

Groton Daily Independent

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Groton Community Calendar

Sunday, Dec. 18

Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., Worship Service at 10:45 a.m.; Christmas Program at 5 p.m. with banquet to follow.

St. John's worship with communion, 9 a.m.; Sunday school, 9:45 a.m.; Zion's worship with communion, 11 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran worship with Sunday school program, 9 a.m.; Worship at Avantara, 3 p.m.; Choir, 7 p.m.

United Methodist: Conde worship, 8:30 a.m.; Coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.; Sunday school, 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship with Sunday school Christmas program, 10:30 a.m.; Noon meal at Groton.

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.

Open Gym: Grade JK-8, 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.; Grades 6-12, 3:30 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Monday, Dec. 19

Senior Menu: Swedish meat balls, mashed potatoes, peas and carrots, fruit cocktail, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Breakfast pizza.

School Lunch: Cheese Burger Bake, Peas.

Emmanuel Lutheran Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

Cancelled: JHGBB hosts Sisseton (7th at 6 p.m. followed by 8th)

Senior Citizens meet at the community center with Christmas potluck at noon

The Pantry, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Groton UMC Advent Bible Study, 6 p.m.

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.

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2023 DOG LICENSES due by Dec. 30, 2022

Fines start January 1, 2023

Spayed/Neutered dogs are \$5 per dog, otherwise \$10 per dog

Proof of rabies shot information is **REQUIRED!!**

Email proof to city.kellie@nvc.net,
fax to (605) 397-4498 or bring a copy to City Hall!!

Please contact City Hall as soon as possible if you no longer have a dog(s) that were previously licensed!

Questions call (605) 397-8422

X SERIES. | *Cub Cadet.*

PUT WINTER IN ITS PLACE



3X 30" HD

Gear up for the worst of winter weather with the 3X 30" HD powered by a 420cc Cub Cadet OHV engine.

- Heavy-duty 14-gauge steel auger housing and side plates
- LED light bar on auger housing plus dual LED in-dash headlights
- 23" intake height
- Heated hand grips
- OVH crank chute control w/ high-arc steel chute
- Heavy-duty cast aluminum gear box backed by 5-year limited warranty**

MSRP
\$1,999*



3X 26" TRAC

Clear it all with the strength of the 3X 26" Trac featuring a powerful 357cc Cub Cadet OHV engine.

- Track Drive ideal for slopes, inclines and gravel driveways
- Heavy-duty 14-gauge steel auger housing and side plates
- 23" intake height
- Heated hand grips
- OVH crank chute control w/ high-arc steel chute
- LED light bar on auger housing plus dual LED in-dash headlights
- Heavy-duty cast aluminum auger gear box w/ 5-year limited warranty**

MSRP
\$2,099*



2X 30" MAX

Tak on winter with the commercial-grade durability of the 357cc Cub Cadet 2X 30" MAX snow blower

- Heavy-duty 14-gauge steel side plates and auger housing
- 14" augers and impeller
- Sealed ball bearings on auger and wheel shafts
- LED light bar on auger housing
- 23" intake height
- Heated hand grips
- 16"x6.5" X-Trac tires
- High-arc steel chute
- Heavy-duty cast aluminum auger gear box w/ 5-year limited warranty

MSRP
\$1,899*

■ Indicates step-up feature



YOUR INDEPENDENT DEALER – EXPERT SERVICE. LOCALLY OWNED.
The advice, service, selection and support you need to find the right fit for you.

HARRY IMPLEMENT INC.
109 CENTER ST.
FERNEY, SD 57439
www.harrysinc.com
605-395-6421

¹Restrictions apply. See dealer or cubcadet.com/en_US/financing for details.

[†]When compared to the same engine without IntelliPower™ technology. Improvements vary depending on engine models and specific operating conditions.

* Actual retail prices are set by dealer and may vary. Taxes are additional and vary by location. Freight and PDI charges may be additional and vary by dealer. Models subject to limited availability. Images may not reflect dealer inventory and/or unit specifications.

** See owner's manual for warranty details and information. Certain restrictions apply.

© 2022 Cub Cadet

**EXCEPTIONAL FINANCING
OFFERS AVAILABLE!**



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Weekly Vikings Recap - Week 15

By Jack & Duane Kolsrud

In a season filled with some of the craziest Minnesota Vikings games we have ever seen, Saturday's game against the Indianapolis Colts might take the cake. After trailing 33-0 at halftime, the Vikings completed the largest comeback in NFL history, defeating the Colts 39-36 in overtime and clinching the NFC North title.

It was a rough start, to say the least, for the Vikings on Saturday. In the first half, the Vikings managed to have a punt blocked for a touchdown, throw an interception for a touchdown, and to put salt in the wound, have a defensive touchdown of their own taken away by the referees on a quick whistle because of bad forward progress call on a Michael Pittman fumble. After having a season filled with lucky moments throughout, it felt like the luck had finally run out on the Vikings. As the boos started to ring throughout US Bank Stadium, it felt like Saturday was just not the Vikings' day.

However, the unbelievable happened as the Vikings outscored the Colts 39-3 from halftime. The hero of the game was KJ Osborn, who despite having a surprisingly quiet season, put together by far the best game of his career. Not only did he finish the game with 157 receiving yards on 10 catches, but he also had a huge 63-yard catch early in the 3rd quarter to jump-start the Vikings. At the time of the catch, the Vikings were still down 33-0 and time was ticking away. Osborn's catch not only ignited the offense, it also ignited the defense as they gave up only three points the rest of the game.

Throughout the second half, it felt like the doors were going to completely shut on a Vikings' comeback. First, Kirk Cousins threw an untimely interception down 36-21 and only 8:09 remaining in the game. And later, the Vikings turned it over on downs later in the 4th quarter when only 2:57 remained in the game. Nonetheless, this Vikings' team just never quit as they quickly forced a Colts turnover on downs and got the ball back to the Vikings' offense.

With the Vikings down 36-28 and only 2:28 remaining in the game, the Vikings were going to need to put together a 64-yard drive to tie the game. Thankfully, it only took one play as Dalvin Cook took a halfback screen to the endzone, breaking what felt like all 11 Colts' defenders' attempts at tackling him. Needing a two-point conversion to still tie, Kirk Cousins found TJ Hockenson in the endzone to somehow force this insane game into overtime. Thanks to a Greg Joseph 40-yard field goal in overtime, the Vikings managed to win the craziest game not only in Vikings' history but maybe in NFL history.

There has been a lot of talk from the national media that this Vikings' team is not as good as their now 11-3 record says. While the first half might have proven these people right, it would be hard for anyone to not look at the performance of the Vikings in the second half as commendable. This team all year has managed to find ways to win and never quit. Perhaps it is an indication that everything will come crashing down in the playoffs, or perhaps it means this team is tough enough to deal with any challenge come playoff time. Whatever, it is the Vikings' comeback today must give Vikings' fans hope that this team is never going to be out of a game.

Looking forward, the Vikings will likely need to win the rest of their games this season to ensure a 2-seed in the NFC playoffs. The 49ers currently sit a game behind the Vikings in the standings and are showing no signs of slowing down for the rest of the season. A 2-seed versus a 3-seed means a lot for not only the Vikings themselves but their fans. A 2-seed will guarantee that this team will get not only one home playoff game, but two home playoff games should the Vikings win their game in the wild-card round.

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This photo was taken by someone who posted it on Facebook of North Buffalo Lake.

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25 Days - Brown County Fair



Mike Nehls

Fair Board - 3 Years

Committees I have served on -

- *Camping, Concessions/Vendors, Grandstand Events, & Home Arts*

Favorite thing about the Holidays -

- *Time spent with family is the most important thing over the holidays.*

Favorite thing about the Fair -

- *Watching people enjoy all the events and activities that the Brown County Fair has to offer.*

If you could do anything or go anywhere -

- *I would like to travel & visit every state in the USA!*

In 2023 -

- *Hopefully good health of family and friends and a successful 2023 Brown County Fair!*

www.BrownCountySDFair.com

MERRY
CHRISTMAS

MERRY
CHRISTMAS

Another Groton resident on the Brown County Fair Board was recognized by the Brown County Fair Facebook Page. None other than Mike Nehls!



Groton Community Transit
Invites you to their

Holiday Bake Sale **Thursday Dec. 22, 2022**

9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

**Coffee, cider and Christmas
goodies will be served!**

If you would like to donate baked goods, please contact Groton Community Transit office at 605-397-8661. Any and all donations are welcome!! We are looking forward to seeing you!!



THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.



Detail of "The Birth of Christ (The Nativity)"
by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1860)

LUKE 2: 6, 7

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HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS.

BIBBLE
TRIVIA
by Wilson Casey

1. The main Christmas story is paraphrased from which two New Testament books? *Mark/John, Acts/Romans, Matthew/Luke, Jude/Revelation*

2. Who visited Jesus on the night of His birth and found Mary, Joseph and the babe lying in a manger? *Innkeeper, Shepherds, Herod, Magi*

3. Where was the young child when the Magi came to visit Him to present gifts? *Manger, Under the stars, House, Temple*

4. How many times does the word “Christmas” appear in the Bible (KJV)? *0, 1, 2, 7*

5. Who was King of Judea at the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem? *Solomon, Herod, Balak, Belshazzar*

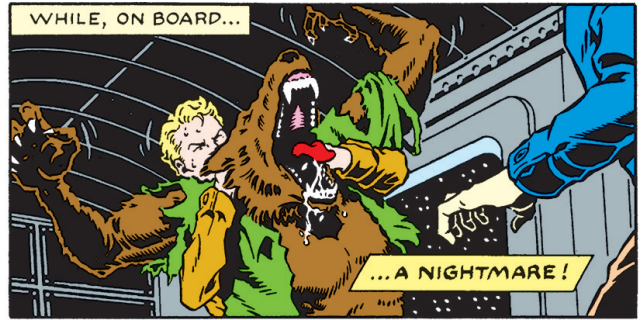
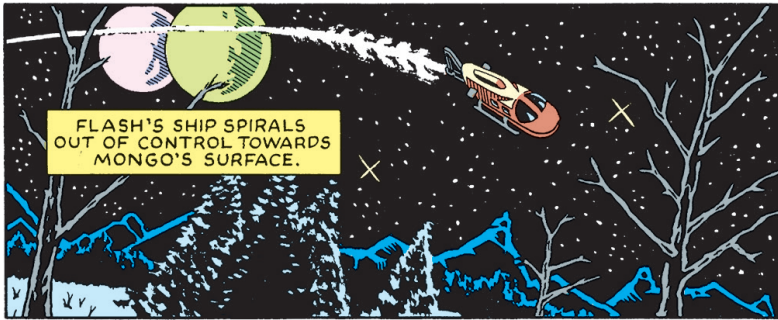
6. Which animals were present at Jesus’ birth? *Lions and bears, Sheep and goats, Cows and donkeys, No mention of animals*

ANSWERS: 1) Matthew/Luke, 2) Shepherds, 3) House, 4) Zero, 5) Herod, 4) No mention of animals

“*Test Your Bible Knowledge,*” a book with 1,206 multiple-choice questions by columnist Wilson Casey, is available in stores and online.

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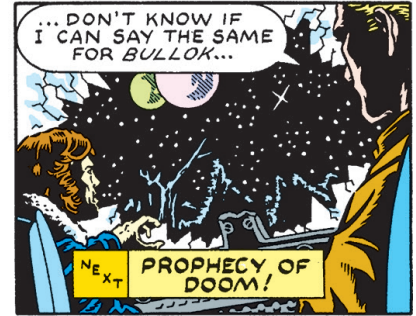
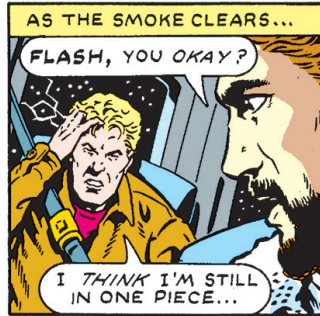
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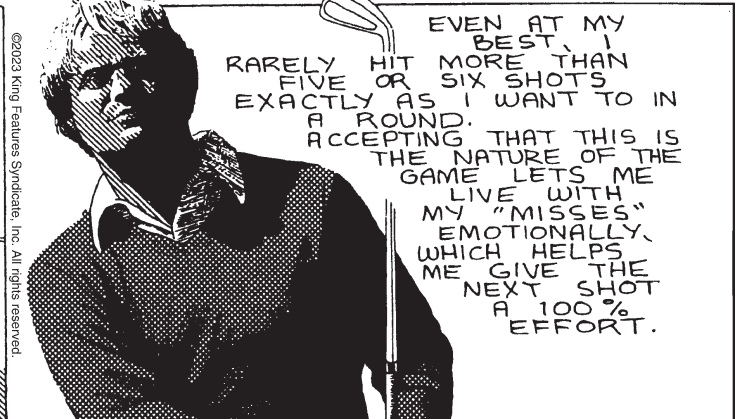
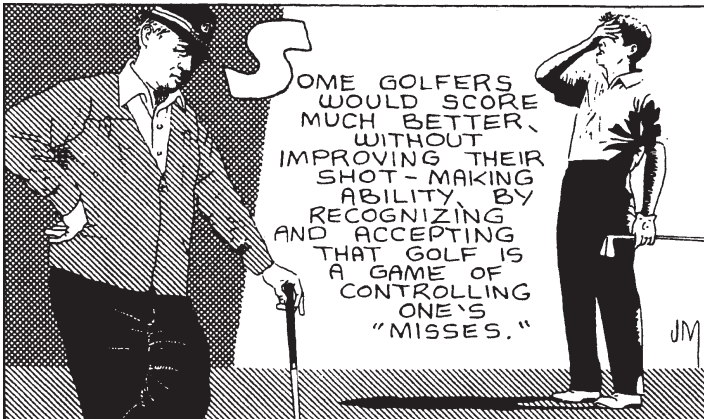
FLASH GORDON

BY JIM KEEFE

BULLOK, HAVING TRANSFORMED INTO A WEREWOLF, WREAKS HAVOC ABOARD FLASH'S SHIP!



Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS





Ten-Year Fracture Risk Determines Need for Osteoporosis Meds

DEAR DR. ROACH: I'm 77 and have been diagnosed with osteoporosis. I'm taking Fosamax and following all the steps recommended for strengthening bones. But I have two questions: First, is it possible to avoid a fracture without taking medication? Second, is it necessary to avoid coffee completely? I am confused about both questions, having read a lot of conflicting information online. I recently finished reading a book that strongly condemned osteoporosis medication, and I have also read that coffee is OK, even good, for bones; though, other sources say it leeches calcium from bones. I would appreciate some clarity on these issues. — J.M.

ANSWER: I have also read dire warnings about osteoporosis drugs, particularly the bisphosphonate class that includes alendronate (Fosamax), but the truth is more complex than it first appears.

The most important thing to realize is that every person has their own individual risk of developing an osteoporotic-type fracture. For young, healthy people with strong bones, the risk is very small, but as we age, the risk of fracture increases. Many medical conditions, as well as diet, exercise and some medications, affect the risk of fracture. Whether we are men or women, and even what our ethnicity is, affects fracture risk. The bone mineral density measured by a DEXA

an accurate fracture risk prediction needs to take a person's whole history into account. Only people at high risk for fracture should be taking a medication like Fosamax.

A standard guideline is that people should be recommended medication therapy if their 10-year risk of a hip fracture is greater than 3%, or their 10-year risk of any kind of major osteoporotic fracture is 20% or higher. If a person's risk is less than these numbers, they may be unnecessarily subjecting themselves to the risk of medication. The FRAX score is a standardized, country-specific way of estimating risk (www.sheffield.ac.uk/FRAX/tool.aspx).

If a group of people has a risk of fracture of 20% in the next 10 years, then 80% of them will not have a fracture if they don't take medication. Like treatment for high blood pressure or high cholesterol, medication treatment only helps a small proportion of those who receive it. We don't have the ability to predict with certainty who will have a bad outcome from these conditions, so we recommend treating people when they reach a certain degree of risk.

Treating only higher-risk patients leads to the drug helping a higher proportion of the group, but some people who were not offered medication will develop the bad outcome we're trying to avoid. A person who gets a hip fracture that could have been prevented with medication treatment is a tragedy. In my opinion, a person should know the risks of treatment and the risk of withholding treatment before making a decision.

The calcium question is also controversial, but while it is true that caffeine causes the body to lose calcium, if you take in enough calcium through diet, coffee does not seem to increase your risk of a fracture.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu.

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"Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery" (PG-13) -- The success garnered by the 2019 mystery "Knives Out" led Netflix to acquire two standalone sequels, the first of which releases on the streaming platform on Dec. 23. Daniel Craig reprises his role as detective Benoit Blanc in "Glass Onion," as Blanc is mysteriously requested to visit billionaire Miles Bron's (Edward Norton) Greek estate. Miles, who is hosting a group of his friends, conducts a murder mystery party, but Blanc shortly discovers an actual dead body and dives into a full-fledged investigation. Some other faces you might recognize in the film are Janelle Monae, Kathryn Hahn, Leslie Odom Jr., Dave Bautista and Kate Hudson. (Netflix)



"The Best Man: The Final Chapters" stars, from left, Terrance Howard, Morris Chestnut and Harold Perrineau. Courtesy of Peacock

"Top Gun: Maverick" (PG-13) -- The sequel to "Top Gun" (1986) will soon be released on Paramount's streaming service for those who haven't yet seen the highest-grossing film of 2022 (or for those who just like to enjoy the nostalgia). Releasing Dec. 22, "Maverick" stars the one and only Tom Cruise, along with Miles Teller, Jennifer Connelly and Val Kilmer. Cruise plays Pete "Maverick" Mitchell training the latest Top Gun graduates on an elite mission. The extensive and impressive action sequences in this film no doubt played a part in its great reception across the U.S. ... Plus, Miles Teller's mustache? 10/10. (Paramount+)

"The Best Man: The Final Chapters" (NR) -- The 1999 film "The Best Man," starring Morris Chestnut, Taye Diggs and Nia Long, is one of my favorite '90s films. A splash of comedy here, a splash of romantic drama there, and a final dancing scene of everyone doing the electric slide -- what more can you ask for? A Christmas sequel to the film was released in 2013, but fans like me who've grown to love these flawed, relatable characters wanted more! So, Peacock is set to release an eight-episode miniseries Dec. 22 based on the franchise. The characters, who are now in their middle-age stages of life, tackle new challenges as professionals, husbands, wives and parents -- and, ultimately, friends. (Peacock)

"Mack & Rita" (PG-13) -- If you ever wondered what the opposite of a movie like "17 Again" would look like, look no further than this new comedy starring Diane Keaton and Elizabeth Lail. Mack Martin (Lail) always grew up feeling as if she was an older woman trapped in a young woman's body, a feeling that gets accentuated when she goes to Palm Springs for her best friend's bachelorette party. On a whim, Mack decides to try a past life regression and wakes up as the 70-year-old version of herself (portrayed by Keaton). At first frightened in her new body, Mack realizes she feels much more at home at this age, even renaming herself "Rita," and connects with her true, inner self like never before. Out Dec. 23. (Hulu)

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1. What was "Calypso" about?
2. "Give Me Back My Man" appeared on which album?
3. Why was "Heaven Must Be Missing An Angel" split between the A and B sides of the single?
4. Which artist legally changed his name to Sananda Maitreya?
5. Name the song that contains these lyrics: "Seven thirty seven comin' out of the sky, Won't you take me down to Memphis on a midnight ride."

Answers

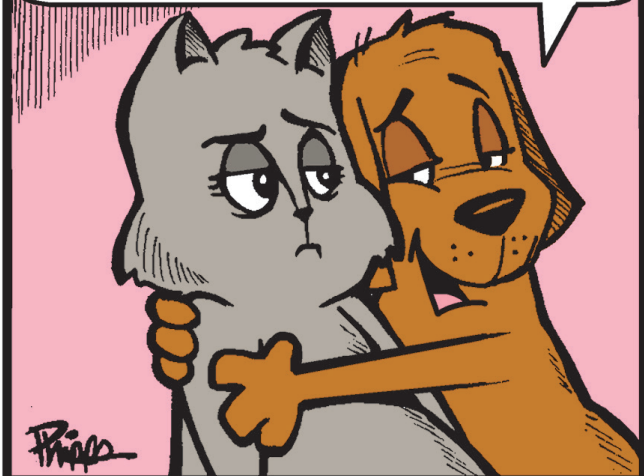
1. John Denver wrote the 1975 song as a tribute to Jacques-Yves Cousteau and the oceanographic research vessel Calypso.
2. The song was released on "Wild Planet" by the B-52's in 1980.
3. The 1976 disco song by Tavares was 6 minutes, 38 seconds long. While it didn't top the Billboard chart, it did reach No. 1 on the Hot Dance Club list.
4. Terence Trent D'Arby, in 2001. His debut album won a Grammy for Best Male R&B Vocal Performance in 1989.
5. "Travelin' Band" by Creedence Clearwater Revival, in 1970. In 1972, the group was sued for plagiarism for the music, with a claim that it was too similar to another song, "Good Golly, Miss Molly." The suit was settled out of court.

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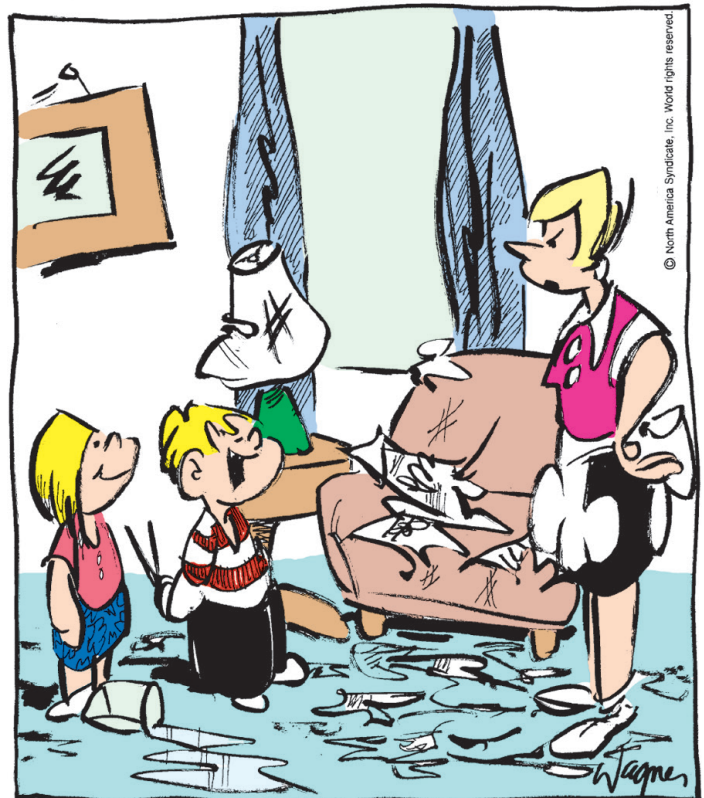
GRIN and BEAR IT Wagner

Just Like Cats & Dogs by Dave T. Phipps

FOR DATE NIGHT LET'S LET FATE DECIDE WHERE WE EAT. WE'LL PUT MY COUPONS IN A HAT AND DRAW.



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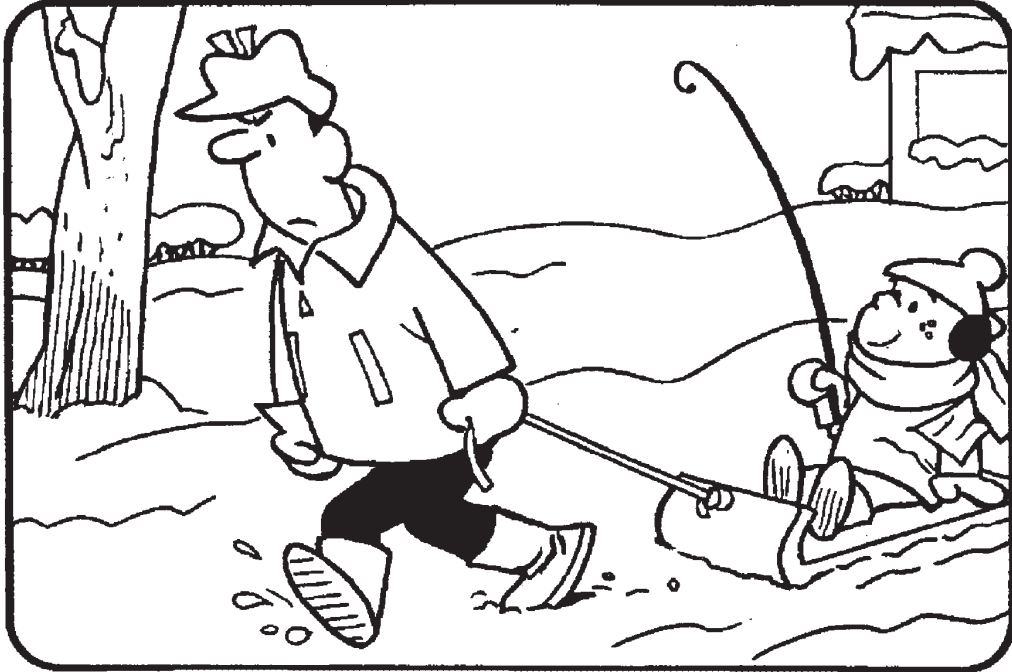


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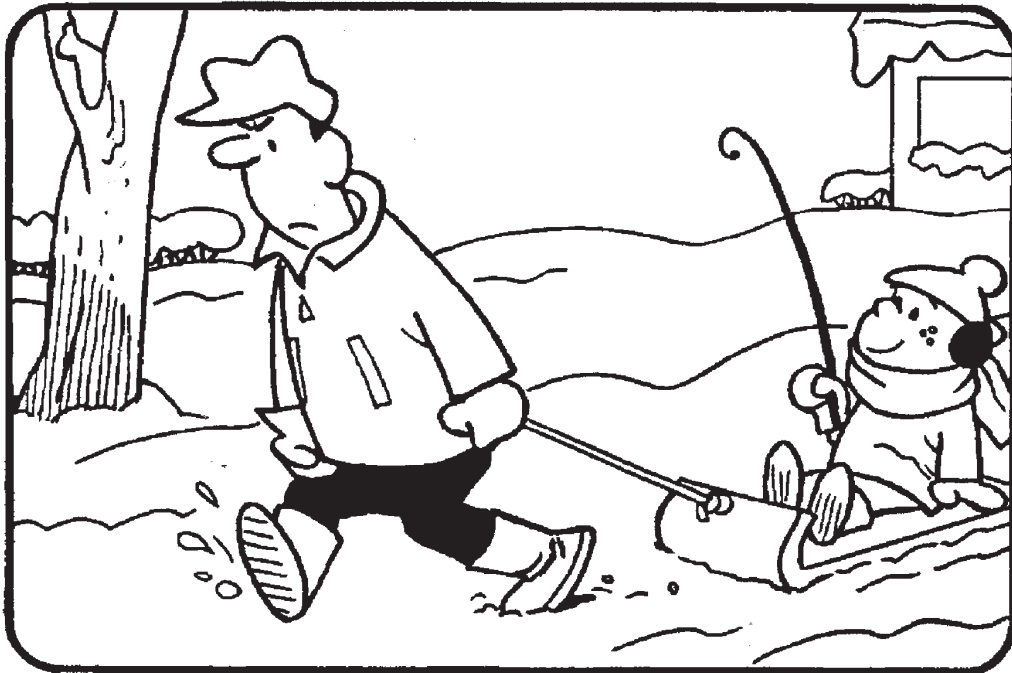
"But thank goodness we're safe, huh, Mom?"

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY
HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Cap is different. 2. Collar is different. 3. Leg is moved. 4. Rope end is missing. 5. Whip is shorter. 6. Scarf end is missing.

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* "Set up a phone call between kids and grandparents a week or so before visiting. They can talk about what the kids might like to do. It gives the grandparents time to prepare, and it gives kids a chance to build excitement before the trip." -- G.R. in Ohio

* Clean and disinfect a wood cutting board with salt and lemon juice. Sprinkle the board with a healthy dose of plain salt (kosher or coarse salt works best), and scrub it with a cut half of a lemon. Rinse and clean with soap and water.

* Hairspray spritzed on the end of a thread will stiffen it long enough to get it through a needle head. You also can thread your needle in front of a surface that's an opposing color (i.e. a white piece of paper while threading a needle with black thread).

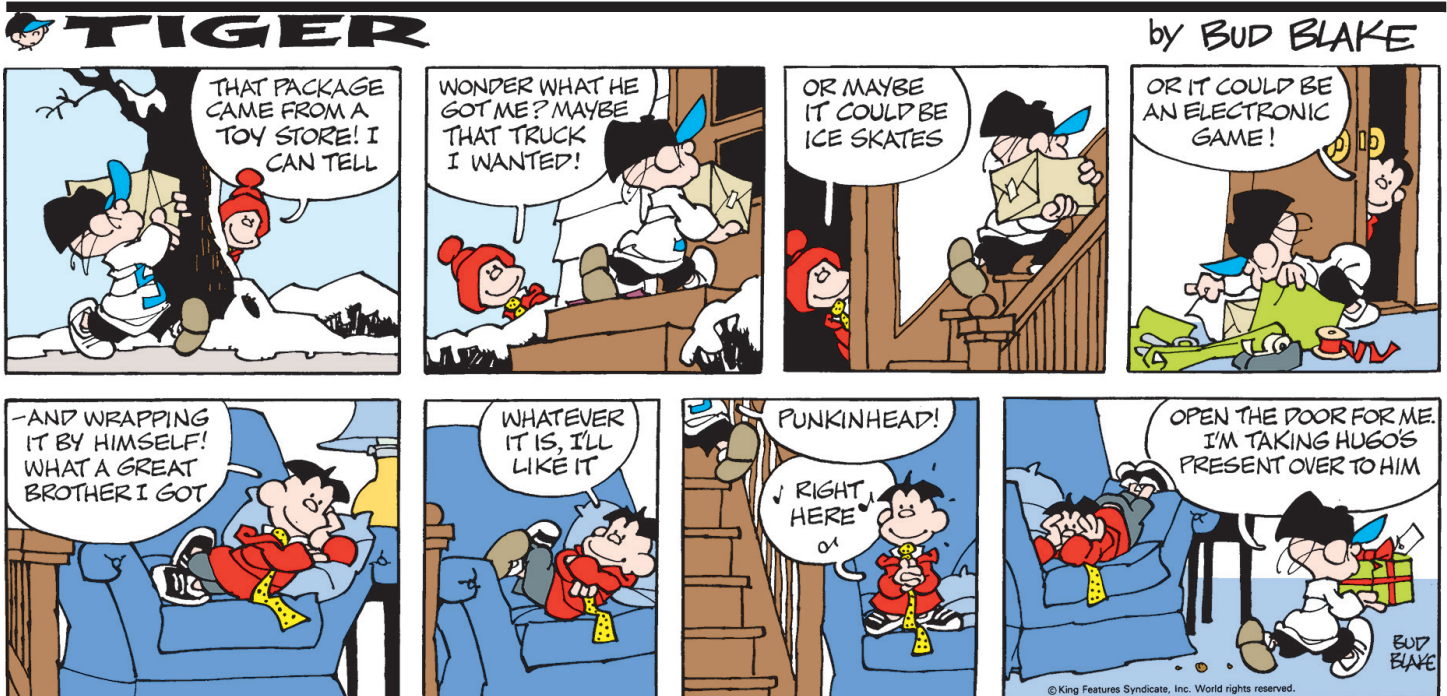
* When shopping for seamless bras, bring a T-shirt that is relatively tight-fitting to wear over the bras. You will know right away if there are seam lines or if the cup is too small. These sometimes get overlooked when a bra is worn under a looser shirt. -- E.D. in Ontario, Canada

* Another use for baking soda: It's a perfect exfoliator. It's good for the whole body and is pH neutral, so it won't overdry skin. To use it, just make a paste and rub onto skin. Rinse and enjoy the softness.

* Cold and flu got you down? Once you clear those symptoms, try gargling with saltwater. It reduces inflammation in your throat and washes away irritants and bacteria.

Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803.

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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Feedbag bit
- 4 Chilled
- 8 Theatergoer's souvenir
- 12 Show to a seat, slangily
- 13 Cleopatra's river
- 14 Poi base
- 15 Dance syllable
- 16 Fabric fastener
- 18 Klum of "Project Runway"
- 20 Hide-hair insert
- 21 Early birds?
- 24 Apple intruders
- 28 Wind-driven toy
- 32 Tidy
- 33 Altar affirmative
- 34 Fusses
- 36 Log chopper
- 37 Region (Abbr.)
- 39 Flag-shaped blazer accessory
- 41 Pago Pago's place
- 43 Sleuth Wolfe
- 44 Sphere
- 46 Lively dance
- 50 Yankee uniform pattern
- 55 Squeak stopper

1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11	
12				13					14				
15				16				17					
18			19				20						
			21		22	23		24		25	26	27	
28	29	30					31		32				
33				34				35		36			
37			38		39				40				
41				42		43							
			44		45			46		47	48	49	
50	51	52					53	54			55		
56					57						58		
59					60						61		

- 56 Clue
- 57 One-named supermodel
- 58 Buddy
- 59 Conks out
- 60 Like lemons
- 61 Supplement, with "out"
- 7 TV chef Paula
- 8 "Sophie's Choice" author
- 9 Spigot
- 10 Swiss canton
- 11 "— voyage!"
- 17 AAA job
- 19 Morning moisture
- 22 Earth sci.
- 23 Auto style
- 25 Harvest
- 26 Extra-long
- 27 British gun
- 28 Plum centers
- 29 Notion
- 30 Standard
- 31 Easy gait
- 35 Eden tempter
- 38 Perches
- 40 Privy
- 42 Illustrations
- 45 Telly watcher
- 47 Earring site
- 48 "Star Trek" captain
- 49 Medicinal plant
- 50 Prof's degree
- 51 Three, on a sundial
- 52 Away from SSW
- 53 "— Little Teapot"
- 54 Standard

DOWN

- 1 "That hurts!"
- 2 Tennis great Arthur
- 3 Bangkok language
- 4 Perception
- 5 Espionage org.
- 6 Sprite

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— King Crossword —

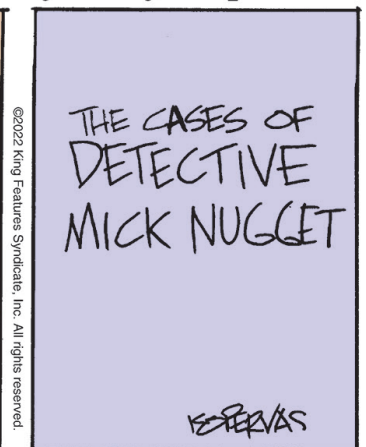
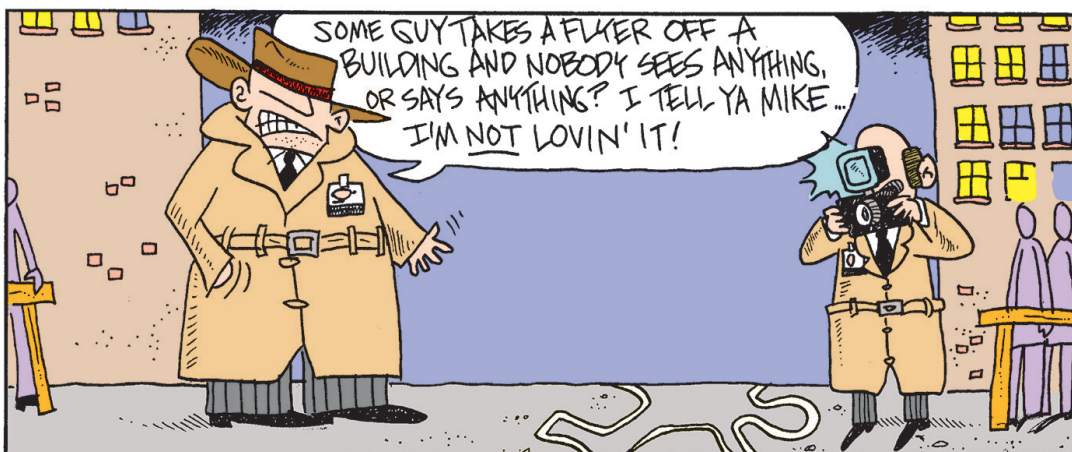
Answers

Solution time: 24 mins.

O	A	T		I	C	E	D		S	T	U	B	
U	S	H		N	I	L	E		T	A	R	O	
C	H	A		S	A	F	E	T	Y	P	I	N	
H	E	I	D	I				N	O	R			
				E	G	G	S		W	O	R	M	S
P	I	N	W	H	E	E	L		N	E	A	T	
I	D	O		T	O	D	O	S		A	X	E	
T	E	R	R		L	A	P	E	L	P	I	N	
S	A	M	O	A		N	E	R	O				
				O	R	B			P	O	L	K	A
P	I	N	S	T	R	I	P	E		O	I	L	
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Out on a Limb

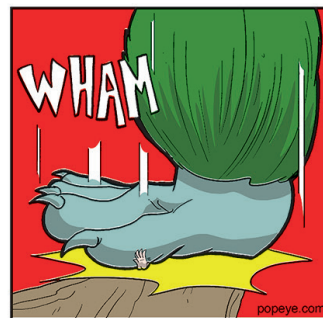
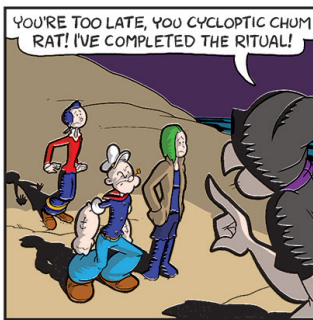
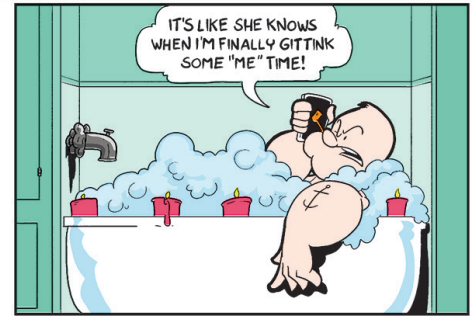
by Gary Kopervas



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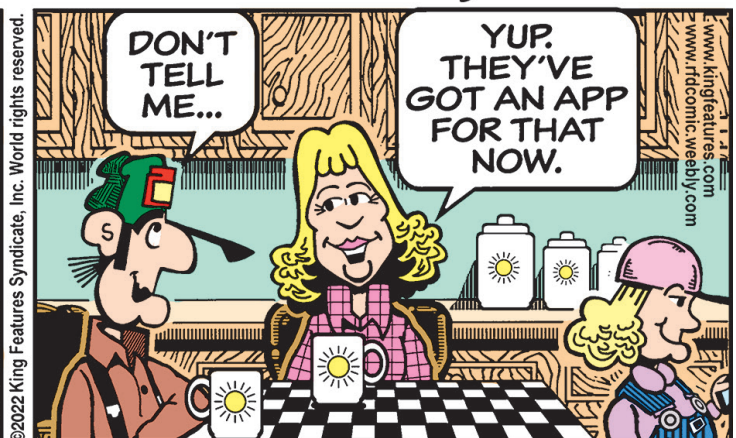
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R.F.D.

by Mike Marland



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Hal Foster's GIANNI AND SCHULTZ
Prince Valiant

GAWAIN BEGINS HIS TALE OF THE BLOND GIANT:

"ALLOW ME TO TELL YOU ABOUT THIS SCURRILOUS INGRATE!"



"I WAS ENJOYING A TOUR OF THE COUNTRYSIDE, MY FAVORED RELAXATION, SAMPLING THE LOCAL TREATS..."



"WHEN IN LURCH THESE PEONS, DRAGGING THIS - THIS - WHATEVER HE IS! THEY'D FOUND HIM SKULKING IN THEIR FIELDS AND THOUGHT IT BEST TO TURN HIM OVER TO THE COURT RATHER THAN KILL HIM THEMSELVES."

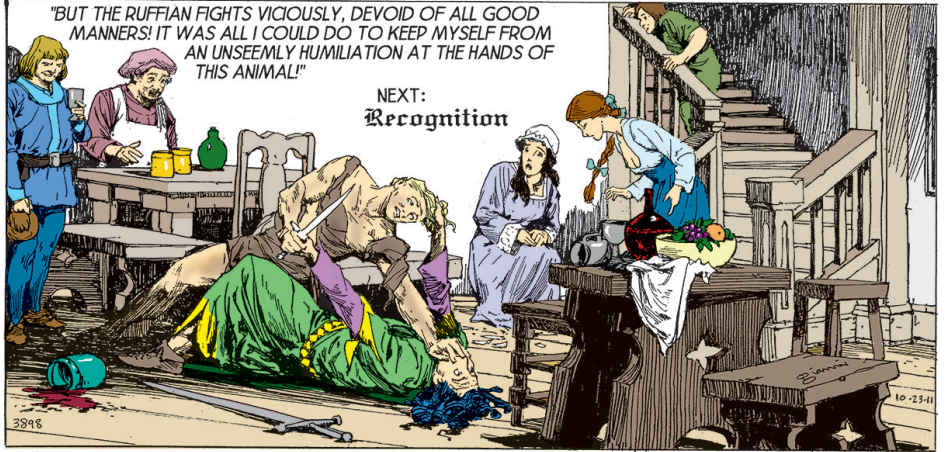
"WHOEVER HE IS, HE'S OBVIOUSLY OF NOBLE BIRTH - HIS ARROGANCE SAYS AS MUCH. I GRACIOUSLY OFFERED HIM THE CHANCE TO SHOW HIS METTLE AGAINST A KNIGHT OF ARTHUR'S TABLE."



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"BUT THE RUFFIAN FIGHTS VICIOUSLY, DEVOID OF ALL GOOD MANNERS! IT WAS ALL I COULD DO TO KEEP MYSELF FROM AN UNSEEMLY HUMILIATION AT THE HANDS OF THIS ANIMAL!"

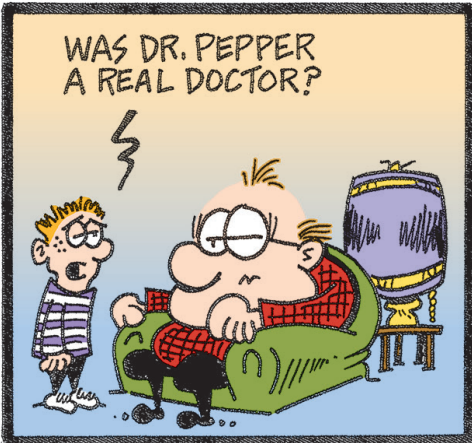
NEXT:
Recognition



The Spats

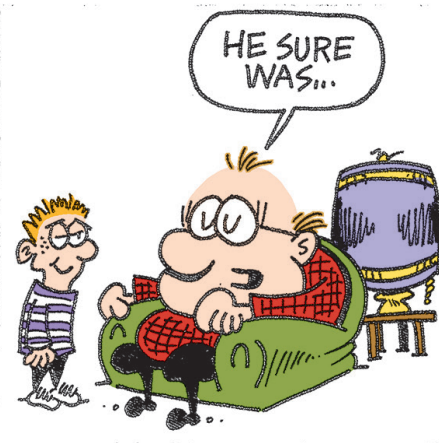
by Jeff Pickering

WAS DR. PEPPER A REAL DOCTOR?

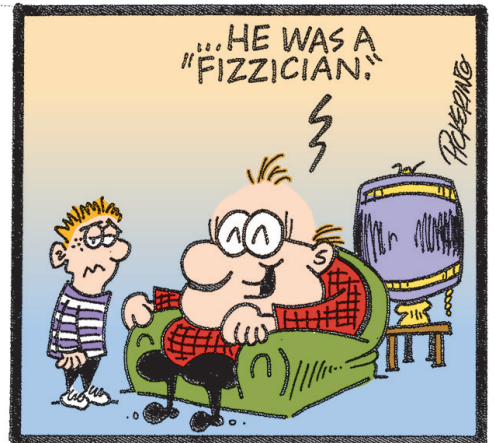


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HE SURE WAS...



"... HE WAS A 'FIZZICIAN'."



SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Finding Assisted Living

Is 2023 the year when you have to consider moving into assisted living? Or perhaps helping an elderly relative make the move? In either case, your first steps should be gathering as much information as possible.

What type of care is needed? Daily help with everything from bathing to eating to remembering to take medications? Or is a more specialized, secure location needed for memory care? Or something in between?

What facilities are in your area? It will be important that friends and family can visit easily, as well as having access to the same medical care after the move. Going out for lunch locally can go a long way toward keeping relationships intact.

Once you've selected a few facilities to explore, start digging for information. Call the state and ask about the licenses, accreditation and safety track records. Call your local fire and police departments about potential safety issues.

Do you know anyone who works in one of the facilities you're considering, or who knows someone who lives there? Their input could be crucial when it comes to learning about any rules the facility might have, or any staff shortages that could lead to problems with client care or any ongoing complaints about the food.

Then ask for a tour at every facility on your list. Stay as long as you can and ask a lot of questions. Get a copy of the potential contract to give your attorney to review (ideally one specializing in elder law).

Money: You'll need to know what everything costs, and by everything, that means all the fees that might not be included in the overall amount. Are clients charged for field trips or special entertainment, for example? How about laundry costs?

As part of your information-gathering, go online and search for "how to select an assisted living facility" or something similar. Look for checklists of questions to ask. You'll need all the information you can find.

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1. On Nov. 8, 1972, what cable TV channel launched with a broadcast of the New York Rangers vs. Vancouver Canucks game from Madison Square Garden?

2. What Miami-based sports agent penned the 2008 book "Next Question: An NFL Super Agent's Proven Game Plan for Business Success?"

3. Narendra Modi Stadium, Eden Gardens and Greenfield International Stadium are cricket grounds located in what country?

4. What two-time NASCAR Grand National Series champion (1962-63) was killed when his head struck a retaining wall during a race at California's Riverside International Raceway in 1964?

5. What indoor football league played its inaugural season in 2021 with teams Beasts, Glacier Boyz, Wild Aces and Zappers?

6. DaVarryl Williamson, a pro heavyweight boxer from 2000-2014, had a powerful right-handed punch that earned him what nickname?

7. Name the soccer star who scored both goals in the U.S. Women's National Team's 2-1 win over Norway in the 1991 FIFA Women's World Cup final?



by Ryan A. Berenz

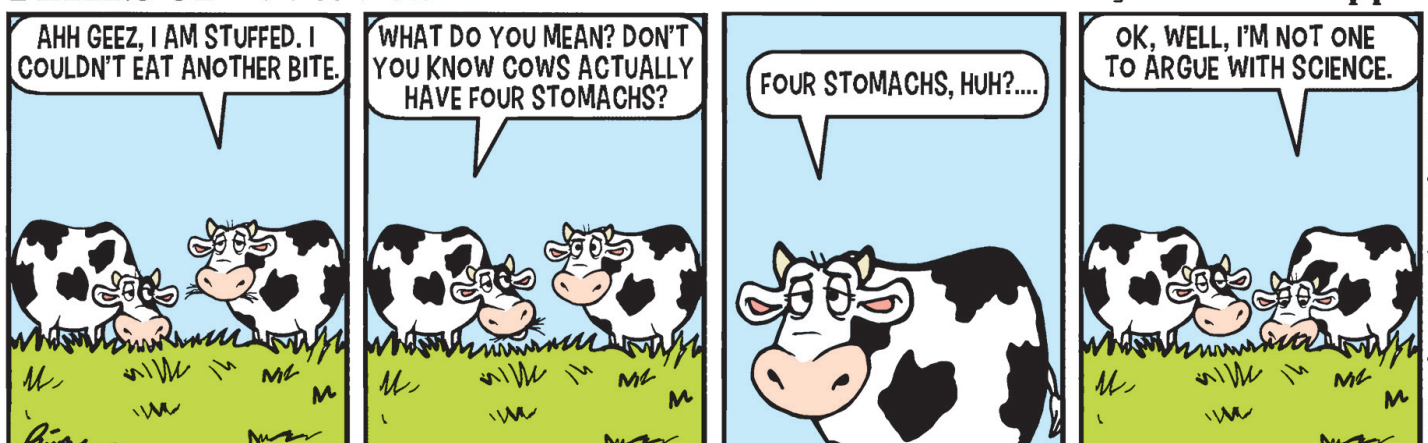
Answers

1. HBO.
2. Drew Rosenhaus.
3. India.
4. Joe Weatherly.
5. Fan Controlled Football.
6. "Touch of Sleep."
7. Michelle Akers.

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





Potty Tales: Behold the Magic of Shop Towels

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: When I turned 78 years ago, my wringer washer broke. I hated toting laundry to the laundromat, and I hated lugging home kitty litter to my many cats. So I came up with a solution: I use washable cotton bed pads and cotton shop towels, laid out over plant trays. They can quickly be washed in a big tub with hot water, soap and bleach. My cats took to them right away -- the big cats don't miss the cotton pads, and my other cats will use the shop towels and then wrap them over their poop. The savings are tremendous for me, and there is no litter to buy and lug home. The shop towels last for years.

It may sound weird to some people, but if you read the reviews under most cotton bed pads, many are purchased by people for their pets. -- Eva D., via email

DEAR EVA: What a unique solution. It seems like a lot of extra work compared to just lugging litter home, but then there's the constant scooping and disposal that litter entails. Thank you for the tip!

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: Disposable potty pads can be expensive, and their plastic lining seems like a disaster for the environment. But my 15-year-old Chihuahua, Shemp, has incontinence problems and can't make it outside when he needs to pee. Instead of going broke buying the pads, I line a plastic tray with newspaper and a cotton shop towel. I change this padding each time Shemp uses it, around two to three times per day. The newspaper is disposable, and I wash the shop towels in the laundry sink with soap and hot water. -- Jane K., Lexington, Kentucky

DEAR JANE: Thank you for sharing this handy tip! Readers, note how frequently a potty pad must be changed to keep the area clean and odor-free and, most importantly, to keep your pet healthy.

Send your tips, comments or questions to ask@pawscorner.com.

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Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

- * Almost every New York City alley scene in the movies is shot at the same location.
- * Nigel Richards won a French Scrabble World Championship without actually knowing how to speak the language. He just memorized words from a French dictionary.
- * We hate to disillusion you, but pumpkin spice and pumpkin pie spice contain no pumpkin whatsoever.
- * There is an asteroid named after Kurt Vonnegut.
- * The world's oldest known rose bush, which grows up the side of Hildesheim Cathedral in Germany, was planted more than 1,000 years ago and even survived a World War II bombing.
- * In some cities, road crews use pickle juice or beet juice to combat winter's icy streets.
- * Got a mouse problem at your house? Your grocery store might provide a quick and easy answer in the form of bananas. Male mice are scared of their scent -- especially virgin male mice.
- * American radio broadcaster Art Bell stayed on air for a world-record-setting 116 hours and 15 minutes as part of a fundraiser to bring 130 Vietnamese orphans to the U.S. for adoption.

Thought for the Day: "If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair." -- Shirley Chisholm

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The Garden Bug

Low-cost holiday decorating

- Snippets of evergreen branches, pine cones and twigs can fill a vase, be tucked into folded napkins or gathered into a wreath to hang at your front door.
- A winter scarf can be a table runner.
- Make your own garlands by stringing popcorn, large beads or cinnamon sticks.
- Put cranberries in a mason jar, fill it with water and place a tea light on top.
- Gather sticks from outdoors, make sure they are dry, then hot-glue to a jar or metal can. - Brenda Weaver Source: mommysavers.com



by Freddy Groves

Dirty Water Flows Downhill

It's not enough that I spent part of my childhood on a base that ended up as a Superfund site. This week I discovered that my current town, where I've lived for many years, has water contaminated by chemicals from the nearby now-defunct base.

The base, a mere few miles from my home, was declared a Superfund site in the 1980s due to the firefighting foams that contained two different perfluorinated alkylated substances (PFAS), specifically perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane

sulfonic acid (PFOS), both deadly "forever chemicals." Three years later responsibilities were established for who would deal with the mess, and the base was eventually closed due to BRAC (base realignment and closure).

The base was repeatedly cleaned and tested over the years, with acres paved over to contain the worst of the contaminated ground that they couldn't dig up. Changes were made in how the water was treated as time went on, but chemicals were still found in the water. In some areas, a landfill cap was put in place; in others, there was removal of more soil; and in some areas there was cleanup and ongoing monitoring. Eventually those in authority considered the whole matter done and dusted.

Now we learn that the original PFAS chemicals at the base may be contaminating the aquifer -- where we get our drinking water. Hidden away under their dirt cap, those chemicals appear to have migrated downhill. Tests done last year show that the level of chemicals was double what the state recommends, and one well was taken offline. New monitors were installed. Now, however, a recent test showed extremely high readings, higher than ever, with suspicion that closing that first well was driving the chemicals to the remaining wells where we get our drinking water.

The lesson here is this: If you live near a base that was deemed a Superfund site, and if remediation was done and the site declared to be clean, that does not mean problems won't come back in the future.

Water does, after all, flow downhill.

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Wishing Well®

5	8	7	4	8	6	3	5	8	5	2	8	2
F	E	S	T	X	D	N	U	E	N	B	R	U
6	8	6	8	7	6	2	6	2	8	7	8	5
O	C	A	I	T	F	S	R	I	S	A	E	E
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O	P	X	A	M	Y	A	I	P	T	E	I	I
8	6	8	4	8	3	6	2	7	3	6	8	6
E	E	N	K	C	E	N	N	N	N	D	E	A
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T	T	E	F	O	A	A	L	E	B	V	S	L
7	5	4	2	5	3	7	5	6	4	3	7	5
U	R	A	S	I	O	C	E	O	C	C	H	N
4	3	6	5	3	5	2	4	2	4	2	4	2
T	K	R	C	S	E	T	I	R	O	I	N	P

HERE IS A PLEASANT LITTLE GAME that will give you a message every day. It's a numerical puzzle designed to spell out your fortune. Count the letters in your first name. If the number of letters is 6 or more, subtract 4. If the number is less than 6, add 3. The result is your key number. Start at the upper left-hand corner and check one of your key numbers, left to right. Then read the message the letters under the checked figures give you.

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1. TELEVISION: What is the primary setting of the Netflix series "Bridgerton"?
2. GEOGRAPHY: Where is the Republic of Maldives located?
3. LITERATURE: What is the subject of Walt Whitman's poem "O Captain! My Captain!"?
4. LANGUAGE: What is the third letter of the Greek alphabet?
5. HISTORY: When was the last time the Liberty Bell rang in Philadelphia?
6. MOVIES: What was Henry Fonda's jury number in "12 Angry Men"?
7. MATH: What is a heptahedron?
8. BUSINESS: In what year did McDonald's introduce the Big Mac to all of its customers?
9. U.S. PRESIDENTS: Which president tried to ban Christmas trees from the White House?
10. ANIMAL KINGDOM: What do bees collect from flowers and use to make honey?

Answers

1. London, England.
2. Indian Ocean.
3. The death of President Abraham Lincoln.
4. Gamma.
5. 1846.
6. Juror No. 8.
7. A polyhedron with seven faces.
8. 1968.
9. Theodore Roosevelt.
10. Nectar.

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South Dakota Governor

Kristi Noem



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

Curtailing China

China's Communist government hates America. That may seem overly harsh or simple – but it's a fact. They want to be the strongest nation on earth, and they see America standing in their way. Unfortunately, we have a President in Washington who is not taking this threat seriously. If he won't protect the American people from this very real and growing threat, then states need to step up and do what we can.

President Joe Biden is not standing up to the Chinese Communist Party. He isn't stopping them from using TikTok to gather data on our citizens. He has not stopped them from purchasing agricultural land and buying up our food supply. He has not taken steps to stop taxpayer dollars from being sent to China.

South Dakota is taking the lead in each of these areas.

Two weeks ago, I banned TikTok for state government employees. Since then, state after state has followed our lead. The United States Senate has also followed our lead and unanimously voted to ban TikTok on U.S. government devices. I encourage the House and President Biden to follow through on this key action.

Our South Dakota Investment Council has also conducted a review of all state investments to see where our state's finances may be tied to Communist China. They have already pulled state investments out of a few Chinese companies, and we all agree that Communist China should not benefit from South Dakota dollars.

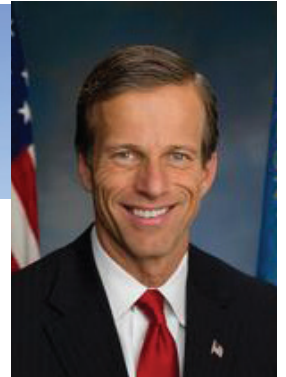
Most recently, I announced my plan to block purchases of agricultural land by nations that hate us, and I will work with legislators to make that happen. We will create a new board, called the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States – South Dakota, which will make recommendations to me regarding foreign interests trying to purchase ag land in South Dakota. If they are tied to China or another nation that hates us, I will reject the purchase.

A recent report showed that 47 million acres of ag land – or nearly 2% of all ag land in the country – is held by foreign investors. In states like Florida and Texas, it's more than 2.4%. South Dakota has a much smaller share, and I'm proud of that, but there is room for our laws to improve. We will take action to make it happen.

South Dakota will continue to lead by example. We will stand up to protect our people from the emerging threat of Communist China. And I hope that other states across the nation continue to follow our lead.

This column was initially printed as an op-ed on FoxNews.com.

John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



To Expand Broadband, Accountability is Key

Expanding broadband to more rural areas has long been a priority of mine. As we are increasingly reliant on an internet connection to run a business, provide health care, or do homework, it is more critical than ever that we close the digital divide.

In the last two years, Congress has allocated nearly \$80 billion for broadband-related services. The good news is that, in addition to sustained investment from telecommunications providers, this funding should help expand broadband access to areas where connectivity challenges remain unresolved. The bad news is that this funding is split among 133 programs at 15 different federal agencies, with the lion's share going to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), which has previously fumbled attempts to expand broadband access.

In 2009, a government stimulus bill allocated \$4.7 billion to NTIA to expand broadband in rural and unserved areas, a fraction of the funding it has available to it today. Even then the agency struggled with implementation as a number of agency-approved projects that faced serious issues, and 14 projects were temporarily or permanently halted. Other projects resulted in significant overbuilding, meaning there was taxpayer-funded construction of additional broadband infrastructure in areas that already had access to reliable internet.

Every federal dollar that has been spent should go toward its stated purpose: expanding connectivity to truly unserved areas. Without stringent oversight, I'm concerned NTIA and other federal agencies will repeat past mistakes with this recent influx of broadband funding, which is why I recently launched a nationwide oversight initiative to review federal broadband programs. As part of this effort, I'll gather input from a diverse group of stakeholders and, if change is needed, we will get to work to make sure these programs are effective and efficient.

In addition to improving federal programs, I believe we need to recognize that the federal government will not solve the digital divide on its own. The United States' light-touch regulatory approach to broadband policy has resulted in telecommunications providers in South Dakota and the rest of the country making network reliability, affordability, and resiliency a priority. During the pandemic, when demand for reliable internet soared, U.S. broadband providers were able to keep Americans connected, which was not the case in other countries.

We also need to continue making improvements to permitting for broadband infrastructure. My MOBILE NOW Act, which became law in 2018, helped move the federal government in the right direction, but there continue to be unnecessary delays and costs associated with permitting that get in the way of expanding internet access. A key part of my oversight effort is holding federal agencies accountable for implementing these permitting improvements so that construction can get underway and move forward without unnecessary delay.

For too long, we have talked about closing the digital divide, and it's time to actually get it done. The best way to achieve this is by ensuring the funding and programs that Congress has already put in place actually go toward expanding internet access to areas that currently lack it. Anything short of a robust accountability effort risks leaving taxpayer dollars wasted and Americans still disconnected.

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CONGRESSMAN

DUSTY JOHNSON

Representing **SOUTH DAKOTA** at large



Snowed In

A big snowstorm came across the state this week, canceling school and closing offices for many people. While remote working and learning has made snow days a thing of the past, being inside day and night makes it easy to get bored in the evenings. When this much snow comes down, it's time to think up some fun activities to do at home.

I've compiled a list of ideas to get you started:

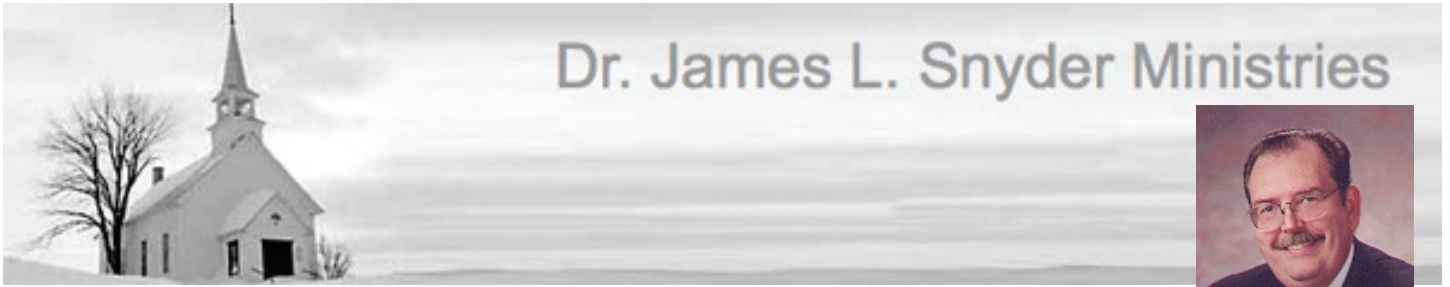
- Watch C-SPAN. They show a completely unfiltered view of government – you can see exactly what is happening on the House and Senate floors and in committee rooms across the Capitol.
- Bake chocolate chip cookies (my favorite)
- Build a snowman and give him glasses and an orange tie
- Watch my favorite Christmas movie – Elf
- Play a board game or a card game – I love playing Exploding Kittens with my family
- Read *The Children's Blizzard* book by David Laskin. I read this several years ago and it changed how I thought about how resilient the South Dakota pioneers needed to be.
- Do a scavenger hunt with your extended family on a video call

As South Dakotans, we are familiar with snowstorms, but remember ice and snow can be dangerous even when you are being cautious. If you have to leave your house, obey road closures, drive slowly and safely, wear your seatbelt, and bundle up when you leave the house.

Take care.

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As Luck Would Have It

Quite frankly, I do not believe in luck in any degree. Once in a while, I will say it, but I don't believe it. Luck has no place in my wallet.

Sometimes things happen that you can't plan for, which turns out to be rather good. Luck has nothing to do with it.

This past week my granddaughter went to the hospital on a Tuesday morning to have her first baby.

The day was busy for me. On the other side of town, I visited somebody in the hospital. I stopped at my bank to do a little bit of business. I also had to pick up some office-supplies.

I stopped, don't let The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage know, and got a cup of coffee and a delicious Apple Fritter. So while munching on this forbidden fruit, I looked at my watch and saw that it was a little after 3 o'clock.

I thought I might have time to stop at the hospital and check on my granddaughter to see how she was doing.

I didn't have to think very long along this line, and as I pulled out of my Apple Fritter palace, I decided to go to the hospital on the other side of town.

The traffic was terrible at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and I almost decided to go home. But, "as luck would have it," I decided to continue to the hospital.

Arriving at the hospital, the parking lot was so full that it took me some time to find a parking space. Finally, I found a place and parked my vehicle and headed for the hospital.

I would never say this out loud, but sometimes these hospitals are almost like psych wards. At the front desk I introduced myself and asked where my granddaughter was. They told me the floor and room number.

I went to the elevator and saw a sign that said, "Do not enter if flashing." I'm not quite sure, but I can't remember the last time I did any flashing. So very cautiously, I got into the elevator. Thankfully, I was alone.

But how many 4th floors can a hospital have? I was to go to the fourth floor, and they gave me the room number. So I went there, and when I walked in, I almost dropped over. In the bed was a man who looked like he was 125 years old and had every physical problem in the book. So I gasped and then went back to the nurse's desk in panic.

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I found out this hospital has two 4th floors, and, "as luck would have it," I was on the wrong 4th floor.

I had to go down the hallway, turn to my right, then turn to my left and I will find a door that would lead me to where I wanted to go.

I finally got up to the nurse's desk and asked where my granddaughter would be. Right behind me was a hallway, and her room was the seventh one on the left.

I knocked on the door in full preparation that I had the wrong room. I was invited in, and "as luck would have it," I was at the right place, and there was my granddaughter.

The new father-to-be and his mother were there beside her. I joined them, and we had a very pleasant conversation. I thought I would be there for 10, maybe 15 minutes, and then I would leave and go home. It was around 4 o'clock, so I planned to go home for supper.

As the conversation developed, she was ready to have the baby anytime. "As luck would have it," I would be there and see our great-granddaughter before my wife would be there. She planned to be there on Wednesday when the baby was due.

The nurse came in, and we went out to the waiting room to wait for the good news.

I now know why they call it the "waiting room." All you can do in that room is wait, wait, wait. My waiting was weighing heavy upon my patience.

Over two hours later, we received notification that she had the baby and we could go in.

As we walked down the hall to the room, we were stopped, and it was the wrong baby. Therefore, we had to go back to the "waiting room" and wait some more.

Finally, we got another call, and it was the right one this time, and we went in and saw the new baby, my great-granddaughter. Of all the babies I've seen, this has to be one of the most beautiful.

We all had the privilege of holding this baby, and I was elated when it was my turn. I now could go home and rub this in The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage's face. I got to hold our great-granddaughter before she did. I certainly will remember this for the rest of my life.

Wallowing in my delight about my new Great-granddaughter I could not help but think of what Solomon said in Proverbs 17:6, "Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers."

Whenever I feel sorry for myself because I'm getting old, and getting old does have a negative side, there is the positive side. If I was not as old as I am, I would never have seen my Great-granddaughter.

EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: Do houseplants really improve indoor air quality? Which ones are the most effective as such?
-- Kay Hamm, Los Angeles, CA

In recent years, more and more people have developed an interest in keeping houseplants. There are many potential reasons why there has been such a resurgence in indoor gardening. Many people took up tending to houseplants during the pandemic as a quarantine hobby. As the years have progressed, people's interest in keeping houseplants has continued to thrive and it's easy to understand why. They liven up any living space, and provide people with something to care for—both which provide many mental health benefits. However, there has been speculation as to whether or not keeping houseplants provides environmental and health benefits through purifying the air in our homes.

The short answer is that houseplants do have the potential to purify the air in our homes. When plants perform photosynthesis, they take carbon dioxide out of the air and emit oxygen as a byproduct. Since plants output oxygen into the surroundings, by scientific definition they have the potential to increase the oxygen concentration in your living space. However, the degree to which they can detoxify the air and measurably make a difference to the air quality in a person's living space is another matter.

"There is currently no evidence...that a reasonable number of houseplants remove significant quantities of pollutants in homes and offices," reports the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Indeed, in order to make a considerable difference in the air quality of your home, you'd have to keep a large number of houseplants under specific climatic conditions, requiring a large amount of effort, time and money that isn't realistic for most of us. Having houseplants can even worsen indoor air quality if you are overwatering them, as overly damp soil may promote the growth of microorganisms which can affect allergic individuals.

However, if you are interested in keeping houseplants that have the potential to clean the air in your home, there are a variety to choose from. There are two major air pollutants found in homes: particulates—dust, mold, etc.—and volatile organic compounds (VOC)—gases that are released from materials such as fabric, paint and cleaning products. Spider plants, philodendrons, ZZ plants, dumb canes, pygmy date palms and ivies are among the plants suited to indoor living that are especially good at filtering out particulates. Other plants especially good at removing volatile organic compounds (VOCs) out of your indoor air include pathos, bamboo, Areca palms, rubber plants and peace lilies. You can usually find a wide assortment of indoor plants — and get more advice — at a local nursery or garden center.

Of course, there are also many other ways to improve the air quality of your home. Keeping a clean home reduces the amount of particulate matter in the air. Investing in air purifiers and home air filters can help reduce both the concentration of VOCs and particulate matter that could be impairing your indoor air quality. Simple tasks like opening your windows and airing out your home in the warmer months increases air circulation and benefits your home's indoor environment. .



Some plants are better than others when it comes to filtering pollutants out of your indoor air, so choose carefully.

Credit: David B. Gleason, FlickrCC..

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South Dakota COVID-19 Report

New Cases*

923
-166

Total Cases*

270,809

Currently Hospitalized

64
+2

New Hospitalizations

35

Total Hospitalized

12,161

[Click to Visit](#)

SD COVID-19 Vaccination
Coverage

New Deaths

9

Total Deaths

3,115

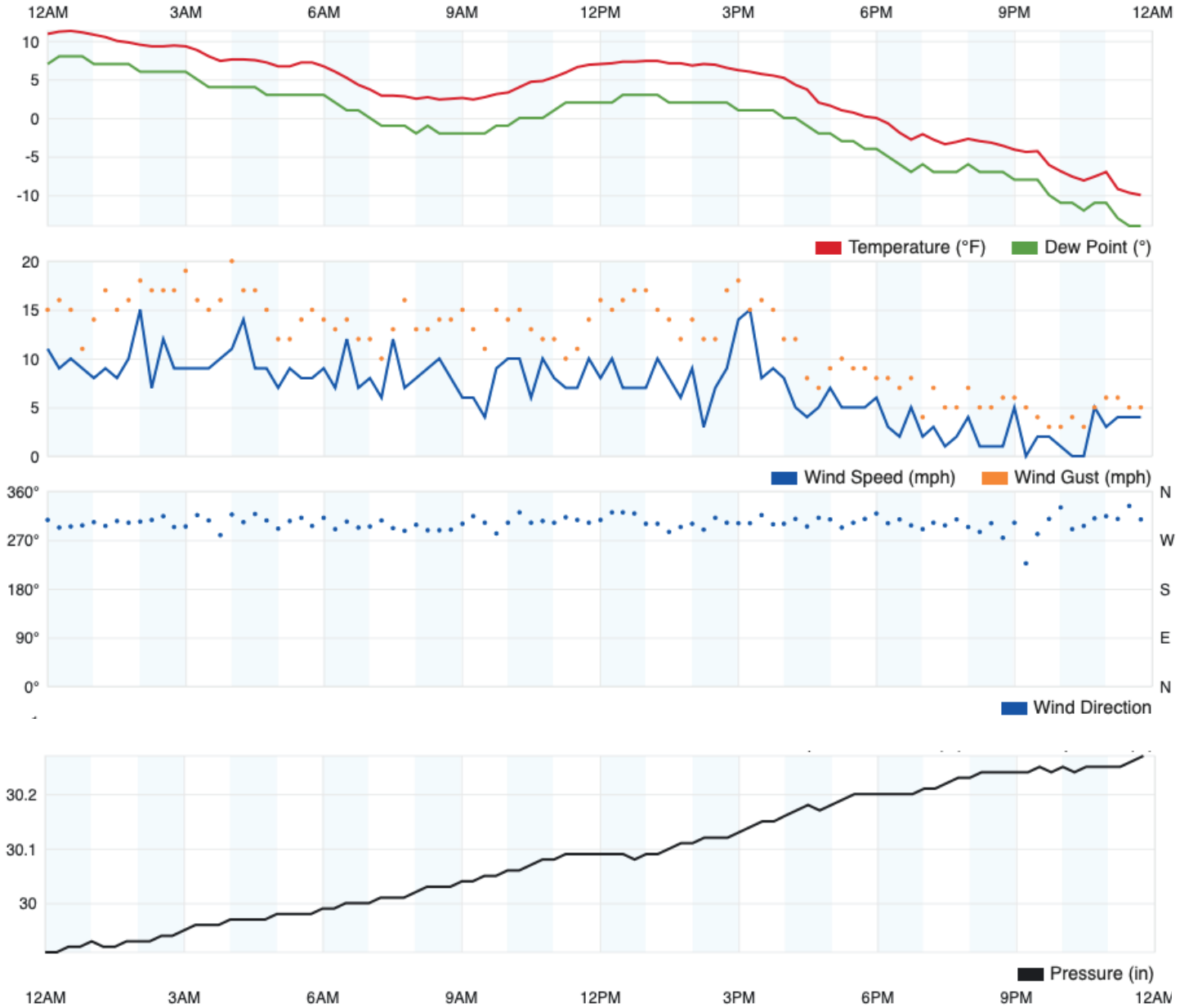
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COVID-19 Community
Levels

Groton Daily Independent








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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

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Today	Tonight	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday
						
Chance Flurries	Chance Flurries	Slight Chance Snow	Partly Cloudy	Cold	Mostly Cloudy then Slight Chance Snow	Chance Snow
High: 2 °F	Low: -7 °F	High: 5 °F	Low: -14 °F	High: -4 °F	Low: -20 °F	High: -7 °F



Extreme Cold & Dangerous Wind Chills

December 18, 2022
3:57 AM

Key Messages

- Prolonged Arctic Outbreak ongoing.
- Clipper responsible for another Arctic blast Wednesday/Thursday.
- Thursday/Friday will see extremely dangerous wind chills. If you venture outside with exposed skin, it will be subject to **frostbite in a matter of minutes**.

NEW Important Updates

- A Wind Chill Watch covers central South Dakota Tuesday morning through Friday, and Northeast South Dakota and Traverse/Big Stone counties in Minnesota Wednesday morning through Friday .

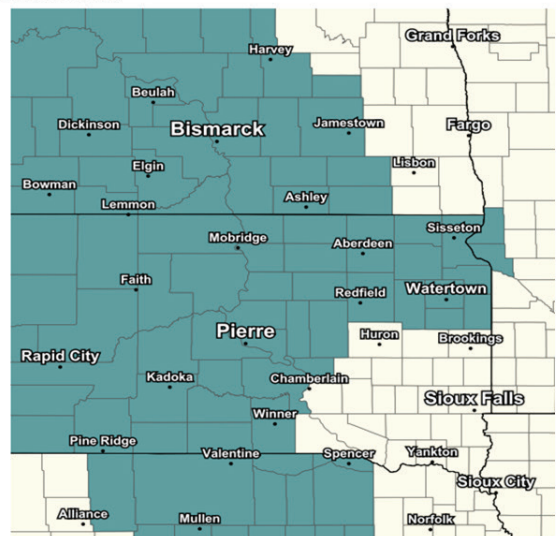
Next Scheduled Briefing

- Sunday Afternoon



Excessive Cold

■ Wind Chill Watch



Graphic Created
December 18th, 2022
3:36 AM CST

Valid as of 3 AM Dec 16, 2022



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

We continue to see arctic air linger across the area, with a reinforcing shot of even colder air behind a clipper system mid week, all part of a prolonged period of extreme cold and dangerous wind chills.

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Temperatures (Highs & Lows)

December 18, 2022
3:57 AM

Maximum Temperature Forecast									Minimum Temperature Forecast								
	12/18	12/19	12/20	12/21	12/22	12/23	12/24	12/25		12/18	12/19	12/20	12/21	12/22	12/23	12/24	12/25
	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Aberdeen	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Aberdeen	2	6	-4	-6	-8	-9	-2	9	Aberdeen	-12	-6	-13	-13	-14	-18	-15	-8
Britton	1	5	-5	-8	-10	-9	-4	7	Britton	-13	-7	-15	-15	-15	-17	-15	-9
Eagle Butte	2	-1	-4	-8	-11	-9	4	24	Eagle Butte	-6	-7	-12	-13	-17	-23	-13	0
Eureka	4	5	-6	-9	-10	-8	-2	15	Eureka	-12	-7	-15	-17	-18	-24	-16	-7
Gettysburg	3	4	-4	-7	-11	-11	0	16	Gettysburg	-6	-7	-13	-15	-18	-23	-18	-9
Kennebec	4	7	1	0	-7	-4	4	22	Kennebec	-6	-6	-10	-10	-16	-18	-11	-2
McIntosh	3	1	-7	-11	-13	-8	1	20	McIntosh	-7	-9	-16	-17	-19	-24	-16	-6
Milbank	4	7	-1	-6	-9	-8	-2	7	Milbank	-4	-4	-10	-11	-13	-13	-12	-7
Miller	4	6	-2	-4	-9	-8	-1	19	Miller	-10	-6	-12	-12	-16	-18	-13	-7
Mobridge	7	7	-1	-4	-7	-3	5	23	Mobridge	-5	-6	-11	-12	-14	-17	-10	0
Murdo	4	2	0	-2	-9	-6	3	25	Murdo	-4	-7	-10	-11	-16	-19	-13	0
Pierre	8	9	2	-1	-6	-2	6	23	Pierre	-3	-2	-8	-9	-14	-19	-13	0
Redfield	3	6	-3	-4	-9	-8	-2	13	Redfield	-11	-6	-12	-13	-16	-18	-16	-9
Sisseton	4	8	-2	-6	-8	-8	-1	8	Sisseton	-5	-5	-10	-11	-12	-13	-11	-6
Watertown	6	8	-3	-6	-11	-10	-4	9	Watertown	-9	-5	-12	-12	-16	-17	-15	-10
Webster	2	5	-6	-8	-12	-11	-5	6	Webster	-11	-5	-14	-13	-15	-17	-14	-8
Wheaton	3	8	-3	-6	-10	-9	-4	4	Wheaton	-6	-6	-12	-14	-12	-14	-14	-9



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Wind Chill Watch

URGENT - WINTER WEATHER MESSAGE
National Weather Service Aberdeen SD
447 AM CST Sun Dec 18 2022

Traverse-Big Stone-Brown-Marshall-Roberts-Day-Spink-Clark-Codington-Grant-Hamlin-Deuel-
Including the cities of Wheaton, Ortonville, Aberdeen, Britton, Sisseton, Webster, Redfield, Clark, Water-
town, Milbank, Hayti, and Clear Lake

...WIND CHILL WATCH REMAINS IN EFFECT FROM LATE TUESDAY NIGHT THROUGH FRIDAY AFTER-
NOON...

- * WHAT...Dangerously cold wind chills possible. Wind chills as low as 45 below zero.
- * WHERE...Portions of west central Minnesota and northeast South Dakota.
- * WHEN...From late Tuesday night through Friday afternoon.
- * IMPACTS...The dangerously cold wind chills could cause frostbite on exposed skin in as little as 10 minutes.
- * ADDITIONAL DETAILS...There could also be some snow and wind in the forecast from late Tuesday night through early Thursday morning.

PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...
Monitor the latest forecasts for updates on this situation.

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Upcoming Wind Chills

December 18, 2022
3:57 AM

Minimum Wind Chill Forecast

	12/19 Mon				12/20 Tue				12/21 Wed				12/22 Thu				12/23 Fri				12/24 Sat			
	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm
Aberdeen	-20	-20	-11	-23	-26	-29	-24	-30	-30	-31	-28	-36	-39	-39	-35	-38	-40	-42	-35	-39	-36	-36	-24	-28
Britton	-21	-21	-13	-21	-27	-29	-26	-32	-32	-32	-30	-35	-39	-39	-37	-40	-40	-40	-36	-40	-37	-35	-30	-30
Eagle Butte	-22	-22	-22	-28	-32	-35	-27	-33	-34	-34	-34	-40	-46	-46	-42	-45	-46	-47	-36	-33	-32	-31	-23	-22
Eureka	-21	-23	-14	-27	-33	-36	-32	-37	-37	-37	-34	-43	-44	-45	-41	-45	-48	-48	-39	-40	-39	-39	-30	-31
Gettysburg	-22	-22	-16	-28	-31	-34	-28	-33	-35	-35	-34	-42	-44	-45	-43	-46	-48	-47	-39	-39	-39	-39	-26	-28
Kennebec	-20	-19	-13	-25	-28	-31	-21	-28	-28	-27	-26	-35	-42	-44	-39	-43	-45	-45	-34	-33	-33	-33	-24	-24
McIntosh	-22	-21	-19	-30	-34	-36	-32	-38	-39	-38	-37	-43	-47	-49	-45	-46	-48	-48	-39	-36	-36	-32	-26	-24
Milbank	-15	-16	-7	-17	-22	-24	-22	-26	-28	-28	-26	-32	-35	-36	-36	-38	-39	-38	-35	-37	-35	-34	-26	-28
Miller	-17	-20	-12	-25	-27	-30	-23	-29	-29	-30	-25	-36	-40	-41	-38	-42	-45	-45	-36	-35	-35	-35	-26	-28
Mobridge	-17	-18	-9	-24	-26	-27	-23	-29	-29	-30	-29	-37	-40	-40	-36	-39	-40	-40	-30	-30	-29	-29	-19	-18
Murdo	-23	-24	-19	-28	-31	-31	-24	-27	-29	-28	-28	-37	-45	-45	-42	-43	-45	-45	-33	-33	-33	-31	-21	-21
Pierre	-11	-12	-9	-18	-23	-24	-18	-21	-21	-26	-25	-33	-39	-41	-38	-38	-41	-40	-31	-29	-29	-29	-20	-18
Redfield	-19	-19	-11	-23	-26	-29	-23	-27	-30	-31	-25	-35	-39	-39	-37	-41	-42	-42	-35	-37	-37	-36	-27	-27
Sisseton	-18	-19	-10	-19	-24	-27	-25	-29	-30	-30	-27	-33	-37	-37	-37	-37	-39	-39	-35	-38	-36	-36	-26	-29
Watertown	-16	-19	-6	-18	-24	-27	-22	-26	-27	-29	-26	-33	-39	-40	-37	-41	-43	-43	-37	-39	-38	-37	-28	-30
Webster	-19	-20	-9	-21	-27	-30	-26	-30	-30	-31	-30	-34	-40	-40	-39	-41	-41	-42	-39	-39	-37	-37	-30	-30
Wheaton	-19	-19	-8	-17	-24	-28	-26	-30	-32	-34	-27	-31	-36	-37	-37	-37	-38	-39	-35	-36	-37	-37	-29	-29



National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD



December 18, 2022
3:57 AM

Simple Safety Steps During Times of Extreme Cold

You



- Dress in Layers
- Cover Exposed Skin
- Limit Outdoor Time
- Check on Family

Your Vehicle



- Keep Gas Tank ½ Full
- Add a Few Blankets
- Maintain Tire Pressure
- Get a Safety Kit Packed
- Notify Family if Traveling
- Caution If Car Left Running

Your Pets



- Limit Outdoor Time
- Bring Outdoor Pets Inside
- Cover/Check Paws
- Check Water & Food
- Provide Shelter

Your Home



- Slow Drip Faucets
- Monitor Furnace
- Heater Caution



National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

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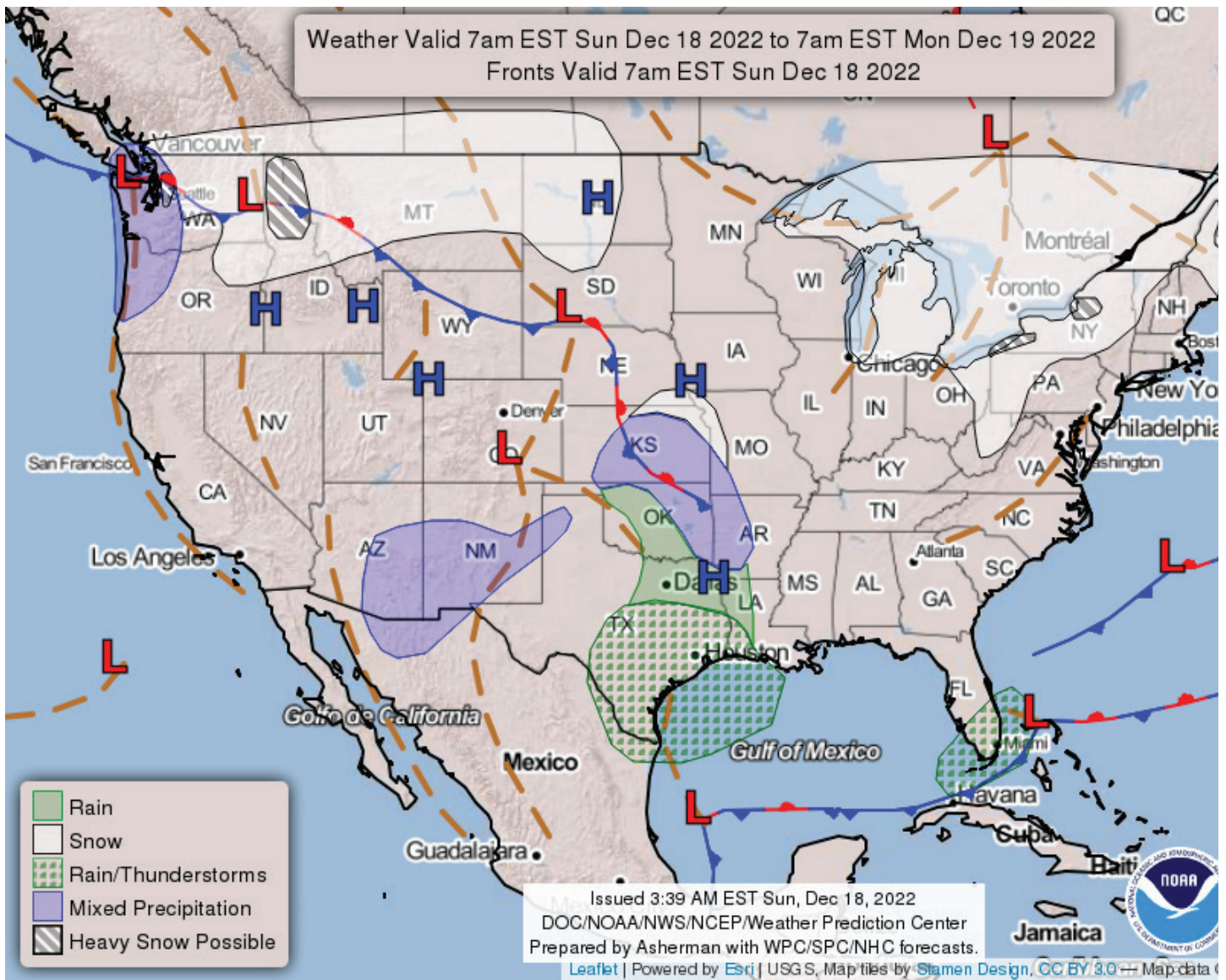
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 11 °F at 12:26 AM
Low Temp: -10 °F at 11:48 PM
Wind: 20 mph at 3:01 AM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 8 hours, 46 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 58 in 1979
Record Low: -37 in 2016
Average High: 28°F
Average Low: 7°F
Average Precip in Dec.: 0.34
Precip to date in Dec.: 1.85
Average Precip to date: 21.55
Precip Year to Date: 19.35
Sunset Tonight: 4:52:23 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:06:25 AM



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Today in Weather History

December 18, 1985: Bitter cold impacted most places in South Dakota as low temperatures dropped 20 degrees below zero or lower. The coldest temperature was 30 below zero at Huron in Beadle County and Canton in Lincoln County. Aberdeen dropped to 22 below zero, Highmore and Mobridge fell to 23 below zero; Britton fell to 24 below zero, and Summit bottomed out at 25 below.

December 18, 1996: A powerful Alberta Clipper and a slow-moving deep Arctic high-pressure system brought widespread, prolonged blizzard conditions to the entire region from the 16th to the 19th. The clipper dropped from 1 to 5 inches of snowfall on top of the already extensive snow cover of 1 to almost 4 feet. Across central and north-central South Dakota, northerly winds increased to 25 to 40 mph with gusts to 55 mph late in the morning of the 16th. Temperatures also fell, and widespread blizzard conditions and dangerous wind chills of 40 to 70 below zero developed, prevailing through noon on the 18th. Across northeast South Dakota, conditions changed through late on the day of the 16th, with widespread blowing snow, falling temperatures, and dangerous wind chills. Blizzard conditions developed on the morning of the 17th and continued into the evening of the 18th. Conditions changed throughout the afternoon of the 16th in west-central Minnesota, with a full-fledged blizzard by the morning of the 17th.

North winds of 30 to 40 mph gusting to 50 mph brought visibilities near zero and caused heavy drifting, making travel difficult. Many people had to be rescued from their vehicles after getting stuck in massive snowdrifts or going into ditches because of low visibilities. Some people had to wait to be rescued for many hours, for some over a day. Due to the massive amount of blowing snow, widespread heavy drifting occurred across the entire area, blocking roads, making travel difficult, and leaving some people stranded to wait out the storm. Some snowdrifts from the storm were as high as 15 feet, with a few houses almost buried. A Burlington Northern locomotive became stuck in a 12-foot drift near Hazel and had to be dug out. Due to the weight of the snow, the roof of a hangar at the Gettysburg Airport collapsed on an airplane.

All schools were let out early on the 16th, with some schools not reopening until the 20th. Several school buses went into the ditch or got stuck in drifts and had to be pulled out. There were several accidents, most with minor injuries; however, one accident in Dewey County resulted in serious injury. Most of the roads, state highways and Interstate 90 were closed for a day or two until road crews could get to them. Interstate 29 also received heavy drifting, with parts of it closed for a while during the storm. Most snow plows had to be called back because they could not see the roads or the roads would be drifted over shortly after they were plowed. Some county snow removal budgets were already depleted or were close to being consumed. Emergency personnel and road crews were working extended hours to keep up with the storm. Rescue vehicles had a difficult time responding to emergencies. In one case, a lady from Mobridge had to be brought to Aberdeen. The 100-mile trip took six hours. Also, a rural Westport man died because the rescue units could not get to him in time.

Airports were closed, or flights were canceled or delayed. Mail was delayed for some people up to several days with a massive backup of Christmas packages. Some government offices and many businesses were closed for several days. All sports and other activities were postponed or canceled. Farmers and ranchers had a difficult time getting feed to their livestock. Many cattle were loose and had to be found as they walked on snowdrifts over fences. The storm also killed several animals and a countless number of pheasants with some buried in the snow. Several dairy producers had to dump thousands of pounds of milk because trucks could not get to them in time. Fortunately, there were only spotty power outages throughout the storm. For several hours on the night of the 16th in the extreme cold, 3000 people in Pierre were without power for several hours.

December 18th, 2016 An Arctic airmass over the Northern Plains produced bitterly cold temperatures. In South Dakota, both Aberdeen and Watertown broke their record low by several degrees, with both falling to 37 degrees below zero. The Arctic air combined with 10 to 20 mph winds brought wind chills to 35 to 60 degrees below zero across the region.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

NO ROOM, BUT...

The annual church Christmas program was rapidly approaching, and Mrs. Adams was assigning roles to the children in her Sunday school class. "Albert," she said, "I'd like you to be the innkeeper this year."

"No way, not me, absolutely not!" said Albert. "I'm not going to be the one who turned Mary and Joseph away from a good night's rest."

"Oh, please," she begged. "I really need you to do this. We won't be able to have the play without you," she pleaded. Finally, he agreed.

On the night of the performance, Joseph went to the door and knocked. "Who's there?" he asked.

"My name's Joseph, and Mary and I need a place to sleep," was the reply.

"I'm sorry," he said politely. "We have no rooms available." And then added kindly, "But if you'd like you can rest awhile, and I'll get you some cookies and milk."

There are many, like Albert, who would gladly give our Lord some "cookies and milk" but would never allow Him to come into their hearts and change their lives. It's enjoyable to visit the manger, sing a few carols, read the story of His birth, and then exchange gifts. But to make Him a permanent resident? Not likely!

See Him now: Patiently standing. Gently knocking. Carefully listening. Waiting hopefully. Wanting desperately to save us and give us eternal life.

Prayer: We thank You, Father, for wanting to be our Savior and to fellowship with us. Come, dwell within us and make our hearts Your home. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Revelation 3:20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.



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

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) _ These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Saturday:

Dakota Cash

07-08-24-29-33

(seven, eight, twenty-four, twenty-nine, thirty-three)

Estimated jackpot: \$245,000

Lotto America

07-12-16-40-49, Star Ball: 1, ASB: 5

(seven, twelve, sixteen, forty, forty-nine; Star Ball: one; ASB: five)

Estimated jackpot: \$31,040,000

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: 465,000,000

Powerball

33-56-64-66-68, Powerball: 12, Power Play: 2

(thirty-three, fifty-six, sixty-four, sixty-six, sixty-eight; Powerball: twelve; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$158,000,000

Saturday's Scores

The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL=

Aberdeen Roncalli 49, Oakes, N.D. 47

Corsica/Stickney 50, Avon 31

Dell Rapids St. Mary 58, Colman-Egan 48

Ethan 64, Freeman Academy/Marion 44

Exira/Elk Horn-Kimballton, Iowa 61, Lennox 57

McCook Central/Montrose 73, Bon Homme 46

Scotland 64, Andes Central/Dakota Christian 48

Sioux Falls Christian 64, Sioux Falls O'Gorman 59

St. Thomas More 60, Scottsbluff, Neb. 49

Vermillion 54, Crofton, Neb. 24

Viborg-Hurley 60, Irene-Wakonda 34

Lakota Nation Invitational=

He Sapa Bracket=

Championship=

Omaha Nation, Neb. 73, Crazy Horse 71

Consolation Championship=

Tiospaye Topa 61, Dupree 59

Seventh Place=

Takini 54, Oelrichs 26

Third Place=

Santee, Neb. 75, Wakpala 67

Matokica Bracket=

Championship=

Tiospa Zina Tribal 49, Marty Indian 37

Third Place=

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Crow Creek 65, St. Francis Indian 49
Matosica Bracket=
Consolation Championship=
Little Wound 68, Wall 51
Seventh Place=
McLaughlin 55, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 37
Oceti Sakowin Bracket=
Championship=
Rapid City Christian 79, White River 77
Consolation Championship=
Red Cloud 65, Custer 52
Seventh Place=
Pine Ridge 74, Todd County 44
Third Place=
Lower Brule 81, Lakota Tech 33
POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS=
Brookings vs. Fairmont, Minn., ccd.
Enderlin, N.D. vs. Groton Area, ccd.
Great Plains Lutheran vs. Tri-State, N.D., ppd.
Leola/Frederick vs. Waubay/Summit, ppd. to Feb 14th.
Newcastle, Wyo. vs. Lead-Deadwood, ppd.
Philip vs. Bison, ppd.
Rapid City Central vs. Mitchell, ppd.
Rapid City Stevens vs. Huron, ppd.
Stuart, Neb. vs. Burke, ppd.
Sturgis Brown vs. Aberdeen Central, ppd. to Dec 20th.
Sundance, Wyo. vs. Belle Fourche, ppd.

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL=
Aberdeen Roncalli 61, Britton-Hecla 27
Alcester-Hudson 49, West Sioux, Iowa 46
Avon 53, Corsica/Stickney 39
Baltic 29, Estelline/Hendricks 23
Bon Homme 43, Tripp-Delmont/Armour 30
Chester 59, Dell Rapids 54
DeSmet 47, Dell Rapids St. Mary 37
Ethan 63, Freeman Academy/Marion 41
Garretson 60, Arlington 55
LeMars, Iowa 74, Dakota Valley 51
Madison 53, Elkton-Lake Benton 43
Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 51, Deuel 40
Redfield 49, Aberdeen Christian 18
St. Thomas More 59, Scottsbluff, Neb. 34
Vermillion 62, Worthington, Minn. 37
Lakota Nation Invitational=
He Sapa Bracket=
Championship=
Tiospa Zina Tribal 51, Omaha Nation, Neb. 45
Consolation Championship=
Santee, Neb. 69, Wakpala 43

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Seventh Place=

Crazy Horse 50, Takini 36

Third Place=

Tiospaye Topa 28, Oelrichs 26

Makosica Bracket=

Championship=

Todd County 62, Crow Creek 58

Consolation Championship=

Lower Brule 62, McLaughlin 38

Seventh Place=

Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 41, Marty Indian 38

Third Place=

Pine Ridge 60, St. Francis Indian 47

Oceti Sakowin Bracket=

Championship=

Red Cloud 45, Lakota Tech 38

Consolation Championship=

Custer, Mont. 54, Dupree 48

Seventh Place=

Wall 77, Little Wound 44

Third Place=

Rapid City Christian 70, White River 49

POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS=

Aberdeen Central vs. Sturgis Brown, ppd. to Dec 20th.

Belle Fourche vs. Sundance, Wyo., ppd.

Brookings vs. Fairmont, Minn., ccd.

Groton Area vs. Kenmare/Bowbells Co-op, N.D., ccd.

Hill City vs. Kadoka Area, ppd.

Huron vs. Rapid City Stevens, ppd.

Lead-Deadwood vs. Newcastle, Wyo., ppd.

Leola/Frederick vs. Waubay/Summit, ppd.

Mitchell vs. Rapid City Central, ppd.

Philip vs. Bison, ppd.

Stuart, Neb. vs. Burke, ppd.

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

Gronowski leads South Dakota St past Montana St in FCS semi

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — Mark Gronowski threw for two touchdowns and ran for a third and top-seeded South Dakota State dominated fourth-seeded Montana State 39-18 on a frozen field Saturday in the FCS semifinals.

The Jackrabbits (13-1), who have won 13 straight, head to Texas next month for a Missouri Valley Football Conference showdown with third-seeded North Dakota State (12-2). SDSU beat the defending national champion Bison 23-21 on Oct. 15.

Gronowski led South Dakota State to touchdowns on its first five drives with a balanced offense that had 281 yards rushing and 192 passing.

On the other side, the Jackrabbits' nation-best rushing defense (85.4 yards a game) held the nation's best rushing offense (331.8) to 52 yards.

The game started with the temperature at 10 degrees and the wind chill at minus-7. It was the coldest

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game ever played at South Dakota State.

It was the third straight semifinal for the two teams. SDSU avenged a 31-17 loss last year at MSU.

The teams swapped touchdowns on their opening drives and then the Jackrabbits scored three straight touchdowns, shocking the Bobcats with two long scoring runs for a 28-9 lead at the half.

Gronowski, who had a 36-yard hookup with Tucker Kraft to open the scoring, capped a 12-play, 69-yard drive with a 1-yard plunge on the second drive. That gave him a rushing and passing TD in the same game nine times this season.

The next two touchdowns were a 41-yard burst up the middle by Isaiah Davis and a 38-yard scamper by Amar Johnson on a field that played like a skating rink.

Gronowski finished 10-of-13 passing for 189 yards and Davis ran for 158.

Montana State's top two rushers, quarterbacks Tommy Mellott and Sean Chambers, were non-factors. Chambers (850 yards) scored on the Bobcats' first possession but injured an ankle on the 1-yard plunge and watched the rest of the game with a boot on. He had 12 yards on five carries. Mellott (1,065 yards), who had a 10-yard scoring run in the fourth quarter, had 3 yards on 17 keepers.

The two schools with the longest current playoff appearance streaks — NDSU at 13, SDSU at 11 — now have a rematch in Frisco, Texas, on Sunday, Jan. 8.

South Dakota State lost to Sam Houston in the 2020 spring championship, it's only appearance in the title game. Gronowski suffered an ACL injury in that game and did not play last fall. North Dakota State is 9-0 in the finale, beating Montana State 38-10 to cap last season.

Live updates | Argentina plays France in World Cup final

LUSAIL, Qatar (AP) — The Latest from the World Cup final between Argentina and France:

The World Cup champions will earn \$42 million in prize money for their soccer federation while the losing team in the final will get \$30 million from a FIFA prize fund of \$440 million.

Not all the money goes to players, but they are expected to get a good chunk of it. France players such as Kylian Mbappé are in line to be paid a bonus of 554,000 euros (\$586,000) by their federation for winning the final, French sports daily L'Equipe reported.

Third-place team Croatia earned \$27 million in prize money and Morocco, which ended up in fourth, will be paid \$25 million.

Argentines woke up ready to watch the national team play for its third World Cup title amid a national feeling of unity and joy that is rare for a country that has been engulfed in an economic crisis for years and has one of the worst inflation rates in the world.

Argentina will face France in the final in Qatar and fan Guillermo Ortiz says "the whole city is dressed with the flag."

Argentina last reached the World Cup final in 2014 but lost to Germany. Everyone in the country agrees the sense of anticipation and excitement for this year's game is far higher than it ever was for that match in Brazil.

It's now or never for Lionel Messi.

The Argentina superstar's once-in-a-generation career will be defined — for many — by whether he leads his country to the World Cup title.

Can he finally, at the age of 35, win soccer's biggest prize to secure his place alongside Pelé and Diego Maradona in the pantheon of the game's greatest ever players?

Standing in his way is France, the defending champion, and Kylian Mbappé, the player best positioned to take over from Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo as soccer's marquee name.

That's if he hasn't already.

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Argentina arguably has the World Cup's most fervent fans. They are known for their rhythmical singing, incessant drumming and trance-like ferocity, and the country's history of success at the World Cup is rivaled by few.

Argentina won the World Cup in 1978 and 1986 and lost in the final three times. This fervor will only grow as Lionel Messi leads Argentina against defending champion France in the final in Qatar.

Argentines take pride in the intensity and they are proud to be known for it around the world. They care deeply about soccer and they are among the best in the world at it.

Pope wrote resignation note in case of health impediment

ROME (AP) — Pope Francis has revealed in an interview published Sunday that shortly after being elected pontiff in 2013 he wrote a resignation letter in case medical problems impede him from carrying out his duties.

Speaking to the Spanish newspaper ABC, Francis said he gave the note to Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, who then was the Vatican secretary of state. The pontiff added that he presumes that the prelate currently in that Vatican No. 2 role, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, now has the written instruction.

Francis, who turned 86 on Saturday, had surgery in 2021 to repair a bowel narrowing and has been hobbled by knee pain that for months saw him use a wheelchair. Lately, he has increasingly used a cane instead of the wheelchair to get around in public.

Asked what happens if health issues or an accident suddenly leaves a pope unable to do his job, and whether there should be a rule for such instances, Francis replied, "In practice there is already a rule."

"I have already signed my renunciation," Francis revealed, noting that he did so early in the papacy.

"I signed it and said: 'If I should become impaired for medical reasons or whatever, here is my resignation. Here you have it,'" he said, referring to Cardinal Bertone, who stepped down as secretary of state in October 2013, in the first months of Francis' papacy.

The pontiff quipped that now that he has revealed the existence of his resignation note, "someone will run up to Bertone (saying), 'Give me that piece of paper.'"

Francis said he was sure Bertone would have passed on the letter to the current secretary of state, Parolin.

In past remarks, Francis has hailed the decision of his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI, to resign because he felt due to advancing age he wouldn't be best able to carry out his duties. Benedict, who is living in a monastery on the Vatican's grounds, was the first pontiff to resign in 600 years, and his stepping down paved the way for Francis' election as the first pope from South America.

Francis in the interview played down his mobility challenge, saying "One governs with the head, not the knee."

Catholic church law requires a papal resignation be "freely and properly manifested" — as was the case when Benedict startled the world when he announced his resignation to a gathering of prelates at the Vatican in February 2013.

Economic pain, Turkish strikes drive Syrian Kurds to Europe

By KAREEM CHEHAYEB and HOGIR AL ABDO Associated Press

QAMISHLI, Syria (AP) — Baran Ramadan Mesko had been hiding with other migrants for weeks in the coastal Algerian city of Oran, awaiting a chance to take a boat across the Mediterranean Sea to Europe.

Days before the 38-year-old Syrian Kurd was to begin the journey, he received news that a smuggler boat carrying some of his friends had sunk soon after leaving the Algerian coast. Most of its passengers had drowned.

It came as a shock, after spending weeks to get to Algeria from Syria and then waiting for a month for a smuggler to put him on the boat.

But having poured thousands of dollars into the journey, and with his wife and 4- and 3-year-old daughters counting on him to secure a life safe from conflict, the engineer-turned-citizen journalist boarded a

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small fishing boat with a dozen other men and took a group selfie to send to their families before they went offline.

After a 12-hour overnight journey, Mesko made his way to Almería, Spain, on Oct. 15, and then flew to Germany four days later, where he is now an asylum seeker in a migrant settlement near Bielefeld. He's still getting used to the cold weather, and is using a translation app on his phone to help him get around while learning German. He said he's hopeful his papers will be settled soon so his family can join him.

At least 246 migrants have gone missing while trying to cross the western Mediterranean into Europe in 2022, the International Organization for Migration says. In the past few years, thousands more have perished making the dangerous sea voyage.

Mesko is among a growing number of Syrian Kurds making the journey to Europe on a winding course that includes travel by car and plane across Lebanon, Egypt, Libya, Algeria, then finally by boat to Spain. They say they are opting for this circuitous route because they fear detention by Turkish forces or Turkish-backed militants in Syria if they try to sneak into Turkey, the most direct path to Europe.

According to data from the European Union border agency Frontex, at least 591 Syrians have crossed the Mediterranean from Algeria and Morocco to Spain in 2022, six times more than last year's total.

A Kurdish Syrian smuggler in Algeria said dozens of Kurds from Syria arrive in the Algerian coastal city of Oran each week for the sea journey.

"I've never had numbers this high before," the smuggler told The Associated Press, speaking on condition of anonymity for fear of arrest by Algerian authorities.

Years of conflict and economic turmoil have left their mark on Syria's northern areas, home to some 3 million people under de facto Kurdish control. The region has been targeted by Islamic State group militants, Turkish forces and Syrian opposition groups from the country's northwestern rebel-held enclave. Climate change and worsening poverty spurred a cholera outbreak in recent months.

Like Mesko, many of the migrants come from the Syrian city of Kobani, which made headlines seven years ago when Kurdish fighters withstood a brutal siege by the Islamic State militant group.

The town was left in ruins, and since then, "not much has happened" to try to rebuild, said Joseph Daher, a professor at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy, adding that most development funding went to cities further east.

Recent events in northeastern Syria have given its residents an additional incentive to leave.

Turkey stepped up attacks on Kurdish areas in Syria after a bombing in Istanbul in November killed six people and wounded over 80 others. Ankara blames the outlawed Kurdish Workers' Party and the U.S.-backed Kurdish militia, the People's Protection Unit in Syria. Both have denied responsibility.

Since then, Turkish airstrikes have pounded areas across northeastern Syria, including Kobani, further battering its already pulverized infrastructure, and Ankara has vowed a ground invasion.

Bozan Shahin, an engineer from Kobani, recalled a Turkish airstrike last month.

"I saw my mother trembling in fear and holding my 4-year-old sister to keep her calm," Shahin said.

He now wants to join the flow of Kurds headed from Syria to Europe.

"I have some friends who found a way to get to Lebanon through a smuggler and go somewhere through Libya," he said. "I'm not familiar with all the details, but I'm trying to see how I can take that journey safely."

The operation, which takes weeks and costs thousands of dollars, is run by a smuggler network that bribes Syrian soldiers to get people through checkpoints where they could be detained for draft-dodging or anti-government activism, then across the porous border into Lebanon, the migrants and smugglers said.

There, the migrants typically stay in crowded apartments in Beirut for about a week while awaiting expedited passports from the Syrian Embassy by way of a smuggler's middleman.

With passports in hand, they fly to Egypt, where Syrians can enter visa-free, then take another flight to Benghazi in war-torn Libya before embarking on the journey to Algeria through another network of smugglers.

"We went in vans and jeeps and they took us across Libya through Tripoli and the coastal road and we would switch cars every 500 kilometers or so," Mesko said.

During the journey across the desert, they had to cross checkpoints run by Libya's mosaic of armed

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groups.

"Some of the guards at checkpoints treated us horribly when they knew we were Syrian, taking our money and phones, or making us stand outside in the heat for hours," he said.

An armed group kidnapped the group of migrants who left before his and demanded \$36,000 for their release, Mesko said.

By the time they reached the Algerian city of Oran, Mesko was relieved to take refuge in an apartment run by the smugglers. While they waited for weeks, he and the other migrants spent most of their time indoors.

"We couldn't move freely around Oran, because security forces are all over and we did not cross into the country legally," Mesko said. "There were also gangs in the city or even on the coast who would try to mug migrants and take their money."

Human rights groups have accused the Algerian authorities of arresting migrants, and in some cases expelling them across land borders. According to the U.N. refugee agency, Algeria expelled over 13,000 migrants to neighboring Niger to its south in the first half of 2021.

Despite his relief at arriving safely in Germany with a chance to bring his wife and girls there, Mesko feels remorse for leaving Kobani.

"I was always opposed to the idea of migrating or even being displaced," he said. "Whenever we had to move to another area because of the war, we'd come back to Kobani once we could."

Mesko spends much of his time at asylum interviews and court hearings, but says he's in good spirits knowing he's started a process he only dreamed of months ago. He hopes to be granted asylum status soon, so his wife and daughters can reunite with him in Europe.

"Syria has become an epicenter of war, corruption and terrorism," he said. "We lived this way for 10 years, and I don't want my children to live through these experiences, and see all the atrocities."

Israel deports Palestinian activist to France

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel said it deported a Palestinian lawyer and activist to France early Sunday, claiming he has ties to a banned militant group, despite objections from the French government.

The expulsion of Salah Hammouri underscored the fragile status of Palestinians in Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem, where most hold revocable residency rights but are not Israeli citizens. It also set up a possible diplomatic spat with France, which had repeatedly appealed to Israel not to carry out the expulsion.

"I'm happy to announce that justice was served today and the terrorist Salah Hammouri was deported from Israel," Israel's interior minister, Ayelet Shaked, announced in a videotaped statement. He was set to land in Paris just before 10 a.m. local time.

Hammouri was born in Jerusalem but holds French citizenship.

Israel says Hammouri is an activist in the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a group that it has labeled a terrorist organization. He has worked as a lawyer for Adameer, a rights group that assists Palestinian prisoners that Israel has banned for alleged ties to the PFLP.

He spent seven years in prison after being convicted in an alleged plot to kill a prominent rabbi but was released in a 2011 prisoner swap with the Hamas militant group. He has not been convicted in the latest proceedings against him.

Israel, however, claimed he continued his activities with the banned group, stripped him of residency, and placed him last March in administrative detention — a status that allows Israel to hold suspected militants for months at a time without charging them or putting them on trial. Hammouri was not charged in the current case, but Shaked ordered the deportation when his detention order expired. Israel's Supreme Court had rejected an appeal against the decision to revoke Hammouri's residency status.

France's Foreign Ministry condemned Israel's deportation of Hammouri after he landed in Paris, saying it has "taken full action, including at the highest level of the State, to ensure that Mr. Salah Hammouri's rights are respected, that he benefits from all legal remedies and that he can lead a normal life in Jerusalem, where he was born, resides and wishes to live."

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The Israeli human rights group HaMoked, which had defended Hammouri, condemned Sunday's expulsion. A Jan. 1 hearing on the matter had been scheduled, and it was not immediately clear how Israel was able to push ahead with the deportation.

"Deporting a Palestinian from their homeland for breach of allegiance to the state of Israel is a dangerous precedent and a gross violation of basic rights," said the group's director, Jessica Montell. "HaMoked will continue to fight against this unconstitutional law."

Last year, Hammouri was among six human rights activists whose mobile phones were found by independent security researchers to have been infected with spyware made by the Israeli company NSO Group.

It was not known who placed the spyware on the phones. Israel said there's no connection between the terror designation of Adameer and five other Palestinian rights groups and any alleged use of NSO spyware. Israel has provided little evidence publicly to support the terrorism designation, which Palestinian groups say is meant to muzzle them and dry up their sources of funding.

Aryeh Deri, Shaked's apparent successor as interior minister in Benjamin Netanyahu's new government, said Hammouri's deportation was "the end of a long but just legal process" and congratulated Shaked for carrying it out.

The expected new governing coalition is set to pass legislation to allow Deri to serve as a minister despite a recent conviction on tax offenses.

Israel captured east Jerusalem, home to the city's most important religious sites, in the 1967 Mideast war and annexed the area in a move that is not internationally recognized. It considers the entire city to be its capital, while the Palestinians claim east Jerusalem as the capital of a future state.

While Jews in the city are entitled to automatic citizenship, Palestinians are granted residency status. This allows them freedom of movement, the ability to work and access to Israeli social services, but they are not allowed to vote in national elections. Residency rights can be stripped if a Palestinian is found to live outside the city for an extended period or in certain security cases.

Palestinians can apply for citizenship. But few do, not wanting to be seen as accepting what they see as an occupation. Those who do apply, however, face a lengthy and bureaucratic process.

The Haaretz daily reported this year that fewer than 20,000 Palestinians in Jerusalem, some 5% of the population, hold Israeli citizenship, and that just 34% of applications are approved. It cited information from the Interior Ministry delivered by Shaked to a parliamentary inquiry.

It was not known if France would accept Hammouri. The Foreign Ministry has previously said "he must be able to exercise all his rights and lead a normal life in Jerusalem, his city of birth and residence."

N Korea fires 2 ballistic missiles capable of reaching Japan

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea test-fired a pair of ballistic missiles with a potential range of striking Japan on Sunday, in a possible protest of Tokyo's adoption of a new security strategy to push for more offensive footing against North Korea and China.

The launches came two days after the North claimed to have performed a key test needed to build a more mobile, powerful intercontinental ballistic missile designed to strike the U.S. mainland.

The two missiles traveled from the country's northwest Tongchangri area about 500 kilometers (310 miles) at a maximum altitude of 550 kilometers (340 miles) before landing in the waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan, according to the South Korean and Japanese governments.

South Korea's military described both missiles as medium-range weapons that were launched at a steep angle, suggesting they could have traveled farther if fired at a standard trajectory. North Korea usually tests medium- and longer-range missiles at a high angle to avoid neighboring countries, though it fired an intermediate-range missile over Japan in October, forcing Tokyo to issue evacuation alerts and halt trains.

In an emergency meeting, top South Korean security officials deplored North Korea's continued provocations that they said came despite "the plight of its citizens moaning in hunger and cold due to a serious food shortage." They said South Korea will boost a trilateral security cooperation with the U.S. and Japan,

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according to South Korea's presidential office.

Japanese Vice Defense Minister Toshiro Ino separately criticized North Korea for threatening the safety of Japan, the region and the international community. The U.S. Indo-Pacific Command said the launches highlight the destabilizing impact of North Korea's unlawful weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs. It said the U.S. commitments to the defense of South Korea and Japan "remain ironclad."

Kwon Yong Soo, a former professor at Korea National Defense University in South Korea, said North Korea likely tested its Pukguksong-2 missile, a solid-fueled, land-based variant of its Pukguksong family of missiles that can be fired from submarines. Kwon said that flight details of the weapons tested Sunday were similar to those of the Pukguksong-2's two known tests in 2017.

Kwon said the Pukguksong-2 can fly about 1,200-2,000 kilometers (745-1,240 miles) if it's launched at a normal trajectory, a range enough to strike key facilities in Japan, including U.S. military installations there. Some experts say the Pukguksong-2 is nuclear-capable.

"North Korea staged an armed protest with a land version of a submarine-launched ballistic missile that it can fire quickly in response" to the Japanese national security strategy, Kwon said.

Some observers say North Korea might have tested a newly developed medium-range missile that can still reach Japan.

On Friday, the Japanese government adopted a national security strategy that would allow it to carry out preemptive strikes and fire powerful cruise missiles to give itself more offensive footing against threats from neighboring China and North Korea. That was a major break from its strictly self-defense-only post-war principle. The Japanese strategy names China as "the biggest strategic challenge" — before North Korea and Russia — to Japan's efforts to ensure peace, safety and stability for itself and the international community.

Sunday's launch is the North's first public weapons test since it launched last month its developmental, longest-range liquid-fueled Hwasong-17 ICBM capable of reaching the entire U.S. homeland. Earlier this year, North Korea test-launched a variety of other missiles at a record pace.

North Korea has defended its weapons testing as self-defense measures to cope with the expanded U.S.-South Korea military drills that it views as an invasion rehearsal. But some experts say North Korea likely used its rivals' military training as an excuse to enlarge its arsenal and increase leverage in future negotiations with the U.S. to win sanctions relief and other concessions.

"In the face of mounting diplomatic pressure after an unprecedented year for North Korean missile tests, the Kim regime is determined to show no weakness ahead of its New Year's political events," said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul.

On Friday, North Korea said it tested a "high-thrust solid-fuel motor" for a new strategic weapon the previous day, a development that experts say could allow it to possess a more mobile, harder-to-detect arsenal of intercontinental ballistic missiles that can reach the U.S. mainland.

North Korea will likely use the motor to build a solid-fueled ICBM, which is among a list of high-tech weapons systems that leader Kim Jong Un has vowed to build to deal with what he calls U.S. hostility, experts say.

All of North Korea's existing ICBMs use liquid propellant, which must be added to the weapons before they're fired. This makes it relatively easier for outsiders to spot their launch preparations via satellites. But fuel in solid-propellant rockets is already loaded inside, so it shortens launch preparation times, increases their mobility and makes it harder for outsiders to learn what's happening ahead of liftoff. North Korea already has a growing arsenal of short-range, solid-fueled ballistic missiles targeting key locations in South Korea, including U.S. military bases there.

Kwon, the former professor, said North Korea could test-fire a solid-fueled ICBM designed to reach the U.S. West Coast as early as the first half of next year.

Some experts speculate North Korea already has functioning nuclear-tipped missiles that can hit the entire U.S. and its allies South Korea and Japan, given the number of years it has spent on its nuclear program. But others say the country is still years away from acquiring such weapons, noting it has yet

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to publicly prove it has a technology to build warheads small enough to be placed on missiles or protect warheads from the harsh conditions of atmospheric reentry.

'Tired of this war': Congolese cope with M23 rebel violence

By AL-HADJI KUDRA MALIRO & SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

BENI, Congo (AP) — Kavira Mathe was making dinner for her two sons when bullets began flying. Eastern Congo's M23 rebels had attacked her village, killing scores of civilians. She and others fled for their lives, she said.

"I lost several friends," said Mathe speaking to The Associated Press by phone from Kanyabayonga where she now shelters. Trekking 50 kilometers (some 30 miles) to safety, she saw roads littered with bodies that appeared to have been bound and shot, she said.

"It was really horrible to see," said Mathe. "We are tired of this war."

Communities in eastern Congo are struggling to survive in the wake of that massacre and others in which at least 130 people were killed by M23 rebels in what the United Nations called "unspeakable violence" against civilians.

Nearly 26,000 people have been displaced since the attacks at the end of November, according to the U.N. refugee agency, adding to hundreds of thousands who have been uprooted since fighting began between M23 and a coalition of armed civilian protection militia more than a year ago.

The Associated Press spoke with four people who fled the attacks in North Kivu province. They said M23 shot people indiscriminately, raided shops and chased them from their homes so that people had to hike to safety for hours over rugged terrain and through rivers, without food or water. Many now live in squalid conditions, cramped into small rooms with no money or access to fields for farming.

The M23 rebel group, largely comprised of Congolese ethnic Tutsis, rose to prominence 10 years ago when its fighters seized Goma, eastern Congo's largest city on the border with Rwanda. It derives its name from a March 23, 2009, peace deal, which it accuses the Congo government of not implementing. The rebel group was dormant for nearly a decade before resurfacing late last year.

Since October, M23 violence has surged and the rebels have seized more territory including Rutshuru Center and Kiwanja and destroyed a newly established site for displaced Congolese who had recently returned from Uganda.

"This situation has directly put thousands of families in very poor living conditions. In the makeshift camps where they live, there is no food, no shelter, no drinking water, no primary healthcare. In short, the families are in unprecedented suffering," said Francois Kamate, press officer for LUCHA, a local rights group.

Aid organizations are struggling to cope with the soaring needs. Water is extremely limited in the areas surrounding Goma, contributing to an outbreak of cholera. More than 100 cases have been reported in recent weeks, said Caitlin Brady, Congo director for the Norwegian Refugee Council.

"The humanitarian community is responding, but we have to have more resources to scale up," she said. The nearly 400,000 newly displaced people since October are in addition to nearly 5.5 million people already displaced in Congo and the situation is quite desperate, she said.

Many civilians living under M23 aren't receiving assistance at all as some of the areas are too hard to access amid the insecurity. Those living under the rebels say they live in terror.

"The situation is very bad. People are being killed," said a resident living in Rutshuru Center, a town now occupied by the group. The AP is not using his name to protect his identity. People are living in fear and the rebels are demanding food and money, he said. M23 is also beating and jailing those who take photos in town because they're worried people are passing on information, he said.

Efforts at peace talks have so far yielded little. Both sides accuse the other of breaking a fragile cease-fire agreed to last month in Angola. This week, M23 representatives met with regional leaders, the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Congo and the Congolese army, saying it welcomes efforts to resolve the conflict, said Lawrence Kanyuka the group's political spokesman in a statement.

Congo's government blames Rwanda for supporting the M23 with troops and superior firepower, findings

backed by the U.N. In a speech to the country this week Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi called out the international community for not doing enough to stem the fighting.

"The east is plagued by violence because of the presence of many armed groups in almost total indifference to the international community," he said.

The continued external support for the rebels, compounded by escalating violence, could threaten regional stability, say conflict analysts.

"Congo's militia problem has increasingly turned into a potent regional security threat," said Trupti Agrawal, senior analyst for East Africa for the Economist Intelligence Unit. "The rebel groups' ability to escalate attacks despite reinforcements to counterinsurgency operations indicates their strength."

Key Ukrainian city's rapid fall leaves unanswered questions

By SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

KHERSON, Ukraine (AP) — When about 100 Russian troops rolled into Kherson's Lilac Park on the morning of March 1, Oleh Shornik was one of about 20 lightly armed Ukrainian volunteers who didn't stand a chance against them.

Ukraine's military was nowhere to be seen, and Russian troops in armored vehicles had easily entered the Shumensky neighborhood, opening fire and sending shrapnel flying everywhere, witnesses said. Civilians walking to work were hit in the short, fierce battle. The volunteers, hiding among the trees in the park, were cut down so rapidly that they weren't even able to throw the Molotov cocktails they had prepared.

"They did not have time to do anything," said Anatolii Hudzenko, who was inside his home next to the park during the attack, in an interview with The Associated Press.

Left seemingly on their own, the civilian volunteers fell quickly. A day later, so did Kherson.

Thousands of Russian troops, sweeping up from the Crimean Peninsula on Feb. 24, captured the city on the Dnieper River so rapidly that many residents say they felt abandoned by the Ukrainian military and its quick withdrawal, leaving the city without an adequate defense.

But was the doomed stand in Lilac Park a futile, early act of resistance to what became a bloody Russian occupation of Kherson? Was it due to the hasty retreat by Ukraine's military so it could regroup to fight another day — indeed later retaking the city in November? Or was it the result of a betrayal by high-level Ukrainian security officials collaborating with Moscow?

It's possible it was a combination of all of those.

Now that Russia has retreated from Kherson following Ukraine's counteroffensive in the south, residents want to know why Moscow's forces were able to overrun the city so easily.

"There are more questions than answers to this story," said Svetlana Shornik, standing at her ex-husband's grave for the first time because the Russians had blocked access to the cemetery while they had occupied the city.

Besides the volunteers killed in the park, about five others were slain that day at a roundabout nearby.

Families of the dead say they have been trying in vain for months to get information from the military and the government so they can have some closure about the deaths of their loved ones.

"I know very little," said Nadiia Khandusenko, recounting what few facts she knows about the death of her husband, Serhii, who also was killed in Lilac Park.

Wiping away tears, Shornik told the AP that she believes her ex-husband probably suffered in his final minutes because an autopsy revealed the 53-year-old retired policeman was shot in the lung. The bodies lay on the bloodstained grounds of the park for three days because the Russians would not allow them to be buried, residents said.

"They are heroes," Shornik said. "They were practically defending (the city) with their bare hands," she said.

Ukraine's Territorial Defense Force began operating just before the Russian invasion. A volunteer militia under the command of the Defense Ministry, it was made up of civilians, part-time reservists and former

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troops to fight alongside the regular military.

Despite their lack of training and equipment, the volunteers have played a crucial role in the war and were a key reason Kyiv wasn't occupied, said Mykhailo Samus, founder of New Geopolitics Research Network, a Ukrainian think tank.

"When a (Russian) sabotage group gets into a city, they expect to see civilians, but they found a lot of people with Kalashnikov guns and it was a disaster for Russians," Samus said.

Civilian volunteers were unable to hold back the Russian forces from Kherson, a port city with a prewar population of 280,000 that is home to a ship-building industry.

Kherson is just north of Crimea, which Russia illegally annexed in 2014. When Ukraine controlled the city, it was able to cut off fresh water to the peninsula, and Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke of the need to restore water supplies as one reason to invade.

Flat and marshy, the Kherson region has few forests or other natural barriers to halt the tanks and troops from nearby Crimea that hosts Russia's Black Sea fleet and air bases.

In addition, Ukrainian officials such as Kherson Mayor Ihor Kolykhaev told the newspaper *Ukrainska Pravda* in May that the failure to destroy key bridges leading to the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions was a mistake that helped the Russians, although he stressed he was not a military man.

Ukraine's outnumbered military, meanwhile, had withdrawn from Kherson for the southern city of Mykolaiv, said Maj. Oleksandr Fedyunin, a military spokesman.

That withdrawal "ensured the survivability of troops and did not allow the enemy to gain fire superiority in the air," said Bohdan Senyk, chief spokesman for the army.

Kherson's swift capture has raised questions about whether Ukrainian collaborators aided the Russian invasion.

"Russia had its agents infiltrated into the Ukrainian security forces, and the cleanup by Kyiv was slow and inefficient," said Orysia Lutsevych, head of the Ukraine forum at the London-based Chatham House think tank. "The cost of that betrayal was high human loss."

On April 1, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy dismissed two senior officials of Ukraine's SBU domestic security agency, including the head of the Kherson regional branch, stripping their rank as generals for violating their military oath of allegiance. He called them "anti-heroes" and said they "had trouble determining where their Fatherland is."

He added: "I don't have time now to deal with all the traitors, but they will all face punishment."

In addition, an aide to one of those SBU officials was arrested and faces prosecution for allegedly handing over maps of minefields and helping coordinate Russian airstrikes that aided Moscow's forces, said Oleksandr Samoilenko, head of Kherson's regional legislature.

The Russian takeover of Kherson — the only regional capital to fall in the war — ushered in a harsh, eight-month occupation that saw fierce resistance from its remaining civilians, including attacks against Moscow-installed officials, planted bombs and other threats. Moscow introduced the ruble, set up Russian cellphone networks and cut off Ukrainian TV in the area. Street protests were banned.

As in other Ukrainian areas that Russia seized, officials who refused to cooperate were abducted, including the Kherson mayor, Kolykhaev. Residents allege they were confined, beaten, shocked, interrogated and threatened with death in at least five sites in the city and four others in the wider region.

The region was one of four that was illegally annexed by Moscow in September, although its troops were forced to withdraw weeks later as Ukrainians stepped up their attacks with U.S.-supplied missiles and cut the Russians' supply lines. The retreating forces left behind mines and booby traps, shuttered shops and restaurants, and a traumatized population.

In Lilac Park, a small memorial honors the volunteers who fell there. Wreaths are fastened to a few trees, with some yellow roses and a plaque mounted with a cross and a small Ukrainian flag at the top.

It reads: "On March 1, 2022, fighters from the Territorial Defense were taken to heaven."

Libya militia held Lockerbie suspect before handover to US

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Around midnight in mid-November, Libyan militiamen in two Toyota pickup trucks arrived at a residential building in a neighborhood of the capital of Tripoli. They stormed the house, bringing out a blindfolded man in his 70s.

Their target was former Libyan intelligence agent Abu Agila Mohammad Mas'ud Kheir Al-Marimi, wanted by the United States for allegedly making the bomb that brought down New York-bound Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, just days before Christmas in 1988. The attack killed 259 people in the air and 11 on the ground.

Weeks after that night raid in Tripoli, the U.S. announced Mas'ud was in its custody, to the surprise of many in Libya, which has been split between two rival governments, each backed by an array of militias and foreign powers.

Analysts said the Tripoli-based government responsible for handing over Mas'ud was likely seeking U.S. goodwill and favor amid the power struggles in Libya.

Four Libyan security and government officials with direct knowledge of the operation recounted the journey that ended with Mas'ud in Washington.

The officials said it started with him being taken from his home in the Abu Salim neighborhood of Tripoli. He was transferred to the coastal city of Misrata and eventually handed over to American agents who flew him out of the country, they said.

The officials spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals. Several said the United States had been exerting pressure for months to see Mas'ud handed over.

"Every time they communicated, Abu Agila was on the agenda," one official said.

In Libya, many questioned the legality of how he was picked up, just months after his release from a Libyan prison, and sent to the U.S. Libya and the U.S. don't have a standing agreement on extradition, so there was no obligation to hand Mas'ud over.

The White House and Justice Department declined to comment on the new details about Mas'ud's handover. U.S. officials have said privately that in their view, it played out as a by-the-book extradition through an ordinary court process.

A State Department official, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with briefing regulations, said Saturday that Mas'ud's transfer was lawful and described it as a culmination of years of cooperation with Libyan authorities.

Libya's chief prosecutor has opened an investigation following a complaint from Mas'ud's family. But for nearly a week after the U.S. announcement, the Tripoli government was silent, while rumors swirled for weeks that Mas'ud had been abducted and sold by militiamen.

After public outcry in Libya, the country's Tripoli-based prime minister, Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, acknowledged on Thursday that his government had handed Mas'ud over. In the same speech, he also said that Interpol had issued a warrant for Mas'ud's arrest. A spokesman for Dbeibah's government did not answer calls and messages seeking additional comment.

On December 12, the U.S. Department of Justice said that it had requested that Interpol issue a warrant for him.

After the fall and killing of longtime Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi in a 2011 uprising-turned-civil war, Mas'ud, an explosives expert for Libya's intelligence service, was detained by a militia in western Libya. He served 10 years in prison in Tripoli for crimes related to his position during Gadhafi's rule.

He was released in June after completing his sentence. After his release, he was under permanent surveillance and barely left his family home in the Abu Salim district, a military official said.

The neighborhood is controlled by the Stabilization Support Authority, an umbrella of militias led by warlord Abdel-Ghani al-Kikli, a close ally of Dbeibah. Al-Kikli has been accused by Amnesty International of involvement in war crimes and other serious rights violations over the past decade.

After Mas'ud's release from prison, the Biden administration intensified extradition demands, Libyan

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officials said.

At first, the Dbeibah government, one of the two rival administrations claiming to govern Libya, was reluctant, citing concerns of political and legal repercussions, said an official at the prime minister's office.

The official said U.S. officials continued to raise the issue with the Tripoli-based government and with warlords they were dealing with in the fight against Islamic militants in Libya. With pressure mounting, the prime minister and his aides decided in October to hand over Mas'ud to American authorities, the official said.

Dbeibah's mandate remains highly contested after planned elections failed to happen last year.

"It fits into a broader campaign being conducted by Dbeibah, which basically consists of giving gifts to influential states," said Jalel Harchaoui, a Libya expert and an associate fellow at the Royal United Services Institute. He said Dbeibah needs to curry favor to help him remain in power.

More than a decade after the death of Gadhafi, Libya remains chaotic and lawless, with militias still holding sway over large territories. The country's security forces are weak, compared to local militias, with which the Dbeibah government is allied to varying degrees. To carry out the arrest of Mas'ud, the Dbeibah government called on al-Kikli, who also holds a formal position in the government.

The prime minister discussed the Mas'ud case in a meeting in early November with al-Kikli, according to an employee of the Stabilization Support Authority who had been briefed on the matter. After the meeting, Dbeibah informed U.S. officials of his decision, agreeing that the handover would take place within weeks in Misrata, where his family is influential, a government official said.

Then came the raid in mid-November, which was described by the officials.

Militiamen rushed into Mas'ud's bedroom and seized him, transporting him blindfolded to a detention center run by the SSA in Tripoli. He was there for two weeks before he was given to another militia in Misrata, known as the Joint Force, which reports directly to Dbeibah. It's a new paramilitary unit established as part of a network of militias that support him.

In Misrata, Mas'ud was interrogated by Libyan officers in the presence of U.S. intelligence officers, said a Libyan official briefed on the interrogation. Mas'ud declined to answer questions about his alleged role in the Lockerbie attack, including the contents of an interview that the U.S. says he gave to Libyan authorities in 2012 during which he admitted to being the bomb-maker. He insisted his detention and extradition are illegal, the official said.

In 2017, U.S. officials received a copy of the 2012 interview in which they said Mas'ud admitted building the bomb and working with two other conspirators to carry out the attack on the Pan Am plane. According to an FBI affidavit filed in the case, Mas'ud said that the operation was ordered by Libyan intelligence and that Gadhafi thanked him and other members of the team afterwards.

Some have questioned the legality of Mas'ud's handover, given the role of informal armed groups and a lack of official extradition procedures.

Harchaoui, the analyst, said Mas'ud's extradition signals the U.S. is condoning what he portrayed as lawless behavior.

"What the foreign states are doing is that they are saying we don't care how the sausage is made," he said. "We are getting things that we like."

Comeback king Vikings set NFL rally record in win vs. Colts

By DAVE CAMPBELL AP Pro Football Writer

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — With the Minnesota Vikings gathered in their humbled locker room at halftime in a huge hole, cornerback Patrick Peterson set the tone for an historic escape by promising his offensive teammates the defense would do its part to hold the Indianapolis Colts.

"You just need five touchdowns," Peterson told them. "That's nothing."

This rally sure was something, though.

The Vikings completed the biggest comeback in NFL history, erasing a 33-point deficit by beating the Colts 39-36 on Greg Joseph's 40-yard field goal with three seconds left in overtime Saturday to win the

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NFC North division in their typical dramatic fashion.

Kirk Cousins passed for 460 yards and four touchdowns to lead the Vikings (11-3), who trailed 36-7 late in the third quarter and became just the third team in league history to win 10 games in a season by eight points or fewer.

"We're going to grind it out until they tell us there's no more ball left to play," coach Kevin O'Connell said.

The Colts (4-9-1) landed on the infamous side of this list, just ahead of the Houston Oilers in the 1992 postseason. They blew a 32-point lead (35-3) and lost to Buffalo (41-38) in overtime.

"When you have chances to put people away, we've got to do a better job than we've done up until this point," quarterback Matt Ryan said.

According to Sportradar data available since 1930, the Vikings became only the second team in 1,551 regular-season or playoff games to trail by 30 or more points and still win.

"Nothing fazes us. We showed that in Buffalo," said Peterson, who aided a 33-30 overtime victory over the Bills on Nov. 13 after a 17-point deficit. "We showed that again today."

The Vikings took this rally all the way to their second possession of overtime. Cousins hit K.J. Osborn — who caught the first score and had a career-high 157 yards — for 15 yards. He found Adam Thielen — who had the second of three fourth-quarter touchdown passes — for 21 yards. Then he threw to Justin Jefferson for 13 yards to move into range.

Ifeadi Odenigbo was called for delay of game for lying on Jefferson to try to keep the Vikings from setting up for the kick, putting Joseph 5 yards closer for the winner.

"It's a special group, a lot of fighters," Thielen said.

Colts interim coach Jeff Saturday didn't exactly get conservative in this collapse. Ryan was stopped short on a fourth-and-1 sneak at the Minnesota 36 with 2:19 left in regulation. Then Cousins hit Dalvin Cook for a 64-yard touchdown on a screen pass on the next play and T.J. Hockenson for the 2-point conversion to tie the game before the 2-minute warning.

"We would have closed the game out and ended the game," Saturday said. "I'm in. Everybody's in. We didn't convert."

Outscored 33-0 in the fourth quarter of their most recent game, a 54-19 loss to Dallas on Dec. 4, the Colts came back fresh from their bye week and stunned the Vikings with a 33-0 halftime lead that was the second-largest in the NFL this season. Cincinnati led Carolina 35-0 on Nov. 6.

The intermission deficit for Minnesota was the second-biggest in franchise history, behind a 45-10 score at Seattle in 2002.

The Vikings even overcame a pair of fumble returns for touchdowns by Chandon Sullivan that were wiped out by the whistle.

"I know that there's other games that don't end like that. It was just cool to see everybody battle back and I'm just happy that I get to share this moment with my teammates," linebacker Eric Kendricks said, wiping away tears.

YOU LIKE THAT?

The last team to overcome a deficit of 24-plus points to win a regular season game was Washington over Tampa Bay in 2015, when Cousins was the quarterback. The previous regular season comeback record was 28 points in 1980, when San Francisco rallied from down 35-7 to win 38-35.

ALARMING START

The special teams units bore the brunt of the brutal start for the Vikings. Dallis Flowers returned the opening kickoff 49 yards, and the Colts were in scoring position within seconds.

Odenigbo plowed past two blockers and sideswiped Ryan Wright's punt with his right arm. JoJo Domann caught the deflected ball and returned it 24 yards for the too-easy score and a 10-0 lead.

Then with the Vikings trailing 20-0 on fourth-and-1 from their own 31, Wright's pass on a fake punt sailed over Jalen Nailor's head for a second straight turnover on downs.

JEFFERSON WATCH

Jefferson left the game twice for brief examination following jarring hits to the chest. On the second

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occurrence, Stephon Gilmore also got him in the facemask and drew an unnecessary roughness penalty in the fourth quarter.

Both times after Jefferson left the game, Cousins threw to Jalen Reagor on the next play and was intercepted after an apparent miscommunication on the routes. The first one was returned by Julian Blackmon for a 17-yard touchdown that made it 30-0 in the second quarter.

Jefferson had 12 catches for 123 yards and a touchdown and raised his season total to 1,623 receiving yards. Calvin Johnson's all-time record of 1,964 yards was set in 16 games in 2012.

INJURY REPORT

Colts: RB Jonathan Taylor (ankle) left the game on the opening drive after a hard tackle as he tumbled out of bounds. He missed three games with the injury earlier this season.

Vikings: LT Christian Darrisaw returned from a three-game absence for a concussion. He limped off twice in overtime with leg cramps. Peterson left briefly with the same problem.

UP NEXT

Colts: Host the Los Angeles Chargers on Dec. 26.

Vikings: Host the New York Giants on Dec. 24.

Watson throws for TD, wins home debut as Browns down Ravens

By TOM WITHERS AP Sports Writer

CLEVELAND (AP) — Deshaun Watson dropped to a knee for the third time to extinguish the final seconds. He turned and walked alone, taking a few steps before tilting his head back screaming into the frosty air.

This win meant a little bit more.

"It was special," he said.

Watson threw a touchdown pass in his home debut for Cleveland, leading the Browns to an ugly 13-3 win on Saturday over the Baltimore Ravens, who need injured star quarterback Lamar Jackson to get back quickly.

In his third game after serving an 11-game NFL suspension for alleged sexual misconduct, Watson wasn't spectacular. But he did enough to help the Browns (6-8) keep their miniscule playoff hopes alive while knocking the Ravens (9-5) off stride.

Baltimore had won six of seven. But the loss knocked the Ravens out of first in the AFC North, dropping them a half-game back of Cincinnati pending the Bengals' game at Tampa Bay on Sunday.

Before he left the field, Watson let all his emotions pour out.

"It was a lot," Watson said, explaining his feelings at the conclusion. "Just to be able to get my first victory in my first home start, just to get a victory against a tough divisional team. Last week we wanted that one, and it didn't go our way.

"It was me just soaking in the moment and releasing all the energy and the happiness I had in myself. I just wanted yell that and scream that out. I feel like everyone needs that every once in a while."

Watson, who connected with Donovan Peoples-Jones on a 3-yard TD pass in the third quarter, left First-Energy Stadium with a game ball tucked under his right arm.

Watson finished 18 of 28 for 161 yards, and added 22 on the ground. He's still not close to playing like a three-time Pro Bowler or franchise QB, but there's no doubt he's getting better every time.

"He's trending upward, which we knew he would do," said Browns star Myles Garrett, who had 1 1/2 sacks. "He's a baller."

Browns rookie Cade York made two field goals — and missed two tries — but outkicked Ravens All-Pro Justin Tucker, the league's most accurate kicker, who missed a 48-yarder and had another attempt blocked by Cleveland defensive tackle Jordan Elliott.

Jackson missed his second straight game with a knee injury, and the Ravens aren't the same without his dynamic playmaking ability.

Tyler Huntley, who was only cleared from concussion protocol a few days ago, started again for Jackson but couldn't get Baltimore going. Huntley went 17 of 30 for 138 yards, but threw a critical interception

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inside Cleveland's 10 in the third.

Baltimore's J.K. Dobbins ran for 125 yards, and the Ravens rolled up 198 yards rushing. But forced to throw while playing from behind in the fourth, Huntley couldn't come up with a big play.

"We have to just have a better passing game, basically," coach John Harbaugh said with Huntley sitting nearby. "It's not a good enough passing game right now across the board to do the things that we're hoping to do. So, that will be priority one.

"Every area can get better at something in certain things, but from an offensive standpoint, that's something that we have to go to work on, and we will."

After Denzel Ward intercepted Huntley, Watson directed a 91-yard scoring drive, delivering his TD strike to Peoples-Jones with 2:10 left in the third.

Without Jackson, the Ravens have been relying on their solid running game, strong defense and Tucker's trusted leg to keep them in the playoff hunt.

The formula worked the previous two weeks, and despite some offensive issues, Baltimore was positioned to tie it at 6 before Tucker hooked a 48-yard attempt on the final play of the second quarter.

Tucker apologized to his teammates following the game.

"I let a number of them know that this one is on me," Tucker said. "As someone who feels like I'm a leader in this locker room, I think that's the example that needs to be set."

It didn't get much better for Baltimore in the second half.

"Very frustrating," Huntley said. "You have to score to win, so I'm very mad that we didn't."

JACKSON UPDATE

The Ravens have been encouraged by Jackson's progress and are hoping he'll return to practice this week and possibly play on Saturday.

Jackson was injured in the first quarter of Baltimore's 10-9 win over Denver on Dec. 4.

GREAT CAUSE

Browns coach Kevin Stefanski and some of his staff ran the stadium's steps before the game to raise awareness and funds for the The Coach Knapp Memorial Fund, established for longtime NFL assistant Greg Knapp.

The 58-year-old Knapp was killed in 2021 by a distracted driver while cycling.

INJURIES

Ravens: Harbaugh did not have an update on massive DT Calais Campbell, who hurt his knee in the fourth quarter. He was able to walk off under his own power. ... CB Marcus Peters went out in the third quarter with a calf injury and didn't return.

Browns: DE Jadeveon Clowney sustained a head injury late in the second quarter. ... S John Johnson III (thigh) went out in the third quarter, shortly after forcing and recovering a fumble.

UP NEXT

Ravens: Host Atlanta on Dec. 24.

Browns: Host New Orleans on Dec. 24 in their home finale.

Snow pummels parts of Northeast; thousands without power

BOSTON (AP) — Utility crews raced Saturday to restore power to tens of thousands of customers across New England and New York after a powerful storm dumped 2 feet of snow in some places.

More than 160,000 customers in New England were in the dark as of the afternoon and another 20,000 were without power in New York as heavy snow brought tree limbs onto power lines, according to poweroutage.us, which tracks outages across the country.

Restoration efforts were complicated by snow still falling in some places, making travel dangerous. Doug Foley, Eversource president of electric operations in New Hampshire, said snow-covered roads were making it tough for workers to reach communities in order to assess damage and make repairs.

"We are still taking on system damage in parts of the state where heavy, wet snow continues to fall, and hundreds of additional crews are coming to New Hampshire to support our restoration effort," Foley

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said in an emailed statement.

As of Saturday afternoon, Eversource had restored power to nearly 61,000 customers in New Hampshire since the beginning of the storm, but another 40,000 remained without power, according to the utility.

Green Mountain Power, which serves customers in Vermont, said more outages were possible there with temperatures not expected to warm up enough in the next couple of days to melt the snow.

"Clearing downed trees to get to outage locations has been slow and difficult," Mike Burke, the utility company's vice president of field operations, said in a statement.

More than 2 feet of snow was recorded in parts of Vermont and western New York, and many communities across the region saw more than a foot, according to the National Weather Service.

Bond set at \$50K for father of July 4 shooting suspect

By MICHAEL TARM The Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — A judge on Saturday set bond at \$50,000 for the father of an Illinois man charged with killing seven people at a July 4 parade who is accused of helping his son get a gun license years before the shooting on a suburban Chicago main street.

Robert Crimo Jr., 58, looked somber and tired in his first appearance before a judge since voluntarily surrendering to police Friday. His lawyer, George M. Gomez, told the judge Saturday that the father of three would be able to pay the required bond amount for his release.

Crimo, a rare case of a parent charged after a child is accused in a mass shooting, faces seven felony counts of reckless conduct — one count for each person fatally shot during the summertime parade. Each count carries a maximum three-year prison term.

At a brief 10-minute hearing, conducted via video link, Lake County Judge Jacquelyn Melius said she accepted an agreement between Crimo's lawyer and prosecutors that bond be set at \$50,000, which was lower than the \$500,000 bond that could have been imposed.

Gomez told the judge before she set bond that his client had been a business owner for over 30 years and had lifelong ties to the community of Highland Park, where the mass shooting occurred over the summer. Prosecutors did not oppose Crimo's release on bond.

"Mr. Crimo is not a danger to the community. He is not a flight risk," Gomez said, adding that Crimo had cooperated fully with authorities since the shooting.

Among the conditions of his release, the judge told Crimo, was that he turn in any gun licenses, as well as any weapons at his home, within 24 hours of the hearing. Crimo currently lives in Highwood, a city that borders Highland Park.

Asked by the judge if he could hear the proceedings through his video link, Crimo said that he could — but he otherwise made no statements to the court.

Judge Melius set his next hearing for Jan. 12.

Lake County State's Attorney Eric Rinehart said Friday that charges against the father were based on Crimo sponsoring his son's application for a gun license in December 2019. His son was 19 years old at the time.

"Parents and guardians are in the best position to decide whether their teenagers should have a weapon," Rinehart said. "In this case, the system failed when Robert Crimo Jr. sponsored his son. He knew what he knew and he signed the form anyway."

Authorities have previously said the accused shooter, Robert Crimo III, attempted suicide by machete in April 2019 and in September 2019 was accused by a family member of making threats to "kill everyone."

Those reports came months before Crimo Jr. sponsored his son's application.

Gomez, the Chicago-area attorney, called the charges against the father "baseless and unprecedented" in a written statement on Friday.

"This decision should alarm every single parent in the United States of America who according to the Lake County State's Attorney knows exactly what is going on with their 19 year old adult children and can be held criminally liable for actions taken nearly three years later," Gomez said.

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Gomez said his client “continues to sympathize and feel terrible for the individuals and families who were injured and lost loved ones.” But the attorney called the charges “politically motivated and a distraction from the real change that needs to happen in this country.”

A grand jury in July indicted Robert Crimo III on 21 first-degree murder counts, 48 counts of attempted murder and 48 counts of aggravated battery, representing the seven people killed and dozens wounded in the attack on a beloved holiday event in Highland Park.

Legal experts have said it’s rare for an accused shooter’s parent or guardian to face charges — in part because it’s difficult to prove such charges.

In one notable exception, a Michigan prosecutor last year filed involuntary manslaughter charges against the parents of a teen accused of fatally shooting four students at his high school. A January trial date in that case has been delayed while the state appeals court considers an appeal by the parents.

Authorities have previously said that Illinois State Police reviewed Crimo III’s December 2019 gun license application and found no reason to deny it because he had no arrests, no criminal record, no serious mental health problems, no orders of protection and no other behavior that would disqualify him.

But following the parade shooting, public records showed that Crimo III attempted suicide by machete in April 2019, according to a police report obtained by The Associated Press that noted a “history of attempts.”

In September 2019, police received a report from a family member that Crimo III had a collection of knives and had threatened to “kill everyone.”

Both Crimo III and his mother disputed the threat of violence at the time. Police have said father Robert Crimo Jr. later told investigators the knives belonged to him, and authorities returned them.

Robert Crimo Jr. has shown up at several pretrial hearings for his son this year, nodding in greeting when his son entered the courtroom shackled and flanked by guards. The father has been a familiar face around Highland Park, where he was once a mayoral candidate and was well known for operating convenience stores.

In media interviews after the shooting, Robert Crimo Jr. had said he did not expect to face charges and did not believe he did anything wrong by helping his son get a gun license through the state’s established process.

Morocco’s World Cup finish is bittersweet for Arab fans

By ABBY SEWELL undefined

BEIRUT (AP) — Morocco’s fans in the Arab world took the North African team’s 2-1 loss to Croatia in Saturday’s World Cup third-place playoff philosophically. The team had already made history, becoming the first Arab and first African team to reach the semifinals in the international soccer tournament.

Its loss to France on Wednesday dashed fans’ hopes that Morocco would become an underdog champion, but many had hoped that it would at least take third place in facing off against Croatia.

In the Moroccan capital, national team’s fans were disappointed by Saturday’s loss, but pointed with pride to the team’s historic performance.

“They remain champions in our eyes,” said Soukaina Makkaoui, a fan in Rabat. “They are now among the four top teams in the world.”

Ali Hachimi, another Moroccan fan, was both proud and sad.

“We would have liked to finish third because the players deserved it after giving their all,” he said.

Along the way, the Moroccan team charmed many Arab soccer fans who saw in the team a reflection of themselves, with players waving the Palestinian flag after their wins and celebrating on the field with their mothers and children.

Seeing Palestinian flags fluttering in the stadium “was an indescribable feeling,” said Ibrahim al-Lilli, who was among thousands of fans in the Gaza Strip who gathered to cheer for Morocco on Saturday.

The games affirmed that the Arab street “supports the Palestinian cause regardless of what their governments do,” he said, referring to the Abraham Accord normalization agreements that four Arab countries — including Morocco — signed with Israel in 2020.

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Fans in the besieged Gaza enclave found a bitter solace in the fact that the northern Africa Arab country got as far as it did.

"It's a defeat, albeit with a taste of victory and joy," said Ahmed al-Najjar, another fan in Gaza.

In Beirut's Tarik al-Jdideh neighborhood, where fans were also rooting for Morocco, Muhammad Shaalan said the team's fourth-place finish is still a point of pride for the Arab world.

"They arrived to the final games and they defeated three of the best big European teams (Belgium, Spain and Portugal)," he said. "I bow my head in respect to them as an Arab team."

Low turnout in Tunisia parliament vote amid economic vows

By BOUAZZA BEN BOUAZZA and BARBARA SURK Associated Press

TUNIS, Tunisia (AP) — Tunisians on Saturday voted to elect a new parliament, to the backdrop of a soaring cost-of-living crisis and concerns of democracy backsliding in the North African country — the cradle of Arab Spring protests a decade ago.

Opposition parties — including the Salvation Front coalition that the popular Ennahda party is part of — boycotted the polls because they say the vote is part of President Kais Saied's efforts to consolidate power. The decision to boycott will likely lead to the next legislature being subservient to the president, whom critics accuse of authoritarian drift.

After the polls closed at 6 p.m. (1700 GMT), the voter turnout appeared lower than in previous legislative elections in 2014 and 2019. Associated Press reporters observed deserted polling stations during Saturday's balloting — although they also saw people queuing outside several polling places around the capital, Tunis.

Farouk Bouaskar, president of Tunisia's Election Authority, said Saturday night that the turnout was astonishingly low and stood at 8.8 percent. Of 9 million registered voters, only some 800,000 cast ballots, Bouaskar said.

"It's really a stretch to call what occurred today an election," said Saida Ounissi, a former member of the parliament that the president dissolved in March after years of political deadlock and economic stagnation.

Ounissi, who also served as minister and was elected in two previous elections to the legislature on the Ennahda party list, acknowledged that she was "a bit bitter" at the political situation as the country faced an unprecedented financial crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic and the fallout from the war in Ukraine.

"People were very angry at the parliament because of the deteriorating economy that is due to various crisis, and the president capitalized on that anger to crush the parliament, stifle democracy and seize more power," Ounissi said.

Parliament last met in July 2021. Since then, Saied, who was elected in 2019 and still enjoys the backing of more than half of the electorate, has also curbed the independence of the judiciary and weakened parliament's powers.

In a referendum in July, Tunisians approved a constitution that hands broad executive powers to the president. Saied, who spearheaded the project and wrote the text himself, made full use of the mandate in September, changing the electoral law to diminish the role of political parties.

The new law reduces the number of member of the lower house of parliament from 217 to 161, who are now to be elected directly instead of via a party list. And lawmakers who "do not fulfil their roles" can be removed if 10% of their constituents lodge a formal request.

Critics say the electoral law reforms have hit women particularly hard. Only 127 women are among the 1,055 candidates running in Saturday's election.

Saied's critics accuse him of endangering the democratic process. But many others believe that scrapping the party lists puts individuals ahead of political parties and will improve elected officials' accountability. They are exasperated with political elites, welcome their increasingly autocratic president's political reforms and see the vote for a new parliament as a chance to solve their dire economic crisis.

Saied and his wife, Ichraf Chebil, cast their ballots in Ennasr, an upscale suburb north of Tunis on Saturday morning. He called on citizens to vote "with your hearts and your consciousness to reclaim your legitimate rights to justice and freedom." He also warned against supporting those he claimed had abused

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power and “depleted the country of valuable resources after bribing people to elect them under the old electoral law.”

The Tunisian government is deeply indebted and chronically short of funds to pay for badly needed food and energy. Food prices have soared over the past months and shortages of basic staples like sugar, vegetable oil, rice, milk and even bottled water have threatened to turn simmering discontent into larger turmoil.

Many believe their country’s decade-old democratic revolution has failed, a decade after Tunisia was the only nation to emerge from the Arab Spring protests with a democratic government.

Hédia Sekhiri, a retired private sector worker, said she came out to vote to set an example for young people. “It’s my duty as a citizen ... to build a better future for our country,” Sekhiri said.

Amor Hamad, a 58-year-old engineer in Tunis, said he hopes his vote will “contribute to the evolution of the country in the right direction and put an end to 10 years of disastrous leadership by successive governments since the 2011 revolution.”

The vote comes on the 12th anniversary of the event that sparked the Arab Spring — when a Tunisian fruit vendor, Mohamed Bouazizi, set himself on fire because of the dire economic situation under the long-time strongman rule of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. Bouazizi died weeks later. His act of desperation prompted protests that led to the dictator’s ouster and provoked similar uprisings around the Arab world.

Biodiversity talks in final days with many issues unresolved

By MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

Negotiators at a United Nations biodiversity conference Saturday have still not resolved most of the key issues around protecting the world’s nature by 2030 and providing tens of billions of dollars to developing countries to fund those efforts.

The United Nations Biodiversity Conference, or COP15, is set to wrap up Monday in Montreal and delegates were racing to agree on language in a framework that calls for protecting 30% of global land and marine areas by 2030, a goal known as “30 by 30.” Currently, 17% of terrestrial and 10% of marine areas globally are protected.

They also have to settle on amounts of funding that would go to financing projects to create protected areas and restore marine and other ecosystems. Early draft frameworks called for closing a \$700 billion gap in financing by 2030. Most of that would come from reforming subsidies in the agriculture, fisheries and energy sectors but there are also calls for tens of billions of dollars in new funding that would flow from rich to poor nations.

“From the beginning of the negotiations, we’ve been seeing systematically some countries weakening the ambition. The ambition needs to come back,” Marco Lambertini, the director general of WWF International said, adding that they needed a “clear conservation target” that “sets the world on a clear trajectory towards delivering a nature positive future.”

Canada’s Minister of Environment and Climate Change Steven Guilbeault expressed more optimism. Guilbeault told The Associated Press Saturday morning that he has heard “few people talk about red lines” and that means “people are willing to talk. People are willing to negotiate.”

“I’ve heard a lot of support for ambition from all corners of the world,” Guilbeault said. “Everyone wants to leave here with an ambitious agreement.”

Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, the executive secretary of the U.N. Convention on Biological Diversity, told reporters Saturday afternoon that she was encouraged by the progress especially around committing resources but that a deal had not been reached yet.

“The negotiating teams have more work to do. They have to turn promises made into plans, ambitions and actions,” she said.

The ministers and government officials from about 190 countries mostly agree that protecting biodiversity has to be a priority, with many comparing those efforts to climate talks that wrapped up last month in Egypt.

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Climate change coupled with habitat loss, pollution and development have hammered the world's biodiversity, with one estimate in 2019 warning that a million plant and animal species face extinction within decades — a rate of loss 1,000 times greater than expected. Humans use about 50,000 wild species routinely, and 1 out of 5 people of the world's 8 billion population depend on those species for food and income, the report said.

But they are struggling to agree on what that protection looks like and who will pay for it.

The financing has been among the most contentious issues, with delegates from 70 African, South American and Asian countries walking out of negotiations Wednesday. They returned several hours later.

Brazil, speaking for developing countries, said in a statement that a new funding mechanism dedicated to biodiversity be established and that developed countries provide \$100 billion annually in financial grants to emerging economies until 2030.

"You need a robust and ambitious package on finance that matches the ambition of the Global Biodiversity framework," Leonardo Cleaver de Athayde, the head of the Brazilian delegation, told the AP.

"This will cost a lot of money to implement. The targets are extremely ambitious and cost a lot of money," he continued. "The developing countries will bear a higher burden in implementing it because most biodiversity resources are to be found in developing countries. They need international support."

The donor countries — the European Union and 13 countries — responded Friday with a statement promising to increase biodiversity financing. They noted they doubled biodiversity spending from 2010 to 2015 and committed to several billion dollars more in biodiversity funding since then.

Zac Goldsmith, the U.K.'s minister for Overseas Territories, Commonwealth, Energy, Climate and Environment, acknowledged the focus cannot only be on popular protection measures like the 30 by 30 goal.

"The 30-by-30 is a headline target, but you can't deliver 30-by-30 without a whole range of other things being agreed as well," he said. "We're not gonna have 30-by-30 without finance. We're not going to have it unless other countries do as Costa Rica has and break the link between agricultural productivity and land degradation and deforestation. And we're not gonna be able to do any of these things if we don't address ... subsidies."

Even protection targets are still being squabbled over. Many countries believe 30% is an admirable goal but some countries are pushing to water the language down to allow among other things sustainable activities in those areas that conservationists fear could result in destructive logging and mining. Others want language referencing ways to better manage the other 70% of the world that wouldn't be protected.

Other disagreements revolve around how best to share the benefits from genetic resources and enshrining the rights of Indigenous groups in any agreement. Some Indigenous groups want direct access to funding and a voice in designating protected areas that impact Indigenous peoples.

"Any protected areas that affect Indigenous peoples need to have the free prior informed consent of Indigenous peoples, otherwise there will be the same old patterns of Indigenous peoples being displaced by protected areas," Atossa Soltani, the director of global strategy for the Amazon Sacred Headwaters Initiative, an alliance of 30 Indigenous nations in Ecuador and Peru working to permanently protect 86 million acres of rainforest, said in an email interview.

The other challenge is including language — similar to the Paris Agreement on climate change — that creates a stronger system to report and verify the progress countries make. Many point to the failures of the 2010 biodiversity framework, which saw only six of the 20 targets partially met by a 2020 deadline.

"It's very important for parties to see what others are doing. It's important for civil society, people like you to track our progress or sometimes unfortunately lack thereof," Guilbeault said. "It's an important tool to help keep our feet to the fire. If it's effective on climate. We should have it on nature as well."

Iran authorities arrest actress of Oscar-winning movie

CAIRO (AP) — Iranian authorities arrested one of the country's most renowned actresses Saturday on charges of spreading falsehoods about nationwide protests that grip the country, state media said.

The report by IRNA said Taraneh Alidoosti, star of the Oscar-winning movie "The Salesman," was detained

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a week after she made a post on Instagram expressing solidarity with the first man recently executed for crimes allegedly committed during the protests.

The announcement is the latest in a series of celebrity arrests, that have included footballers, actors and influencers, in response to their open display of support for anti-government demonstrations now in their third month

According to the report published on the state media's official Telegram channel, Alidoosti was arrested because she did not provide "any documents in line with her claims."

It said that several other Iranian celebrities had also "been summoned by the judiciary body over publishing provocative content," and that some had been arrested. It provided no further details.

In her post, the 38-year-old actress said: "His name was Mohsen Shekari. Every international organization who is watching this bloodshed and not taking action, is a disgrace to humanity."

Shekari was executed Dec. 9 after being charged by an Iranian court with blocking a street in Tehran and attacking a member of the country's security forces with a machete.

In November, Hengameh Ghaziani and Katayoun Riahi, two other famous Iranian actresses, were arrested by authorities for expressing solidarity with protesters on social media. Voria Ghafouri, an Iranian soccer player, was also arrested last month for "insulting the national soccer team and propagandizing against the government." All three have been released.

Since September, Alidoosti has openly expressed solidarity with protesters in at least three posts on Instagram. Her account, which had some 8 million followers, has been suspended.

Last Week, Iran executed a second prisoner, Majidreza Rahnavaard, in connection with the protests. Rahnavaard's body was left hanging from a construction crane as a gruesome warning to others. Iranian authorities alleged Rahnavaard stabbed two members of its paramilitary force.

Both Shekari and Rahnavaard were executed less than a month after they were charged, underscoring the speed at which Iran now carries out death sentences imposed for alleged crimes related to the demonstrations. Activists say at least a dozen people have been sentenced to death in closed-door hearings. Iran is one of the one the world's top executioners.

Iran has been rocked by protests since the Sept. 16 death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, who died after being detained by the morality police. The protests have since morphed into one of the most serious challenges to Iran's theocracy installed by the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Alidoosti had previously criticised the Iranian government and its police force before this year's protests.

In June 2020, she was given a suspended five-month prison sentence after she criticized the police on Twitter in 2018 for assaulting a woman who had removed her headscarf.

At least 495 people have been killed in the demonstrations amid a harsh security crackdown, according to Human Rights Activists in Iran, a group that has been monitoring the protests since they began. Over 18,200 people have been detained by authorities.

Other well-known movies Alidoosti has starred in include "The Beautiful City" and "About Elly."

McCarthy's race for speaker risks upending House on Day One

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — In his quest to rise to House speaker, Kevin McCarthy is charging straight into history — potentially becoming the first nominee in 100 years unable to win the job on a first-round floor vote.

The increasingly real prospect of a messy fight over the speaker's gavel on Day One of the new Congress on Jan. 3 is worrying House Republicans, who are bracing for the spectacle. They have been meeting endlessly in private at the Capitol trying to resolve the standoff.

Taking hold of a perilously slim 222-seat Republican majority in the 435-member House and facing a handful of defectors, McCarthy is working furiously to reach the 218-vote threshold typically needed to become speaker.

"The fear is, that if we stumble out of the gate," said Rep. Jim Banks, R-Ind., a McCarthy ally, then the voters who sent the Republicans to Washington "will revolt over that and they will feel let down."

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Not since the disputed election of 1923 has a candidate for House speaker faced the public scrutiny of convening a new session of Congress only to have it descend into political chaos, with one vote after another, until a new speaker is chosen. At that time, it eventually took a grueling nine ballots to secure the gavel.

McCarthy, a Republican from Bakersfield, California, who was first elected in 2006 and who remains allied with Donald Trump, has signaled he is willing to go as long as it takes in a floor vote to secure the speaker's job he has wanted for years. The former president has endorsed McCarthy, and is said to be making calls on McCarthy's behalf. McCarthy has given no indication he would step aside, as he did in 2015 when it was clear he did not have the support.

But McCarthy also is acknowledging the holdouts won't budge. "It's all in jeopardy," McCarthy said Friday in an interview with conservative Hugh Hewitt.

The dilemma reflects not just McCarthy's uncertain stature among his peers, but also the shifting political norms in Congress as party leaders who once wielded immense power — the names of Cannon, Rayburn and now Pelosi adorn House meeting rooms and office buildings — are seeing it slip away in the 21st century.

Rank-and-file lawmakers have become political stars on their own terms, able to shape their brands on social media and raise their own money for campaigns. House members are less reliant than they once were on the party leaders to dole out favors in exchange for support.

The test for McCarthy, if he is able to shore up the votes on Jan. 3 or in the days that follow, will be whether he emerges a weakened speaker, forced to pay an enormous price for the gavel, or whether the potentially brutal power struggle emboldens his new leadership.

"Does he want to go down as the first speaker candidate in 100 years to go to the floor and have to essentially, you know, give up?" said Jeffrey A. Jenkins, a professor at the University of Southern California and co-author of "Fighting for the Speakership."

"But if he pulls this rabbit out of the hat, you know, maybe he actually has more of the right stuff."

Republicans met in private this past week for another lengthy session as McCarthy's detractors, largely a handful of conservative stalwarts from the Freedom Caucus, demand changes to House rules that would diminish the power of the speaker's office.

The Freedom Caucus members and others want assurances they will be able to help draft legislation from the ground up and have opportunities to amend bills during the floor debates. They want enforcement of the 72-hour rule that requires bills to be presented for review before voting.

Outgoing Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and the past two Republican speakers, John Boehner and Paul Ryan, faced similar challenges, but they were able to rely on the currency of their position to hand out favors, negotiate deals and otherwise win over opponents to keep them in line — for a time. Boehner and Ryan ended up retiring early.

But the central demand by McCarthy's opponents' could go too far: They want to reinstate a House rule that allows any single lawmaker to file a motion to "vacate the chair," essentially allowing a floor vote to boot the speaker from office.

The early leaders of the Freedom Caucus, under Mark Meadows, the former North Carolina congressman turned Trump's chief of staff, wielded the little-used procedure as a threat over Boehner, and later, over Ryan.

It wasn't until Pelosi seized the gavel the second time, in 2019, that House Democrats voted to do away with the rule and require a majority vote of the caucus to mount a floor vote challenge to the speaker.

Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas, said the 200-year-old rule was good enough for Thomas Jefferson, so it's one he would like to see in place.

"We're still a long way from fixing this institution the way it needs to be fixed," Roy told reporters Thursday at the Capitol.

What's unclear for McCarthy is even if he gives in to the various demands being made by the conservatives, whether that will be enough for them to drop their opposition to his leadership.

Several House Republicans said they do not believe McCarthy will ever be able to overcome the detractors.

"I don't believe he's going to get to 218 votes," said Rep. Bob Good, R-Va., among the holdouts. "And

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so I look forward to when that recognition sets in and, for the good of the country, for the good of the Congress, he steps aside, and we can consider other candidates.”

The opposition to McCarthy has promoted a counteroffensive from other groups of House Republicans who are becoming more vocal in their support of the GOP leader — and more concerned about the fallout if the start of the new Congress descends into an internal party fight.

Rep. David Joyce, R-Ohio, who leads the Republican Governance Group, was wearing an “O.K.” button on his lapel — meaning, “Only Kevin,” he explained.

Some have suggested that the opponents to McCarthy could simply vote “present,” lowering the threshold for reaching a majority — a tactic Pelosi and Boehner both used to win with fewer than 218 votes.

While some have suggested threatening the detractors with removal from their committee assignments or other retribution, Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-S.D., a leader of another conservative governance caucus, said: “Anybody who thinks that the holdouts are going to be bullied into compliance doesn’t understand how this town works.”

Retiring Rep. Fred Upton, R-Mich., who recalled that then-Republican Speaker Newt Gingrich of Georgia dropped out of the race in 1998 when he didn’t have the votes, cautioned McCarthy against backing down.

“My advice to Kevin is, you got to go to the finish line,” Upton said. “You can’t fold the cards. You got to make these folks vote — and vote.”

Oppenheimer wrongly stripped of security clearance, US says

Associated Press undefined

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration has reversed a decades-old decision to revoke the security clearance of Robert Oppenheimer, the physicist called the father of the atomic bomb for his leading role in World War II’s Manhattan Project.

U.S. Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm said the 1954 decision by the Atomic Energy Commission was made using a “flawed process” that violated the commission’s own regulations.

“As time has passed, more evidence has come to light of the bias and unfairness of the process that Dr. Oppenheimer was subjected to while the evidence of his loyalty and love of country have only been further affirmed,” Granholm said in a statement on Friday.

Oppenheimer, who died in 1967, led the Manhattan Project, which developed the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II. The theoretical physicist was later accused of having communist sympathies and his security clearance was revoked following a four-week, closed-door hearing.

In stripping Oppenheimer of his clearance, the Atomic Energy Commission did not allege that he had revealed or mishandled classified information, nor was his loyalty to the country questioned, according to Granholm’s order. The commission, however, concluded there were “fundamental defects” in his character.

Years later, an Atomic Energy Commission lawyer concluded after an internal review that “the system failed” and a “substantial injustice was done to a loyal American,” according to the secretary’s order.

Granholm said the commission’s decision was driven by a desire among its political leadership to “discredit Oppenheimer in public debates over nuclear weapons policy.”

“Such political motives must have no place in our personnel security process,” she wrote.

U.S. Sen. Patrick Leahy of Vermont applauded the reversal, saying the 1954 decision followed a “manifestly unjust and unethical hearing that would be resoundingly condemned today.”

“This decision reaffirms that government scientists, whether renowned like Oppenheimer or a technician doing his or her daily job — including those willing to raise safety concerns or to express unpopular opinions on matters of national security — can do so freely and that their cases will be fairly reviewed based on facts, not personal animus or politics,” Leahy said in a statement.

The decision comes as the story of Oppenheimer is headed to the big screen. Christopher Nolan’s “Oppenheimer” film is expected to be released in theaters in July. It’s based on Kai Bird and Martin J. Sherwin’s Pulitzer Prize-winning biography “American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer,” and stars Cillian Murphy in the title role.

Dead boy pulled from rubble of latest Russian hit on Ukraine

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Emergency crews pulled the body of a toddler from the rubble in a pre-dawn search Saturday for survivors of a Russian missile strike that tore through an apartment building in the central Ukrainian city of Kryvyi Rih.

The missile was one of what Ukrainian authorities said were 16 that eluded air defenses among the 76 missiles fired Friday in the latest Russian attack targeting Ukrainian energy infrastructure, part of Moscow's strategy to leave Ukrainian civilians and soldiers in the dark and cold this winter.

Gov. Valentyn Reznichenko of the Dnipropetrovsk region, where Kryvyi Rih is located, wrote on the Telegram social media app that "rescuers retrieved the body of a 1-1/2-year-old boy from under the rubble of a house destroyed by a Russian rocket." In all, four people were killed in the strike, and 13 injured — four of them children — authorities said.

Reznichenko said the pounding from Russian forces continued overnight, damaging power lines and houses in the cities and towns of Nikopol, Marhanets and Chervonohryhorivka, which are across the Dnieper River from the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant.

By Saturday morning, Ukraine's military leadership said Russian forces had fired more than a score of further missiles since the barrage a day earlier. It did not say how many of those might have been stopped by the air defenses.

Friday's onslaught, which pummeled many parts of central, eastern and southern Ukraine, constituted one of the biggest assaults on the capital, Kyiv, since Russia began the war by attacking Ukraine on Feb. 24. Kyiv came under fire from about 40 missiles on Friday, authorities said, nearly all intercepted by air defenses.

In Kherson, where Ukraine regained control last month in a significant setback for Russia, a 36-year-old man was killed and a 70-year-old woman was wounded in a Russian attack on Saturday, said regional governor Yaroslav Yanushevych.

Yet again, Ukrainian utility crews have had to scramble to patch up damaged power and water systems as Russia targets vital services for civilians as winter's hardships set in.

Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko reported Saturday that two-thirds of homes in the country's capital had been reconnected to electricity and all had regained access to water. The subway system also resumed service, after serving as a shelter the day before.

Half of the Kyiv province, which surrounds but doesn't include the Ukrainian capital, still lacked electricity a day after Friday's attack, Regional Gov. Oleksiy Kuleba said, adding that rain and snow, making power lines icy, was complicating efforts to restore power.

The head of Ukraine's northeastern Kharkiv province Oleh Syniehubov said Saturday that electricity had been restored to the entire region, including Kharkiv city, the country's second-largest metropolis. The power had been knocked out on Friday in attacks involving 10 S-300 missiles.

In Kryvyi Rih, 596 miners were stuck underground because of missile strikes, but all were eventually rescued, Mayor Oleksandr Vilkul said late Friday.

In Moscow on Saturday, Russia's foreign ministry slammed a new package of European Union sanctions approved a day earlier. Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova branded the EU's ninth batch of sanctions in response to the war "illegitimate unilateral restrictive measures" and lashed out at a ban on broadcasts by four major Russian TV channels as "authoritarian."

In allowing EU member states to "provide certain exemptions" for Russian food and fertilizer exporters, Zakharova contended that the EU was recognizing that its "restrictive measures have been undermining world food security." Targets of the latest round of sanctions include divisions of the Russian army and all of Russia's parliamentary parties. Also included in the package are a ban on the export of aviation engines to Russia and sanctions against the energy and mining sectors.

The Kremlin on Saturday confirmed that Russian President Vladimir Putin huddled a day earlier with armed forces commanders, including Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, chief of general staff, Valery Gerasimov.

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He also spoke with commanders from different branches.

Meanwhile, installation of a protective dome has begun over the spent-fuel storage area at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, an official from the Moscow-installed authorities of Ukraine's southeastern Zaporizhzhia province said on Saturday. Vladimir Rogov said the dome would protect against fragments of shells and improvised explosive devices carried by drones. The Russian-held plant, Europe's biggest nuclear power station, has been repeatedly shelled; its six reactors have been shut down for months.

The International Atomic Energy Agency recently announced plans to station nuclear safety and security experts at Ukraine's nuclear power plants to prevent any nuclear accident. The U.N. nuclear watchdog has already deployed a permanent mission to the Zaporizhzhia plant.

Qatar offers World Cup visitors an introduction to Islam

By LUIS ANDRES HENAO Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — Fatima Garcia donned a headscarf and a black abaya — a long, loose-fitting robe — over her clothes as she walked into a mosque in Doha to learn about Islam.

In Qatar to enjoy the World Cup with friends, the Salvadoran visitor took a day off from soccer to go sightseeing at the Katara mosque, where preachers have been introducing Islam in multiple languages to curious fans from around the world.

"Qatar is my first exposure to Islam," Garcia said inside the house of prayer, also known as the blue mosque for its beautiful turquoise tiles. "Qatar has been a life-changing adventure because it gives you a perspective on different cultures."

Hundreds of thousands of visitors have come to Qatar during the World Cup. For many it's their first visit to a Muslim country. Those who don't venture far beyond the stadiums and Doha's glitzy hotels will have only limited exposure to the country's religion, such as hearing the call to prayer at a distance or witnessing Muslims prostrate at prayer rooms in stadiums, airports and hotels. But for those who are curious to find out more about Islam, Qatari authorities and religious officials are eager to help.

Local mosques are offering multilingual tours to visitors and the Islamic Cultural Center in Doha offers a virtual reality tour of the holy city of Mecca. Booths at tourist sites hand out free copies of the Quran and brochures about Islam are available in hotel lobbies. Billboards have been set up across Doha featuring U.S. Olympic fencer Ibtihaj Muhammed and other Muslim personalities as part of a campaign encouraging people to explore Islam.

"Why during the World Cup? Everyone is coming here from across the world to Qatar, a Muslim country, and it's an opportunity to educate people about the faith," said Abu Huraira, a volunteer for the campaign by the Explore Islam Foundation and the Islam & Muslims Initiative.

Qatari officials say they hope the tournament will help provide visitors with a better understanding of their culture and that of the larger region.

Qatar follows an ultraconservative form of Sunni Islam known as Wahhabism. But unlike neighboring Saudi Arabia, where adherence to Wahhabism led to strict segregation of unmarried men and women, banned women from driving and kept concerts, cinemas and even yoga off-limits for decades, Qatar has long sponsored the arts, allowed women to participate in high levels of governance and encouraged tourists to feel at ease.

The World Cup host, though, has faced intense criticism over human rights issues, including the treatment of migrant workers, and accusations of "sportswashing" or attempting to use the event's prestige to remake its image.

Qatari officials have argued that the nation's progress and achievements are being overlooked. The ruling emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, said some of the criticism against the first Arab and Muslim country to host the World Cup included "fabrications and double standards."

The Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs and the host country's Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy did not respond to requests for comment.

Back inside the ornate Ottoman-style Katara mosque, Riffat Ishfaq, a guide from Pakistan, told Garcia

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that it was designed by Turkish interior designer Zeynep Fadillioglu, whose first name is the Turkish form of the name of the eldest daughter of the Prophet Muhammed. The tiles had been handmade, Ishfaq said; the columns were covered with leather and the domed roof contained gold. By the end of the tour, Garcia also learned why women dress modestly in Islam and the origins of the religion.

"We want to tell people about Islam. We feel pride in our identity," Ishfaq said, before telling Garcia to keep the abaya as a parting gift. "This helps to dispel misconceptions."

Nearby, Sergio Morales, a Guatemalan who had come for the whole tournament, finished listening to a tour and walked out of the mosque to a booth located at the entrance where he asked for a free copy of the Quran.

"Today I became interested because the guided tour was in Spanish and I could understand it all," he said. "There should be guides in Spanish in every mosque because there are so many Latin American people coming to these countries."

Booths with free Qurans and booklets introducing the religion in several languages are also available in the winding cobbled alleys of Souq Waqif, the capital's oldest bazaar where stores hawk spices and perfumes, scented oils and silk scarves.

Just steps from there, World Cup visitors walked into the spiral-like building of the Abdullah Bin Zaid Al-Mahmoud Islamic Cultural Center, for a tour and a visit to the mosque, where people gathered for Friday prayer.

Carlos Bustos, Mireya Arias and their sons, 8-year-old Jacobo and 13-year-old Matias toured the cultural center. The Colombian family read information on large placards about the contributions of the Islamic world to medicine, science, math and architecture.

"What we've seen is that they've made an effort to change the image that we have in the West of seeing Islam. It's breaking that barrier," said Carlos Bustos, who along with his sons had dressed in traditional Qatari clothes.

"They've told us that we're very different but we see more similarities than differences," he said.

His wife, Mireya Arias, admired the devotion of Muslims to their faith and how they follow the call to prayer. She also appreciated the efforts made by Qatar to introduce visitors to Islam.

"They've used a lot of strategies to get closer to visitors, for us to understand and learn," she said. "When you're on the buses that take you to the (World Cup) stadiums, you point to a QR code and it gives you explanations about the Quran."

Doha's Museum of Islamic Art also offers glimpses into religious beliefs and rituals. Visitors can read about the five pillars of Islam — the profession of faith, prayer, almsgiving, fasting and hajj or pilgrimage — or learn about hajj rituals and different funerary practices in the Islamic world.

"The more you understand this Islamic culture, the more fascinating it is," said Jose Antonio Tinoco, a Brazilian museum visitor, who wore his country's soccer jersey. "The most important part of the museum for me was the part on Islam."

2022 is deadliest year on record for Mexican journalists

By CHRISTOPHER SHERMAN Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — The deadliest year in at least three decades for Mexican journalists and media workers is nearing a close, with 15 slayings — a perilous situation underlined by a brazen near-miss attack this week on one of the country's most prominent journalists.

Two gunmen astride a motorcycle shot up radio and television journalist *Ciro Gómez Leyva's* armored vehicle 200 yards from his home Thursday night. The journalist described the attack and posted photos of his vehicle to social media.

Solidarity has grown among Mexico's press corps amid the carnage, and its members are making increasing noise after each killing. They also have pushed back against a longtime government narrative that the victims weren't real journalists or were corrupt.

Still, the killings — 15 counted by The Associated Press — have continued to rise.

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This year, many of the dead were small town reporters running their own outlets on a shoestring. Others were freelancers, including for national publications, in big cities like Tijuana.

Also on Thursday, assailants took aim at journalist Flavio Reyes de Dios, director of an online news site in Palenque, a town in the southern state of Chiapas. A vehicle without license plates followed him and then ran his motorcycle off the road, injuring the journalist, the press advocacy group Article 19 said.

That incident drew little notice. But it was national news that shots were fired at Gómez Leyva, who is one of Mexico's best known journalists. He is a regular critic of the government and a frequent target of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's tirades against press criticism.

Nevertheless, López Obrador on Friday condemned the attempt against Gómez Leyva. While acknowledging they had their differences, the president said, "It is completely reprehensible for anyone to be attacked."

Jan-Albert Hootsen, the Mexico representative for the Committee to Protect Journalists, said that this year the only nation to see more journalists killed is Ukraine, which is fighting the Russian invasion.

"We started gathering data on homicides of journalists in 1992, and it's been both the highest number of journalist killings in a single year, and we can also say that so far it looks to be the deadliest 'sexenio' (Mexico's six-year presidential term), which means the deadliest period of a single Mexican president if the trend as things stand right now continues," Hootsen said.

"Andrés Manuel López Obrador, both during the campaign and as president, has successfully politicized journalism in Mexico more than it has ever been in recent memory," Hootsen said.

Katherine Corcoran, author of "In the Mouth of the Wolf: A Murder, a Cover-up and the True Cost of Silencing the Press," said a big reason that journalist killings have remained stubbornly high in Mexico is that government officials are behind many of them.

"It's some kind of government corruption that's being threatened or some kind of government empire that's being threatened when they go after these journalists," said Corcoran, a former Associated Press bureau chief in Mexico.

The other factor is that Mexico's press has become more independent and aggressive, she said. "The reporters really are hitting a nerve and that's what's getting them killed."

Corcoran's book focused on the 2012 killing one such journalist, Regina Martínez from the national news magazine Proceso. She said Martínez's murder in the Gulf coast state of Veracruz overturned the government narrative that had long painted journalists who were killed as victims of their own corruption. Martínez was well-known, respected, ethical and believed to be beyond reproach.

Since Martínez was slain in April 2012, at least 86 other journalists and media workers have been killed in Mexico, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists' data.

While there is more solidarity among Mexico's journalists, they still receive little support from the Mexican public. When a journalist is killed, dozens of colleagues gather to protest, but there is generally not an outpouring of anger from society in general.

Corcoran said that stems from a long period when much of Mexico's press was part of the government machine and took significant amounts of money in exchange for positive coverage.

"That idea of paying the press is going to haunt the press in Mexico forever, because it did exist and intermittently came back," she said.

López Obrador frequently hammers that point during his daily news conferences. His administration cut much of those government payments and he says that is the reason he receives critical coverage. Much like former U.S. President Donald Trump did, López Obrador dismisses any critical press coverage as coming from corrupt reporters he calls his adversaries.

Last February, after five journalists had already been killed, the president said journalists "lie like they breathe."

Still, Hootsen said there is not any evidence that federal officials in the current administration are behind violence targeting journalists. However, he said, "it is very disappointing to see that even though the government is not actively persecuting journalists, it has done very little to prevent the persecution of journalists by other actors, either state or non-state."

In the absence of that protection, Mexican journalists have become much better prepared for situations of violence by creating formal and informal networks of support and rapid response, as well as strengthening ties to civil society organizations, he said.

But when there are attacks on journalists they seldom lead to arrests and even more rarely to convictions. "In terms of impunity, we are still seeing just about the same numbers that we've always seen, which means that more than 95% of all the murders of journalists linger in impunity," Hootsen said.

'Something to Talk About' songwriter Shirley Eikhard dies

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Shirley Eikhard, the singer-songwriter who supplied songs for Cher, Emmylou Harris, Anne Murray, Chet Atkins and found lasting fame penning Bonnie Raitt's Grammy-winning 1991 hit "Something to Talk About," has died. She was 67.

Eikhard died Thursday at Headwaters Health Care Centre in Orangeville, Ontario, due to complications from cancer, said publicist Eric Alper.

The blues-rock smash hit "Something to Talk About" was written in 1985 and Eikhard had offered it to Murray and other artists, who all declined to record it. Then years later Raitt left a message on Eikhard's phone saying she she'd just recorded it. Raitt said later she'd discovered the song on a demo Eikhard had sent and admired it.

The song was the first single from Raitt's 1991 album "Luck of the Draw" and spent 20 weeks on the Billboard Hot 100, peaking at No. 5. It would win Raitt the best pop vocal performance at the 1992 Grammy Awards and was also nominated in the record of the year category.

On Grammy night, Raitt made sure to thank Eikhard and she turned to Twitter after Eikhard's death to say she was "deeply saddened," writing "I will be forever grateful for our beautiful connection and friendship."

Eikhard earned Juno Awards in 1973 and 1974 for best country female artist and she won several BMI Awards. She was inducted into the Canadian Songwriter's Hall of Fame in October 2020. Her most recent album was 2021's "On My Way to You."

During her career, Eikhard released 18 full-length albums between 1972 to 2021 and taught herself to play guitar, piano, bass, drums, percussion, chromatic harmonica, sax, banjo and mandolin.

At age 15, Eikhard's song "It Takes Time" was recorded by country singer Murray in 1971, and later became a hit in her native Canada. Eikhard released her self-titled debut album the following year in 1972. The title track for Atkins' 41st studio album, "Pickin' My Way" was one of Eikhard's earliest successes.

She also crafted with Cher the frenetic dance track "Lovers Forever" for the 1994 film "Interview with the Vampire," but it didn't make the final soundtrack cut. They collaborated again on "Born With the Hunger," from Cher's 2000 album, "Not.com.mercial."

Eikhard sang the theme song for Stanley Kramer's 1976 movie "The Domino Principle" starring Gene Hackman and Candice Bergen, as well as the theme song for "The Passion of Ayn Rand" in 2000.

Anti-LGBTQ hate thrives online, spurs fears of more violence

By DAVID KLEPPER Associated Press

In the days after a gunman killed five people at a gay nightclub in Colorado last month, much of social media lit up with the now familiar expressions of grief, mourning and disbelief.

But on some online message boards and platforms, the tone was celebratory. "I love waking up to great news," wrote one user on Gab, a platform popular with far-right groups. Other users on the site called for more violence.

The hate isn't limited to fringe sites.

On Twitter, YouTube and Facebook, researchers and LGBTQ advocates have tracked an increase in hate speech and threats of violence directed at LGBTQ people, groups and events, with much of it directed at transgender people.

The content comes after conservative lawmakers in several states introduced dozens of anti-LGBTQ

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measures and amid a wave of threats targeting LGBTQ groups, as well as hospitals, health care workers, libraries and private businesses that support them.

"I don't think people understand the state of danger that we're living in right now," said Jay Brown, senior vice president at the Human Rights Campaign and a transgender man. "A lot of that is happening online, and online threats are turning into threats of real violence offline."

Hospitals in Boston, Pittsburgh, Phoenix, Washington, D.C., and other cities have received bomb threats and other harassing messages after misleading claims spread online about transgender care programs.

In Tennessee, masked members of a white supremacist group showed up recently at a holiday charity event at a bookstore because the evening's entertainment included a drag performer. An upcoming holiday party at an adults-only gay nightclub scheduled for Friday was also the subject of threats. The party's theme? Ugly Christmas sweaters.

"And they're still coming after us? It's just straight up bigotry and hatred at this point," said Jessica Patterson, one of the organizers of the event, who noted that groups calling for violence against LGBTQ groups often espouse other bigotries too. "They just have to hate someone."

The transphobic content targeting events such as Patterson's is just a subset of the hateful content about Jews, Muslims, women, Black people, Asians and others that has internet safety advocates and an increasing number of lawmakers in the United States and elsewhere pushing for tougher regulations that would force tech companies to do more.

There's no simple explanation for the increase in hate speech documented by researchers recent years. Socio-economic stress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, increased political polarization and resurgent far-right movements have all been blamed. So have politicians such as Donald Trump, whose brash use of social media emboldened extremists online.

"I've been tracking hate-fueled extremist communities for more than 25 years but I've never seen hate speech — let alone the calls for violence that they spark — reach the volume they have now," extremism researcher Rita Katz wrote in an email to The Associated Press.

Katz is co-founder of SITE Intelligence Group, which monitors far-right internet sites and has identified dozens of threats against LGBTQ groups and events in the U.S. in recent months. SITE released a bulletin Thursday detailing death threats against drag performers after one appeared at the White House bill signing of the Respect for Marriage Act.

Researchers at the Center for Countering Digital Hate, a nonprofit with offices in the U.S. and United Kingdom, studied the social media messages that spread immediately after the Colorado Springs shooting in November and found many examples of far-right Trump supporters celebrating the carnage. The users who didn't praise the shooting often claimed it was faked by authorities and the media as a way to make conservatives look bad.

Online hate speech has been linked to offline violence in the past, and many of the perpetrators of recent mass shootings were later found to be immersed in online worlds of bigotry and conspiracy theories.

Officials in a number of countries have cited social media as a key factor in extremist radicalization, and have warned that COVID restrictions and lockdowns have given extremist groups a powerful recruiting tool.

Despite rules prohibiting hate speech or violent threats, platforms such as Facebook and YouTube have struggled to identify and remove such content. In some cases, it's because people use coded language designed to evade automated content moderation.

Then there's Twitter, which saw a surge in racist, anti-Semitic and homophobic content following its purchase by Elon Musk, a self-described free speech absolutist. Musk himself posted a tweet this past week that mocked transgender pronouns, as well as another misleadingly suggesting that Yoel Roth, Twitter's former head of trust and safety, had supported letting children into gay dating apps.

Roth, who is gay, went into hiding after receiving a deluge of threats following Musk's tweet.

"He (Musk) didn't use the word 'groomer' but that's the subtext of his tweet is that Yoel Roth is a groomer," said Bhaskar Chakravorti, dean of global business at the Fletcher School at Tufts University, who has created a "Musk Monitor" tracking hate speech on the site.

"If the owner of Twitter himself is pushing false and hateful content against his former head of safety, what can we expect from this platform?" Chakravorti said.

India's visa temples attract devotees aspiring to go abroad

By DEEPA BHARATH Associated Press

CHENNAI, India (AP) — Arjun Viswanathan stood on the street, his hands folded, eyes fixed on the idol of the Hindu deity Ganesh.

On a humid morning, the information technology professional was waiting outside the temple, the size of a small closet – barely enough room for the lone priest to stand and perform puja or rituals for the beloved elephant-headed deity, believed to be the remover of obstacles.

Viswanathan was among about a dozen visitors, most of them there for the same purpose: To offer prayers so their U.S. visa interviews would go smoothly and successfully. Viswanathan came the day before his interview for an employment visa.

"I came here to pray for my brother's U.K. visa 10 years ago and for my wife's U.S. visa two years ago," he said. "They were both successful. So I have faith."

The Sri Lakshmi Visa Ganapathy Temple is a few miles north of the airport in Chennai (formerly Madras), a bustling metropolis on the Coromandel Coast in southeast India -- known for its iconic cuisine, ancient temples and churches, silk saris, classical music, dance and sculptures.

This "visa temple" has surged in popularity among U.S. visa seekers over the past decade; they can be found in almost any Indian city with a U.S. consulate. They typically gain a following through word of mouth or social media.

A mile away from the Ganesh temple is the Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Navaneetha Krishnan Temple, where an idol of Hanuman – a deity who has a human body and the face of a monkey — is believed to possess the power to secure visas. Also known as "Anjaneya," this god stands for strength, wisdom and devotion. In this temple, he has earned the monikers "America Anjaneya" and "Visa Anjaneya."

The temple's longtime secretary, G.C. Srinivasan, said it wasn't until 2016 that this temple became a "visa temple."

"It was around that time that a few people who prayed for a visa spread the word around that they were successful, and it's continued," he said.

A month ago, Srinivasan said he met someone who got news of his visa approval even as he was circumambulating the Anjaneya idol — a common Hindu practice of walking around a sacred object or site.

On a recent Saturday night, devotees decorated the idol with garlands made of betel leaves. S. Pradeep, who placed a garland on the deity, said he was not there to pray for a visa, but believes in the god's unique power.

"He is my favorite god," he said. "If you genuinely pray – not just for visa – it will come true."

At the Ganesh temple, some devotees had success stories to share. Jyothi Bontha said her visa interview at the U.S. Consulate in Chennai went without a hitch, and that she had returned to offer thanks.

"They barely asked me a couple of questions," she said. "I was pleasantly surprised."

Bontha's friend, Phani Veeranki, stood nearby, nervously clutching an envelope containing her visa application and supporting documents. Bontha and Veeranki, both computer science students from the neighboring state of Andhra Pradesh and childhood friends, are headed to Ohio.

Both learned about the visa temple on the social media platform Telegram.

Veeranki said she was anxious because she had a lot riding on her upcoming visa interview.

"I'm the first person in my family to go the United States," she said. "My mother is afraid to send me. But I'm excited for the opportunities I'll have in America."

Veeranki then handed over the envelope to the temple's priest for him to place at the foot of the idol for a blessing.

"We've been hearing about applications being rejected," she said, her hands still folded in prayer. "I'm really hoping mine gets approved."

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If she and Bontha make it to Ohio, they want to take a trip to Niagara Falls.

"I've always wanted to see it," Bontha said.

Mohanbabu Jagannathan and his wife, Sangeetha, run the temple, which Jagannathan's grandfather built in 1987. Their house is on a cul-de-sac, which is considered bad luck in several Asian cultures. In Chennai, it is common to find a Ganesh temple outside cul-de-sac homes due to the belief that the deity has the power to ward off evil. At first, only neighbors came to the temple, Jagannathan said.

"But over the years it started earning a quirky reputation," he said. "A lot of visa applicants who came to the temple spread the word that they found success after praying here."

In 2009, his father, Jagannathan Radhakrishnan, reconstructed the temple and added the word "visa" to the temple's name. Jagannathan said the success stories are heartwarming; visitors sometimes stop by his home to thank his family for keeping the temple open.

"I've never been bothered by it," Jagannathan said. "We offer this as a service to the public. It's a joy to see how happy people are when they come back and tell us they got their visa."

His wife said she was touched by the story of a man who came all the way from New Delhi to pray for a visa to see his grandchild after eight years apart. She remembers another time when a woman called her in tears, saying her visa application was rejected.

"Sure, some don't get it," she said. "God only knows why."

Padma Kannan brought her daughter, Monisha, who is preparing to pursue a master's degree in marketing analytics in Clark University. Kannan believes her daughter got her visa because of this powerful deity.

"I found this temple on Google," she said. "I was so nervous for her, and so I prayed here."

Monisha Kannan said she is not so sure she got her visa because of this temple, but she said she came to support her mom.

"I'm skeptical," she said. "I'm just someone who goes with the flow."

Her mother takes a more philosophical stance.

"We pray for our children and things happen easily for them," she said. "I think when they go through the rigors of life themselves, they will start believing in the power of prayer."

Viswanathan said he is not someone "who usually believes in such things." When his brother got his British visa a decade ago after offering prayers here, Viswanathan chalked it up to coincidence. He became a believer when his wife got her U.S. visa two years ago, he said.

The day after he visited the temple this time, Viswanathan's employment visa was approved. He'll head to New Hampshire in a few months.

"It's all about faith," he said. "If you believe it will happen, it will happen."

Crypto's ties to sports raise ethical questions

By EDDIE PELLIS AP National Writer

Sports fans who view their favorite players as role models might think twice before taking their financial advice, too.

The bankruptcy of FTX and the arrest of its founder and former CEO are raising new questions about the role celebrity athletes such as Tom Brady, Steph Curry, Naomi Osaka and others played in lending legitimacy to the largely unregulated landscape of crypto, while also reframing the conversation about just how costly blind loyalty to favorite players or teams can be for the average fan.

Cryptocurrencies are digital money that use blockchain as the database for recording transactions. It isn't backed by any government or institution and it remains a confusing concept — one that at first was largely the niche of tech-savvy coding specialists, people who distrusted governments and centralized banking systems and speculators with money to risk.

But now that risk is increasingly being taken on by investors who can't afford to lose, and the disparity in wealth between celebrities and their fans creates an ethical dilemma: Should sports stars, or teams, or leagues, be touting products that could lead their fans to financial harm? Or should fans bear the responsibility for their own risky behavior regardless of who is encouraging it?

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"In retrospect, it was an unwise business association that put Curry and Brady together with bad company," Mark Pritchard, a professor at Central Washington who has studied the intersection of ethics and sports, said in an email to The Associated Press. "Not sure how much due diligence was paid to the decision, but it does call to mind a Warren Buffet quote: 'Be fearful when others are greedy and greedy when others are fearful.'"

The marriage between crypto and sports formed a few years ago and has only strengthened since, despite all the troubles plaguing the industry. A study by the IEG sponsorship group, for instance, found FTX and other crypto companies had spent \$130 million for sponsorship in the NBA alone over the 2021-22 season; the season before, the sum was less than \$2 million.

FTX itself had numerous ties to sports before its eventual collapse: The company paid an undisclosed amount to place patches on the uniforms of MLB umpires, \$135 million for the naming rights on the arena where the Miami Heat play, and another \$10 million to Curry's basketball team, the Golden State Warriors, for ad placement in its arena and throughout the Warriors organization.

While those deals, as well as some others, cratered when FTX declared bankruptcy, plenty more live on. They include the naming rights for the home of the Lakers, which was once known as the Staples Center, but is now known as Crypto.com Arena, at the reported cost of \$700 million over 20 years. There are crypto deals in cricket, soccer and Formula 1.

Separately, dozens of athletes have endorsed crypto, and in doing so, have led some of their fans to follow suit — and others to file suit, against the likes of Curry, Brady and other high-profile personalities for using their celebrity status to promote FTX's failed business model.

Ben Salus, a Philly sports fan who has lost money in crypto, said he was uncomfortably surprised at the sudden increase of crypto-related signage around his favorite teams.

"It's a very odd transition, especially because I don't know if the world was ready for the prominence of crypto," Salus said. "You're getting these big personalities backing a thing that they, or their teams, know something about, but not very much."

The debate has become even more complex over the past five years, with the intersection between crypto, digitized artwork offered in the form of non-fungible tokens (NFTs), legalized sports wagering and e-gaming, along with the ever-expanding virtual-reality Metaverse — all growing more popular among large factions of sports stars and fans alike.

"It's a lot more connected than people think," said Ryan Nicklin, who studies the role of crypto in sports as part of his public-relations business. "And there's a lot more crossover from the crypto world to the gambling world and into gaming, because when you spend on one of these Metaverse games, you're essentially gambling since you don't know whether the value of that asset you've purchased is going to go up or down."

Crypto's move into the public mainstream wasn't driven by sports, but as it became a better-known commodity, sports leagues and teams and their athletes — never shy about trying to make a buck off the latest trends — got into the act.

"A lot of endorsements have to do with an emotional attachment," said Brandon Brown, who teaches sports and business at New York University's Tisch Institute for Global Sport. "So, it would make sense for these (crypto) companies to work with a sports team or a sports celebrity because there's an emotional attachment that goes along with that partnership."

One key moment came in 2020 when a few players, including Carolina Panthers Pro Bowl lineman Russell Okung, announced they would take all or some of their multimillion-dollar salaries in crypto.

"So many purchase Bitcoin to become cash rich," Okung tweeted not long after the announcement. "I bought it to be free from cash." Not long after, Bitcoin.com proudly stated that the increases in the price of Bitcoin had essentially doubled the \$6.5 million portion of Okung's salary that was paid in crypto.

Bigger names followed. Actors Matt Damon and Larry David were among the Hollywood types. The mayors of New York and Miami made a splash when they, too, said they would take their pay in crypto.

Aaron Rodgers, Shaquille O'Neal, Beckham Jr. and Trevor Lawrence were among a large group of high-profile athletes who also got into the act. One popular commercial involved Tampa Bay Buccaneers

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quarterback Brady and his then-wife, Gisele Bündchen, calling friends to talk crypto and playfully asking them: "Are you in?"

The relationship between crypto and sports is also regenerating a debate about how athletes should use the platform they wouldn't otherwise have but for sports. Colin Kaepernick's kneeling, to say nothing of the racial tensions laid bare in the U.S. by George Floyd's killing in 2020, upended the old "shut up and play" cliché, and presented many athletes with an opening to use sports to send a message.

Curry is among those who has been unafraid to delve into some of society's more difficult topics, speaking out after Floyd's killing and contributing to the Players' Tribune website where athletes blog about their views unfiltered by traditional media.

Now, Curry is in the headlines again as one of many paid endorsers of FTX. But aside of being named in the class action lawsuit and being ridiculed on some social media sites that are heavily engaged in crypto discussions, there hasn't been any major blowback against Curry for his investments and endorsements — and there may never be.

"When the currency blows up, will people look poorly on the currency, or will people look poorly on Brady or Steph Curry?" Brown said. "I'd venture to say that people are likely to have such a strong connection with their sports figures that they'll latch onto said sports figure and blame the other party, which in this case is FTX, or the currency."

Today in History: December 18, first Trump impeachment

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Sunday, Dec. 18, the 352nd day of 2022. There are 13 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 18, 2019, the U.S. House impeached President Donald Trump on two charges, sending his case to the Senate for trial; the articles of impeachment accused him of abusing the power of the presidency to investigate rival Joe Biden ahead of the 2020 election and then obstructing Congress' investigation. (It was the first of two Trump impeachment trials that would end in acquittal by the Senate.)

On this date:

In 1865, the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, abolishing slavery, was declared in effect by Secretary of State William H. Seward.

In 1892, Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky's ballet "The Nutcracker" publicly premiered in St. Petersburg, Russia; although now considered a classic, it received a generally negative reception from critics.

In 1917, Congress passed the 18th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution prohibiting "the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors" and sent it to the states for ratification.

In 1940, Adolf Hitler signed a secret directive ordering preparations for a Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union. (Operation Barbarossa was launched in June 1941.)

In 1944, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the government's wartime evacuation of people of Japanese descent from the West Coast while at the same time ruling that "concededly loyal" Americans of Japanese ancestry could not continue to be detained.

In 1957, the Shippingport Atomic Power Station in Pennsylvania, the first nuclear facility to generate electricity in the United States, went on line. (It was taken out of service in 1982.)

In 1958, the world's first communications satellite, SCORE (Signal Communication by Orbiting Relay Equipment), nicknamed "Chatterbox," was launched by the United States aboard an Atlas rocket.

In 1969, Britain's House of Lords joined the House of Commons in making permanent a 1965 ban on the death penalty for murder.

In 1992, Kim Young-sam was elected South Korea's first civilian president in three decades.

In 2003, two federal appeals courts ruled the U.S. military could not indefinitely hold prisoners without access to lawyers or American courts.

In 2011, the last convoy of heavily armored U.S. troops left Iraq, crossing into Kuwait in darkness in the

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final moments of a nine-year war. Vaclav Havel, 75, the dissident playwright who became Czechoslovakia's first democratically elected president, died in the northern Czech Republic.

In 2020, the U.S. added a second COVID-19 vaccine to its arsenal, as the Food and Drug Administration authorized an emergency rollout of the vaccine developed by Moderna Inc. and the National Institutes of Health; a vaccine from Pfizer Inc. and Germany's BioNTech was already being dispensed.

Ten years ago: Classes resumed in Newtown, Connecticut, except at Sandy Hook Elementary School, the scene of a massacre four days earlier. Two bank robbers pulled off a daring escape from downtown Chicago's high-rise jail by scaling down 17 stories using a makeshift rope. (Kenneth Conley and Jose Banks were later recaptured.) Texas A&M quarterback Johnny Manziel became the first freshman to be voted The Associated Press Player of the Year in college football.

Five years ago: An Amtrak train making the first-ever run along a faster route hurtled off an overpass south of Seattle and spilled some of its cars onto the highway below; three people were killed and dozens were hurt. (Investigators found that the train was traveling 80 mph in a 30 mph zone.) A fire and blackout at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, the world's busiest, forced the cancellation of more than 1,500 flights just days before the start of the Christmas rush; airlines said some of the grounded travelers would have to wait days before there would be available seats on flights. The Los Angeles Lakers retired numbers 8 and 24, both of the jersey numbers worn by Kobe Bryant, the leading scorer in franchise history.

One year ago: Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear said all of the people reported missing in Kentucky after tornadoes swept through the state a week earlier had been accounted for; more than 90 people were confirmed dead in five states, including 81 in Kentucky. Nations across Europe moved to reimpose tougher measures to stem a new wave of COVID-19 infections spurred by the highly transmissible omicron variant, with the Netherlands leading the way by imposing a nationwide lockdown. "Saturday Night Live" aired without a live audience, and with only limited cast and crew, due to a recent spike in the omicron variant.

Today's Birthdays: Rock musician Keith Richards is 79. Writer-director Alan Rudolph is 79. Movie producer-director Steven Spielberg is 76. Blues artist Rod Piazza is 75. Movie director Gillian Armstrong is 72. Movie reviewer Leonard Maltin is 72. Rock musician Elliot Easton is 69. Comedian Ron White is 66. R&B singer Angie Stone is 61. Actor Brad Pitt is 59. Professional wrestler-turned-actor "Stone Cold" Steve Austin is 58. Actor Shawn Christian is 57. Actor Rachel Griffiths is 54. Singer Alejandro Sanz is 54. Actor Casper Van Dien is 54. Country/rap singer Cowboy Troy is 52. International Tennis Hall of Famer Arantxa Sanchez Vicario is 51. DJ Lethal (Limp Bizkit) is 50. Pop singer Sia is 47. Country singer Randy Houser is 46. Actor Josh Dallas is 44. Actor Katie Holmes is 44. Actor Ravi Patel is 44. Singer Christina Aguilera is 42. Actor Ashley Benson is 33. NHL defenseman Victor Hedman is 32. Actor-singer Bridgit Mendler is 30. MLB outfielder Ronald Acuña Jr. is 25. Electro-pop singer Billie Eilish is 21. Actor Isabella Crovetti is 18.