the United States will continue to work with Qatar on strengthening labor rights and human rights more broadly long after the World Cup is over."

Blinken spoke alongside Qatar's foreign minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, at the news conference. Asked by a Qatar-based journalist about the "media attacks" on his country, Sheikh Mohammed dismissed them.

"As for the reforms the state of Qatar, I think there were some quarters who did not take this into consideration and relied on preconceived notions," he said. "Of course we cannot change the opinion of those who just want to attack us or distort our image."

Blinken's visit comes as part of a strategic dialogue with Qatar, which also hosts some 8,000 American troops at its massive Al-Udeid Air Base that serves as the forward headquarters of the U.S. military's Central Command. The base was a key node in America's chaotic 2021 withdrawal from Afghanistan and evacuation of Afghan civilians.

One major issue to discuss is Iran. Nonproliferation experts say Iran now has enough uranium enriched up to 60% — a short step from weapons-grade levels — to reprocess into fuel for a nuclear weapon if it chooses to do so.

Tehran insists its program is peaceful, though it has drastically expanded it since the collapse of Iran's



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2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

Meanwhile, Iran is being shaken by monthslong protests following the Sept. 16 death in custody of a 22-year-old woman arrested by the country's morality police.

A crackdown by authorities and violence surrounding the demonstrations have killed at least 434 people, according to Human Rights Activists in Iran, a group that's been monitoring the protests. Iran is playing at the World Cup as well, and will face the U.S. on Nov. 29.

"The world is rightly focused on what's happening inside of Iran," Blinken said. "The protests that have arisen since the killing of Mahsa Amini are something that have galvanized the world."

Questioned about the U.S. recent decision to shield Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman over the lawsuit targeting him for the killing of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi, Blinken said the Biden administration would "simply follow the law" in terms of granting immunity to a head of state.

Blinken added there were no plans for the crown prince to visit the U.S.

## Today in History: November 23, the UN seats China

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, Nov. 23, the 327th day of 2022. There are 38 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 23, 1971, the People's Republic of China was seated in the U.N. Security Council.

On this date:

In 1889, the first jukebox made its debut in San Francisco, at the Palais Royale Saloon. (The coin-operated device consisted of four listening tubes attached to an Edison phonograph.)

In 1903, Enrico Caruso made his American debut at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York, appearing in "Rigoletto."

In 1936, Life, the photojournalism magazine created by Henry R. Luce (loos), was first published.

In 1963, President Lyndon B. Johnson proclaimed Nov. 25 a day of national mourning following the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

In 1980, some 2,600 people were killed by a series of earthquakes that devastated southern Italy.

In 1996, a commandeered Ethiopian Airlines Boeing 767 crashed into the water off the Comoros Islands, killing 125 of the 175 people on board, including all three hijackers.

In 2000, in a setback for Al Gore, the Florida Supreme Court refused to order Miami-Dade County officials to resume hand-counting its election-day ballots. Meanwhile, Gore's lawyers argued in a brief filed with the U.S. Supreme Court that the high court should stay out of the Florida election controversy.

In 2003, five U.S. soldiers were killed in a helicopter crash in Afghanistan. Eduard Shevardnadze (sheh-vahrd-NAHD'-zeh) resigned as president of Georgia in the face of protests.

In 2006, former KGB spy Alexander Litvinenko (leet-vee-NYEN'-koh) died in London from radiation poisoning after making a deathbed statement blaming Russian President Vladimir Putin.

In 2008, the government unveiled a bold plan to rescue Citigroup, injecting a fresh \$20 billion into the troubled firm as well as guaranteeing hundreds of billions of dollars in risky assets.

In 2011, Yemen's authoritarian President Ali Abdullah Saleh (AH'-lee ahb-DUH'-luh sah-LEH') agreed to step down amid a fierce uprising to oust him after 33 years in power.

In 2020, the federal government recognized Joe Biden as the "apparent winner" of the Nov. 3 election, formally starting the transition of power; President Donald Trump still refused to concede and vowed to continue a court fight after General Services Administrator Emily Murphy gave the green light for Biden to coordinate with federal agencies ahead of his inauguration. Michigan certified Biden's win in the battleground state.

Ten years ago: Supporters and opponents of Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi clashed in the streets of Cairo and other major cities in the worst violence since Morsi took office nearly five months earlier. Actor Larry Hagman, best known for playing the scheming oil baron J.R. Ewing on TV's "Dallas," died in

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Dallas at the age of 81.

Five years ago: The holiday shopping season kicked off with some major retailers opening on Thanksgiving afternoon or evening, hoping for a lift from a better economy.

One year ago: A jury in Virginia ordered 17 white nationalist leaders and organizations to pay more than \$26 million in damages over the violence that erupted during the deadly 2017 Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville in 2017. A federal jury in Cleveland found that CVS, Walgreens and Walmart pharmacies recklessly distributed massive amounts of pain pills in two Ohio counties. (A judge awarded \$650 million in damages.) NASA launched a spacecraft on a mission to smash into an asteroid and test whether it would be possible to knock a speeding space rock off course. (NASA said the mission was a success.) President Joe Biden ordered a record 50 million barrels of oil released from America's strategic reserve, aiming to bring down gasoline and other costs. The only person convicted in the 2007 murder in Italy of British student Meredith Kercher, Rudy Guede, was freed after serving most of his 16-year prison sentence. Multi-genre performer Jon Batiste scored the most Grammy nominations with 11.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Franco Nero is 81. Screenwriter Joe Eszterhas (ES'-tur-hahs) is 78. Actor-comedy writer Bruce Vilanch is 75. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., is 72. Singer Bruce Hornsby is 68. Former Sen. Mary Landrieu (LAN'-droo), D-La., is 67. Actor Maxwell Caulfield is 63. Actor John Henton is 62. TV personality Robin Roberts ("Good Morning America") is 62. Rock singer-musician Ken Block (Sister Hazel) is 56. Actor Salli Richardson-Whitfield is 55. Actor Oded Fehr (OH'-dehd fayr) is 52. Rapper-actor Kurupt (Tha Dogg Pound) is 50. Actor Page Kennedy is 46. Actor Kelly Brook is 43. Actor Lucas Grabeel (GRAY'-beel) is 38. TV personality Nicole "Snooki" Polizzi is 35. Actor-singer Miley Cyrus is 30. Actor Olivia Keville (TV: "Splitting Up Together") is 20.