

Groton Daily Independent

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Groton Community Calendar Monday, Jan. 16

Senior Menu: Parmesean chicken breast, baked potato with sour cream, wild rice, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Breakfast pizza.

School Lunch: Taco salads.

Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center, 1 p.m.

Girls Basketball at Langford Area: JV game at 6 p.m. followed by varsity.

Middle School Wrestling at Redfield.

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

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

Tuesday, Jan. 17

Senior Menu: Roast beef, mashed potatoes and gravy, beets, chocolate cake, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: French toast.

School Lunch: Meatballs, mashed potatoes.

Middle School Wrestling at Aberdeen Civic Arena, 4 p.m.

Wrestling at Willow Lake with Clark/Willow Lake and Hamlin, 6 p.m.

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

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

The Pantry, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran; Groton Ministerial Meeting at UMC, 11 a.m.

United Methodist: Conde Ad Council.

City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.

Wednesday, Jan. 18

Senior Menu: Cabbage hot dish, carrots, pears, muffin.

School Breakfast: Egg omelets.

School Lunch: Chicken strips, tri tators.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 6 p.m.

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Confirmation, 4 p.m.; Groton Ad Council, 7 p.m.

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

CLOSED: 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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Weekly Vikings Recap - Week 18

By Jack & Duane Kolsrud

The 2022 Minnesota Vikings season officially came to an end after the team fell to the New York Giants in the Wild Card Round. The Vikings set an NFL record this year by going 11-0 in one-score games - unfortunately for them (and us, the fans), their streak ended when they needed it most as they fell 24-31 to the visiting Giants. The story of the game for the Vikings was the putrid performance of their defense. Not only did the Giants amass 431 yards of total offense, but they weren't forced to punt until late in the third quarter. It was evident early that the Vikings' defense was in for a long day as the team gave up back-to-back touchdown drives on just five plays or less on the first two drives of the game. The issue for the Vikings' defense seemed to be the lack of speed by many of their veteran players. Often, Daniel Jones was able to find wide-open Giants' wide receivers on simple crossing routes because the Vikings' cornerbacks could not keep up. And in the rare occasions when the crossing routes weren't open, Daniel Jones would easily sneak out of the pocket for a first down rush.

Looking toward the offseason, the Vikings will have a lot of questions about what to do with many of these defensive players. Veterans such as Harrison Smith and Eric Kendricks, who have been with the Vikings for many years, have started to slow down a bit and might be on their way out sooner than we would have thought heading into the season. Also, guys like Za'Darius Smith, Patrick Peterson, and Jordan Hicks, who have been contributors for the Vikings for only a short time, might not be on the Vikings next year as the team might look to get younger on the defensive side of the ball. Whatever this new Vikings' regime decides to do with these players will be a good indicator of whether the team is going to build for the future or go all out for one more run at a Super Bowl.

As for the Vikings' offense, Kirk Cousins had a great game for the most part. He completed almost 80% of his passes for 273 yards and 2 touchdowns. TJ Hockenson also played great today as he caught 10 passes for 129 yards, his most receiving yards in a game this season since joining the Vikings midway through the season. Despite these two impressive performances Sunday, when it mattered the most, they both failed to deliver. On 4th and 8 with 1:51 remaining in the game and the Vikings down 31-24, Kirk Cousins decided to throw a 3-yard check down to Hockenson rather than attempt a tougher throw past the first-down marker. It's not clear whether it was Hockenson's fault for running a route short of the first-down marker or Cousins' fault for not giving one of his other wide receivers a chance down the field, despite them being somewhat covered for the most part. Whatever it was, it was such an "un-exciting" way to end such an exciting season.

The Vikings now will head into yet another offseason without a Super Bowl trophy in their trophy case. Even though the season did not get a Super Bowl parade throughout Minneapolis, that does not take away the fact that this was a fun season with record-setting moments and crazy plays. Sometimes you just have to enjoy the journey even though you failed to reach the ultimate goal.

"Extending the Golden Hour"

When I was a young physician, we talked with almost religious zeal about the "Golden Hour." Early on, this principally focused on the idea that within the first hour after an injury, a patient needed to receive definitive treatment in order to maximize the chances of survival, and recovery. We usually interpreted this to mean that the patient needed to be in the hands of the trauma surgeon before this hour was up. We took ATLS classes so we could make sure that the patient in our emergency room got the best treatment we non-surgeons could provide, until the surgeon could take over.

Of course, in the rural upper midwest, the nearest surgeon, and even the nearest emergency room, might be more than an hour away.

Fortunately for those of us living in more sparsely populated areas, time to the surgeon isn't the only factor that impacts our chances in an emergency. The care we receive before we get to the hospital matters. In fact, it matters a lot.

Gone are the days of "scoop and run" when the only goal of the first responders was to get the patient to the hospital as fast as possible. As with so many roles in modern society, a first responder today has a more complicated job. They need the training and flexibility to address what they see when they meet their patient. A person who has overdosed on fentanyl needs naloxone, to reverse the opioid and get them breathing. A person in cardiac arrest needs a shock delivered, to restart their heart. A person who has lost a limb in a car accident needs the bleeding stopped. These things need to be done well before the patient could arrive in an emergency room, even if they were delivered there by helicopter.

Certainly some emergencies require care that is still well beyond what could be provided outside of a hospital. If they can receive it in time, approximately 25% of stroke victims could benefit from clot busting medications. Another 10-15% have strokes that are actually caused by bleeding. It's a distinction that can't be made in an ambulance, and the wrong call could be catastrophic.

We all know that the pandemic has radically changed the workforce. Employers around the country are facing a shortage of workers, from fast food to finance. Health care is no different. This includes ambulance services, where the situation is further complicated by the reality that many rural EMS providers rely on volunteer labor. Those volunteers need to know more than just how to drive the ambulance. They need to know how to provide effective interventions, to extend that "Golden Hour." This particular labor shortage has grave consequences. It is quite literally a matter of life and death.

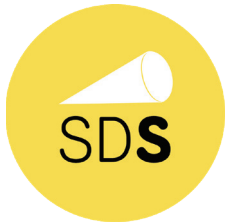
Debra Johnston, M.D. is part of The Prairie Doc® team of physicians and currently practices family medicine in Brookings, South Dakota. Follow The Prairie Doc® based on science, built on trust, at www.prairiedoc.org and on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show, broadcast on SDPB and streaming live on Facebook most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.



Based on Science, Built on Trust



Debra Johnston, M.D.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Rural lawyer recruitment efforts show local results, but fail to alter urban-rural divide

BY: JOHN HULT - JANUARY 15, 2023 12:59 AM

In 2013, then-Chief Justice of the South Dakota Supreme Court David Gilbertson was quoted in The New York Times for a story on a shortage of lawyers in rural areas.

Gilbertson helped spearhead an effort called "Project Rural Practice," a coordinated effort to address that issue.

The goal was critical, Gilbertson told reporter Ethan Bronner. Sixty-five percent of lawyers in South Dakota lived in four urban areas: Sioux Falls, Rapid City, Aberdeen and Pierre.

"We face the very real possibility of whole sections of this state being without access to legal services," he said.

A decade later, South Dakota has more lawyers overall, but the ratio of rural to urban has gotten worse. As of January, 72% of lawyers live in the same four cities.

That's why Patrick Goetzinger, another champion of Project Rural Practice, views the state's legal access issues through a different lens than those who would argue that South Dakota has a shortage of lawyers overall.

"We don't have a problem with the number of lawyers," the Rapid City attorney said. "We have a distribution problem."

And while Goetzinger acknowledges that the widened ratio is concerning, he sees Project Rural Practice as a program that's made a difference in several rural counties.

The joint efforts of the State Bar of South Dakota and the Unified Judicial System (UJS) to draw new lawyers to small towns have resulted in the recruitment of 31 lawyers over the past 10 years in every corner of the state, 14 of whom were practicing in rural areas last year.

The UJS Rural Attorney Recruitment Program, funded by the Legislature, is the state arm of the Bar-led Project Rural Practice. It pays new lawyers about \$12,500 a year for five years for working in counties with populations of 10,000 or less or cities with populations of 3,500 or less. The counties or cities foot 35% of the bill.

So far, 10 attorneys have completed all five years. Of those, seven have stayed rural.

The program made a difference for Zach Pahlke, the Tripp County state's attorney. Pahlke is one of the seven who stuck around.

He grew up in Winner, the son of two lawyers, but he didn't initially expect to follow in their footsteps. He decided to go to law school a year after earning his business administration degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

"I was looking to come back to South Dakota, but I can't say I would have come back to Winner without this program," Pahlke said.

In many ways, practicing in a rural area is more difficult for a recent graduate than practicing in urban areas. Wages are lower and the number of available cases are fewer – a daunting thought for a law school graduate with a heavy debt load.

The UJS program essentially covers student loan payments, which made Pahlke's choice to come back easier to make.

Also a help: his parents' guidance. One of the most difficult parts of being a young lawyer in a small

town is the sheer range of legal questions they might face.

"Rural practice is pretty general and broad, so you know a little about a multitude of fields rather than specializing," Pahlke said. "It does take a while to build up a competence in multiple areas, and in rural areas there are fewer attorneys to guide you."

The city of Winner has opened its checkbook to show appreciation for the program, offering another \$15,000 over five years on top of the UJS payout for another rural practice lawyer.

Goetzinger believes moves like that signal the next step for attracting and retaining rural lawyers: community buy-in.

"That's the kind of story that we like to hear – creative thinking at the local level to supplement and incentivize people coming to their community," he said.

John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux falls Argus Leader.

Bar exam critics move to strike testing requirement for USD law grads

New push for apprenticeship follows years of debate, creation of study group

BY: JOHN HULT - JANUARY 15, 2023 1:00 AM

On Wednesday, the state's top judicial official asked lawmakers to refrain from any changes to the bar admission process while a committee studies it.

Within hours, a lawmaker vowed to file a bill that would change the bar exam.

Rep. Mary Fitzgerald, R-Spearfish, wants University of South Dakota Knudson School of Law graduates to earn a license without passing the most contentious part of the exam.

Instead, under her proposal, USD Law graduates would pass the ethics portion of the test and put in 1,000 hours of apprenticeship with a licensed South Dakota lawyer who has at least five years of experience.

Graduates could opt to forgo the apprenticeship and take the bar if the proposal were to pass.

It's the second year in a row Fitzgerald has tried to alter attorney licensing. Last year's bill was similar, but lacked an apprenticeship component.

Fitzgerald's second go at the bar exam is the latest shot fired in a yearslong debate over the exam's value – both as a measure of fitness for legal duty, and its alleged effect on the state's roster of available lawyers.

South Dakota is 45th in the nation for lawyers per capita, according to the American Bar Association, and the issue is more acute in rural areas. More than 65% of South Dakota lawyers lived in one of four urban centers in 2013. Today, the figure is 72%, according to the State Bar.

The spark for the bar exam controversy came in 2014.

That was the year the state Supreme Court required potential lawyers to earn passing scores on not only the essay but also the multiple choice section of the exam, which is more likely to bedevil examinees in South Dakota and nationwide. Until then, scores for the two exam types were averaged. The court also changed the passing score on the multiple choice test from 130 to 135.

Passage rates had already begun to fall nationwide and in South Dakota at the time of the change, and they plummeted in the years immediately afterward.

In 2018, after a lengthy rules hearing, the high court adjusted its scoring system again, this time to allow examinees to transfer points from a high-scoring essay grade to their score on the multiple choice test. It also lowered the passing score for that multiple choice test by two points.

Passage rates have since returned to levels above the national average, Supreme Court Chief Justice

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Steven Jensen told lawmakers this week.

Fitzgerald and some others see the exam as an unnecessary burden for all graduates that disproportionately impacts Native Americans, non-English speakers and those without the means to spend the time and money necessary to apply for, prepare for and pass the test.

The test itself carries a \$450 application fee from the state, with additional fees for character and fitness reports and fingerprints. Costlier still are test preparation programs and a loss of an income from months of full-time study.

"It's going to take you a couple of months, and what are you going to do in the meantime?" Fitzgerald said.

The bar exam wasn't a requirement for South Dakota lawyers until 1983. Backers of "diploma privilege" have pointed out that retired Supreme Court justice David Gilbertson, the longest-serving chief justice in the state's history, didn't take the exam.

Fitzgerald said diploma privilege with apprenticeship would ease the burden on students and expand the pool of available lawyers.

"If you can go to law school and pass all those exams, you ought to be able to practice law in South Dakota," Fitzgerald said.

National discussion on bar exam structure

The conversation in South Dakota isn't happening in a vacuum.

The National Conference of Bar Examiners is working to update the test to a "Next Gen Bar Exam," in part as a response to criticisms that the multiple choice section of the test stands as a barrier to practice. That process began in 2018, and the new test will begin rolling out in 2026.

The expectation, according to USD Law School Dean Neil Fulton, is that the multiple choice section of the exam will be replaced.

Discussions on how to improve the manner of testing for legal competency, Fulton said, ought to be "a perpetual quest" for legal educators. The dean doesn't see issues with the test as a reason to do away with it, though.

"For those people who say, 'well, the current exam doesn't test as well as it should,' that's an argument to reform the exam and make it better, as opposed to not having a licensure exam at all," said Fulton, who serves on a South Dakota bar exam study committee.

Jensen outlined the goals of the study group in his speech on Wednesday, but he also said the bar exam is important.

"As a court, we are not unsympathetic to the individuals who have invested time and money in law school but are unable to pass the bar examination," Jensen said. "However, these sympathies cannot outweigh our institutional obligation to protect the public by requiring an assessment of competence before issuing a license to practice law in this state."

Exam keeps some out of profession

But for his troubles with the bar exam, Jun Park would be a practicing lawyer in South Dakota.

Instead, the USD Law School graduate is looking for work in Seoul, South Korea, a city he left more than a decade ago to pursue an education and legal career in the United States.

Park, who studied political science as an undergraduate in Buffalo, New York, felt like he'd found a home when he landed in South Dakota in 2015.

The school and community was small and welcoming, and South Dakota's Christian influences suited Park's religious beliefs.

"The main reason I want to practice law in South Dakota is that I love South Dakota," Park said from his home in Seoul.

Park did well in law school. He did not do as well on the bar exam. He passed the essay and ethics portions of the exam but stumbled on the timed, 200-question multiple choice section, called the Multistate Bar Exam (MBE). Park failed the MBE three times. The 2-hour time limit was a problem for him, he said, as was choosing one answer on questions where he saw more than one good one.

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The South Dakota Supreme Court declined to offer Park another chance, which is required in the state to take the bar more than three times. In most states, law school graduates can continue to take the test until they pass.

Some students move to states with less stringent requirements for retakes, or to one of the majority of states that average scores on different sections of the test to arrive at a final score.

Park's classmate Jeff Holt did that, moving to North Dakota after struggling with the South Dakota exam. North Dakota doesn't allow unlimited retakes, but it does scale its scores.

Before moving north, Holt paid his fees and spent months preparing for the South Dakota test. He missed a passing score in South Dakota by two points, he said.

Holt would like to see diploma privilege, but also sees apprenticeship as a reasonable track. His employer and his clients are pleased with his work, he said, and he sees that as a more realistic metric for legal skill than the MBE.

"Let their boss evaluate them after six months. Like any job, if they're doing well, they could keep them. If they're not, you let them go," Holt said.

Holt said Park, his former law school moot court teammate, would have a lot to offer to South Dakota clients.

"I have no doubt that Jun would be able to handle any type of law you'd throw at him," Holt said.

Test takers trip over multiple choice

Fitzgerald and her supporters point to the state's scoring system as the problem.

"Basically, we are the only ones that grade our bar exams like this," Fitzgerald said. "It's created a shortage of lawyers."

More pointedly, many who refer to those who fail the South Dakota bar as "victims" of the state's testing scheme argue that the exam is a poor measure of competence.

Supporters of Fitzgerald's 2022 diploma privilege proposal told lawmakers that the timed MBE test punishes slow, methodical readers and English language learners for lacking skills lawyers don't actually need.

Some even argued that slower readers may have more to offer potential clients.

"I want a lawyer who is methodical, who takes the time to do the research," former USD Law Professor Roger Baron told the House State Affairs Committee in 2022.

Rep. Fitzgerald's husband John Fitzgerald, a longtime prosecutor recently elected to a circuit judgeship, said in an interview with South Dakota Searchlight that the expense of the test is a particular concern.

Backers of bar exam change often hear from graduates who can't afford to stop working for months to study or to spend thousands of dollars on study aids, he said.

"It favors those who have more resources," John Fitzgerald said. "It does play into this idea that there's two systems: one for the rich, one for everybody else."

Some of those issues are not unique to South Dakota. Forty-nine states require a bar exam for licensure. One, Wisconsin, has diploma privilege, but Fulton pointed out that the state has strict academic performance measures designed to make sure students grasp the basics tested for in the bar.

New Hampshire's Daniel Webster program, which allows some students to forgo the post-graduation bar exam, builds bar exam testing into its coursework.

Other states, including Oregon and Minnesota, have explored alternatives through apprenticeship.

Support for scoring system

Fulton and Jensen reject the notion that the state's scoring system is behind examinee troubles – especially today.

A 2018 rules hearing that lowered the required MBE score to 133 from 135 and instituted a point sharing option saw a host of legal minds challenging the scoring scheme and questioning the exam.

Thomas Geu, the former USD Law School dean, decried the increasing complexity of bar exam questions. Mark Mickelson, former speaker of the South Dakota House, questioned the value of a higher score to potential clients across the state. One former chair of the Board of Bar Examiners, Jim Leach of Rapid City, sided with John Fitzgerald in arguing for a return to the pre-2014 system, noting the disparate impact

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the changes had on Native American lawyers.

"As best we can estimate, we think there are about 30 Native American lawyers in South Dakota, and that's approximately 1% in a state where the population is 10%," Leach said. "In western South Dakota, I'm told that approximately half the cases that are filed involve Native Americans."

Leach also questioned the importance of a higher required score. When Leach sat on the board, between 1997 and 2008, the passing score on the MBE was 130. Every year, he said, a handful of lawyers would pass with scores lower than the 135 required after the 2014 rule change.

"We have a whole group of lawyers that have been practicing between nine and 21 years, and further back than that, who got in with scores between 130 and 134," Leach said. "To my knowledge and belief, we have not had a problem with incompetent lawyers in South Dakota."

Jensen, who had only recently joined the Supreme Court in 2018, said the changes made that year have paid off. But he also said the hearing signaled that the next set of changes deserved a more thorough review. Jensen hopes to invite representatives from the National Conference of Bar Examiners to speak to South Dakota's bar exam committee this year.

The cost of exam preparation, passage rates, barriers to entry and potential changes to the test at the national level all played into the Supreme Court's decision to appoint the study group less than a year after Rep. Fitzgerald's bill failed in a legislative committee, Jensen said.

Instead of a change by legislative fiat or moving in one direction or the other to satisfy specific interest groups, Jensen said, the hope is for a thorough review that can inform meaningful action.

"Those are really the factors that caused the court to say, 'let's look at this. Let's not try to piecemeal it or try to fix something that maybe really isn't the problem,'" the chief justice said. "Let's look at this comprehensively and put a group together to study it so we have good information in terms of whether their changes should be made."

John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux falls Argus Leader.

COMMENTARY

Leaders needed to reconcile the races in South Dakota

by **DANA HESS** ~ JANUARY 16, 2023 3:00 AM

In December of 1989, Gov. George Mickelson wrote to Lakota Times publisher Tim Giago asking for his help writing a proclamation that would declare a year of reconciliation between the races in South Dakota. In the letter, Mickelson noted that racial harmony in the nation had been helped along by the work of Martin Luther King Jr.

On Martin Luther King Jr. Day, it's worth looking at where reconciliation between the Native American and white races stands in South Dakota.

It seems that in this state it takes more than the 12 months of Mickelson's Year of Reconciliation for the races to be reconciled.

For his part, Mickelson always had a long view of reconciliation. His father, governor of the state in the 1940s, was troubled by the state's racial relations. Forty years later, his son was governor and faced the same challenges as Native Americans and whites failed to trust each other or work together. It was the younger Mickelson's hope that 40 years after his administration, the next governor would not face the same challenges.

Well, the challenges are still there, but no one has stepped forward to face them. While reconciliation has enjoyed fits and starts of progress, for the most part the movement died in the plane crash that took Mickelson's life on April 19, 1993.

It's been 32 years since the original proclamation and the state has had five governors in that time. At

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this point, it looks for all the world like the governor who holds the office 40 years after Mickelson will face the same problems spawned by the distrust that's bred by ignorance when one culture fails to understand another.

We can't blame the governors who came after Mickelson for this lack of progress. Reconciliation of the races isn't in the governor's job description. That's a challenge that Mickelson set for himself, above and beyond his other duties in office.

South Dakotans feel insulted when they hear their state referred to as "fly-over country." But for white South Dakotans the state's nine Native American reservations are "drive-through country," unless they make a quick stop for cheap cigarettes or a few hands of blackjack at a casino.

For their part, no one can blame Native Americans for looking askance at white efforts that offer help or seek to foster understanding. With their history of federal government-induced pain and suffering, they have every right to be wary.

It was in this landscape that Gov. Kristi Noem caused a kerfuffle in 2020 when she announced that the secretary of the state's Tribal Relations office would offer the State of the Tribes address the first week of the legislative session.

Native American leaders were indignant. A tribal chairman traditionally gave that address and they would boycott rather than have the state of their nine nations get a government-approved soft soap treatment. When the dust settled, Noem relented and Crow Creek Tribal Chairman Lester Thompson Jr. delivered the address.

Noem's initial decision had another outcome, however. While they didn't boycott the State of the Tribes address, later that same afternoon leaders of all nine of the state's tribes met in Fort Pierre for the Great Sioux Nation Tribal Address. In an unprecedented show of unity, all nine leaders spoke about the challenges they face.

It's likely that Mickelson would have been pleased with the show of tribal unity. He would not have been as pleased with their message as speaker after speaker began with the distrust and problems caused by treaties that were signed and broken in the late 1800s. Mickelson, a governor focused on his state's economic development, preferred looking ahead rather than dwelling on the past.

As we look ahead, to 2023 and beyond, it's natural to wonder if there is anyone who can pick up Mickelson's mantle.

Giago, who died last year, was forever tied to Mickelson's effort but never again found a partner with the grit or the broad shoulders to handle such a heavy load.

President Barry Dunn at South Dakota State University is making progress with the Wokini Initiative that works toward Native American student success.

As South Dakota Searchlight recently noted, outgoing Attorney General Mark Vargo's short time in office was highlighted by a series of appointments and programs designed to strengthen the ties between law enforcement and the tribes.

There's no telling who will be the next leader who makes reconciliation a priority. It could be a legislator, a government official, a mayor, a tribal chairman. No matter who it is, that kind of leadership is still needed in South Dakota. Until someone credible steps forward, racial relations in this state will continue to be marked by miscommunication and mistrust.

Dana Hess spent more than 25 years in South Dakota journalism, editing newspapers in Redfield, Milbank and Pierre. He's retired and lives in Brookings, working occasionally as a freelance writer.

GDILIVE.COM

Girls Basketball at Langford
Monday, Jan. 16, 2023, 6 p.m.

Junior Varsity Game starts at 6 p.m.
Sponsored by Ed & Connie Stauch



followed by Varsity Game

Sponsored by
Bary Keith at Harr Motors
Bierman Farm Service
Blocker Construction
Dacotah Bank
Groton Chamber of Commerce
Groton Ford
John Sieh Agency
Locke Electric
Spanier Harvesting & Trucking
Bahr Spray Foam
Thunder Seed with John Wheeting



Anyone wanting to sponsor a JV game, Call/Text Paul at 605-397-7460

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Wolves Unable to Find a Rhythm in Dual Loss to No. 9 Peacocks

Aberdeen, S.D. – The No. 21 Northern State University wrestling team fell to No. 9 Upper Iowa University on Sunday afternoon. The Wolves tallied three match victories and fought hard against the Peacocks, suffering two decision losses by two points or less.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 10, UIU 26

Records: NSU 4-3 (2-2 NSIC), UIU 6-2 (1-1 NSIC)

Attendance: 492

HOW IT HAPPENED

- Landen Fischer opened the dual for the Wolves, defeating Colby Lopez in a 9-0 major decision; Fischer tallied a takedown, reversal, 4-point nearfall, and riding time point in the win
- The Wolves fell in the following two weights, however No. 11 Wyatt Turnquist regained the lead at 149 pounds
- Turnquist defeated Ethen Doty in a 5-0 decision, giving the Wolves a 7-6 lead
- Devin Bahr battled at 157-pounds, but ultimately fell in a 6-4 decision, and Upper Iowa ran away with the dual, notching wins at 157, 165, 174, and 184 pounds
- No. 2 Cole Huss broke the Peacock streak, defeating Colter Bye in a 3-1 decision

MATCH RESULTS

	Summary	NSU	UIU
125	Landen Fischer (Northern State) over Colby Lopez (Upper Iowa) (MD 9-0)	4.0	0.0
133	Kaden Anderlik (Upper Iowa) over Teagan Block (Northern State) (Dec 7-1)	0.0	3.0
141	#5 Tate Murty (Upper Iowa) over Kolton Roth (Northern State) (Dec 13-9)	0.0	3.0
149	#11 Wyatt Turnquist (Northern State) over Ethen Doty (Upper Iowa) (Dec 5-0)	3.0	0.0
157	Eric Faught (Upper Iowa) over Devin Bahr (Northern State) (Dec 6-4)	0.0	3.0
165	#2 Chase Luensman (Upper Iowa) over Chase Bloomquist (Northern State) (MD 12-4)	0.0	4.0
174	Cael Meyer (Upper Iowa) over Kelby Hawkins (Northern State) (Fall 5:59)	0.0	6.0
184	Cameron Lopez (Upper Iowa) over Sam Kruger (Northern State) (Dec 3-2)	0.0	3.0
197	#2 Cole Huss (Northern State) over Colter Bye (Upper Iowa) (Dec 3-1)	3.0	0.0
285	#9 Zach Ryg (Upper Iowa) over Nathan Schauer (Northern State) (MD 12-1)	0.0	4.0
285	Exhibition: Jordan Baumler (Upper Iowa) over George Bolling (Northern State) (Fall 0:25)	0.0	0.0
Team Score:		10.0	26.0

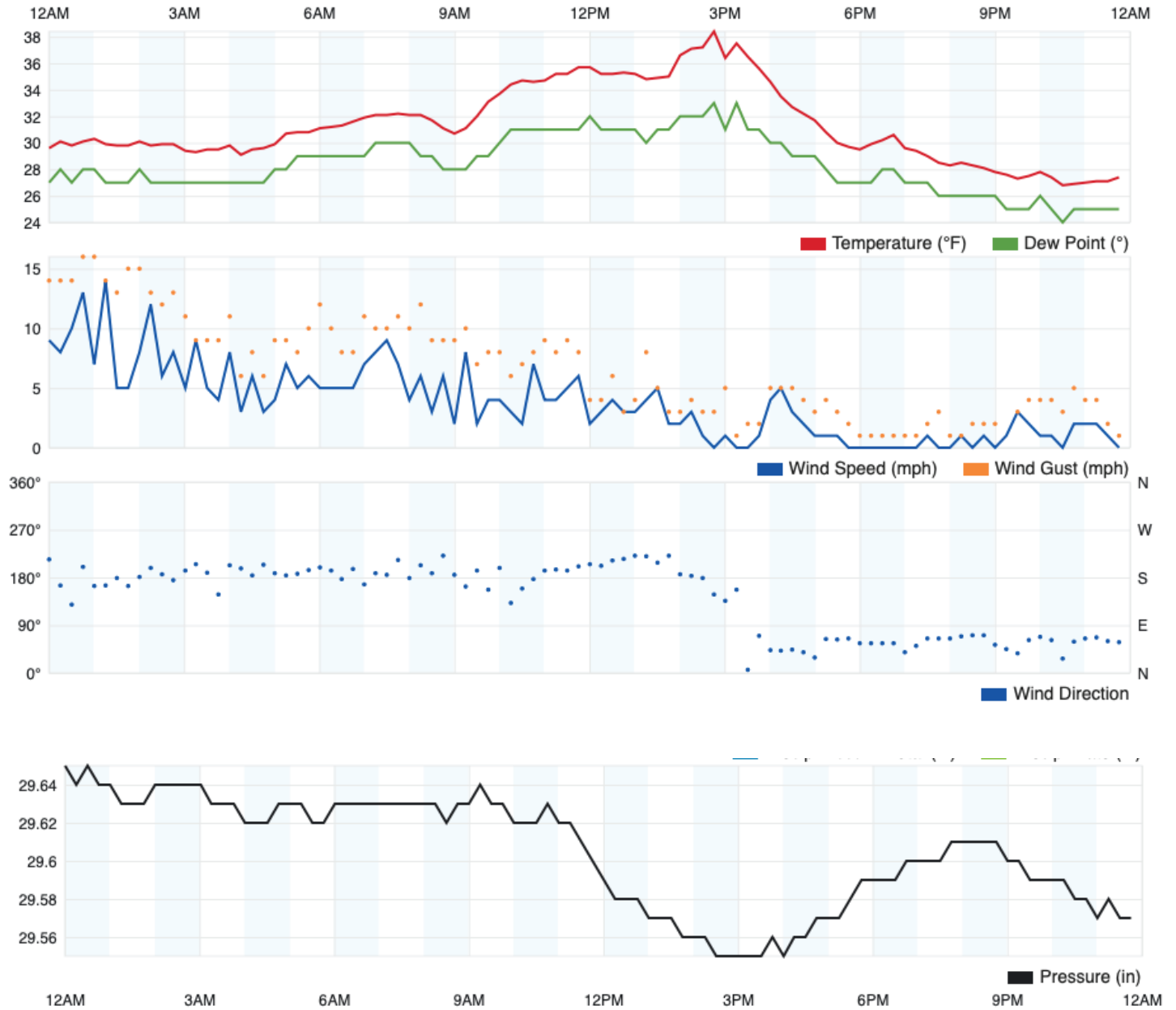
UP NEXT

Northern State returns to action next Saturday at the UNK Midwest Duals. Match start times are set for 9 a.m. versus the host Lopers, 10:30 a.m. against Fort Hays State, and 12 p.m. versus Central Missouri.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Broton Daily Independent

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M.L.King Day	Tonight	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday
						
Snow and Patchy Blowing Snow	Snow Likely then Chance Snow	Slight Chance Snow then Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy
High: 30 °F	Low: 18 °F	High: 23 °F	Low: 11 °F	High: 18 °F	Low: 10 °F	High: 19 °F



Weather Weather Expected

January 16, 2023
4:26 AM

Today through Tuesday morning

Key Messages

- A Winter Weather Advisory is in effect for eastern SD and western MN through 6 AM CST Tuesday.
- Ice accumulation up to 0.03 of an inch possible along and east of I-29.
- 1-2 inches of snow possible east of the Missouri River Valley.

NEW Important Updates

- No new updates

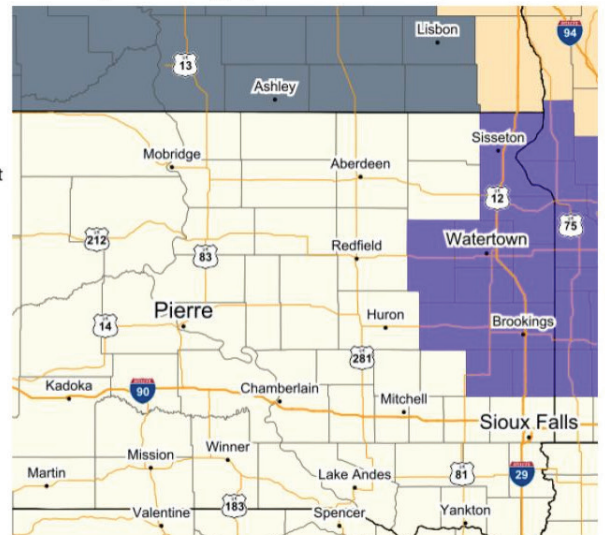
Next Scheduled Weather Update

- Monday evening



Current Watches, Warnings, and Advisories

- Special Weather Statement
- Dense Fog Advisory
- Winter Weather Advisory



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

A weak Colorado low is making its way across the region bringing a mix of snow and the possibility of freezing drizzle early before changing to all snow through the morning. Areas along and east of I-29 have the increased chance of having higher snow totals with freezing rain/drizzle hanging on through this afternoon, before transitioning all snow.

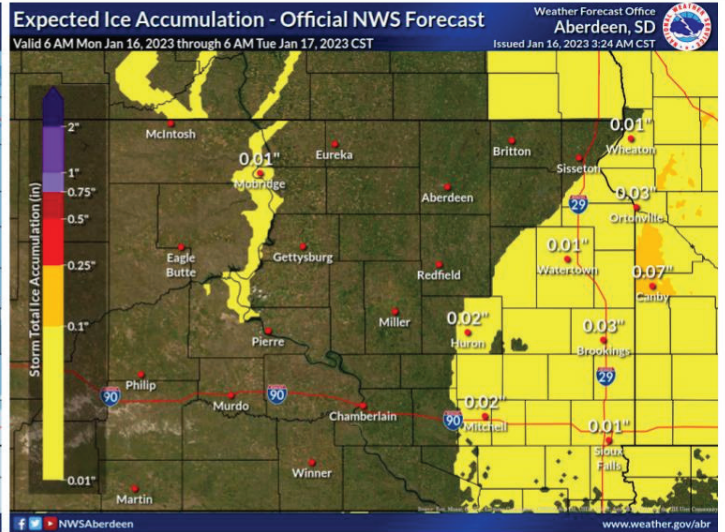
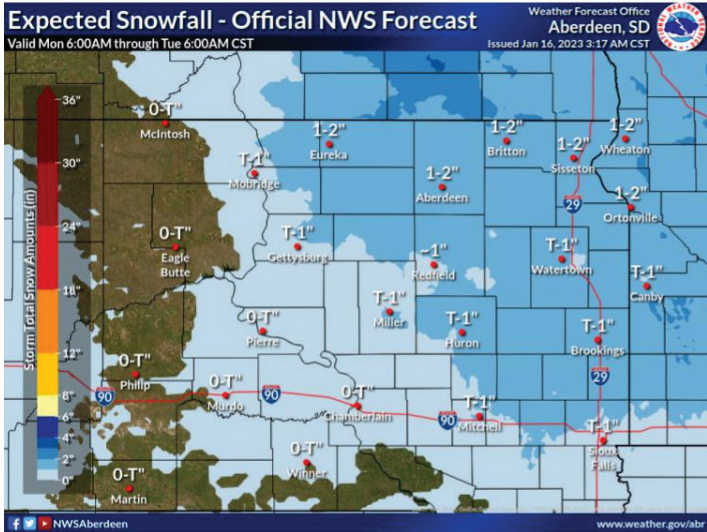
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Total Snow and Ice Amounts

January 16, 2023
4:26 AM



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

1 to 2 inches of snow possible with up to 0.04 of an inch of ice, mainly along and east of I-29.



Winter Weather Threats Timeline

January 16, 2023
4:26 AM

	Weather Forecast									
	1/16 Mon						1/17 Tue			
	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am
Aberdeen	55%	70%	80%	65%	55%	60%	25%	20%	20%	20%
Britton	50%	70%	75%	55%	65%	70%	40%	35%	35%	25%
Eagle Butte	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%	25%	10%	10%	10%	10%
Eureka	30%	55%	70%	70%	60%	50%	25%	20%	25%	25%
Gettysburg	40%	55%	60%	50%	35%	30%	15%	10%	10%	10%
Kennebec	30%	30%	25%	25%	5%	5%	5%	5%	0%	0%
McIntosh	20%	25%	20%	25%	30%	30%	20%	20%	15%	15%
Milbank	35%	75%	90%	55%	60%	65%	35%	35%	30%	20%
Miller	65%	65%	70%	50%	35%	30%	15%	10%	5%	5%
Mobridge	25%	35%	35%	45%	40%	45%	20%	15%	15%	20%
Murdo	30%	20%	20%	20%	5%	5%	5%	5%	0%	0%
Pierre	35%	30%	35%	25%	15%	15%	10%	5%	5%	5%
Redfield	45%	65%	75%	60%	50%	40%	20%	15%	15%	10%
Sisseton	55%	75%	85%	45%	65%	75%	40%	35%	30%	25%
Watertown	35%	70%	85%	55%	55%	50%	35%	25%	20%	15%
Webster	50%	65%	75%	50%	60%	60%	35%	30%	25%	25%
Wheaton	40%	70%	85%	65%	65%	70%	40%	35%	35%	30%

*Created: 3 am CST Mon 1/16/2023. Shows most impactful weather for the period beginning at the time shown. Weather symbols display where

- Rain + - Fz Rain + - Snow +



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

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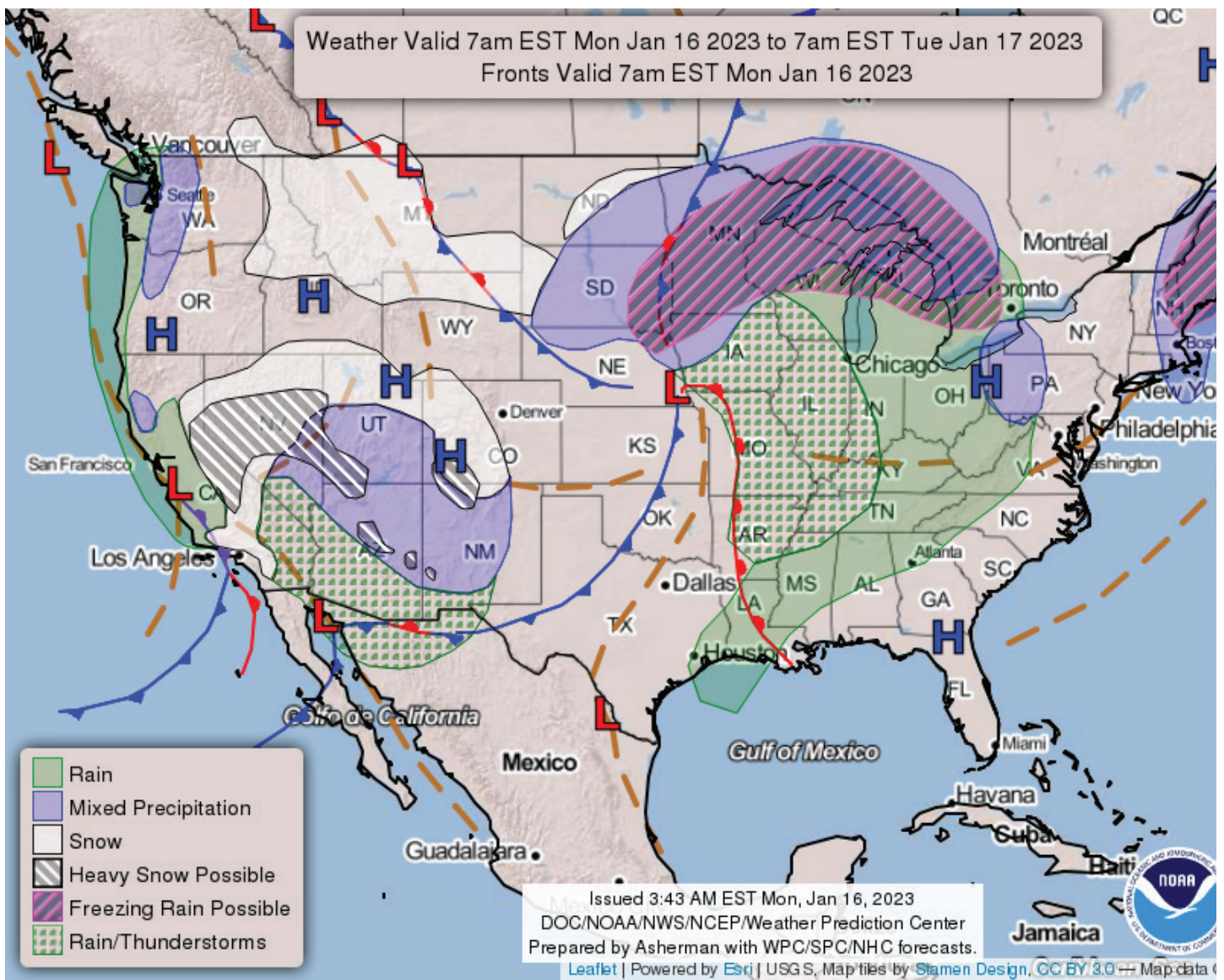
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 39 °F at 2:50 PM
Low Temp: 27 °F at 10:26 PM
Wind: 16 mph at 12:03 AM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 9 hours, 12 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 49 in 1942
Record Low: -30 in 2005
Average High: 23°F
Average Low: 1°F
Average Precip in Jan.: 0.31
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.31
Precip Year to Date: 0.00
Sunset Tonight: 5:18:14 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:05:25 AM



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Today in Weather History

January 16, 1967: In Minnesota, a fast-moving blizzard brought winds over 75 mph. The snowfall was light to moderate, with extensive blowing and drifting snow. Visibility was near zero for an extended time. Temperatures fell rapidly during the storm, and by the morning of the 18th, many record lows temperatures were set. Many vehicles went into the ditch. Thousands of motorists and schoolchildren found shelter wherever they could as travel was halted. A Wheaton man froze to death. In South Dakota, rain followed by a sudden drop in temperatures of nearly 30 degrees in 2 hours resulted in widespread freezing rain and significant icing on roads and trees. Strong winds of 35 to 45 mph with gusts to 75 mph along with the ice halted most travel. The wind and icing also caused the toppling of a 270-foot radio tower near Aberdeen.

January 16, 1997: An intense Arctic High brought widespread blizzard conditions and dangerous wind chills of 40 to 70 below to central and northeast South Dakota and west-central Minnesota. One to 3 inches of snow fell on top of the already deep snowpack of 2 to 5 feet. The blizzard winds brought another round of widespread heavy drifting, blocking area roads and highways. Many area schools were closed once again to add to their large number of days missed for the winter season. Fortunately, this blizzard was short-lived compared to previous blizzards, and the people were better prepared.

January 16, 2014: A strong area of high-pressure building into the region behind an Arctic cold front brought high winds to central and north-central South Dakota during the early morning hours of the 16th. Some of the strongest wind gusts include; 69 mph near Whitlocks Bay; 68 mph near Bullhead; 67 mph near Trail City; 66 mph in Foster Bay; 65 mph near Mellette and in Presho; 64 mph near Harrold and in Murdo; and 63 mph in Pierre, Reliance, and Miranda. The strong winds diminished during the late afternoon hours of the 16th. A clipper system passing across the region brought light snowfall and powerful northwest winds gusting more than 70 mph at times resulting in blizzard conditions. The highest wind gusts include; 76 mph at the Brown County Landfill, 69 mph in Aberdeen and Cravens Corner, 52 mph near Webster, and 52 mph in Sisseton. Blizzard conditions ended during the late afternoon hours. A no travel advisory was issued in Grant, Codington, Hamlin, and Spink Counties due to low visibilities. The blizzard led to the cancellation of several area activities and schools and nearly impossible travel conditions.

1831 - A great snowstorm raged from Georgia to Maine. Snowfall totals greater than 30 inches were reported from Pennsylvania across southern New England. (David Ludlum)

1964 - Fort Worth, TX, received 7.5 inches of snow, and Dallas reported a foot of snow. (David Ludlum)

1987 - A winter storm produced a total of 61 inches of snow at Rye CO, and wind gusts to 100 mph in Utah. The storm then spread heavy snow from the Texas panhandle to Indiana. Tulia TX received 16 inches of snow, and up to 14 inches was reported in western Oklahoma. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A small storm in the western U.S. produced a foot of snow and wind gusts to 70 mph in the Lake Tahoe Basin of Nevada. Showers and thunderstorms produced 2.28 inches of rain at Brownsville TX, their third highest total for any day in January. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Strong chinook winds plagued much of the state of Wyoming. Winds gusted to 80 mph at Cody, and wind gusts to 100 mph were reported in eastern and northwestern Wyoming. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990: Heavy snow fell across Prince Williams Sound and the Susitna Valley of southern Alaska. Valdez was buried under 64.9 inches of snow in less than two days, including a record of 47.5 inches in 24 hours. The heavy snow blocked roads, closed schools, and sunk six vessels in the Valdez harbor under the heavy snow's weight. The image below is from Storm Data.

2008: An area of low pressure brought snow, sleet, and freezing rain across northern Georgia. Three to four inches was a typical amount reported from many of the northeast Georgia counties.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS: HAVE HOPE

Years ago I was reading a book that contained a most interesting, disturbing, and thought-provoking statement: "There is a dramatic difference between 'giving up' and 'given up'." Giving up may take a long time. It begins when we start to evaluate what is going on in our lives and attempt to come to a conclusion as to whether or not the struggle or struggles we are having are worth the effort. Given up is when we come to the conclusion that the struggle or struggles we face are no longer worth the effort it takes to breathe, and we resign ourselves to fate or death, and life loses its meaning. What was "hope and a bright future" is over, and what's left is resignation and death.

Again, we find sound advice and great encouragement from a proverb: "There is surely a future hope for you and your hope will not be cut off." In other words, "what is" may not be what we would like it to be. But remember, "what is" is not the end. We are to look beyond the present and accept the wisdom that comes from God and rest in His hope - not our circumstances.

The word translated "a future" describes "something that comes after something else." It is what is last or behind or beyond what we can presently see - it comes from what we believe.

We can take "hope" from the words of Jeremiah: "This is what the Lord says "For I know the plans I have for you - plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and will bring you back from captivity."

Whatever captivates is as temporary as a passing cloud. How we view "the cloud" is up to us. Do we give up on God or give "the cloud" to God and trust and have hope in Him?

Prayer: Thank You, Father, for giving us hope - knowing that "what is" will pass, and that our future is with You and in Your hands! May our hope be in You if our hope fails. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: There is surely a future hope for you and your hope will not be cut off. Proverbs 23:18



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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2023 Community Events

- 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)
- 03/25/2023 Spring Vendor Fair, 10am-3pm, Community Center
- 04/01/2023 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)
- 04/01/2023 Dueling Duo Baseball/Softball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
- 04/06/2023 Groton Career Development Event
- 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)
- 06/16/2023 – SDSU Alumni and Friends Golf Tournament
- 07/04/2023 – Couples Firecracker Golf Tournament
- 07/09/2023 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
- 07/26/2023 – GGA Burger Fundraiser Lunch at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 08/04/2023 – Wine on Nine 6pm
- 08/11/2023 – GHS Basketball Golf Tournament
- 09/09/2023 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 09/10/2023 – Couples Sunflower Golf Tournament
- 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)
- 12/02/2023 – Tour of Homes & Holiday Party

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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.13.23

30 43 45 46 61 14

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 14 Hrs 38
DRAW: Mins 34 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.14.23

25 35 37 38 48 5

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$34,170,000

NEXT 14 Hrs 38 Mins
DRAW: 34 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.15.23

5 8 13 41 44 10

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 14 Hrs 8 Mins 35
DRAW: Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.14.23

2 10 17 27 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000

NEXT 2 Days 14 Hrs 38
DRAW: Mins 35 Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.14.23

17 19 31 33 64 13

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 14 Hrs 37 Mins 34
DRAW: Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.14.23

24 26 39 47 57 23

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$416,000,000

NEXT 14 Hrs 37 Mins 34
DRAW: Secs

[GAME DETAILS](#)

News from the Associated Press

Flight data, voice recorders retrieved from Nepal crash site

By ANISH BHATTARAI, KRUTIKA PATHI and SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

POKHARA, Nepal (AP) — Search teams retrieved the flight data and cockpit voice recorders Monday of a passenger plane that crashed on approach to a new airport in Nepal's Himalayan foothills, officials said. At least 69 of the 72 people aboard were killed in the crash, whose cause is unknown.

Rescuers are still searching the debris, which is scattered down a 300-meter (984-foot) gorge, for the three missing people who are believed to be dead.

Many of the passengers on Sunday's flight were returning home to Pokhara, though the city is also popular with tourists since it's the gateway to the Annapurna Circuit hiking trail. A pharmaceutical marketing agent was traveling to be with his sister as she gave birth, and a minister of a Korean religious group was visiting the school he founded.

On Monday evening, relatives and friends were still gathered outside a local hospital. Many consoled one another, while some shouted at officials to speed up the post mortems so they could take the bodies of their loved ones home for funerals.

It's still not clear what caused the crash, which took place less than a minute's flight from the airport on a mild day with little wind.

Nepal's Civil Aviation Authority said the aircraft last made contact with the airport, which began operations only two weeks ago, from near Seti Gorge before crashing.

A witness who recorded footage of the plane's descent said it looked like a normal landing until the plane suddenly veered to the left.

"I saw that, and I was shocked," said Diwas Bohora. "I thought that today everything will be finished here after it crashes, I will also be dead."

After it crashed, red flames erupted and the ground shook violently, Bohora said. "Seeing that scene, I was scared," he added.

Amit Singh, an experienced pilot and founder of India's Safety Matters Foundation, said Bohora's video appears to show a stall, a situation in which a plane loses lift, especially likely at low airspeeds.

The twin-engine ATR 72 aircraft, operated by Nepal's Yeti Airlines, was completing the 27-minute flight from the capital, Kathmandu, to Pokhara, 200 kilometers (125 miles) west. It was carrying 68 passengers, including 15 foreign nationals, as well as four crew members, Nepal's Civil Aviation Authority said in a statement. The foreigners included five Indians, four Russians, two South Koreans, and one each from Ireland, Australia, Argentina and France.

Jagannath Niraula, a spokesman for the authority, said the flight recorders will be handed over to investigators. Pemba Sherpa, spokesperson for Yeti Airlines, confirmed that both the flight data and the cockpit voice recorders were found.

Nepal is home to eight of the world's 14 highest mountains including Mount Everest. A pilot who routinely flies an ATR 72-500 plane from India to Nepal said the region's topography, with its mountain peaks and narrow valleys, raises the risk of accidents and sometimes requires pilots to fly by sight rather than relying on instruments.

The pilot, who works for a private Indian airline and insisted on anonymity due to company policy, called the ATR 72-500 an "unforgiving aircraft" if the pilot isn't highly skilled and familiar with the region's terrain and wind speeds.

Hundreds of people have gathered outside the Pokhara Academy of Health and Science, Western Hospital, where the bodies are being kept.

Bimala Bhenderi said was planning to meet her friend, Tribhuban Paudel, on Tuesday when she heard that his flight had crashed. "I'm so sad, I can't believe it still," she said in tears.

Bikash Jaiswal said he could only identify his wife's brother only by the ring he wore, and that he had yet

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to tell his wife, who just gave birth to their daughter. Sanjay Jaiswal, who worked as a marketing agent for a private pharmaceutical company in Kathmandu, was flying to Pokhara for the birth. More than 24 hours after the crash, his body lay in the same hospital where his niece was born.

"He was a hardworking person, and now there's no one left in his family to earn," Bikash said.

Park Dae-seong, a minister and spokesperson of the Won Buddhist order, confirmed on Monday the deaths of Arun Paudel and his daughter, Prasiddi.

Arun Paudel, 47, had worked as a police officer in Nepal before being introduced into the religion by his brother. He studied the religion for years at a South Korean university before becoming a minister in 2009. He then returned to Nepal and established a school in the Lumbini province in 2013 where children received English, Korean and information technology instruction. Park said Paudel was returning to Nepal for work related to the school, called the Vishow Ekata Academy.

The Civil Aviation Authority said that 41 people have been identified. Gyan Khadka, a police spokesperson in the district, said the bodies would be handed over to family after officials finish post mortem reports.

The type of plane involved, the ATR 72, has been used by airlines around the world for short regional flights since the late 1980s. In Taiwan, two accidents involving ATR 72-500 and ATR 72-600 aircrafts in 2014 and 2015 led to the planes being grounded for a period.

ATR identified the plane involved in Sunday's crash as an ATR 72-500 in a tweet. According to plane tracking data from flightradar24.com, the aircraft was 15 years old and "equipped with an old transponder with unreliable data." It was previously flown by India's Kingfisher Airlines and Thailand's Nok Air before Yeti took it over in 2019, according to records on Airfleets.net. ATR has not responded to a request for comment.

According to the Safety Matters Foundation's data, there have been 42 fatal plane crashes in Nepal since 1946.

Sunday's crash is the country's deadliest since 1992, when all 167 people aboard a Pakistan International Airlines plane were killed when it plowed into a hill as it tried to land in Kathmandu.

The European Union has banned airlines from Nepal from flying into the 27-nation bloc since 2013, citing weak safety standards. In 2017, the International Civil Aviation Organization cited improvements in Nepal's aviation sector, but the EU continues to demand administrative reforms.

Italian film legend Gina Lollobrigida dies at age 95

By FRANCES D'EMILIO Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Italian actor Gina Lollobrigida, who achieved international film stardom during the 1950s and was dubbed "the most beautiful woman in the world" after the title of one her movies, died in Rome on Monday, her agent said. She was 95.

The agent, Paola Comin, didn't provide details. But Lollobrigida had surgery in September to repair a thigh bone broken in a fall. She returned home and said she had quickly resumed walking.

A drawn portrait of the diva graced a 1954 cover of Time magazine, which in an article about Italian movie-making likened her to a "goddess." More than a half-century later, Lollobrigida still turned heads with a head full of auburn curly hair and her statuesque figure.

"Lollo," as she was lovingly nicknamed by Italians, began making movies in Italy just after the end of World War II, as the country began to promote on the big screen a stereotypical concept of Mediterranean beauty as buxom and brunette.

Besides "The World's Most Beautiful Woman" in 1955, career highlights included Golden Globe-winner "Come September," with Rock Hudson; "Trapeze;" "Beat the Devil," a 1953 John Huston film starring Humphrey Bogart and Jennifer Jones; and "Buona Sera, Mrs. Campbell," which won Lollobrigida Italy's top movie award, a David di Donatello, as best actress in 1969.

In Italy, she worked with some of the country's top directors following the war, including Mario Monicelli, Luigi Comencini, Pietro Germi and Vittorio De Sica.

Two of her more popular films at home were Comencini's "Pane Amore Fantasia" (Bread Love Fantasy)

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in 1953, and the sequel a year later, "Pane Amore Gelosia" (Bread Love Jealousy). In each of them, her male foil was Vittorio Gassman, one of Italy's most leading men on the screen.

Lollobrigida began her career in beauty contests, posing for the covers of magazines and brief appearances in minor films. But her sexy image quickly propelled her to roles in major Italian and international movies.

While Lollobrigida played some dramatic roles, her characters were most popular in lighthearted comedies, like the "Bread Love" movies.

Lollobrigida also was an accomplished sculptor, painter and photographer, and eventually essentially dropped film for the fine arts. With her camera, she roamed the world from what was then the Soviet Union to Australia.

In 1974, Fidel Castro hosted her as a guest in Cuba for 12 days as she worked on a photo reportage.

She was born on July 4, 1927 in Subiaco, a picturesque hill town near Rome, where her father was a furniture maker.

Thousands turn out to bid farewell to Greece's former king

By ELENA BECATOROS and THEODORA TONGAS Associated Press

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — To chants of "long live the king" and "Constantine, Constantine" from a crowd of thousands, the casket carrying the former and last monarch of Greece emerged from Athens' metropolitan cathedral Monday after a funeral service attended by royalty from across Europe.

Constantine's wife Anne-Marie, the sister of Denmark's Queen Margrethe II, and his eldest son Pavlos, followed at the head of the funeral procession. The casket, draped with the Greek flag, was loaded into a hearse for the trip to Tatoi, the former royal estate north of Athens where Constantine will be buried near his parents and ancestors.

Once a richly forested site popular with Athenians for picnics and nature walks, Tatoi was ravaged by a wildfire about two years ago and had been mostly blackened and derelict ever since. Cleanup crews worked feverishly since Constantine's death last week at the age of 82 to clean up the site in time for Monday's funeral.

European royals, many closely related to Constantine, descended on Athens for the funeral, including Margrethe and nearly the entire Spanish royal family. Constantine's sister Sophia is the wife of Spain's former King Juan Carlos, and mother of Spain's current monarch, King Felipe VI. Constantine was one of the godparents of Prince William, heir to the British throne. The British royal family was being represented by Princess Anne.

Juan Carlos, walking with the aid of a walking stick, attended with Sophia at his side. It was a rare public appearance for the former king, who has been living in Abu Dhabi since being cut off from the Spanish royal family in 2020 amid financial scandals.

Greece's monarchy was definitively abolished in a referendum in 1974, and Constantine, a controversial figure during a turbulent time in Greek history, spent decades in exile before returning to settle in his home country once more in his waning years.

The government announced Constantine would be buried as a private citizen without honors reserved for former heads of state. A limited lying in state was allowed in a chapel next to the cathedral, with the public allowed to visit from 6 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Thousands turned out, some traveling from across Greece and lining up for hours in the pre-dawn darkness and winter chill.

"He was a constitutional leader of the country. It was a monarchy then, so we must honor this man who stayed in Greece for so many years and who is Greek," said Athens resident Georgia Florenti, waiting to pay her respects to the former monarch.

Some mourners expressed disappointment that Constantine was being buried without the honors awarded to former heads of state.

"I feel anger because I consider it petty for funerals to be held at public expense for actors and singers, and for us not to honor a person who, for better or for worse, was king of Greece," said Irene Zagana.

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Constantine acceded to the throne in 1964 at the age of 23, already an Olympic sailing gold medalist. The young king and his wife enjoyed huge popularity, which quickly eroded because of Constantine's active involvement in the machinations that brought down the elected government of then Prime Minister George Papandreou.

"There was social adoration for the young king. Any dislikes there were concerned his mother," said Thanassis Diamantopoulos, professor of political science at Athens' Panteion University. "He himself was beloved, but unfortunately, through the mindless and thoughtless management of the 1965 crisis, he managed to squander this sympathy very quickly."

The episode involving the defection from the ruling party of several lawmakers destabilized the constitutional order and led to a military coup in 1967. Constantine eventually clashed with the military rulers and was forced into exile.

When the dictatorship collapsed in July 1974, Constantine was eager to return to Greece, but was advised against it by veteran politician Constantine Karamanlis, who returned from exile to head a civilian government.

After winning November elections, Karamanlis called for a plebiscite on the monarchy. Constantine wasn't allowed to return to campaign, but the result was widely accepted: 69.2% voted in favor of a republic.

Constantine "should be given credit for something that other deposed monarchs have not done: he never threatened, challenged or undermined the state not headed by a king after he was dethroned," Diamantopoulos said. "He accepted the 1974 referendum. He did not create a party of monarchy nostalgics. ... Thus with his silence he contributed to cementing the new system of government."

There have been no opinion polls measuring possible support for the former king since the monarchy was abolished, and public discourse in Greece tends to be significantly negative concerning the monarchy.

The prevailing judgment on Constantine "is not exactly unfair, it is one-dimensional," Diamantopoulos said.

Constantine's "mistakes were glaring, and they were significant in delegitimizing and undermining smooth political life, especially in how he handled the resignation of (then Prime Minister) George Papandreou," Diamantopoulos said. "But a discourse that was politically dominant and not altruistic came to treat him negatively for everything, without any reference to the positive contributions he made."

The size of the crowd waiting patiently for hours in Athens to pay their final respects suggested Constantine was still much loved by a segment of society.

"He is a former high-level official to whom we should certainly show the necessary honors, a person who is serious, who is noble, who is decent," said lawyer Giannis Katsiavos, who was among the crowd. "We will remember him forever."

Ukraine strike deaths hit 40; Russia seen preparing long war

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — The death toll from a weekend Russian missile strike on an apartment building in the southeastern Ukrainian city of Dnipro has risen to 40, authorities said Monday, as Western analysts pointed to indications the Kremlin was preparing for a drawn-out war in Ukraine after almost 11 months of fighting.

About 1,700 people lived in the multi-story building, and search and rescue crews have worked nonstop since Saturday's strike to locate victims and survivors in the wreckage. The regional administration said 39 people have been rescued so far and 30 more remained missing. Authorities said at least 75 were wounded.

The reported death toll made it the deadliest single attack on Ukrainian civilians since before the summer, according to The Associated Press-Frontline War Crimes Watch project. Residents said the apartment tower did not house any military facilities.

The European Union's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, called the strike, and others like it, "inhumane aggression" because it directly targeted civilians. "There will be no impunity for these crimes," he said in a tweet Sunday.

Asked about the strike Monday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the Russian military doesn't target residential buildings and suggested the Dnipro building was hit as a result of Ukrainian air defense actions.

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The strike on the building came amid a wider barrage of Russian cruise missiles across Ukraine. The Ukrainian military said Sunday that it did not have the means to intercept the type of Russian missile that hit the residential building in Dnipro.

Fierce fighting continued to rage Monday in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk province, where military analysts have said both sides are likely suffering heavy troop casualties. No independent verification of developments was possible.

Donetsk and neighboring Luhansk province make up the Donbas, an expansive industrial region bordering Russia that Russian President Vladimir Putin identified as a focus from the war's outset. Moscow-backed separatists have been fighting Kyiv's forces there since 2014.

The Russian and Belarusian air forces began a joint exercise Monday in Belarus, which borders Ukraine and served as a staging ground for Russia's Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine. The drills are set to run through Feb. 1, the Belarusian Defense Ministry said. Russia has sent its warplanes to Belarus for the drills.

The Institute for the Study of War, a Washington think tank, reported signs of the Kremlin taking steps to turn its Ukraine invasion into "a major conventional war" after months of embarrassing military reversals.

What Moscow calls "a special military operation" aimed to capture the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, within weeks and to install a Kremlin-friendly regime there, but Russian forces ultimately withdrew from around Kyiv, the think tank said. Then came a successful Ukrainian counteroffensive in recent months before the onset of winter slowed military advances.

"The Kremlin is likely preparing to conduct a decisive strategic action in the next six months intended to regain the initiative and end Ukraine's current string of operational successes," the Institute for the Study of War said in a report late Sunday.

It noted reports indicating the Russian military command was in "serious preparations" for an expanded mobilization effort, conserving mobilized personnel for future use, while seeking to boost military industrial production and reshuffling its command structure.

That means Ukraine's Western allies "will need to continue supporting Ukraine in the long run," the think tank said.

NATO member nations have sought in recent days to reassure Ukraine that they will stay the course. The United Kingdom has pledged tanks and the U.S. military's new, expanded combat training of Ukrainian forces began in Germany on Sunday.

Other developments on Monday:

— Russian forces shelled the city of Kherson and the Kherson region, killing three people and wounding 14 others over the last 24 hours, regional Gov. Yaroslav Yanushevych said. In the city of Kherson, the shelling damaged a hospital, a children disability center, a shipyard, critical infrastructure and apartment buildings.

— Russian forces struck the city of Zaporizhzhia, damaging industrial infrastructure and wounding five people, two of them children, the deputy head of Ukraine's presidential office Kyrylo Tymoshenko reported.

— Russian air defenses downed seven drones Monday over the Black Sea near the port of Sevastopol in annexed Crimea, Mikhail Razvozhayev, the Russian-installed head of Sevastopol, reported.

As elites arrive in Davos, conspiracy theories thrive online

By SOPHIA TULP Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — When some of the world's wealthiest and most influential figures gathered at the World Economic Forum's annual meeting last year, sessions on climate change drew high-level discussions on topics such as carbon financing and sustainable food systems.

But an entirely different narrative played out on the internet, where social media users claimed leaders wanted to force the population to eat insects instead of meat in the name of saving the environment.

The annual event in the Swiss ski resort town of Davos, which opens Monday, has increasingly become a target of bizarre claims from a growing chorus of commentators who believe the forum involves a group of elites manipulating global events for their own benefit. Experts say what was once a conspiracy theory found in the internet's underbelly has now hit the mainstream.

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"This isn't a conspiracy that is playing out on the extreme fringes," said Alex Friedfeld, a researcher with the Anti-Defamation League who studies anti-government extremism. "We're seeing it on mainstream social media platforms being shared by regular Americans. We were seeing it being spread by mainstream media figures right on their prime time news, on their nightly networks."

The meeting draws heads of state, business executives, cultural trendsetters and representatives from international organizations to the luxe mountain town. Though it's always unclear how much concrete action will emerge, the meeting is slated to take on pressing global issues from climate change and economic uncertainty to geopolitical instability and public health.

Hundreds of public sessions are planned, but the four-day conference is also known for secretive back-room meetings and deal-making by business leaders. This gap between what's shown to the public and what happens behind closed doors helps make that makes the meeting a flashpoint for misinformation.

"When we have very high levels of ambiguity, it's very easy to fill in narratives," said Kathleen Hall Jamieson, who is the director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania and also studies misinformation.

Theories about influential global leaders are not new, she said, but scrutiny of the forum and its chairman, Klaus Schwab, intensified in 2020 in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. That year, the theme of the annual meeting was "The Great Reset." The initiative envisioned sweeping changes to how societies and economies would work to recover from the pandemic and build a more sustainable future.

Now, in increasingly mainstream corners of the internet and on conservative talk shows, "The Great Reset" has become shorthand for what skeptics say is a reorganization of society, using global uncertainty as a guise to take away rights. Believers argue that measures including pandemic lockdowns and vaccine mandates are tools to consolidate power and undercut individual sovereignty.

In a time of mounting anxiety, Jamieson says the public has become more susceptible to falsehoods, as conspiracy theories emerge as a tool to cut through the chaos. Researchers who monitor extremism say these beliefs are becoming more popular and more concerning.

At a rally staged on the grounds of an upstate New York church last fall, a photo of Schwab was displayed on the center of a large screen alongside other "villains" accused of threatening American values. The crowd of thousands had gathered in a revivalist tent at a traveling roadshow used as a recruiting tool for an ascendant Christian nationalist movement. Participants discussed "The Great Reset," among a host of other theories, as an assault on America's foundations.

The phrase was used more than 60 times across all programs on Fox News in 2022, according to one tally generated by the Internet Archive's TV news database. That's up from 30 mentions in 2021 and about 20 in 2020. It was discussed most frequently on "The Ingraham Angle" and "Tucker Carlson Tonight."

And in August, amid a defamation trial for calling the Sandy Hook Elementary School attack a hoax, Infowars host Alex Jones released a book called "The Great Reset: And The War For the World." It's described as an analysis of "the global elite's international conspiracy to enslave humanity and all life on the planet."

As the World Economic Forum has become intertwined with this narrative, a steady stream of claims have plagued the organization. While some people offer legitimate criticisms of the forum — namely that it hosts wealthy executives who fly in on emissions-spewing corporate jets — others spread unverified or baseless information as fact.

For example, a site known for spreading fabricated stories falsely claimed last month that Schwab publicly encouraged the decriminalization of sex between children and adults, using an invented quote and other baseless statements. Still, it drew tens of thousands of shares on Twitter and Facebook.

Meanwhile, the popular claim that the forum wants people to replace meat with bugs is a distorted reference to an article once published on the organization's website. In another instance, a widely shared post claimed without evidence that the forum had "appointed" U.S. Rep. Kevin McCarthy as speaker of the House before the actual vote had taken place.

The concern, Friedfeld says, is that posts like these could introduce people to more fringe and dangerous conspiracy theories or even translate into real-world violence. Yann Zopf, head of media for the forum, says the organization has increased its monitoring of this kind of online activity and carefully watches for

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direct threats.

"Creating all that kind of stuff can generate enemies that people believe are responsible for whatever bad thing is happening in the world," Friedfeld said. "Once that happens, when you believe that that things are happening in the world and a certain person or group of people is responsible for these attacks, all of a sudden, the idea of using violence to resist becomes more plausible."

Italy arrests No 1 fugitive Mafia boss, 30 years on the run

By FRANCES D'EMILIO Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Italy's No. 1 fugitive, convicted Mafia boss Matteo Messina Denaro, was captured on Monday at a private clinic in Palermo, Sicily, after three decades on the run, Italian paramilitary police said.

Messina Denaro was captured at the clinic where he was receiving treatment for an undisclosed medical condition, said Carabinieri Gen. Pasquale Angelosanto, who heads the police force's special operations squad.

A pair of Carabinieri officers, each holding an arm, walked him down the front steps of the upscale clinic and led him to a waiting black van on a gray morning. Messina Denaro was wearing a brown leather jacket trimmed in shearling and a matching white-and-brown skull cap and his trademark tinted glasses. His face looked wan and he looked straight ahead. He was taken to a secret location by police immediately after the arrest, Italian state television reported.

A young man when he went into hiding, he is now 60. Messina Denaro, who had a power base in the port city of Trapani, in western Sicily, was considered Sicily's Cosa Nostra top boss even while a fugitive.

He was the last of three longtime fugitive top-level Mafia bosses who had for decades eluded capture, and hundreds of police officers over the years had been tasked with tracking him down.

Messina Denaro, who was tried in absentia and convicted of dozens of murders, faces multiple life sentences.

He is set to be imprisoned for two bombings in Sicily in 1992 that murdered top anti-Mafia prosecutors, Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino, Falcone's wife and several of their bodyguards. Among other grisly crimes he was convicted of is the murder of a Mafia turncoat's young son, who was abducted and strangled before his body was dissolved in a vat of acid.

The arrest Monday came 30 years and a day after the Jan. 15, 1993, capture of convicted "boss of bosses" Salvatore "Totò" Riina, in a Palermo apartment after 23 years on the run. Messina Denaro went into hiding in summer of that same year, as the Italian state stiffened its crackdown on the Sicilian crime syndicate following the murders of Falcone and Borsellino.

Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni tweeted that Messina Denaro's capture is a "great victory of the state, which shows that it doesn't surrender in the face of the Mafia."

Italy's Mafia boss who set the record for the longest time on the lam was Bernardo Provenzano, captured in a farmhouse near Corleone, Sicily, in 2006 after 38 years as a fugitive. Once Provenzano was in police hands, the hunt focused on Messina Denaro, but despite numerous reported sightings of the boss, he managed to elude arrest, until Monday.

That all three top bosses were ultimately arrested in the heart of Sicily while they conducted decades of a clandestine life won't surprise Italy's police and prosecutors. Law enforcement have long said that such bosses rely on contacts and confidentiality of fellow mobsters and complicit family members to move the fugitives from hideout to hideout, supply basic needs, like food and clean clothing and communication, and a code of silence known as "omerta'."

Riina and Provenzano lived out the last years of their life in the strictest of Italian prison conditions reserved for unrepentant organized crime bosses and refused to cooperate with investigators.

Messina Denaro was believed to have enjoyed a more comfortable lifestyle in his decades hiding from police, leaving some to speculate whether he might agree to cooperate with prosecutors in exchange for more lenient prison conditions.

During his years on the run, he had a series of lovers and passed time by playing video games, according to Italian media reports.

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One of his girlfriends was arrested and convicted of having hidden him for a time while he was a fugitive. But while he had a weakness for women, Messina Denaro could be cruel, strangling a woman while she was pregnant, according to Italian media.

Right after he went into hiding, Messina Denaro sent a letter to his then girlfriend, saying, "You'll hear talk about me, they will paint me like the devil, but it's all falsehoods," ANSA quoted the letter as saying.

Wary of being tracked down by cellphone use, Mafia bosses frequently resort to handwritten notes known as "pizzini." When Provenzano was nabbed in his rustic, almost primitive, hideaway in the countryside, police found a stash of such notes.

With the crackdown that began in the 1990s against Sicily's Cosa Nostra, the island's mafiosi started losing their dominance in Italy compared to other organized crime syndicates.

While the Sicilian Mafia was significantly weakened by a small army of turncoats, on the mainland, the 'ndrangheta syndicate, based in the "toe" of the Italian peninsula, steadily eclipsed Cosa Nostra in reach and influence. Unlike Sicily's crime syndicates, the 'ndrangheta draws its footsoldiers based on family ties, leaving it less vulnerable to turncoats. The 'ndrangheta is now one of the world's most powerful cocaine traffickers.

But the Sicilian Mafia still runs drug trafficking operations. Other lucrative illicit businesses include infiltration of public works contracts and extortion of small business owners who are threatened if they don't regularly pay "protection money."

John Kerry tells AP he backs UAE oil chief overseeing COP28

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — U.S. climate envoy John Kerry backs the United Arab Emirates' decision to appoint the CEO of a state-run oil company to preside over the upcoming U.N. climate negotiations in Dubai, citing his work on renewable energy projects.

In an interview Sunday with The Associated Press, the former U.S. secretary of state acknowledged that the Emirates and other countries relying on fossil fuels to fund their state coffers face finding "some balance" ahead.

However, he dismissed the idea that Sultan al-Jaber's appointment should be automatically disqualified due to him leading the Abu Dhabi National Oil Co. Activists, however, equated it to asking "arms dealers to lead peace talks" when authorities announced his nomination Thursday.

"I think that Dr. Sultan al-Jaber is a terrific choice because he is the head of the company. That company knows it needs to transition," Kerry said after attending an energy conference in the Emirati capital. "He knows — and the leadership of the UAE is committed to transitioning."

Still, Abu Dhabi plans to increase its production of crude oil from 4 million barrels a day up to 5 million even while the UAE promises to be carbon neutral by 2050 — a target that remains difficult to assess and one that the Emirates still hasn't fully explained how it will reach.

Kerry pointed to a speech al-Jaber gave Saturday in Abu Dhabi, in which he called for the upcoming COP — or Conference of Parties — to move "from goals to getting it done across mitigation, adaptation, finance and loss and damage." Al-Jaber also warned that the world "must be honest with ourselves about how much progress we have actually achieved, and how much further and faster we truly need to go."

"He made it absolutely clear we're not moving fast enough. We have to reduce emissions. We have to begin to accelerate this transition significantly," Kerry said. "So I have great confidence that the right issues are going to be on the table, that they're going to respond to them and lead countries to recognize their responsibility."

Each year, the country hosting the U.N. negotiations nominates a person to chair the talks. Hosts typically pick a veteran diplomat as the talks can be incredibly difficult to steer between competing nations and their interests. The nominee's position as "COP president" is confirmed by delegates at the start of the talks, usually without objections.

Al-Jaber is a trusted confidant of UAE leader Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. He also led a

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once-ambitious project to erect a \$22 billion “carbon-neutral” city on Abu Dhabi’s outskirts — an effort later pared back after the global financial crisis that struck the Emirates hard beginning in 2008. Today, he also serves as the chairman of Masdar, a clean energy company that grew out of the project.

Skepticism remains among activists over al-Jaber, however. A call by countries, including India and the United States, for a phase down of oil and natural gas never reached a public discussion during COP27 in the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheikh in November.

Activists worry that COP being held in a Mideast nation reliant on fossil fuel sales for a second year in a row could see something similar happen in the Emirates.

Asked about that fear, Kerry said: “I don’t believe UAE was involved in changing that.”

“There’s going to be a level of scrutiny — and and I think that’s going to be very constructive,” the former U.S. senator and 2004 presidential contender said. “It’s going to help people, you know, stay on the line here.”

“I think this is a time, a new time of accountability,” he added.

Still, the Emirates and the U.S. maintain close military relations, regardless of the federation making policy decisions disliked by Washington.

Dubai’s Jebel Ali Port is the most-used port of call for the U.S. Navy outside of America. Some 3,500 American troops are deployed in the country, including at Abu Dhabi’s Al Dhafra Air Base and a Navy outpost in Fujairah. The UAE has some \$29 billion in pending defense sales with the Americans, including purchasing its most-advanced air defense system known by the acronym THAAD.

For Europeans in particular, Russia’s war on Ukraine has led to a reckoning on the continent’s reliance of Moscow’s natural gas to heat their homes in the winter. Though aided by an unusually warm winter, Europeans are trying to source gas elsewhere while also looking for renewables to fill whatever gaps they can.

“No country is advantaged by having a petro-dictator be able to control their future and their prices and their economy with reckless behavior,” Kerry said, referring to Russian leader Vladimir Putin.

“To the degree there’s something that’s coming out of it that will change things for the better, that is Europe’s deep commitment to big reductions in emissions and to a whole shift in the nature of their energy supply,” Kerry said.

Kabul’s mannequins, hooded and masked under Taliban rules

By EBRAHIM NOROOZI Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Under the Taliban, the mannequins in women’s dress shops across the Afghan capital of Kabul are a haunting sight, their heads cloaked in cloth sacks or wrapped in black plastic bags.

The hooded mannequins are one symbol of the Taliban’s puritanical rule over Afghanistan. But in a way, they are also a small show of resistance and creativity by Kabul’s dress merchants.

Initially, the Taliban wanted the mannequins to be outright beheaded.

Not long after they seized power in August 2021, the Taliban Ministry of Vice and Virtue decreed that all mannequins must be removed from shop windows or their heads taken off, according to local media. They based the order on a strict interpretation of Islamic law that forbids statues and images of the human form since they could be worshipped as idols — though it also meshes with the Taliban’s campaign to force women out of the public eye.

Some clothes sellers complied. But others pushed back.

They complained they’d be unable to display their clothes properly or would have to damage valuable mannequins. The Taliban had to amend their order and allowed the shop owners to cover the mannequins’ heads instead.

Shop owners then had to balance between obeying the Taliban and trying to attract customers. The variety of solutions they came up with are on display on Lycee Maryam Street, a middle-class commercial street lined with dress shops in a northern part of Kabul. The store windows and showrooms are lined with mannequins in evening gowns and dresses bursting with color and decoration — and all in various

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types of head coverings.

In one shop, the mannequins' heads were cloaked in tailored sacks made out of the same material as the traditional dresses they modeled. One, in a purple dress beaded with cowrie shells, had a matching purple hood. Another, in a red gown elaborately embroidered in gold, was almost elegant in a mask of red velvet with a gold crown on her head.

"I can't cover the mannequins' heads with plastic or ugly things because it would make my window and shop look ugly," said Bashir, the owner. Like other owners, he spoke to The Associated Press on condition he be identified only by his first name for fear of reprisals.

Shop owners need keep things attractive — the economy has collapsed since the Taliban takeover and the ensuing cutoff of international financing, throwing almost the entire population into poverty.

Elaborate dresses have always been popular in Afghanistan for weddings, which even before the Taliban were usually gender-segregated, giving women a chance to dress in their finest in the country's conservative society. Under the Taliban, weddings are one of the few remaining opportunities for social gatherings. But with incomes so strained, they have become less elaborate.

Bashir said his sales are half what they used to be.

"Buying wedding, evening and traditional dresses is no longer a priority for people," he said. "People think more about getting food and surviving."

Another shop owner, Hakim, shaped aluminum foil over his mannequins' heads. It adds a certain flash to his merchandise, he decided.

"I made an opportunity out of this threat and ban and did it so the mannequins are even more attractive than before," he said.

Not all can be so elaborate. In one shop, the mannequins in sleeveless gowns all had black plastic sacks over their heads. The owner said he couldn't afford more.

Another shop owner, Aziz, said agents of the Ministry of Vice and Virtue regularly patrol shops and malls to make sure the mannequins are beheaded or covered. He was dismissive of the Taliban's justification for the rules. "Everyone knows mannequins aren't idols, and no one's going to worship them. In all Muslim countries, mannequins are used to display clothes."

A small number of male mannequins can be seen in display windows, also with their heads covered, suggesting that the authorities are applying the ban uniformly.

The Taliban initially said they would not impose the same harsh rules over society as they did during their first rule in the late 1990s. But they have progressively imposed more restrictions, particularly on women. They have banned women and girls from schooling beyond the sixth grade, barred them from most jobs and demanded they cover their faces when outside.

On a recent day, a woman shopping on Lycee Maryam Street looked at the hooded mannequins.

"When I see them, I feel that these mannequins are also captured and trapped, and I get a sense of fear," said the woman, who gave only her first name, Rahima.

"I feel like I see myself behind these shop windows, an Afghan woman who has been deprived of all her rights."

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Indonesia soccer disaster trial begins for 5 charged

By TRISNADI and NINIEK KARMINI Associated Press

SURABAYA, Indonesia (AP) — An Indonesian court began trial Monday against five men on charges of negligence leading to the deaths of 135 people after police fired tear gas inside a soccer stadium, setting off a panicked run for the exits in which many were crushed.

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The deadly crowd surge Oct. 1 in East Java's Malang city was among the world's worst sporting disasters. Police officers fired tear gas when fans flooded the pitch after Arema FC was defeated in a home match for the first time in 23 years by rival Persebaya Surabaya.

The match at Kanjuruhan stadium was attended only by Arema fans, as organizers had banned Persebaya supporters because of Indonesia's history of violent soccer rivalries.

Police described the pitch invasion as a riot and said two officers were killed, but survivors accused them of overreacting. Videos showed officers using force, kicking and hitting fans with batons, and pushing spectators back into the stands.

At least 11 officers fired tear gas — eight canisters into the stands and three onto the pitch — to prevent more spectators from taking to the field after the game.

An investigation team set up by Indonesian President Joko Widodo in response to a national outcry over the deaths concluded that the tear gas was the main cause of the crowd surge. It said police on duty had no knowledge that the use of tear gas is prohibited at soccer stadiums and used it "indiscriminately" on the field, in the stands and outside the stadium, causing more than 42,000 spectators inside the 36,000-seat stadium to rush to the exits — several of which were locked.

It was among the deadliest soccer-related tragedies since a 1964 crush in Peru killed over 300 people.

Prosecutors charged the five men — three police officials who allowed or ordered officers to use tear gas and the Arema FC Organizing Committee chair and security chief — with criminal negligence causing death and bodily harm, which carries a penalty of up to five years in jail if found guilty.

Lead prosecutor Ari Basuki said the three police officers had given clear instruction to their subordinates to fire tear gas.

"They did not consider the risk factors," Basuki said. "Their order to fire (tear gas) was a form of negligence and carelessness that built up the risk of a panicked crowd fleeing for exits of the stadium and a crush."

The defendants ignored the 2021 safety and security regulations made by the national soccer association that firearms and mass dispersal weapons may not be carried into nor used in the stadium, he said.

Prosecutors said the crowd's panic at the half-open stadium caused a buildup at exits 3, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14, where many fans were crushed and trampled.

They also said PT Liga Indonesia Baru, the organizer of the soccer league, had not verified the safety of the stadium since 2020 and Arema FC's organizing committee "did not prepare an emergency plan."

Authorities in Surabaya, the capital of East Java province, deployed 1,600 security forces Monday, including police and soldiers, in and around the Surabaya District Court, and the trial is being held remotely for added security.

Arema fans, known widely as "Aremania," are prohibited from coming to Surabaya during the trial to avoid possible clash with Persebaya fans.

Rini Hanifah, a mother of three who is seeking justice for her son Agus Riansyah who died at the deadly crush, said she is disappointed by the fact that only five people went on trial for such a huge number of victims.

"I really hope that justice is truly upheld through this trial, for us little people who don't understand why this could happen," Hanifah said with tears running down her face.

National Police Chief Listyo Sigit Prabowo removed the police chiefs of East Java province and Malang district and suspended 20 other officers over violations of professional ethics since the tragedy.

Listyo said several criminal experts have been involved in investigations and none of them concluded the case meets the elements of murder or premeditated murder. The National Human Rights Commission said the Kanjuruhan tragedy was not a serious human rights violation.

Widodo's fact-finding team, which included government officials, soccer and security experts and activists, also concluded the national soccer association PSSI had been negligent and ignored safety and security regulations. They urged its chair and executive committee to quit.

A three-judge panel set the next hearing for Jan. 23, when the five defendants and their lawyers will respond to the prosecution.

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Sumardhan, lawyer for defendant Abdul Haris, Arema FC's organizing committee chair, said they are still studying the prosecutors' indictment.

"Of course we believe there is no wrongdoing made by our client," said Sumardhan, who goes by a single name. "We are preparing facts to counter the prosecution against him."

About 140 witnesses are expected to testify in the court hearings, prosecutors said.

In tornado-ravaged Selma, prayers of thanks

By KIM CHANDLER Associated Press

SELMA, Ala. (AP) — Leading Sunday services on the lawn outside his tornado-damaged Crosspoint Christian Church, the Rev. David Nichols told his congregation there was much for which to be grateful despite the destruction around them.

The tornado that ravaged Selma hit the church's daycare. It destroyed much of the building, collapsing walls and leaving piles of rubble in some of the classrooms, but the 70 children and teachers who huddled inside bathrooms were unharmed.

"Nothing but by the grace of God that they walked out of there," Nichols said as he looked at the building.

The Sunday after a tornado devastated much of the historic city of Selma, church congregations raised up prayers of gratitude for lives spared and gave prayers of comfort for lives lost elsewhere to the storm.

Churches anchor the community for many in this historic city. Black congregations also played an integral role in the civil rights movement. The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., whose birthday is celebrated Monday, led the 1965 voting rights march from Brown Chapel AME Church.

The storm system was blamed with killing nine people — two in Georgia and seven in rural Autauga County, Alabama where an estimated EF3 tornado, which is just two steps below the most powerful category of twister, tossed mobile homes into the air and ripped way roofs. The Selma twister, an estimated high-end EF2 with winds of 130 mph, cut a wide swath through the city, collapsing buildings and snapping trees in half. Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey said Sunday that President Joe Biden had approved a major disaster declaration for the two hard-hit Alabama counties.

The hymn "Amazing Grace" floated across the lawn at Selma's Crosspoint Church, where services were held outside because of the damage to the main sanctuary. The service also honored the quick-thinking teachers who got the children, ranging in age from infants to 5-year-olds, to the building's inner bathrooms and shielded them with their own bodies as the twister roared over them.

Sheila Stockman, a teacher at Crosspoint Christian daycare, said they made the decision to get the children to the bathroom when they saw the storm was headed for them.

"The walls started shaking and I told my class, 'Lie down and close your eyes' and I laid down on top of them until it was over," Stockman said.

Stockman said the teachers tried to reassure the children as the tornado roared above.

"I was praying and I kept telling them, 'It's OK. I got you. You're OK. I love y'all,'" Shana Lathan told her class as they huddled inside the bathroom.

When it was over, Stockman said they opened the bathroom door to see the sky above them and parts of the building gone. A room that held the preschoolers moments earlier was filled with rubble.

At historic Brown Chapel AME, congregation members handed out plates of food, baby formula, diapers, water and other supplies Sunday afternoon.

"There are so many people hurting here right now that there is sort of like a mutual misery, which requires a shared hope and a shared vision to help us to help each other through this," the Rev. Leodis Strong said.

His sermon for the day was titled "A Storm-Tested Faith." Strong said the community's faith is being tested because "this is an environment that we have to rely upon that relationship with God and put into practice the faith that we have developed."

A bust of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. sits outside the church. As the nation marks King's birthday, Strong said King's message resonates through the disaster recovery.

"If anything, that ought to inspire and motivate us to practice our faith and our understanding of Dr.

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King's commitment. So we'll make it through this. We're going to make it," Strong said.

At Blue Jean Selma Church, a racially diverse church with a name meant to convey that all are welcome in any attire they choose, there was a similar message. "Even in the midst of this we have hope," Bob Armstrong, the church pastor, said.

Church members shared stories of close calls — one man emerging unscathed from a demolished building and another who moved from a building shortly before the ceiling collapsed.

Congregation member Lynn Reeves, who swayed to the modern gospel music beneath the church's stained glass windows, had a similar feeling of gratitude. With the destruction through the city, it's amazing no one was killed, she said.

During the storm, Reeves sheltered in the bathroom of the auto parts store where she works. She said her coworker was in the store's delivery truck when the twister dropped part of a roof on top of him, but he was not seriously hurt.

"It's a blessing. By the grace of God, it's a blessing ... because it could have been worse," Reeves said.

A loving dad and his injured son pay war's costs in Ukraine

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

CHERNIHIV, Ukraine (AP) — In a Ukrainian hospital ward for wounded soldiers, where daylight barely penetrates, a father talks to his injured son for hours. Serhii Shumei, 64, never scolded Vitalii for choosing to go to war. Even now, despite the damage done to his son's brain by an exploding artillery shell, Serhii feels pride, not pity.

"I've been constantly with him in the last five months, beside him, beside him, beside him," says Serhii, a retired former soldier himself. "I'm not going anywhere. ... except for a smoke."

Vitalii, a 34-year-old long-range anti-aircraft missile commander, was wounded in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine that has become synonymous with horrific losses in ongoing fighting for both Ukraine and Russia. Quite how deadly isn't known — because neither side is saying. From the stream of wounded soldiers that are coming off frontlines to hospitals like the one where Vitalii lies, it's evident the costs are severe.

Both sides have poured troops and resources to capture or defend Donbas strongholds, fighting over months of grinding, attritional combat to what has largely become a bloody stalemate. After setbacks elsewhere in Ukraine for President Vladimir Putin's nearly 11-month invasion, Russia is looking for some sort of localized success in the Donbas, even if that just means taking control of a town or two pounded into rubble. Ukraine wants to make Russia's advances as costly as possible.

The Donbas towns of Bakhmut and Soledar have been turned into hellscape as a result. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy described them as "completely destroyed," strewn with corpses and craters, and with "almost no life left."

"This is what madness looks like," Zelenskyy says.

Vitalii was wounded Aug. 25 on another section of the Donbas frontline, in Adviiivka, about 70 kilometers (45 miles) south of Bakhmut. The shell that struck his dugout set off other explosives. The blast tore a crater in Vitalii's skull that is as deep and broad as half a melon. His brain injuries were so severe that doctors doubted he'd show signs of consciousness again.

Now, Vitalii sometimes seems aware of his surroundings. He blinks. He can swallow. But he's largely immobile.

Serhii refuses to give up on him.

"We are seeing some progress, getting back on our feet. This is my opinion," he says.

He spends hours at Vitalii's bedside, sharing news from the battlefields, reciting from books, and reading out messages of support.

They're sent by grateful Ukrainians who urge Vitalii to "Hold on to life! We really need you!" and say "You are strong! You will manage!"

Serhii says tears roll down Vitalii's cheeks when he reads them to him. Other signs of improvement

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appeared in late December, when Vitalii started wiggling his toes, Serhii says. Vitalii also has started to frown, which Serhii interprets as meaning that his son is interested in what he's reading to him.

And recently, Serhii says, another breakthrough: audible responses from Vitalii.

"I've started asking him 'Do you know who I am?' And he answered 'Dad'."

Another of Vitalii's frequent visitors is Iryna Timofeyeva, a volunteer whose brainchild it was to collect messages of support.

"The love of the family, the attention of other people, very often helps the positive dynamics of the patient," she says. "It is very important for the wounded that he is not alone. That is how he understands that he has to fight."

Vitalii is, for now, alone in his ward, after other patients were transferred for rehabilitation elsewhere. But the beds around him are unlikely to stay empty for long, given the ferocity of the fighting in the Donbas. Vitalii's hospital in Chernihiv, north of Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, is among those where soldiers get long-term follow-up care after their wounds have been stabilized closer to the fronts.

Serhii feels that caring for his son is his contribution to the war effort.

"I will put him back on his feet. This is my dream," he says.

Inclining to his son's ear, he asks: "Ukraine will win, we will win, right?"

The answer is silence.

NFL playoffs: No lead safe, drama abounds in wild weekend

By DAVID BRANDT AP Sports Writer

The Buffalo Bills blew a 17-point advantage before recovering to win Sunday. That narrow escape came less than 24 hours after the Jacksonville Jaguars overcame a 27-point deficit and pulled off one of the most stunning comeback victories in playoff history.

No lead is safe and the drama abounds so far in the NFL playoffs.

A loaded Sunday schedule saw the Bills escape with a 34-31 win over the Miami Dolphins, the New York Giants upset the Minnesota Vikings 31-24 and the Cincinnati Bengals hang on to beat the Baltimore Ravens 24-17 as wild-card weekend continued.

One more game in the round remains: Tom Brady and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers host Dak Prescott and the Dallas Cowboys on Monday night.

All three of Sunday's games were decided in the final minutes. In the nightcap, Sam Hubbard returned Baltimore quarterback Tyler Huntley's fumble 98 yards for a tiebreaking touchdown in the fourth quarter in a stunning turn of events that led the Bengals to their win.

Huntley tried to go over the top of the line for the go-ahead score. But he was stood up by Germaine Pratt and stripped by fellow linebacker Logan Wilson.

The ball went right to Hubbard at the 2, and the defensive end took off down the field for the longest fumble return for a touchdown in NFL postseason history. It also was the longest go-ahead TD in the fourth quarter in the postseason.

In Sunday's opener, Bills quarterback Josh Allen shrugged off a three-turnover outing by throwing two touchdown passes 3:11 apart in the third quarter. He finished 23 of 39 for 352 yards and three TDs, but also threw two interceptions and lost a fumble.

Cole Beasley scored the go-ahead touchdown with a 6-yard catch, and Gabe Davis extended the lead to 34-24 with a 23-yard TD reception after Buffalo squandered its early 17-0 advantage.

Giants quarterback Daniel Jones became one of the stars of wild-card weekend by leading sixth-seeded New York to its road win over No. 3 Minnesota. Jones — playing in his first playoff game — threw for 301 yards and two touchdowns and ran for 78 yards in a stellar all-around performance. Saquon Barkley rushed for two scores, including the tiebreaker midway through the fourth quarter.

On Saturday, rookie Brock Purdy and the San Francisco 49ers beat the Seattle Seahawks 41-23 while the Jaguars capped their comeback by beating the Los Angeles Chargers 31-30.

The No. 1 overall seed in the AFC was claimed by Kansas City with its 31-13 win over Las Vegas in Week

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18. The NFC's top spot was taken by Philadelphia. Those teams got the weekend off before playing in the divisional round next weekend.

Here are some other things to know during the postseason:

WHAT'S THE UPCOMING SCHEDULE?

MONDAY

Dallas Cowboys at Tampa Bay Buccaneers, 8:15 p.m. EST, ESPN/ABC

SATURDAY, JAN. 21

Jacksonville Jaguars at Kansas City Chiefs, 4:30 p.m. EST, NBC/Peacock/Universo

New York Giants at Philadelphia Eagles, 8:15 p.m. EST, Fox/Fox Deportes

SUNDAY, JAN. 22

Cincinnati Bengals at Buffalo Bills, 3 p.m. EST, CBS/Paramount+

Dallas/Tampa Bay at San Francisco 49ers, 6:30 p.m. EST, Fox, Fox Deportes

WHAT'S THE FORMAT FOR PLAYOFFS?

This is the third straight year of the current playoff format, which includes the top seven teams from both the AFC and the NFC.

The four division winners in both conferences automatically get the top four seeds, regardless of record, and then the top three teams with the best record that didn't win their division are the wild-card selections. That's why it's fairly common for a wild-card selection to have a better record — but worse playoff seeding — than a team that finished as a division winner.

The No. 1-seeded team in each conference gets a bye into the second round — that's the Chiefs and Eagles — while No. 2 hosts No. 7, No. 3 hosts No. 6 and No. 4 hosts No. 5 during the wild-card weekend.

The NFL re-seeds teams after each playoff round. That means no matter how the bracket started, the lowest-seeded team will always travel to the highest-seeded team.

There are four rounds to the playoffs: The wild-card round is this weekend, the divisional round is Jan. 21-22, the conference championship games are on Jan. 29 and the Super Bowl is scheduled for Feb. 12 in Glendale, Arizona.

WHAT CHANGED WITH BILLS-BENGALS CANCELLATION?

Players and fans watched in horror on Jan. 2 as Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin collapsed on the field at Cincinnati when his heart stopped and he received CPR before leaving the field in an ambulance. Over the next week, those same players and fans reacted with joy at news of Hamlin's recovery.

Even better news came Saturday: Hamlin visited with teammates at the Bills' facility for the first time since being discharged from a Buffalo hospital.

A person with direct knowledge of Hamlin's schedule confirmed to The Associated Press the player's visit. The person spoke on the condition of anonymity because Hamlin has kept his schedule and recovery private.

Hamlin's remarkable recovery has made it much easier to focus on the playoffs.

The cancellation of the Bills-Bengals game because of Hamlin's injury could lead to one big change to the AFC playoff format.

The AFC championship game would be played at a neutral site if the Chiefs and Bills reach that point under a rule adjustment approved by NFL owners last Friday. That's because Buffalo (13-3) played one fewer game than Kansas City (14-3) and missed out on a chance to earn the top seed. The Bills beat the Chiefs 24-20 on Oct. 16 and would have held the tiebreaker had the teams finished with the same record. Buffalo lost 42-36 at Kansas City in a divisional-round classic last season.

The Chiefs would host the AFC title game against any other team, including the third-seeded Bengals (12-4).

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Bills hang on for 34-31 wild-card win over Dolphins

By JOHN WAWROW AP Sports Writer

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. (AP) — Josh Allen and the Buffalo Bills opened the season with Super Bowl aspirations.

One week into the playoffs, their objective remains in sight — but barely.

Allen shrugged off a three-turnover outing, and the three-time defending AFC East champion Bills avoided a major collapse by rallying for a 34-31 victory over the AFC's seventh-seeded and injury-depleted Miami Dolphins in a wild-card playoff game on Sunday.

In acknowledging he was hardly at his best, Allen said all that mattered was the final score.

"One-week seasons, man, that's it," he said. "All that matters is surviving and advancing. Doesn't matter how we win, it's if we win."

The "if" part of the equation hung in the balance until the final minutes of a game in which the Bills squandered a 17-0 lead against an opponent that limped into the playoffs by losing five of its final six and was down to its third-string quarterback, rookie Skylar Thompson.

It wasn't until Allen's fumble was returned 5 yards for a touchdown by Zach Sieler 61 seconds into the third quarter to put the Dolphins up 24-20 that the Bills' offense finally reawakened.

Allen threw two touchdown passes over a span of 3:11, with Cole Beasley scoring the go-ahead TD with a 6-yard catch, before Gabe Davis extended the lead to 34-24 with a 23-yard TD reception.

"That's just playoff football for the most part. All the games I've played in the playoffs, I don't even know if we've had a blowout," Beasley said. "The thing is you've got to keep your foot on the gas. You can't ever get complacent. You gotta play consistent. We were a little inconsistent tonight. We can't do that going forward."

The game wasn't decided until Buffalo's defense, which forced six punts and two turnovers, stopped Miami as it turned the ball over on downs on its final possession.

Thompson's pass on fourth-and-6 went just off the fingertips of tight end Mike Gesicki with 2:22 remaining.

Buffalo ran out the clock when Devin Singletary bulled his way for a 7-yard gain to convert a third-and-7.

It was a sloppy game and a lengthy saga lasting nearly four hours between two division rivals, and the outcome fitting after the two teams split their regular-season series in games decided by a combined five points. The Dolphins beat Buffalo 21-19 at Miami in September, with the Bills rallying to beat Miami 32-29 last month.

Allen finished 23 of 39 for 352 yards and three TDs, but also threw two interceptions, which resulted in the Dolphins scoring 11 points.

Buffalo advances to host the third-seeded Cincinnati Bengals next Sunday in the divisional round. Three weeks earlier, the Bills' game against the Bengals in Cincinnati was canceled when Buffalo safety Damar Hamlin went into cardiac arrest and needed to be resuscitated on the field. Hamlin is recovering and watched Sunday's game at home.

The Dolphins played tough in a game they entered as 13 1/2-point underdogs, according to FanDuel Sportsbook, without numerous offensive starters, including quarterback Tua Tagovailoa, who is still in the concussion protocol, and backup Teddy Bridgewater who is dealing with a dislocated pinky finger.

"That was the hand that was dealt, and that was part of the story that we were willing to complete," coach Mike McDaniels said. "I'm heartbroken for the guys because they didn't want their season to end and they did everything they could."

The Dolphins extended their run of playoff losses to five. Miami's most recent playoff win was a 23-17 overtime victory over Indianapolis on Dec. 30, 2000 in the wild-card round.

Miami's defense and special teams made up for an offense that managed just 16 first downs and 231 yards. Jevon Holland and Xavier Howard's interceptions, along with Cedric Wilson's 50-yard punt return, led to the Dolphins taking advantage of short fields to tie the game at 17 on Gesicki's 7-yard catch late in the second quarter.

Making just his third career start, Thompson finished 18 of 45 for 220 yards with a touchdown and two

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interceptions.

"Man, our defense played so good today. That's tough. Because those guys gave us every chance to win," Thompson said. "Feel like that's a game we definitely had the opportunity to win. I will take (responsibility) for the loss, and shoulder that, and move forward."

Buffalo didn't resemble a team that closed the season reeling off seven straight victories.

Instead, the Bills looked as if they were running out of adrenaline after an emotionally draining week, and a season full of disruptions.

Hamlin was with the team in spirit, live-tweeting during the game from home, where he continues to recover. A message Hamlin posted on his Twitter account about an hour before kickoff read: "My heart is with my guys as they compete today! ... Nothing I want more than to be out there with them."

The 24-year-old Hamlin was released from a Buffalo hospital on Wednesday and visited with his teammates at the Bills facility on Saturday.

Cornerback Tre'Davious White said Hamlin's visit "gave us a lot of juice." for this game. "It lifted our spirits for sure," he added.

NOTABLE OUTINGS

Dolphins: Sieler had two of Miami's playoff-record seven sacks. Jeff Wilson closed the scoring with a 1-yard run, capping an 11-play, 75-yard drive with 10:53 left. Jason Sanders hit all three field-goal attempts, including a 48-yarder. Tyreek Hill led Miami with seven catches for 69 yards.

Bills: LB Matt Milano, fresh off being selected as an All-Pro, had two sacks. Dawson Knox also scored on a 6-yard catch for Buffalo, while James Cook scored on 12-yard run. Bass hit both field-goal attempts, including a 39-yarder. WR Stefon Diggs had seven catches for 114 yards, and Davis finished with six catches for 113.

UP NEXT

Bills: Host Cincinnati next Sunday at 3 p.m. EST.

Giants outlast Vikings 31-24 for 1st playoff win in 11 years

By DAVE CAMPBELL AP Pro Football Writer

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — First-year head coach Brian Daboll had his upstart team fully prepared. Daniel Jones played at a level well beyond his experience.

The New York Giants came confidently into Minnesota's raucous stadium and beat the tight-finish masters at their own game.

Jones passed for 301 yards and two touchdowns and ran for 78 yards in his first career playoff game for the Giants in a 31-24 wild-card round victory on Sunday that gave the Vikings their first loss in 12 one-score games this season.

"A cornerstone franchise like this with such a rich history, this is what we're supposed to do," wide receiver Darius Slayton said. "We're supposed to go to the playoffs. We're supposed to be a winning team. We're just going to keep trying to live up to the legacy that's been here."

Saquon Barkley rushed for two scores, including the tiebreaker midway through the fourth quarter. Jones became the first quarterback in NFL history to hit these thresholds in a postseason game: 300-plus yards passing, two-plus passing touchdowns and 70-plus yards rushing.

"He's a special player," said Barkley, who had 109 total yards on only 14 touches. "This is where you can create your legacy in the playoffs, and what a way to start it off."

The defense finished off the franchise's first playoff win since the Super Bowl 11 years ago by swarming tight end T.J. Hockenson at midfield after a 3-yard reception from Kirk Cousins on fourth-and-8 to force a turnover on downs with 1:44 to go and no timeouts left for the Vikings (13-5).

The Giants (10-7-1) advanced to play No. 1 seed and NFC East rival Philadelphia in the divisional round next Saturday night. They converted seven of 13 third downs and had their way with a Vikings defense that has been vulnerable all season, averaging 8.3 yards per play in the first half.

"I think we've had some of our better games recently and found some stuff that works for us," said Jones,

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who had touchdown passes to Isaiah Hodgins and Daniel Bellinger. "So we'll keep doing it. I thought the coaching staff did a great job having us prepared."

Cousins went 31 for 39 for 273 yards and two scores and a rushing touchdown to cap the game's opening possession, the too-short throw to Hockenson his one glaring mistake. Cousins was more upset by his placement on the third-and-8 pass to K.J. Osborn — who had a first-half touchdown catch — that was knocked down by Cor'Dale Flott.

"There was always belief. I think that's why it hurts, because you expect to find a way, especially the way this team has gone all year," said Cousins, who called this "probably the toughest loss" of his 11-year career after going an NFL-record 11-0 in one-score games in the regular season.

Five years and one day after Case Keenum's 61-yard last-play touchdown pass to Stefon Diggs gave the Vikings a 29-24 victory over New Orleans in the divisional round, Cousins finally got a postseason game in Minnesota in his fifth season with the team.

The Vikings stayed on brand by facing 10-point deficits late in the second quarter and again early in the third quarter.

Cousins, who delivered all kinds of on-target throws as he was knocked to the turf by the blitz-fueled Giants defense, hit Irv Smith Jr. for a touchdown that brought the Vikings within 24-21.

Then came the unusual — the defense got a stop.

Danielle Hunter's sack forced the first Giants punt, and the Vikings went the other way for the tying field goal. They left behind some crucial points, though, when Cousins ran successful sneak on fourth-and-1 at the 15 that was negated by a false start on left tackle Christian Darrisaw.

Jones converted a penalty-free fourth-and-1 sneak on the next drive for the Giants. Barkley chugged into the end zone for the lead with 7:47 to go.

"There were real tears in there," first-year coach Kevin O'Connell said outside the locker room. "There are guys that expected to have a chance to win a world championship. You've got to give the Giants a lot of credit."

JACKSON VS. JEFFERSON

Cousins targeted Hockenson 11 times for 10 receptions and 129 yards, but after Justin Jefferson had four catches on the opening touchdown drive he had only three more the rest of the way and just one in the second half.

The NFL's leading receiver, who had 133 yards and a touchdown on 12 receptions in the 27-24 win over the Giants last month, almost always had a safety following him and was deftly covered by Adoree' Jackson in the cornerback's return from a seven-game absence to a knee injury.

"I always believe in myself, but it's always gratifying and it's appreciated when others believe in you," Jackson said.

INJURY REPORT

Giants: OLB Azeez Ojulari (quadriceps) was hurt in the second quarter and ruled out at halftime. ... Backup FS Jason Pinnock (abdomen) left on a cart after covering a kickoff in the fourth quarter and went to a hospital for evaluation. He rejoined Giants in the locker room and was flying home with the team.

Vikings: LB Brian Asamoah II (concussion) was injured covering a kickoff late in the second quarter. ... Backup CB Cameron Dantzler Sr. (personal) was inactive after missing practice all week.

Biden: Americans should 'pay attention' to MLK's legacy

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — President Joe Biden made a historical pilgrimage Sunday to "America's freedom church" to mark Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, saying democracy was at a perilous moment and that the civil rights leader's life and legacy "show us the way and we should pay attention."

As the first sitting president to deliver a Sunday morning sermon at King's Ebenezer Baptist Church, Biden cited the telling question that King himself once asked of the nation.

"He said, 'Where do we go from here?'" Biden said from the pulpit. "Well, my message to this nation

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on this day is we go forward, we go together, when we choose democracy over autocracy, a beloved community over chaos, when we choose believers and the dreams, to be doers, to be unafraid, always keeping the faith."

In a divided country only two years removed from a violent insurrection, Biden told congregants, elected officials and dignitaries that "the battle for the soul of this nation is perennial. It's a constant struggle ... between hope and fear, kindness and cruelty, justice and injustice."

He spoke out against those who "traffic in racism, extremism, insurrection" and said the struggle to safeguard democracy was playing out in courthouses and ballot boxes, protests and other ways. "At our best, the American promise wins out. ... But I don't need to tell you that we're not always at our best. We're fallible. We fail and fall."

The stop at Ebenezer came at a delicate moment for Biden after Attorney General Merrick Garland on Thursday announced the appointment of a special counsel to investigate how the president handled classified documents after leaving the vice presidency in 2017. The White House on Saturday revealed that additional classified records were found at Biden's home near Wilmington, Delaware.

In introducing Biden, the church's senior pastor, Democratic Sen. Raphael Warnock noted that the president was "a devout Catholic" for whom "this Baptist service might be a little bit rambunctious and animated. But I saw him over there clapping his hands."

King, "the greatest American prophet of the 20th century," as Warnock put it, served as co-pastor from 1960 until he was assassinated in 1968.

Warnock, like many battleground state Democrats who won reelection in 2022, kept his distance during the campaign from Biden as the president's approval rating lagged and the inflation rate climbed.

But with the election behind him and a full six-year term ahead, Warnock fully embraced Biden at the service. Near the close, he asked Biden to come to the front of the church and asked Ebenezer's congregants to pray for the president as he listed several of Biden's legislative achievements.

"That, my friends, is God's work," said Warnock, adding that Biden "had a little something to do with it."

As Biden begins to turn his attention toward an expected 2024 reelection effort, Georgia is going to get plenty of his attention.

In 2020, Biden managed to win Georgia as well as closely contested Michigan and Pennsylvania, where Black votes made up a disproportionate share of the Democratic electorate. Turning out Black voters in those states will be essential to Biden's 2024 hopes.

The White House has tried to promote Biden's agenda in minority communities. The White House has cited efforts to encourage states to take equity into account for public works projects as they spend money from the administration's \$1 trillion infrastructure bill. The administration also has acted to end sentencing disparity between crack and powder cocaine offenses, scrapping a policy widely seen as racist.

The administration also highlights Biden's work to diversify the federal judiciary, including his appointment of Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson as the first Black woman to serve on the Supreme Court and the confirmation of 11 Black women judges to federal appeals courts — more than those installed to those powerful courts under all previous presidents combined.

Biden's failure to win passage of a measure that would have bolstered voting right protections, a central campaign pledge, is one of his biggest disappointments of his first two years in office. The task is even steeper now that Republicans control the House.

In his remarks, the president said that for all the progress the United States has made, the country had now reached a critical point in its history. He said democracies can backslide, noting the collapse of the institutional structures of democracy in places such as Brazil.

"Progress is never easy, but it's always possible and things do get better in our march to a more perfect union," he said. "But at this inflection point, we know a lot of work that has to continue on economic justice civil rights, voting rights, protecting our democracy. And I'm remembering our job is to redeem the soul of America."

This moment, he said, "is the time of choosing. ... Are we a people who will choose democracy over

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autocracy? Couldn't ask that question 15 years ago because everybody thought democracy was settled. ... But it's not." Americans, he said, " have to choose a community over chaos. ... These are the vital questions of our time and the reason why I'm here as your president. I believe Dr. King's life and legacy show us the way and we should pay attention."

King, who was born on Jan. 15, 1929, was killed at age 39. He helped drive passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965. Members of King's family attended the service, including his 95-year-old sister, Christine King Farris.

"I've spoken before parliaments, kings, queens, leaders of the world ... but this is intimidating," Biden said in opening his sermon.

The president plans to be in Washington on Monday to speak at the National Action Network's annual breakfast on the King holiday.

House GOP demands visitor logs in Biden classified docs case

By HOPE YEN and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Newly empowered House Republicans on Sunday demanded the White House turn over all information related to its searches that have uncovered classified documents at President Joe Biden's home and former office in the wake of more records found at his Delaware residence.

"We have a lot of questions," said Rep. James Comer, chairman of the House Oversight and Accountability Committee.

Comer, R-Ky., said he wants to see all documents and communications related to the searches by the Biden team, as well as visitor logs of the president's home in Wilmington, Delaware, from Jan. 20, 2021, to present. He said the aim is to determine who might have had access to classified material and how the records got there.

The White House on Saturday said it had discovered five additional pages of classified documents at Biden's home on Thursday, the same day a special counsel was appointed to review the matter.

In a letter Sunday to White House chief of staff Ron Klain, Comer criticized the searches by Biden representatives when the Justice Department was beginning to investigate and said Biden's "mishandling of classified materials raises the issue of whether he has jeopardized our national security." Comer demanded that the White House provide all relevant information including visitor logs by the end of the month.

Appearing on CNN's "State of the Union," Comer referred to Biden's home as a "crime scene" though he acknowledged that it was not clear whether laws were broken.

"My concern is that the special counsel was called for, but yet hours after that we still had the president's personal attorneys, who have no security clearance, still rummaging around the president's residence, looking for things — I mean that would essentially be a crime scene, so to speak," Comer said.

While the U.S. Secret Service provides security at the president's private residence, it does not maintain visitor logs, agency spokesman Anthony Guglielmi said Sunday.

"We don't independently maintain our own visitor logs because it's a private residence," Guglielmi said. He added that the agency does screen visitors to the president's properties but doesn't maintain records of those checks.

The White House confirmed that Biden has not independently maintained records of who has visited his residence since he becoming president.

"Like every President in decades of modern history, his personal residence is personal," White House spokesman Ian Sams said. "But upon taking office, President Biden restored the norm and tradition of keeping White House visitors logs, including publishing them regularly, after the previous administration ended them."

Indeed, President Donald Trump's administration announced early in his presidency that they wouldn't release visitor logs out of "grave national security risks and privacy concerns of the hundreds of thousands of visitors annually." Democrat Barack Obama's administration initially fought attempts by Congress and conservative and liberal groups to obtain visitor records. But after being sued, it voluntarily began disclos-

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ing the logs in December 2009, posting records every three to four months.

A federal appeals court ruled in 2013 that the logs can be withheld under presidential executive privilege. That unanimous ruling was written by Judge Merrick Garland, who is now serving as Biden's attorney general.

Asked about Comer's request for logs and communications regarding the search for documents, Sams responded: "I would simply refer you to what Congressman Comer himself told CNN this morning: 'At the end of the day, my biggest concern isn't the classified documents to be honest with you.' That says it all."

In that CNN interview, Comer had added that House Republicans did not trust the Justice Department to give the matter of Biden's classified documents an appropriate level of scrutiny. The House Judiciary Committee on Friday requested that Garland turn over information related to the discovery of documents and Garland's appointment of special counsel Richard Hur to oversee the investigation.

White House officials "can say they're being transparent, but it's anything but," the committee chairman, Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, told Fox News Channel's "Sunday Morning Futures."

White House lawyer Richard Sauber said in a statement Saturday that a total of six pages of classified documents were found from Biden's time serving as vice president in the Obama administration during a search of Biden's private library. The White House had said previously that only a single page was found there.

The latest disclosure was in addition to the discovery of documents found in December in Biden's garage and in November at his former offices at the Penn Biden Center in Washington.

Sauber said that Biden's personal lawyers, who did not have security clearances, stopped their search after finding the first page on Wednesday evening. Sauber found the remaining material Thursday, as he was facilitating their retrieval by Justice Department. Sauber did not explain why the White House waited two days to provide an updated accounting. The White House is already facing scrutiny for waiting more than two months to acknowledge the discovery of the initial group of documents at the Biden office.

Rep. Jamie Raskin of Maryland, the top Democrat on the House Oversight and Accountability Committee, said the Justice Department rightfully appointed special counsels to "get to the bottom" of the Biden classified documents matter as well as in a separate investigation into the mishandling of classified documents at former President Donald Trump's private club and residence in Florida.

But Raskin also stressed key differences between the two cases, including that Biden's team readily handed over documents to the National Archives compared with Trump's repeated resistance to such requests.

"We should keep a sense of proportion and measure about what we're talking about," Raskin told CNN.

Asked Sunday if his oversight committee would investigate Trump's handling of classified documents as well, Comer demurred.

"There have been so many investigations of President Trump, I don't feel like we need to spend a whole lot of time investigating President Trump, because the Democrats have done that for the past six years," he said.

Expanded US training for Ukraine forces begins in Germany

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — The U.S. military's new, expanded combat training of Ukrainian forces began in Germany on Sunday, with a goal of getting a battalion of about 500 troops back on the battlefield to fight the Russians in the next five to eight weeks, said Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Milley, who plans to visit the Grafenwoehr training area on Monday to get a first-hand look at the program, said the troops being trained left Ukraine a few days ago. In Germany is a full set of weapons and equipment for them to use.

Until now the Pentagon had declined to say exactly when the training would start.

The so-called combined arms training is aimed at honing the skills of the Ukrainian forces so they will be better prepared to launch an offensive or counter any surge in Russian attacks. They will learn how

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to better move and coordinate their company- and battalion-size units in battle, using combined artillery, armor and ground forces.

Speaking to two reporters traveling with him to Europe on Sunday, Milley said the complex training — combined with an array of new weapons, artillery, tanks and other vehicles heading to Ukraine — will be key to helping the country's forces take back territory that has been captured by Russia in the nearly 11-month-old war.

"This support is really important for Ukraine to be able to defend itself," Milley said. "And we're hoping to be able to pull this together here in short order."

The goal, he said, is for all the incoming weapons and equipment to be delivered to Ukraine so that the newly trained forces will be able to use it "sometime before the spring rains show up. That would be ideal."

The new instruction comes as Ukrainian forces face fierce fighting in the eastern Donetsk province, where the Russian military has claimed it has control of the small salt-mining town of Soledar. Ukraine asserts that its troops are still fighting, but if Moscow's troops take control of Soledar it would allow them to inch closer to the bigger city of Bakhmut, where fighting has raged for months.

Russia also launched a widespread barrage of missile strikes, including in Kyiv, the northeastern city of Kharkiv and the southeastern city of Dnipro, where the death toll in one apartment building rose to 30.

Milley said he wants to make sure the training is on track and whether anything else is needed, and also ensure that it will line up well with the equipment deliveries.

The program will include classroom instruction and field work that will begin with small squads and gradually grow to involve larger units. It would culminate with a more complex combat exercise bringing an entire battalion and a headquarters unit together.

Until now, the U.S. focus has been on providing Ukrainian forces with more immediate battlefield needs, particularly on how to use the wide array of Western weapons systems pouring into the country.

The U.S. has already trained more than 3,100 Ukrainian troops on how to use and maintain certain weapons and other equipment, including howitzers, armored vehicles and the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System, known as HIMARS. Other nations are also conducting training on the weapons they provide.

In announcing the new program last month, Air Force Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder, Pentagon press secretary, said the idea "is to be able to give them this advanced level of collective training that enables them to conduct effective combined arms operations and maneuver on the battlefield."

Milley said the U.S. was doing this type of training prior to the Russian invasion last February. But once the war began, U.S. National Guard and special operations forces that were doing training inside Ukraine all left the country. This new effort, which is being done by U.S. Army Europe Africa's 7th Army Training Command, will be a continuation of what they had been doing prior to the invasion. Other European allies are also providing training.

Alabama basketball player, 2nd man charged with murder

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. (AP) — Alabama basketball player Darius Miles and another man have been charged with capital murder after a fatal shooting near campus.

Tuscaloosa Police Capt. Jack Kennedy said that the shooting occurred early Sunday morning in the Strip off University Blvd. near campus. He said Jamea Harris, 23, of the Birmingham area was shot and killed.

Miles, 21, a junior reserve forward from Washington, D.C., and Michael Lynn Davis, 20, of Charles County, Maryland, were both charged with capital murder. The capital murder charge arose because the death involved shots fired into a vehicle, Kennedy said.

"At this time, it appears that the only motive was a minor altercation that these individuals had with the victim as they were out on The Strip," Kennedy said in a news conference Sunday evening. They didn't have a previous relationship, he said.

He said the driver of another vehicle, in which Harris was a passenger, approached campus police near Bryant-Denny Stadium at about 1:45 a.m. saying that someone had shot into the vehicle, and he fired back. One of the suspects was treated for non-life-threatening injuries at a local hospital, and Kennedy

declined to disclose who fired the gun or who was hurt.

An emotional Miles spoke to someone as he was being ushered into a law enforcement vehicle: "I swear I love you more than you can imagine."

Miles was a reserve on the fourth-ranked Crimson Tide team. Alabama had announced before Saturday's game against LSU that he was out for the season with an ankle injury. His bio has been removed from the athletic department website and the university said that he "has been removed from campus" and is no longer on the team.

"The University of Alabama's utmost priority is the safety and well-being of the campus community," a university statement said. "We are grieved by the incident that occurred near campus last night and extend our deepest condolences to the victim's family and friends."

Neither the driver of the other vehicle nor Harris nor Davis appeared to be affiliated with the university, Kennedy said.

68 dead, 4 missing after plane crashes in Nepal resort town

By UPENDRA MAN SINGH, SHEIKH SAALIQ and ANISH BHATTARAI Associated Press

POKHARA, Nepal (AP) — A plane making a 27-minute flight to a Nepal tourist town crashed into a gorge Sunday while attempting to land at a newly opened airport, killing at least 68 of the 72 people aboard. At least one witness reported hearing cries for help from within the fiery wreck, the country's deadliest airplane accident in three decades.

Hours after dark, scores of onlookers crowded around the crash site near the airport in the resort town of Pokhara as rescue workers combed the wreckage on the edge of the cliff and in the ravine below. Officials suspended the search for the four missing people overnight and planned to resume looking Monday.

Local resident Bishnu Tiwari, who rushed to the crash site near the Seti River to help search for bodies, said the rescue efforts were hampered by thick smoke and a raging fire.

"The flames were so hot that we couldn't go near the wreckage. I heard a man crying for help, but because of the flames and smoke we couldn't help him," Tiwari said.

It was not immediately clear what caused the accident, Nepal's Civil Aviation Authority said.

A witness said he saw the aircraft spinning violently in the air after it began descending to land, watching from the terrace of his house. Finally, Gaurav Gurung said, the plane fell nose-first towards its left and crashed into the gorge.

The aviation authority said the aircraft last made contact with the airport from near Seti Gorge at 10:50 a.m. before crashing.

The twin-engine ATR 72 aircraft, operated by Nepal's Yeti Airlines, was flying from the capital, Kathmandu, to Pokhara, located 200 kilometers (125 miles) west. It was carrying 68 passengers including 15 foreign nationals, as well as four crew members, Nepal's Civil Aviation Authority said in a statement. The foreigners included five Indians, four Russians, two South Koreans, and one each from Ireland, Australia, Argentina and France.

Images and videos shared on Twitter showed plumes of smoke billowing from the crash site, about 1.6 kilometers (nearly a mile) away from Pokhara International Airport. The aircraft's fuselage was split into multiple parts that were scattered down the gorge.

Firefighters carried bodies, some burned beyond recognition, to hospitals where grief-stricken relatives had assembled. At Kathmandu airport, family members appeared distraught as they were escorted in and at times exchanged heated words with officials as they waited for information.

Tek Bahadur K. C., a senior administrative officer in the Kaski district, said he expected rescue workers to find more bodies at the bottom of the gorge.

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, who rushed to Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu after the crash, set up a panel to investigate the accident.

"The incident was tragic. The full force of the Nepali army, police has been deployed for rescue," he said.

South Korea's Foreign Ministry said in a statement that it's still trying to confirm the fate of two South

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Korean passengers and has sent staff to the scene. The Russian Ambassador to Nepal, Alexei Novikov, confirmed the death of four Russian citizens who were on board the plane.

Omar Gutiérrez, governor of Argentina's Neuquen province, reported on his official Twitter account that an Argentine passenger on the flight was Jannet Palavecino from his province.

The Facebook page of Palavecino says she was manager of the Hotel Suizo in Neuquen city.

On the page, she described herself as a lover of travel, and of adventure tourism. "I am passionate about the mountains! Riding my bike in cycling. I love my garden and the countryside. I like to paint!" she wrote.

Her account has many photos of her in the mountains.

Pokhara is the gateway to the Annapurna Circuit, a popular hiking trail in the Himalayas. The city's new international airport began operations only two weeks ago.

The type of plane involved, the ATR 72, has been used by airlines around the world for short regional flights. Introduced in the late 1980s by a French and Italian partnership, the aircraft model has been involved in several deadly accidents over the years.

In Taiwan two earlier accidents involving ATR 72-500 and ATR 72-600 aircrafts happened just months apart.

In July 2014, a TransAsia ATR 72-500 flight crashed while trying to land on the scenic Penghu archipelago between Taiwan and China, killing 48 people onboard. An ATR 72-600 operated by the same Taiwanese airline crashed shortly after takeoff in Taipei in February 2015 after one of its engines failed and the second was shut down, apparently by mistake.

The 2015 crash, captured in dramatic footage that showed the plane striking a taxi as it hurtled out of control, killed 43, and prompted authorities to ground all Taiwanese-registered ATR 72s for some time. TransAsia ceased all flights in 2016 and later went out of business.

ATR identified the plane involved in Sunday's crash as an ATR 72-500 in a tweet. According to plane tracking data from flightradar24.com, the aircraft was 15 years old and "equipped with an old transponder with unreliable data." It was previously flown by India's Kingfisher Airlines and Thailand's Nok Air before Yeti took it over in 2019, according to records on Airfleets.net.

Yeti Airlines has a fleet of six ATR72-500 planes, company spokesperson Sudarshan Bartaula said.

Nepal, home to eight of the world's 14 highest mountains, including Mount Everest, has a history of air crashes. According to the Flight Safety Foundation's Aviation Safety database, there have been 42 fatal plane crashes in Nepal since 1946.

Sunday's crash is Nepal's deadliest since 1992, when all 167 people aboard a Pakistan International Airlines plane were killed when it plowed into a hill as it tried to land in Kathmandu.

The European Union has banned airlines from Nepal from flying into the 27-nation bloc since 2013, citing weak safety standards. In 2017, the International Civil Aviation Organization cited improvements in Nepal's aviation sector, but the EU continues to demand administrative reforms.

California gets more rain and snow, but dry days are ahead

LOS ANGELES (AP) — More rain and snow fell during the weekend in storm-battered California, making travel dangerous and prompting evacuation warnings over flooding concerns along a swollen river near Sacramento.

Bands of gusty thunderstorms started Saturday in the north and spread south, with yet another atmospheric river storm following close behind Sunday, the National Weather Service said.

Up to two inches (5 cm) of rain was predicted for the saturated Sacramento Valley, where residents of semi-rural Wilton and surrounding communities were warned to prepare to leave if the Cosumnes River continued to rise. The warning was downgraded from an evacuation order Sunday afternoon.

Gusts and up to 3 feet (91 cm) of snow were expected in the Sierra Nevada, where the weather service warned of hazardous driving conditions. Interstate 80, a key highway from the San Francisco Bay Area to Lake Tahoe ski resorts, reopened after being closed most of Saturday because of slick roads and snow.

The University of California Berkeley Central Sierra Snow Lab tweeted Sunday morning that it received 21.5 inches (54 centimeters) of snow in 24 hours. Its snowpack of about 10 feet (3 meters) was expected

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to grow several more feet by Monday.

A backcountry avalanche warning was issued for the central Sierra, including the greater Lake Tahoe area, through Monday.

The California Highway Patrol rescued three people whose car slid off a rain-slicked road and ended up teetering at the edge of a cliff in the Santa Cruz Mountains on Friday. The occupants of the car "were scared for their lives and were in disbelief" when they were pulled safely from the car as the vehicle's front end hung precariously over the cliff's edge, the highway patrol said in a statement.

"We cannot stress this enough. Please ONLY drive if it's necessary," the statement said.

Just to the south in Santa Cruz County, the tiny community of Felton Grove along the San Lorenzo River was under an evacuation warning.

The swollen Salinas River swamped farmland in Monterey County. To the east, flood warnings were in effect for Merced County in the agricultural Central Valley, where Gov. Gavin Newsom visited Saturday to take stock of problems and warn of still more possible danger.

"We're not done," Newsom said. He urged people to be vigilant about safety for a few more days, when the last of a parade of nine atmospheric rivers was expected to move through.

Several roads, including State Route 99, were closed because of flooding Sunday in San Joaquin County.

In Southern California, winter storm warnings and advisories were in place for mountain areas, where many roads remained impassable because of mud and rock slides. Two northbound lanes of Interstate 5 near Castaic in northern Los Angeles County were closed indefinitely after a hillside collapsed.

Downtown Los Angeles set a rainfall record Saturday with 1.82 inches (4.6 cm), the weather service said.

The series of storms has dumped rain and snow on California since late December, cutting power to thousands, swamping roads, unleashing debris flows, and triggering landslides.

President Joe Biden declared a major disaster in the state and ordered federal aid to supplement local recovery efforts in affected areas.

At least 19 storm-related deaths have occurred, and a 5-year-old boy remained missing after being swept out of his mother's car by floodwaters in San Luis Obispo County.

Dry days are in this week's forecast for California starting on Tuesday.

Missouri Democrats say House dress code debate a distraction

By JOSH FUNK Associated Press

Women who serve in the Missouri House will face a tougher dress code when they return to the floor this week after a debate that Democrats panned as a pointless distraction from the issues facing the state.

The new rules require female legislators and staff members to wear a jacket such as a cardigan or blazer. The Republican lawmaker who introduced the change said it was done to ensure decorum and mirror the men's dress code. Democrats called it ridiculous, saying women shouldn't be policed for their fashion choices.

Republican Rep. Ann Kelley, who introduced the amendment, said it cleans up language in current House rules so that the dress code for women will mirror the dress code for men.

"It is essential to always maintain a formal and professional atmosphere on House floor and to ensure this happens, I have felt compelled to offer this amendment," she said during Wednesday's floor debate.

Her initial amendment said women would be required to wear business attire – specifically a "jacket," which would include "blazers and knit blazers." After spirited debate, a revised amendment was adopted to clarify that a cardigan could also be worn.

Men in the Missouri House of Representatives were already required to wear a jacket, shirt and a tie. Under the previous dress code, women were required to wear "dresses or skirts or slacks worn with a blazer or sweater and appropriate dress shoes or boots." A second layer of clothing was not required.

Kelley said ensuring decorum was a key reason behind her proposal -- an idea Democrats seized on.

"I've seen a lot of lack of decorum in this room in my two years here and not once has that lack of decorum spurred from someone's blazer or lack thereof," said Rep. Ashley Aune, a Democrat. "There are a lot of ways we could break decorum in this room. But a woman, what she's wearing, that is ridiculous."

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Aune went on to say she has personally been asked about her attire, even though she was following the rules.

"Do you know what it feels like to have a bunch of men in this room looking at your top trying to determine if it's appropriate or not?" she said.

Virginia Ramseyer Winter, an associate professor at the University of Missouri School of Health Professions and director of the Center for Body Image Research and Policy, said lawmakers shouldn't have even debated this because it unnecessarily put the focus on the way women look instead of the issues.

"I think it reinforces the idea that we value women more for their appearance above other more important things like their intelligence and their contributions," she said.

Ramseyer Winter and other critics of the measure said the debate echoed the one over abortion restrictions lawmakers approved last summer after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*.

"I do think that it also sends the message that we have to police women's bodies," she said.

Rep. Raychel Proudie, a Democrat, took issue with the amendment before it was amended to include "cardigan." She pointed out that it wouldn't be easy for pregnant women to comply because "they don't make jackets or blazers for women who are pregnant. That could be very uncomfortable, particularly in a pro-life state."

The dress code was a small part of a package of rules that state lawmakers ultimately approved last Wednesday.

"There are some very serious things that are in this rule package that I think we should be debating, but instead we are fighting, again, for a women's right to choose something. And this time it is how she covers herself," Proudie said.

Lawmakers in other states have pushed back against dress code rules as sexist and culturally insensitive. Congress' longstanding ban on sleeveless tops and open-toes shoes generated a fight in 2017 before those rules were updated.

Missouri Republicans said the criticism of the dress code was overdone when all the rules did was clarify what is required.

"It's a normal process for any entity regarding a professional work environment," Republican state Rep. Doug Richey said. "We just happen to have a political context that we have to navigate and, because of that, it is ripe for some members to grandstand and try to make it into something that it's not."

Still Rep. Peter Merideth, a Democrat, declined to vote on the dress code amendment because he didn't want to dare say what was appropriate or inappropriate for women to wear. In the House, there are 43 women and 116 men.

"This is ridiculous," he said. "Our people sent us here to pass laws ... not fight about mandates and rules on women's clothing."

Clearance of German hamlet for mine said to be near-complete

BERLIN (AP) — A village in western Germany that is due to be demolished to make way for a coal mine expansion has been cleared of activists, apart from a pair who remained holed up in a tunnel, police said Sunday.

The operation to evict climate activists who flocked to the site in the hamlet of Luetzerath kicked off Wednesday morning and progressed steadily over the following days. Police cleared people out of farm buildings, the few remaining houses and a few dozen makeshift constructions such as tree houses.

On Saturday, thousands of people demonstrated nearby against the eviction and the planned expansion of the Garzweiler coal mine. There were standoffs with police as some protesters tried to reach the village, which is now fenced off, and the mine.

Environmentalists say bulldozing the village to expand the Garzweiler mine would result in huge amounts of greenhouse gas emissions. The government and utility company RWE argue the coal is needed to ensure Germany's energy security.

The regional and national governments, both of which include the environmentalist Green party, reached

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a deal with RWE last year allowing it to destroy the abandoned village in return for ending coal use by 2030, rather than 2038.

The Greens' leaders argue that the deal fulfills many of the environmentalists' demands and saved five other villages from demolition, and that Luetzerath is the wrong symbol for protests. Activists reject that stance.

Police said in a statement Sunday that nearly 300 people have been removed so far from Luetzerath. They added that "the rescue by RWE Power of the two people in underground structures continues; beyond that, the clearance by police is complete."

They said that 12 people were detained in connection with Saturday's incidents. Demolition of the buildings in Luetzerath is already under way.

Swedish climate campaigner Greta Thunberg, who joined Saturday's big protest, took part in a smaller demonstration on Sunday, singing and dancing with other activists near the edge of the mine, German news agency dpa reported.

Police said Thunberg briefly sat on an embankment at the edge of the mine and officers carried her a few steps away after didn't comply with calls to move for her own safety, dpa reported, adding that she then went on her way.

Hamlin cheers on Bills from home, says 'heart is with' team

By CAROLYN THOMPSON and JOHN WAWROW undefined

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. (AP) — Bills safety Damar Hamlin, who is still recovering after going into cardiac arrest on the field in Cincinnati two weeks ago, cheered via Twitter from home Sunday during Buffalo's wild-card playoff home game against the Miami Dolphins.

"My heart is with my guys as they compete today!" Hamlin tweeted less than hour before kickoff.

"Supporting from home as I focus on my recovery. Nothing I want more than to be out there with them!" Hamlin posted, along with a video of himself greeting fans during the Bills' last game against Miami, which was on Dec. 17.

A person with direct knowledge of the player's schedule had told The Associated Press on Sunday that Hamlin planned to attend the game in person. He later said those "plans may have changed."

The person spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because Hamlin has kept his schedule and recovery private since being released from a Buffalo hospital on Wednesday.

Hamlin visited teammates at the Bills' stadium on Saturday but has not been seen in public since being rushed off the field in Cincinnati in an ambulance on Jan. 2. He spent more than a week in the hospital, much of the time in critical condition.

His occasional tweets during the game Sunday included a first-half shoutout to his replacement, Dean Marlowe, after he intercepted a pass from Miami quarterback Skylar Thompson.

Charged up fans were eager to blunt the memory of Hamlin's collapse, when the 24-year-old from the Pittsburgh exurb of McKees Rocks stood up after making a tackle against the Bengals, then fell backwards, landing motionless on the turf at Paycor Stadium.

'Avatar 2,' 'M3GAN' hold onto top spots at the box office

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

New movies like "Plane" and "House Party" were no match for "Avatar: The Way of Water" and the killer doll horror "M3GAN" at the box office this weekend. The two holdovers topped the charts again according to studio estimates Sunday.

In first place for the fifth weekend in a row was James Cameron's "Avatar" sequel, which added an estimated \$31.1 million through Sunday. That total will likely balloon to \$38.5 million by the end of Monday's Martin Luther King holiday. As of Sunday, the film's domestic total now rests at \$562.9 million (the 13th biggest of all time) and its global total is \$1.89 billion. "Avatar 2" needs to pass \$1.92 billion to trump "Spider-Man: No Way Home," which is currently the sixth highest grossing film of all time globally.

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"There were such huge expectations and a lot of naysayers that opening weekend," said Paul Dergarabedian, the senior media analyst for Comscore. "But 'Avatar,' for a James Cameron movie, is moving at lightning speed up the domestic and global box office chart. I think he always knew this would be a \$2 billion movie."

Second place went to Universal and Blumhouse's "M3GAN" which in its second weekend in theaters added \$17.9 million through Sunday and an estimated \$21.2 million including Monday. The modestly budgeted thriller that cost a reported \$12 million to produce has made \$59.8 million in North America.

Horror movies typically have very steep second weekend drop offs in ticket sales, but "M3GAN" only fell 41%. Dergarabedian said that's almost unheard of for a horror picture and shows "world class staying power."

Universal also claimed the third place spot, with "Puss in Boots: The Last Wish," which audiences continued to seek out in theaters even though it's currently available to rent at home. The family-friendly animated film added \$13.4 million in its fourth weekend, bringing its domestic total to \$110.3 million.

"A Man Called Otto," from Columbia Pictures, expanded to 3,802 theaters this weekend, adding \$12.7 million through Sunday, and \$15 million including Monday, to take fourth place. Directed by Marc Forster, the adaptation of "A Man Called Ove" starring Tom Hanks is proving to be something of a rarity in the theatrical marketplace as an adult-targeted drama that is doing well.

The Gerard Butler action pic "Plane," a Lionsgate acquisition for release in North America, rounded out the top five with a better-than-expected \$10 million in its first three days. In the film, Butler plays a pilot whose crash landing on an island is only the first of his troubles. On the island, most of the passengers are taken hostage. "Plane" got better-than-average reviews with 75% positive from critics on Rotten Tomatoes.

Sixth place went to the second major new offering this weekend, "House Party," a reboot of Reginald Hudlin's 1990 hit that spawned several spinoffs. The film, which made \$3.9 million through Sunday from 1,400 locations, was originally intended as a straight-to-HBO Max property but Warner Bros. pivoted to a theatrical release as a gesture to audiences and exhibitors hungry for new films. The R-rated, youth-oriented comedy did not score well with critics.

Overall, the three-day box office total is going to net out around \$100 million, which is not quite at pre-pandemic levels, but still up some 44% from the same weekend last year.

"January is not going to be the slow month we thought. It's a great combination of films out there that's not just dominated by 'Avatar: The Way of Water,'" Dergarabedian said. "Theaters need movies and the studios are supplying those."

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Comscore, with Wednesday through Sunday in parentheses. Final domestic figures will be released Monday.

1. "Avatar: The Way of Water," \$31.1 million.
2. "M3GAN," \$17.9 million.
3. "Puss in Boots: The Last Wish," \$13.4 million.
4. "A Man Called Otto," \$12.7 million.
5. "Plane," \$10 million.
6. "House Party," \$3.9 million.
7. "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever," \$2.2 million.
8. "The Whale," \$1.5 million.
9. "I Wanna Dance With Somebody," \$1.2 million.
10. "Waltair Veeraya," 905,000.

Ukraine building suffers deadliest civilian attack in months

By VASILISA STEPANENKO and ANDREW MELDRUM Associated Press

DNIPRO, Ukraine (AP) — The death toll from a Russian missile strike on an apartment building in the southeastern Ukrainian city of Dnipro rose to 30 Sunday, the national emergencies service reported as rescue workers scrambled to reach survivors in the rubble.

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Emergency crews worked through the frigid night and all day at the multi-story residential building, where officials said about 1,700 people lived before Saturday's strike. The reported death toll made it the deadliest attack in one place since a Sept. 30 strike in Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia region, according to The Associated Press-Frontline War Crimes Watch project.

Russia also targeted the capital, Kyiv, and the northeastern city of Kharkiv during a widespread barrage the same day, ending a two-week lull in the airstrikes it has launched against Ukraine's power infrastructure and urban centers almost weekly since October.

Russia on Sunday acknowledged the missile strikes but did not mention the Dnipro apartment building. Russia has repeatedly denied targeting civilians in the war.

Russia fired 33 cruise missiles on Saturday, of which 21 were shot down, according to Gen. Valerii Zaluzhnyi, the commander-in-chief of the Ukrainian armed forces. The missile that hit the apartment building was a Kh-22 launched from Russia's Kursk region, according to the military's air force command, adding that Ukraine does not have a system capable of intercepting that type of weapon.

In Dnipro, workers used a crane as they tried to rescue people trapped on upper floors of the apartment tower. Some residents signaled for help with lights on their mobile phones.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy reported that at least 73 people were wounded and 39 people had been rescued as of Sunday afternoon. The city government in Dnipro said 43 people were reported missing.

"Search and rescue operations and the dismantling of dangerous structural elements continues. Around the clock. We continue to fight for every life," Zelenskyy said.

Ivan Garnuk was in his apartment when the building was hit and said he felt lucky to have survived. He described his shock that the Russians would strike a residential building with no strategic value.

"There are no military facilities here. There is nothing here," he said. "There is no air defense, there are no military bases here. It just hit civilians, innocent people."

Dnipro residents joined rescue workers at the scene to help clear the rubble. Others brought food and warm clothes for those who had lost their homes.

"This is clearly terrorism and all this is simply not human," one local, Artem Myzychenko, said as he cleared rubble.

Claiming responsibility for the missile strikes across Ukraine, Russia's Defense Ministry said Sunday that it achieved its goal.

"All designated targets have been hit. The goal of the attack has been achieved," a ministry statement posted on Telegram said. It said missiles were fired "on the military command and control system of Ukraine and related energy facilities," and did not mention the attack on the Dnipro residential building.

On Sunday, Russian forces attacked a residential area in the southern Ukrainian city of Kherson, regional Gov. Yaroslav Yanushevych said in a Telegram post. According to preliminary information, two people were wounded.

Russia's renewed air attacks came as fierce fighting raged in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk province, where the Russian military has claimed it has control of the small salt-mining town of Soledar but Ukraine asserts that its troops are still fighting.

If the Russian forces win full control of Soledar it would allow them to inch closer to the bigger city of Bakhmut. The battle for Bakhmut has raged for months, causing substantial casualties on both sides.

With the grinding war nearing the 11-month mark, Britain announced it would deliver tanks to Ukraine, its first donation of such heavy-duty weaponry. Although the pledge of 14 Challenger 2 tanks appeared modest, Ukrainian officials expect it will encourage other Western nations to supply more tanks.

"Sending Challenger 2 tanks to Ukraine is the start of a gear change in the U.K.'s support," British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's office said in a statement late Saturday. "A squadron of 14 tanks will go into the country in the coming weeks after the prime minister told President Zelenskyy that the U.K. would provide additional support to aid Ukraine's land war. Around 30 AS90s, which are large, self-propelled guns, operated by five gunners, are expected to follow."

Sunak is hoping other Western allies follow suit as part of a coordinated international effort to boost support for Ukraine in the lead-up to the 1-year anniversary of the invasion next month, according to officials.

The U.K. defense secretary plans to travel to Estonia and Germany this week to work with NATO allies, and the foreign secretary is scheduled to visit the U.S. and Canada to discuss closer coordination.

UGa football player killed in wreck after title celebration

By PAUL NEWBERRY AP Sports Writer

Georgia offensive lineman Devin Willock and a recruiting staff member were killed early Sunday in a car wreck, the school said, just hours after the Bulldogs celebrated their second straight national championship with a parade and ceremony.

Two other members of the football program were injured in the crash, which occurred in Athens, south of the Georgia campus. They were not immediately identified, but the school said both were in stable condition.

ESPN reported that another offensive lineman, Warren McLendon, was among the injured. The junior announced Saturday he was entering the NFL draft.

The single-vehicle wreck occurred at approximately 2:45 a.m., according to a statement from the Athens-Clarke County police department.

The initial investigation found that a Ford Expedition "left the roadway, striking two power poles and several trees," the statement said.

The 20-year-old Willock was pronounced dead at the scene. The driver of the vehicle, 24-year-old Chandler LeCroy, was transported to a hospital, where she died from her injuries.

LeCroy was a recruiting analyst for the Bulldogs.

On Saturday, Georgia marked its 65-7 rout of TCU in the national championship game with a parade through town and a ceremony at Sanford Stadium.

The joyous mood quickly turned to grief.

"We are all heartbroken and devastated with the loss of Devin Willock and Chandler LeCroy," Georgia coach Kirby Smart said. "Devin was an outstanding young man in every way. He was always smiling, was a great teammate and a joy to coach."

Smart said LeCroy was "a valuable member of our football staff and brought an incredible attitude and energy every single day. We grieve with their families for this tragic loss and will support them in every way possible."

Police said the wreck was still under investigation and they have not determined what factors may have contributed to the crash. It may be several days before an accident report is issued.

Willock was a 6-foot-7, 335-pound redshirt sophomore from New Milford, New Jersey.

He played extensively as a backup during the 2022 season and started at right guard in Southeastern Conference victories over Tennessee and Kentucky.

With McClendon and offensive lineman Warren Ericson headed to the NFL draft, Willock likely would have been competing for a starting position in 2023 as the Bulldogs go for a third straight national title.

Athletic director Josh Brooks said Willock and LeCroy were "two special people" who "meant the world to our football program and athletic department."

"We will continue to honor their memory in the years to come," Brooks added.

Police said a 21-year-old male passenger sustained minor injuries and a 26-year-old female passenger sustained serious injuries. "We will continue to monitor their status with medical personnel," the school said.

Georgia also said its mental health and performance personnel would "make sure we are providing the best support possible for our staff and student-athletes who are processing this grief."

Southeastern Conference Commissioner Greg Sankey, who spoke at the championship celebration, tweeted that Willock's death was "incredibly sad news and we join in sharing our sympathies, prayers and support."

Another Georgia player, linebacker Nolan Smith, said Willock's death "hurt my heart."

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"All I have to say the GREAT ONES LEAVE (TOO) SOON," Smith tweeted. "@DevinWillock I LOVE YOU FOREVER."

A few hours before his death, Willock retweeted a post that showed him taking time with a young Georgia fan at what appeared to a restaurant, even letting the youngster wear his championship ring.

"Special thank u to @DevinWillock for taking time for my grandson when he didn't have to," the tweet said. "U went out of ur way to make him feel special and U made his day!! Good luck next year! Go Dawgs!"

Carpaccio the artist, not the appetizer, now getting his due

By TRISHA THOMAS Associated Press

VENICE, Italy (AP) — When most people think of "carpaccio," they think of the thinly sliced raw beef appetizer made famous by Venice's iconic Harry's Bar. Few people know that the dish is named for a lesser-known Venetian, the Renaissance painter Vittore Carpaccio, because of the intense red hues he favored.

Carpaccio the painter has recently received more attention outside his native Venice. In November, the National Gallery in Washington inaugurated the first retrospective exhibit of his work outside Italy. The show, "Vittore Carpaccio: Master Storyteller of Renaissance Venice," is set to move to Venice's showcase Palazzo Ducale on March 18.

The Washington exhibit includes two Carpaccio paintings that left Venice for the first time in more than 500 years.

"At first, we were a bit hesitant, because allowing these masterpieces to leave their natural habitat is always a risk," said Piergiorgio Millich, the grand guardian of the Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavon fraternity.

The Venice institution, also known as the Scuola Dalmata, or Dalmatian School, has 10 Carpaccio paintings, the most still under the roof of the same place that originally commissioned the artist's work.

Art conservator Valentina Piovan analyzed the works and undertook a yearlong restoration before she convinced the institution that some of the canvases could safely make the journey to Washington.

Piovan is now working on restoration of several other Carpaccios in the headquarters of the fraternity, which was founded in 1451 by a group of Venetians as a social center providing medical and spiritual support for members — mostly sailors in the republic's naval fleet. When the fleet defeated the Ottomans in the Turkish-Venetian wars, they were paid handsomely.

As a result, they were able to hire one of the most prominent Venetian painters of his time, Carpaccio, to paint a series of paintings dedicated to St. George, the legendary figure who slayed a dragon, saved a princess and convinced the Selenites to convert to Christianity.

In the first painting in the cycle "Saint George and the Dragon," a masterpiece more than three meters (around 10 feet) long, Carpaccio paints the saint on horseback with his lance thrust into the mouth of the dragon and the ground littered with the body parts of partially devoured humans. The princess, dressed in a "carpaccio" red robe, clasps her hands together in gratitude as she watches the scene from a rocky outcropping above.

It is classic Carpaccio, a combination of narrative storytelling and attention to detail.

And it clearly was an inspiration for Giuseppe Cipriani, the Venetian restaurateur and owner of Harry's Bar, who invented a dish named for the painter in the 1950s. According to the official Harry's Bar history, Cipriani had a customer, Contessa Amalia Nani Mocenigo, whose doctors had prescribed a strict diet without cooked meat.

Cipriani came up with a dish of sliced raw beef with a sauce of mayonnaise and Worcestershire sauce, and named it after the painter in part because of its resemblance to his favorite reds that were on exhibit in Venice at the time.

"I think people are starting to get an appreciation of paintings, Venetian paintings, from the very beginning of the 16th century, and also learn maybe where the word carpaccio," came from, said Melissa Conn, director of the Venice office of Save Venice, an American nonprofit which has provided \$400,000 for the restoration of several Carpaccio works.

GOP action on mail ballot timelines angers military families

By JULIE CARR SMYTH and GARY FIELDS Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Ohio's restrictive new election law significantly shortens the window for mailed ballots to be received — despite no evidence that the extended timeline has led to fraud or any other problems — and that change is angering active-duty members of the military and their families because of its potential to disenfranchise them.

The pace of ballot counting after Election Day has become a target of conservatives egged on by former President Donald Trump. He has promoted a false narrative since losing the 2020 election that fluctuating results as late-arriving mail-in ballots are tallied is a sign of fraud.

Republican lawmakers said during debate on the Ohio legislation that even if Trump's claims aren't true, the skepticism they have caused among conservatives about the accuracy of election results justifies imposing new limits.

The new law reduces the number of days for county election boards to include mailed ballots in their tallies from 10 days after Election Day to four. Critics say that could lead more ballots from Ohio's military voters to miss the deadline and get tossed.

This issue isn't confined to Ohio.

Three other states narrowed their post-election windows for accepting mail ballots last session, according to data from the nonpartisan Voting Rights Lab. Similar moves pushed by Republican lawmakers are being proposed or discussed this year in Wisconsin, New Jersey, California and other states.

Ohio's tightened window for receiving mailed ballots is likely to affect just several hundred of the thousands of military and overseas ballots received in any election. Critics say any number is too great.

"What kind of society do we call ourselves if we are disenfranchising people from the rights that they are over there protecting?" said Willis Gordon, a Navy veteran and veterans affairs chair of the Ohio NAACP's executive committee.

Republican state Sen. Theresa Gavarone, who championed the tightened ballot deadline, said Ohio's previous window was "an extreme outlier" nationally. She said Ohio's military and overseas voters still have ample time under the new law.

"While there is certainly more work to do, this new law drastically enhances Ohio's election security and improves the integrity of our elections, which my constituents and citizens across the state have demanded," she said.

Republicans' claims that Ohio needs to clamp down in the name of election integrity run counter to GOP officials' glowing assessments of the state's current system. Ohio reported a near-perfect tally of its 2020 presidential election results, for example, and fraud referrals represent a tiny fraction of the ballots cast.

Board of elections data shows that in the state's most populous county, which includes the capital city of Columbus, 242 absentee ballots from military and overseas voters were received after Election Day last November. Of that, nearly 40% arrived more than four days later and would have been rejected had the new law been in effect.

In 2020, a federal survey administered by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission found that Ohio rejected just 1% of the 21,600 ballots cast by overseas and military voters with the 10-day time frame in place. That compared with 2.1% nationally, a figure attributed mostly to voters missing state ballot deadlines.

All states are required to transmit ballots to registered overseas and military voters at least 45 days before an election, or as soon as possible if the request comes in after that date.

Former state Rep. Connie Pillich, an Air Force veteran who leads the Ohio Democratic Party's outreach to veterans and military families, rejects arguments that the relatively small number of affected ballots is worth the trade-off.

"These guys and gals stationed overseas, living in the sandbox or wherever they are, doing their jobs, putting themselves in harm's way, you're making it harder for them to participate," said Pillich, who led an unsuccessful effort to have GOP Gov. Mike DeWine veto the bill.

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"I can tell you everyone I've talked to is livid and upset," she said.

Those familiar with submitting military ballots said applying for, receiving and filling out a mailed ballot requires extra time for those who are deployed. Postal schedules, sudden calls to duty, even extra time needed to consult family back home about the candidates and issues are factors. Ohio's new law also sets a new deadline — five days earlier — for voters to request a mailed ballot, a move supporters say will help voters meet the tightened return deadline.

Neither the Ohio Association of Election Officials nor the state's elections chief, Republican Secretary of State Frank LaRose, asked lawmakers to shrink the existing 10-day window for receiving mailed ballots.

Aaron Ockerman, a lobbyist for the election officials' group, said the seven-day post-election window called for in an early version of the legislation was a compromise that county election directors decided they could live with.

"They felt the vast, vast majority of the ballots have arrived within eight days," he said. The group opposed making the window any shorter, on grounds that voters — including those in the military — would be disenfranchised.

Research by the Voting Rights Lab shows Ohio joined three other states — Republican-controlled Arkansas and Iowa, and Nevada, where Democrats held full control at the time — in passing laws last year that shortened the post-election return window for mailed ballots. Five states lengthened theirs.

Nationwide, a little more than 911,000 military and overseas ballots were cast in 2020. Of those, about 19,000, or roughly 2%, were rejected — typically for being received after the deadline, according to the U.S. Election Assistance Commission.

The Secure Families Initiative, a national nonpartisan group advocating for military voters and their families, is trying to push state election laws in the other direction, toward broader electronic access to voting for service members and their families.

Kate Marsh Lord, the group's communications director, said they were "deeply disappointed" to see DeWine sign the Ohio bill.

"In fact, I'm an Ohio voter — born and raised in Columbus — and I've cast my Ohio ballot from as far away as Japan," she said. "HB458 set out to solve a problem that didn't exist, and military voters will pay the price by having their ballots disqualified."

Marsh Lord, currently in South Carolina where her husband is stationed in the Air Force, said mail sometimes took weeks to reach her family when they lived in Japan.

"Even if I were to get my ballot in the mail a week ahead of time, a lot of times with the military postal service and the Postal Service in general, there are delays," she said. "So that shortened window doesn't allow as much time for things that are really out of military voters' control."

She said it's even more challenging for active-duty personnel deployed to remote areas — "the people on the front lines of the fight to defend our democracy and our freedom and the right to vote around the world. Those are the people who will be most impacted by this change."

Congo's army says church bomb kills 10, extremists suspected

By JUSTIN KABUMBA and AL-HADJI KUDRA MALIRO Associated Press

GOMA, Congo (AP) — A suspected extremist attack at a church in eastern Congo killed at least 10 people and wounded more than three dozen, according to the country's army.

A group linked to Islamic extremists was suspected of being responsible for a bomb that went off in the Pentecostal church in the North Kivu province town of Kasindi, military spokesperson Anthony Mwalushayi told The Associated Press by phone.

A Kenyan national found at the scene was detained, Mwalushayi said. Congo's government urged people to avoid crowds and be vigilant as it conducted an investigation, the minister of communication tweeted.

Videos and photos of the attack seen by the AP showed dead bodies lying on the ground outside the church, including what appeared to be a dead child. The injured were being carried out of the church surrounded by other people screaming.

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Survivors and witnesses said the blast severed some people's limbs from their bodies.

Masika Makasi, 25, was sitting under a tent outside the church when she heard a noise that sounded like a tire going flat, she told the AP from her home in Kasindi. Her leg was injured in the attack and her sister-in-law, who was several feet away, died instantly, Makasi said.

"I am traumatized from seeing people die around me," she said.

Violence has wracked eastern Congo for decades as more than 120 armed groups and self-defense militias fight for land and power. Nearly 6 million people are internally displaced, and hundreds of thousands are facing extreme food insecurity, according to the U.N.

Fighters with the Allied Democratic Forces, a rebel organization which is believed to have links to the Islamic State group have carried out several attacks in Kasindi, which is located on the border with Uganda.

Troops from Uganda's army have deployed to eastern Congo to try to stem the violence, but the attacks have increased and spread. ADF attacks since April have killed at least 370 civilians and involved the abduction of several hundred more, a report by the United Nations last month said.

The rebel group has extended its area of operations to Goma and into neighboring Ituri province.

The complex militia problem in Congo has long produced ethnically motivated attacks and fluid alliances between multiple militias with diverse interests, said Trupti Agrawal, senior East Africa analyst for the Economist Intelligence Unit, a research department of the Economist Group, a global media and information-services company.

"The church attack will work to further the narrative of (the) eastern (Congo) conflict taking a religious turn," Agrawal said. "It is likely to deepen anti-Islam sentiment in the Christian majority country, particularly in the eastern provinces where Islamist rebels are most active."

South Korean president travels to UAE, seeks arms sales

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol received an honor guard welcome Sunday on a trip to the United Arab Emirates as he hopes to expand his country's military sales here.

Yoon's visit comes as South Korea conducts business deals worth billions of dollars and stations special forces troops to defend the UAE, an arrangement that drew criticism under his liberal predecessor. Now, however, it appears the conservative leader wants to double down on those military links even as tensions with neighboring Iran have already seen Tehran seize a South Korean oil tanker in 2021.

"I think that the situation in the Middle East is changing very rapidly when it comes to geopolitics," said June Park, a fellow with the International Strategy Forum at Schmidt Futures. "So Korea wants to make sure some of the strategic partnerships and the components ... with the UAE" remain strong.

Yoon arrived at Qasr Al Watan palace in Abu Dhabi on Sunday. He was greeted by Emirati leader Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, who took office in May after serving as the country's de facto ruler for years.

An honor guard of traditionally dressed Emiratis greeted Yoon and his wife, Kim Keon Hee. They twirled model Lee-Enfield rifles alongside troops on camelback and horseback. Inside, a military band played the South Korean and Emirati national anthems.

After the ceremony, South Korea's Yonhap news agency quoted Sheikh Mohammed as saying the UAE planned to invest \$30 billion in South Korea. "We decided to make the investment with confidence in the Republic of Korea that keeps its promises under all circumstances," he said.

The report did not elaborate.

While energy-hungry South Korea does rely on the Emirates for just under 10% of its crude oil supply, Seoul has struck a series of deals far beyond oil with this nation of seven sheikhdoms that closely tie the nation to Abu Dhabi. South Korea's trade with the UAE is into the billions of dollars worth of cars, material and other goods.

The importance of the trip for Seoul could be seen in the South Korean business leaders attending a

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camel meat luncheon at the palace. They included Hyundai Motor Group Chairman Euisun Chung, Samsung Electronics Executive Chairman Lee Jae-yong and SK Group Chairman Chey Tae-won.

Before Yoon's trip, officials described the visit as seeking to solidify the ties between the two countries.

"This visit will strengthen strategic cooperation with our brother country UAE in the four core cooperative sectors of nuclear power, energy, investment and defense," said Kim Sung-han, director of national security in Yoon's government.

On Saturday, Yonhap quoted an anonymous presidency official as also saying that an arms deal was planned.

"The atmosphere is extremely ripe for security or military cooperation between South Korea and the UAE involving the arms industry," the official said, according to Yonhap.

Already, South Korea reached a \$3.5 billion deal with the UAE in 2022 to sell the M-SAM, an advanced air defense system designed to intercept missiles at altitudes below 40 kilometers (25 miles). Emirati officials have grown increasingly concerned about protecting their airspace after being targeted in long-range drone attacks by Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels.

While U.S. forces fired Patriot missiles for the first time in combat since the 2003 Iraq invasion to defend Abu Dhabi during those attacks, the Emiratis have been hedging their reliance on American military support since America's chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan.

But South Korea's biggest project remains the Barakah nuclear power plant, Seoul's first attempt to build atomic reactors abroad. The \$20 billion facility, which ultimately will have four reactors, is in the UAE's western deserts near the Saudi border and one day will account for nearly a quarter of all of the Emirates' power needs.

It's also key to the UAE's plans to go carbon neutral by 2050, a pledge that takes on special importance as it prepares to host the United Nations COP28 climate negotiations beginning in November in Dubai.

Yoon likely wants to assure the Emiratis that South Korea wants to be in the running for lucrative maintenance contracts after his predecessor, President Moon Jae-in, had said Seoul wanted to move away from nuclear energy.

"The energy policy took on a 180 degree shift" after the election, said Park, the analyst. "So Korea is now for nuclear and I guess that the Yoon administration wants to make sure to the Emiratis that there is no concern regarding policy shifts or anything like that."

Then there's also the nuclear tensions with North Korea. Yoon, a former top prosecutor, became president in May on a promise to take a harder line on Pyongyang. Up until recent years, hundreds of North Korean laborers were believed to be working in the UAE and elsewhere in the Gulf Arab states, offering a cash stream to Pyongyang as it seeks to evade mounting sanctions over its nuclear program.

However, a crackdown has seen their numbers drastically drop as nations stopped renewing their visas. A recent U.N. expert report noted that high-end camera gear bought in the UAE ended up in North Korea, while another mentioned a North Korean national living in Dubai obtaining foreign currency through an online app by lying about his nationality.

The U.N. also said as recently as 2021 it had information about North Korean diplomats in Iran flying on Dubai-based long-haul carrier Emirates smuggling gold with them.

Wealth looms big as ever in post-scandal college admissions

By COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

Celebrities wept in court. Coaches lost their jobs. Elite universities saw their reputations stained. And nearly four years later, the mastermind of the Varsity Blues scheme was sentenced this month to more than three years in prison.

But there's little belief the college bribery scandal has stirred significant change in the admissions landscape. Some schools tweaked rules to prevent the most flagrant types of misconduct, but the outsize roles of wealth, class and race — which were thrust into public view in shocking plainness — loom as large as ever.

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College admissions leaders say the case is an anomaly. Corrupt athletics officials abused holes in the system, they argue, but no college admissions officers were accused. Still, critics say the case revealed deeper, more troubling imbalances.

"Privilege is just really baked into the system in many ways," said Julie Park, who studies college admissions and racial equity at the University of Maryland. "At the end of the day, there's disproportionate representation of the 1% at any private college."

The scheme itself was brazen, with rich parents paying to get their children accepted to selective universities as fake athletes. It drew attention to the advantages those families already had, including tutors and private consultants. It also highlighted other ways money can sway admission decisions, with edges given to the relatives of donors and alumni.

In court, some of the accused parents argued their alleged bribes were no different from donations colleges routinely accept from relatives of prospective students. Records revealed from the University of Southern California showed lists detailing scores of "VIP" applicants, with notes such as "potential donor" or "1 mil pledge."

Among the parents sent to prison for participating in the scheme were "Full House" actor Lori Loughlin, her fashion designer husband Mossimo Giannulli, and "Desperate Housewives" star Felicity Huffman.

When authorities announced the first charges in 2019, it left colleges across the U.S. scrambling to review their own admissions systems, especially where there was overlap with athletics programs. Schools added layers of scrutiny around recruiting, with a sharp eye on lower-profile sports targeted in the scheme, such as water polo and rowing.

Asked what has changed since then, the universities at the center of the scheme point to a flurry of policies that were adopted within a few months of the arrests.

An internal review at USC found an average of 12 students a year had been recruited for sports they didn't end up playing. Some, but not all, were tied to the bribery scheme. The university blamed it on "one or a small number" of sports officials who violated school policy and hid it from the admissions office.

Officials at USC said they started reviewing athletic recruits at multiple levels of administration, including by an office of athletics compliance, which also started verifying that recruits actually end up competing.

Yale University made similar changes after a women's soccer coach accepted \$860,000 in bribes to get students admitted as part of the scheme. Yale's athletic director started reviewing all proposed recruits, the school announced in 2019, and recruits that don't end up on teams now face "close scrutiny."

But in the big picture of Yale's admissions, "very little has changed," said Logan Roberts, a senior at the Ivy League school who came from a low-income family in upstate New York. The school denounced the scandal, he said, but ignored deeper problems that give wealthy students advantages in admissions.

On campus, he said, students from modest means are still far outnumbered by those who went to private schools with access to expensive tutors. Roberts and others have pressed the university to abandon policies that favor wealth, including preferences for the children of alumni, but so far Yale has resisted change.

"When money and morality clash, money generally tends to win," said Roberts, 22.

Angel Pérez was the head of admissions at Trinity College in Connecticut when the scandal broke. His school wasn't implicated, but within minutes, his phone was buzzing with texts from colleagues. Could it happen here, they wondered? Trinity reviewed its policies and concluded they were sound.

Ultimately, it did little to change the industry, said Pérez, who now leads NACAC, a national association of college admissions officials.

"The majority of institutions found that they had a really good process and that there wasn't unethical behavior taking place," he said. "This was a case of some bad actors who were framing themselves as college counselors."

Still, he said, the bribery case — along with the country's racial reckoning and separate legal battles over affirmative action — stirred debate about the fairness of legacy preferences and entrance exams.

"I think it just woke up the American public," he said.

After the Jan. 4 sentencing of scheme mastermind Rick Singer, authorities said their work led to reform. The FBI said colleges reached out asking how they could catch wrongdoing.

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Massachusetts U.S. Attorney Rachael Rollins said it revealed a "separate college admissions process for the rich, powerful and entitled," but she also said it led to "meaningful changes." She suggested it may have contributed to more colleges making the SAT and ACT optional, a trend that started before the case but gained steam during the pandemic.

Others, however, argue that the scheme was only a symptom of a disease.

America's obsession with elite schools, combined with opaque admissions systems, has led to desperation among families seeking the best for their children, said Mark Sklarow, CEO of the Independent Educational Consultants Association, a nonprofit that represents private counselors who help in the admissions process.

Colleges help fuel the frenzy, he said, by boasting about their ever-narrowing acceptance rates, all while giving advantages to the well-connected.

"Colleges created a system that was designed to reject more and more kids," he said. "It became less and less clear who got in and who got rejected, and I think that led this generation of parents to say, 'I'll do whatever it takes to get my kid in.'"

Closing bribery loopholes, he added, does little to make admissions more fair.

Ultimately, wealth and privilege play the same role in admissions that they did before the case, said Park, of the University of Maryland. So far she sees little real change, she said, with only a small number of schools agreeing to drop legacy preferences, for example.

"Things have the potential to change," she said. "But is it just going to be shifting chairs around on the Titanic? I don't know."

As tornadoes hit, survivors hid in tubs, shipping container

By SHARON JOHNSON and BUTCH DILL Associated Press

MARBURY, Ala. (AP) — An Alabama engine mechanic took refuge in a shipping container as a tornado from a violent storm decimated his shop and killed two of his neighbors along its destructive path across Alabama and Georgia.

The harrowing stories of David Hollon and other survivors of Thursday's storm are emerging as residents comb through the wreckage wrought by tornadoes and blistering winds that have led to the deaths of at least nine people.

In Alabama's rural Autauga County, where at least seven people have died, Hollon and his workers saw a massive tornado churning toward them. They needed to get to shelter — immediately.

Hollon said they ran into a metal shipping container near the back of his garage because the container had been anchored to the floor with concrete. Once inside, Hollon began frantically dialing his neighbor on the phone. But as they heard the garage being ripped apart by the storm, the call kept going to voicemail.

The storm passed and they emerged, only to find the body of his neighbor in the street, he said. Another neighbor up the road had also died, a family member said.

"I guess we did a lot better than most. We got damage, but we're still here," Hollon, 52, said in an interview Saturday as he walked amidst the remains of his garage, stepping through a field littered with battered cars, shattered glass, snapped tree branches, splintered wood and other debris.

Leighea Johnson, a 54-year-old cafeteria worker who also lives in Autauga County, stood among the strewn remains of her trailer home. She pointed to a tall pile of rubble that she identified as her bedroom, bathroom and kitchen.

A swing set she had in her backyard was now across the street, mangled among some trees. Her outdoor trampoline had been wrapped around another set of trees in a neighbor's front yard.

"The trailer should be here, and now it's not," Johnson said, pointing to a slab covered in debris, "And it is all over the place now."

The storm brought powerful twisters and winds to Alabama and Georgia that uprooted trees, sent mobile homes airborne, derailed a freight train, flipped cars, cracked utility poles and downed power lines, leaving thousands without electricity. Suspected tornado damage was reported in at least 14 counties in Alabama and 14 counties in Georgia, according to the National Weather Service.

Early Sunday, President Joe Biden declared a major disaster in Alabama and ordered federal aid to

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supplement recovery efforts in affected areas.

Autauga County officials said the tornado had winds of at least 136 mph (218 kph) and leveled damage consistent with an EF3, two steps below the most powerful category of twister. County authorities have said at least a dozen people were hospitalized and about 40 homes were destroyed or seriously damaged, including mobile homes that were launched into the air.

Residents described chaotic scenes as the storm spun toward them. People rushed into shelters, bathtubs and sheds as the winds bore down. In one case, a search crew found five people, trapped but unharmed, inside a storm shelter after a wall from a nearby house fell onto it.

Downtown Selma sustained severe damage before the worst of the weather moved across Georgia south of Atlanta. No deaths were reported in Selma.

Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp said the damage was felt across his state. Some of the worst reports emerged from Troup County near the Georgia-Alabama line, where more than 100 homes were hit.

Kemp said a state transportation department worker was killed while responding to storm damage. A 5-year-old child who was riding in a vehicle was killed by a falling tree in Georgia's Butts County, authorities said. At least 12 people were treated at a hospital in Spalding County, south of Atlanta, where the weather service confirmed at least two tornadoes struck.

Johnson, the cafeteria worker in Autauga County, said she was at work when she learned the storm would pass directly over her home. She quickly warned her daughter, who was with her 2-year-old grandson at home.

"I called my daughter and said, 'You do not have time to get out, you've got to get somewhere now,'" Johnson said, her voice cracking. "And she said, 'I'm getting in the tub. If the house is messed up I'll be in the tub area.'"

The call dropped. Johnson kept calling back. When she finally reconnected with her daughter, Johnson said she told her: "The house is gone, the house is gone."

Her daughter and grandson had some cuts and bruises but were otherwise fine after a trip to the emergency room, Johnson said.

"I brought her home and tried not to let go of her after that," Johnson said. "I lost a lot of things materialistically and I don't have insurance but I don't even care, because my child is all right."

"That's really all that matters to me."

Today in History: JAN 16, Caesar declared Roman emperor

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, Jan. 16, the 16th day of 2023. There are 349 days left in the year. This is Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 16, 1991, the White House announced the start of Operation Desert Storm to drive Iraqi forces out of Kuwait. (Allied forces prevailed on Feb. 28, 1991.)

On this date:

In 27 B.C., Caesar Augustus was declared the first Emperor of the Roman Empire by the Senate.

In 1865, Union Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman decreed that 400,000 acres of land in the South would be divided into 40-acre lots and given to former slaves. (The order, later revoked by President Andrew Johnson, is believed to have inspired the expression, "Forty acres and a mule.")

In 1912, a day before reaching the South Pole, British explorer Robert Scott and his expedition found evidence that Roald Amundsen of Norway and his team had gotten there ahead of them.

In 1919, pianist and statesman Ignacy Jan Paderewski (pah-dehr-EHF'-skee) became the first premier of the newly created Republic of Poland.

In 1920, Prohibition began in the United States as the 18th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution took effect, one year to the day after its ratification. (It was later repealed by the 21st Amendment.)

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In 1942, actor Carole Lombard, 33, her mother, Elizabeth, and 20 other people were killed when their plane crashed near Las Vegas, Nevada, while en route to California from a war-bond promotion tour.

In 1989, three days of rioting began in Miami when a police officer fatally shot Clement Lloyd, a Black motorcyclist, causing a crash that also claimed the life of Lloyd's passenger, Allan Blanchard. (The officer, William Lozano, was convicted of manslaughter, but then was acquitted in a retrial.)

In 2002, Richard Reid was indicted in Boston on federal charges alleging he'd tried to blow up a U.S.-bound jetliner with explosives hidden in his shoes. (Reid later pleaded guilty and was sentenced to life in prison.)

In 2003, the space shuttle Columbia blasted off for what turned out to be its last flight; on board was Israel's first astronaut, Ilan Ramon (ee-LAHN' rah-MOHN'). (The mission ended in tragedy on Feb. 1, when the shuttle broke up during its return descent, killing all seven crew members.)

In 2017, former NASA astronaut Eugene Cernan, to date the last man to walk on the moon, died in Houston at age 82.

In 2020, the first impeachment trial of President Donald Trump opened in the Senate, with senators standing and swearing an oath of "impartial justice." Trump, who denounced the proceedings as a "hoax," would later be acquitted on charges of abuse of power and obstruction of Congress.

Ten years ago: Braced for a fight, President Barack Obama unveiled the most sweeping proposals for curbing gun violence in two decades, pressing a reluctant Congress to pass universal background checks and bans on military-style assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition magazines like the ones used in the Newtown, Conn., school shooting. Pauline Friedman Phillips, better known as advice columnist Dear Abby, died in Minneapolis at age 94.

Five years ago: Pope Francis met with survivors of priests who sexually abused them; a spokesman said Francis wept with them and apologized for the "irreparable damage" they suffered. Authorities in Denmark charged inventor Peter Madsen with killing Swedish journalist Kim Wall during a trip on his private submarine. (Madsen was later convicted and sentenced to life in prison.)

One year ago: Tennis star Novak Djokovic, who refused to be vaccinated for COVID-19, was deported from Australia after losing a bid to stay in the country to defend his Australian Open title. France's parliament approved a law to exclude unvaccinated people from all restaurants, sports arenas and other venues, as the government tried to protect hospitals amid record numbers of COVID-19 infections driven by the highly contagious omicron variant.

Today's birthdays:

Author William Kennedy is 95. Author-editor Norman Podhoretz is 93. Opera singer Marilyn Horne is 89. Hall of Fame auto racer A.J. Foyt is 88. Singer Barbara Lynn is 81. Country singer Ronnie Milsap is 80. Singer Katherine Anderson Schaffner (The Marvelettes) is 79. Country singer Jim Stafford is 79. Talk show host Dr. Laura Schlessinger is 76. Movie director John Carpenter is 75. Actor-dancer-choreographer Debbie Allen is 73. R&B singer Maxine Jones (En Vogue) is 64. Singer Sade (shah-DAY') is 64. Pop/rock singer-songwriter Jill Sobule is 64. Rock musician Paul Webb (Talk Talk) is 61. Actor David Chokachi (CHOH'-kuh-chee) is 55. Former Labor Secretary Alexander Acosta is 54. Actor-writer-director Josh Evans is 52. Actor-comedian Jonathan Mangum is 52. Actor Richard T. Jones is 51. Actor Josie Davis is 50. Model Kate Moss is 49. Actor-playwright Lin-Manuel Miranda is 43. Country musician James Young (The Eli Young Band) is 43. Rock musician Nick Valensi (The Strokes) is 42. Actor Renee Felice Smith is 38. NFL quarterback Joe Flacco is 38. Actor Yvonne Zima ("The Young and the Restless") is 34.